The four North American species requiring the most drainage year-around, are probably M. *macrophylla,* M. *ashei,* M. *fraseri* and M. *pyramidata.* M. *pyramidata* and M. *fraseri* are probably the two most sensitive, and partly for this reason are rarely seen in cultivation. M. *macrophylla* is not quite so sensitive, but will be noted in Tennessee and Kentucky as mostly growing on higher, drier sites than M. *tripetala,* in woods where both occur. Where it occurs with M. *grandiflora,* as in southern Mississippi woods, M. *macrophylla* again will be seen farther up the slopes, in general. Only at Natural Bridge, Alabama, have I seen some trees of it growing along a stream side, and this was fresh water from a nearby spring.

Karl Evert Flinck, from his experience in Sweden, suggests treating M. *sieboldi* like a Rhododendron: well-drained acid porous soil, a mulch, and some shade. This would probably apply also to its relatives in the Oyama section, wherever they are hardy, and to such members of Section Rytidio-spermum as *fraseri, pyramidata* and (in very mild climates) *rostrata.* Both M. *ashei* and M. *macrophylla* occur as understory trees among pines and hardwoods, which give their big thin leaves some sun and wind shelter.

Full sun is tolerated by the leaves of most other hardy deciduous magnolias, and by *grandiflora* and *virginiana australis* in the south where zero temperatures are rare. But no species, north or south, is recommended for planting in clay or compacted soils where aeration is poor. ***

More on Michelia figo

by PHILIP J. SAVAGE, JR.

How nice it is to have a bit of botanical controversy now and then, in language an amateur, such as myself, can cope with!

On page eighteen, of the April Newsletter, I described a tree of *Michelia figo,* given to me by Mr. Tom Sawada of Mobile, Alabama, which is typical of plants of this species grown in the southern United States. I wrote that this plant had, "stiff little flowers, cream-yellow, bordered with a narrow purple picotee." I also mentioned that in a closed greenhouse, they have a powerful scent of "synthetic banana oil."

I quickly heard from two groups of members on that subject. The letters of group one, from the south-eastern United States, said, in essence, "How dare you call *Magnolia fuscata,* our beloved Banana Shrub, by such an outlandish name as *Michelia figo*!" Group two, from England and New Zealand, suggested with tact that I check my plant again, to see if the flowers were not, in fact, purplish brown, instead of cream yellow with purple edges, and the scent that of port wine, instead of banana oil.

To parry the thrusts of group one, I checked the nomenclature of this species, as follows:

(1790) Described as *Liriodendron figo,* by Loureiro in Flora Cochinchinae.

(1802) Published as *Magnolia fuscata* by H. C. Andrews in The Botanists Repository.

(1825) Re-named *Michelia figo* by Kurt Sprengel in Syst. II, P. 643.

(1828) Published as *Michelia fuscata* by Karl L. Blume in Flora Javanica, Vol. 8. It can be seen above that Sprengel placed the species in its presently accepted genus three years before Blume, considerately retaining Loureiro's original specific epithet, *figo.*

Wheeling to face group two, I found statistics dishearteningly muddled. Henderson's Handbook, of 1890, describes the flowers as, "dull purple, with exquisite fragrance." L. H. Bailey notes they are "small, erect, brown-purple, very fragrant." W. J. Bean, on the other hand, saw them as "yellowish-green stained with dull purple," and notes that: "Two or three blossoms will fill a small greenhouse with their fruity perfume, which strongly recalls that of an old fashioned sweet known as pear drops." A businesslike description from the catalog of Duncan & Davies Ltd., of New Plymouth, New Zealand, reads; "*Michelia figo,* (Port Wine Magnolia), renowned for the strong port wine bouquet of its small, reddish-purple flowers." W. Arnold-Forster says the small flowers are, "maroon on the outside, powerfully scented like pear-drop sweets." In his beautiful new "Manual of Trees & Shrubs", Mr. H. C. Hillier agrees with Arnold-Forster.

Putting the books away, I read a most interesting letter from M. S. member, Mr. A. W. Massey, of St. James Close, London. Mr. Massey described the flowers of his *M. figo* as, "brown-purple, with a tiny yellow centre," and, "smelling strongly of banana." He also informed me that, "Pear drop sweets are an acid sweet, roughly in the shape of a pear, and supposed to taste like one."

While the line between blue and green often escapes me, I won't concede that I can confuse cream-yellow and brownish-purple. I feel even less prone to confuse the bouquet of good Port wine with synthetic banana oil, no matter how rough its voyage from Oporto to the Antipodes may have been.

From mystery develops theory, usually more than one, and having pen in hand, I'll herewith give you mine. I'll also be happy to entertain yours.

The plants, and/or seeds of *Michelia figo* that reached England around 1790, very likely came from the neighborhood of Canton and Hong Kong, in Kwangtung province. This strain, or perhaps clone, seldom or never set seed in England and thus retained its identity, when during later years it was sent out to the United States, Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa by English nurserymen. Let us suppose this clone had brown-purple flowers, and a Port wine scent.

During the first third of the present century, a number of intelligent and industrious Japanese-Americans established large nursery operations along the Gulf coast of the United States, and in California. Vast numbers of valuable clones of Camellia species, and Kurume azaleas were introduced by them from Japan. Color variants of *Magnolia kobus* var. *stellata,* some