

The Meeting at Seattle

There could hardly have been a more appropriate place than Seattle for the American Magnolia Society's 1980 spring meeting. The University of Washington Arboretum, which played host and recommended the dates (March 28-29), hit it on the nose for those who hoped to see the spectacular displays of big reds and pinks and magentas—Magnolias that most of us do not often encounter—*M. campbellii* and forms, *M. dawsoniana*, *M. sargentiana robusta*, and *M. sprengeri* 'Diva.' To these were added those in Section Buergeria — *M. kobus*, *M. k. stellata*, and *M. cylindrica*, plus various hybrids.

Some arrived in town March 27 (Thursday) or earlier and used the extra time for sneak previews around the arboretum and elsewhere, but most members stuck to business the first day (Friday, March 28) and contented themselves with an early morning foray or hasty glances through the windows of buildings and cars while attending the day-long general and business meeting, though there were a number of slide color shows displaying Magnolias in other parts of the country — and the world.

It's no trouble to encounter pleasurable sights in Seattle. The town is so green that just about everyone seems to have been lured down the garden path. If money doesn't grow on trees, Camellias and Rhododendrons do, and almost every yard or garden had its

spring bloom against a splendid green background of stately and sparkling conifers. If there are any slums in the city they have receded behind facades of flowers and foliage. All's against a backdrop of blue water and snow capped mountains stretching into the purple yonder.

That distance can be deceptive to a non-native. Nobody had any trouble guessing that the eminence occupying a good piece of the horizon was indeed Mount Rainier, easy to make out from the ground or a plane, and the information that it's 30 miles away didn't strain credulity. But what was that peak in the distance behind it as the plane banked and headed east? My captain knew he had a tourist on the hook and acknowledged we were looking at that old fussbudget and newsmaker, Mt. St. Helens. "She's around a hundred miles from here," he confided. "And she looks a little quiet this morning, folks." Not being able to tell smoke from clouds at a hundred paces and not being as familiar as my captain with the tempestuous lady's tantrums, I had to take his word she was having a Sabbath respite.

The Society was welcomed by Joseph Witt, director of plant accessions at the University of Washington Arboretum, who took part in the program and with Mrs. Witt led a tour of the arboretum and a nearby garden noted for its Magnolias the next day (Saturday). Brian Mulligan, emeritus director of the arboretum



Society members gather for tour of the University of Washington Arboretum.



Fully open flowers of Sargentiana robusta create a kind of symmetry against sky.

who has been responsible for a great many of the Magnolia plantings over the years, joined the tour at mid-point. Ron Brightman, a Society member in Seattle, took charge of the Society's Saturday morning walk around the Rhododendron Species Foundation located between Seattle and Tacoma. Here are a large number of Rhododendron species established with companion plants in a woodland setting. Ron also served admirably as chief organizer, planner, and knowledgeable savant of the Seattle horticulture scene.

The membership meeting Friday was held in the University Student Union Building amidst surroundings that make the campus an arboreum in itself. There was no fixed schedule of events for this meeting, but everything seemed to fall into place with a minimum of fuss.

Karl Flinck enumerated the great variety of Magnolias that gardeners are able to grow in Sweden and passed on some advice: U.S. gardeners ought to spend more of their efforts selecting superior clones of native Magnolias. Karl also entered an objection to the patenting of Magnolia cultivars, a practice he thought could mean considerable delay in getting them into gardens because most people feel they must see the flower of a Magnolia cultivar before they buy it and it's likely to be years

before they see the flowers on the patented ones, if ever. Karl said he'd been surveying the various cultivars of *M. stellata* and finds that practically all worthwhile ones descend from one plant—*M. stellata* 'Rosea'—introduced nearly a century ago to the U.S. He thinks *stellata* 'Rosea' comes in turn from the Japanese form of *M. stellata* called 'Keiskei.' Of Norway and Sweden, Karl said parts of these countries are warmed by the Gulf Stream and the majority of cultivated Magnolias are hardy there.

Bill Dodd, superintendent of parks in Mobile, related some of the consequences of that overwhelming and somewhat intimidating legacy left to Magnolia culture from the breeding carried out by the late Todd Gresham beginning in 1955. The several hundred crosses that produced thousands of seedlings were mainly (but not entirely) between *M. × soulangiana* 'Lennei Alba' with *M. × veitchii* and *M. liliflora* with *M. × veitchii*.

Bill was responsible for overseeing the transfer of most of these seedlings in 1969 to Gloster Arboretum in Mississippi and a smaller number to Tom Dodd Nursery in Alabama shortly before Todd Gresham died. Today thousands of Magnolia hybrids, planted out as seedlings over several acres at Gloster, form a magnolia orchard, and almost all of those that have flowered so far are beautiful. And there's the rub, says Bill. The necessary task of selecting only the best ones is not only endlessly complicated and a



Bill Dodd (left) and Tom Dodd III.



