Volume 1, Number 1

Newsletter

of the American Magnolia Society

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Why A Magnolia Society?

JOHN M. FOGG, JR., Director The Morris Arboretum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

WHEN ONE REALIZES that a society, club or association has been established for almost every major group of ornamental plants from *Abelia* to *Zizyphus*, the question naturally arises as to the wisdom of forming yet another one. Doubtless the answer is to be sought in that principle of variation which influenced Darwin's early thinking about Natural Selection. Individual human beings vary widely, not only in appearance, but in their tastes, manners and enthusiasms. The rose fancier may care little about iris, the devotee of azaleas may hardly glance at a peony, and the holly fan may turn up his nose at boxwood. Probably most of us have a favorite group of plants, although in many cases our capacity for affection may embrace two or more genera in quite different families.

My own interest in magnolias, which goes back farther than I like to confess, was brought into somewhat sharper focus in 1959. It was at the annual meeting of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboretums, held in Rochester, N. Y., in October of that year, that the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University was designated as the National Registration Center for ornamental plants. Shortly thereafter I was invited by Dr. Donald Wyman, Horticulturist of the Arnold Arboretum, to serve as the registration authority for *Magnolia* and to prepare for publication an annotated list of all cultivar names within this genus. A fuller account of these matters will be found in the Morris Arboretum Bulletin, Volume 12: 17-18. 1961.

As the first step in ascertaining what cultivar or varietal names were already in use, I compiled the four-page

Magnolia grandiflora 'Celestial,' described by W. Todd Gresham in Morris Arboretum Bulietin, June, 1963. mimeographed list of epithets referred to by Mr. Gresham in his article entitled *Recommended Magnolias for a Beginner's Collection*, which appears in this issue (p. 5). Copies of this list were mailed in duplicate to more than a hundred institutions, nurseries and individuals in August, 1961. (If you did not receive one and would care to see it, please let me know.)

The response to this questionnaire was highly gratifying and the replies as they were received and tabulated added greatly to my list of names. They also provided a great deal of information as to just where certain named forms might be obtained and this, it is hoped, will make possible the formulation of "finding lists" which might be published in future issues of this Newsletter.

Still another result of my mailing was to stimulate a substantial number of letters, all of which had the same refrain, namely, "Why don't we organize a Magnolia Society?" My reply to all of these was sympathetic, but tinctured with the warning that there were already perhaps too many plant societies, that the going would certainly be rough, and that I would certainly not undertake such a venture unless I could be assured of the cooperation of



persons who knew far more about magnolias than I did. My advice was to wait until we had a broader base of opinion upon which to proceed.

In the midst of all of this, my good friend, Dr. J. C. McDaniel, of Urbana, Illinois, tipped the scales. In one of his occasional mimeographed releases dealing with forestry and horticulture he announced that a Magnolia Society was in the process of formation and that anyone who wished to become a charter member should send \$2.00 to Dr. Fogg at the Morris Arboretum. Immediately checks began to arrive and an idea became reality-a rather terrifying reality, indeed, save for the fact that at about that time I was able to persuade Mr. D. Todd Gresham, of Santa Cruz, California, to join me as a "partner in crime" and aid me in launching this new enterprise. Later, by virtue of a procedure which would make Roberts, of "Rules of Order" fame, turn over in his grave, I was designated as President and Todd as Secretary-Treasurer. I assure you, however, that we would both be happy to relinquish our titles at the drop of a tepal.

I said earlier that the going might be rough and in a way it has. We have been criticized by responsible members of the American Horticultural Society for our audacity in adding to the long roster of organized plant societies. It was for this reason that I called for a meeting of our members at the annual convention of the A.H.S. held in St. Louis in October. 1963. About a dozen of us got together on that occasion and I put the matter squarely before them. There was unanimous agreement that, instead of amalgamating with the A.H.S., or affiliating with any other organization, we should preserve our autonomy and that because most of our members were more interested in Magnolias than in any other group of plants we could accomplish more by maintaining our independence and establishing our own channel for the communication and exchange of ideas and information.

We now have over 200 members and the "Charter" list of those who joined up to February 10, 1964, our date of "going to press," is printed herein. It should prove very helpful to those who want to know who else in their particular area belongs.

