



Japanese Maples – *Acer* spp.

Known for their astounding variety in color, texture and habit, Japanese Maples are easygoing and adaptable and belong in every garden. If you already have one, think about adding another!

For Every Site, a Japanese Maple!

- Botanists count twenty-three species to include under the common heading of Japanese Maple. The largest group is *Acer palmatum* and its cultivars, followed by *Acer japonicum*. The numerous cultivars of *Acer palmatum* are further divided into seven groups which are mostly defined by leaf-shape.
- In addition to variation in leaf-shape, Japanese Maples come in an array of sizes, growth habits, color ranges, and full sun to part shade preference. They add structure, contrast, texture, and beauty to any garden.
- Carefully evaluate your chosen planting spot: Japanese maples require a slightly acid, sandy loam, with medium moisture and good drainage. Regular leafed varieties take full sun better than laceleaf types, but all Japanese Maples will be happy with at least some afternoon shade, since St. Louis summer sun is hot, strong and humid.
- Remember that plants grow outwards as well as upwards and site appropriately. Consider the proximity of the planting site to any buildings and any overhead limits. Some pruning is possible but should not be a necessary task.
- The main requirement of a Japanese Maple is a *uniform* supply of water. They are not happy with very wet periods followed by long, dry periods or vice versa. Most will need supplemental water in the St. Louis summers. Japanese Maples in planters have this same need for consistency – be careful that they do not become waterlogged!

Prepare Your Site, Plant Your Tree

- Japanese Maples have a shallow root system which is easily established as long as uniform moisture is provided.
- Prepare the planting hole in advance, digging a hole twice as wide as the planting container or root-ball and no deeper than the depth of the root-ball of the plant.
- Mix existing soil taken out of planting hole 50/50 with compost and add *Turface* to improve drainage.
- Gently tip the tree from its pot – weeping cultivars may require two people. The tree should never be planted deeper than the root flare. Position the tree at this level, spreading the fibrous roots out in the bottom of the hole.
- As you backfill, gently firm the soil so that the finer root hairs are not left in air pockets. Pile up the leftover soil/compost mix in a ring slightly bigger than the perimeter of the buried root-ball to form a watering well. When you water, direct a gentle stream inside this wall, remembering the roots will take a while to move outwards.
- The roots of Japanese Maples do not like competition from other plants nearby. Do not plant them within a bed of aggressive groundcover or grass. Mulching the area around your tree is a better idea.
- Japanese Maples are wonderful choices for planters. Their fibrous roots enable them to thrive in the limited space and, with proper care, they may be grown in containers for several years without repotting or root pruning.
- Remember that they cannot be neglected during summer vacations and may need watering during winter dry spells.