

Helping  
Carolinians  
Increase Their  
Knowledge of  
Gardening,  
Manage Their  
Landscape  
Investment &  
Protect the  
Environment

JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

## Japanese Maples Provide Form and Foliage Treasures

**E**legant form, ornate leaf pattern and striking leaf color establish Japanese maples as our most peaceful and eye-pleasing small trees in the landscape. They are perfect for today's residential home, providing graceful beauty and enough shade for a small patio, porch or garden. The tranquil appeal of many cultivars comes from downcast, closely layered branches which provide cascading sheets of leaves that yield the image of a foliage waterfall. Most grow 15- to 20-feet high and wide and are considered slow growers.

When planted in the right place, Japanese maples have few problems. Dappled shade is ideal. Too much shade and they are less vigorous and may even perish. They can be planted in full sun if they are watered during drought but some cultivars may exhibit scorched leaves more so than others in such bright light. Whether you plant in clay, sandy or rocky soil, prepare the soil well and make sure it's on the acidic side with a 6.0 pH level.

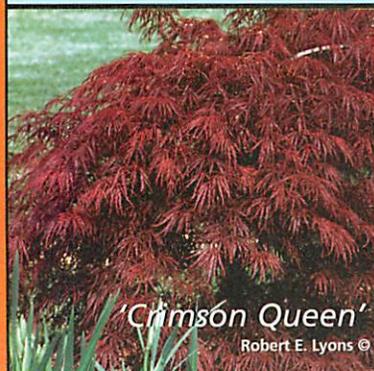
Japanese maples are grouped into several varieties according to size and leaf shape. The single most popular cultivar is 'Bloodgood'. It tolerates heat, retains its conspicuous purple foliage in the summer and turns a dazzling red in the fall. Its eye-catching, red, papery fruit is an added bonus. Those labeled 'dissectum' somewhere in their scientific names have finely threaded leaves and provide the familiar manicured look found in formal Japanese gardens.

An incredible array of Japanese maple cultivars is on the market. Those pictured, 'Oregon Sunset', 'Crimson Queen', and 'Osakazuki' are three examples among the plethora available.

The Japanese maple is the signature plant of the JC Raulston Arboretum at NC State University and there is a good chance you'll see one from any vantage point in the arboretum. For a listing of the arboretum's cultivars, visit <[www.arb.ncsu.edu](http://www.arb.ncsu.edu)>. Click on "Search Our Current Plantings" and type in "*Acer palmatum*". Just watch how many come up and then go see them first-hand! **John MacNair**

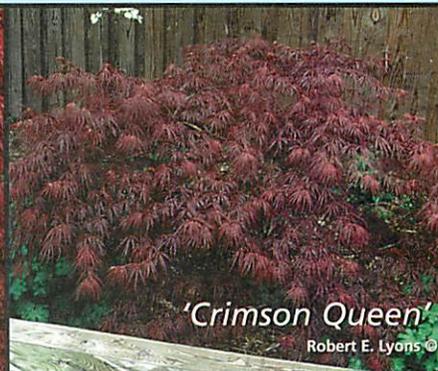
'Oregon Sunset'

Robert E. Lyons ©



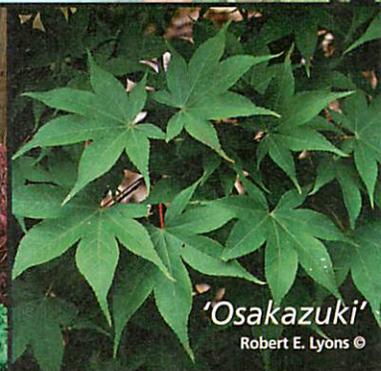
'Crimson Queen'

Robert E. Lyons ©



'Crimson Queen'

Robert E. Lyons ©



'Osakazuki'

Robert E. Lyons ©

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National Association of County Agricultural Agents Best Team Newsletter

International Association of Business Communicators 1999 Silver Quill Award

Southern Extension Forest Resource Specialists Award of Excellence



Robert E. Lyons ©

*Reed Grass*

Robert E. Lyons ©

*Canadian Hemlock*

## Privacy Matters – Screening Plants to Consider

A landscape's basic function is to create a personal environment in the home's outside areas. Public areas in the front of the house most often are designed to create a pleasant view from the street while the private areas, usually in the back, are often designed to be an extension of the house itself. These extensions are like outdoor rooms that can extend the living space of the home. The result can transform a backyard used for garbage cans, clotheslines and vegetable gardens into a natural setting for relaxation, meals and entertainment.

One of the essential features of privacy areas are plants that screen undesirable sights and noises. Landscapers have overused the Leyland cypress and photinia to the point that these plants have a high probability of developing pest problems. There are many selections, however, that can serve the same function beyond these two problem species.

