

Incomparable Katsura

In recent years, the katsura has become much favored as a distinctively beautiful tree for parks and large gardens.

A massive tree needing plenty of root room as well as air space, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* grows 50' to 60' high and wide. Hardy in zones 4 to 8, this dense-growing tree has 3" heart to fan shaped leaves which open wine-red, become blue-green, and then turn clear yellow. Katsura foliage is unique in releasing a compound called malto which gives the leaves a pungent burnt sugar/cinnamon fragrance just before they fall.

Several cultivars are gaining wide acceptance. Their names indicate superior forms or foliage colors – 'Amazing Grace', 'Heronswood Globe', 'Pendula', 'Ruby'. And now a smaller version of the katsura is exciting gardeners with limited space. *C. magnificum* (often sold as *C. japonicum magnificum*) grows only 20' to 30' tall and has slightly larger and more broadly oval leaves. The opening leaves in spring are bronzy red-orange, and in the fall they turn gold if the tree is growing in neutral soil, apricot-orange-salmon if it is in acid soil.

Katsura thrives in deep soils. They do not stand drought well and will suffer leaf browning if not watered in hot dry periods. Sources of fine katsuras include Arbor Village Nursery (Box 227, Holt MO 64048), Gossler Farms Nursery (1200 Weaver Road, Springfield, OR 97478) and Greer Gardens (1280 Goodpasture Island Road, Eugene OR 97401). The Avant Gardener Oct. 2007