

A Tree to Consider

By Sharon Burch

We have a new and rare addition to the Central Gardens Arboretum, a Three-Flower Maple (*Acer triflorum*). It was planted within the center median at 590 S. Belvedere this past winter in memory of noted forester, friend, neighbor and fellow arboretum committee member, Plato Touliatos.

This multi-season tree has displayed its winterscape of exquisite exfoliating bark. During the spring, its bright velvety new leaves are unfolding from blackish- brown buds, which are to be followed by the emergence of three-flowered clusters, hence the source of its common and botanic names. Through the long summer, its rich green foliage will offer shade to the hot and tired. Then at last, as the cool days of late autumn arrive, the leaves will meld to spectacular golden yellows, pumpkin oranges with tinges of reds. The autumn beauty of the Three-Flowered Maple is purported to challenge the sugar maples of the eastern United States landscapes. Indeed, that is a bold statement, and I will be pulling for it.

Three-Flowered Maples were imported in 1917 from the Korean peninsula by way of the famed Arnold Arboretum. This maple has since proven to have near limitless landscape potential, from garden focal points to tough streetscape trees. Many horticulturists and arborist would love to have this tree in their gardens. However, propagation difficulties are reported and supplies remain limited. You'll not find this tree in any big-box store and you'll have to look long and hard in specialty nurseries for any chance of discovering another. It is fitting that we planted such a rare tree in memory of a rare gentleman.



Three-Flower Maple (*Acer triflorum*)