And that, fellow Magnoliaphiles, is where we stand today. This is the first issue of our Newsletter: Volume I, Number 1, if you please. Keep it; it may one day become a collector's item. For it we are largely indebted to the generous cooperation of our member, Mr. George O. Slankard, of Sesser, Illinois.

How often it can appear will depend upon the state of our budget. How useful it can prove will be determined solely by the extent to which you can contribute articles and ideas. It should provide a clearing-house for data on such matters as hardiness and the merits of new varieties, a platform for the discussion of methods of disease control and culture (grafting, layering, crossing and the like), and a forum where questions can be asked and answered concerning the availability of species, hybrids and varieties, new and old.

Above all, if it is to improve it must grow and its growth will depend upon attracting to it the support of everyone who is seriously interested in this magnificent group of plants.

Fragrant Magnolias Bloom Spectacularly in Boston's Bay Area

GEORGE TALOUMIS Salem, Massachusetts (Reprinted from *The Boston Sunday Globe*. April 23, 1961)

IT'S MAGNOLIA TIME IN BOSTON! In the Public Garden and all along Commonwealth Ave. and Marlborough and Beacon Streets, this early-flowering small tree has unfolded its large fragrant cups, lending the city a gay and festive atmosphere.

In fact, visitors like to flock to this section of Back Bay to enjoy a spectacle that is always eagerly awaited. At noon, downtown workers allot time from their lunch hours to drink in this warming and exhilarating breath of Spring. This year more than ever the display will mean more to New Englanders who are weary of a long, cold, and hard Winter.

The riotous pageant of bloom has often been compared to the cherry blossoms in our nation's capital early every Spring. Though on a much smaller scale, the display here is not less significant, though how much more impressive it would be if there would be a full scale planting of magnolias in this part of old, historic Boston.

Saucer or saucer-cup magnolia (Magnolia Soulangiana) is the common name of the small, hardy tree, which through the years has proved its toughness and adaptability to the grime, soot, dust, and heat of city conditions. Add to that neglect, for the trees for the most part have been entirely on their own.

The common type of saucer magnolia is the white, slightly tinged with pink or lavender on the outside. Yet



Magnolia Sieboldii Photo: Dr. C. E. Lewis, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan



Magnolia macrophylla, Morris Arboretum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Photo: J. M. Fogg, Jr.

there are several varieties, that are all too little planted, forms with deeper, richer colors that add variety to the garden picture. One of these is a deep rose-pink, with purple at the base on the outside, that is known as 'Alexandrina.'

'Speciosa' is a pure white, with blooms that measure six inches across. 'Lennei' is a dark-flowered variety, with rosy-purple on the outside and white on the insides of the broad petals. It is one of the last to flower, thus extending the magnolia season by a few weeks.

The six-eight inch long leaves of saucer magnolia are one of the most attractive features. Two to three inches wide, they are a dark green color, hairy beneath, and remain in good condition all summer. Another desirable characteristic is the pleasant soft gray coloring of the bark, which sparkles in the winter sunshine. Plants also develop an interesting character, especially as they age, whether they have a single trunk or are allowed to develop with several trunks. In the winter, too, there are the fat flower buds covered with fuzz. Even in the autumn, this desirable tree has something to offer, namely handsome cucumber-like pods, which break open to release heads of bright red seeds.

Since this magnolia does not transplant easily, the early spring is the time to set it out in your garden. For this reason, too, plants are only handled with a ball of soil, and when transplanting be careful to keep the soil intact. Actually, saucer magnolia is not fussy about soil, thriving in light and sandy or rich and humusy, but at planting time it is advisable to incorporate peat moss, leaf mold, compost or other organic matter, including some dry manure.

If you cannot do the planting before flower buds break, it does not matter, for this magnolia can be handled when in full flower. In fact, it is better to plant it some time in the spring, when plants make strong root growth, needed to become well established. Another reason fall planting is not advised is the injury caused the thin bark by the winter sun.

Before setting out this lovely tree, give thought to its proper placement. Since it comes into flower so early in the season, when the weather is often wet, cold and disagreeable, place it where it can be enjoyed from insidefrom the sitting room or kitchen—when the weather is inclement. Another good spot is the front of the house or by a doorway, so its full-flowered beauty can be enjoyed every time the members of the house leave or enter.

