

**Momijigari, autumn leaves viewing
at the Seattle Japanese Garden**

Continuing Education

2024, Revised August 2025



SEATTLE JAPANESE GARDEN

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Class Description

Fall is the perfect time for visitors to discover the beautiful maples that grow in the Seattle Japanese Garden. As guides we can contribute to their enjoyment of the maples through learning about the history and lore surrounding the maples. This class features 11 maples that will be highlighted by garden signs during the Maple festivities, Oct 3rd through the 13th. Class handouts describing the maples will be sent to registered participants prior to the class and will be referenced during the garden walk through for a fun and educational morning!

Dedication

The Plant Committee dedicates this class to the memory of Aleks Monk who passed away in late July. Aleks was a founding member of the Plant Committee and a dedicated participant in all of the committee's projects. Aleks loved *haiku* poetry and entered the Moon Viewing *Haiku* Contest several times. She received an award in 2018 for this *haiku*.

in my inbox

message from the full moon:

—not coming tonight!

As a guide, she shared her enthusiasm and knowledge with the garden visitors. As a leader, she created visitor friendly brochures highlighting seasonal plants such as 'SJG April Rhododendrons and Azaleas' and 'SJG Maples'. Aleks also created the SJG Bloom Blog, devoting countless hours over many years to this online resource with photographs and descriptions of hundreds of the plants in the garden – in both alphabetical order and by month. She was an avid and skilled photographer and many of her photographs are included in these class materials.

Maples in Japanese Culture

The Japanese tell a story about Sen-no-Rikyū, the 16th century tea master famous for transforming the tea ceremony from ostentation into a simpler Zen aesthetic: When he was a tea-novice, the tea master Taken Jōō instructed him to rake the tea garden as a preliminary test. Rikyū raked it clean. Yet, feeling the garden sterile, he shook the adjacent maple tree to scatter a few seasonal leaves.

Maples have long been appreciated in Japan. The *Manyōshū*, a Nara period compilation of early *waka* (pre-haiku) poetry, includes a poem by Princess Nukata (ca. 660-690) debating whether spring blossoms are lovelier than autumn's "prized" leaves - she chooses the fall. The *Komakurabe* scroll (depicting social events in 1024 Kyoto) contains an image of a maple tree in a mansion courtyard with maple leaves floating in the adjacent stream. The *Sakuteiki* (c. 1028-1094), the oldest book on Japanese gardens (or indeed any residential garden) directs that plants with "pleasing fall colors," likely a reference to maples, be planted in the west part of the garden.

The natural variability of *Acer palmatum* leaves has led to the development of hundreds of cultivars of this species over the centuries. During the Edo period (1603-1867) the number of maple cultivars surged as private gardens were developed. The *Chikinshō*, published in 1695, is one of the earliest known books giving descriptions of different Japanese maples, and by the end of the Edo period there were as many as 250 named cultivars of *A. palmatum*. Many hundreds of *A. palmatum* cultivars now exist throughout the world.

What is a Japanese maple

"Japanese maple," as used now by the public and landscapers, most often refers to *Acer palmatum* and *Acer japonicum* species. The 2024 Seattle Japanese Garden plant inventory lists 24 *A. palmatum* cultivars and two *A. japonicum* cultivars, out of a total of 36 distinct maples.

Maple Colors and Form

Maple trees are prized for their color. 'Momiji', one Japanese name for *Acer palmatum*, is possibly derived from the ancient form of the verb *momizu* meaning "becomes crimson leaved."

In maples with green spring leaves their green chlorophyll pigment dominates the existing but latent carotenoids and tannin pigments until the chlorophyll fades in the fall due to waning daylight, lower night temperatures, and changes in moisture. The carotenoids and tannins then turn the leaves yellow, orange, russet, and brown. Red fall tints come from the later production of anthocyanin, which occurs only in select trees based on genetics. Trees that start with red leaves in the spring, such as *A. palmatum* var. *dissectum* (our striking entry plant), take on a bronzy green tinge in the summer, as chlorophyll asserts itself, and then become a brilliant crimson in the fall, as the chlorophyll recedes.

Maple leaves grow opposite each other on the branch and usually have 5-7 lobes (bumps on the leaf edge) that radiate like a palm (palmately) from a common point on the leaf stem. These lobes may be sharply divided all the way to the stem, creating a lacey effect (*A. palmatum* var. *dissectum*), or so minimally cut that the leaf seems circular with just a pinking shears-like edge (*A. japonicum* – full moon maple). A few species have a compound leaf made of delicate leaflets, instead of lobed leaves (*A. griseum* – paperbark maple).

