

## MAPLES - THE SMALLER VARIETIES

The Japanese maples and larger shade tree grade maples are very widely used plants because of their versatility and beauty. However, there is an often overlooked part of the maple family that generally falls right in between these two groups- the smaller maples. We use that term to describe those maples that generally stay under 30' tall in the landscape, and aren't in the Japanese maple group. One thing that most of these have in common is character, and lots of it!

### Acer buergerianum – Trident Maple

**Height:** 20'-30' (40')                      **Width:** 25' (30'+)                      **Fall color:** Red-Orange  
**Shape:** Rounded, spreading                      **Growth Rate:** Slow-Moderate

The Trident maple is a great tree for smaller yards. Its small leaves are very glossy green and have a nice appearance against the rounded frame. Excellent red-orange fall color. It is difficult to express the charm that this tree has in words, it is something you must simply see to fully appreciate.

### Acer circinatum – Vine Maple

**Height:** 6'-15' (20'+)                      **Width:** 10'±                      **Exposure:** Partial shade  
**Shape:** Multi-stemmed, upright. Spreads.                      **Growth Rate:** Medium                      **Fall color:** Vivid Orange-red

The vine maple is a very popular Oregon native used as a small tree or large border shrub. It is also used extensively for woodland or "natural" gardens. The size of the vine maple will depend on sun exposure. More sun=less height. Give this tree some afternoon shade, as it is by nature a forest dweller and resents lots of heat. In other words, lots of heat will either kill them or make them look very unhealthy.

### Acer ginnala – Amur Maple (A. tataricum ssp. ginnala)

**Height:** 15'-18' (25')                      **Width:** 20' (+)                      **Soil needs:** Well-drained  
**Shape:** Shrubby, stiffly rounded                      **Growth Rate:** Slow                      **Fall color:** Brilliant Red

-Acer ginnala is a smaller maple that can be used as a small tree or a taller deciduous hedge. Its fall color is generally an outstanding red, although yellows have been known to pop up from time to time. Keep this tree in well-drained soil, as it will suffer in overly heavy and wet soils. Very dense and shrubby.

### Acer davidii – David's Maple

**Height:** 20'-35' (50')                      **Width:** 20'-35'                      **Sun Exposure:** Part shade  
**Shape:** Arching, semi-vase shaped                      **Growth Rate:** Slow                      **Fall Color:** Bright yellow-orange

Not seen very often anywhere outside of England, this is a maple of a different sort than what most people are used to around here. First of all, the mature leaves do not have the characteristic lobes of the other maples, taking on an oval shape. Also, this is one of the "snake-bark" maples, so-called because the shiny green bark has silver striping, creating a stunning effect. This is generally a slow grower, and is best in partial shade. Be sure to provide well-drained soil, as Acer davidii doesn't grow well (or at all, it may seem) in heavy wet soils. Fall color is variable, but is generally a pleasant yellow to orange, with red-purple tints showing up from time to time. Supposedly the Pacific Northwest is one of the few places in the U.S. where this tree will grow very successfully, so this could be worth growing just for the bragging rights alone.

### Acer grandidentatum 'Rocky Mountain Glow' (Acer saccharum ssp. grandidentatum) -- Rocky Mountain Glow Maple

**Height:** 25'                      **Width:** 15'                      **Growth Rate:** Moderate  
**Shape:** Oval                      **Fall color:** Orange-red

This maple is a variety of Big tooth Maple, which is actually a subspecies of Sugar Maple. It is actually quite like a Sugar Maple, but about half the size. The leaves are a rich deep green in the growing season, and a glowing orange-red in fall. A great smaller tree, and very tough.

### Acer griseum – Paperbark Maple

**Height:** 20'-30' (40'+)                      **Width:** 10'-20' (+)                      **Soil Needs:** Well-drained  
**Shape:** Upright spreading, rounded                      **Growth Rate:** Slow                      **Fall Color:** Red

*Acer griseum* is a unique and attractive tree indeed. Its cinnamon-brown bark peels, leaving an orange-brown under-layer. Its leaves are actually divided into 3 smaller leaflets, giving this tree a very open look. In general, a good small specimen tree or focal point. Give this tree good drainage though, as it can suffer otherwise.

***Acer negundo* ‘Sensation’ – Sensation Box Elder (Ash-Leaved Maple)**

**Height:** 30’                      **Width:** 25’                      **Growth Rate:** Moderate  
**Shape:** Rounded                      **Fall Color:** Brilliant Red

“That can’t be a maple” is a common response to Box Elders. Instead of having the traditional lobed maple leaves, box elders have several single leaves, much like an elder or ash. Whereas the species is often described as a weed, growing too fast, having brittle wood, seeding down everywhere, and just being generally rangy, this variety is an improvement in all of those areas. A seedless form, it grows slower than the species, and with a better branching habit. This makes it a sturdier and better shaped tree altogether, and the seedless aspect is also good (mature box elders loaded with seed are truly a scary sight when you consider that they are very prolific sprouters!). Truly a nice little tree, and a significant improvement on the species.

***Acer pensylvanicum* – Striped Maple, Moosewood, Whistlewood, Goose-foot Maple**

**Height:** 15’-20’ (40’+)                      **Width:** 15’-20’ (30’+)                      **Shape:** Oval  
**Growth rate:** Slow-moderate                      **Fall color:** Outstanding yellow

The Striped Maple is another interesting maple due to its bark (and many names). It has alternating vertical stripes of white and bright green on the trunk. This tree is actually a native of the Northeastern U.S.. Like many Northeast natives, this tree does not appreciate lots of heat, so partial shade is a good idea. It has a bright clear yellow fall color that can be quite spectacular.

***Acer triflorum* – Three-flower Maple**

**Height:** 20’-30’                      **Width:** 20’-30’                      **Shape:** Broadly columnar to spreading  
**Growth rate:** Slow-moderate                      **Fall color:** Brilliant yellow to red (gives overall orange look)

The Three-flower maple has peeling light brown bark, a well-behaved growth habit, great fall color, and the leaf patterns are even interesting. This is a great tree for a smaller yard, or anywhere where someone can get close to it and witness its charm. One note on the name- you probably won’t notice the flowers unless you really get close, and they are very uninteresting. The name is more of a horticultural classification to keep it straight from other maples, since we can’t call them all “really-awesome-fall-color- maples”.

***Acer tschonoskii* ssp. *koreanum* (A.c. var. *rubripes*) – Korean Tschonoski Stripe-Barked Maple**

**Height:** 15’-20’ (30’+)                      **Width:** 12’-15’ (20’+)                      **Fall color:** Orange-Red

This tree in itself is extremely obscure and difficult to find, information about it is even harder to come by. A member of the snake-bark maple group, this tree does have the characteristic silver stripes on the bark, but they can be hard to see because the new growth is *bright fiery red*. These have actually at times had better color the Coral Bark Japanese maples, but the initial intensity is probably not as long-lived as the branches age. Fall color has been described anywhere from yellow to red, with most sources saying that they are predominantly orange-red. Accounts of size are variable, but this tree is generally classified as a smaller maple, probably ending up less than 20’ tall in the landscape. An interesting tree for bark effect and general habit (not to mention how impressed your friends will be if you can pronounce “tschonoskii”), this is definitely worth a second look!