



**Leadwort**

**LIGHT:** Full sun

**SOIL:** Loamy, well-draining soil

**HARDINESS:**

USDA Zones

5-10

By the time the season is in full swing, leadwort's foliage has deepened to a shameless, A-for-adultery scarlet.

**Acer semenovii**

WOODY PLANTS ADAPTED to the harsh, dry climate and alkaline clay soils of the interior West are hard to come by, especially ones with interesting features. Usually just the fact that a tree or shrub has leaves and grows ensures it a place in our long-suffering hearts. *Acer tataricum* subsp. *semenovii* (also seen as *A. semenovii* and *A. ginnala* var. *semenovii*), the Turkestan shrub maple, is one such plant—a multistemmed 15-foot toughie with a lot going for it.

Turkestan shrub maple sports the shiny, dark green, three- to five-lobed foliage of the Amur maple, *A. ginnala*, yet even smaller and more finely cut. It also has that species' outrageous red fall color. It shares Tatarian maple's tolerance for high pH and clay, without the abhorrent yellow foliage chlorosis that Amur maple suffers in such soils

In mid-spring, a multitude of creamy flowers in small panicles exude a sweet, almost lily-of-the-valley fragrance. These go on to form pairs of small, reddish, winged samaras. Red also features strongly in the leaf petioles and midribs of the immature foliage, a hint of the stunning fall display to come. The bark on my young plant is a smooth, pale gray, which is nice in winter.

The tree is fast-growing but not prone to wind or snow

breakage—in four years a six-inch plant has grown to more than five feet on my windy hillside, where it receives less than 20 inches of moisture a year, a rare feat for a woody plant. —Lauren Springer



**Acer semenovii**

**LIGHT:** Full sun

**SOIL:** Average well-draining soil

**HARDINESS:**

USDA Zones

3-7

**Kirengeshoma**

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A native of Japanese woodlands, this hardy (USDA Zone 5) herbaceous perennial has thrived in two distinctly different parts of my garden, in both situations gradually expanding into substantial clumps. My “sunny” clump is located beside a wrought-iron gate, where its nearly black stems create a striking echo, which is made even more beautiful in late summer as the stems arch slightly to showcase the countless soft yellow shuttlecock flowers. In my garden, flowering starts in August and continues for four to six weeks. Really hot sun will burn the foliage of this member of the hydrangea family, however, and if I gardened anywhere but the Pacific Northwest, I might not get away with this location.

Not far away from the sunny clump, but in total shade, another clump grows at half speed—just as elegant but with far fewer stems and flowers.

Moisture is essential for this plant—indeed, it asks for little else. By late June my plants are four feet high with side branches beginning to fill out. They will be followed by slender buds. The flowers are intriguing—each petal is almost as thick as a banana peel, and very similar in color and texture. Autumn turns the leaves to gold, and my plants produce nigella-like seed pods that are held rigidly and look great in winter—another asset for a terrific plant.



### **Kirengeshoma**

**LIGHT:** Partial shade to full shade

**SOIL:** Rich humusy, moist soil

**HARDINESS:** USDA Zones 5–7

There are two types of kirengeshomas available, but they are so similar in all respects that it is generally believed they are all one species. However, the flower petals of a Korean variant, known as *K. palmata* Korean Group, are slightly more flared than those of the regular species.

Plants that associate well with kirengeshoma include the herbaceous clematis *C. xjouiniana* ‘Mrs. Robert Brydon’—the very pale blue flowers are an equal to the particularly soft shade of yellow of kirengeshoma flowers. A tuft or two of *Hakonechloa macra* ‘Aureola’ near or at the feet of your kirengeshoma will echo the lovely “wax bell” flowers of this aristocrat of the late-summer garden. —Thomas Hobbs ♡

## Resources

The following books all discuss plants and planting ideas for making the most of this season:

*Autumn Gardens*, Ethne Clarke (Soma Books, 1999)

*Christopher Lloyd’s Gardening Year*, Christopher Lloyd (Frances Lincoln, 1999)

*My Garden in Autumn and Winter*, E.A. Bowles (Timber Press, 1998)

*The Garden in Autumn*, Allen Lacy (Henry Holt, 1990)

*The Year at North Hill*, Wayne Winterrowd and Joe Eck (Henry Holt, 1996)