

The Goddess of Changyang Hsien

by Philip J. Savage, Jr.

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In the lovely woodland Garden of Caerhays, near St. Austell, in Cornwall, grows a 45 foot Magnolia that is both a delight and a puzzle to the horticultural world. Appropriately named *M. sprengeri* 'Diva,' or Goddess, by Dr. Otto Stapf, this beautiful tree has a story that, although often told, bears repeating here.

In the autumn of 1900, Ernest H. Wilson sent to his employers, the nursery firm of Veitch and Sons, a consignment of seeds collected in the woods around Changyang Hsien, a village "of the fourth class," just south of Ichang, in western Hupeh province, China.

When received in England, the various packets of seed were sown and cared for with the skill of long

experience, each genus being treated according to its known needs, and in time a small number of Magnolia seedlings from Wilson's seed number 688 were lined out and growing at the Veitch nursery of Coombe Wood.

Sir Harry J. Veitch retired from business in 1913, and a liquidation sale being held at Coombe Wood, its treasures found their way to many great English gardens. Of the little row of Magnolias from seed packet number 688, one went to Caerhays, two to Bodnant and three to Kew. No one knows where the rest went, or indeed if their number was ever greater than six. When delivered, they carried the label *M. denudata* var. *purpurascens*, and as such they grew to flowering age.

The plants that went to Kew and



Magnolia sprengeri 'Diva' flowers.

Bodnant quickly developed an upright and columnar, but bushy, habit of growth and soon flowered, without causing any great excitement. The blossoms were white, with a faint pink stripe outside, and stood erect on the terminal twigs. Although they showed twelve tepals, as against the nine of *M. denudata*, their flowers lacked the voluptuous figure and rich scent of the latter species.

Even before it flowered, the Caerhays tree was notably different from the other five. A super-symmetrical grower, strongly treelike but attractively spreading, it gave every sign of developing into an outstanding specimen. Then one day in late March it flowered, and it was evident at once that here was something very special. Held upright on the branch tips, the flowers were beautifully presented. The well proportioned tepals had great substance, and when fully open, were an attractive saucer shape. Crimson pink on the outside, lighter pink within, their color was judged as good as all but the best forms of *M. campbellii*. Each year thereafter produced a finer spectacle, and as an added bonus, the tree began to produce good seed, which Mr. J. C. Williams collected and sowed, generously giving seedlings to his many friends.

When the first flowers of this Caerhays marvel reached his hands, Dr. Otto Stapf realized he was examining a new species. Ernest Wilson, to everyone's surprise, strongly disagreed. Even after seeing the Caerhays tree in flower, Wilson maintained that the plant was "merely the wild type of the common Yulan tree." Dr. Alfred Rehder concurred with Wilson, and all specimens of pink or red flower color appear as *M. denudata* var. *purpurascens* in *Plantae Wilsonianae*.

During preparation of his book "Magnolias," the first real attempt at a

monograph of the genus, Mr. J. G. Millais received a letter from curator W. J. Bean, of Kew. Dr. Bean wrote, in part: "I quite agree with you that the Caerhays Magnolia is distinct from the old *M. conspicua*, in fact, I told Wilson as much the last time he was here. His reply was that in English gardens we do not know the true wild *conspicua*, only the plant that has been developed by the Chinese during hundreds of years' cultivation." (It should be remembered that the *conspicua* vs. *denudata* controversy among botanists was going on at that time, and is not really settled today.)

The above confusion appeared to present no problem to John Millais, an expert in the confusion game himself. Accordingly, in his book, he merely described the Caerhays tree as *M. denudata* var. *purpurascens* in one subchapter, and as *M. Diva* in another, and just to keep his readers on their toes, he made the descriptions different.

From the standpoint of later Magnoliaphiles, the unfortunate thing about these misunderstandings is that the so-called *M. denudata* var. *purpurascens*, a name applied to two distinct species, was considered to be safely "in cultivation," and no further attempt was made to send home seed, or select outstanding forms of either the wild Magnolias in Hupeh, or the plant cultivated in Japan as *M. conspicua* var. *purpurascens*, with which they were confused.

