Acer japonicum ‘Acontifolium’: ‘Acontifolium’ Fullmoon Maple

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

Introduction

Full moon maple is a small, deciduous tree which reaches 10 to 15 feet in height and width, creating an irregular, rounded silhouette. It fits well into the oriental garden due to the exotic silhouette. This cultivar is exceptionally cold hardy, having survived temperatures of -25°F below zero. The deeply divided, soft green leaves have 9 to 11 lobes and are delicately displayed on thin, drooping branches. Leaves take on a beautiful yellow to red coloration in the fall before dropping, making this small, dense plant really stand out in the landscape. Fall color has been described as exceptional. The hanging clusters of purple/red flowers appear in late spring and are followed by the production of winged seeds.

General Information

Scientific name: Acer japonicum
Pronunciation: AY-ser juh-PAWN-ih-kum
Common name(s): ‘Acontifolium’ Fullmoon maple, fernleaf maple
Family: Aceraceae
USDA hardiness zones: 5A through 7B (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: little invasive potential
Uses: specimen; deck or patio; container or planter; trained as a standard; Bonsai
Availability: not native to North America

Figure 1. Young Acer japonicum ‘Acontifolium’: ‘Acontifolium’ Fullmoon Maple

Figure 2. Range
**Description**

Height: 10 to 15 feet  
Spread: 6 to 10 feet  
Crown uniformity: symmetrical  
Crown shape: vase, round  
Crown density: moderate  
Growth rate: slow  
Texture: medium

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: parted, incised, lobed  
Leaf shape: star-shaped  
Leaf venation: palmate  
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous  
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: red  
Fall characteristic: showy

**Flower**

Flower color: red  
Flower characteristics: showy

**Fruit**

Fruit shape: elongated, oval  
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch  
Fruit covering: dry or hard  
Fruit color: green  
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns  
Pruning requirement: little required  
Breakage: resistant  
Current year twig color: green  
Current year twig thickness: thin, medium  
Wood specific gravity: unknown

**Culture**

Light requirement: partial sun or partial shade, shade tolerant  
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained  
Drought tolerance: moderate  
Aerosol salt tolerance: none

**Other**

Roots: not a problem  
Winter interest: no  
Outstanding tree: yes  
Ozone sensitivity: unknown  
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible  
Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

**Use and Management**

This maple would at home in the residential landscape as well as the commercial setting. Planted near the patio or deck, it would generate many comments from friends and other visitors. It is probably best used as a specimen, planted to attract attention to an area. It should live for at least 20 years. Nice specimens can be viewed at arboreta, but few nurseries currently offer this cultivar for sale. This may change as nursery operators and homeowners discover the tree.

Full moon maple should be grown in full sun or partial shade. Where the sunlight is intense, the tree will benefit from having its roots shaded to help keep the soil cool.

**Pests**

No pests are of major concern.

**Diseases**

This maple is susceptible to verticillium wilt.