

Ginkgo biloba

Ginkgo or Maidenhair Tree

GING-koe bye-LOE-bah

gin - Chinese, silver; *kyo* - Chinese, apricot

biloba - L., two-lobed

Ginkgoaceae



Southeastern China

Simple, Alternate

Deciduous, 40–80 ft.



Fleshy seeds

Variation in
fall leaf color



The ginkgo is unique among all plants as a lone survivor from the time of the dinosaurs. One of the world's oldest remaining species, its closest relatives went extinct millions of years ago. It can be readily identified by its fan-shaped leaves, an extract of which has been used for centuries to improve brain function. The ginkgo is popular in temperate cities all over the world because of its resilience to the tribulations of urban life, and for its golden fall leaf color. Most cultivated trees are now grafted males because the overripe fleshy seeds of female trees have a foul stench, reminiscent of vomit and dog feces. Ginkgo may have become extinct in the wild sometime in the past few thousand years, only surviving in cultivation in China and later in Japan, where some trees are over one thousand years old. Some authorities believe that remnant wild stands still survive in the mountains of southeastern China.



Newly emerging leaves
and male cones

*The passing of a great tree
is never reported in the
obituaries of our news-
papers. This
is a shame,
for some of
them have
had unusual
lives.*
—Peter Del
Tredici

