

The Tribbium

Piedmont Chapter
North American Rock Garden Society
Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, NC

Unusual Maples for Gardens

By Joann Currier

When people in the south think of maple trees, many picture our native red maple, *Acer rubrum*, with its large 3-5 lobed leaves, dazzling red fall color and grand stature. Although the red maple and its many cultivars are superb trees for autumn color and provide much sought after shade in the summer, they can be too large for many residential landscapes. Fast-growing, they have been promoted in the landscape industry because they are quick to reach a caliper required by landscape codes, easy to produce, and appeal to most people. However, there are a number of other beautiful maple cultivars that are generally smaller with equally good characteristics and are great substitutes in southern gardens.

Of course Japanese maples come to mind, *Acer palmatum*, known for its diversity of form, gorgeous leaf shapes and spring and fall colors, and ability to fit into almost any landscape. *Acer japonicum*, fullmoon

maple, is also another type of Japanese maple with larger leaves and brilliant fall coloration as well as a sturdier branch structure. *Acer griseum*, paperbark maple, is widely known for its beautiful cinnamon-peeling bark, three-lobed leaves and red fall color. We currently have many of these maples in our gardens at The Unique Plant: *Acer griseum*, 3 cultivars of *Acer japonicum* and over 90 cultivars of *Acer palmatum*. (Did I mention that I am addicted to maples!)? In addition to these species that are more common, there are many other maples that we have successfully grown that I will present in this article. Before we look at these species, I will discuss maples in general.

Maples are woody plants, small shrubs to large trees. Most are deciduous, but a few are evergreen. The leaf arrangement is opposite with 3-5-7 lobes (up to 13), but some are unlobed and do not look like the “typical” maple leaf. The flowers produced in spring, while not considered to be ornamentally important, as on *Acer rubrum*, are very prominent on certain species. Double winged fruits called samaras are characteristic of maples and can also provide interest with their size, number and color. Some maples have colorful bark providing interest all seasons.



Acer japonicum 'Aconitifolium'--"Dancing Peacock".

Photo by Unique Plants Nursery



As a group, maples are very adaptable to most soils, acid or alkaline, and other adverse conditions such as pollution or moderate drought. They have a well-branched root system providing stability in windy situations. Although the majority of maples can tolerate moist or dry soils, most prefer moderate moisture with good drainage. Maples are relatively free of pests or disease, usually only becoming a problem if the tree is under stress, like prolonged drought, flooding conditions, or environmental stress like “weed-eater disease”. Most bacterial or fungal leaf spots on the foliage are just cosmetic and not actually harmful to the tree itself.

When planting a maple tree, it is important to provide a loose soil structure for best establishment and prevention of disease and insect problems. Also, trees are less susceptible to problems and have better fall coloration when there is a lower fertility. In addition, fall color is more intense if the soil condition is more on the dry side. Most people have observed maple leaves quickly losing their color and dropping off sooner in wet weather.

Maples are found mostly in the climates of the northern hemisphere, but some occur in equatorial regions, where most of the evergreen species exist. The origin of maples is thought to be in China (where there is the most diversity) spreading to Korea, Japan, eastern Siberia and on to North America, west to Eurasia (Himalayans, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, the Balkans, Europe and northern Africa), and south to the tropics of southeast Asia (Indo-China, Malaysia, and the Philippines). They have adapted to many diverse conditions, but a number of maples from other parts of the world can grow and thrive in our climate. A few superb selections follow:

Acer buergerianum (Trident Maple)

The Trident maple originated in eastern China and Taiwan and was later introduced in Japan many centuries ago where it has naturalized in some areas. It is a fine-textured, handsome tree that grows to about 30 feet tall and is tolerant of dry conditions and air pollution, making it a very adaptable small street tree or midsize tree for residential gardens. The leaves are three-lobed and approximately 3 inches long and 2 inches wide, smaller than those of *Acer rubrum*-easier to rake! The green-leaved forms turn gorgeous reds in the fall. There are a number of really interesting cultivars with different leaf characteristic such as variegation or peculiar rolled leaf shapes (e.g., ‘Naruto’) as well as dwarf selections.



Photo from www.flickr.com/photos/

Acer buergerianum fall color



Acer carpinifolium flowers in spring

Photo from www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/

Acer carpinifolium (Hornbeam Maple)

This maple has the most “un-maple-like” leaves, which resemble those of a hornbeam, *Carpinus*. They are unlobed, 3-4 ½ inches long and 1 ½-2 inches wide, with double serrated margins and prominent ridges, turning a clear golden yellow in the fall. Add to that, beautiful yellow-green flower racemes in spring! (See photo of a champion tree at the National Arboreta in England.) After fall frosts, the tan leaves persist much like our native beech tree, *Fagus grandifolia*. This tree is native to Japan and grows to about 30 feet, preferring moist conditions although it tolerates dryness.



