

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 big to columnar, there are many shapes and colors to choose from to 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 all in one, with different looks in spring, then summer, and finally 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 goes into sun and shade 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 got! 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.
- 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 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 best to use to control, or to use as a preventative. Be sure to sterilize your pruners/saws when moving from tree to tree that show signs of disease – preventing you from spreading problems.
- For insect issues, never use anything systemic on maples, as they will burn. My rule of thumb is that if the product is listed for vegetable use, then you are good to go to use 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.
- Growing Japanese Maples in pots: Hundreds of cultivars translates into 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 that 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. Be sure to utilize pot feet or pot risers to keep containers elevated off hard surfaces.

- The laceleaf maples: See our list for varieties. 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 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 to control size is easier as well.
- 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.
- 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 some 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 foliage. Whites, pinks, and greens in a mixture of textures are showy, or 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 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 the outstanding color, structure and size (from Japanese Maple). Look for ‘Final Fire’, ‘First Flame’, ‘Ice Dragon’, and the latest one ‘Cascadia’ – they are all excellent choices for home gardeners.

Maples For Containers

Japanese Maples make excellent container trees. They boast dramatic foliage color/texture and can be placed in sun and shade for years of beauty. Spring colors on many are as bright as fall colors. Many offer bark color and interesting branching for winter interest as well. Utilize them as the “thriller” in your container mix, or combine with other tidy perennials, smaller grasses, dwarf shrubs, and of course colorful annuals for a year around interest container. Use them on patios and decks. Spot some container specimens as accents in the garden. They can be utilized just about everywhere! Follow these steps when planting maples in pots...

1. Watch the amount sun your desired container spot will receive
2. Select a good quality and frost proof container of appropriate size
3. Utilize a good organic potting soil mix – even add some planting compost
4. Ensure drainage by using a drain screen in bottom
5. Top-dress with compost or a mulch on the surface after planting
6. Select companion plants that like the same sun and amount of water
7. Make sure your container is “raised” off surface with pot feet or pot risers

Nearly all Japanese Maples make good container trees. Remember, the faster growers (and thus larger in ultimate size) will cause one of two things – they need to be transplanted quicker into the ground, or purchase one ginormous container! Try and choose dwarf ones resulting in slow and steady growth and thus longer healthy specimens in smaller containers. Below are some suggestions for varieties to try in pots – again pay attention to the location. Full sun varieties are often the bright reds and will take the heat, but will need to be watered a bit more. Shadier spot maples tend to be the brighter yellow, oranges, and numerous variegated leaf varieties. The selection of the right tree for the right pot will ensure years of enjoyment from your container specimen. Again, most all varieties are suitable, but here a few of the best...

For Hot Afternoon Sun Locations: Adrian’s Compact, Aka kawa hime, Beni hoshi, Bonfire, Burgundy Lime, Coonara Pygmy, Elizabeth, Hime Shojo, Johnnie’s Pink, Kamagata, Kandy Kitchen, Kiyohime, Koto no Ito, Little Sango, Pixie, Red Pygmy, Rhode Island Red, Sharp’s Pygmy, Winter Flame, Fireglow, Katsura, Shindeshojo, Shishigashira, Tsukasa Silhouette, Ash’s Scarlet Princess, Tsukushigata.

For Morning Sun/Part Shade Locations: Any of the Ghost Series, Akane, Bihou, Coral Magic, Dr. Seuss, Fairy Hair, Hana Fubuki, Katsura hime, Mikawa Yatsubusa, Mikazuki, Radiant, Rainbow, Ryusen, Shidava Gold, WIntergold, Butterfly, Iijima Sunago, Orange Dream, Shirazz, Taylor, Tsuma Gaki, Winter Gold, Baby Lace, Irish Lace, Mini Maple.

For Full Shade: Most of the above Part Shade selections plus Abigail Rose, Hoshi Kuzu, Olsen’s Frosted Strawberry, Ukigumo, Golden Full Moon, Susei, any of the Ghost Series.