All maples' fruit appears in distinctive sheath with paired wings (samara), though some are delicate with close V-shaped wings, while other wings are very large and almost horizontal, like a propeller (*A. circinatum* – Vine Maple).

With the variety of stunning maple colors and shapes, during Momijigari we can all agree with Princess Nukata: "For me, the autumn hills!"

Maple Tree History

The story of the maples in Seattle begins with the Duwamish people and the original native forest. A Survey by the US Government Land Office from 1855 - 1862 noted that there were many conifers and native maples, including Bigleaf Maple and Vine Maple. The Duwamish people used the land to hunt, fish and collect berries until the mid-19th century, when the federal government sold the land to the Puget Mill Company. The land was logged of large trees and then sold to the City of Seattle to become a park. In 1934, Seattle and the University of Washington signed an agreement to create an Arboretum which would be managed by the University.

Beginning in the early 1940s, the Arboretum developed its Maple Collection in two areas—in the Arboretum and where the Japanese Garden would later be sited. A variety of North American, European, and Asian maples were planted. When the Japanese Garden was created in 1960, and in the years to follow, notable additions included many Japanese maples—*Acer palmatum* cultivars 'Inazuma', 'Samidare', 'Osakazuki akame', 'Koto-no-ito' and 'Tsuma gaki'. Today, the Japanese Garden has 35 different species or cultivars of maples totaling approximately 118 individual plants.

***Acer palmatum* var. *dissectum* (*Acer palmatum* var. *dissectum atropurpureum*)**

Common name—weeping laceleaf Japanese maple

*Located just past the Garden's entry gate, on the west side of the path in Area B
(Four younger weeping laceleaf maples are planted in Areas C, Y & W)*

The oldest weeping laceleaf Japanese maple in the Garden, this iconic specimen has a bold architectural branching structure. Its beautiful laceleaf foliage is burgundy-red in spring, bronzy-green in summer, and glowing orange-red in fall. With finely-divided leaves and gracefully cascading branches, it's the only form of Japanese maple most people are familiar with—and the maple tree that Garden visitors are most likely to admire.



There are more than a dozen red-leaved cultivars of laceleaf Japanese maple, but trees like this one, without a cultivar name, are usually grown from seed, rather than cuttings, and tend to be variable, with leaves that aren't predictable in color or form. Fortunately, this entry specimen has delicately dissected foliage and beautiful color in both spring and fall. The Garden also contains four younger weeping laceleaf maples, including one with green leaves, but none—including two trees (one with green leaves) located just across the path (Area C)—are comparable to Area B's magnificent specimen.



Weeping laceleaf maples have leaves divided into 7-11 long, narrow, finely dissected lobes, each lobe deeply divided to its base—hence the word “laceleaf,” describing their lacey appearance. The trees are also “weeping,” with a form that is horizontal and pendulous. Unlike most Japanese maples, which tend to have an upright, somewhat vase-shaped habit, theirs is arching and umbrella-like. With proper pruning and staking, the most attractive trees attain a height of 7-10 feet, often spreading much wider.

As they mature, these trees become twiggy and dense. Unpruned, as they are in so many U.S. gardens, they often resemble shapeless mops. In Japan, skillful pruning reveals their beautiful branching structure, prominent in all seasons. In our Garden, in winter 2012, the gardeners dug up this tree, rotated it 180 degrees, and replanted it about four feet from the original location. This moves the tree further from other plants and better displays its elegant branching structure.

Weeping laceleaf Japanese maples are cold hardy to at least USDA Zone 5 (minimum temperature -20 degrees Fahrenheit), and grow best in moist, fertile, well-drained soil, in part shade or sun (but not reflected heat). Best foliage color develops when grown in sun. During our dry summers, they require regular irrigation.

[Historical note: Washington Park Arboretum records are unclear, but this plant may have been received as *Acer palmatum dissectum* (weeping laceleaf Japanese maple). It should include the word *atropurpureum*, which accurately describes its red foliage. (Currently, *Acer palmatum* var. *dissectum atropurpureum* is the botanical name used by most authorities.)]