Photo by Unique Plant Nursery

Acer olivaceum fall color

This is another species maple shared with us by Dr. Charles Keith, which again was grafted onto *A. palmatum* with great success. The leaves are similar to those of many green-

Acer olivaceum

I first encountered this elegant maple while walking through the extensive arboretum of Dr. Charles Keith in Orange County. He said this tree was given to him by the late J. D. Vertrees, author of Japanese Maples. He generously shared some scion wood with me, and we had it grafted onto *A. palmatum*. In the summer the bold, 5-lobed green leaves stand out in contrast to other palmate maples. In fall, the colors are gorgeous shades of yellow and red! It is one of our favorite maples and has a prominent spot in the garden. It originated in eastern China and should reach about 30 feet at maturity. We have sent scion wood to area grafters for propagation and have been promoting this tree.

Acer oliverianum



Photo by unique Plant Nursery

Acer oliverianum fall color



Photo by www.flickr.com/photos/ilingworth

Acer truncatum at the Morris Arboretum

leafed *A. palmatum*, the fall colors turning spectacular oranges and reds that seem to hold on for a prolonged time period. It is a vigorous grower with good heat tolerance that will reach 30 feet tall and wide. We have been propagating and promoting this tree as well as a more vigorous alternative to *A. palmatum*.

Acer truncatum (Shantung Maple)

Shantung maple is another favorite maple species from northern China, Japan and Korea. This

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smaller tree with a rounded crown grows to 30 feet or more and is known for its heat and drought tolerance. People are always surprised at the prominent greenish yellow flowers adorning our tree in spring! The picture shows a gorgeous specimen at the Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia in its full spring glory. Fall colors are gorgeous yellows with reds. The deeply fissured bark is also a very interesting, distinctive feature. In fall the medium-sized leaves turn a vibrant yellow and red. There are several cultivars, one of which is Main Street® introduced by a local nursery Worthington Farms, near Greenville, N.C. It is reported to be 20 feet tall by 14 feet wide in 10 years. It has very dense foliage that turns a beautiful orange-red color in fall and has displayed great drought tolerance.

SNAKEBARK MAPLES

There are a number of maples in this category that exhibit smooth, green bark, with whitish stripes. Some of the cultivars have yellow or red bark with whitish stripes. Most do best in part sun (a.m. sun/p.m. shade), offering a more diverse selection of maples for shadier situations. Several types follow.

Acer davidii (David Maple) from China is a rather open, fast-growing vase-shaped tree up to 40 feet or more with green and white stripe bark. It has elliptical usually unlobed green leaves (3-6 inches long and 1.5 to 2.5 inches wide.) Fall colors are yellow-orange. It grows best in acid soils and has performed very well in a garden nearby outside Chapel Hill. This fabulous specimen was a seedling originally from Camellia Forest Nursery and is now over 30 feet tall!

Acer pensylvanicum (Striped Maple) is the only snake bark maple native to the North America, found in cool north-facing slopes in the Appalachians, along the coast of Maine, the upper Great Lakes region and west to Minnesota. This maple has very large 3-lobed leaves (5-8 inches long and wide!) that turn a striking yellow in the fall. The bark is green with prominent vertical white stripes. It grows 30-40 feet and prefers partially shaded woods, moist, well-drained acidic soil. Long racemes of yellow flowers produced in late spring make this tree even more appealing! Although his tree is very desirable, it is very difficult to grow in the heat of the Southeast and has been tried by a number of gardeners with limited success. However, there is a nice specimen at Duke Gardens in a cool, shaded and moist area of the Blumquist native garden. The cultivar 'Erythrocladum' has young stems that turn coral-red in the winter. We had this cultivar successfully grafted on *Acer rufinerve* and have been fortunate to have this striking tree growing in our garden for sev-



Acer pensylvanicum 'Erythrocladum'

Photo by Unique Plant Nursery

eral years! Perhaps a solution to growing this species in the Piedmont is to graft it onto *A. rufinerve*/*A. davidii* or other compatible heat tolerant species.



