The Tapline

Fall 2025

Newsletter of the Indiana Maple Syrup Association

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Maple Syrup for the Masses:

Thousands of Tastings at the Pioneer Village

by JR Elrod

Visiting the IMSA Sugar Shack in the Pioneer Village at the Indiana State Fair has become a tradition for thousands of families. Some stock up on maple syrup for the year. Others load up on maple cream. It is indeed the sweetest treat at the whole fair: sweeter than ice cream, elephant ears, or lemon shake-ups. This year we sold maple root beer, and it was such a crowd favorite that we sold out of it long before the fair ended.

Thousands of people sample the free spoonfuls of syrup and maple cream, and hundreds of people try real maple syrup for the first time. This is the biggest outreach event for IMSA, and many people are surprised to learn that Indiana is a maple syrup producing state.

Education is a main focus of the Pioneer Village. The scale model of an evaporator from Sunrise is a great aid.

Annual Meeting

Nashville, Indiana

December 6, 2025

Print off a membership registration at

www.indianamaplesyrup.org

2025 IMSA dues are $25.00

Checks should be made out to IMSA and sent to:
Levi Mast, Treasurer
418 3 B Road
Nappanee, IN 46550

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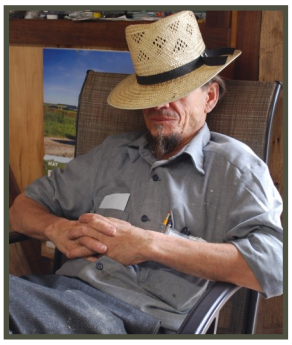
Message from the President by Dan Winger



Greetings one and all! I hope this finds all doing well.

It is hard to believe we are in October already. Time to think about getting ready for another season. I will be glad to have some cooler weather than we have been having.

I would like to thank all the volunteers that worked in the Sugar Shack this year. It is greatly appreciated. Without your help it would not have been a success. I know there were several first time folks. Thanks for your help and hope you all can help again next year. It was also good to have some children helping out. We hope these young ones will be there to carry on in the future. Let's keep them involved.

This brings up a new item for IMSA. We are giving a reduced lunch rate for children at our Annual Meeting. It would be great to see more of our young ones at our Annual Meeting this year.

I would like to remind all about the annual meeting of the North American Maple Syrup Council. It is being held in Port Huron, MI this year. The dates are October 23- 25, 2025. I hope that several can make it, either for the whole meeting or just part. It is a very worthwhile function to attend. This is the meeting IMSA is planning to host in 2029.

We are looking forward to our Annual Meeting in December. Mike Rechlin is planning on coming this year. He will do a work shop on Friday from 2-5 on precision tapping. This will be hands-on and out in the sugarbush. I hope many will come to it.

I am looking forward to seeing as many as possible on December 5th and 6th at our annual meeting. Hope all have great fall and a safe one.

What Do I Get Out of My IMSA Membership?

- ***The Tapline*: Starting with this issue, all members will be mailed the quarterly IMSA newsletter with great content for IMSA members.**
- **NAMSC Membership: IMSA dues also pay for North American Maple Syrup Council membership and receive quarterly *The Maple Digest*— this is the best source for crop reports, recent studies, and research.**
- **Fellowship Events: From the Annual Meeting to Canning Day to the Sugar Shack at the State Fair, these are great opportunities to meet and learn from other Sugarmakers.**
- **Great Programs: At the Annual Meeting you will find speakers, demonstrations, and vendors, and we have coordinated three maple grading classes in 2025, the next will be November 7th.**
- **A Network of Support: Getting started in maple syrup is overwhelming: choosing an evaporator, buckets or tubing, filtering—there are so many options and it's all so expensive. You are not alone. The friends you meet at IMSA will give you great advice. They are also your lifeline when something goes wrong in your sugar shack.**

It is the highest honor a sugar maker may achieve. I share this honor with a number of people, both from Indiana and all the maple producing states and provinces, who have influenced me in many positive ways to make me a better sugar maker.

-David Hamilton on his induction into the International Maple Hall of Fame Class of 2025

Sugar Shack (cont.)

by JR Elrod

Two sections of maple trunks are set up with taps demonstrating how sap flows during the season. These really help people to visualize how it works, and how much effort goes into making a bottle of syrup.

