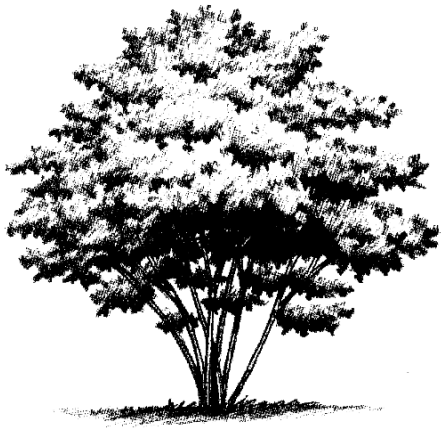
BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS
SCIENTIFIC TREE CARE SINCE 1907

Plant Health Care Recommendations for Japanese Maple

Japanese maple is a spectacular, aristocratic tree suitable for most landscapes. As its name implies, Japanese maple is native to Japan, China and Korea. It was cultivated by the Japanese long before it was introduced into England and the United States in the early 1800's.



It can be used as a medium size specimen tree, an accent plant, bonsai or as a boarder shrub depending on the cultivar selected and the style of pruning. Mature height ranges from 6 to 50 feet, with most varieties in the 15 to 25 foot range. Foliage color also varies with cultivar from purple-red all season long to red in the spring and fall and green during the summer.

Cultivars are adapted from zones 5 to 8, the warmer areas of Massachusetts and New York south to the Georgia, and including all of California. Growth is best in moist, well-drained soils that are high in organic matter with a pH of 6 to 8. Light shade is ideal, full sun is acceptable for many cultivars if irrigation is provided during summer droughts. Growth is rapid when young and when growing conditions are correct.

Lack of water is one of the most serious problems for Japanese maple. Trees in the full sun or in windy sites often suffer from excessive drying even during minor droughts. Symptoms of drought damage include browning or necrosis of the leaf margins and twig dieback. Drought may also predispose to other problems such as fungal cankers.

Three other root problems are common and may produce the same symptoms as drought. Verticillium wilt is a vascular disease that is initiated by root infection. In addition to leaf wilting, branches or the entire tree may be killed. Soil nematodes are small parasitic worms that feed on roots. By destroying the trees fine roots, less water is taken up and wounds are created which allow entry of verticillium. Symptoms are wilting and leaf dieback as well as an overall thinning of the trees. Phytophthora root rot and root collar canker are common diseases associated with wet sites. Excess water in the soil weakens the roots and allows for easy spread of this water mold. Early symptoms are similar to a nematode attack, death of the tree can occur more quickly.

Japanese maple is susceptible to a number of leaf spot diseases that may disfigure leaves and cause early defoliation. The major foliar diseases are anthracnose, Phyllosticta leaf spot and Pseudomonas tip blight.

There are several insects that may attack Japanese maples. Leaf feeders include the Japanese beetle. Scales can also cause the decline of otherwise healthy trees. The major scale insect pests are cottony maple, cottony camellia, oleander, and cottony taxus scale. Aphids often feed on leaves producing honeydew that encourages the growth of black sooty mold fungus on other leaves or on surfaces beneath the tree.

Proper pruning of Japanese maple is essential for tree health. Annual light pruning is preferred to maintain tree size, shape and health. When pruning is done infrequently and heavily, the tree may be devitalized due to the loss of food storage and food generation capabilities. Sunscorch may also result from heavy pruning that may lead to in bark injury and cankers

Important Cultivars

Standardleaf Bloodgood - The best deep purple leaf color, slow growing, small (15 - 20').

Burgundy Lace - Reddish purple leaf which fades slightly in the summer, deeply lobed leaves appearing almost pinnately compound, small (12 - 15').

Dissectum - Doubly lobed green leaves with fernleaf texture. Weeping branches, small (6 - 12').

Dissectum atropurpureum - Similar to Dissectum, leaves purple red in spring with moderate light and orange in fall.

Waterfall - The best green dissectum leaf, red to yellow in fall. Small (10 - 12').

Recommended Monitoring of Japanese Maple

Timing	**Treatment**
Winter	Corrective prune to remove dead, dying diseased limbs and interfering limbs. Shape crown as desired to achieve landscape goals. Inspect root collar and take soil sample. Inspect for scale, cankers and twig borers, treat if needed.
Mid spring	Anthracnose and leaf spot suppression treatment if needed.
Late spring	Monitor leaf feeding and scale insects. Repeat soil
Early summer	Monitor leaf feeding and scale insects. Repeat leaf disease
Summer	Monitor soil moisture, especially on newly planted trees.
Fall	Fertilize as needed. Apply soil insecticide to reduce sucking insects next year.