(1st photo, showing fall color, by Aurora Santiago; 2nd photo, of spring foliage, by Aleks Monk)

Acer palmatum* ‘Yatsubusa’

Common name—Yatsubusa Japanese Maple

Located in Area C, next to the path and south of the paperbark maple

The word *yatsubusa* means dwarf, and this Japanese maple has the smallest leaves and is the slowest growing of the Garden’s *Acer palmatum* cultivars. Its leaves are green in spring and summer. These photos show the rather subtle beginnings of its bright orange and gold fall color.

Our tree has a compact, rounded habit and tight branching. Its very small leaves have five to seven lobes and appear to be layered on the branches.



Two 15-inch Japanese maples labeled ‘Yatsubusa’ (Accession number 764-66) were received by the Washington Park Arboretum in 1966. They were included in a major maple collection donated by Rod Searles of Indianapolis and were probably grown on in the WPA’s nursery for a number of years. One of the trees was planted in the Arboretum but died in about 1993.



We do not know when the tree in the Japanese Garden was planted, but according to a 1983 Accession card notation by Arboretum Director Emeritus Brian O. Mulligan:

“Plant in Japanese Garden thriving, now 4–4.5 feet tall. . . .”

Now, 40 years later, it’s about twelve feet tall and still thriving!

*[The single word *yatsubusa* was used as a cultivar name in the past, but this is no longer considered correct, and plants labeled simply ‘Yatsubusa’ are no longer available. As explained in *Japanese Maples: The Complete Guide to Selection and Cultivation*, 4th Edition (2009):

“Yatsubusa” is a general term meaning “dwarf” in Japanese.... [so,] this term should not be used by itself as a cultivar name. Many “yatsubusa” clones are correctly designated with cultivar status, such as ‘Hime yatsubusa’, ‘Sekka yatsubusa’, and ‘Shishi yatsubusa’.]

(Photos by Aleks Monk)

***Acer japonicum* ‘Vitifolium’**

Common name—grape leaf full moon maple

Two specimens, located at the south end of the Garden, across from each other on the main path (Areas C and Z)

This *Acer japonicum* cultivar develops magnificent fall colors. At first the leaves are a blend of gold and crimson, later changing to a vivid scarlet.

Acer japonicum (“full moon maple”) is one of two maple species native to Japan that are commonly known as “Japanese maples.” *Acer palmatum*, however, is the more well-known.

Full moon maple is a large to medium-sized deciduous tree native to the mountain forests of Japan, on the islands of Honshu and Hokkaido. The species tree and most of its cultivars are sturdy, strong-growing, adaptable trees known for their brilliant fall colors. Their leaves usually consist of 9-11 lobes and are round in outline—hence the name full moon maple. Cold hardy to USDA Zone 6 (minimum temperature -10 degrees Fahrenheit), they grow well in sun or shade.

‘Vitifolium’ is larger growing than most of the other cultivars, often exceeding 30 feet tall. Its habit is upright, becoming broad and round-topped with age.



The thick-textured leaves are 5-6 inches wide, with long, stiff leaf stalks (*petioles*). Their 9-11 lobes are separated almost halfway to the base. Green in spring and summer, they resemble the leaves of grapes (in the genus *Vitis*)—hence the name ‘Vitifolium’, which means “grape leaf.”

Delicate purple-red flowers, held in large drooping clusters (*corymbs*), appear before the leaves.

Plant material was received by the Washington Park Arboretum in the early 1960s, and the Area Z tree, currently about 40 feet tall, was planted in the Garden in 1969. The planting date of the Area C tree, now about 30 feet tall, was not recorded. Arboretum records for both trees include this 1983 notation: “plant thriving.”

(Photos by Aleks Monk. The first photo was taken from the Garden entrance, looking northward. The tree in Area Z is on the left and the one in Area C is on the right.)