All day long, IMSA volunteers explain the process of making maple syrup to children and adults alike. Each day, a few people ask for a membership form from IMSA. Our efforts result in many people tapping for the first time. And some of these will become the next generation of Hoosier Sugarmakers.

Maple Grading Course

by Dan Winger

Purdue University's ACER grant team will be holding its third maple grading course this year on November 7, 2025 in Marshall County. This is taught by excellent professors and very hands-on. Participants will taste good and bad syrup, learn best practices, and receive several items including a hydrometer and grading kit. While normally such events have large registration fees, the cost is only $20 to cover lunch. Limited to 25 registrants.

November 7, 2025. 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. $20 for lunch.
Gallery On West
202 West Street
Argos IN 46501

RSVP with Dan Winger 260-578-7382.

State Fair Report

by Canning Committee Chairman Andy Hochstedler

We had another great year! With an excellent team of volunteers running the booth, and good weather and good sales made for a great year!

Sales were good with some items doing better than others. We again had maple root beer this year which was a great hit with the people. We ordered a whole pallet of root beer which was 1,728 bottles, and we were sold out by the ninth day of fair.

Thanks to everyone that helped out with the State Fair! It's an excellent opportunity to tell people about our great maple syrup and the value added products we produce!

Surplus State Fair Syrup and Maple Root Beer for Sale at Annual Meeting

Surplus maple products from the Sugar Shack will be available for purchase at the Annual Meeting. This is a great opportunity to stock up early for your customers or to buy Christmas gifts for friends and family at a discount.

- Gallons $40.00; Half Gallons $21.00; Quarts $11.00; Pints $6.00; Half Pints $3.00
- Glass 250ml $5.00
- 2oz Maple Candy $3.00
- 1 Pound Maple Cream $11.00
- Maple Root Beer $30.00 (24 Bottles in a Case)

Black Walnut Syrup Field Day
November 8, 2025; 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Indianapolis, Indiana

As some of you may be aware, I tap black walnut trees in addition to maples. Black walnut trees produce much less sap than maples, but have a similar sugar content of around 1.5%-2%. Black walnut syrup tastes nothing like black walnuts and nothing like the smell of its leaves or husks. Instead, it has a butterscotch flavor that is truly remarkable in some seasons.

I have received a federal grant to research tapping black walnuts, and I will be presenting the results of my research at my sugarbush in southeast Marion County on November 8, 2025. The Field Day will include lunch, a black walnut syrup tasting, and a tour of the operation.

There is no fee, but attendance is limited. Email me at bluetempestllc@gmail.com to register. I will send you a confirmation e-mail with more details.

——————————————————————————-**J.R.E.**———————

Pioneer Village Photos by JR Elrod

Maple Syrup Contest at Annual Meeting

by Joseph Schwartz

Hat's off to all the winners of the 2024 syrup contest. We had a really great turnout. We didn't know what to expect our first year.

Once again, IMSA wants to thank Ron and Kenna Rhynard for organizing the contest and making this possible. Our heartfelt thanks, with a handshake, seemed inadequate for the gift of all their wisdom and expertise.

Many of you may know the process of judging maple syrup. Some of you may not, but I'll try to explain.

When the syrup is submitted, one person will assign a number with a letter. The number is random, not necessarily in order, and the letter will be based on the grade of the entry: G for golden, A for amber, D for dark, and V for very dark. So, if you enter it as amber, that is the grade we will judge it. Last year many samples got entered in the wrong category.

The entry is first taken to Room #1 where four judges check the density with two Milwaukee Refractometers. The readings very seldom disagreed, but if they did, they wiped everything clean and started over. Usually they would agree on the second testing, but if not they would use the average, giving the contestant the benefit of the doubt.

30 points were given if it tested between 66.5-67 brix, and 25 points were given in the ranges of 67.1-68.9 brix and 66.0-66.4 brix. Entries that tested over 68.9 brix received 0 points but were not disqualified. Entries below 66.0 brix were disqualified because that's not syrup!

After that they checked the color with two Hanna graders. The Hanna graders use light transmittance to get their reading. So the less light passing through the syrup the darker the syrup. The readings are percentages: 100%-75% is golden, 74%-50% is amber, 49%-25% is dark, and 24%-0% is very dark. There were a very few right on the threshold, maybe both meters said 24% which is very dark syrup., but it was entered as dark. The Hanna meters are guaranteed accurate at +/-1%, so we would give you the benefit of the doubt and put it in the dark category. Very seldom the Hanna meters disagreed, and if so we would start over always using clean vials, clean syringes, etc., and once again giving you the benefit of the doubt.