For year-round privacy, an evergreen hedge is the best choice. For a high screen, in full sun to partial shade, Canadian hemlock, Deodar cedar, Japanese cryptomeria, Southern magnolia, Arizona cypress, Eastern red cedar and 'Nellie R. Stevens' holly are effective. Be sure to give these plants plenty of room to grow. Spacing them 10 to 12 feet apart would be about right and may even be too

tight after they begin to mature. If you do not like the idea of these huge spaces between plants you can purposely overplant then cut out every other plant in five years or so.

A screen consisting of a single species in a uniform planting may not be the best choice. This type of repetition lends a degree of formality that is not always desirable. In addition, if a screen consists of all the same species, replacing a plant can be a serious problem. It is often difficult and sometimes impossible to find the desired variety of a specific size to fill in the hole created by a missing plant. Mixed borders are always more natural looking and easier to repair if a plant is lost. A slightly shorter evergreen screen could consist of Camellia japonica, Gold thread cypress, anise tree, Hollywood junipers, 'Burford' holly, yaupon holly, English laurel and wax myrtle. Remember, as a rule, the junipers like more sun and the hollies tolerate shade.

Many deciduous plants also make good hedges or screens. Scotch broom, winged euonymus, forsythia, witch hazel and any number of spireas work well. Also consider some of the taller ornamental grasses such as pampas, zebra or feather reed.

*Carl Matyac*

## Plant a Crop to Improve Your Soil

Late this fall, after you've harvested the last garden produce, consider planting a cover crop to help reduce erosion and retain nutrients that might otherwise be leached from the soil.



Robert E. Lyons ©

Some cover crops, such as clovers, vetches and peas, add nitrogen to the soil. Other helpful cover crops are rye and wheat. To learn more, contact your county Cooperative Extension Center. *Karen Neill*

## Test Soil for Successful Garden

A soil analysis every two to three years is one of the most valuable tools for successful gardeners. In North Carolina, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services provides this service free of charge. A soil test report will tell you exactly how much lime and fertilizer your lawn and garden need to keep your plants as healthy as possible. In addition, the analysis will identify any needed micronutrients and may reveal the cause of problems in your garden.

Collecting a sample is easy, but it has to be done right to get accurate results. Your county Cooperative Extension Center can provide all the details. The most important step is to get a representative sample. Although you'll only

be submitting about a pint of soil, the laboratory will perform more than a dozen tests. That pint of soil has to accurately represent the soil conditions in your entire 100-square-foot flower bed or half-acre lawn.

To get a good sample, collect it when it's only slightly moist. Collect soil to the rooting depth of the plant in question (about 4 inches for a lawn; 6 to 8 inches for shrubs, trees and vegetable gardens). Also, for each sample, collect soil from about six locations and mix it together. Remember, contact your county Extension Center for complete details, a free soil test kit and for assistance in interpreting the report.

For more information, access [www.agr.state.nc.us/agronomi/](http://www.agr.state.nc.us/agronomi/).

*Paul McKenzie*



## Q&A Does the Leyland cypress have a lot of problems?

Not a lot, but the main two that cause folks problems are bagworms and Leyland canker, and they can be quite troublesome when they occur. You can recognize bagworm caterpillars by their protective bag camouflaged with dead needles. Use Dipel, a *Bacillus thuringiensis* product, in July to control them. Use Orthene or other caterpillar pesticide later in the season. Leyland canker is a fungus disease. It shows up as a sunken area with resin oozing from the tree, although you normally see the dying foliage first. Leyland canker doesn't have an obvious crack along the margin of

the sunken area like a less damaging disease. Control this disease by pruning out the canker. Both bagworms and canker spread easily when several Leylands are planted together or in a row. While I still recommend Leylands as screening plants, I suggest mixing several other screening plants in the same row. Wax myrtles contrast nicely with Leylands. I also like 'Nellie R. Stevens' holly and 'Fosteri' holly. *Sasanqua* camellias make nice screening plants. 'Little Gem' magnolia is one of my favorites. Check with the local garden center for other screening plants they have. **David Goforth**

## Your Garden's Magic Wings

Few garden decorations can exceed the delight and charm of nature's own butterflies. On a warm, sunny day these fluttering jewels provide color and motion that doubles the pleasure of gardening.

Butterfly gardening has become a popular way to observe, study, conserve and enjoy butterflies.

To attract a lot of butterflies to a garden, make sure food is available for the adults and the caterpillars.



Robert E. Lyons ©

Flowers are the major food source for adult butterflies. Butterfly flower favorites include the aster, black-eyed Susan, lantana, butterfly bush, penta, coreopsis and purple coneflower. Host plants for larvae include parsley, passionflower, hollyhock, clover, milkweed and violet.

