

grown from seed and these 4- to 7-year-old plants in the 3- to 6-foot-tall sizes most commonly sold have to be carried several more years, sometimes as much as 20, before they will flower. This is a long and unnecessary wait inasmuch as plants can be flowered far younger when produced from rooted cuttings and at the same time be of outstanding cultivar quality as opposed to random seedlings. It is very seldom the customer is told how long it will take his 3- to 6-foot plant to flower and often the nursery salesman himself doesn't know. A long waiting period can be disillusioning to gardeners. Magnolia fanciers grudgingly accept long years of waiting for that brief moment of ecstasy when nature at last begins to display her glorious wares.

Many homeowners with small properties lack the space for the typical *M. grandiflora*, yet will grow them only to find in later years that they have become too large, shading out their lawn and nearby trees and shrubs, including their neighbor's. For this kind of a situation, 'Little Gem' is an ideal choice and there is no question it would provide many more years of pleasure for the small property owner because of its compact narrow habit and slow growing nature. Further, the smaller leaves would provide a more suitable foliage texture scaled to the landscape effect of the small property.

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Needed: More Energetic Promotion

by Kenneth Durio

Most nurseries don't handle a variety of magnolias for the simple reason that they can't sell enough of them to make it profitable. We have tried to handle 40 or 50 magnolia cultivars and usually get calls for only three types: *M. grandiflora* (called "palm trees" around here because the leaves are "blessed" in the Catholic Church on Palm Sunday), "purple" (usually they are referring to *M. quinquepetala nigra*), and "pink" (usually referring to *M. × soulangiana*).

We have planted several cultivars around the nursery to show prospective customers the difference. Most can't really tell the difference. What we need to do is persist in trying to educate and promote. We have the same difficulty with daylilies; only a very small number of gardeners are aware of the fine new cultivars available today.

Journals and newsletters reach only those persons who are already interested. Magnolia articles and color pictures probably help most, but many more are needed. If the demand exists, then we can find nurseries willing to specialize in magnolias, or at least a representative selection of several kinds. Plantings in arboreta and parks and other public places also will help a great deal.

As a landscape architect, I try to include magnolias in as many of my plans as

possible. We also donate them to churches, schools, and such institutions in the hope that people will see them and like them. But progress is very slow; we will all continue to push our favorite trees and flowers as best we can.

The prices for grafted plants also turn customers off. If we pay a magnolia specialist nursery for a particular cultivar or rare species (such as *M. × soulangiana* 'Lennei Alba' or *M. heptapeta*), then get them and add a small profit and air freight, then the price is way out of the range that most of our customers want to pay. They would like to buy magnolias for about \$5, or \$3.98 would probably be more like it.

We resorted to selling *M. heptapeta* seedlings for several years. Of course some bloomed light pink and we got some complaints. We did tell customers what they were getting when they bought these seedlings. Even at that, all we have seen were pretty when they bloomed and nearly all were "white." Some were pure white, whereas the parent clone for grafting had small pink patches near the base of the tepals.

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