Brian Mulligan (left) and Karl Flinck.

challenge to the most savvy of Magnolia experts; it also presents an embarrassment of riches that has tempted too many people to make too many selections, and the problem is getting stickier all the time.

Leaning on his practical experience as a nurseryman, he is compelled to believe that anything more than a very modest number of selections from these thousands of seedlings, no matter how worthy they are, will swamp the commercial Magnolia market, diluting the popularity of each and making it impossible for nurserymen to keep them sorted out and give each one adequate promotion. These tiny plants that he professionally shoehorned into one 16-wheel truck in California in 1969 are now good size trees and they are crowding each other at Dodd's. Many have not yet flowered and these late bloomers are presumed to possess a greater inheritance from their slow-to-flower but beautiful *M. campbellii* ancestor, therefore are worth waiting for. But if these trees are to produce any flowers some will have to be sacrificed so the rest can reach maturity.

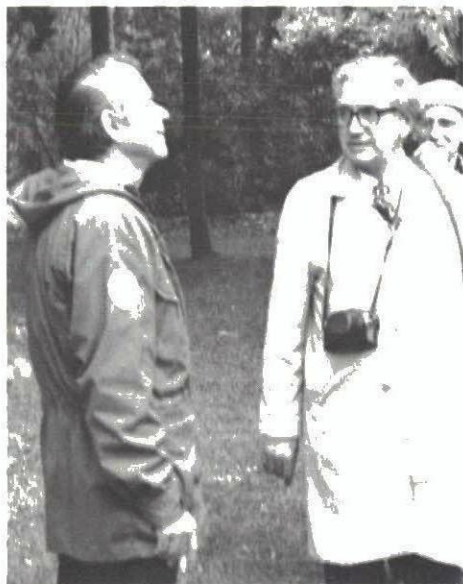
Todd Gresham himself had selected and named several of his earlier crosses. His death before these could be adequately recorded and distributed has created confusion about the identities of some. Several Society members have been working on this problem, including Bill. He showed a number of color slides of

Gresham selections, including some whose identities have still not been ironed out.

Wally Lane, a nurseryman of Watsonville, California, reported the current status of Lufer Nursery, whose large collection of Magnolia specimens representing about 50 varieties in Salem, Oregon, is threatened by the city's rezoning and growing pains. Ernest Lufer, the owner, wants to retire and hopes to find public or private funding to make the 10 acres of plantings into a park. So far nobody has come forward with the needed matching funds for the state's offer of \$125,000 (half the amount Lufer is asking), according to Wally. Even if help is on the way, much work would need to be done because the place is overcrowded with plants.

Bob Ticknor reported on testing of Magnolias in landscape tree trials carried out at the Oregon State University North Willamette Experiment Station at Aurora, Oregon. These included various *M. grandiflora* cultivars, *M.* × 'Merrill,' *M.* × 'Wada's Memory,' *M. fraseri*, *M. stellata*, the U.S. National Arboretum's "children series" of *liliflora-stellata* hybrids (also known as the "little girls"), *sprengeri* 'Diva' × *liliflora* 'Nigra,' and *sargentiana robusta*. Testing included rate of growth and size, habit, hardiness, and susceptibility to damage by the elements.

Tom Dodd III described and presented color slides about his plant exploring trip to



Joseph Witt (left) and C. Ferris Miller.



Evamaria Sperber (left) and Lola Koerting.

Mexico in the fall of 1979 with a group from the U.S. and England (see his account elsewhere in this issue).

Lola Koerting of the Brooklyn Botanical Garden's Kitchawan Research Laboratories, Ossining, New York, showed color photos of some of the *Magnolia* hybrids bred by that institution, including the recently patented and introduced *M. × 'Elizabeth'*. A surprise was her introduction of former colleague Evamaria Sperber, who bred this cultivar while working at Kitchawan. She now lives in Bellevue, Washington.

Phil Savage of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, showed several slides, including his cross of *Michelia doltsopa* and *M. figo*.

C. Ferris Miller, who traveled to the Seattle meeting from Korea, gave a presentation on his Chollipo Arboretum, a 250-acre site located on a peninsula in South Korea that includes an island at high tide. Planting started in 1972 and it has a large collection of *Magnolias*, *Ilex*, and *Lauraceae*. The Koreans love *Magnolias*, he said, and every Korean garden has at least one *Magnolia* tree. He and his assistant Barry Yinger (see Barry's article in this issue) are both avid plant collectors and explorers and are studying the variants of *Magnolia sieboldii* (forms with red and with yellow stamens, semi double, variegated, etc.) and the relationship between *M. hypoleuca* and *M. officinalis* (including bilobed leaves) as shown by trees in Korea.