There are many characteristics of the genus Magnolia that must have dampened the enthusiasm of plant hunters. Birds quickly clean up ripe Magnolia fruits, and these are formed on the terminal twig tips of large, brittle-wooded mountain trees. What fruits are collected must be scoured of pulp quickly and the cleaned seed kept cool and moist until planted. When prolonged storage and ocean shipping

were required, the prognosis of ultimate germination must have been no greater than five percent, if that high. After all this, the few plants produced might take 25 years to flower. A plant collector could stock a large nursery with Rhododendrons at a fraction of the labor and cost required for ten of the tree-type Magnolias. Perhaps this explains why Wilson, in his two-volume edition of "A Naturalist in Western China," mentions Magnolias four times, in over four hundred pages, and each time only to say, "*Magnolia officinalis* grown hereabouts for its bark." *Spiraea* is mentioned 14 times and *Lonicera* 16 in the two volumes. I can recall being outraged about this at age 14, when I received the books for a birthday present.

On Ernest Wilson's first two trips to China, in the interest of the Veitch firm, he appears to have followed almost step by step the progress of the great French Missionary-Zoologist, Pere Armand David, 32 years before. David's correspondence and herbarium specimens, many of the latter still unclassified at that date, must have saved Wilson a great deal of time, and allowed him to go directly to such remaining forested areas as Changyang Hsien.

The classic highway on which plant collectors, zoologists, missionaries and explorers entered the interior of China was up the broad and busy Yangtze to the first of its four famous limestone gorges. Here the treaty port of Ichang, with a cosmopolitan foreign community, offered facilities for transferring cargo from the big steamers of the lower river to shallow draft boats capable of navigating the rapids and whirlpools of the great gorges to the west. Here also rose the eastern foothills of the continuous mountain ranges that still farther west encircle the "red basin" of Szechwan,



Magnolia × *soulangiana* flowers.

even at that time one of the most densely populated and productive areas in the world.

Dr. Augustine Henry spent several years, from 1882 to 1889, in the neighborhood of Ichang, where he was stationed as an assistant medical officer to the European community. He is credited with the discovery of 23 new genera, and over 500 new species of plants. Most of his specimens went to Kew, although the Arnold Arboretum received a good number, including Magnolias, which Dr. Alfred Rehder later identified as *M. denudata* var. *purpurascens*. They are now annotated *M. sprengeri*, I have been told.

Antwerp E. Pratt, a zoologist, arrived at Ichang in 1887 with his entire family. He met Augustine Henry, and spent the fall of that year trapping and observing around Changyang Hsien. The following spring and summer he worked in the same area, which gives an idea of its

scientific interest, and he described the flora and fauna, in two chapters of his interesting book, "To The Snows Of Tibet Through China." Although Pratt goes into considerable detail on some flowering plants, I do not find any mention of Magnolias.

When Ernest Wilson arrived at Ichang in 1899, he had already visited with Augustine Henry in England, and received many pointers on the flora of that part of Hupeh. Wilson had been sent to China primarily to collect seeds, rather than herbarium specimens, though he also prepared his share of the latter for the firm of Veitch, and on two later trips for the Arnold Arboretum.

Twenty years later, in a letter to John Millais, Wilson wrote that the tree he called *M. denudata* var. *purpurascens* "is the common Magnolia of western Hupeh and eastern Szechwan, and is fairly plentiful in moist woods and thickets between 1000-1800 m. altitude. The

flowers are saucer-shaped, and vary from rose red without to rose or pale pink within. The stamens and carpels are also rose red in color. In early April, this Magnolia with its handsome, fragrant flowers is a striking object in the Woodland landscape." He then adds the ominous note: "The bark, like that of allied species, is valued as a drug known as Mu Pi." Wilson mentioned that in addition to the white Yulan, the "variety with reddish pink flowers has been long cultivated in China, and also in Japan."

If Augustine Henry, Antwerp Pratt, Ernest Wilson and many others, in what must have been a thorough and scholarly sifting of the flora around Changyang Hsien, did not think the "sixty-five foot trees covered with reddish pink flowers" were sufficiently exciting to make any great hullabaloo about, even to the extent of one special letter to the Veitch firm, or to Kew, or

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one photograph to the Arnold Arboretum, then we are left with the even more tormenting thought that around the turn of the century such Magnolias were commonplace in Hupeh and Eastern Szechwan, and everybody thought everybody knew about them.

