

# Classification of Japanese Maple Cultivar Groups

## *The Official Classification of The Maple Society*

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*Acer* 'Ō-sakazuki' (Amoenum Group)

**Amoenum: Group 1.** The Amoenum Group encompasses cultivars that have no characteristics such as foliage color or variegation that assign them to one of the other groups. Characteristics are 7 lobed leaves, of which the basal lobes can be very small, leaves divided to half the leaf blade. Lobes wide and simply serrate. The type cultivar is *Acer* 'Ō-sakazuki'.



*Acer* 'Bloodgood' (Atropurpureum Group)

**Atropurpureum: Group 2.** Contains all the upright growing cultivars with red foliage, with the exception of those belonging to the Linearilobum Group or the Witches Broom Group. Hybrids such as *Acer* 'Yasemin' (*shirasawanum* × *palmatum*) are included. *Acer* 'Bloodgood' is the type cultivar.



*Acer* 'Summer Gold' (Aureum Group)

**Aureum: Group 3.** This group is characterized by yellow or orange spring foliage eventually turning yellow or lime green in summer. It consists almost entirely of *Acer palmatum* and *Acer palmatum* × *Acer shirasawanum* selections. A classic is *Acer* 'Katsura'; other examples are *Acers* 'Summer Gold' and 'Jordan', known to be of hybrid origin (*Acer palmatum* × *shirasawanum*).



*Acer* 'Pévé Starfish' (Convexum Group)

**Convexum: Group 4.** Many in this group are of hybrid origin, showing a strong *shirasawanum* influence. *Acer* 'Trompenburg' is a well known example that shows the main characteristic, convex lobes.



*Acer* 'Ruben' (Corallinum Group)

**Corallinum: Group 5.** These maples exhibit bright pink tones in spring. *Acer* 'Deshōjō' is a fine example. The cultivars in this group seem to originate from *Acer palmatum*, rather than the related species.



*Acer* 'Kinky Krinkle' (Crispum Group)

**Crispum: Group 6.** Relatively small five-lobed crinkled leaves define this group. They are sometimes thought of as dwarfs, but *Acer* 'Shishi-gashira' can easily reach ten feet or more.



*Acer* 'Dissectum' (Dissectum Group)



*Acer* 'Koto-no-ito' (Linearilobum Group)



*Acer* 'Soma-no-kawa' (Matsumurae Group)



*Acer* 'Kagiri-nishiki' (Marginatum Group)



*Acer* 'Diana' (Palmatum Group)



*Acer* 'Nishiki-gawa' (Pinebark Group)

**Dissectum: Group 7.** All the members of this group originate from the species *Acer amoenum* var. *matsumurae* with which they share their deeply divided leaves, all the way to the base of the leaf. The lobes are strong doubly serrate and the vast majority of cultivars in this group have a weeping habit, although *Acer* 'Sei-ryū' is upright. The typical cultivar in this group, among hundreds, is *Acer* 'Garnet'.

**Linearilobum: Group 8.** Extremely narrow, sometimes strap-like lobes, divided to the leaf base, define this group. The first flush in spring sometimes shows wider lobes, but the mature leaves show the true characteristic of this group. A good example can be found in *Acer* 'Koto-no-ito'.

**Matsumurae: Group 9.** Referring to the former botanical classification. 7 to 9 lobed leaves divided to the leaf base, but not as strongly doubly serrate and without the weeping mushroom habit of the Dissectum Group. *Acer* 'Soma-no-kawa' is a fine example of the Matsumurae Group.

**Marginatum: Group 10.** Two groups of variegated plants are recognized in this system. This group is restricted to variegated cultivars of which the leaf margins are distinctly different in color from the rest of the leaf. A commonly seen example is *Acer* 'Butterfly'.

**Palmatum: Group 11.** Cultivars in this group do not show characteristics in leaf color or shape, bark color or texture that places them in one of the other groups. The leaves are 5 or occasionally 7 lobed, divided to no more than two thirds of the leaf. *Acer* 'Diana' is an example. Many of the lovely Japanese Maples found in large gardens and arboreta fall into this group.

**Pinebark: Group 12.** Cultivars in this group do not exhibit the usual smooth bark of Japanese Maples, with rough pine-like bark beginning to show as the plants mature. The leaves are not distinct from the ordinary *Acer palmatum*, with the bark being the only defining characteristic. *Acer* 'Nishiki-gawa' starts to show its rough bark in the second or third year.



*Acer* 'Sango-kaku' (Red Wood Group)

**Red Wood: Group 13.** Bright red or orange winter branches define the cultivars in this group, with *Acer* 'Sango-kaku' as the most well known cultivar. The susceptibility to branch die back in this group can be problematic.



