

Quick Guide Japanese Maples

Japanese maple trees have a variety of shapes, and their range of leaf colours, shapes and autumn colours makes for year-round interest, especially for smaller gardens.

- Acer japonicum selections tend to make small spreading trees
- Acer palmatum selections are more shrub-like because they are broader than they are tall

Both of the above still offer a variety of forms including upright, spreading and weeping forms. After thinking about what height and shape you would like, think about the leaf colour. It's worth noting that the same leaves can be different colours at different times of year.

- Newly emerged leaves range in colour from yellow through lime-green to bright pink.
- They are usually palmate in shape with finger-like lobes or so finely cut to appear lace-like.
- Autumn colour ranges from bright yellow through orange to intense red.
- Red-leaved cultivars need some sun to develop a rich leaf colour.

Where to plant:

- They do best in slightly acidic, well drained soils with plenty of organic matter. Shelter from strong wind exposed sites, they can wind burn easily.
- Red and purple leaved cultivars need some sun to fully develop their color.
- Variegated cultivars need partial shade to prevent the afternoon sun from scorching the foliage.
- Green leaved cultivars will tolerate full sun, but are best in dappled shade in very bright conditions.
- Japanese maples prefer space for their roots and do best if they do not have to compete with the plants around them.
- Mulch with well-rotted organic matter, so the soil does not dry out in the summer (2"). Apply a thick layer of mulch over the winter (bring up to 4"), reducing it back to 2" in spring.

Watering:

- Water regularly in dry spells during the first year to aid establishment, especially if planted in spring or later in the summer season. You may need to water once a week during hot, dry spells which can cause the leaves to brown and crinkle around the edges. Water trees in containers regularly so they do not dry out. This can mean at least once a day in hot weather.

Fertilizing:

- Before fertilizing a soil test should be done to determine what sort of fertilizer to use, in respect to what the plant needs. The soil test will also determine if the pH is correct for that tree and whether or not it will be able to take up fertilizer.
- Bio-Tone can be applied at the time of planting. It is organic and helps the plant grow strong roots and help new plants get maximum water and nutrients from the soil.
- Please see our Garden Shop Info Desk for more information and the best recommendations.

Pruning:

- Usually require very little pruning
- Japanese maples are best pruned when fully dormant, as maples bleed sap from pruning cuts at other times, weakening the tree.
- However, pruning is still best kept to a minimum as the most graceful shape comes from a tree that has been allowed to develop fairly naturally. As a result, just remove badly-placed or crossing shoots to encourage a good framework of branches to grow.