If you entered your syrup in the right category you got 20 points, and if not you got 0 points.

After checking density and grade, they would pour the syrup into 8oz glass jars so the entries would all look the same and put on each jar a small sticker with the secret code. These would be placed on a tray and taken to Room #2 with five judges. Each judge had a light to check clarity, a bottle of water, cranberry juice, dill pickles, and crackers.

They would get one entry at a time, taste it, and put down their comments. With each entry they would discuss what they tasted: metabolism, sour sap, burnt flavor, defoamer, dish soap were some of the comments. This would continue until they had tasted all the entries in that category (grade). Then each judge ranked them from good to bad using their own judgment.

They checked the clarity of the syrup using their light and the glass jar on a scale of 0-10 (0 being cloudy and 10 being clear), based on their own judgement.

After they had ranked the whole category, each judge's scoresheet got handed to Kenna, and she tallied the numbers by adding and dividing, and who knows what else, to determine the overall scores and rankings.

Thanks to all the judges for your willingness to help be the pioneers of the IMSA Syrup Contest. Your blood sugar levels were probably in the diabetic range for a week! Thanks to all who participated. I got a few gray hairs trying to make this happen, but I shouldn't have worried. Ron had this down pat.

Maybe in the future we can get someone to give some hints on how to clear up what the judges put in your comments.

Editor's Note: At the 2024 Annual Meeting, IMSA held its first ever maple syrup contest. Several entries were disqualified for not meeting density requirements. The judges were honest if off-flavors were detected, which also resulted in disqualification. The Editor's entry was DQ'd for density and received both positive and painfully negative comments on flavor.

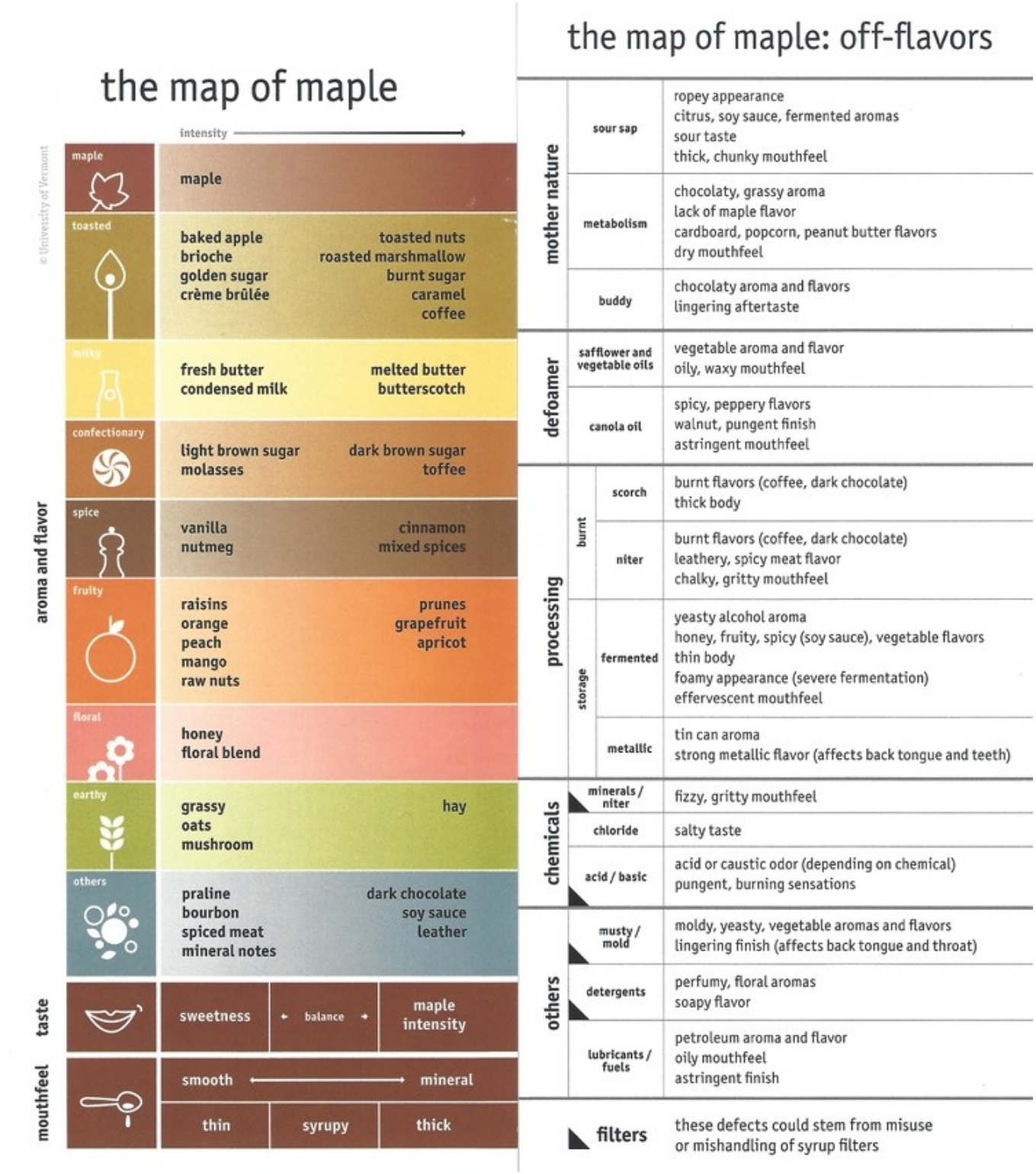
These contests have two purposes: to recognize excellence, and to improve the overall quality of our members' syrup. Criticism is always difficult, and we owe the judges a high degree of respect and gratitude for their candor.

