

Introducing *M.* × 'Yellow Bird'

by Lola Koerting

Magnolia × 'Yellow Bird' is the second yellow blooming magnolia developed and introduced by the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. It was registered with the American Magnolia Society (Check List of the Cultivated Magnolias) in February 1981.

Many magnoliaphiles have been very enthusiastic about the showy yellow blooming hybrid *Magnolia* × 'Elizabeth,' introduced by BBG in 1978, and spectacular in full bloom. 'Yellow Bird' is somewhat less showy but more dependable. Because of its later blooming time, it is not much affected by late frosts. The spring of 1981 did bring devastating frosts to many magnolia blossoms in the northeast. We are happy to report that



Magnolia 'Yellow Bird.'

'Yellow Bird' exhibited its flowers despite these adversities. This deciduous magnolia surely is a fine candidate for our colder climates.

M. × 'Yellow Bird' is a cross between *M.* × *brooklynensis* 'Evamaria' and *M.* *acuminata*. In technical terms it is a backcross of *M.* × *brooklynensis* to its seed parent. The hybridization work was done by Doris Stone in 1967, at that time plant breeder at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. The tree was selected from a group of seedlings of the same origin for its color and shape of the blossoms and consistency of blooming.

The flowering period of *M.* × 'Yellow Bird' is later than for *M.* × 'Elizabeth' and *M.* × *soulangiana* in general but earlier than *M.* *acuminata*. The flowers appear simultaneously with the leaves. Their yellow color (No. 12C on the Royal Horticultural Society Color Chart) is sufficiently intense to be conspicuous. The slight greenish tinge on the outer tepals mostly disappears as the blossom opens. The tepals are 7-9 cm long and 4 to 6 cm wide. The flowers hold their tapered erect shape during the entire blooming period, which lasts 2 to 3 weeks. The leaves are elliptic, dark green and glabrous when mature. The shape of the tree is narrow pyramidal, and the trunk has a furrowed bark.

M. × 'Yellow Bird' is being propagated at Kitchawan Research Station of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Rooting of softwood cuttings by the conventional method was not very successful. Several new techniques will be tested. At the present time grafting is the method of choice. *M.* *acuminata* is a very compatible and readily available understock. Plants raised from the seed of 'Yellow Bird' are equally desirable as understock.