

The Meeting in Washington

The American Magnolia Society was discovered to be alive and well in Washington April 1-2 at its meeting at the U. S. National Arboretum. It was good to renew acquaintances not seen since the 1971 meeting in Philadelphia and even better to see a strong showing of newer members giving the society the vitality it needs to promote wider culture of Magnolias.

The weather cooperated with balmy sunshine for the first day or outdoors part of the spring meeting. This consisted of a tour of the National Arboretum's Magnolia trees in both its experimental nursery and its public plantings, plus a tree planting ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of this first and only arboretum operated by the Federal government. There were showers the second day but temperatures held pleasant and everybody stayed dry while the scheduled events proceeded in the greenhouse Saturday morning and concluded in the arboretum auditorium in the afternoon.

About 30 members made it to Washington from New England, the Middle Atlantic States, the South, and the Midwest. One of our staunchest members, Karl Flinck, came all the way from Sweden to be with us.

The Arboretum's Magnolia collection, one of the best in the eastern part of the country, provided a good display. Flowering had begun a little earlier than normal and some of the more precocious Asian magnolias, such as the *M. kobus* complex and the early flowering *M. X soulangianas*, had passed their peak but there were individual trees that held off their show till April 1. The pink goddess, *M. sprengeri* 'Diva,' had presented her flush earlier but there were still a few flowers left to show members what was there a few days before.

The meeting was opened by program co-chairman Gene Eisenbeiss, a magnolia and holly researcher on the arboretum staff, and President Joe McDaniel. The members were welcomed by Dr. John Creech, director of the National Arboretum and well known plant explorer (see story on his remarks).

Dr. Creech urged members not to miss other arboretum attractions such as the new bonsai collection, presented by the people of Japan to the people of the U.S.A., housed next door to the administration building. He then turned the members over to Dr. Frank Santamour, chief of research on hollies, magnolias, and ornamental trees, who led the group on a tour of the experimental nursery to learn about recent and current magnolia hybridization and other research to develop more desirable magnolias for the horticultural trade. Among these were two erect trees of the hybridization *M. quinquepeta* (syn. *liliflora*) X *M. sprengeri* 'Diva' developed in 1969 and now beginning to produce crops of plum colored flowers; *M. X veitchii* X *M. heptapeta* (syn. *denudata*) crosses bred in the 1960's and bearing large white to pink flowers; and the group of "Little Girls," eight selections of *M. quinquepeta* X *M. kobus* var. *stellata* hybridizations that have been entering cultivation for a few years now.

All these hybridizations were made under the tenure of researcher William F. Kosar, now retired. Mr. Kosar was also responsible for some dozen hybrid plants of *M. hypoleuca* X *M. virginiana* which members viewed with interest, although it was too early in spring to see the flowers. These appear in late May and early June and are fleshy, creamy, orbicular-tepaled, cup-shaped, and fragrant, about 5 or 6 inches across, on branchlet terminals surrounded by light green foliage resembling oversized *M. virginiana* leaves. The arboretum currently is preparing to name and distribute its selection of one of these, having been held up somewhat by difficulties in developing a method of rooting propagation because of excessively pithy stems. Its flowers and foliage are reminiscent of another hybrid, *M. X thompsoniana* (*virginiana* X *tripetala*). Both are sterile.

The last part of the experimental nursery tour included some hybrid seedlings developed by Dr. Santamour, largely crossings of various species with *M. grandiflora*, one of the aims having been to create flowers that are pink to purple on trees with *grandiflora*-like evergreen foliage. Flower bearing by these seedlings, including *grandiflora* X *quinquepeta*, has been awaited with interest.



Tree planting participants (l to r) Dr. Stephen Spongberg, Gene Eisenbeiss, Frank Grant, and Joe McDaniel.

Dr. Santamour also has made recent hybridizations using *M. acuminata* as seed parent and involving a number of Asian species or hybrids, but these were too young for flowering and were not shown. Our members await all these new plants with some excitement.

The party then moved by motorcade across the arboretum grounds to the public plantings of Magnolia where many trees were in their first flush of bloom and some earlier flowering types were still putting on a show. Flowering treetops in all directions beckoned members to scatter and prowl among and admire favorites.

The group regathered for the planting ceremony, featuring a large-flowered *M. kobus* var. *stellata* selected and named 'Centennial' at the Arnold Arboretum, an adjunct of Harvard University at Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, a few years ago to commemorate that arboretum's 100th anniversary. The presentation by Dr. Stephen A. Spongberg, representing Arnold, was made on the occasion of the National Arboretum's 50th anniversary. Another plant was presented by Tom Dodd Nurseries, Semmes, Alabama, this being a specimen of Brooklyn Botanic Garden's *M. X brooklynensis* 'Evamaria,' a patented cross of *M. acuminata* X *M. quinquepeta*. Planting of this little tree was postponed because it was in soft growth, having been hand carried to Washington by Tom Dodd, III and opening a flower while in flight.