After it has become established, saucer magnolia will ask for little. It will respond to feeding in the early spring or summer, but avoid fertilizing in the fall, for this stimulates late growth. Water plants in time of drought, but again the specimens in Boston have survived many a dry spell without artificial watering. There are hardly any diseases or pests, except for the occasional appearance of scale.

When cut, plants bleed easily, which indicates that they do not like pruning. However, very little is necessary, for these are clean trees, producing very little dead wood or twiggy growth that requires removal. The late summer and early fall are the best times to prune, for at that time the cuts heal easily. Avoid particularly winter pruning.

There is little doubt that this is a great plant, a nearly perfect small flowering tree for the home garden. If it has one fault, it is its tendency to flower so early that frosts are known to nip and blacken its silken petals. At that, it is worth a place, for what other tree gladdens our hearts while winter is still reluctant to release its hold?

Gloster Arboretum Magnolia Macrophyllas

THE FRANK GLADNEYS Baton Rouge, Louisiana

WE FIRST WENT to Wisley, Kew, Bodnant, Glasnevin, Mt. Usher and Caerhays Castle to see our native Magnolias.

So when we found at our Gloster, Mississippi, place, Magnolia macrophylla in profusion, M. acuminata, M. grandiflora, M. virginiana (glauca) and a few rare plants of M. pyramidata nearby, it appeared that the area was worth saving and developing. The cooking bay, Persea Borbonia, added its interest. It was not difficult to bring in M. tripetala from the Ozarks and M. Fraseri from the Great Smokies. Introduction of M. cordata bloomed last year and this fall a field trip to Florida gave us nice specimens of M. Ashei.

We have an assortment of Oriental species but the specimens of M. Campbellii came before we found the place at Gloster and they were planted in our back yard in Baton Rouge where they died. All magnolias taken to Gloster are in excellent shape and we hope to extend our collection into all available species and hybrids.

At Gloster almost everything in the Heath Family seems to thrive. We made a collection of native azaleas, as the place was well stocked with *A. canescens*, some of the plants having trunks up to four or five inches. *Stewartia Malacodendron* is indigenous. *Kalmia latifolia* is flourishing. Sourwood is plentiful and luxuriant. *Decumaria barbara* is gorgeous. Yellow jessamine will festoon the pines and myrtles in early February. Numerous native orchids abound, including a three-acre bog of yellow fringed orchids.

But the magnolias are still our first love. After Christmas as we sat in the crotch of an ancient *Magnolia macrophylla*, its silver tips glowed in the sky.

A jeep road curves gently through this area, east a few feet to miss the sun-flecked stream, west again to avoid climbing the not too gentle hill.

To the north on the stream side of the road, we admired three other macrophyllas, — more accurately, a single macrophylla and two colonies. Old trees must fight for survival among forest trees and they do it very well. When broken or badly bent under the weight of timber trees felled by woodsmen, they sprout several shoots or suckers.

The view east of the gravel road thrilled us beyond expression. By clearing out the under-story and, we must confess, some gorgeous specimens of other trees we exposed the following:

A curtain of green pines, extending many acres toward civilization, crowns the summit of a fifty foot hill. A pair of cat squirrels chased each other on high branches in a hickory tree.

Half way up the hill, twenty to thirty feet, more than fifteen colonies of Magnolia macrophylla stand in all their glory. Their gray gnarled multiple trunks, one to eight in number, are silhouetted against a backdrop of elm, oak species, two Magnolia acuminata, M. grandiflora, beech, dogwood, sourwood, sassafras, witch-hazel, sumac, aralia, Halesia diptera, Ilex opaca, I. vomitoria, Callicarpa americana and huckleberry. Ground covers are Christmas, ebony, and rattle-snake fern, sphagnum moss and Mitchella repens. With an apparent affinity for the Magnolia macrophylla, Hydrangea quercifolia has drifted along the ridges and settled in elegant groupings nearby.

The sculptured beauty of these magnolias, resembling giant candlelabra, creates masterpieces of abstract art. Thousands of inch-long silvery tips, soft as kitten's ears, will develop into enormous leaf-swirls centered with large white blossoms in May. The tips now shine in the evening sun.

This tapestry was woven by selective thinning-nothing was planted by man.

Experiences in Importing Magnolias

H. B. BAUMAN Harrisburg, Illinois

I HAVE BEEN ASKED by Mr. Todd Gresham to write a short article on importing magnolias. I have chosen to write of my experience in inducing the plants to grow after they have been obtained, since the process for ordering plants from abroad is simply an application to U. S.