It is perfectly true that *M. denudata* is a variable species. The form introduced to England by Sir Joseph Banks in 1779 appears to have been a long-domesticated strain of Yulan, cultivated for perhaps two thousand years and with its genes "fixed" to breed true, like the Fameuse Snow Apple. This particular form of Yulan is said to be growing in temple grounds all over China, even in Yunnan province, where the even more spectacular *M. campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata* abounds as a native. It appears there is a religious significance attached to that form of Yulan, not just any nice plant of wild *M. denudata*. As another example, there are many prettier Viburnums in China, but *V. fragrans* is the "temple" Viburnum.

Professor Alfred Rehder regarded the Kiu Ling mountains in Kiangsi as the center of distribution of the typical, or wild *M. denudata*. This is not far from the Lu Shan Botanic Gardens where fellow A.M.S. member Gus Krossa obtained his seed of *M. cylindrica* back in the thirties. The Lu Shan gardens are reported being enlarged and rebuilt after great destruction during and after World War II.

The mysterious *M. amoena* is described as having a pink flower, with nine tepals, the type being collected in N.W. Chekiang, in the range of *M. denudata*. It is difficult to believe it is distinct.

In "Asiatic Magnolias In Cultivation," the late Mr. G. H. Johnstone calls attention to herbarium specimens of *M. denudata* at Kew,



Magnolia sprengeri 'Diva' flowers.

collected in Southern Anhwei, having large "kite-shaped" leaves, with the apex emarginate, or notched, this last being considered a characteristic of *M. sargentiana* var. *robusta*. Surely a variable species.

In personal correspondence of 20 years ago, the late Arthur Sowerby told me that, "We saw (circa 1914) trees of *M. conspicua* in bloom on the hills two days' pony ride south of the rail terminus at Mien-Chih Hsien" (in western Honan). This would be almost the exact area where the Belgian railroad expert and botanist, Joseph Hers, collected specimens of Magnolia in the early twenties, and sent them to the Arnold Arboretum, where they were identified as *M. denudata* var. *purpurascens*. Dr. Otto Staph seems later to have regarded these Honan Magnolias as conspecific with the Changyang Hsien specimens of Henry and Wilson. If justified, this would extend the range of *M. sprengeri* some

275 miles to the northward, into a considerably colder, and a drier, climate zone.

Curiosity prompted me to write the Arnold Arboretum recently, to ask if the *Magnolia* specimens sent to them by Joseph Hers from the neighborhood of Sunghsien, in western Honan, show nine tepals or twelve. Dr. Gordon DeWolf, Jr., was kind enough to inform me that "We have no flowering material labeled either *M. denudata* or *M. sprengeri* from Hers. All his collections are either sterile or fruiting." It may still be possible to count the tepal scars on the fruiting specimens at some later date.

The center of the area of Hers's *Magnolia* collections is at 34° 0' N, 112° 30' E. It is on or close to the 30 F. January isotherm, which would be very roughly equivalent to Zone V in the United States. Since Sunghsien is in an area of low to medium mountains (up

to a maximum of 7874 ft.). It would be expected that *Magnolias* native to the section would have ample winter hardiness for Boston, Mass., Rochester, N.Y., or let us just say, Bloomfield Hills Mich. (The subjectiveness of my research is here embarrassingly apparent).

If Stapf was correct in assigning these Honan specimens to *M. sprengeri*, then that species is, or was, native to a range extending farther north than any other *Magnolia*, to my knowledge, belonging to the elite section *Yulania*.

The earliest true civilizations of China seem to have developed in the wide valley of the Hwang Ho. The geographical heartland of the Shang, Chou, and Ch'in empires, in northern Honan, is within 50 or 60 miles of the *Magnolias* observed by Sowerby and Hers. These three dynasties together are thought to have prospered for two thousand years, and under them great progress was made in the methods of farming and manufacturing, the domestication of animals and plants, and the religion of ancestor worship that has persisted in north China (itself named for the Ch'in dynasty) to the present day. It is inconceivable that this vigorous and artistic people, with their evident fascination with animals, plants, and nature, should not have been delighted with their wild *Magnolia* trees, and have taken them into cultivation.

