

Photos by Tim Savage



The big blooms of Wada's 'Picture' look in a second floor bedroom window.

Some Magnolias in Japan

by K. WADA

with introduction by
J. C. McDaniel

Mr. K. Wada, President of Hakoneya Nurseries, Inc. (Y.P.P.D. Box 295, Yokohama 231-91, Japan) is a famed Japanese plantsman who has worked long with many genera. In America and England he is perhaps best known as the first exporter of *Rhododendron metternichium* var. *yakusimanum*, usually called *R. yakusimanum*, that hardy gem from (the island of) Yaku-Shima. In his varied interests, he has worked with *Chaenomeles* and other genera including *Magnolia*. Those who grow it appreciate his selection of *M. denudata* as perhaps the finest clone of this species in commerce. His name is attached to 'Wada's Memory', (probably *kobus* × *salicifolia*), which the University of Washington Arboretum grew from seed sent them from Mr. Wada. *M. × soulangiana* 'Picture' was introduced by him and does very well in American gardens. I thought other members would like to read excerpts I have edited from two letters, mainly concerning magnolias, that he wrote me in 1974.

Dear Mr. McDaniel:

It has interested me that a photograph of *Magnolia* 'Picture' was used on the front cover of a recent Newsletter, because this magnolia is of my introduction. I have in my nursery more than one hundred seedlings raised at different times from open-pollinated seeds of 'Picture'. Over thirty plants have flowered, giving the whole color range of the present *soulangiana* hybrids, but with larger and more substantial flowers. On one seedling the flowers are yellowish white. I enclose a color slide of one of the first seedlings, now thirty-five years old. It is noted to have the vigor of *M. 'Picture'*, with a better shaped flower.

Both *M. campbellii* and (its subspecies) *mollicomata* cannot endure our hot summers, and the result of crossing them, said to have hybrid vigor in England, cannot grow tall here and is just alive, still four feet tall at ten years.

From the many seeds sent me by the late Mr. Todd Gresham (from crosses between *M. campbellii* subspecies *Mollicomata* and *M. liliflora* 'Nigra' and others), I now have over one hundred seedlings in my nursery, and they are growing with surprising vigor. Many of the seedlings of *Mollicomata* × 'Nigra' made an average growth of eight feet last season, with some growing over ten feet. These Gresham hybrids will be a great acquisition to our Japanese Gardens.



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M. salicifolia makes a dense, solid looking, small-leaved tree, with strongly anise-scented foliage. Eventually it made the largest tree in my Numazu Nursery, surpassing the *M. kobus* plants. I did not take this plant to be *M. kobus* because the flowers were pure white throughout, and strongly scented. One of its outstanding features was coming into leaf later than any magnolia available in Japan, but flowering before the late-sprouting new foliage.

This magnolia survived the air-raids of the war, but died when I tried to move it to my Yokohama Nursery several years ago. The year before it had produced three seeds, which germinated and are growing in my nursery. I am watching these to see if they were selfed or crossed with a nearby *kobus*. Flowers on these seedlings are more strongly scented than *kobus*, as were those of the original plant.

I have now no plant of *kobus* × *denudata* (offered in 1925), but have one of *stellata* × *denudata* and another of *salicifolia* × *denudata*. The latter looks like a very twiggy, but small leaved *denudata*. 'Merrill' appears to me more like my *stellata* × *denudata*, than *kobus* × *stellata*.

Magnolia salicifolia is a highland species, and native where land is over three thousand feet above sea level only. In lowland areas, such as Tokyo and Yokohama, it does not grow with enough vigor to be useful as a garden plant. This magnolia is therefore not available commercially in Japan. Possibly there could be much variation among clones in the wild.

Before the war, I used to use wild collected *M. salicifolia* plants for export. Among several hundred such plants, I noticed one more vigorous than the rest, and kept it for further observation. Eventually it made the largest

My *M. grandiflora* 'St. Mary' plant in my Yokohama Nursery remains one foot tall, though it was planted ten years ago. The *M. grandiflora* plants long grown in Japan, and which I identify as 'Ferruginea' grow very well with us. I have a tree in my yard at least forty feet tall. What makes such a difference? Winter cold? Humidity in the air? Does high and prolonged summer heat stop all root action on this magnolia, or kill the root tips?

McDaniel note: I would doubt that anything in the Yokohama climate would be particularly unfavorable to 'St. Mary'. Perhaps there was a root infection on the plant Mr. Wada imported. Does anyone have another clue?

Regarding the Greshan hybrid seedlings, which Mr. Wada does not indicate as flowering so far, the late Todd Greshan told me that the form of *M. liliflora* he used in his hybridizing was better than the one usually propagated in America as 'Nigra'. The 'Nigra' name has been used rather carelessly, to include clones of *M. liliflora* with smaller, and lighter colored flowers than the true 'Nigra'.

I'm sure we may look forward to good Magnolia introductions from among Mr. K. Wada's seedlings. ***

Newsletters Down to Date

Most members would like to own a complete set of the Newsletters published by the Society from its beginning.

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P.J.S.