D. A., 209 River Street, Hoboken, New Jersey, for permit to import.

The two plans here are easy to follow, and I have experienced about fifty percent success in getting imported plants to grow in my garden. I expect to make another order from England for Spring '64, and I expect much greater success than in the previous order since I shall place them under mist as soon as they are potted rather than wait until mid-summer losses occurred as I did in the past year—all imported plants arrived with bare roots,

I prefer fall delivery to spring, since the shock of transplanting is greatly reduced because of approaching dormancy of the plants. I potted the plants in a medium of one-third each of good garden soil, peat and coarse sand and placed them in a cold frame for the winter. As growth began in the spring and the plants were slightly hardened by open exposure for a week in the cold frame, they were planted in their permanent places in the garden. I protected these plants from hot sunshine and drying winds for the first summer. The soil must be well drained, slightly acid and moisture retentive. In the fall the plants are wrapped with burlap strips in preparation for their first winter. I mulched the ground about them heavily.

The other plan has to do with spring delivery. The potting is in the same kind of medium only perfect drainage is mandatory since those pots will be larger, (I use ten gallon egg cans) and will be placed under mist as soon as potted. In late August I reduced the mist process gradually and by mid-September removed them from the mist and permitted them to harden off in more sunshine under dry conditions. After growth has ceased, after several heavy frosts, I planted them as I did in the process used for plants that wintered in a cold frame—in their permanent places in the garden.

I would not advise planting directly into permanent positions in the garden of newly arrived plants unless the moisture, humidity, drainage, shade and acidity of the soil can be continued.

Some may ask the question of why import magnolias? In my experience I have found sources for obtaining the more unusual species and hybrids very difficult (I have forty-five species and hybrids in my garden). Secondly, the cost is less in spite of high air express rates, and the plants are sturdier and have greater root masses. I prefer imported plants for these reasons.

Notes____

IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED that we appoint Membership Chairmen on a regional basis. Your officers consider this an excellent idea and since the first person to volunteer her services is Mrs. Francis L. Edmondson of 722 E. Morningside Drive N.E., Atlanta 9, Georgia, we hereby announce her appointment as Membership Chairman for the southeastern United States. Who's next?

We would be happy to receive your suggestions as to any special features which you would like to see embodied in this Newsletter. Should we, for example, have a section



headed "Exchanges," in which a member could offer seeds, cuttings or plants of something he had in excess for something which he desperately wanted in return? Should we have a section entitled "Hardiness Reports," in which the resistance to extreme weather conditions of such a cultivar for example as the Bogue Magnolia could be reported? Should one entire issue be devoted to a kind of symposium in which the cultivars of a single species or hybrid, e.g., *Soulangiana* could be discussed? These and many other ideas will doubtless occur to you and we hope that you will pass them on to us.

We are keenly desirous of having more illustrations in the Newsletter and urge all members who have good black and white prints of magnolias to submit them for inclusion in the next issue.

-J. M. F., Jr.

Recommended Magnolias For a Beginner's Collection

D. TODD GRESHAM Santa Cruz, California

A QUICK GLANCE at Dr. Fogg's monumental compilation of Magnolia Varieties and Species Cultivated in the United States and Canada, will convince anyone of the difficulty encountered in attempting the selection of Ten Favorite Magnolia for a Beginner's Collection.

This listing constitutes a show case of practically all the magnolia sections, or an inter-or intra-fusing of two sections, and brief comment on their value and dependability. With the exceptions of Magnolia grandiflora, M. mollicomata, and $M. \times Thompsoniana$, all are reasonably hardy. They are listed in approximate blooming sequence, calculated to reward the grower with almost twelve months of constant magnolia blossoming pleasure.

- 1. Magnolia stellata 'Water Lily'
- 2. Magnolia Soulangiana 'Alexandrina'
- 3. Magnolia mollicomata
- 4. Magnolia Soulangiana 'Lennei'
- 5. Magnolia obovata
- 6. Magnolia 🗙 Watsoni

Magnolia stellata var. rosea Photo: Dr. Patricia Allison, Plant Pathologist at the Morris Arboretum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

- 7. Magnolia Wilsonii
- 8. Magnolia \times Thompsoniana
- 9. Magnolia macrophylla
- 10. Magnolia grandiflora 'St. Mary'

Magnolia stellata 'Water Lily' is completely captivating and indispensable for a profusion of early multiplepetaled pink flushed water lily shaped blossoms. Stronger growing than most stellata forms, it may be used effectively in many original ways to suit individual imagination; as a small formal trunked tree; multiple trunks; espaliered on fence or building; trained low and trimmed as a form fitting garland for a rolling hillock.

