

Earth layering in Holland

By John M. Fogg, Jr.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was submitted by the author before his death in fall 1982.)

Anyone who has doubts that horticulture is a mainstay of the economy of the Netherlands should spend a few days in that delightful small country, visiting its horticultural and botanical institutions, its botanical gardens and its nurseries.

First and foremost among these is Wageningen, only a few miles from Amsterdam (almost everything in Holland seems to be only a few miles from Amsterdam). Here are many centers of research, employing over 13,000 people devoted to investigating every phase of the plant sciences. Here also is the Belmonte Arboretum, with its rich collection of native and exotic trees and shrubs, including a fine representation of magnolias. (See photo, at left).

The Botanical Garden in Amsterdam is one of the oldest in the world, having been founded about 1700. It boasts a well-stocked series of

greenhouses and a good collection of medicinal plants. It was here that Hugo de Vries carried out his classical studies on plant mutations as a mechanism of evolution.

Since the main purpose of these brief notes is *Magnolia*, the time has come to visit Boskoop, the nursery center of the Netherlands. There are said to be over 600 nurseries at Boskoop, and I have no reason to doubt it. Some are mere postage stamps in size; others cover acres. It would take weeks to visit them all and we did not have weeks, just hours. Some of the most famous names in Dutch horticulture are to be found here: Koster, Van Nes, Van Ouden, etc. Some of our finest *Magnolia* cultivars have originated here, though not all are still in cultivation.

But the thing that intrigued most of us was a small plot, run by Van Nes, in which magnolias were propagated by earth-layering. Robust young plants are set out and their branches spread out and pegged to the soil. Nature does the rest. We were told that this practice is much faster than air-layering. The plants shown here are *Magnolia stellata*. (See photo, at right).



Magnolia section at the Belmonte Arboretum.



M. stellata layered at Van Nes nursery at Boskoop.