

# Magnolias in Eastern Australia

by Walter S. Flory

Three of every four natural growing trees in Australia belong to one of the some 600 species of *Eucalyptus* which dominate the forests of that continent. A surprising number and variety of *Magnolia* types are being used, however, and others are being tested for use and adaptability in the comparatively wet eastern biogeographical province of the country, especially in the states of New South Wales and Victoria.

While in Australia attending the XXth International Horticulture Congress in August 1978, I observed and took notes on *Magnolias* wherever seen in botanic gardens or in street or yard plantings. Here is a summary.

In Sydney, at about 34 degrees south latitude, a considerable number of *M. × soulangeana* plants appeared in street and yard plantings and in the Sydney Botanic and other public gardens. Since the latitude of Sydney, in the Southern hemisphere, is near the approximately 37 degrees north, which is the latitude of Washington, D.C., in the Northern hemisphere, it was to be expected that *Magnolias* would be blooming in late August in New South Wales. The *soulangeana* plants around Sydney at that time were in full bloom. A few had essentially white flowers, but the majority had flowers with pinkish or purplish tints. Most were unlabeled and there could be no certainty of the varieties. The mature plants of *soulangeana* in Sydney were 15 to 25 feet in height, many noticeably smaller than this hybrid grows in the eastern United States.

The most striking, and the only other *Magnolia* seen in Sydney, was *M. denudata*. There was especially fine and beautiful specimens of this species in the Kuring-gai Wildflower Garden, north of Sydney. The snow-white flowers of *denudata*, with their usual nine petals and sepals, gave the appearance of being doubles. The plants varied from 20 to 30 feet in height with heavily laden fragrant white flowers growing to perfection.

In Melbourne, and especially in the National Botanic Garden in that city, there was a wide range of *Magnolia* taxa. Melbourne lies farther south than Sydney, of course, at about latitude 38 degrees south. It was not unexpected that the *Magnolias* in Melbourne were in an earlier and more

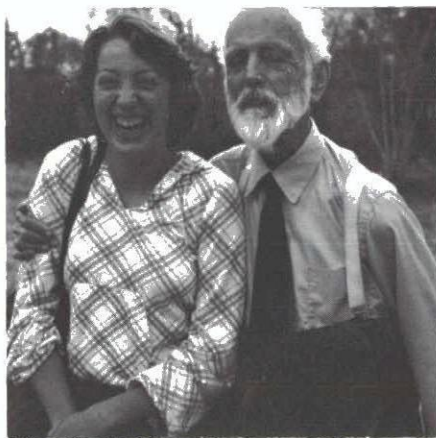
delayed stage of growth than those in Sydney.

The several *Magnolia* taxa seen in and around Melbourne are listed here, with some remarks.

Plants of *M. × soulangeana* 'Alexandrina' were seen at several places. Though budding, none were in flower in late August. The plants were well-shaped, 10 to 12 feet in height, and quite spreading, the spread being equal to the height.

A hybrid between *M. campbellii* and *M. × soulangeana* 'Lenei' in the Melbourne Gardens sent up several large branches from the base (with no main trunk) to heights of 15 to 20 feet. This plant had entirely bare branches - no leaves, buds, or flowers - on August 26.

A tree of *M. campbellii*, one of the parent species of the hybrid just listed, was growing near the hybrid. This *M. campbellii* had three main branches - all about equal in size -



Frank Gladney, who with his wife Sara founded Gloster Arboretum in Mississippi, died late in 1978. He is shown here with Tina Durio, daughter of member Ken Durio of Opelousas, Louisiana, during a visit of the Durios to the Arboretum earlier that year.

Frank and Sara Gladney were charter members of the American Magnolia Society and wrote a piece about Gloster Arboretum in the first issue of this Newsletter in 1964. Gloster acquired a large number of the unnamed hybrid seedlings bred by the late D. Todd Gresham and from these seedlings new cultivars are still being selected.

rising from the base at ground level. Each main branch was approximately 20 feet in height. This plant had not started to bud nor leaf out on August 26.

There were several small plants of *M. kobus* in the Melbourne Botanical Garden, about five feet in height, just starting to show leaves, and to differentiate a few flower buds.

Several plants of *M. liliflora* were budding out, with some large purple buds showing, and a number of smaller, tightly folded buds developing. At another location similar sized plants of *M. liliflora*, about 7 feet in height, were dormant with no sign of buds on this same date of August 26. Nearby were several specimens of *M. liliflora* 'Gracilis,' about five feet tall, and developing numerous small buds.

The many plants of *M. × soulangeana* in Melbourne were in an earlier stage of growth than in Sydney. Most were in tight bud. In one cluster of these plants, a single individual was in practically full bloom, while its companions were just breaking dormancy. At several places plants labeled *M. × soulangeana* var. 'Triumphant' were budding out strongly with a few open flowers. These had white buds which, when open, carried red stripes down the center of the petals. These averaged about 12 feet in height.