Photo by Unique Plant Nursery

Acer rufinerve 'Erythrocladum'

Acer rufinerve (Redvein Maple) is native to mountain forests in Japan and the most common of the Asian snake bark maples in cultivation. Being much more heat tolerant, this maple is a great substitute for *A. pensylvanicum* with its larger leaves and similar characteristics! It can grow up to 30 feet or more, but is usually less wide and smaller in the U.S. Beautiful long racemes of yellowish flowers are also seen on this species in the spring. It has dark green leaves, which turn yellow-orange to red in fall. Samaras are covered with a reddish brown pubescens which falls off at maturity. Sebastian,

who works with me, has grown *Acer rufinerve* for a number of years in his partly shaded woods with great success. We have a beautiful variegated cultivar, 'Albolimbatum' with irregular green and white speckling on the leaves as well as 'Erythrocladum' a cultivar with yellow stems that provides great winter interest in the garden—“glowing boldly where no maple has gone before!”

These are only a few examples of other smaller maples for our southern gardens. With so many superb choices, we can extend the palette of small trees for our landscapes to provide greater interest all year long! ❧



Photo by Unique Plant Nursery

Acer rufinerve

Iris in the Rock Garden

By Robert Pries

When thinking of plants for the rock garden, most rock gardeners would not immediately think of the genus iris. Even so, the genus iris with over 250 species is filled with classic rock garden plants. We could start with a true alpine.

In the French Alps spilling over into the Swiss Alps one may find the delightful *Iris chamaeiris*. Although extremely easy to grow and once widely available in the USA this iris has become rare in American collections. One explanation may be in its name. The Latin of *Chamaeiris* literally means low to the ground and generally the plant will be under 8 inches tall. Some varieties are only 4 inches in bloom with half of the plant being flower. Unfortunately Botanists have combined the miniature *chamaeiris* with the foot tall *Iris lutescens* and the almost 2 foot *Iris olbiensis* under the name *Iris lutescens*. With the exception of cultivar names for selected varieties it is now impossible to tell what size one might be getting under the name *Iris lutescens*. Iris breeders have turned away from *lutescens* because its chromosome number of 40 does not cross easily with most other species and usually produces sterile hybrids. Even so in the first half of the twentieth century around a hundred cultivars were selected ranging from white, yellow, purple, lavender, and bicolors. Sadly these cultivars have mostly disappeared but on high alpine meadows variations can still be found.

Iris occur throughout the Northern Hemisphere. Every mountain range seems to have a few associated Iris species. There are

many examples of species endemic to one mountain top or one small region.

Some years ago I spent a delightful day with a dozen Iris taxonomists climbing a mountain searching for the endemic *Iris sabina*. The Sabine Hills are a small range of mountains about 90 miles from Rome. *Iris sabina* is a dark purple Iris under 8 inches in the boulder fields of the mountain. It is distinguished by branching near the base of its stalk. Although at the top there were thousands of plants none were yet in bloom. It was still a fascinating visit because of 4 or 5 species of the ground orchids and poets narcissus that were in full bloom. Finally after combing the mountaintop Dr. Peter Goldblatt, the author of the most recent monograph of the Iris family discovered some blooming plants. The field trip was a great success. It turns out that *Iris sabina* is not the garden subject one would expect. Once brought down from the 7000 ft treeless summit it will grow to 18 inches with numerous branches. What environmental

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Photo by LesSenteurs du Quercy

Iris chamaeiris



Photo by L. Capasso

Iris salina

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factors prevent its genetic height from being expressed in situ is yet to be determined. Fortunately few iris species change so much when cultivated.

It would take a large book to cover the hundreds of *Iris species* that are candidates for the rock garden. It can be said no matter what the environmental conditions there is most likely an iris to fill that niche. From pond Iris to desert Iris, woodland natives to exotic Himalayan irises, iris can provide a special plant for every rock garden. ❧

Bio: Bob Pries started out as a plant ecologist but spent much of his working life selling pharmaceuticals. From a young child he gardened and developed a special interest in rock gardens. He co-founded the Gateway Chapter of NARGS at Missouri Botanical Gardens and currently serves on the board of the American Iris Society as public relations chair. His recent retirement to Roxboro, N.C. brings the challenge of creating a new garden in a new climate. He welcomes visitors and hopes to learn from their shared experiences.

Piedmont Chapter—NARGS 2010 Program—through April

January 16, 2010

Robert Pries
“Iris for Rock Gardens”
Roxboro, N.C.

February 20, 2010

Joann Currier
“The World of Japanese Maples”
Chapel Hill, N.C.

March 27, 2010

Note: It is the fourth Sat. in the month
Anne Raver
Topic to be announced
Garden writer, New York Times
Reistertown, Md.

April 17, 2010

Martha and Charles Oliver
“Flora of the Shale Barrens of the Mid-Atlantic States”
Scottsdale, Pa.

