

1. Do those cone filters filter quickly enough to keep the syrup at 190? Or do you have to filter and then re-heat?

*The syrup doesn't need to stay at 190F in order to be filtered, it just needs to warm enough to run more easily. Syrup tends to take a while to cool so that gives you enough time if you use the cone filter correctly. You need to layer in 3 or 4 prefilters inside of the final cloth filter. As the prefilters get clogged with sugar sand you pull them out. This keeps the syrup moving and allows you to finish before it cools off too much.*

2. What are the delicious candies called? Are they maple/caramels? Recipe?

*I've only ever heard them referred to as "maple candies" and, you're correct, they're delicious! They're very simple, it's just maple sugar. You keep boiling the sap until it gets to about 250-260F then pull it off the heat and stir. Keep stirring until it cools and crystallizes into sugar (it's an arm workout!). The candies are set while the sugar is still warm so put the sugar into your mold, let them cool, and you've got candies!*

3. Why do you see so many large maples died out at the top?

*This is a phenomenon called "bigleaf maple decline" which in forestry terms means we know maples are struggling in the region but haven't pinpointed exactly why. So far, research suggests it's a result of the hotter, drier summers rather than a disease or insect. The most susceptible trees are the one's growing in already stressful conditions (roadsides, yards, forest edges, etc.). Here's a link for more info: <https://ppo.puyallup.wsu.edu/plant-health-concerns/maple/>.*

4. What advice do you have for planting new bigleaf maples on pastureland?

*First and foremost, match species to site. You'll need to confirm that the ground is capable of sustaining bigleaf maple. That can be done by looking at what's growing nearby, what grew there previously (if possible), and examining the soils (bigleaf likes moist but well-drained soils). If you believe you have a good site, you're good to plant. Know that planting into pastureland is a very difficult task and it's quite common to experience some tree mortality. This is largely due to how competitive grass can be with young seedlings, particularly for water. I recommend killing the grass within two feet on all sides of each seedling, either with herbicide or planting fabric/mulching. This will give your trees a leg up. Also, don't forget to protect your trees from deer/elk browse!*

5. Do you think its destructive to the tree/mycelium/etc. when I'm scurrying around the trunks of my coppiced trees?

*Very unlikely. It's possible to cause soil compaction around the base of a tree without heavy equipment but it would take significant foot traffic on an ongoing basis.*

6. What is a good tree spacing for healthy coppiced maples?

*It really depends on the size/age of your trees but you'll need a wider spacing compared to conifers or other hardwoods like red alder. Bigleaf maple is known*

*for having a big spreading crown that takes up a lot of canopy space. In a younger stand a healthy spacing might be 15-20 feet, then maybe up to 25 feet as the tree diameters get large (>20").*

7. Is the UW or anyone else looking for more sites to study?

*Not for this season. It's possibly they may add some sites in the next season but I think they have a good array of sites now. I recommend signing up for the Washington Bigleaf Maple Syrup Network in case there is a call for more sites (<https://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/blmsyrup/>).*

8. UW or WSU was going to set up a blog, where one could learn from others' mistakes. Has that website been set up yet? If so, how to access it?

*I'm not aware of any intentions to create a blog but you may be referring to the Bigleaf Maple Syrup Network (<https://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/blmsyrup/>), which is an email list and is already up and running. If you sign up, you can submit questions, thoughts, experiences, etc. to the group and get a conversation going!*

9. I thought I read that maple leaves are dangerous to horses and goats. Is this true for certain maples or all varieties?

*I had not heard this before but I did some research and found this article: <https://extension.umn.edu/horse-pastures-and-facilities/are-maple-leaves-toxic-horses>. It sounds like the fresh leaves are less toxic, but wilted and dry leaves may cause a problem.*

10. Where is the best place to purchase materials/equipment?

*I've bought equipment from multiple suppliers and am yet to have a negative experience. Rather than suggest a specific company, I'll point you towards our Bigleaf Maple Syrup Resources page on our website (<https://forestry.wsu.edu/nps/blmsyrup/>). Scroll down and you'll see a list of suppliers.*

11. What percentage of stems can you safely tap in a clump?

*It's less to do with a percentage and more to do with size. If all the stems are greater than 10", you can tap 100% of them. If you have a clump with stems that are an inch or two under 10" I recommend tapping every other or every third stem and rotating through them as you retap until they grow to 10".*

12. The Bigleaf Maple flowers are edible... how? As pick-&-eat snack? Boiled? In salad? Other? [Kevin's note: attendees suggested salads, battered and fried as fritters, or just eat right off the tree but before they get to the fuzzy stage later in spring]

*Anyway you like them! That said, I like them most in salads. I've not tried them battered and fried but that sounds delicious too. They are definitely best when they are young and tender.*

13. Should you remove the taps at 50 degrees F and wait until the next freeze?

*No. The only reason to remove a tap is if it's been 4-6 weeks since you've tapped and you're retapping or if it's the end of the season. Otherwise, leave them in and wait for the next freeze.*

14. If using restaurant pans, how do you connect three together to facilitate cooking?

*No need to connect them. You can just set them next to each other on the evaporator but set them close enough so that there is a minimal or no gap between. Then you treat each as an individual pan. You won't get the sugar gradient we discussed in the webinar, which is one reason they're not as efficient, but they will still get the job done.*

15. Where can I buy some syrup to taste?

*Presently there is only one commercial producer of bigleaf maple syrup in Washington, Neil's Bigleaf Maple (<https://www.neilsbigleaf.com/>).*

16. Is it better to collect the buckets/bags containing the sap in the morning, or in the evening?

*It depends on the sap flow and the size of your buckets/bags. If temperatures warm, sap typically starts running in the late morning or afternoon after a freezing night. Many people will let the sap flow that day and overnight then start collecting and boiling the next morning. If it's a strong flow you may need to empty them the night before to keep them from overflowing. You'll have to use your judgement to see what's best for avoiding overflow and, more importantly, exposing the sap to long periods of warm weather.*

17. Can you tap birch trees?

*Yes! Birch trees also produce sap but it's based on root pressure from warming temperatures in the soil. For that reason, they tend to produce sap a little later in the sap season when warm temps are more consistent.*

18. Are people allowed to tap on public lands?

*No. I'm not aware of any leases or permits that allow people to tap on public lands.*