

WEEKLY UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 18 –24, 2015

“September twenty-second, Sir, the bough
cracks with the unpicked apples, and at dawn,
the small-mouthed bass breaks water, gorged with spawn.”

Robert Lowell (1917-1977), “After the Surprising
Conversions”

“One of the few infallible rules of gardening is that no garden
can have too many bulbs. Splurge. It’s the only way.”

Anna Pavord, *Bulb*, 2009

Shine on, shine on harvest moon...

“Rising harvest moon...
from this hut
as yet unwalled
I will view it well”

Kaya Shirao (1738-1791)

A harvest moon is a full moon closest to the Autumnal Equinox. It is associated with bringing in the crops as its bright light illuminates the fields throughout the night. Last year’s harvest moon, a supermoon, came early on September 8. This year the harvest moon will “shine on, shine on...” on September 27.

In Asian cultures the harvest moon marks the time of the Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as the Moon Festival or Mooncake Festival. In China it is a public holiday.

The Magic of Maple Trees

“How enviable –
turning beautiful, then falling
maple leaves

Masaoki Shiki (1867-1902)

Mocha has a very thick coat and is prone to heat exhaustion so these cooler temperatures make our morning walks more pleasurable for him. Fallen leaves litter the sidewalks and are raked into big piles on the lawns and along the boulevards and curbs. This morning, as we crunched our way through them, we spotted a perfect red maple leaf, its long middle lobe shining like a little beacon and pointing the way down the street.

Who can ignore maple trees in Canada? Besides being our beloved national symbol, they grow just about everywhere in our country. Belonging to the genus *Acer*, Latin for “sharp,” referring to the points on their leaves, in the family Sapindaceae

(VanDusen Garden changed to this classification from Aceraceae in 2010), the approximately 128 species of maples are found predominantly in the northern hemisphere, including North America, Europe and Asia. Only one species, *Acer laurinum*, is native to the southern hemisphere. Almost all are deciduous although evergreen species can be found in the southern Asian and Mediterranean regions. Three species are native to BC: the big leaf maple (*A. macrophylla*), the vine maple (*A. circinatum*) and the Douglas maple (*A. glabrum*).

Maples are distinguished by their opposite leaf arrangement. Most leaves are of a similar shape consisting of a single leaf blade, 3 to 9 veins (rarely to 13), each leading to a lobe, one of which is the primary lobe. The Canadian flag features an 11-pointed generic maple leaf. Not only are the leaves attached in pairs opposite each other, but so are the buds and twigs.

Maples are trees for all seasons. In late winter or early spring, their flowers emerge and may be borne in racemes, corymbs or umbels. They may range in colour from red, orange, yellow or green. The fruit, called samaras, or more commonly, maple keys, whirlybirds or helicopters, also occur in distinctive pairs; they spin as they fall and are carried by the wind. We enjoy the green foliage in the summer and the colourful display in the fall. Many species such as the snakebark maple (*A. pensylvanicum*) and the paperbark maple (*A. griseum*) have interesting bark which looks spectacular against the snow or backlit by the sun.

Every garden needs a maple tree, and in VanDusen Garden, maples are the most commonly found deciduous trees. In the Maple Grove, to the west of Heron Lake, look for many of the larger examples, including the sugar maple (*A. saccharum*). Also present are examples of the Norway maple (*A. platanoides*), many cultivars of the European sycamore maple (*A. pseudoplatanus*) and the bigleaf maple (*A. macrophyllum*), the “big daddy” of Pacific Northwest maples, described by David Douglas as the noblest maple of them all. At this time of year, the Japanese maples (*A. palmatum*) exhibit striking colour and foliage. There are over 1,000 cultivars of Japanese maple.

In Japan, maple leaves are referred to as “momiji” which translates as “baby’s hands” or “becomes crimson leaves”. Just as fall colour tours are popular in eastern Canada and the United States, the Japanese celebrate the changing colour of maples with a leaf viewing custom called “momijigari” with Nikko and Kyoto being favourite destinations for this activity.

“When you plant daffodils, you are planting for your children and for their grandchildren. Because daffodils, like diamonds, are forever.”

Gloria Cole, davesgarden.com