

Seed Germination Testing

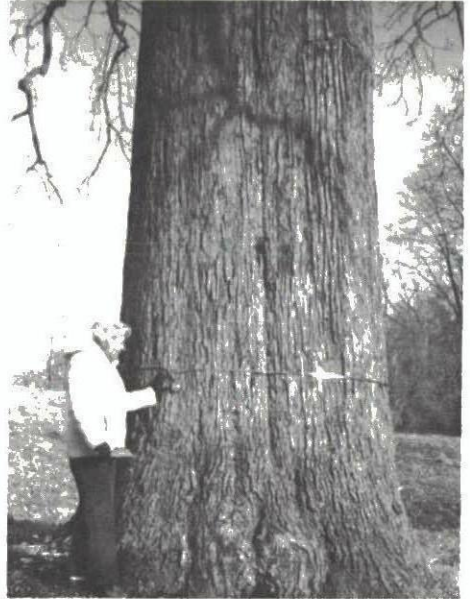
by Harry Heineman

If you are as curious as I am about the success others are having with AMS Seed Counter seed, then perhaps you will help the membership out by reporting your results to me come fall. I would like to gather information from as many members as will write to me next September, and put it all into some kind of order and report back to you in the AMS Journal. My success depends on your willingness to take a few minutes to jot down your results — well, O.K., a few hours — and send them in.

As things go now, I receive a few scattered reports in the Round Robins, which still leaves me wondering what I did wrong, if anything, when not a single plant comes up out of an entire seed lot. With me, this happens with discouraging frequency. The big question is: are others succeeding with the same lots I'm failing with, and if so, how? In other words, how can I improve my technique for ger-

minating magnolia seed? If we find out that nobody is succeeding with certain lots, then that is useful information also. It will not only bolster my self-confidence, which often needs doing, but it may lead to improvement in our cleaning, shipping, and storage methods. My hope is that it will make more people aware of the absolute necessity not to let magnolia seed dry out at any time between collecting and planting. Those of you who know me through Robins 2 and 4 know that I am a nut about this need to keep magnolia seeds moist at all times — and by "moist" I mean fairly wet. In fact, I've been conducting a one-man campaign to have magnolia seed shipped in tightly-sealed Baggies containing wet Turface or peat or sphagnum moss — anything that will assure that they never become the least bit dry.

Anyway, let's find out. But I obviously need your cooperation in reporting your individual



Ollie Diller has entered the Magnolia acuminata derby and sends these two photos of a tree brought to his attention at North Canton, Ohio, by Jerry Felland, director of the Wilderness Center in Wilmot, near North Canton. It's 94.2 feet high with a crown spread of 93 feet, and at 4.5 feet above ground is 20.25 feet in circumference and 6.5 feet in diameter, officially certified by the North Canton city engineer. Mrs. Winifred Felland (at right) tries it on for size.

experiences with Seed Counter seeds. I think we may learn quite a lot by pooling our results. And, if we don't, we haven't lost anything but a 15 cent stamp and a negligible amount of time.

I would like to suggest a useful way of reporting your results. I think most sowers can give all the pertinent information in tabular form on one sheet of 8½ by 11 paper. Column headings you might want to use across the long edge of the paper:

(1) Seed counter lot number, if given; (2) Species name or cross; (3) Source: person place;

(4) Number of seed in lot: (a) floaters; (b) non-floaters;

(5) Number of plants up (a) by May 1, (b) by July 1, (c) by Sept. 1;

(6) Approximate number of seedlings lost to (a) disease, (b) other: slugs, insects, etc.;

(7) Special treatment given seeds, such as additional stratification at 40°F., use of bottom heat, or whatever.

Some of you will have ideas for additional headings, no doubt, but the above are some of the categories that seem of greatest interest. After deciding on the headings, you could take a separate line (or group of lines) to cover each seed lot you tried. Down at the bottom, you might want to describe what you use for a germinating medium, whether it is sterile or not, and approximate night and day temperature ranges if you start your seed in boxes in the house or the greenhouse.

I don't want to make recording of results difficult, because then it becomes simply a chore, and only compulsive people will carry through. You could leave spaces blank if you don't have the data; even just counting noses in September (and of course you'll want to count the number of seed you started with) will give us all some useful information. Send the information to Harry Heineman, 673 First Parish Rd., Scituate, MA 02066.

Fringe Benefits

Two substantial benefits of membership in the American Magnolia Society are its Seed Counter and its Pollen Bank. Another popular activity is the Round Robin series of letters that circulate among members throughout the year carrying the observations and comments of members concerning Magnolias.

The Seed Counter is a program through which members and friends of the Society contribute seeds of Magnolias and a few other desirable plants for purchase by other members. The profits go to the Society's treasury.

The Pollen Bank—just started in 1980—operates the same way. Contributions of various Magnolia pollens are stored and sold to members who desire particular pollens for Magnolia breeding projects.

The Round Robin groups—there are about a half-dozen "robins," each with six or eight continuing members—pass around a large envelope containing a stack of letters contributed by all the correspondents in the group, each adding his bit and mailing it on, until each person's comments are seen by all. There is a Mother Hen who clucks sharply if somebody sits on the package too long without getting it back on its rounds.

The names and addresses of the appropriate chairmen are carried on page 2 of each issue for those members who would like to participate in one or more of these activities.

Are Members Ready For a Scion Bank?

• Joe McDaniel refers to his "Gere" *Magnolia denudata* tree which he uses as breeding stock and his most excellent article titled "Plants for the 80's and Beyond" in the last bulletin of the Holly Society of America, covering a great many kinds of woody plants and including a large number of named clones he and others have selected but which are just not available, as exciting as they may sound on paper. One can well wonder if they ever will be available, given our current plant distribution system and the apparent trend to patent many kinds. What can our Society do to help? For the membership at large, who are ambassadors of Magnolias, perhaps it is time to go formally beyond distributing seed and pollen and offer scion wood for those items we would like to see in America's gardens, where there are no plans to patent them. There is obviously a person-to-person movement as judged by our correspondence exchanges, so why not formalize?

—Perry Narten, Round Robin Letters