

JAPANESE MAPLES

One of the most delicate and extraordinary landscape pieces, these stunning, colourful, small trees add beauty and unique form to any landscape.

The many varieties of Japanese Maples help suit everyone's requirements and tastes, from dwarf, weeping, laceleaf varieties to more upright, broad, full leafed trees. Their diversity in size, shape, colour, form, texture and utility is so great that when properly selected and planted carefully they will fit almost any need.

Japanese Maples are not native to our area, however, when certain requirements are met, these specimen plants will thrive in this climate.

SITE SELECTION

It is most important to select a planting site that is protected from sweeping **winds** and late spring frosts. It is advisable to plant near homes, or under neighbouring trees for additional shelter. Avoid open sites that are prone to prevailing winds. A spot with constant winds will harm the plant's bark over winter and will scorch the leaves in the summer. Japanese Maples prefer 'micro-climates', which are areas that differ slightly from the conditions in the rest of the garden and landscape. Some varieties require specific conditions. Varieties of green leafed Japanese Maples can tolerate full sun, although some cultivars develop forms of sunburn in very hot, dry conditions. A planting site with afternoon shade will prevent scorched leaves. For many of the red varieties, full sun is required to bring out the beautiful red, orange and burgundy colours. Generally, most prefer full sun to partial shade. **The best conditions would be full sun during the early hours of the day, with sunlight tapering off to partial shade in the afternoon.**

PLANTING

Japanese Maples prefer rich, well drained soil. Mix one part Peat Moss or Triple Mix/Biomax to three parts topsoil or your existing garden soil. The planting hole should be at least three times the width of the container the tree came in. Do not plant Japanese Maples too deep. You want the planting depth of the tree to be the same as it was in the container. Be sure to water in thoroughly, for deep saturation. Add 2 – 4" of mulch to the surface of the soil. This will act as a barrier to prevent weeds from germinating and prevent moisture from evaporating. Mulch helps cool down the root zone during the heat of the day, as well it slowly breaks down, adding organic nutrients over time.

FERTILIZING

It is advisable to use a transplanting fertilizer at planting time, Plant World Plant Starter. For additional feedings, Japanese Maples should be fertilized in early spring, prior to emerging leaves. Use 20-20-20 or Rose, Tree and Shrub 28-14-14 fertilizer. Be sure to apply it to moistened soils during the cooler part of the day.

PRUNING

Normally, it is not necessary to prune or shape these beautiful trees. Although, in the urban garden, available space and size is a problem. Top shaping and pruning to any Japanese Maples should be started and done early in the life of the tree. Major pruning should be done during the dormant season or just prior to leaf production in the spring. Corrective pruning and training can be done at any time in the growing season. All cuts should be made above a bud.

Japanese Maples in their initial stages of life need a little *T.L.C.*, although once they become fully established, they thrive and become self sufficient. There are a few rules to follow for additional care.

WATERING

Plenty of moisture is needed throughout the hot summer months, otherwise scorching will occur. If this does occur, it will not harm the plant. (Unless it is subjected to very long periods of drought). The damage is more from an aesthetic view than anything else. Japanese Maples have very fibrous and surface laden roots. They dry out quickly and the leaves are the first to display this symptom. The lace – leaf varieties are more prone to this than the others because of their fine textured, papery leaves. Deep moisture penetration is needed instead of short watering.

WINTER PROTECTION

For the first three years, it is advisable to wrap the tree with burlap in mid to late November. Wrapping Japanese Maples protects the bark and buds from drying out over winter. Secure a framework of 3 to 4 stakes into the ground surrounding the tree. Be sure once the stakes are placed in the ground they are at the same height of the tree. Wrap burlap tightly around the stakes ensuring the burlap reaches the height of all the branches to provide a windbreak. Begin wrapping from the base of the tree towards the top. Do not allow burlap to come in contact with the branches. Be sure not to use more than two layers of burlap around the entire tree. Allow the top of this framework to be uncovered and exposed. This allows moisture and sunlight to reach the tree over winter. To prevent winter root damage due to lack of moisture – soak the soil at the base of the plant in late November. Let the hose run half speed for 1.5 - 2 hours to allow the penetration of moisture to be at least 12" deep. This will ensure a solid freeze. Be sure that water does not puddle around the base of the tree over winter. This may cause ice damage. In early spring when there is no threat of hard frost, remove the burlap and stakes and water the base of the plant.