



# All About JAPANESE MAPLES

Without a doubt, Japanese maples are by far one of the most popular and versatile of ornamental trees. With their small stature, tremendous variety, and four-season beauty, Japanese maples offer something all year long. Follow these recommendations for Japanese maples- from planting to insect and disease control to pruning and more.

## TYPES OF JAPANESE MAPLES

Japanese Maples are available in two species, Acer Palamtun and Acer Dessectum. Both types are available in either green or red leaf colors.

- **Acer** - Latin for maple
- **Acer palamtun (broad leaf)** - Grow upright and range in size from two-feet to twenty-feet high.
- **Acer dissectum (fine, lacy leaf)** - Weeping, trailing habit, and smaller in size.

**Grafting** (visible node located on the trunk of the tree) - When saplings are old enough, they are fused with a branch cutting from a different Japanese maple. This is done by slicing a notch in a tree branch and inserting another branch into the notch. The two are bound until they fuse together and grow as one.

## LOCATION - SUN VS. SHADE

Japanese maples are very versatile and can take both sun or shade.

- Red and green broad leaf varieties do better in sun.
- Lacy, weeping varieties prefer shade.

## GROWING IN A CONTAINER

Offers more flexibility and the ability to move your tree from one location to another. Japanese maples grown in containers are slower growing, since their root system is confined.

Grow them alone in a container or under-plant with heuchera, vinca, hostas, etc.

## PLANTING IN-GROUND

Dig a hole approximately twice the width of the root ball. Use your fingers to loosen the root ball, and then place it in the hole. The top of the root ball should sit about an inch above ground level. Fill the hole back in with 1/3 compost, 1/3 perlite, and 1/3 of your own dirt (that came out of the hole), mounding up to top edge of the root ball. Mulch over top of the roots and water.

*TIP: Mulching helps to decrease the fluctuation of temperatures above and below ground, retain moisture, and keep weeds out.*



## PLANTING IN CONTAINERS

Use a quality potting soil to allow for proper drainage. We recommend McDonald organic or all purpose potting soils that are formulated specifically for Hampton Roads.

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## WATERING

Follow these watering guidelines to ensure your plants stay hydrated and healthy all season long:

- Water in the morning.
- Water roots not the leaves.
- Water deep and less often (water Japanese maples every two to three days).
- Water less in cooler temps.
- Watch them carefully during the summer months (especially those planted in full sun). Japanese maples have a shallow root system and need frequent watering during the warmer months.

## FERTILIZERS

- **Bio-Tone Starter Plus** - An all natural plant food enhanced with bio-stimulants, beneficial bacteria, and mycorrhizae. Bio-Tone works naturally within the soil to help plants establish quickly, withstand environmental stress, promote deeper root systems, encourage better blooms, and improve soil structure.
- **McDonald Greenleaf (Traditional and Organic formulas)** - Use for established trees. Formulated specifically for Hampton Roads.
- **Fox Farm Happy Frog Japanese Maple Fertilizer (traditional or organic)** - 4-3-4 fertilizer with active soil microbes and a low nitrogen content.
- **Suprthrive** - Used to help plants that are struggling. Replenishes the soil to nourish and encourage the natural building blocks that plants make themselves under optimum conditions.

Japanese maples are slow growing and cannot process large amounts of nitrogen. High amounts of nitrogen results in excessively fast growth that can make them more susceptible to disease and insect issues as well as burning.

*NOTE: Be careful not use a lawn fertilizer on grass areas under the tree canopy. Lawn fertilizer contains high amounts of nitrogen, which can be harmful to Japanese maples.*

## WHEN TO FERTILIZE

- Fertilize mid March to April after they have leafed out.
- Fertilize Japanese maples on the drip line where the tree's feeder roots are located (not around the trunk).

## INSECT AND DISEASE ISSUES

Japanese maples do not have a lot of insect and disease issues. Issues to look out for include scale, aphids, white flies, mealy bugs, and Japanese beetles.

## INSECT TREATMENTS OPTIONS

- **Natural Guard Spinosad Soap (organic)** - Suffocates insects and diseases (good for treating scale). Spinosad is a combination of potassium salts of fatty acid and spinosad, which effectively control foliage feeding pests.

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- **Fertilome Triple Action (organic)** - Contains neem oil. An easy to use broad spectrum fungicide/insecticide/miticide.
- **Systemic Insecticides and Fungicides** (last up to six to eight weeks) - Great as a preventive treatment that absorbs into the system of the plant.

## PRUNING

Japanese maples have a naturally beautiful form, so if they are in good health and have room to grow, they'll need very little pruning. If pruning is required or desired, prune during the winter (when the tree is dormant) to remove dead, dying and diseased limbs. Light pruning can be done anytime.

## WHY PRUNE JAPANESE MAPLES?

- **To direct growth and structure** - Pruning helps to direct growth habits and influence the structure of the tree as it grows.
- **Improve airflow** - Decreases the likelihood of disease.
- **Removal of dead, diseased, or damaged branches** - These should always be removed first for the health of the tree.
- **Prevent unwanted growth** - Prune branches that are growing into power lines, house eaves, or other unwanted areas.
- **Reduce weight** - Trim branches that are too heavy to reduce its weight.

## LIMBING UP

"Limbing up" is a pruning method to remove the lowest branches and expose more of the lower trunk (creates a canopy habit).

- Use sharp, clean pruners.
- Prune lower branches flush with the collar.
- Hold the branch while you cut to avoid tearing.

## TIPPING OFF BRANCH ENDS

Tipping encourages new growth and branching.

- Use sharp, clean pruners.
- Cut branches at the ends (remove up to 6-8 inches depending on size).
- Cut at an angle to avoid moisture build up.

## REMOVE CROSSING BRANCHES

Crossing branches result in rubbing and damage to bark and even the branches. This can encourage disease and pests. Removal of crossing branches also helps to thin out and improve airflow.

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