



Figure 1 Maple leaf scenery in autumn in Lansì

Image source: Japan food guide

This autumn scenery has become a major tourism resource and a symbol of Kyoto's seasonal identity. Arashiyama is cited nationally and internationally as a representative destination for viewing autumn leaves, with forest color change playing a central role in visitor appeal and local tourism planning (Mu et al., 2022). Phenological research on Japanese maple foliage shows that the timing and duration of coloration directly influence visitor numbers, and delayed but compressed color periods can increase maple-viewing tourism volume (Liu et al., 2019). Such findings help explain why the extensive planting and conservation of maples in Arashiyama have been prioritized: dense maple stands ensure a reliable, visually striking autumn display that underpins seasonal festivals and economic activity.

3.2 Color contrast with evergreen trees and water landscapes

In Arashiyama, red and yellow maples are composed with evergreen conifers and the Katsura River to create strong color contrast and spatial layering. Landscape analyses of the Kyoto-Arashiyama area identify cherry trees, pine trees (evergreen), and maples as key structural elements whose differing forms and phenologies are intentionally combined to shape views from designated vantage points. On the mountain slopes, darker green pine and other evergreens provide a deep background against which bright maple crowns stand out in autumn, enhancing perceived saturation and depth of color patches (Mu et al., 2022). This arrangement produces a tiered vertical structure: dark evergreen canopy, mid-story deciduous maples, and lighter understory vegetation.

The presence of the river and surrounding water landscapes further strengthens visual impact. Studies of slope-forest color aesthetics show that scenes with strong red-green-yellow contrast, clear primary and secondary color patches, and diversified but balanced color distribution achieve superior visual aesthetic quality and higher public preference. In Arashiyama, reflections of red maples and green pines on the river surface multiply color patches and soften transitions, while the linear water body organizes views and guides sightlines along the valley. This composition of deciduous maples, evergreen trees, and water aligns closely with empirically supported rules for high-quality autumn color landscapes on urban and peri-urban slopes (Mu et al., 2022).

3.3 Demonstrating the value of maples in landscape color design

The Arashiyama case powerfully illustrates the design value of maple trees as strategic color elements in landscape planning. As "constitution trees," maples have been used not only for ecological functions but also as key carriers of seasonal symbolism and aesthetic identity, deliberately embedded into postwar planting and scenic-area planning in Kyoto. Long-term management of Arashiyama National Forest emphasizes sustaining a