Acer griseum

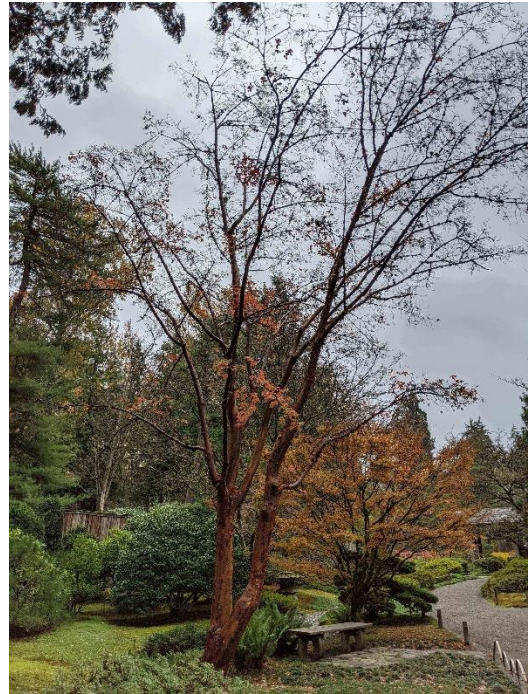
Common name—paperbark maple

Located east of the path and south of the stone bridge in Area C

Acer griseum is a deciduous tree with slender upright branching, attractive in all seasons. In full sun, the fall color varies from a brilliant orange-red to reddish-green or bronze. Trees growing in shade often display more subtle but still lovely colors, in tints of apricot and yellow.

This magnificent tree has unique exfoliating bark. The rich brown or reddish-brown outer bark peels into large papery curls that remain on the tree, with smooth, often shiny, cinnamon-brown inner bark.

Paperbark maple is native to mixed forests in central China at elevations of about 6,000 feet. It was brought to the West in the late 19th century, though much earlier to Japan, and is now a popular ornamental in temperate regions worldwide.



In the Pacific Northwest, *Acer griseum* matures to about 30 feet tall by 20 feet wide, with a densely foliated, oval-rounded habit. Remarkably adaptable, it is reliably cold hardy to USDA Zone 5 (minimum temperature -20 degrees Fahrenheit) and has no serious pest or disease problems.

The compound leaves consist of three leaflets (dissecting to the stem, rather than leaf lobes) and are three to five inches long. Coarsely toothed and held alternately on the stem, they are bronzy when young, maturing to a dark bluish-green. The species name, *griseum*, means grayish and refers to the leaves' pale undersides.



The Seattle Japanese Garden contains a large, attractive specimen, located not far from the entrance gate. It was planted in November 1964 as a young tree, about six feet tall. It had probably been grown on in the Washington Park Arboretum's nursery from plant material acquired in the mid-1950s.

(Photos by Corinne Kennedy)

***Acer palmatum* ‘Koto-no-ito’**

Common name—harp strings Japanese maple

Located in the Garden’s entry courtyard in Area A, in the south end of the lawn in Area F, and across from the willow and behind the bench in Area L

Acer palmatum ‘Koto-no-ito’ is a graceful semi-dwarf Japanese maple with unusual, very narrow-lobed, straplike leaves. It was introduced in 1938 by renowned nurseryman Koichiro Wada in Numazushi, Japan.

In fact, ‘Koto-no-ito’ displays two distinct leaf types: the foliage that emerges in spring (on “old” wood) is very fine and essentially string-like. Later in the season, the leaves that emerge on “new growth” have lobes that are longer and broader, although they’re still quite narrow.



This lovely cultivar’s common name, harp strings, refers to its very narrow leaf lobes. They appear to dance in the wind, so it’s sometimes called the dancing monkey tree.



The new spring leaves are green with crimson tints, but soon become all green. Fall color is a brilliant golden yellow, sometimes becoming orange or crimson. Often, the earlier, string-like foliage turns golden first, creating a gold and green effect until the broader, later-emerging foliage develops its own fall color.

Our Garden contains three specimens, the largest one planted in 2009 in the entry courtyard. Two additional specimens are located east of the Garden’s central pond.

‘Koto-no-ito’ is a dense, upright grower with a vase-shaped habit and a soft, graceful appearance. Cold hardy to USDA Zone 6 (minimum temperature -10 degrees Fahrenheit), its size at maturity (20-25 years) is about 15 feet tall by 10 feet wide.

This maple’s manageable size, unusual foliage, and glowing fall color make it an attractive addition to both large and small gardens. It performs well in part shade or full sun and is suitable for planting in a container or in the ground. It’s also available at some of our region’s larger retail nurseries.

(Photos by Aleks and Tony Monk: leaf detail, and fall color of the tree in Area F)

Acer palmatum 'Ōmato'

common name—Ōmato Japanese maple

Located near the Wisteria on the island between the paths in Area K

'Ōmato' means "big target."

'Ōmato' is a strong growing, vase-shaped tree noted for its excellent red or orange-red fall foliage. Its large, sharply toothed leaves, about four inches wide, are of good texture and substance. They consist of five to seven lobes that gradually taper to sharp points.