One of the factors that has muddled the waters for botanists attempting to outline the native ranges of various Asiatic *Magnolias* is the evident occurrence of feral populations of such long domesticated species as *liliflora*, and probably even *denudata*. The insects may well have produced the *Soulangiana* hybrid both in China and Japan centuries before the Chevalier of Fromont produced it in his garden near Paris. Most travelers in China mention the patches of woodland that

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Magnolia dawsoniana at Strybing Arboretum, San Francisco.

commonly surround temples. Many of these trees are non-native species having religious significance, and plant hunters had constantly to guard against such non-native seed and specimens in even the remote areas.

Although Ernest Wilson, writing many years after his final farewell to China, maintained that trees producing flowers of the type and color of the 'Diva' were the "common *Magnolia*" of western Hupeh and eastern Szechwan, there were many who took his statement "with a grain of salt." There was considerable support for these doubts.

- First, no one, including Wilson himself, seems to have raved about, or in fact mentioned, beautiful, large, pink flowering *Magnolia* trees in Hupeh until after the Caerhays plant had bloomed.
- Second, five out of the six trees grown from seed number 688 had

unexceptional white flowers.

- Third, Pampanini's description of the type specimen of *M. sprengeri*, noted with considerable charity by Stapf as "discordant," would fit a *Magnolia* of section *Buergeria* such as *cylindrica* or perhaps *biondii*, much better than the trees to which this was ultimately "force-fitted."

- Fourth, seed from the Caerhays tree has produced a large proportion of offspring having flowers inferior to, and in some cases little resembling its own.

- Fifth, plants of the type of the Caerhays tree were not known in cultivation in Japan, or as far as can be determined, in China, and I have not found them figured or photographed by Chinese botanists.

Other than the flowers, there are many noticeable differences between

M. denudata and *M. sprengeri* 'Diva.' The stout first year twigs of the former are dark chocolate brown, while the more slender twigs of 'Diva' are a waxy apple green. Leaf buds differ in shape, color and pubescence, while the leaves themselves are very distinct. On uncrowded plants of *M. denudata*, the main branches typically leave the trunk at nearly a right angle, and grow out and up in a single, even arc, like the arms of a candelabrum. Add to this the fact that 'Diva' grows at a considerably greater rate than any of the *denudata* forms, the original tree having reached 40 feet in its first 50 years, and it is difficult to see how an experienced field botanist could mistake the two.

In feel and appearance of leaf, color of branchlets, and habit of growth, *M. sargentiana* seems close to 'Diva.' A photograph of a wild sapling of *M. sargentiana* taken by E. H. Wilson on Mount Wa, in Szechwan, and reproduced as Fig. 11 in Johnstone's book, illustrates its branching habit very well. In number of tepals (12), and in color, the flowers of *M. sargentiana* and *M. 'Diva'* must be very similar. Only in their poise on the twig tips, and in the substance of the tepals is there a radical difference.

Many if not most of the Magnolias in western Szechwan have flowers that droop below the horizontal when fully open. Not only *M. sargentiana*, but *dawsoniana*, the puzzling var. *robusta*, *wilsonii* and *sinensis* display this upside down posture. Even on the easternmost forms of *M. campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata*, there is a tendency for the outer row of tepals to be flaccid and drooping. Perhaps the constant downpour of rain, during the flowering season in those very wet areas has made it advantageous for a large flower to hang upside down, and thus protect its pollen with a rain-shedding roof of tepals. All of us can recall the soggy mess of rain-soaked pollen, and

anthers in the bottom of the Yulan's crisp, upright cups after a spring shower.

Is it not possible that the pink form of *M. sprengeri* represents an eastern form of *M. sargentiana*, with the upright flowers and less lush growth to be expected in a drier habitat?

