

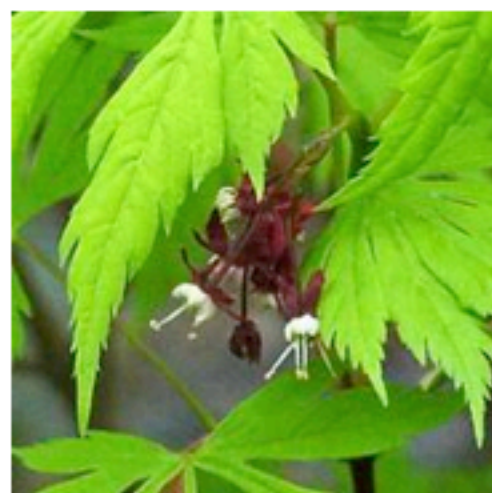
Vine maples—more kinds than you'd guess

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By [Jim McCausland](#), *Sunset Magazine*

Introduced to American horticulture by Meriwether Lewis in 1805, and to British horticulture in 1826, vine maple (*Acer circinatum*) has a lot going for it: beautiful, rounded, many-lobed leaves; terrific yellow and red fall color; sinuous multiple trunks; and the right scale for small gardens. What I didn't know was how many selections exist.

Robert Jamgochian at [Mendocino Maples](#) helped sort it all out for me



'[Monroe](#)' (right) is the one selection I knew. It grows standard vine maple size—that's about house-high in the Pacific Northwest—and has deeply cut leaves that remind me of *A. japonicum aconitifolium*.

'[Sunglow](#)' (left) is the best known of the dwarfs, growing about 6 ft. in 10 years, and eventually to 10 ft. It sports peachy yellow new leaves that shift to lime yellow in summer. Like most golden-leaved plants, this one does best in partial shade.

'[Pacific Fire](#)' (right) is generating a lot of excitement for its color phases. Young branches turn bright red as leaves color up in autumn, and they stay red all winter and into spring,

when lime-green new leaves emerge. As branches age, they turn-orange brown. Samaras (nut-like seed pods) have red wings. This variety grows about 12 ft. high and 8 ft. wide. It should be fairly widely available this year.

'[Sunny Sister](#)' (left). For those who haven't noticed, many maples have three distinct color phases. Emerging leaves are often heavily infused with pastel colors that fade to green in summer, then color up again in fall. 'Sunny Sister' is one of these, and in a way, I like it's emerging new foliage best. Fresh,

soft, and perfect, it has more apricot and peach overtones that the similar 'Sunglow' (top left). This maple also stays small, growing about 6 ft. in 10 years.

'[Del's Dwarf](#)' (left) is another diminutive vine maple, topping out at 6 ft. in 10 years. Its leaves are smaller than those of the species, and emerge bronzy orange, shift to green in summer, and turn yellow and orange before they drop in fall.

'[Ki Setsudoe](#)' has bright red new growth (right) that turns coppery greenish-red in summer. Expect it to grow about 12 feet tall and wide.

Vine maples really do grow best in their native range, which runs from southeast Alaska south through British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. They're hardy enough to take -20°F,

