

Advice Sheet: Acers, Common name; Maple



Acers are slow growing deciduous trees/shrubs that are generally grown for their decorative foliage.

Most cultivars are fully winter hardy, however late spring frosts can cause severe damage to emerging foliage.

Species such as acer palmatum ( Japanese Maple) can grow to a height of around 4.5 metres (15ft) and have a spread of around 2.5 metres (8ft) making them suitable for growing in containers or smaller gardens

They appreciate free-draining and humus-rich soil that is slightly acidic and does not dry out in summer or become waterlogged in winter.

Most cultivars will adapt well to other soil types, but will not tolerate extremes of wet or dry and do not flourish in excessively alkaline soils.

Improve clay soil, by adding gravel/grit to help with winter drainage and organic matter to improve summer moisture retention.

The rubrum species is tolerant of chalk, but does best in lime-free soil.

Asiatic species are lime-tolerant and require protection from cold winds, late frosts and early morning sun,

Variegated cultivars need partial shade to prevent sun scorch.

Red-leaved cultivars need some sun to develop their characteristic rich coloration.

Green-leaved cultivars will tolerate full sun but in hot conditions may scorch.

The most common problem leaf scorch, is when the foliage turns brown late in the season particularly around the margins and veins, then curl and shrivel.

This is caused by water being lost from the leaves faster than the roots can take it up.

It is not necessary to prune back unless the stems are damaged.

Such conditions do not usually kill plants, but those that show the symptoms should be well watered and sheltered even if this means erecting a temporary wind break.

Various factors can cause scorch, e.g. frost, drought, drying winds, hot sun and even salt-laden winds in coastal areas.

Maples are prone to attack by vine weevil, aphid and scale insects.

They are also prone to stem die-back.

Where this happens, prune the dead stems out to healthy wood