



I have trees in my yard and would like to make maple syrup.... What do I do?

For great informational resources:  
Join the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers' Association at <https://www.omspa.com>.

Download the North American Maple Producers' Manual at <https://mapleresearch.org/pub/manual/>

See the references in the text to the manual.

Refer to sources at [mapleresearch.org](http://mapleresearch.org)

### **Identify your maple trees**

All native maple trees can be tapped, but mostly sugar, black, and red maple trees. (Identifying characteristics chart in producers manual pg 3-4, 3-5).



### **When to tap**

Late winter to early spring, February, March, and April. (From first thaw until bud break). This varies depending on what region you are in.

(see producers manual starting on pg 6-7)

### **How to tap**

Equipment - drill, appropriate drill bit, spouts, and small mallet or hammer.

Tree diameter 10" - 12" one tap

Tree diameter 18" or greater two taps

Tap hole depth 1 1/2" - 2", drill the hole then lightly tap the spout into the hole. Away from previous tapholes (4" side to side and 6" above or below)

Remove taps at the end of each season (see producers manual starting on pg 6-12)



### **Sap collection**

Traditional sap buckets or bags

Plastic bucket with tubing spout and dropline. Maple tubing between trees to a collection barrel or tank (Needs to be food grade used for maple sap only). (see producers manual starting on pg 6-27)



### **Sap Storage**

Process sap ASAP, keep sap cool and out of the sun. Always use food grade collection & storage containers that are for maple sap & syrup only.

Small producers can freeze sap until ready to boil. (see producers manual starting on pg 6-64)



## **Boiling sap to syrup**

The quicker and hotter the boil the faster the water evaporates. Sap becomes syrup when it reaches the correct density for proper storage, most commonly using the Brix scale. The hydrometer is the instrument of choice. Temperature can be used as a guide when boiling sap, testing your thermometer before each boil to determine the current boiling point and adding approximately 7 1/2 degrees Fahrenheit. Very small producers make syrup by the batch method. Sap is added gradually as it boils away. Adding sap continues until the sap is gone or the pan fills to a point that it makes sense to finish off a batch of syrup and begin the process over again.

(see producers manual for density starting on pg 8-12)



## **Reverse Osmosis**

Reverse Osmosis (RO) is a very fine filter that can concentrate sap. It can be a great option for the backyarder or small maple producer. In recent years RO units for any size of production have come available or can be built by the maple producer. An RO can cut boiling time in half or much more depending on the unit and desire of the producer.

## **Syrup Filtration**

If you are a backyarder planning to use your syrup only for yourself, you can get away with filtering syrup with just a paper filter, but expect the lower parts of jars to be cloudy and contain a sediment of sugar sand.

Sugar sand is a collection of minerals that settle out of the sugary solution of maple syrup. It is not harmful but it is not attractive. Filtering with a paper filter and the thicker felt filter removes the sediment making a nice clear maple syrup. Three main methods of filtering are commonly used. A very small producer may use a filter as simple as a coffee filter. Most will use a set of cone filters, the top one of paper and the lower one of felt or similar material. A set of flat filters

can also be used. Even these filters may not do a sufficient job of filtering for the syrup to be displayed in glass. For larger producers or those wishing to sell in glass containers a filter press is preferred.

## **Syrup Grading**

If you sell maple syrup there you need to follow either the Ontario regulation 119, or the Canadian (federal) regulation.



There are four aspects of grading: color, density, clarity and flavor. Color grading can be accomplished with a visual grading kit, density with a refractometer or hydrometer, clarity is determined visually and flavor by tasting. (See chapter 8 in the producers manual)

## **Syrup packaging/storage**

After filtering, syrup should be heated to a minimum of 180°F (180 - 195) for filling and sealing containers for storage. Syrup can also be frozen for storage; refrigeration is not acceptable for storage over a few weeks. (Also see chapter 8)

## **When to stop and cleanup**

When the sap stops running because the buds are swelling or leaves emerging or when the syrup no longer tastes good it is time to pull the spouts and clean everything up.

**More** Many great food and beverage products can be made from maple syrup. (See chapter 9)