



METRO MAPLES

October 2019 Newsletter



THEY'RE (NEARLY) HEEERE!

New trees are coming! Next week, maybe. We think. Definitely soon. See below.



GHOSTS!

In keeping with the 'spirit' of Halloween, we take a look at the 'Ghost' cultivars.



FALL COLOR

When, why, and how do they do it?

THEY'RE (NEARLY) HEEERE!

We are still in the middle of prime tree planting season and are eagerly anticipating the arrival of 200+ trees from our primary grower in Oregon.

The trees are in the process of being dug, wrapped and loaded and should be on their way to Metro Maples within the next few days.

We're always excited about getting new trees. It's like Christmas for us, getting to unwrap all these amazing specimens. It's a ton of work, but so much fun.



This picture was taken last year. A similar truck full of literally 20 tons of maples will be here soon.

We don't yet have a firm date from our supplier, but we will send out an email announcement once the trees have arrived, and will update the header at the top of the Metro Maples website as well.



Fall color on 'Sister Ghost' is a vivid gold

GHOSTS!

It's Halloween, so we thought this would be a good time to talk about a group of cultivars call the "Ghost Series."

These cultivars were developed by Talon Buchholz of Buchholz Nursery in Gaston, Oregon. All of them feature reticulated leaves, meaning the veins in the leaves are visible, giving them a skeletal or 'ghostly' appearance. Adding to the creepiness are the heavily serrated leaves that look like teeth.

'Sister Ghost' is a upright but spreading tree to about 8 feet with greenish-white leaves and deep green veins. The parent tree was the similarly reticulated 'Shigitatsu sawa'. Fall color is a bright yellow.

'Purple Ghost' originated around 1990 as a seedling with *Acer palmatum* 'Kasagi yama' as the parent tree. The leaves are deep magenta and purple with a visible reticulated vein. This variety maxes out at about 8 feet.



'Purple Ghost' foliage in late Spring. The visible veins and ruffled edges are normal and typical in this cultivar. It is weird, but lovely.



The colors on 'Amber Ghost' in spring can be spectacular.

The best-growing cultivar in the "Ghost Series" we've grown at Metro Maples is *Acer palmatum* 'Amber Ghost'. It displays a vigorous upright habit, somewhat narrow (but full) when young, then eventually more broad at maturity. The "Amber" in the name reflects the foliage color in spring and early summer. The amber color and reticulation tend to lessen as the Texas summer heats up, but the tree retains its graceful habit through the fall when it lights up in oranges and reds.

FALL COLOR

Fall color is one of the most loved aspects of maple trees and ginkgos. Over the next few weeks, our nursery will be a constantly shifting palette from the deep greens and purples of summer to the golds, oranges and crimsons of autumn. We thought we'd take a moment here to break down the when, why, and wherefore of autumn leaves.

When will I get color?

Pretty soon. The recent cool weather and shorter days will trigger the trees to start changing. We've already seen some early signs this week at the farm. Over the next couple of weeks things will really get going, and colors typically peak around the week of Thanksgiving in our part of the world.



The bright yellow of Ginkgo leaves in autumn rivals any maple.

Why so late?

Geography. Our southern location means we have warmer weather and longer daylight hours than our friends up north.

What makes some trees turn yellow and others turn orange or red?

That's a simple question with a complex answer. Deciduous trees begin to turn colors when



This Paperbark Maple at Metro Maples is always amazing in autumn.

the weather cools and days shorten. When these things happen photosynthesis becomes less efficient. So the tree breaks down the green chlorophyll (the protein responsible for photosynthesis) in the leaves into a number of amino acids, which the tree then stores in its root system to use again next spring.

When the green chlorophyll leaves the leaves, what remains are yellow and golden orange pigments in xanthophylls and carotenoids which are always in the leaves, but are obscured by the chlorophyll in the growing season.

Red leaves are a little different. They're caused by a pigments called anthocyanins. These pigments are not in the leaves during the growing season, but are built in



Fall color on a Shantung maple at the front gate of Metro Maples. On this tree the yellows deepen to golden orange late in the season.

early fall. Sunny days and cool but not freezing weather tends to result in the best red colors. Autumn of 2018 was really great for red and red-orange trees.

Why do the trees do this?

It takes extra effort for the trees to produce red pigments, so there must be an advantage but we don't know for certain why this happens. There are several theories. It could be a way to protect the trees from predatory insects. Or it could be to shade out other competing trees for a few extra weeks each year, giving the red-leaved trees an advantage. Or it could be to attract birds which would then eat and subsequently disperse seeds.

Is there anything I can do to change the timing or the colors on my tree?

Not really. Following our basic guidelines on keeping the tree healthy throughout the growing season will ensure your tree has as many happy leaves as possible in autumn. Beyond that, we are subject to the weather and the whims of nature. Each year is different and some years are better than others, but by selecting trees that grow well in our climate and are known to have specific genetics, you greatly increase your chances of getting the colors, shapes, and sizes you want in your garden. There will always be an element of chance, but that's why we place trees in a garden instead of stones and statues. The fact that our gardens are alive and always changing is what makes them so special.



'Osakazuki' is green in spring and summer, but the red color in fall is absolutely stunning.



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