

Maple Syrup Production in Utah – We Can Do That?

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Maple syrup production is not traditionally associated with western states. Most maple syrup in the United States comes from New England, with Vermont being the top-producing state. Through research and community engagement, Utah State University Extension is showing people how to tap and process sap from trees such as Boxelder and Bigtooth Maple, which are well-suited to the climate of the Mountain West region.

Maple syrup production involves collecting sap and boiling it to create the sweet, familiar amber syrup. Though labor-intensive, this process is being modernized through the use of advanced equipment such as vacuum pumps, reverse osmosis systems, and efficient evaporators. These innovations are helping both new and experienced producers streamline their operations, making maple sugaring a viable enterprise for more people and communities.

“Traditionally, maple syrup production is concentrated in the northeastern United States, but our research shows that western trees such as Bigtooth Maples and Boxelders also yield high-quality sap,” said Youping Sun, USU associate professor in landscape horticulture and a project leader. “With the right techniques, Utah and surrounding states can cultivate a thriving maple syrup industry.”

Producers can collect sap using methods ranging from the traditional spile-and-bucket system to contemporary tubing networks, facilitating larger-scale operations. Tubing systems minimize labor and enhance yields by employing gravity or vacuum pumps to gather sap from multiple trees into a single location.

Once collected, the sap is processed into syrup through evaporation. Reverse osmosis systems are often used to remove excess water from the sap before boiling, reducing energy consumption while preserving the syrup’s rich flavor.

“Maple sugaring isn’t just a production process – it’s a connection to the land and a way to celebrate our natural resources,” said Greg Witt, president of the Woodland Hills Outdoors/Bigtooth Maple Project in Woodland Hills, Utah. “Through our efforts, we hope to inspire more people to explore this rewarding activity.”

USU Extension provides educational programs and information about [maple sugaring resources](#), including hands-on workshops, online resources, fact sheets, videos, and partnerships with local communities to spread knowledge about tree tapping, sap collection, and syrup processing.

The Big Tooth Maple Festival will be held in Utah on April 19, with details coming soon. [Click here](#) to see last year’s event.

Maple Syrup workshops and educational materials are a collaboration of the USU Department of Plants, Soils, and Climate, USU Extension, and the Stokes Nature Center. Funding sources include the USDA Acer Access and Development Program.

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