Other Brooklyn Botanic Garden hybrids were shown Friday evening by one of its plant researchers, Dr. Lola Koerting, during presentation of color slides by members. An arresting sight was photos of big sulfur to lemon yellow flowers on hybrid trees of a yellow-flowered *M. acuminata* X pure white flowered *M. heptapeta*. Other slides included photos sent by English member Brian Savage of Asian magnolias at Trewithen in Cornwall and brief glimpses of some of Dr. Frank Galyon's hybrids produced in Knoxville. Dr. Galyon's named cultivar nearest to introduction, *M. X* 'Paul Cook' (*M. sprengeri* 'Diva' X *M. X soulangiana*), has been tested for several years by Joe McDaniel (see separate story). Several other Galyon hybrids are promising under Knoxville conditions.

As April showers soaked the plantings outdoors Saturday morning, demonstrations were conducted in the headhouse at the greenhouse complex by Gene Eisenbeiss, on handling and planting magnolia seeds and rooting of magnolia cuttings; by Joe McDaniel on grafting and budding techniques and principles; and by Phil Savage on the best methods for hand pollination to produce hybrids. Members became so absorbed in these useful technical presentations and the questions about them that they had to be pried loose to make it to lunch on schedule.

At a short business session Saturday afternoon the Society's incumbent officers were re-elected: Joe McDaniel, president; Walter Flory, vice president; and Ginnie Melnick, secretary-treasurer. The society expressed its gratitude to Dr. John Creech and the National Arboretum staff for making the meeting a success and for its invaluable work in Magnolia culture. Dues were raised to \$7 effective in 1978 to keep up with inflation in the costs of printing and mailing

the AMS Newsletter. Volunteers were asked for to take over the Society's thriving seed counter which, under the push and zeal, careful planning, expert knowledge, and general legerdemain of the chief bottlewasher, President McDaniel, has become one of the Society's principal functions in behalf of its members.

Although Vice President Walter Flory said he could eventually take over the counter, the sudden illness of Joe McDaniel a few weeks after the meeting (see separate story) called for emergency action to begin collecting and processing seeds this fall. Fortunately, Perry Narten, who has years of experience in handling and processing magnolia seed and has the kind of equipment needed, agreed to take over immediately and has done so.

Dr. Yu-Chen Ting, trained as a plant geneticist and now chairman of the Biology Department at Boston College, was the first guest speaker of the afternoon, describing his trip to his native country, China, in summer 1976 and showing color slides he took, many indicating the wide popularity in that country of a native U. S. magnolia, *M. grandiflora*. Dr. Ting's trip was interrupted by an earthquake over wide areas of China, necessitating his premature return to the U. S. He had hoped to obtain or arrange for obtaining live material of the Chinese magnolia, *M. biondii*, not known to be in cultivation in Europe or North America. He was unable to obtain material of this Magnolia, which grows in his native Honan province, but believes he can in the near future arrange for receiving material from a horticultural acquaintance there. He has returned to China on a second trip and is due back by the time this is published. Dr. Ting was introduced by Dr. August E. Kehr, an AMS member who is president of the American Rhododendron Society and a scientist with the U. S. Department of Agriculture research station at Beltsville, Maryland. Dr. Kehr himself subsequently spent two summer months in China on a USDA agricultural mission to that country (see separate story).

Dr. Stephen A. Spongberg gave the final guest talk on the research and rationale that formed the basis of his recent monograph renaming and reclassifying some Magnolias. He is preparing a version of his talk for the next issue of the AMS Newsletter expected to be published in December, 1977.

Registration slips for the AMS April 1-2 meeting in Washington have been temporarily mislaid, but a partial list of those attending, based on memory, included: Carl R. Amason, Dr. John Creech, Oliver D. Diller, Tom Dodd, Jr., Tom Dodd III, Dr. Theodore Dudley, Gene Eisenbeiss, Richard B. Figlar, Karl E. and Mrs. Flinck, Dr. Walter S. Flory, Dr. John M. Fogg Jr., Dr. Frank B. Galyon Jr., Frank Grant, Gordon Hagen, Harry J. Heineman Jr., Joseph W. Hickman, Harold C. and Mrs. Hopkins, Elliott Jessen, Dr. August E. Kehr, Dr. Lola Koerting, Dr. Peter P. Lejins, Lyle Littlefield, Roger F. Luce, L. Dean McCoy, J.C. McDaniel, Dr. Frank S. Santamour Jr., Philip J. Savage Jr., William Secunda, Ralph H. Smith, Dr. and Mrs. Stephen A. Spongberg, and Dr. Yu-Chen Ting. —Editor