

# Tap into Your Maple Resource

Maple sugaring represents a traditional and sustainable use of New York forests. With the demand for pure maple products currently outpacing supply and prices at record levels, there is a significant opportunity to increase production and fill the growing markets.

Maple syrup production provides forest owners with an annual income without the need for commercial timber harvesting. There are three main ways landowners can get involved—each with their own unique opportunities:

- Become a maple producer;
- Lease your maple trees to a nearby maple producer;
- Tap your trees and sell the sap to a nearby producer.

Which option is right for you?

Wilbur Comstock did not want his Yates County property logged commercially, but needed help with paying his property taxes. Dave Schiek, a nearby maple producer, wanted more trees to tap. They developed a contract to tap 1,100 trees on 40 acres. Wilbur now receives \$550 annually in rental fees and his taxes decreased significantly as a result of qualifying for an agricultural assessment.



Dave Schiek



## Resources for Landowners and Maple Producers

There are many resources in New York State to assist people who want to get involved in maple production:

### Cornell Maple Program

Faculty and staff members at Cornell University assist through research and extension. Cornell partners with county Cornell Cooperative Extension offices to put on regional workshops for beginning and existing producers. Cornell also maintains two teaching and research forests—Arnot Forest in Van Etten and Uihlein Forest in Lake Placid. [www.cornellmaple.com](http://www.cornellmaple.com)

### New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

DEC service foresters can help landowners identify maple trees on their property, develop basic forest management plans, and provide lists of consulting foresters who can help plan sugarbush improvement projects. [www.dec.ny.gov/about/843.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/843.html)

### New York Forest Owners Association

NYFOA is a not-for-profit group promoting stewardship of private forests for the benefit of current and future generations. Through local chapters and statewide activities, NYFOA helps woodland owners to become responsible managers and interested publics to appreciate the importance of New York's forests. [www.nyfoa.org](http://www.nyfoa.org)

### New York State Maple Producers Association

The mission of NYSMPA is to support the maple products industry and, by working with partners including NYS Dept. of Ag & Markets, to promote the long-term viability of sugar-making as an industry. NYS ranks second in the nation in maple production; and in 2008, the State's 1,500 producers made 322,000 gallons of syrup.



New York State Maple Producers Association, Inc.  
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# Getting Involved with Maple Syrup Production

## Options for Landowners in New York State



New York Maple Producers Association, Inc.

# Tap into Your Maple Resource

## Become a Maple Producer

You can tap your maple trees and boil the sap down into syrup on your own property. While there are innovative and inexpensive ways to do this on a small scale, commercial production requires significant capital investments in a sugarhouse, evaporator, and other equipment. This is a good option for landowners who have enough time and resources to devote to maple syrup production.

## Lease Your Trees to a Nearby Producer

This is an attractive option for landowners who would like to see their property used but do not have the time or inclination to get into maple production. Those interested in leasing should seek out nearby maple producers and develop a minimum 5 year written contract. Landowners typically receive between \$.25-.75/tap/year, and often times, also receive syrup that came right from their own property!

## Tap Your Trees and Sell the Sap to a Nearby Producer

Many people collect and sell sap to a nearby producer rather than building their own sugarhouse. If you do not have the time or financial resources to develop a full-scale sugaring operation, working with a nearby producer makes economic and practical sense. Typically landowners will receive half of the value of the syrup produced from their sap.

Dean Lashway harvests and sells sap from about 1,120 taps in his Altona, NY woods to nearby Parker Family Maple Farm. Dean has learned the finer points of sugarmaking from the Parkers and is now using the money he received for his sap to build his own sugarhouse.



Left to right: Dean Lashway, Jonathan Lashway, and Michael Parker

## Frequently Asked Questions about Tapping Maple Trees

### Will tapping hurt or kill my trees?

Maple trees have evolved sophisticated defense mechanisms to cope with injuries to the trunk, such as those derived from tapping. As long as recognized tapping guidelines are adhered to, maple trees can grow and thrive year after year producing a sustainable supply of sap while simultaneously providing the other benefits derived from permanent forest cover.

### Will tapping my trees lead to reduced property taxes?

In NYS, if you produce at least \$10,000 a year in agricultural revenues from your land, you can qualify for reduced property tax assessment. Making syrup yourself or developing at least a five-year contract to lease at least seven acres of your forestland to a maple producer who qualifies for an ag assessment can qualify your property. The assessed value is based on soil type and is only applicable to farmland including sugarbushes and up to 50 acres of associated woodland. Ag assessment has fewer regulations than the 480-a managed timberland tax exemption. In many situations, the tax savings can be even greater than the income from leasing. For more information, refer to <http://www.orps.state.ny.us/pamphlet/exempt/agassess.htm>

### Will tapping interfere with the aesthetics, wildlife or recreational opportunities on my property?

Sap buckets are only in use for 4-6 weeks during the spring and properly designed tubing systems can be installed in ways that keep roads and trails open year round. Wildlife is

not bothered by the tubing and many species thrive in the permanent forest cover sustained in a sugarbush over time. Modern tubing systems can be designed to blend in with the surrounding landscape and maintain or enhance the aesthetic qualities of your forest.



Landowners woodwalk with Cornell Maple Program staff

### Will tapping reduce the value of my sawlogs?

Although tapping can reduce the commercial value of the bottom 6-8 ft of the trunk, it also presents unique opportunities to create valuable lumber that can be sold in niche markets once the trees have passed their useful life for syrup production. Taphole maple lumber is increasingly popular due to the interesting patterns brought about by previous tapping and the novel story associated with it. The ultimate value of a tapped maple log depends on the ability of the landowner to tap into the niche markets.



Taphole maple paneling