

Japanese Maples

How to plant and care for Japanese Maples

Light Requirement *

A mature Japanese Maple does best in full sun but can tolerate some shade. For the best foliage colour, lots of sun is recommended. Keep in mind that if you notice scorched leaves in the summer, it's probably overexposed. Only in the southernmost areas of their hardiness range will you have to worry about this. If the fall foliage isn't as dramatic as expected, it may be getting too much shade.

If it's been a year or two and your Japanese Maple isn't doing the best in the location it's in right now, you can move it without worry. The location of your Japanese Maple is one of the most important factors to growing it successfully. If you are moving your maple, the best time to move it is in the late summer or early fall. Generally, one month before the ground freezes. Japanese maples can be forgiving but make sure to leave as much soil as you can around the roots when you dig it up.

Protection from Strong Wind

The foliage of Japanese Maples is quite fragile. The leaves do dry out quickly in the high winds. This doesn't mean you have to grow your tree in a totally enclosed or protected area. If your maple isn't being whipped around by wind on a regular basis it will be fine.

Soil and Water Requirements

Japanese Maples flourish in any well-drained soil except highly alkaline soil. Another soil concern is salt. While they are flexible with other soil matter such as heavy clays and loose sands, they do not like salt soils. If your soil is high in salt, consider growing your maple in a container. Note, this does not apply to salt spray, which the maples have quite a good tolerance for.

While these maples are young, they are greedy feeders. So before planting, you can work as much compost as you like into the soil around the tree and keep adding it during spring and early summer.

When the Japanese Maples are mature, they are quite drought-tolerant. However, when they are young they need regular deep watering during the first few years. Plan to water twice a

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week during normal weather and three to four times weekly in periods of drought. Young or old, your Japanese Maples does like their soil consistently moist by regular watering and mulching. A 3-inch layer of shredded bark around the entire root zone of the tree (not touching the trunk) works well in all seasons.

TIP: to encourage the best colour of our maple in fall, reduce the amount of water you give your maple in the late summer and early autumn. Don't let it dry out completely but starve it enough so that it stops growing new leaves and beings the change in colour.

Protecting from Frost

Spring is when your Japanese Maple is most prone to damage. The first bit of warm weather will cause it to break dormancy and produce new leaves. Generally, there's still several frosts after the initial warm period. Because of that, it can be dangerous for your maple, especially when its young. Keep the tree covered when the forecast calls for frost.