



(Photo: Starved Rock State Park/Council Overhang/Jolyn Wise)

FALL COLOR REPORT FOR 10/20/16

Northwest

The bottomland areas, especially along the Mississippi River corridor, are showing nice colors. Silver maples show yellows and reds and cottonwood shows yellows. Walnut trees have shed their leaves now and stand defoliated next to the other trees. Sumac and dogwood are reds and purples in the roadside, and burning bush is flaming red in city landscapes. Virginia creeper is red and looks like flames of fire climbing into the tree tops. The upland trees along the Mississippi bluffs are now in peak color; the hickories are turning golden bronze; and, the oaks are turning reds and oranges thanks to some bright, sunny weather earlier in the past week in Carroll County.

Quad Cities, Rock Island, Mercer, Henry, Knox, Stark, and Bureau Counties: Lots of changes this past week, with more yellow, brownish yellow, and rust color in general (probably about 80% of the tree species turn yellow on the trees, then fall to the ground and turn brown as leaves dry); sugar maple has made major changes, bringing more yellow and pinkish orange to the landscape; white ash (autumn purple ash in town) continues to add pinkish/purple color. While many red maples have turned to their light reddish burgundy color-, some have not started to change as the late arrival of color continues. Roadsides are starting to lose their scarlet from sumac and grayish burgundy from dogwood as leaves begin to drop. Urban shrubs, particularly burning bushes, should be showing their scarlet and burgundy colors this week.

Northeast

Things are really happening now for fall color in McHenry County. The hickories have started to show golden yellow. Sugar maple is probably at its peak with orange, yellow and red. Red Oaks are slowly starting to show deep red color. White oaks are still green, for the most part. Vines and sumac are showing deep red also. Colors are really looking nice.

West Central

Pike, Adams, Scott, Calhoun, Brown, Jersey, Greene, and Macoupin counties: Cottonwood, sycamore, walnut, silver maple, and catalpa are yellowing/browning and losing leaves. Most sassafras, dogwood, and sugar maple are starting to hit their fall color peaks (red/yellow/orange/gold). Most of the ash trees are also near their color peaks (red/purple/yellow). Most of the sumac and creeper vines are near their color peaks as well (predominantly red/orange). Some hickory trees are starting to yellow. Most oak and other tree/brush species are still predominantly green this week. Overall peak colors should be this week through mid-week next week. Great area color drives would be the River Road - Route 100 from Alton to Grafton...then take the Grafton Ferry across the Illinois River to Calhoun County and take County Highway 1 through Brussels to Hardin; or continue past the Grafton Ferry at Grafton on Route 100, and continue on to Hardin through Jersey County on Route 100/16. Other great color drives would be the Eldred Blacktop from Route 100/16 to Route 106; Route 100 from Hardin north to Milton, IL; and Route 100 from Hardin north to Kampsville; Route 96 west from Kampsville through Mozier, and then Route 96 north all of the way to Interstate 72.

Lots of color in McDonough County: The color change has kicked into high gear this week. Maples are turning quickly. Oaks are starting to turn bronze and scarlet. Hickories are going from yellow to brown quickly. Ash and walnut have already dropped their leaves. It should not be long before we are at peak color.

Central

Colors are changing quickly at Starved Rock State Park, with a rapid color change last weekend. Leaves are changing color, turning brown and falling off the trees. Colors are not as vibrant this year as they have been in the past few years. There is a great deal of color under the canopy, but as you approach overlooks in the park, there is still a lot of green. The drive along Rt. 71 that winds along the outskirts of the park is a beautiful five-mile drive.

In the last week, the color has really turned on across Mason County. Red, orange and yellow are all prevalent. Most of the oaks have not yet changed yet, though. This weekend and next week could be considered the peak of color.

East Central

This week, some of the white ash that were showing purple and green ash that were showing yellow have been lost to the high winds, although many of the black walnut trees surprisingly have held their yellow leaves. There are sassafras that continue with orange and red. The sugar maple and hickory

have really turned it on and are showing orange and yellows. A few blackgum and red maples with brilliant scarlet red have been seen, as well as areas of sumac on some roadside ditches. In the far eastern portion of Coles County, the yellow poplars are displaying bright yellow. Black oak is just barely beginning to show some of its yellow to burnt orange, with the occasional brick red color. A handful of white oaks are turning red to burgundy.



(Photo: Wayne County/David N. Johnson)

South

The colors greatly improved over the last weekend and week. The highlights to watch for are sumac (good 'hang time' this year), sassafras, dogwood (deep scarlet), hickory (yellow), poison ivy vines on trees (red and yellow), and persimmon (yellow with orange). This weekend and next week will be the time to go out for tours, trail rides, and nature walks. No frost yet in the Wayne, Hamilton, and Jefferson counties area, so leaves should hang on for a while

At Cache River State Natural Area (Johnson County), the sour gum/black gum are about half way from green to deep red; bald cypress are one-third of the way turned from green to copper. Oaks and hickory are still pretty green. The sweet gum and paw-paw are showing more yellow. Sassafras are becoming predominately orange and red in color.

Clinton County: The sassafras are still in full fall colors. The sumac are still red. Sweet gum are turning yellow and red in more parts of the crowns. The red maples are partially turning red. The sugar maple and hickory are partially turning yellow.

Trees are still mainly green, but with a lot of browns and yellows mixed in along with some orange and red from sassafras, sumac, and dogwoods. Some leaves have dropped, but most trees are still holding their leaves in Pope County.

The fall colors are looking great in the Union County area. There is a great deal of yellow/orange/red in the woods. The maples, sycamore, tulip poplar, sumacs, and others have turned. The oaks are changing, displaying yellow, gold, and red colors. The oaks should continue to change over the next week or two, and hopefully hang on for a while.

FAQs

Why do the leaves change color?

As autumn begins, days get shorter and this signals the tree to go dormant. There is not enough light or water in the winter for trees to photosynthesize (make food), so they shed their leaves and rest. The first step in dormancy is shutting down the food-making factories in the leaves, green chlorophyll, and when green chlorophyll breaks down it exposes other colors in the leaves, like yellows and reds that we could not previously see.

What causes some leaves to be red and some to be yellow?

The yellows and reds that are unmasked when green chlorophyll breaks down are pigments called carotenoids (yellow pigment that gives corn and carrots their color) and anthocyanins (red pigments that give blueberries and strawberries their color).

Where are the best places to see fall color in Illinois?

Southern Illinois and Northwest Illinois are among the best places to see fall color in Illinois. These areas were unglaciated and remain heavily timbered today. Go to the Mississippi Palisades State Park in northwest Illinois to see bottomland forests along the Mississippi River and upland forests along the bluffs in their fall glory. Giant City State Park is a popular destination in southern Illinois.

When will peak foliage happen?

The peak of fall color in Illinois normally occurs by mid-October (now) in northern and central Illinois and by late October or early November in the southern third of the state. Early autumn warm weather has delayed the color surge in 2016.

How does this year's foliage compare to years past? Better/worse?

Last year was good for fall color and this year could be very similar. Northern Illinois is entering peak fall color now, and we need bright, sunny skies during the day for more red, yellow, bronze and orange shades on leaves. Cloudy weather can mean production of more gold and yellow tints. Either way, there was ample rainfall in the summer, so fall 2016 could shape up to be a great year for fall color across Illinois.

Species and color expectations

Oak –red-orange

Hickory – golden bronze

Sugar maple – orange-red

Black maple – glowing yellow

Aspen – golden yellow

Tulip poplar – golden yellow

Dogwood – purplish red

Sumac – bright red

Virginia creeper – flaming red