Spring color is green with a tinge of orange-red, soon turning to summer's rich medium green, a color fairly resistant to sunburn.



Its size at maturity (20-25 years) is about 20-25 feet tall and almost as wide.



With its large colorful leaves, elegant vase-shaped habit, and red *samaras* (dry winged fruits), 'Ōmato' is an excellent choice for gardens of all sizes. But 'Ōmato' is rare in cultivation because of its similarity to 'Ōsakazuki', a popular cultivar renowned for its brilliant fall color. (An 'Ōsakazuki akame' is located in the teahouse garden.)

'Ōmato' was introduced by Angyō Maple Nursery, Japan, in 1930. The Garden's specimen was transplanted from the Washington Park Arboretum in 1992. It had been propagated from plant material received in 1941 from renowned

nurseryman Koichiro Wada, Numazushi, Japan.

(Photos by Aleks Monk)

Acer capillipes

Common name—red snakebark maple; red-shoot maple

Two trees on the east side of the Garden, near its northeast corner in Area M

Acer capillipes is one of the most reliable and attractive of the deciduous trees known as snakebark maples. It's notable for its showy green bark, patterned with vertical stripes, and brilliant orange-red and gold fall color.



This vigorous, graceful, vase-shaped tree is endemic to (native only to) Japan, where it's common in the mountainous areas near Tokyo.

Leaves are about 3-5 inches long and almost as wide, broadly oval, toothed, and conspicuously veined. They consist of three (sometimes five) pointed lobes, with a broad triangular center lobe that ends in a narrow, pointed tip. Small, relatively inconspicuous side lobes may be present.

In spring, the new leaves, *petioles* (leaf stalks), and young shoots are a bright, glossy pinkish red—hence the common names red snakebark maple and red-shoot maple. Even after the leaves have turned green, tinged red-bronze, the petioles remain bright red.

Small, relatively insignificant flowers are followed by pinkish winged fruits (*samaras*), about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch long. The species name, *capillipes*, is a reference to the threadlike stalks of the flowers and fruits. Derived from the Latin words *capillus* ("hair") and *pes* ("foot"), *capillipes* means "slender-footed," giving this maple a third common name, hair-foot maple.



The young red shoots mature to green or gray-green branches and trunks, patterned with light vertical stripes and small, horizontal, brownish *lenticels* (small openings on the stems that permit the passage of air). With age, this showy bark becomes furrowed and grayish brown with darker stripes, resembling the skin of a snake.

In cultivation *Acer capillipes* grows to about 40 feet tall, characterized by long, slender, arching branches and a wide-spreading crown. In the wild, heights of 65 feet are not uncommon, but plants may also mature as tall multi-stemmed shrubs. Cold hardy to USDA Zone 5 (minimum temperature -20 degrees Fahrenheit), red snakebark maple performs best in cool summer climates, preferring part shade and acidic soils kept consistently moist.

Acer palmatum ‘Shishigashira’

Common name—lion’s mane or lion’s head maple

Located above the port village, at the northeast end of the Garden in Area N

‘Shishigashira’ is one of the last Japanese maples to change color in the fall, when its leaves turn a brilliant blend of yellow-gold, orange and red.

Leaves are about two inches long and grow in dense clusters along the branches. Quite crinkled, their edges curl slightly upward, and their 5-7 lobes are deeply divided and irregularly toothed, tapering to sharp points. The word *shishigashira*, meaning “lion’s head,” was given to this cultivar because the dense tufts of heavily curled leaves resemble a lion’s mane.



Bright green leaves in spring mature to a deep green summer color that holds well until fall, even in full sun.

With its compact, stubby habit of growth, ‘Shishigashira’ develops thick, bold trunks and branches and a unique sculptural appearance. It has a very upright, relatively narrow habit, with a height at maturity (20-25 years) that may exceed 20 feet. Cold hardy to USDA Zone 6 (minimum temperature -10 degrees Fahrenheit), it grows well in sun or part shade here in the Pacific Northwest, planted in a container or in the garden.



Cultivated in Japan since 1882, and used there in the landscape and in bonsai, this striking tree was named for Japan’s mythical female lion and the costume worn in the traditional lion’s dance to exorcise evil spirits. Over the decades, it has become popular throughout the temperate world, and has also become known by several other names: ‘Ribesifolium’ (because its leaves resemble those of *Ribes alpinum*), ‘Cristatum’, ‘Minus’, and ‘Mejishi’ (which means “female lion”).