If you're interested in butterflies, a trip to the Magic Wings Butterfly House of the North Carolina Museum of Life and Science in Durham will delight you. You'll encounter over 1,000 exotic butterflies in flight and their tropical habitats.

A visit to the Magic Wings exhibit is free with general admission to the museum; call (919) 220-5429 for details. In Charlotte, visit the Nature Museum's Butterfly Pavilion; call (704) 372-6261 for details. **Karen Neill**

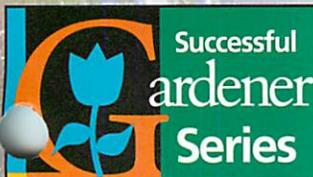
## ENVIRO-TIP

### Reduce Fertilizer Use

The water quality of our lakes and streams has been in the news a lot lately, and the finger often points to farmers and sewage treatment plants when there are problems. The truth is that we all need to do our part in protecting our waters. Reducing the amount of fertilizer we use in our lawns and landscapes is an important step. Reducing fertilizer use, however, doesn't have to mean sickly, pale, yellowing plants. In fact, if we apply fertilizers correctly, we can actually use less while keeping our plants healthier. Here are some ways we can all do our part:

- Collect soil samples to determine the exact fertilizer needs in your lawn and landscape. Today's quality fertilizers are expensive, and there's no reason to waste them!

- Fertilize at the correct time. Different plants need fertilizer at specific times of the year. If you apply at the wrong time, you are wasting your money and possibly harming your plants. For example, never fertilize cool-season grasses in the heat of the summer.
- Measure your landscape! Soil test reports, as well as the instructions on fertilizer bags, make recommendations based on the area to be fertilized. Get a long measuring tape and record the area of your turf, shrub beds and flower beds. Record this in a permanent location for a handy reference in the future. And remember that applying more than the recommended amount is likely to do more harm than good to your plants. **Paul McKenzie**



Fall lawn care determines the beauty of your lawn next spring! Contact your county Cooperative Extension Center for information on Extension's

Successful Gardener classes being offered this fall. You'll increase your gardening knowledge as well as learn how to manage your landscape investment and protect the environment!

### gardentalk

#### September Haiku

*Japanese maple  
blushes scarlet at the thought  
of losing its leaves.*

– Heather Allane Hiebert





*Tithonia rotundifolia*  
**'Torch'**  
Robert E. Lyons ©

Garden Spot

**The Sandhills**

**Horticultural Gardens,**

established in the 1960s, provide an outdoor classroom for students in the Sandhills Community College Landscape Gardening School. Students design, construct and plant these gardens to demonstrate the wide variety of plants available to home landscapers. Among the 10 distinct gardens is the Sir Walter Raleigh Garden, the Fruit and Vegetable Display Garden, the Desmond Native Wetland Trail Garden and the Rose Promenade featuring modern varieties. Decorative structures and fountains tie this marvelous garden together. The Atkins Hillside Garden features a winding river rock stream, waterfalls and pools. Gardens are open daily from sunrise to sunset, with no admission fee. Group tours are available and many garden-related activities are offered. Find the garden at 2200 Airport Road in Pinehurst. Call the visitor's center at (910) 695-3964 for details.

*Karen Neill*

**Gardening in September**

**Lawns**

- In the mountains and Piedmont, fall is the time to establish a lawn or overseed an existing one to carry you through the winter with a good stand of a cool-season grass.
- If not overseeding, put out pre-emergence weed control products to control the winter annual weeds.
- Overseed warm-season grasses with ryegrass now except for centipede grass lawns.

**Ornamentals**

- Fall is the best time to move or plant shrubs and trees. For the mountains and Piedmont, September and October are best, while on the coast it's October and November.
- To add more color to your outdoor landscape, plant ginkgo trees for their brilliant fall yellow color.

Other good choices are red maples, sugar maples, Japanese maples, sourwood and redbuds. As autumn merges into winter, accent the landscape with berry color from such plants as pyracantha,

- nandina, viburnum, beautyberry and many of the holly group.
- Purchase chrysanthemums to add color to your landscape. Mums and pansies brighten up the landscape as many of the annuals start to fade for the season.
- Do not fertilize your shrubs and trees at this time.
- Do not fertilize your perennials; let them go dormant.
- Do not stimulate new growth for most ornamentals by excessive pruning or fertilizing. Let the plants go dormant naturally.

**Edibles**

- There's still time to plant a fall garden for some of your favorite cool-season crops.
- Set out new fruit trees.
- Spray for peach tree borers on plum, nectarine and peach trunks. *David Barkley*



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