Romancing the Rockies: Summer 2010 NARGS annual general meeting.

For more information or to register on-line: <http://nargs.org/2010annual>

Romancing the Rockies will be the first NARGS foray into the very heart of the Colorado Rockies: the Mosquito and Collegiate ranges that flank Salida to the east and west, respectively, are both composed primarily of limestone, although the conference will traverse granite and sandstone areas as well, each harboring its own unique flora which should be in peak bloom during the conference. These are the highest peaks in the state, and the Arkansas river valley has the highest towns in the United States.

The conference fee covers lunch and dinner for the 3 days, and a reception at Denver Botanic Gardens the Sunday before. I recommend coming to Denver a day or two ahead of time and spending some time visiting the Gardens and other sites. If you come without a car, you can carpool with those who have cars, or sign up for a van ride from Denver (leaving from the Gardens) to Salida on Monday (a beautiful drive with some very interesting plant stops on the way).

The conference fee also includes the International slate of evening speakers, plant sales and exhibitions. Unlike other conferences, however, you must make your reservations yourself at one of the full range of motels and bed and breakfasts in Salida. Breakfasts will be on your own as well each day. I suggest you do this right away (you can find many recommended motels at <http://www.nowthisiscolorado.com/lodging/> (This URL can also be found on the conference Web site). Vans will arrange to pick up those without cars if your Salida motel is beyond walking distance. Those who drive to the conference can use their own car to commute to the Conference center. The proximity of high passes and 15 passenger vans will ensure a great deal of flexibility, with lots of time to botanize and time to unwind when we get back to town. Registration is limited to 225 participants: we expect it to fill up quickly. In summary: if you have any intention of coming, make a reservation in Salida TODAY (you can always cancel this eventually if you change your mind, or find alternatives). Plan on a few days beforehand or afterwards to enjoy some of the great private gardens in the Front Range area, or to spend a few more days exploring in the fabulously rich Rocky Mountains. Do come join us for a romantic and thrilling time in the heart of the Rockies! ❧

Submitted by Panayoti Kelaidis Chair, Rocky Mountain Chapter, NARGS.



Plant Profile: Dwarf Jasmine

by Mark Weathington

- Botanical name:** *Jasminum parkeri*
Family: Olive (Oleaceae)
Category: Evergreen shrub
Primary uses: Edging, rock gardens, bonsai
Dimensions: 8 to 12 inches tall by 14 to 22 inches wide.
Culture: Full sun to light shade; well-drained soil. This jasmine is easy to care for in any sunny ordinary garden soil. Do not over fertilize. Pruning is generally unnecessary unless growing it as a bonsai.
Bloom time: Late spring to early summer.
Color: Yellow
General attributes: Dwarf evergreen jasmine is as its name implies a very small semi-evergreen woody shrub. The pinnate foliage is a dark green which serves as a good foil for the cheery yellow flowers. Despite being a jasmine, the fragrance, although sweet, is relatively faint. The shrub works well at the front of a shrub border, in southern rock gardens, or if massed would make an effective ground-cover.



Photo by Mark Weathington

Jasminum parkeri

Eastern Winter Study Weekend



Join us March 19-21, 2010 in Devens, Massachusetts to hear about terrific new plants for your garden; learn design principles you can use to make your garden more interesting and pleasing; buy great plants; enter a plant show; and mingle with other obsessed gardeners. Devens is the new town on the site of the former Fort Devens, 30 miles west of Boston.

Registrar Vivien Bouffard ewswregistration@msn.com
Chair Rosemary Monahan rosemonahan@comcast.net or 978-568-1780

For more details visit www.nargs.org

Attention

Piedmont Chapter Members!

We have changed the location of our meetings starting in January for the duration.

This is a permanent change so note this change in your calendars or as needed.

Our meetings now will be at the J C Raulston Arboretum in the Ruby McSwain Education

