

Vine maple makes transition to fall beautiful

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Contributing Writer

Fall on the West Coast gives us very little to brag about. Compared to the eastern states, with their multitude of hardwood trees imparting a profusion of autumn colors, we here out west appear to have a rather slow, uneventful transition into fall. There is one exception to this rule though, and I would like to take a moment to pay homage to an all too often overlooked member of our native garden, and of our ecosystem at large.

Vine Maple, *Acer circinatum*, is an amazingly common plant throughout western Oregon. It grows just about anywhere west of the Cascades, with the only exception being a few of the drier habitats. Yet, many people still don't know (and love) this plant!

Vine Maples have maple-like, palmately-lobed leaves (shaped like an open hand with spread fin-

gers) that are 3 to 4 inches in width; the edges of the leaves being slightly toothed, or rough. Typically, a Vine Maple grows from 10 to 20 feet in height, and takes the form of a tall shrub, or less often, a small tree. Vine Maples have smooth, gray bark and tend to twist as they grow upward.

Getting back to fall colors, Vine Maples are the one variety of "tree" native to our region that energetically produce a memorable fall coat. Most of our other native hardwoods fade from green to yellow to brown within what seems like only a few days, and the shades of yellows that we do get are anything but breathtaking. Keeping this in mind, it shouldn't be hard to pick out the Vine Maples as you are passing through the native garden on foot, or through the mountains on fossil fuels.

Up in the hills this time of year, you should begin to see patches of fire-red color woven around the larger trees. In natural openings in the forest you can find large

colonies of this tall shrub ignited with Halloween reds and oranges. The Vine Maples in the native garden seem a bit less energetic than what is now happening in the mountains, but then again our concrete backdrop is no match for a hillside full of Firs and Hemlocks.

Vine Maples are interesting plants to observe in their natural habitats. They tend to grow in groups, and their twisting nature gives these clusters some very quizzical, jungle-gym like formations.

Their wood is also very tenacious. Although much too small for timber purposes (thank goodness), Vine Maples have been historically used by people due to their stoutness and flexibility. Native Americans used the wood for making a number of daily implements, such as eating utensils, heavy-duty basketry, snowshoe frames and drum hoops. Euro-American hikers, such as myself, prize the stout branches as choice walking sticks, guaranteed not to



AMY PARRISH / Clackamas Print

Acer circinatum, or Vine Maple, creates colorful fall foliage.

buckle when vaulting rain flooded streams.

Another point of autumn interest in the native garden is the quickly fading California Fuchsia, *Epilobium canum*. Its peak bloom is a few weeks passed, but there should hopefully be a few pinkish-cream blooms left by the time this goes to print. This plant is located directly in the center of the rock garden, just below the windows of the chemis-

try lab.

The California Fuchsia grows to only a foot or so in height, and spreads by horizontally growing roots. It appears in crowded clusters and produces an amazing number of sizable flowers for such small plant. Stop and check it out if you haven't already. It's probably our last splash of color, aside from the occasional rainbow, for many months to come. Enjoy.

Belgian waffles prepare students for life

ROBERT SCHOENBERG
Editor-in-Chief

Making a Belgian Waffle with the new machines at Chartwells, once you get the hang of it, "is like riding a bike; if you know how you're set for life," said Food Manager Rick Traynor.

The waffle makers were installed over the summer term. It is a help-yourself process that involves pouring waffle batter onto the hot grids.

Students and faculty are learning how to put the batter in, measuring out just the right amount, closing the lid and spinning the waffle maker over while a timer counts to three minutes. When done the waffle is pried out with a fork and covered with butter and syrup.

"Everyone who has tried it has really taken to it," said Traynor. "I have them myself for lunch about twice a week."

The machines are common in restaurants and in University food programs. Traynor said he has used them before and that is why he brought them here to Chartwells.

The machines are provided by a batter mix vendor. The waffles cost \$1.85 at Chartwells and are available at any time.

There are two machines, but one is in for some repairs at this time and should be back in a short while.



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Ryan Morey gives Daisy Hart a few pointers on waffle making.

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