2025 IMA Syrup Contest Submission Rules

- Entrant must be an IMSA member in good standing
- Each entry must contain 1 Pint of syrup
- A member may submit only 1 entry in each category (grade)
- Submissions must be made at the Annual Meeting by 8:30 a.m.

Developing a Taste for Maple by JR Elrod

Last summer I took advantage of the opportunity to enroll in one of the maple tasting courses. The worst part was tasting the bad maple syrup. It seemed like a week before I could get the off-flavors out of my mouth. This is a good reminder that just one bad batch can turn people off for a lifetime. A few weeks later, I opened up a five gallon bulk tank to bottle, and it seemed like the syrup would never reach 66 brix and it kept trying to boil over as I finished it on the kitchen stove. I of course tasted it when I first opened it, and it seemed fine. I tasted again, and it was clearly metabolism. But it wrecked my taste buds, so I brought samples of my other bulk tanks for Doug Mark to try. Luckily, they were fine. Below are two publications from the University of Vermont that describe good and bad flavors.



A Maple Coffee Shop

by J.R. Elrod

On June 24, 2024, IMSA members and Sugarmakers Mike and Rachelle Smith got a lot busier. Mike already has a demanding career as a sales and account rep in the manufacturing industry, and Rachelle works in medical billing. During sugar season, they also tap 75-125 trees around their 8 acre spread in Brown County. But they decided to launch another labor of love. They opened a coffee shop: the Brown County Sugar Shack in Nashville, Indiana.

When they started, Rachelle was putting in 70 hours a week at the coffee shop. A year in, they have three or more staffers and Rachelle has cut back to about 40 hours a week. The venture has been a wonderful success, creating the type of community that can only be found in an independent coffee shop.

Even before 7:00 a.m. on a Saturday morning in July, a steady stream of customers pushed through the door. Mike knew nearly every one of his customers by name as they ambled in for coffee and breakfast items.

It is also a maple syrup success. Not only is the coffee shop's name a maple theme, so are the drinks and treats: "Mike's Maple" latte, maple granola, maple yogurt parfait, and maple cream on bagels. The maple icing cinnamon roll I tasted was worth the hour drive to Nashville alone. And of course, you can pick up bottles of syrup and maple cream.

Though the coffee shop is tucked into the corner of a strip mall off of S.R. 46, it has all the charm you could hope for. And it could not be easier to swing by on a morning commute or anytime you find your self near Nashville. If you are going to the Annual Meeting in December, be sure to take a little detour and visit The Brown County Sugar Shack.