In a beautifully illustrated article in the July 1966, *Journal* of the Royal Horticultural Society, Mr. F. Julian Williams, owner of Caerhays, gives a possible clue to the variations in *M. 'Diva'* seedlings previously mentioned. Mr. Williams writes, in part: "The first seed distributed from here in 1931 from the *sprengeri* 'Diva' did disappoint, and I suspect for two reasons:

"(A) that the bees did a little bit of crossing on their own, with the neighboring pure *sargentiana*, and,

"(B) because the flower of the 'Diva' is on the small side."

Indeed, it would appear that the 'Diva' of the garden at Caerhays is as much a nymph as a goddess. In "Asiatic Magnolias In Cultivation," Mr. George Johnstone wrote, in part: "Mr J. C. Williams raised many seedlings from this unique plant, which, with his well-remembered generosity were widely distributed, but these so far prove disappointing in that the flowers have not inherited the lovely rose-pink color of the seed parent, some being stained with purple, while others are nearly white. The inference is that these seedling plants are of hybrid origin-perhaps with *M. × soulangiana* 'Alba Superba', a plant of which used to be growing very near the parent tree. The hybridity of some of these seedlings is further confirmed by the flowers being composed of obviously distinct 'sepals' and 'petals,' mostly nine in number, but sometimes eleven."

As an indication that 'Diva' is not always so wanton, on April 18, 1963, the Royal Horticultural Society



Magnolia sargentiana robusta 'Blood Moon.'

presented an Award of Merit to the late Lord Aberconway, and to Bodnant, "for *M. sprengeri* 'Claret Cup,' as a hardy flowering tree." A fine color photograph, reproduced in the November 1963 *RHS Journal*, shows this handsome clone in its bright, rose pink color. Back in the March, 1940 *Journal*, Lord Aberconway wrote of Magnolias as "Features of My Garden," and mentioned: "A seedling plant from *M. sprengeri* var. 'Diva,' generously sent to Bodnant from Caerhays a foot high in 1928, has now grown to be a tree of a beautiful symmetrical shape, upright in habit. It is growing vigorously and has attained a height of over 20 feet, but has not yet flowered." When it did, *M.* 'Claret Cup' won an Award of Merit.

I have six plants of *M. sprengeri* 'Diva' growing here in Michigan, where winter lows of minus 15° F. are commonly recorded, and open ground freezes to a depth of three feet. The

plants range in age from two to ten years, and in height from two to nine feet. As it happens, three are own-root plants, three are grafted and the former are slightly the more vigorous. These plants came from four commercial sources, and two of them are noticeably different in leafage from the other four. Tiny appressed hairs give a "fine sandpaper" feel to the leaf surface of these two, like leaves of *M. denudata*, while the rest have the smoothness of a bar of (dry) toilet soap. All have been hardy to 15 below zero, but the sandpaper type breaks bud a week later than the other, and has been less damaged by the murderous, and freakish mid-May frosts of '67 and '68. One tree has bloomed, and that of the glabrous-leaved type, producing flowers of moderate size and dark pink color. I was disappointed in the fragrance, an undistinguished "baby talcum" scent, and wondered if the seldom-mentioned

fragrance of *M. sargentiana* was similar enough to offer another clue to close relationship. Bark and twigs of each of the above types are identical. Time will tell the true form.

I don't believe 'Diva' is quite hardy enough for general planting this far north, although it may prove to be. In this latitude it blooms around May 1, and has demonstrated a winter hardiness somewhat greater than that of *M. macrophylla*, a 40 year old tree of which grows at Ann Arbor, Michigan, where it suffers more from the gymnastic activities of college students than from winter cold. Very few trees native only south of the Yangtze, regardless of altitude, will grow here at all, and 'Diva's' toughness would indicate that Changyang Hsien is, or was, one of the southern stations of a generally more northern distribution, perhaps running along the Ta Pa mountain chain to the southern spurs of the Tsin Ling, or even "Tebbu Land" in the upper Min river drainage.

If real specific differences between *M. sargentiana* and *M. sprengeri* 'Diva' rule out almost all possibilities of the latter being an eastern and northern form of *M. sargentiana*, and if carefully selfed seedlings of the original Caerhays tree are uniform enough to quiet all thoughts of its being a natural hybrid, would it not be worth while for botanists to consider consigning the ghostly epithet *sprengeri* to Limbo, so Dr. Stapf's appropriate name *M. diva* could again grace the lovely pink flowering tree saved for the gardening world by the Williams family of Caerhays?

