



ACER CAMPESTRE L.

Fam. Sapindaceae

DESCRIPTION

Deciduous tree of small or medium size, 10-20-(22) m [32-65-(72) ft], often with a sinuous trunk and fairly dense, domed crown; it is short-lived: 120-150 years at the most.

DISTRIBUTION

It is a native species. Its native range covers most of central and southern Europe; in Italy, it can be found in all regions.

FLOWERS

Flowering starts in April-May simultaneously with bud burst. Flowers have 8 stamens, centrally positioned on the disc. The sepals are slightly shorter than the petals and both are yellow-green. The peduncle and the calyx are pubescent. It is a melliferous plant, frequently visited by bees.

ROOTS

It has a fasciculated root system, not very deep nor ample. It adapts to loose and permeable yet fertile soils, even with clayey or loamy characteristics.

FRUITS

Ripening in September and October, the fruits are double samaras with two winged achenes aligned at 180°; the carpels are flat, with a lump in the middle and a thick cuticle.

LEAVES

About 4-7 cm [1.5-2.7 in] long (in basal shoots, they can be up to 12 cm [4.7] long), they normally have 5 blunt lobes, though they can only have 3 lobes. They are dark green on the upper face, lighter green below. The petiole secretes sap if detached and is as long as the blade.

In autumn, when nights are cold, the foliage colour turns rich gold, sometimes red, making the *Acer Campestre* also an ornamental plant.

BARK

Juvenile bark is yellowish and often somewhat corky, it soon turns pale grey or brown and is covered by a shallow longitudinally-furrowed rhytidome, formed by small, fairly persistent, rectangular plates.

INTERESTING FACTS

In the past, it mainly served as a stake in the vineyards but it was also used to consolidate friable soils. The leaves were used as forage and its white, hard wood was used for small craftwork or as excellent firewood.