51 E. Chestnut Street, Suite F, Nashville, IN 47448.

Here Ye, Here Ye, Notice of Annual Meeting

The 2025 IMSA Annual Meeting
December 6, 2025 at 8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Brown County Career Resource Center
357 East Main Street
Nashville, IN 47448

- **Election of Officers: the terms of four board members are expiring and votes will be taken for the seats currently held by Rick Bollinger, Scott Craft, Andy Hochstedler, and John Smith. The Board is looking for more representation from the south of the state. If you wish to be included as a candidate for a board position, contact David Hinchman 765-621-3628 or Chris Slabaugh 574-354-4552.**
- **Dues Increase to $30 for 2027: A vote will be taken to increase the dues from $25 a year to $30 a year for 2027. Dues will remain $25 for 2026.**
- **Registration: Lunch will be $20/adult and $10/child. Registration must be postmarked by November 15th. Free-will offering for Friday dinner. Registration form included in The Tapline p. 9.**

Annual Meeting Schedule

Friday, December 5th:

- **1:30 p.m.–5:00 p.m. Precising Tapping Workshop (Meet at Brown County Resource Center and drive in caravan to Smith Sugarbush)**

  (An activity or those not going in the woods to be announced later)
- **6:00 p.m. Fellowship and Dinner (Please RSVP, free will donation)**

Saturday, December 6th:

- **7:00 a.m.– 8:30 a.m. Registration (coffee and pastries)**
- **8:30 a.m. Deadline for Syrup Contest Submissions**
- **8:30 a.m. Opening, Business, Speakers**
- **12:00 p.m. Lunch (pulled chicken, mac and cheese, baked beans, coleslaw, Please RSVP)**
- **1:00 p.m. Afternoon Session**

Annual Meeting Activities

- **Hydrometer Testing: bring your hydrometer and ensure it is calibrated**
- **Maple Syrup Contest: Bring a pint of your best and see how it compares—one entry per grade**
- **Sugar Shack Surplus: Stock up on syrup, candy, maple cream and soda at discount prices**
- **Vendors: Talk to the pros about your needs: Maple Hollow, Sugar Bush Supplies, Sunrise, The RO Bucket, Winger's, and Harris**
- **Speakers and Break-Out Sessions: precision tapping, tubing sanitation, 3/16 tubing, maple sugar, maple sugaring 101, RO for the hobbyist**
- **Kris Kindel Market: after the meeting walk a couple blocks to the Nashville Christmas Market**
- **Accommodations: Nashville The Cornerstone Inn 812-988-0300; The Artist Colony Inn 812-577-8565; The Brown County Inn 800-772-5249; The Seasons 812-988-2284; The Quality Inn 812-988-6118. Columbus IN: Holiday Inn 812-417-7200; The Fairfield Inn 812-552-5333; Courtyard by Marriott 812-342-8888; La Quinta Inn 812-302-6653; Residence Inn 812-342-2400; Home to Suites 812-375-2399**

Keynote Speaker: Mike Rechlin

Future Generations University, Appalachian Program

Friday Field Workshop: Precision Tapping

Description: We have all heard the saying that in the maple business "money is made in the woods." And, that starts with how you tap a tree. In this workshop we will go over the science behind making the right tapping decisions. It will include taphole placement, drilling the taphole, spout options and tapping in the spout. The workshop will be "hands on" and in the woods.

Saturday Morning Session: Tubing sanitation and why its important

Description: This session will focus on tubing sanitation to increase sap yields and syrup quality. It will be a PowerPoint presentation on research done by Future Generations (FGU) and West Virginia State University on microbial growth in sap lines, sanitation practices and their impact on sap yields and syrup quality.

Saturday Afternoon Session: The operation and maintenance of 3/16 tubing systems

Description: This session will be comprised of a series of demonstrations followed by discussions that illustrate key concepts fundamental to the operation and maintenance of 3/16 tubing systems. Specifics will include: the need for slope, sap flow dynamics, how 3/16 systems differ from 5/16 systems with a vacuum pump, internal pressure in trees, and the advantage of hybrid systems to increasing sap flow. The session will introduce a new Guide to the Operation and Maintenance of 3/16 Tubing Systems, produced by FGU.

2026 IMSA Membership Renewal
2025 IMSA Annual Meeting Registration

Please Check All That Apply:

1.___ I want to renew my IMSA membership for 2026 and plan to attend the annual meeting on Dec. 6.
2.___ I want to renew my IMSA membership for 2026 but cannot attend the annual meeting on Dec. 6.
3.___ I already paid my IMSA membership for 2026 and plan to attend the annual meeting on Dec. 6.
4.___ I plan to join IMSA for the Friday PM in the woods session and evening meal at the Career center, # attending is _____ .