A number of plants of *Magnolia stellata* were in full and profuse bloom in Melbourne during the August 25-27 period. All were under 10 feet in height.

Other species in the Melbourne Botanical Garden included a single specimen of *M. tripetala* about 8 feet in height, and several small plants of *M. virginiana* planted in among palms.

Australians appear quite appreciative of the merits of this fine genus and it seemed that Australian gardens, cities, and growers were growing species and hybrids in comparatively greater quantities than occurs in the eastern United States. Here many of the taxa apparently flourish better, and develop superior plants. This suggests that we might encourage the greater use of *Magnolia* taxa by our street, park and garden units and departments, and also that we might find many prospective new members for our Society among the plants - men of the South Pacific.

## All in the Family

The American Magnolia Society Eastern Chapter, is now open for business—and pleasure.

A group of AMS members in the region around New Jersey, New York, and thereabouts decided not to wait until the AMS schedules a national meeting in their area to get together. Spring and the noise of Magnolia buds threatening to open have been known to make sober, stay-at-home AMS members indulge in strange behavior.

The idea for meeting closer to home began with a remark by Pat Walton (Mrs. James R.), in the AMS Round Robin letter in which she is a correspondent, asking why there couldn't be local meetings where members could get together to swap ideas or brag to each other about their favorite genus. "Why not, indeed?" exclaimed another member of that Round Robin, AMS President Joe McDaniel.

Egged on by such high authority, Pat Walton accepted her own dare, got on her typewriter, and by Sunday, March 4 of this year had persuaded five members to attend a charter Eastern Chapter meeting at her home. Naturally she was named chairperson and sole officeholder, the group exercising remarkable restraint in averting the kind of hierarchy where there'd be five chiefs and no Indians.

For its first pilgrimage, the group decided to see the Magnolia collections at the Tyler Arboretum, Lima, Pennsylvania, and at Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. "The April day was perfect and we were treated to the sight of groves of mature trees, both species and hybrids, many of which were in full bloom. It was our special pleasure to meet Dr. and Mrs. John Wister and visit their charming garden at Swarthmore," reports Pat Walton.

The group's membership had by midsummer expanded to eleven. A look at the places they have been invited helps explain why: Frelinghuysen Arboretum, Morristown, New Jersey; the Kitchawan Research Station of Brooklyn Botanical Garden in Ossining, New York; New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York; Skylands Botanical Garden, Ringwood, New Jersey; and Willowood Arboretum,





These somewhat look alikes are *Magnolia acuminata* and are both champions in their class. Dick Figlar took these pictures of the claimed largest cucumber tree in New Jersey (left), at 51 Lovers Lane in Princeton which is 15 feet and nine inches in circumference at 4½ feet up the trunk, and (right) the largest cucumber in Illinois, so claimed, on the Richardson Farm near Urbana. Underneath it, for size, are AMS President Joe McDaniel and Anita Figlar. Other Figlar entries in the New Jersey Magnolia size derby are *M. macrophylla* (3'1" circ.) and *M. tripetala* (4'4" circ.), both at 63 Lovers Lane, Princeton; *M. soulangiana* (4'5") at Prospect Hall, Princeton; *M. stellata* (7'5") at 2281 Pennington Road, Trenton; *M. virginiana* (4'10") Manahawkin Swamp, Ocean County; and *M. grandiflora* (5'2") at 902 U.S. 130, Burlington.

Gladstone, New Jersey. Chapter memberships are still open. Write or call Mrs. James R. Walton, 33 Sycamore Drive, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458. Phone (201) 327-1344. The Eastern Chapter will accept members from anywhere in the East but is willing to split into Northeastern, Southeastern, or similar chapters when and if things ever get too unwieldy.

The other charter members of AMS's first regional chapter are Mrs. Jean Beutler, Dr. A.R. Goldsby, Dr. Lola Koerting, and William Klippel. Approval of the concept of an Eastern and other regional chapters was railroaded through the parent society's membership meeting at St. Louis in April.

Great chapters from little verses grow, so don't underestimate Pat Walton and Co. They've agreed that to properly promote interest in the genus and exchange

information about their own favorites, they'll need to hold meetings twice a year, in springtime to take in Magnolia collections, in the fall to look at slide shows, swap plants and seeds, and form study groups. Magnolia fanciers can be everblooming even if Magnolias can't.

## What Will and Won't Layer

"*M. macrophylla* and *M. virginiana* are two species that positively refuse to grow from layers. On the other hand I can get any number of new plants from *M. grandiflora*, *M. × soulangiana*, and *M. quinquepeta* by merely pulling down limbs and covering some of the stems, leaving some twigs growing upright. I leave them for several years and transplant them on out in late winter or early spring." —Carl R. Amason, in Robin No. 2.