

VINE MAPLE

Acer circinatum Pursh

plant symbol = ACCI

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Alternative Name

Oregon vine maple

Uses

Ethnobotanic: Native Americans used the straight long stems for making baskets used for general household utility such as carrying wood and fish. They also carved the wood into numerous household utensils such as spoons, bowls, and platters. The sap contains a certain amount of sugar and that used as a drink or concentrated into syrup by boiling off the water (Facciola 1990). Vine maple was used occasionally for tool handles of axes, and frames. This species was used by the Indians of the northwest coast for the bows of their fishing nets (Sargent 1933). The saplings were used for babies' cradles.

Medicinal: The wood was burnt to charcoal and mixed with water and brown sugar then used in the treatment of dysentery and polio (Moerman 1998).

Wildlife: The seeds and buds provide food for squirrels, chipmunks, and numerous birds. Vine maple leaves are eaten by cattle and sheep. During the summer months the leaves and twigs are a preferred food of black-tailed deer and elk.

Agroforestry: Vine maple is used in forested riparian buffers to help reduce stream bank erosion, protect water quality, and enhance aquatic environments.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

Description

General: Maple Family (Aceraceae). Vine maple is a native, deciduous shrub or small tree that ranges between ten to twenty feet. The leaves are round to cordate, usually seven to nine centimeters long, pointed, and double toothed. The flowers are white petals in small loose clusters emerging with the leaves. The bark is thin, smooth, and greenish becoming bright reddish brown.

Distribution: *Acer circinatum* occurs in the Pacific Northwest ranging from the Cascade Mountains to southern British Columbia to northern California. For current distribution, please consult the Plant profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Adaptation

Vine maple occurs most frequently on moist soils along the banks of streams and wet sites. It commonly occurs with Douglas fir, Pacific dogwood, big leaf maple, and western hemlock. This species prefers shady areas but can tolerate the sun. It sometimes grows in clumps or patches (Farrar 1995).

Establishment

Propagation from Seed: The seeds should be gathered and immediately stratified for 90 days at 41° F to break seed dormancy. Sow the seeds in containers or seed trays containing a slow release fertilizer. Firm the medium and place the seeds thinly and evenly on top and cover with medium (Heusser 1997). Seedlings should be placed into individual pots when they are large enough to handle.

Propagation from Softwood Cuttings: Cuttings should be done in the spring or early summer in the early morning. Take cuttings about five to ten centimeters long, just above the node. Put cuttings in a plastic bag to prevent moisture loss (Heuser 1997). They must not be allowed to wilt. Trim the cuttings below the lowest node to remove the lower leaves leaving three or four at the tip (Ibid.). A rooting hormone may be applied to improve rooting before planting. Insert the cuttings in the rooting medium up to half their length so the leaves don't touch each other. The cuttings should root in two to three weeks, after which they can be potted (Ibid.).

Management

Constant pruning is needed to avoid long internodes. Watering may be reduced in the winter but the soil should be kept evenly moist.

Vine maple sends out slender arching branches in the wild. These form roots when they touch the ground and the plant thereby forms large impenetrable thickets often several hectares (Sargent 1965).

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Somewhat available through native plant nurseries.

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