



METRO MAPLES

May 2019 Newsletter



PINE BARK MULCH

We now sell bags of pine bark to amend your soil.



ROUGH BARK MAPLES

This month, we discuss three cultivars known for their rough textured bark.



HOW TO WATER

How much? How often?

PINE BARK MULCH

For years, we have recommended pine bark as the preferred soil amendment when planting maples in clay soils. Mixing some pine bark with your native soil can improve the aeration of the soil and help the tree produce roots more quickly. A 1-2" top layer of mulch over your trees roots will help retain moisture, help control weeds, and will break down over time, enriching the soil.

We also use composted pine bark in all of our containers because it is slightly acidic and strikes the right balance of drainage and water retention.

So, we've recently begun filling sand bags with mulch for our customers to take home. The bags weigh about 20 lbs and are \$5.





Fall brings bright golds, oranges, and reds to the large 'Nishiki gawa' in our nursery.

ROUGH BARK CULTIVARS

We currently carry 3 different cultivars of rough bark Japanese maples: 'Arakawa,' 'Nishiki gawa,' and 'Hubble's Super Cork.'

What differentiates these trees is their bark, which begins a smooth waxy green (similar to most other Japanese maples) and develops bumpy brown plates over time which grow and ultimately fuse. The end result is a tree slightly smaller than the species *Acer palmatum*, and with the same elegant shape and foliage, but with a much thicker and darker bark, more like an oak than a maple.

Of the three varieties, 'Arakawa' is probably the most well-known.

The plates on 'Arakawa' are light gray and slightly raised. 'Nishiki gawa' has a rougher texture, a darker gray color, and tends to develop that texture more quickly - typically on wood that is 3-4 years old.

'Hubble's Super Cork' is exclusive to Metro Maples, and is rougher than either 'Arakawa' or 'Nishiki gawa' and "corks up" really quickly as well.



This is a prime example of mature 'Nishiki gawa' bark.



In this picture, you can see the patches of smooth green bark as well as the larger, lighter, bumpy bark typical of 'Arakawa.'

We currently have 'Arakawa' in 1, 2, 3, and 15 gallon sizes; 'Nishiki gawa' in 1, 2, 3, and 5 gallon sizes; and 'Hubble's Super Cork' in 1, 2, and 3 gallon sizes. Prices range from as low as \$25 to \$225.

HOW TO WATER

As the temperatures climb and rain becomes less frequent, the need to water your trees will increase. Water is essential to growing Japanese maples, and watering *correctly* might be the single best thing you can do for a tree in your landscape.

Is this going to be complicated?

Not really. What we're looking for is a consistently moist soil that is neither soggy nor completely dry.



This is a stock photo, and the guy pictured isn't a Metro Maples employee, but he seems to be enjoying himself nevertheless.

Can I use my irrigation system or do I have to hand water?

An irrigation system (either sprinkler or drip) will do just fine. Water is water, and the tree won't care how the water gets there. That being said, it's always a good idea to check on your trees regularly to make sure they are healthy and aren't too wet or too dry.

How will I know if the soil is too dry?

The tree will let you know first by wilting. The leaves will droop and look sad and tired. Next, the tips of the leaves will begin to turn a dry, sandy brown color. If the drought continues, the dryness will work its way down the leaves until the entire leaf is dry and crispy.

How will I know if the soil is too wet?

This can be a bit trickier, as the tree will give you a similar look if the soil is too wet. The leaf tips will brown, but tend to be a darker brown color, and the tree can wilt. The best strategy is to simply check the soil with your finger. If the tree is stressed and the soil beneath it is muddy or soggy, it's definitely too wet.

So there is such a thing as too much water?

Yep.

Why is that?

Japanese maples want a balance of both water and air in their root systems. That's why we're always talking about good drainage. When the water drains away, air fills the little pockets in the soil where the water was and the roots use that air.



This 'Nuresagi' got a bit dry last summer, but came through just fine and colored up nicely for this picture, taken last November.



I mean just look at how much fun he's having!

Do they need more water when it's hot?
Yes. Water evaporates through their leaves, and the warmer and drier the air is, the faster that evaporation happens. So when we get those triple-digit temperatures later this summer, it's likely your trees will want some extra water just like we will.

What about Shantung?

Shantung maples are far more drought-tolerant than Japanese maples, and grow well in more adverse conditions. For the first year after you plant your Shantung it would be great to give the tree a drink every 10 days or so.

Once the tree becomes established, it can be quite drought tolerant. You'll get a denser crown and more vigorous growth with regular watering, but Shantung maples are highly adaptable and will adjust their growth rate to their conditions.

One thing Shantung maples really seem to resent is flooded or water-logged soil. The best way to

avoid this is obviously to plant the tree in a location that doesn't flood. The second best way is to make sure the root flare of the tree is elevated above the surrounding grade. Even a height of 3 or 4 inches can make a big difference in the health of the tree.

We hope these few pointers will help you and your trees through the harsh Texas summer with a little less stress.



Fall color on a Shantung maple near our front gate.



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