The Seattle Japanese Garden’s specimen was planted in 2004.

(Photos by Aleks Monk)

Acer palmatum ‘Samidare’

Common name—Samidare Japanese maple

Located just west of the zigzag bridge in Area Q

Acer palmatum ‘Samidare’ is a Japanese maple notable for its uniquely beautiful fall color. In spring, leaves emerge almost pink but quickly turn deep green with light reddish margins. They remain rich green without burning, even in full sun, so long as moisture is adequate. Autumn brings the striking leaf colors and patterning that characterize this cultivar—varying blends of gold, crimson and purple. Many leaves display a subtle pattern of gold-green centers and red-purple lobes.



This lovely cultivar has broad, palm-shaped leaves that are large (about three inches long and up to five inches wide) and thick textured. They consist of seven (occasionally five) lobes with very finely toothed edges and blunt tips. The lobes are divided less than halfway to the center and radiate outward—unlike the downward angle of many maple leaf lobes.



‘Samidare’ is a vigorous, sturdy, and durable tree, hardy to at least USDA Zone 6 (minimum temperature -10 degrees Fahrenheit). It grows quickly when young, with thick young branches and an upright habit. Its size at maturity (20-25 years) is about 20 feet tall and wide. Created in Japan, it was mentioned in the maple list of 1882. The word *samidare* (“early spring rain”) is a reference to Japan’s heavy rains in the month of June.

We’re very fortunate that the Seattle Japanese Garden includes this cultivar, which is rare in the Pacific Northwest. Our Garden’s tree was received by the Washington Park Arboretum in 1966, included in a major maple collection donated by Rod Searles of Indianapolis. It was grown in the WPA nursery for several years before being planted in the Garden in April 1971.

(Photos by Aleks Monk)

Acer circinatum

Common name—vine maple

Four specimens are located in Areas F, O, Y and ZZE

Acer circinatum is an understory deciduous tree native to the West Coast, from British Columbia to northern California. Fall color is variable, but specimens grown in full to part sun often develop a beautiful combination of reds, oranges and yellows.

Although vine maple it is not native to Japan, the Garden's design included Pacific Northwest native plants, as well as those traditionally planted in Japanese-style gardens. *Acer circinatum* is a close relative of *Acer palmatum*, the most renowned maple of Japan's native species. This supports the theory that a land bridge once allowed plant and animal migration between East Asia and Alaska.



Vine maple is a multi-stemmed tree widely adapted to sun or shade. When grown in sun, it develops into a compact small tree, growing to about 20-25 feet tall. In its native habitat, under an overstory of large conifers, it is more “vine-like,” with slender, gracefully sprawling branches—as a wide-spreading shrub or as a slender tree reaching towards the sun.

With 7-9 broad, regularly spaced lobes, the leaves are 4-5 inches wide and almost circular in outline—hence the species word *circinatum*, which means “rounded.” The toothed lobes are not deeply cut but taper sharply at the tips. Their spring and summer color is light green. Young bark is a smooth pale green, maturing to reddish gray.

Relatively insignificant small flowers are followed by showy winged fruits (*samaras*) that are deep red at maturity and spread horizontally to almost 180 degrees.

Acer circinatum is cold hardy to at least USDA Zone 5 (minimum temperature -20 degrees Fahrenheit). Though tolerant of sun, it grows best in moist, shady conditions.

Our region's indigenous peoples used the strong, flexible branches to make baskets, fish traps, bows, and various small implements.

(The 1st photo is by Aleks Monk, showing the tree in Area ZZE just south of the teahouse garden. The 2nd photo is courtesy of the US Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region: “Vine Maple Leaves with Fall Colors in Sol Duc area, Olympic National Forest.”)

Acer palmatum 'Ōsakazuki akame'

Common name—Ōsakazuki akame Japanese maple

Located in the teahouse garden in Area W and in Areas X and Y

Acer palmatum 'Ōsakazuki akame' is a more compact, broader-growing form of the well-known and very popular Japanese maple cultivar 'Ōsakazuki'. Both are lovely statement trees, with the same sturdy habit and brilliant fall color—an intense glowing crimson comparable to that of burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*).