I consider Magnolia Soulangiana 'Alexandrina' a reliable early bloomer, with a profusion of pure rosy blossoms over an exceptionally long period of time. The plant habit is vigorous and symmetrical. An alternate choice would be M. Soulangiana 'Lennei alba, a wonderful white tulip-form.

Magnolia mollicomata, the latest flowering and hardiest of the M. Campbellii clan, also blooms in a shorter time from seed or graft than M. Campbellii. In color it ranges from white with violet base shading, to the fuchsine purple of M. Campbelli subsp. mollicomata convar. 'Lanarth.' M. mollicomata is characterized by large flowers of good substance, the outer petals reflexing at maturity. Grow this one without fail if conditions are favorable.

Magnolia Soulangiana 'Lennei' is the latest to bloom of the colored Soulangiana and the finest. Its huge dark wine goblets will not be mistaken for any other Soulangiana. The late blooming season enables it to escape late frosts, which damage many other varieties.

Magnolia obovata, an Asiatic "Big Leaf" magnolia, requires room to develop. Not a very compact grower, the large obovate leaves with silvery reverse, are most interesting. Leaf buds, annular scars, and flower buds have a primitive antedeluvian appearance. The deep ivory blossoms with purplish sepals, have thick tepals of waxy texture. Their exotic fragrance is the odor of all tropical fruits and perfumes combined in one. Tutti-frutti.

 $Magnolia \times Watsoni$, the natural hybrid of MagnoliaSieboldii and M. obovata, fuses good characters of its two parents in a flowering plant of great value. M. obovata has transmitted ample foliage of rich dark green, with silvery reverse, and robust growth. Flowers are waxen, of M. obovata substance and fragrance; it has M. Sieboldii's boss of carmine anthers and whiteness.

Magnolia Wilsonii, the most up-side-down of the Oyama Magnolias and, in good forms, the best. Large six to eight inch fully pendant pure white salvers with a striking boss of carmine anthers. Unmistakably attractive. One cut blossom pervades a room with the pleasant sweetness of its perfume. Grow it is a high standard, so you may look upinto the blossom's vibrant heart, or as a pleached alley.

 $Magnolia \times Thompsoniana$, natural hybrid of Magnoliatripetala by M. virginiana, was a fortunate natural mating. Blooming during the summer, the ivory blooms of good size and enchanting fragrance, are set off by foliage of a glossy dark green. Situated near a terrace, or family gathering spot, this magnolia will be the family pet, it is so amiable and endearing. In regions where $M. \times Thomp$ -soniana is not hardy, plant M. virginiana, a worthy substitute.

The title, "King of the American Umbrella Trees," must be accorded *Magnolia macrophylla*. Fourteen inch white blossoms nest in a wheel of radiating leaves to 36 inches long by 12 inches wide, ghostly white on the under surface. Ultimately attaining large proportions, it should be carefully situated where strong winds will not tear the parchmenty foliage to tatters. For creating bold tropical effect in landscaping, *M. macrophylla* has no rival among deciduous woody plants hardy in the Temperate Zone.

Magnolia grandiflora 'St. Mary' has been propagated vegetatively longer than any other *M. grandiflora* cultivar. Time has proven its reliability as quick to bloom, consistent producer of classic sweetly scented alabaster chalices. Not so robust in growth as most grandiflora forms, it has a neat growing habit, good dark green proportionate foliage, and plentiful rusty indumentum. A lawn, garden, or street tree of the highest quality, wherever hardy.

American Magnolia Society

List of charter members as of February 10, 1964 (publication press date)

- Alexander, Mrs. Lucien B., 11848 S E. Rhone, Portland 66, Oregon.
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- Davis, Mr. Don E., Route 4, Fremont, Michigan.
- Dawes Arboretum, The, c/o E. A. Sanford, Newark, Ohio.
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- Dilatush, Mr. Tom, Earl Dilatush's Holly Nursery, Robbinsville, New Jersey.
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