

# Selecting Sites for Magnolias

by J. C. McDANIEL

How well magnolias perform depends to a high degree on where we plant them. If you want to lose the flower display more years than not, plant your earliest flowering magnolias to the south of a tall, many-windowed building. *M. denudata* trees, particularly, have suffered from such placement before a University of Illinois dormitory complex. March and April warmth do not cause so much premature swelling on buds of trees to the north of a building, shaded at least from the morning sun.

Buildings can offer protection to evergreen magnolias in northern Zone 6, both by shading them from winter sun, and by acting as a windbreak. This would apply to *M. grandiflora*, Freeman hybrids, and *M. virginiana australis* evergreen forms. The latter, with rather slender petioles, seem to lose leaves primarily to the joint action of wind and ice. Ice and frozen snow do not damage foliage nearly so much if a windbreak to the west is present. The safest place for such trees in the north may be east of a house, flanked to the north and south by tall coniferous evergreen trees.

No magnolia is really happy with stagnant water, and probably many *M. virginiana* trees, both evergreen and deciduous, have been killed by planting them with too high a water table, because this species has been considered a "swamp magnolia". In habitat, it usually has some sandy or organic soil to aerate its roots above the water level, and if it occurs at streamside, the stream is free flowing fresh water most of the year. In cultivation, the best trees usually are in well-drained but not drouthy soils. They require no more water than *soulangiana* to do well, if the soil drains well, and if the *virginiana* is a strain adapted to the minimum temperatures of your climate.

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