

The story of 'Monland'—the Timeless Beauty™ Magnolia

by Robert Eiland

During the late 1960's, while making one of my routine car trips, I noticed a *M. grandiflora* growing near Wetumpka, Alabama with flowers open every fall. I had never before seen a *M. grandiflora* in bloom at that time of the year. The tree was located on a side street which ran parallel to the main highway, so it was a couple of years before I actually got around to getting a close look at it.

In October of 1969 I stopped and talked with the woman who owned the tree. Having purchased the magnolia as a seedling from a local nursery several years earlier, the woman was beginning to get concerned that the broad magnolia (10 feet tall by 8 feet wide) was beginning to interfere with the security of her home—in that the dense foliage would provide good cover for a prowler—and felt that it would be safer for her if it was removed. At that time she gave me some cuttings which I later rooted.

I went back for more scion wood for grafting in the spring of the following year, and in return for the woman's generosity I gave her some plants from my nursery. Later that spring the magnolia was cut down.

Of the cuttings that rooted and grafts that took, I ended up with 8 plants. I kept one for myself and distributed the rest to friends. One of these plants was eventually planted in the front yard of Douglas Sheehan of Montgomery, Alabama.

Several years later I decided that it was worthy of propagating. By January 1977 I had 50 or more nice plants (all by cleft grafting) in 5

gallon containers. On January 12 we had an unexpected freeze to 8°F which wiped out all but 2 plants. Discouraged by this, I decided then not to propagate any more of the magnolia.

In 1980 a Sears delivery truck driver, Fred Holland, approached me during a 4th of July barbecue saying that he had passed a sensational magnolia tree with a lot of bloom on it that week. Feeling certain that Fred had seen my magnolia in the Sheehan's front yard in Montgomery, I surprised him by telling him exactly where he had seen it. This renewed my interest in the magnolia and I decided to do something about it.

I started by removing buds in all stages of development from the Sheehan's tree and then sent them to Monrovia Nursery Company, Azusa, California for evaluation. Monrovia was apparently impressed and asked if I could send them a plant, which I did. That plant



Fifteen-year-old original tree of 'Monland' in yard of Douglas Sheehan of Montgomery, Alabama