Green Hills Farm
Arboretum
at Pearl S. Buck International

November Tree of the Month

Japanese Split-Leaf Maple (*Acer Palmatum*)

Tree # 2, 124, 183, 184: Location 12



This beautiful ornamental tree known for its graceful shape adorns many a landscaping bed. Unlike the broad leaves of many maple trees, its leaves are deeply cut into narrow, feathery sections resembling the lace of a fine fabric. The leaves may be green, red, burgundy or purple, turning to orange, red, gold, and crimson in the fall.

The Japanese Maple grows best in a sheltered location with partial sun and moist, well-drained Its height is generally 6-10 ft, and it can live for many decades, developing into a cascading, weeping mound of delicate leaves and graceful limb patterns.

The wild ancestors of this Japanese Maple evolved as understory trees in the mountainous forests of Japan, Korea, and China, where their unique structure allowed better light for the whole plant, wind resistance, and heat and moisture dissipation. Japenese horticulturalists during the Edo period (1603-1867) began cloning and grafting desirable versions, often genetically mutated, selecting for aesthetic beauty rather than raw survival.



Pearl S. Buck included a Split-Leaf Japanese Maple in her water garden at the front of her home, writing that she was “forever grateful for the beauty of Japan.” She and her family had spent eighteen months in Japan after escaping the violent Nanking Incident and social unrest occurring in China in 1927.

We all can benefit from the sense of peace and tranquility created by this collaboration of man with nature.