

Colours Autumn colour



Each autumn lots of trees treat us to a beautiful display of red, orange and yellow leaves. They then fall to the ground for us to rustle and crunch beneath our feet. Trees which lose their leaves like this are called deciduous trees. They shed their leaves in the autumn so that only their toughest parts like trunks and branches have to survive the cold, harsh winter months.

Leaves change colour before they fall because chlorophyll - the green pigment inside them - breaks down. This happens as the temperature cools and the days become shorter. Now there isn't enough sunlight for leaves to make energy through photosynthesis. Chlorophyll starts to break down and the leaves lose their green colouring.

Chlorophyll isn't the only pigment in leaves though. They also contain carotenoids - the red, orange and yellow pigments found in carrots - and anthocyanins, which give berries and cherries their red and purple colours! Now that the green pigment has faded it's time for the red, orange, yellow and purple colours to shine!



Copper beech is a tree which can also be grown as a hedging plant. They have dark red leaves that turn orange and gold in the autumn. The botanical name for this tree is *Fagus sylvatica f. purpurea*.

Smoke bush is a shrub that has green or deep burgundy leaves which turn a beautiful shade of magenta-red in autumn. Its botanical name is *Cotinus coggygia*.



Ginkgo trees have unusual 2-lobed leaves which turn bright yellow in autumn. Ginkgo leaves are the emblem of Tokyo city in Japan. The botanical name for this tree is *Ginkgo biloba*.

Sweetgum is a small tree which is covered in beautiful amber and red leaves each autumn. Its botanical name is *Liquidambar styraciflua*.



Maple trees give wonderful autumn colour displays. The botanical name for maples is *Acer*. There are many *Acer* species, some with red autumn leaves, others with orange or yellow.

Tulip trees have large tulip-shaped leaves which turn butter-yellow each autumn. The tree's botanical name is *Liriodendron tulipifera*.



Red oak trees have wavy leaves which turn fiery-red in the autumn months. The botanical name for the red oak tree is *Quercus rubra*.

Virginia creeper is a climbing plant with 5-lobed leaves that turn a lovely crimson-red colour in the autumn. The botanical name for this plant is *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*.