Are a new member? YES ___ NO ___

Maple weekend registration forms will be at the meeting. 1st year for sign $50.00 renewal $30.00 see form on back.

Name:_____

Company Name (if applicable): _____

Street address: _____

City _____ State: ____ Zip Code:_____County:_____

Phone: (____)_____-_____ Email Address:_____

Number of taps planned for 2026 _____

Do you sell maple products to the public? Yes ___No ___

There will be other things to do if not going to the woods Fri. PM.

Amount Payable

2026 IMSA Membership..... $25 $ _____
2025 Annual Meeting meals for members and guests .....# of meals ____ x $20= $ _____
2025 Annual Meeting meals for late registration and nonmembers...# of meals ____ x $25= $ _____
2025 Annual Meeting meals for children.....# of meals ____ x $10= $ _____

Maple weekend new $50.00 renewal $30.00 $ _____

The meal Friday evening is donation. **TOTAL $_____**

Send this completed form to the following address DUE by Nov.15, 2025.
Registrations postmarked after Nov. 15, 2025 should choose the late registration line for meals.

Levi Mast (IMSA treasurer) 574-773-0148 ext.4
418 3B Road
Nappanee IN 46550

Make check payable to "IMSA". Write your check number here:_____

If you don't plan to attend meeting please include a self addressed, stamped envelope with completed renewal form and payment so the 2026 sticker and membership plaque (if needed) can be sent to mailed to you.

2026 Maple Weekend Registration

March 14-15, 2026

CHECK ONE: New Participant __ ($50) Renewing Participant __ ($30)

Sugar Camp Name _____

Address _____

Contact Person's Name _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

Which days will you be participating? __ 14th and 15th __ 14th Only __ 15th Only

We will collect more information at the Annual Meeting. Please bring photos and any other information that would attract people to your sugar house to the meeting. We will use that information to promote Maple Weekend on the IMSA website. For more information, contact Mike Smith 812-245-9544 or Doug Mark 765-336-9511.

Mail this completed registration form and payment to IMSA treasurer Levi Mast:

Levi Mast
418 3B Road
Nappanee, IN 46550
574-773-0148 ext. 4

Make check payable to IMSA. Write your check # here _____ .

Registration deadline for 2026 Maple Weekend is January 31, 2026.

Member Classifieds

For Sale:

Leader 3x8 drop flue evaporator with 3x5 steam away, lead-free solder.

Includes hoods, 10 ft of smoke stack, and auto draw-off.

$5000

Willing to separate steam away.

Contact Seth Wright 765-730-1743

Have some maple equipment to sell?
Just e-mail the editor and get it posted here.

Free for members.

Winger's Sugarbush & Supplies

Winger's offers D&G equipment and supplies. Winger's also stocks glass jugs from Artisan Printing with the state of Indiana outlined. A large supply of containers is on hand. Marcland products are also available. Contact Dan for prices on equipment and supplies.

Dan Winger
11571 N Ogden Rd
North Manchester, IN 46962
(260) 578-7382
(260) 982-7382 (fax)

D&G DOMINION & GRIMM INC.

~Sweet Spot Maple Supply~

Sweet Spot Maple Supply is excited to serve you in the 2024 maple syrup season. We carry CDL equipment and supplies. Our shelves will be fully stocked to enable us to serve you better. We have all sizes of glass and plastic containers, labeled and unlabeled. We also install high vacuum tubing systems to increase your sap production.

We aim to have quality customer service, so contact us today for all your sugaring needs. We can find an answer for all your questions

10155 Teasdale Lake St.

Constantine, MI 49042

574-364-0538

sweetspotmaple@outlook.com

The Tapline

Newsletter of the Indiana Maple Syrup Association

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We want to hear from you!

- Share a favorite picture or story from your sugarbush this season
- Ask us a question on best practices

Upcoming Events

- **Annual Meeting**
  December 5-6 2025
  Nashville, Indiana
- **Maple Weekend**
  March 14-15, 2026
- **Canning Day**
  May 2026 (TBD)

"The trees of the Lord are full of sap . . . ."
Psalm 104:16 KJV