I hope Mr. F. Julian Williams will be tolerant of my officiousness in writing about his beautiful tree (without ever having seen it), and since he is a member of this Society, perhaps he will give us some "inside" information in some future issue.

Hellbox

Wherein the editor contritely owns to commissions and omissions in past issues, humbly and tardily attempts restitution, begs forgiveness for misleading readers and misprinting authors, shrives himself, and delivers homily and opinion and incidental intelligence.

The Hellbox heading hasn't yet been redesignated "Errata," but I'm beginning to believe it might be more descriptive after our debacle involving the item, "Collection Trip to China," on page 39 of the last issue (vol. XVI No. 1). In my eagerness to tell about Dr. Stephen Spongberg's then impending plant exploration trip to China with a group of other botanists, and how we might all eventually benefit from it, I quoted his short letter, including his name at the bottom, and sent it along with other late-breaking news items to the printer to be thrown into a kind of catch-all on the last page. I had already looked at and given a final okay to print the first 38 pages and was anxious to leave on vacation in late June, but didn't want to hold up printing of *MAGNOLIA* during the two weeks I was to be gone. So I okayed page 39 without seeing the final layout.

Unfortunately, there was one line too many for that page, and I wasn't there to pick which line to kill. Since type can't be compressed, the printer was obliged to trim somewhere and Steve Spongberg's name at the bottom of the very last item happened to be handy, and it got bobtailed. The result made it appear as if the editor, not Steve, had written the item, and a lot of people concluded that I was not only off my rocker but was off to China too. This

note is to assure members that I never left home (except for two weeks in Mississippi) and have been plodding along on the next issue. My wife was so pleased that I was so pleased with Seattle, her hometown, in my geewhiz writeup of that town last spring during the Society's meeting there that she sent the issue to her parents, to show them, perhaps, that she married the right guy. But her Mom and Dad were considerably more worked up over that last item in the journal, which seemed to say that I was going away to sniff every flower in the Orient while their daughter was left at home in her old rags to cope with the children, the bills, the horse and cat, and the Magnolia watering.

When I worked on a weekly magazine years ago I always dreaded Mondays, the day of our staff meeting, when a "marked" copy of the week's issue was handed around from the publisher, who apparently spent the entire weekend going over it with a red pencil and inserting little question and exclamation marks and other doodads, along with comments that were acid, to say the least, all having to do with the imperfections of that particular issue and the overpaid status of the staff that produced it.

Those days are gone but mistakes go on forever, and the president of the Society, who is our chief proofreader, has pointed out that the name of the *Magnolia denudata* clone that he wrote about on page 24 of the last issue (vol XVI, No. 1) is 'Gere,' as he wrote it in his text, not 'Jere,' as I wrote it in the headline. He named it 'Gere' because that was the name on the nearest tombstone in the cemetery where he discovered this tree.

Well, it's evident Mr. (or Mrs.) Gere, or Jere, is not going to say whether the tombstone or the editor is wrong; personally I think editors are the better

spellers, but I leave it to your judgment. Anyway, I was sent a piece of budwood of this tree from Joe McDaniel last spring and tried to graft it on *Magnolia acuminata*, but it didn't take. Maybe because I spelled it 'Jere' on the nametag too.

Rules are made to be broken, they say, so in this issue we once more violate our so-called no-reprint policy to show that we are not set in concrete around here. The very good reason is that Phil Savage's absorbing whodunit about the Goddess of You Know What seems as relevant today as when he wrote it 11 years ago, perhaps more so. Besides that it is appropriate for this special edition, we think that members who have joined since 1969 will find some new thoughts here, and that older members won't be drowned in *deja vu* (a scrumptious word, ain't it?) upon reading Phil's piece again.

