



METRO MAPLES

March 2021 Newsletter



WINTER-POCALYPSE

How Metro Maples handled the worst cold snap in decades.



ACER GRISEUM

The Paperbark Maple is a rare and often overlooked tree that has a lot to offer.



REPOTTING

A critical step to successfully growing maples in containers.

WINTER-POCALYPSE

Wow. That was tough! There are often times when a cold snap and snowfall can be seen as just a beautiful change of pace from the typical Texas winter. This was not one of those times.

February 2021 was one for the history books and not in a fun way. Record cold and days without power created a lot of anxiety and caused us to brush up on our plumbing and electrical skills, as well as our appreciation of the BTU.

But the temperatures have warmed, power has been restored, and the damage to the farm overall was minimal. Less than 1% of our inventory was hurt by the cold and over the next few weeks, the trees will begin to break dormancy as though nothing happened while they slept through the winter.

This spring we will be open by appointment from Monday through Saturday from 8:00 am - 2:00 pm. We'd love to see you!



The maples handled the cold a lot better than we did!

ACER GRISEUM - THE PAPERBARK MAPLE

Acer griseum (commonly known as the Paperbark maple) is an outstanding maple species that is too often overlooked and deserves more consideration from gardeners and designers.

The Paperbark maple is native to central China, where it tolerates hot summers and cold winters. The tree is hardy to Zone 4 (think Iowa) but grows well as an understory tree here in Texas. This tree is slow-growing to 20' tall after about 20 years.

The name *griseum* refers to the silvery gray and velvety underside of the leaf in the spring and summer months. Fall color here in Texas is always

a vivid deep red, and tends to arrive a bit earlier than the Japanese maples.

This species is notoriously difficult to propagate. Fewer than 5% of the seeds produced by these trees are viable, which when combined with the slow growth rate can be discouraging to wholesale growers, which can make them hard to find in retail nurseries.

The species has become endangered in its native range in China due to deforestation and urban expansion, but this unique species has found its way into gardens and landscapes across the globe.

Paperbarks can handle a few hours of intermittent sun, but planting them in partial shade under the canopy of a larger tree is definitely the best way to go.

We currently have a wide range of sizes of these cultivars available including some really nice 10-gallon trees that are over 6' tall. You can see a full listing of our inventory on our website.



The Paperbark's bark peels off in curls as it grows and kind of looks like . . . paper.



This Paperbark at the gate to Metro Maples is always one of the first trees to color up in the fall with this glowing scarlet.



Paperbark leaves look completely different from Japanese and Shantung maples. The tree is totally harmless and any resemblance to poison ivy is purely coincidental.

REPOTTING

Spring is nearly here, and it won't be long until our maple trees wake up and begin to grow.

Japanese maples in particular are very well-suited to growing in containers, provided those containers are:

- well-drained
- the proper size for the tree's root system
- watered frequently



This newly sprouted seedling has plenty of room to grow for now, but it won't be long until it will need a bigger pot.



Shallow bowls are ideal for Japanese maples, and are an unobtrusive presence in the garden. Just be sure that you can see water draining out of the bottom of the bowl every time you water.

By repotting trees before the buds begin to open, we can address the first two of these three concerns and put the tree in position to take full advantage of the ideal spring weather.

Maple trees are shallow-rooted, with lots of fibrous, hair-like roots. The root system is every bit as important as the parts of the tree above the soil line.

The youngest and smallest roots are like the capillaries in our bodies -- they are where all the transfer of water, gases, and minerals take place. So, the more young roots the tree has, the healthier and more vigorous the tree will be.

The thicker, older, and woodier roots are like our arteries -- they're the conduits that convey water, nitrogen, and trace minerals from the soil up into the branches and leaves. They also store carbohydrates and serve as anchors to hold the tree up and keep it stable.

Ideally we should repot a tree when the root system has filled the current pot, but hasn't yet become rootbound. It's easier on everyone involved if we can just slip the tree out of the current pot and place it in a slightly larger pot and fill the gap with fresh potting mix and water well.

At Metro Maples, we promote our youngest trees each year, and typically we only go up one size at a time. We want to give the roots room to grow, but we don't want to go too large at any one time, as doing so can result in the soil staying too wet, which can then lead to fungal issues.

If you want to limit your tree's growth, or you'd just like to keep the tree in the same size container for the long term, you will need to root-prune your tree every few years.

Root-pruning is just what it sounds like: simply prune off the outer inch or two of the rootball and re-pot the tree in the same container with fresh potting mix filling the gap between the root ball and the wall of the container.

This may seem a bit harsh, but cutting back some of the older roots and soil will give the tree a chance to produce new feeder roots in the fresh soil.

It slows growth, but maintains the health of the tree. This is taken to extreme lengths in bonsai -- trees can be meticulously maintained for decades in just a few inches of soil.



Maple addicts take note: Growing trees in pots is a great way to pack lots of trees in a small space.

NOTE: This kind of work should be done while the tree is still dormant. Root-pruning a Japanese maple in spring or summer can be a risky proposition.

Container-grown trees can be easily transplanted to the ground, even after years of container culture. It's best to do this in Texas during the season of "not summer." Growing trees in containers temporarily can be a great way to try out different locations and see where your tree will fit best from both a design and a health perspective.

Hopefully this answers more questions than it creates, but if you have other questions, feel free to email us or better yet come out to the farm and say hello!



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