



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet Vine Maple (*Acer circinatum*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Tourism and Business Development College of Business,
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Vine Maple (*Acer circinatum*)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/vine-maple-acer-circinatum/

By colliiek2

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Let's go a little wild...

Vine Maple is most likely growing wild in your neighborhood. This small native tree can be found from Alaska south to northern California and from the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.



Vine Maple (courtesy of OSU Extension)

Why you want one (or more)

This interesting tree (not a vine) fits into almost any garden—even small gardens and provides nearly year-around interest. Interesting features include seasonal leaf colors, flowers, bark, seeds, and wildlife support.

Vine Maple (*Acer circinatum*) is a close relative of the Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum* – like a palm). *Circinatum* refers to the rounded or circular leaf shape, typical of Vine Maples.

There are approximately 150 maple species worldwide, most originating from eastern Asia. Three native maple species grow in the Pacific Northwest (Big-Leaf, Douglas, and Vine).

Excellent Companion Plants

Once established Vine Maples are almost pest free and make an excellent companion plant, particularly once they are established. It is a favorite for many gardeners. Why? Because they...

- Are hardy to USDA zones 5-9. They will appreciate some protection from strong winds.
- Grow well in a variety of soil types, particularly the common slightly acidic soils found in the Northwest. Give them a yearly dressing of compost and they are happy!
- Tolerate varying moisture levels, including moist to wet areas, and can be used for erosion control.
- Tolerate a variety of light/sun levels. They can function as a soft understory plant or even a showy fall specimen based on the light level. Full sun will bring on brilliant fall leaf shades of red and orange; shade produces deep golden leaf colors in the fall. Note to self: More sun requires more regular water until established.
- Can be pruned to maintain health or height, bring branches off the ground (so they don't root new plants), or to enhance shape. The height can get to 15-20 feet. Want something smaller? Choose one of the new dwarf cultivars that are significantly more bush-like.
- Are easier to care for in a garden compared to Big-Leaf and Douglas maples. Both of these maples are significantly larger.

Big-Leaf maple leaves are very large and can create problems in a smaller garden, not just in more raking and clean-up, but much more. Plants and soil under the trees can be smothered (to death), air and moisture movement reduced, and make soil more acid over time.

The Douglas maple is nearly twice as large compared to the Vine maple. These maples tolerate drier and colder environments and can be found here and eastward beyond the Rocky Mountains.



Vine Maple in early fall (courtesy OSU Extension)

Seeds, Flowers, and Leaves

All maples have certain common aspects. For instance, the paired seeds, create a wing that will twirl in the air. Seed size will vary depending on type of maple.

These seeds are produced by tiny white flowers with wine-colored sepals. Flowers attract butterflies and bees; seeds attract birds, squirrels, and rodents.



Vine Maple flowers (courtesy OSU Extension)

Leaves are deciduous and drop in the fall. Leaves balance on the stem positioned opposite to each other. Vine maple leaves are all nearly the same length when mature with 7-9 regularly spaced lobes. Young stems are typically pale green. Summer foliage is preferred by deer and elk.

Native American Uses

Stems and branches were used to create beautiful baskets and fish traps. This relatively fast-growing tree was also used for firewood.

To learn more or access seed check out the Maple Society at <https://maplesociety.org/en-gb>.

REFERENCES:

- Acer circinatum* (<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/acer-circinatum/>)
- Pacific Northwest Natives (<http://www.pnwplants.wsu.edu/PlantDisplay.aspx?PlantID=36>)
- Oregon State University, *Acer circinatum* (<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/node/146966/printable/print>)
- Wikipedia, *Acer circinatum* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acer_circinatum)
- Portland Nursery, *Acer circinatum* (<https://www.portlandnursery.com/natives/acer-circinatum/>)