*Acer* 'Nathan' (Reticulatum Group)

**Reticulatum: Group 14.** The leaf veins of the cultivars in this group are distinctly different in color from rest of the leaf. *Acer* 'Shigi-tatsu-sawa' was the first to be introduced in cultivation, but in later years many new cultivars, both green and red, have been introduced into this group.



*Acer* 'Beni-ha-garomo' (Sessilifolium Group)

**Sessilifolium: Group 15.** The five-lobed leaves in this group are distinct in shape as they lack a petiole and because the lobes are reduced at the base to a petiole like attachment. *Acer* 'Beni-ha-garomo' is a promising cultivar. The variegated cultivar *Acer* 'Hazeroino' is included in the Sessilifolium Group as leaf characteristic is considered higher priority than variegation.



*Acer* 'Uki-gumo' (Variegatum Group)

**Variegatum: Group 16.** The Variegatum Group consists of all other variegated Japanese Maples not in the Marginatum Group. *Acer* 'Uki-gumo', an old cultivar from Japan with a blotched variegation, represents this group, which encompasses a wide range of variegation patterns.



*Acer* 'Carrl's Corner' (Witches Broom Group)

**Witches Broom: Group 17.** The reduced central lobe on the majority of the leaves is a indicator for members of this group, as well as restricted growth, often but not always globular in shape with a strong branching habit. *Acer* 'Carll's Corner', (often seen as 'Carl's Corner'), very compact growing with red foliage, is a well known member of this group.

## Appendix: Notes on those *Acer* Species which are Eligible for The Maple Society Classification of Japanese Maple Cultivar Groups.

The “Maple Society Classification of Japanese Maple Cultivar Groups” groups cultivars into one of 17 Groups, according to morphology. It is not a botanical classification, and Group names should not be confused with botanical binomial names. This document discusses which species and hybrids may be classified according to the Maple Society Classification of Japanese Maple Cultivar Groups.

The primary maples to which the *Maple Society Classification of Japanese Maple Cultivar Groups* applies are those of the ***Acer palmatum* complex**, or those that are directly known to be, or are morphologically obvious hybrids with said complex. We herein define the “*Acer palmatum* complex” to mean the modern taxonomy of *Acer palmatum*, *Acer amoenum*, and *Acer amoenum* var. *matsumurae*, this latter including all of the so-called “dissectums” or “lace-leaf” cultivars. In previous parlance, the “*Acer palmatum* complex” refers to *Acer palmatum* subsp. *palmatum*, *Acer palmatum* subsp. *amoenum*, and *Acer palmatum* subsp. *matsumurae*, according to the taxonomy given in “Maples of the World”, van Gelderen et al.

Therefore:

1. All maple cultivars **within the *Acer palmatum* complex** as defined above **shall be classified** according to the *Maple Society Classification of Japanese Maple Cultivar Groups*.
2. The other species’ cultivars which **may be classified** due to hybrid status as defined in (3) are: *Acer circinatum*, *Acer elegantulum*, *Acer japonicum*, *Acer oliverianum*, *Acer pauciflorum*, *Acer pseudosieboldianum*, *Acer pubipalmatum*, *Acer serrulatum*, *Acer shirasawanum*, *Acer sieboldianum*, *Acer tenuifolium*, *Acer tutcheri*.
3. All maple cultivars emanating from the eligible species in (2), which are either **known to be of hybrid origin with the *Acer palmatum* complex** as defined above; or **which show morphological characteristics which make it obvious and indisputable that they are hybridized with the *Acer palmatum* complex** as defined above, **shall be classified** according to the *Maple Society Classification of Japanese Maple Cultivar Groups*.
4. All maple cultivars involving hybridization between the species mentioned in (2), or any other *Acer* species, but not hybridized with the *Acer palmatum* complex as defined above, **shall not be classified** according to the *Maple Society Classification of Japanese Maple Cultivar Groups*, e.g. *Acer sieboldianum* × *elegantulum* shall not be classified.
5. All maple cultivars which are **suspected of being hybridized** with the *Acer palmatum* complex, but do not fulfill criterion (3), **shall not be classified** according to the *Maple Society Classification of Japanese Maple Cultivar Groups*. This clause invokes the principle of caution in order to avoid classifying maple cultivars, and so disposing of otherwise useful species information, which are within the normal morphological envelope of the source species, e.g. *Acer circinatum* ‘Sunglow’.
6. All cultivars of *Acer* species mentioned in (2) which are not suspected of hybridization with the *Acer palmatum* complex **shall not be classified** according to the *Maple Society Classification of Japanese Maple Cultivar Groups*; for example *Acer shirasawanum* ‘Aureum’.