



Fine Living

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Fall arrives on the soft leaves of Japanese maples

Autumn is the time to indulge in countryside delights. If you want to see some of the season's finest fall colors and gorgeous foliage, head to Sonoma County to Wildwood Farm Nursery & Sculpture Garden in Kenwood.

"We're maple collectors and we have one of the most extensive collections of Japanese maples in the United States," says Ricardo Monte, owner of Wildwood with his wife, Sara. "Right now, fall color is just peaking here."

Established more than 30 years ago, this family-run nursery is a colorful space where more than 300 cultivars of Japanese maples thrive, along with other specialty trees including beech, katsura, smoke trees and 35 varieties of dogwood and an expansive hydrangea section. Gardeners love searching Wildwood because there are always new, unusual and rare plants to discover. There's also a sculpture garden featuring the work of a number of artists.

On Oct. 28 and Nov. 11, the Montes will offer complimentary tours at 1:30 p.m. "We'll talk about the collection and the history of Wildwood, show guests the different stages of maples so they can see what they look like from the ages of one year to 40 years and all the stages in between as well as their care and

culture," Ricardo Monte says. *Cornus nuttallii* 'Gold Spot,' a rare dogwood, will also be on display. "Grandma," as he lovingly refers to the oldest one, is 12 by 12 feet and blooms twice a year. It will be blooming at the end of the month. Her "babies," he says, are blooming now.

"It's a gorgeous plant and one of the stars of the place," he says. "It has white blooms but the green mottled leaves turn yellow and then orange in fall."

On Nov. 4, the couple will host "Tea Amidst the Maples" and welcome Lou Rosenberger and Gary Hagen of Far West Trading Company who will transform the terrace at Wildwood with Asian furniture, art and collectibles. The event includes loose-leaf tasting, refreshments and a discussion on tea.

Visitors are also welcome to wander the outdoor sculpture garden where a rotating roster of 12 artists are represented.

Wildwood Farm Nursery & Sculpture Garden is at 10300 Sonoma Highway in Kenwood. The hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesdays, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays. To learn more, call 707-833-1161 or visit www.wildwoodmaples.com.