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# Chapter 5

## Growing What Sells – Container Trees

**M**ost small growers are interested in starting a tree nursery to grow trees to sell, rather than growing trees, like chestnut, fruit trees and walnut, to maturity for lumber or nuts. In later chapters, we will explore that option as well. Growing trees from start to saleable size in containers is recommended for growers interested in making a profit sooner, and is the system used by most retail tree nurseries. Here's why:

1. Digging larger trees when they are sold that have been grown in the ground rather than in a container require either digging labor or a specialized and expensive mechanical tree digger. Both options cut into your profits.
2. The number of plants grown per acre can be much higher.
3. Container-grown plants can be sold year-round, regardless of weather.
4. Container-grown trees can be grown faster, because the soil in the pots can be blended to maximize growth.
5. Container production allows growers to easily produce transplant-sensitive trees, such as magnolias and arbutus.



# Chapter 9

## Value-Added Trees

One of the best ways for small-scale tree growers to increase their profits is by adding value to their trees by taking an extra step or two beyond just selling plain trees. In fact, as many growers have discovered, using simple, value-added techniques can increase your profits by 100 percent or more. Let's take a look at some of the ways to do that.

### Bonsai

From tiny trees the size of your thumb to mature maples just 18 inches high, the world of bonsai contains many surprises. Centuries ago, the Japanese collected the gnarled and twisted trees and shrubs that had been naturally dwarfed by a harsh existence in the rocky crevices of the mountains or seashore cliffs.

A growing scarcity of specimens in the wild encouraged growers to develop methods of training that duplicated the wild specimens, and the art of bonsai was born. Most bonsai trees and shrubs are developed from regular nursery stock while still young enough or small enough to train. Some of the most popular are:



Figured wood can occur naturally, but a tree grower can train a tree to develop figured wood. Here's how: Figuring is usually caused by compression, for example, on the downhill side of a leaning tree. To create figured wood, growers can bend over and tie saplings for just the spring growing season. By spacing the new trees about 12' to 15' apart, the top of one young sapling can be temporarily tied to the base of the next sapling. In summer, the sapling is untied, leaving permanent 'wrinkles' or figuring, in the wood. The next spring, the process of bending and tying is repeated on the other side of the tree sapling.

As the tree grows and adds new layers of cambium each year, the wrinkles repeat and expand outward without the need to bend or tie the tree each year. Is it worth the effort? One happy tree farmer recently sold a mature figured maple tree, with about 1,000 board feet of usable lumber, for \$10,000. One tree!

Mike Dubrasich, a timber consultant in the northwest, estimates an acre planted in big leaf maple and trained to produce figured wood, growing at an average of 2" in diameter each year, could be worth \$500,000 over 50 years. What a legacy for your children and grandchildren! In addition, periodic thinning can produce an income from lumber and inner bark worth \$50 for a 25' tree.

The bark from other tree species can be equally valuable as well. Bitter cherry, considered a "weed" tree by most loggers, produces horizontal bands of bark that can be sold to crafters for as much as \$4 each for 1 foot strips. Another "weed" tree, Red alder, is fast growing and even manufactures its own nitrogen fertilizer to help build soil fertility for other tree species. It has become popular as a "substitute" wood in cabinetry and furniture making, as it can be stained to look like other hardwoods such as maple.



# Chapter 11

## Japanese Maples

**F**or hundreds of years, Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*) have been grown and admired by gardeners, who view them as the ‘collector’s tree’ because of their unique beauty. The cost to purchase a Japanese maple is higher than other trees due to their slow growth, taking longer than most other tree species to reach a mature size.

Japanese maples are viewed as prized specimens that make a unique addition to any garden, with foliage ranging from delicate lacy leaves to variegated leaves in a rainbow of colors from red and green to pinks and white highlights. Even without leaves in the winter, the natural shape is eye catching, especially with the variety of bark colors available. Landscape designers love Japanese maples because they can be used in so many ways in the landscape. They are ideal for:



- A focal point in a meditation garden.
- A specimen tree in a shady part of the yard.
- A container or patio tree.
- Small spaces.