



WESTONBIRT ARBORETUM

HELLO GARDENERS... Well, it's only weeks until Christmas and there are still many things you can be doing in the garden. I will come to those later.

It was one of the most amazing Autumns I can remember this year for colour.

You will probably have noticed how fantastic the various colours were on many trees, that vast spectrum of Autumn delight. There are many people out there who seem to think their theories makes them the most experienced Arborist, all have their individual ideas on why this year was so spectacular in colour, however the reason I've heard mentioned the most is that we had a very wet Spring and a very warm long Summer, so I will stick with that!

Back in October I took the opportunity to pay a visit to Westonbirt Arboretum. A remarkable place for people to enjoy and learn about trees - 15,000 specimens from all over the globe offer the perfect setting to escape, relax or have an adventure... A day wasn't long enough, surrounded by heights of just amazing fantastic colour, reflecting in everything you could see. *The trees ranged from...*

- Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*)
- Downy Japanese maple (*Acer japonicum*)
- Cappadocian maple (*Acer cappadocicum*)
- Sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)
- Members of the walnut (*Juglandaceae*) family
- Witch hazel (*Hamamelidaceae*) family
- Stunning deciduous conifers

However, the most amazing smell came from the sweet aroma of Katsura (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*) in the air.

The arboretum is filled with bright, golden, burnished tones. There is something to delight the senses throughout the whole Autumn period.

Westonbirt also has 145 champion trees (the largest or tallest in Britain and Ireland according to the *Tree Register of the British Isles*) and there are also Westonbirt's rare or endangered trees.



Westonbirt holds National Collections for both maple species and Japanese maple cultivars – the latter often referred to (perhaps confusingly) as 'acers'.

Maples provide the foundation for Westonbirt's world-renowned Autumn colour spectacle - which I truly experienced.

Some species such as paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*) and the snake bark maples (including *Acer pennsylvanicum* and *Acer davidii*) display wonderful bark patterns and look their best in Winter. Most share characteristic hand-shaped leaves with varying degrees and numbers of lobes or 'fingers'.

I was most fascinated by the Paperbark maple, *Acer griseum*. Native to China, the paperbark maple was introduced by Ernest Wilson in 1901. Its main attractive feature is its peeling red bark but it also provides good Autumn colour. The trifoliolate leaves (with three leaflets) turn crimson and then deep red by the end of October. Amazing and a spectacular sight (*pictured left, middle*).

I truly recommend a visit to Westonbirt, at any time of year, however especially Autumn for that overdose of colour.

Here at the RCHS we have been putting together our full schedule for 2017 and I am pleased to include a full cut out for you in this months *In and Around magazine*.

We have some marvellous events lined up starting with the fantastic **Horticulturalist Matthew Biggs**. This is a ticket event only and tickets are limited. If you would like tickets, please **call Warren on 01923 451616 or email rhcstalks@gmail.com** or see the website for full details **<http://ruisliphorticultural.org.uk>**

The RCHS would like to wish all members and readers of this article a very Merry Christmas and fantastic gardening 2017.

In January's issue, there will be a membership form for the RCHS, it is £5 a year to join and enjoy the events and shows we put on throughout the year.

See you in 2017.

Warren