The spring leaves of 'Ōsakazuki akame' are olive-orange, maturing in summer to a rich green. Of firm texture, they are seven-lobed, toothed, and broad with narrow tips.



The base of the leaf forms a cup-like shape—hence the name 'Ōsakazuki', which means “leaf like a sake cup.” The meaning of *akame* is “red shoots,” a reference to the leaf stems (*petioles*).



The growth habit of 'Ōsakazuki akame' is upright, round-topped, and broadly spreading. At maturity (20-25 years), it will be about 20 feet tall and 30 feet wide. Very cold hardy to USDA Zone 5 (minimum temperature -20 degrees Fahrenheit), it performs well in full sun or part shade. With sufficient irrigation during our dry summers, its large, thick leaves are resistant to damage from the hot summer sun.

This is a recent introduction from New Zealand, closely related to the very old Japanese cultivar 'Ōsakazuki', which has been listed in Japan since the late 1800s. The main differences are

that 'Ōsakazuki akame' has a smaller leaf, and its habit when fully grown is broader than tall.

Records indicate that the Garden's three trees were planted in 2011. One was later moved from Area E to the teahouse garden (Area W).

(Photos by Aleks Monk, showing the Area E tree before it was moved)

Other Maples Featured during the Garden's Maple Festival

***Acer palmatum* 'Tsuma gaki'**

Acer palmatum 'Tsuma gaki' is renowned for the beauty of its spring leaves. Yellow-green with pointed scarlet tips, and divided into 5-7 lobes, they appear to be drooping from their stems—like “leaf hands” with red-painted nails (the meaning of *tsuma gaki*). Summer's dark green leaves sometimes turn bright red in fall, but this varies from one year to the next. At maturity (20-25 years), 'Tsuma gaki' will be about 12 feet tall and wide, with a dense, layered and rounded habit.



[The Garden's most prominent specimen is on the east side of the pond, in Area D; a second tree is located along the west side fence in Area ZZW.]



***Acer nikoense* (aka *Acer maximowiczianum*)**

Commonly known as Nikko maple, this deciduous tree is native to Japan and China. It grows to about 50 feet tall in the wild but is usually smaller in gardens. It has dark gray bark and three-lobed foliage. In spring the brownish leaves are covered with a thick down. They mature to dark green in summer before turning red-orange or pinkish red in autumn. The three lobes separate as they fall.

[The Garden has one plant, located in Area U at the south end of the cherry orchard.]

***Acer palmatum* 'Shigitatsu sawa'**

This cultivar is noted for the beautiful patterning of its foliage, which has been compared to stained glass windows. The toothed, slightly cupped leaves have 7-9 lobes that taper to sharp points. They are light yellow-green with prominent darker veins. When their color darkens in mid-summer, this “reticulation” is less prominent. 'Shigitatsu sawa' does best when protected from hot sun, but when grown in too much shade, its typical rich red or orange fall color fails to develop.



[The Garden has one plant, located along the west side fence in Area ZZW.]



***Acer japonicum* 'Aconitifolium'**

This full moon maple cultivar matures as a round-topped tree about 20 feet tall by 15 feet wide. Its large, 11-lobed leaves are longer than wide and irregularly dissected, creating a bold, fern-like appearance—hence the common name, fernleaf full moon maple. (The cultivar name, 'Aconitifolium', acknowledges its leaves' resemblance to those of *Aconitum*, the perennial known as monkshood.)

In Japan, this lovely tree is known as “dancing peacock maple” (*mai kujaku*), a reference to its

bold and deeply cut, yet delicate leaves, moving gracefully in the wind. Bright green in spring, they mature to a deeper green in summer before turning fiery shades of orange, red, burgundy, and purple in autumn.

[The Garden has one plant, located along the west side fence in Area ZZW.]

(Photos by Aleks Monk)

MAPLE CLASS RESOURCES (2024)

BOOKS & BOOKLETS

- De Bary, Wm. Theodore, ed. *The Manyōshū Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkodai Translation of One Thousand Poems*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1965 (original 1940).
- Dirr, Michael. *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants: Their Identification, Ornamental Characteristics, Culture, Propagation and Uses*. Champaign, ILL: Stipes Publishing Company, 2009.
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- Gregory, Peter. "Acer capillipes Maximowicz (1867)." Originally published in The Maple Society Newsletter, Winter 1997. [<https://maplesociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/capillipesGregory-vf.pdf>]
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