Our eagle-eyed president has pointed out some other garbles and glitches in the past issue that may mislead or unsettle members who believe everything they read: for instance, Magnolia trees don't speed, as the heading of a column on page 33 tells you. They spread. On page 32, right column, it's horizontal plane, not plant. He also notes that the names given on pages 7 and 9 for Gresham hybrid magnolias have not been registered, and therefore are without benefit of clergy. And to get down to the very bottom of the barrel, the word "districted" on page 27 does injustice to the author's intended "distracted," and "*sargentiana rubusta*" (page 7) is no way to treat the magnolia known as "*sargentiana robusta*." There are other gaffes, such as dropped letters and wayword commas and semicolons, but we're not going to belabor you with them.

Kenneth Durio is a nurseryman in

south central Louisiana about a hundred miles west of New Orleans in the agricultural center of Opelousas, which the Chamber of Commerce there describes as the "Yam Capital of the World." These "yams" are really a variety of sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*) but the local sweet patootie pushers long ago discovered that the word Yam fits better into a headline. Kenneth is a staunch member of our Society, collects the excess seed from his Magnolias each year for the Seed Counter, and has contributed several articles or shorts to MAGNOLIA.

Kenneth's wife Belle helps run the business and sparkles when she comes with him to Society meetings. They usually bring one of their older children along for the experience and there are enough others to look after the nursery while Dad and Mom are away. Tina Durio is one of the children. She's 18 or 19, has become

interested in breeding Magnolias, and already is swapping pollen packets and Magnolia information with such experts as Phil Savage. She has been with her parents to a meeting or two and has accompanied them several times to Gloster Arboretum, about 70 miles away in Mississippi, to see the Gresham hybrid Magnolia plantings there. The late Frank Gladney of Gloster was so taken with her interest that he named one of the more recent selections after her.

It was not very surprising to hear recently that Tina Durio was joining the Society. What was surprising was that she is taking a lifetime membership, which currently costs about \$150.00. When you think it over, that's a bargain, based on the normal life expectation of a lass who hasn't yet reached 20.

You may think I mean a bargain for Tina. Well, maybe that too, but what I



This M. grandiflora 'Nannetensis Flore Pleno' bought by Sir Peter Smithers from Hilliers Nursery in 1970 has never had a double flower but in 1980 it produced a flower with a ring of petaloids in the middle as shown.



Dr. Shuichi Hirao of Kanagawa, Japan, sent these photos of *M. acuminata* trees raised by Nakamura Nurseries. At left is one with especially large flowers and at right another whose flowers appear before the leaves. A third, not shown, has bluish flowers.

mean is it's the Society that's really getting the bargain. This is a kind of guarantee that it's going to be around for a long time to come and that it's going to be in competent hands when some of the rest of us are loosening our grip. I think it would be perfectly logical if Ken were to take a notion to celebrate this family occasion by planting a tree—something like *Magnolia campbellii*, perhaps.

When I was a young reporter on my first newspaper, I was so impressed by the importance of the information I was entrusted to collect for the reader that I brashly poked my nose into places that—out of compassion, civility, or even fear—I would have avoided if it had been simply a matter of my own concern or curiosity. My wet-behind-the-ears zealotry was that of the brainwashed, or the missionary. It used to amaze me afterward to realize that I had actually summoned up enough crust to confront a politician with an embarrassing question, ask the family of a murder victim to lend me a photograph of the

deceased, or try out one of those carnival rides that sling your heart into your mouth and your possessions out of your pockets. Now I sit here, gingerly, amazed again, for the reason that in October I ventured too far up a stepladder to collect seeds of *Franklinia alatamaha* for the Society's seed counter, and the ladder toppled over and dumped me onto a stone retaining wall, from which I then bounced to the pavement below, fracturing a vertebra and a rib and sustaining a whiplash neck injury. Anybody who knows me well knows that I am terrified of ladders and high places. But the *Franklinia* seed crop hadn't been so good in years, and I just felt that I had to have this seed capsule, and that one, and the other one a little higher up there just out of reach.....

Finally, we want to tell you that as soon as we get this special issue safely to the printer, we're going right to work on another one we hope will have lots of the good stuff and ought to reach you this spring, maybe even before your buds open.

Secretary
American Magnolia Society
P. O. Box 129
Nanuet, New York 10954
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