



PARADES & CEREMONIAL

THE NATIONAL FLAG OF CANADA

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE FLAG

Commonly called the “Canadian Flag” or the “Maple Leaf Flag”, the National Flag of Canada became our official flag on 15 February 1965. Its colours, red and white, are the official colours of Canada. The maple leaf is a traditional Canadian symbol which has been with us since the beginning of the 18th Century and it has long been the symbol of our armed forces. There is no official pledge to the Canadian flag; however, there are no laws or statutes which prevent an association or an individual from adopting a form which will suit the purpose.

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE FLAG

The official description reads: “The flag is red and white, the official colours of Canada as appointed by King George V in 1921, with a stylized 11-point red leaf in its centre”. Its proportions are described as: “Two by length and one by width” meaning it is twice as wide as it is high (1 X 2).



The flag becomes a ceremonial dress flag when it is adorned with gold fringe around its edges. Gold heading, sleeve, cord and tassel may be added as well. Such accessories are purely decorative additions, an optional enhancement of the beauty of our flag. There is no special flag protocol for the display of a ceremonial dress flag.

THE FLAG IS TREATED WITH RESPECT

Flags are symbols that identify people belonging to a group. The National Flag of Canada is a symbol of honour and pride for all Canadians. It should be treated with respect. February 15th is observed as National Flag Day in Canada.

The National Flag of Canada shall not be dipped or lowered as a means of paying a salute or complement. The national flag, when carried, is never dipped or lowered to the ground or allowed to touch the ground. When salutes are given, the flags are not dipped but are let fly. The flag bearer extends his/her hand and lets the flag fly free. At the conclusion of the salute, the flags are gathered in. This procedure applies during inspection or on a march-past.

The half-masting of national flags is a well-established procedure whereby countries bestow an honour and express a collective sense of sorrow. Given that such flags are recognized as paramount symbols of their nations, the act of half-masting is a dramatic visual statement that speaks to the sense of loss that is shared by all their citizens. Canadian flag protocol should always be strictly followed for half-masting.

Sources: This article was quoted and compiled from:

A-AD-200-000/AG-000 The Honours, Flags and Heritage Structure of the CF, Chapter 4, Section 4 The National Flag.
Canadian Heritage Website: www.pch.gc.ca Ceremonial & Canadian Symbols Promotion, The National Flag