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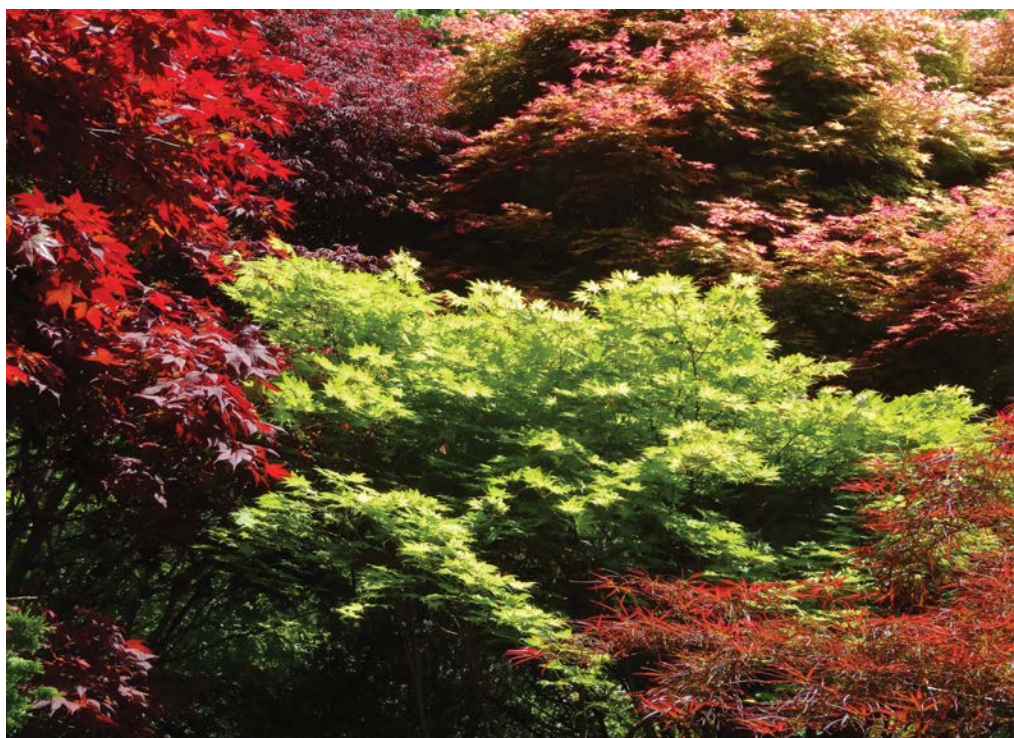
BY DAVID PAYNE

YOU HEAR ABOUT "LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION" BEING SUCH AN IMPORTANT CONCEPT IN REAL ESTATE, BUT THE SAME IS CERTAINLY TRUE FOR THE BEAUTIFUL JAPANESE MAPLE TREES THAT LOVE OUR WEATHER HERE IN THE TRIANGLE.

There are many different cultivars of this native Oriental tree, but some do particularly well in our climate. Here are three stunners that I have used with great success in our area. They are all prized for their beautiful foliage not only in the autumn, but throughout all three growing seasons.

Bloodgood is a non-dissected variety of Japanese maple, meaning its leaves are smaller than a traditional maple and roughly shaped like a hand. It's known for its deep crimson reddish-purple fall foliage, which is a lighter reddish-purple or even green in the summer sun. It grows no more than fifteen-to-twenty feet tall, but reaches that height slowly, growing about one foot per year. That makes this cultivar ideal for small landscapes or as a specimen to be tucked under larger canopy trees.

Garnet is a dissected variety of Japanese maple. Its leaves have finely cut leaf margins that look a bit like lace. Garnet's foliage remains bright reddish-orange throughout the growing season and then fades to purple-green in late summer. It transforms again to bright red in the autumn. Maturing at just nine-to-twelve feet tall, it is another





example of a showstopper that can just as easily be tucked away in a small space as it can stand alone as an eye-catching specimen in your landscape.

Viridis Japanese maple turns golden yellow and orange in the fall, but it is known for its bright chartreuse green color in the growing season and for its cascading, weeping habit. It is a graceful specimen that thrives in dappled sun, like almost all Japanese maples. It only grows a maximum of five-to-ten feet tall, and its rounded form makes it ideal for container gardening or a small space in a garden bed. Its green color is showy contrasted against red Japanese maples.

Because of their versatility, Japanese maples are perfect for almost any landscape. You can grow a grove of them in a large yard with a woodland feel, you can add one in any size or color to complete an Asian-inspired Zen garden, or you can plant them as understory trees to contrast with the green of other leaves. With dappled sun, protection from harsh winds, and a little mulch around their trunks to help retain water, Japanese maples easily create a focal point in your landscape. With changing leaf color in three seasons and dramatic branching that draws interest in the winter, there is something for everyone in every season.

Rely on your professional landscaper to help you choose the right one or to create a spectacular mix of maples for a picture-perfect yard. ♦

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