A number of photographic color slides of

Gresham hybrids taken by John Giordano at Gloster Arboretum were shown. Roger Gossler of Gossler Farms Nursery, Springfield, Oregon, displayed several flowers including the newly introduced *M. × 'Pristine'* bred by Joe McDaniel, and *M. × 'Galaxy'*, a hybrid of *M. sprengeri 'Diva' × M. liliflora 'Nigra'* to be released by the U.S. National Arboretum.

Irene Burden, whose nursery at Canby, Oregon, does some of the *Magnolia* propagation for Gossler Farms Nursery, gave a demonstration of side veneer grafting Friday evening.

The Saturday tours included the Rhododendron Species Foundation between Seattle and Tacoma, a large group of Rhododendron species and other plants planted in a natural forest setting, and tours of the University of Seattle Arboretum and a private garden nearby owned by the estate of the late Donald G. Graham.

The early morning tour of the Species Foundation, reached by bus, was so gratifying that many members dallied or straggled, though a few from the deep South, chilled a bid by the Washington spring, gave up early and huddled for warmth in the bus, which unaccountably bore an Alaska license plate. To



Bill Kosar (right) and his ever present cigar (left).

make the arboretum tour schedule. Joe Hickman ordered the bus stopped at the sign of the golden arch on the way back to town and everybody grabbed a Big Mac and coffee and jumped back on the bus.

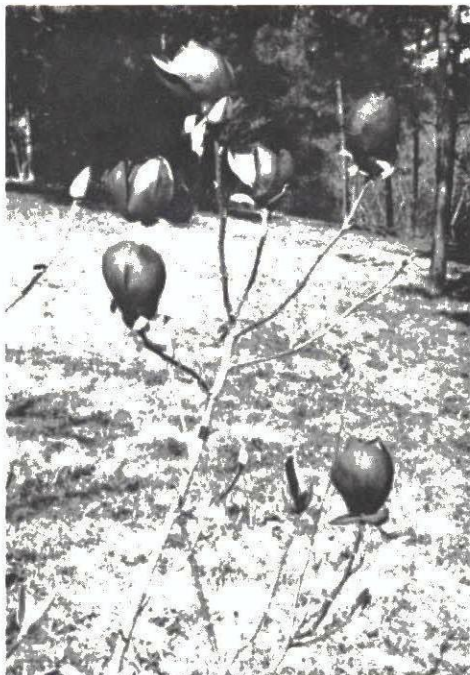
This little bit of roughing it saved time (and money!) and was not regretted, as events proved. After some momentary delays to round up errant members drawn from one plant to another before the company could be formed under a single banner, the assemblage marched off with Joe Witt in the lead. A city ordinance decrees that the gates never be locked, and the arboretum accordingly has become a truly democratic institution. Physical and mental joggers, poets and lovers, photographers and tourists, and gardeners and other esthetes rub shoulders along the pathways without contesting each other's rights to the turf.

How do you describe a *Magnolia campbellii* or *dawsoniana* or *sargentiana rubusta*? However you do it your words will be beggared by the actual article. Many society members wanted to stay and contemplate each discovery, but the tour had to go on to the next stunner. It should be noted that this arboretum has the original *M. × 'Wada's Memory'*. The arboretum's *Magnolias* seldom stand alone but are well integrated with other hardwoods and conifers of practically every kind on every hand.

The tour was almost complete when the drizzle started, and it was not surprising back at the bus to see the shivering southerners already sunk deep into the upholstery. Happily, the sun reappeared and warmed things up again for the tour of the Graham garden. When the bus stopped and let Joseph and Mrs. Witt off on the way back to the motel a spontaneous cheer put a nice exclamation point on the matter.

The Society's incumbent officers were reelected for another year: president, Joseph McDaniel; vice president, Phil Savage; secretary-treasurer, Richard Figlar. Seed Chairman Perry Narten, Pollen Chairman August Kehr, Round Robin Chairman Ginnie Melnick, and AMS Journal editor Harold Hopkins were re-appointed.