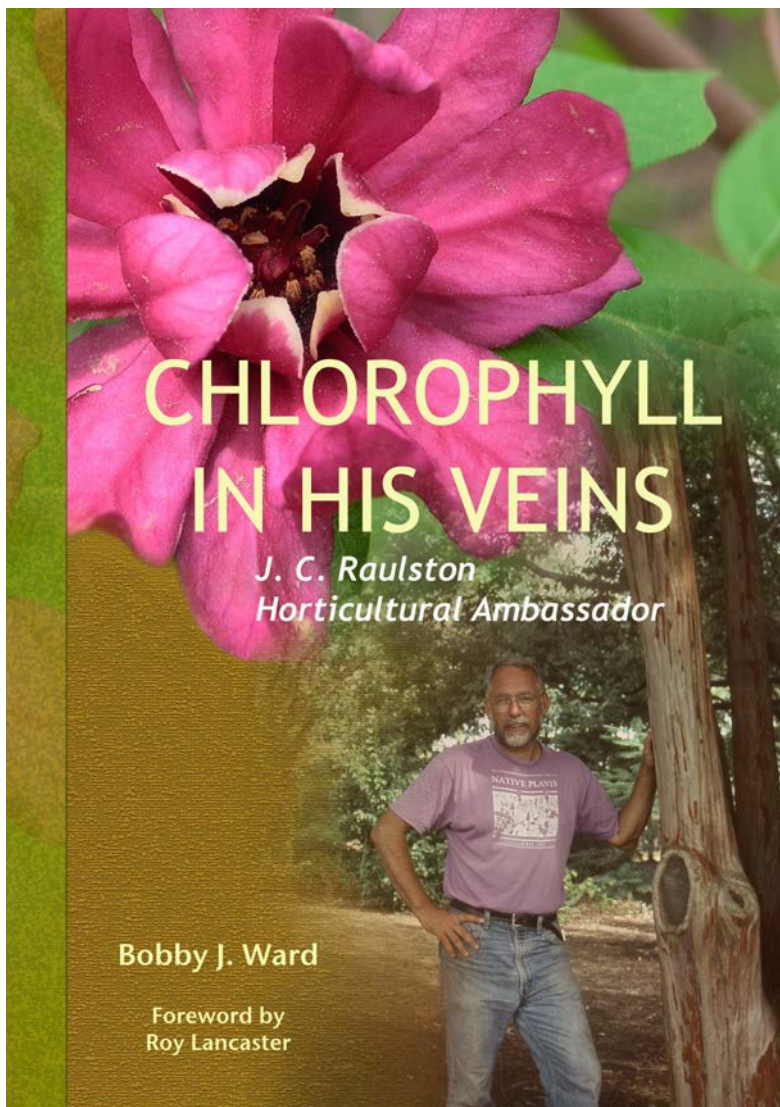
4425 Beryl Rd., Raleigh, NC 27606

✍ — *Book Signing on January 16* — ✍

***Chlorophyll in His Veins: J. C. Raulston,
Horticultural Ambassador***

by Bobby J. Ward

J. C. Raulston was the most important and influential figure in American horticulture in the latter part of the twentieth century. His passion for promoting new plants for landscapes was unmatched. As a teacher at Texas A&M and at North Carolina State University, he gave generously of his time to students, profoundly influencing their lives, altering career paths and personal directions. He saw potential in both plants and students. Against many obstacles, he succeeded in establishing the North Carolina State University Arboretum that now bears his name. *Chlorophyll in His Veins* is an intimate biography, celebrating the life and accomplishments of one of the most-loved gardening personalities.



352 pages, paperback, 5.83” x 8.26”, 22 b&w photos, index, foreword by Roy Lancaster.

BOOK FOR SALE AND SIGNING

at the January 16, 2010

Piedmont Chapter

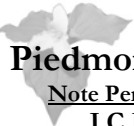
Rock Garden Society meeting.

4425 Beryl Rd., Raleigh, NC 27606

Portion of sales to benefit Piedmont Chapter of

NARGS.

\$27.00 includes N.C. sales tax



Piedmont Chapter Meeting

Note Permanent Location Change:

**J C Raulston Arboretum
Ruby McSwain Education Building**

January 16, 2010, 9:30 a.m.

Robert Pries

Roxboro, N.C.

“Iris for Rock Gardens”

The Trillium, Newsletter of the Piedmont Chapter
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OTHER SIGNIFICANT POSITIONS:

Sept. Plant Sale Manager: Kirtley Cox

Refreshments:Gwen and Maurice Farrier

Bring Goodies to Share

If your last name begins with the letters indicated below, please consider bringing something to share.

Jan L-N++
Feb O-So

March Sp-Z
April Anyone/All



I'LL EARN YOUR TRUST

Whether you're downsizing and hoping to find a buyer who will love your home and garden almost as much as you have, or are looking for that perfect spot to finally start the garden of your dreams - I can help! I have now worked with four members of our group to do those very things and I would love the opportunity to work with you.

I have over 30 years of experience selling homes and running plant businesses - I feel I am qualified to work with serious plant lovers who are selling their beloved gardens or finding the perfect new one. It's always stressful buying or selling, but I can handle many of the details that will make the whole process smoother.

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