

# Japanese Maples

Look at what you have to choose from.... There truly is a maple for every spot in the garden. From dwarf to weeping or from big to columnar, there are many shapes and colors that will pop in your landscape. All of them get spectacular fall color, but look for maples with excellent spring color as well. Many appear to be like three different trees - one in spring, one in summer and finally something different again in fall. In winter, branching is beautiful and some have colored and/or textured bark as well. Japanese Maples are truly the tree for all seasons!

- ***Picking the right tree for the right location:*** Sun preferring goes into sun and shade preferring goes into shade. All maples will thrive in part sun or as an understory tree in the garden. Some will take all the heat you've got too! As with all plants, get the right plant in the right place for a healthy specimen with less pruning and maintenance later.
- ***How to grow, care for and prune your specimens:*** Drainage, drainage and more drainage is the most important soil requirement. Always add compost and consider even slightly mounding your specimen above grade. Fertilize coming out of winter and again in early summer for maximum growth, or just feed in spring for a slow and steady growth habit. When pruning them, try thinning them in summer if foliage is thick and bushy. Opening them up will look best and will highlight branching and silhouette. Be sure to attack laceleaves and upright structure concerns by pruning in winter when trees are bare. This is the ideal time to remove dead wood and even out branching without foliage blocking your view.
- ***In terms of disease,*** poor drainage will inevitably lead to verticillium wilt, for which there is no treatment or cure. This is a soil/ground water disease and trees decline rapidly. Signs will show in spring after a wet winter – a portion of the tree or the entire tree will cease to leaf out. Also keep an eye out for blackish wood, especially on Coral Bark varieties, caused by *Pseudomonas*. This can be pruned out if found and a fungicide containing copper is the best to control it or to use as a preventative. Be sure to sterilize your pruners/saws when moving from tree to tree that shows signs of disease – this will help prevent you from spreading problems.
- ***For insect issues,*** never use anything systemic on maples as they will burn. My rule of thumb is this, if a product is listed for vegetable use then you are good to go when using it on Japanese Maples. You should only need a mild natural/organic type spray for most insect issues anyway. If you had a problem the season before, be sure to apply a good natural dormant spray in winter so that you start off clean in spring. Always spray them early in the morning or late in the evening and avoid hot dry days in summer.
- ***Growing Japanese Maples in pots:*** Hundreds of cultivars translates to numerous great container specimen options. Many maples love to be in pots and will provide years of enjoyment as such. Pay attention to growth rates and choose the proper specimen for your sun location. Utilize frost-free glazed pots so they can be left out year around. Try using about 2/3 organic potting soil (no moisture control!) to 1/3 organic compost as

your potting mix in containers. Or utilize a newer hybrid soil like the *Acidic Planting Mix* from EB Stone Organics – a perfect blend already made for use in pots as is or in the ground mixing with native soil. Be sure to utilize pot feet or pot risers to keep containers elevated off hard surfaces and ensure good drainage.

- **The Laceleaf Maples:** See our list for varieties we carry - [www.sunnysidenursery.net/japanese-maples](http://www.sunnysidenursery.net/japanese-maples). Most all of these continue to grow taller and wider with age and need to be controlled by pruning. There are some naturally smaller growers and some naturally larger ones as well. Again, choose the right spot and give these beauties some room to grow and develop their wonderful branching and structure. Nothing looks worse than a badly butchered laceleaf maple!
- **The Shrub Maples:** Numerous bushy/dwarf selections are on our list as well. Many have outstanding foliage and are simply more manageable for smaller spaces in the garden. Try them as smaller specimens or “bushes” mixed with perennials and other shrubs in the garden borders. Many of these are excellent choices for container growing as well. As these tend to be more twiggy in nature, heading them back a bit makes them easier to control their size.
- **The Upright Trees:** Think of the long-term structure you are seeking... Something big and bushy? Something taller and narrow? A vase shape? A particular fall color? Privacy? Shade? You can find a larger grower to give you exactly what you need. For trees, even the largest Japanese Maple cultivars are still more manageable in size than many other species of “shade” trees.
- **The Full Moon Maples:** These are exquisite foliage maples that look a bit different than typical Japanese maples. Larger leaves, excellent fall color and large spreading crowns for a great shade-style tree. Most of these will do best in afternoon shade, although some will take more sun as well. These varieties are of different species - *Acer japonicum* and *Acer shirawasawanum*.
- **Maples for shady sites:** Nothing brightens up the shade garden like bright variegated or reticulated foliage. Whites, pinks, and greens in a mixture of textures are showy, or even go for some bright golden yellow. Lots of bushy, semi-dwarf specimens to choose from as well some larger ones. Many of these exhibit brightly colored spring foliage and also display reticulated leaves for added interest in spring, summer and fall.
- **The Pacific Rim Collection:** Newer on the market and outstanding growers. Iseli Nursery spent 20 years+ crossing *Acer palmatum* with *Acer pseudosieboldianum* to achieve new hybrids to trial. The best are now available, exhibiting improved cold hardiness and durability (from Korean Maple) while maintaining outstanding color, structure and size (from Japanese Maple). Look for ‘Final Fire’, ‘First Flame’, ‘Ice Dragon’, ‘Cascadia’, and two brand new ones for 2023 ‘Origami’ and ‘Wabi Sabi’ – they are all excellent choices for home gardeners offering unique color, habit, and foliage.