The Society accepted an invitation from Arnold Arboretum to meet there next year and set the meeting for mid-April 1981 (probably April 24-26). Membership dues were raised from \$7 to \$12 a year beginning next year and lifetime membership from \$110 to \$150. The board heard reports of



Gresham hybrid M. 'Deep Purple Dream' at Gloster.

questions raised concerning the legitimacy of the *Magnolia* species names *M. heptapeta* (for *denudata*) and *M. quinquepeta* (for *liliflora*) and took no official action on grounds the Society has no standing in the International Botanical Congress, but suggested that Society members who are accredited botanists or taxonomists could present the issue to the congress at its meeting in Australia in the fall of 1981. The board endorsed the editor's plan for authors of articles in the *Journal* to continue to use the names they prefer pending resolution of the question by the congress.

The board expressed concern over reported inaccuracies and duplication of identities of several magnolia cultivars and appointed Geraldine Hetzer as chairman of a committee to look into the problem and to collect and receive information and make recommendations.

Attending at Seattle were Ronald G. Brightman; Donald, Elizabeth, and Glenn Brockman; Irene Burden; William Curtis; Bill Dodd; Tom Dodd III; Otis Douglas; Kenneth, Belle, and Liz Durio; John English; Karl E. Flinck; Donald and Judy Forster; Gene German; James Gossler; Roger Gossler, Bon and Ferry Hartline; Ed and Gerry Hetzer;

Joseph Hickman; Harold Hopkins; Charles H. Hyde; Otis Hyde; Willis Hyde; Margery Kepner; Donald E. King; Lola Koerting; William F. Kosar; Wally Lane; Joseph and Mary Nell McDaniel; C. Ferris Miller; Fred McDonald; Frank Mossman; Evamaria Sperber; Robert and Mrs. Ticknor; Joseph A. and Mrs. Witt; Andrew, Sherry, and Christine Rasmussen.

The Meeting Next Year

Steve Sponberg and I, as members of the American Magnolia Society, are willing to serve as local coordinators for the annual meeting in 1981. We suggest that Gary Koller of the Arnold staff be a member of the committee. Since the magnolias are in bloom here this week (April 23, 1980), we suggest April 24-26, 1981, for a weekend meeting at the Arnold Arboretum. We can offer tours of the Arnold Arboretum on foot or in our newly acquired trolleys, although most of our magnolias are near the administration building. Possible tour sites include Commonwealth Avenue with its historical display of *Magnolia × soulangiana*, Weston Nurseries, Mt. Auburn Cemetery, the Hunnewell Pinetum and estate in Wellesley. We can prepare a display of library materials....If you wish, Steve Sponberg can report on his collecting trip to China, scheduled August-November of this year.

Richard A. Howard, Arnold Arboretum.

Determination

This past year (1979) was most excellent for crossing magnolias. I have things which I will crow about only when they bloom. One cross I made with great success and with an abundance of seedlings is *Michelia figo* × *M. doltsopa*. I was so determined to make this cross that I brought back a ten-foot budded plant of *M. doltsopa* from California on the airplane. At first, the Delta Airlines people said it couldn't be done. On leaving the baggage claim area, I did manage to knock a two-foot hole in the ceiling.

—S. Christopher Early, Atlanta.

What We Are About

In Article I of its by-laws the American Magnolia Society commits itself to:

1. Publish for its members at regular intervals a news letter or journal of botanical

and horticultural information on Magnolias and other Magnoliaceae. Publications will be particularly concerned with those species, hybrids and cultivars useful in the gardens of North America and in comparable climates around the world.

2. Maintain and extend the Register of Cultivars in the genus *Magnolia* as the International Registration Authority for Magnolias; adhere to the International Code of Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants insofar as is possible in the future.

3. Aid, abet, encourage and assist propagators and plant experimenters to produce and obtain viable documented material of species collected in habitat, species or hybrids collected for genetic interest or garden usefulness and beauty, and seeds from controlled pollinations.

4. Explore methods of adapting more Magnolias to conditions in localities where soil and/or climate make their culture difficult.

5. Hold general and regional meetings of members in localities of interest to the membership and where the work with, and interest in, Magnolias is in progress.

6. Conduct, as its resources permit, a continuing program of education for the public, commercial nurserymen, and professional horticulturists concerning the gardening and ornamental potential, culture, proper identification, and diversity of Magnolias and related genera.

7. Initiate and assist in initiating and maintaining plantings of Magnolias and related genera in locations accessible for the aesthetic enjoyment and education of the public.

8. Honor or memorialize living or dead individuals who have made extraordinary tangible or intangible contributions to the furtherance of the Society's basic objectives.

9. Exchange information and plant material throughout the world and assist, when requested, in the identification of live or herbarium plant materials, including the furnishing of such materials to bona fide researchers or scholars.

10. Support research involving Magnolias when this appears to be in furtherance of the Society's objectives.

11. Initiate, encourage and support efforts to acquire from any locale live plant material such as seeds, etc., that would add to and enrich the known species and cultivars.