

JAPANESE MAPLES

Japanese Maples, by J. D. Vertrees, Third Edition, revised and expanded by Peter Gregory, Timber Press, Portland, OR, 2001, 332 pp., hardcover, ISBN 0-88192-501-2, \$49.95.

Timber Press, an internationally respected publisher, comes with another masterpiece – an extensively revised new edition of J. D. Vertrees's classic *Japanese Maples*. Indeed, it was the first book published by Timber Press (1978), over two decades it has become a signature bestseller in Europe, and moreover, it has lived two new editions. It ought to be said that in 1997 *Japanese Maples* was selected by the American Horticultural Society as one of 75 Great American Garden Books. Congratulations on the latest edition go to Peter Gregory, retired curator of the Westonbirt Arboretum and devoted mapleman who undertook to revise and fully update the second edition from 1987.

The enormous growth of new introductions of Japanese maple cultivars in the trade was the starting impulse to the substantial revision of the previous contents. The volume begins with introductory chapters on the history, taxonomy, culture and propagation of Japanese maples. Those chapters are essentially unchanged though few corrections on taxonomy and nomenclature are inserted to conform to up-to-date standards. The revisions include the return to the older name of *Acer pictum* taxon, employment of rules of the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* in the naming of cultivars, and use of the modified Hepburn system of transliteration of Japanese cultivar names into the Roman alphabet. The heart of the book is a description of *A. palmatum* cultivars in the usual A–Z fashion. From all species of the genus, *A. palmatum* has by far the largest number of cultivars, more than 1000. The volume offers detailed descriptions of

some 320 cultivars of the species. Almost 100 new cultivars which have become available since the last revision by the late J. D. Vertrees were added. All entries are accompanied with stunning color photos, and where possible, the meanings of Japanese cultivar names are provided. The whole chapter is devoted to *A. palmatum* cultivars exclusively, cultivars of other Japanese *Acer* species are separated out into a new chapter that lists over 60 cultivars, including those of *A. japonicum*, *A. pictum*, *A. shirasawanum*, *A. sieboldianum* and other Japanese maples. Five useful appendices close the book, some of them are expanded, some added. I give to the attention the appendix on another 150 exciting cultivars not yet fully assessed – surely promising plants for the future.

Over 300 spectacular color photographs illustrate the entries throughout, as would be expected for a volume from Timber Press. Just about everything you could ask for in a book on Japanese maples is included. Though substantially revised, J. D. Vertrees' unique style of writing was preserved. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to both Mr. Vertrees and Mr. Gregory for this labour of love, passion and professional experience. I highly recommend this book to the wider audience, be they interested in Japanese maples or not. Indeed, the book is a delight both to hold and to read. Moreover, it will expand the horizons of most tree breeders, dendrologists, horticulturists and landscape architects. Enjoy the book!

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