



Magnolia 'Atlas'

Felix Jury's Magnolias

by ABBIE JURY

Felix Jury is a New Zealand hybridizer who is probably better known for his work with camellias and rhododendrons. However, in recent years it is his new magnolias which have been attracting interest.

'Iolanthe' (*M. x soulangiana* 'Lennei' x 'Mark Jury') and 'Serene' (*M. liliiflora* x 'Mark Jury') have

been available for some years now. In the last three years they have been joined by six other varieties, all of which exhibit the same traits of very large flowers and precocious blooming. Pride of the collection is 'Vulcan' (*M. liliiflora* hybrid x 'Lanarth'), a true ruby red.

Felix Jury began his hybridizing

work in the early 1960's. His major motivations were curiosity and a desire to create magnolias which would produce large blooms of good color on juvenile plants. Soulangianas were chosen as seed parents because of their floriferous characteristics.

'Mark Jury' played a major role in the breeding program. This seedling was imported from Hilliers, as *M. campbellii* var. *mollicomata* 'Lanarth,' about 1950. A grafted plant received earlier had failed to survive and Hilliers had only seedlings available to replace it. According to Sir Harold, 'Lanarth' was adjacent to *M. sargentiana* var. *robusta* at Lanarth, and it is highly likely that 'Mark Jury' is a chance hybrid from these parents. It proved to be a lucky break as 'Mark Jury' is an outstanding breeder parent. It has a large, heavy textured, cup and saucer shaped flower of good cream and lavender color. Being female sterile, it could only be used as the pollen parent, but it resulted in 'Athene,' 'Atlas,' 'Lotus,' and 'Milky Way,' as well as 'Iolanthe' and 'Serene.'

'Lanarth' was similarly tried as a pollen parent but, with two exceptions, was disappointing. 'Apollo' and 'Vulcan' are those exceptions. Their sister seedlings were of little or no merit.

All the named magnolias are characterized by their floriferous nature from an early age and their large blooms. Most will flower on four to five year old plants, 'Apollo' even sooner. The sight of a row of single stems in the nursery topped by 'Apollo' blooms can look a little incongruous, although it is a sight to

gladden any nurseryman's heart.

'Iolanthe' is known for its prolonged flowering period as it flowers down the stem. This is helpful in plants which are vulnerable to inclement spring weather. A single wind will not destroy its display for the year. Its pink campbellii-type blooms are large, about 28cm (11 inches) across.

'Atlas' (*M. x soulangiana* 'Lennei' x 'Mark Jury') has a huge 'Iolanthe' type bloom. It has been described somewhat irreverently as rather like a decorative cabbage. It blooms measure some 35cm (14in) across and the individual, lilac pink, petals are 15cm (6in) wide.

'Athene' (*M. x soulangiana* 'Lennei alba' x 'Mark Jury') is a most attractive bicolor, ivory white with an unusual violet pink base, and is rated as one of the best garden magnolias. This plant is subject to a plant protection (patent) application in New Zealand.

'Milky Way,' a sister seedling to 'Athene,' is notable for its large, heavy textured blooms. Its overall display is of a white magnolia although its flowers have a soft pink base.

'Lotus,' the third sister, has an exquisite, large flower in pure cream with spatula shaped petals

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resembling the lotus flower for which it is named. The tree is smaller growing and pyramid shaped. Despite these virtues, it is not as floriferous nor as precocious a bloomer as the other varieties.

'Serene' is the last of the 'Mark Jury' offspring and introduces stronger color through its *liliiflora* parent. The very distinctive, large blooms are bowl shaped and bright rose in color. It is the latest flowering of these magnolias. The tree itself is upright and pyramidal in shape.

'Apollo' (probably a *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra' hybrid x 'Lanarth') first flowered as a two year old seedling and has continued ever since. It is exceptionally heavy flowering, rivaling even 'Iolanthe' in this respect. Its early flowers of the season can be deep violet with paler inner petals; later flowers are a good deep rose pink. They are very large star shaped blooms.

'Vulcan' (*M. liliiflora* hybrid x 'Lanarth') is arguably the prize of

the collection. It is a true color break in campbellii-type flowers, being a brilliant ruby red. Combined as this is with flowers of a good size, a smaller growing tree, and the floriferous, precocious characteristics of the other hybrids, it is a source of some pride to its breeder. It has aroused considerable interest in New Zealand where it is available commercially. It has been granted plant protection in New Zealand.

All of these plants are currently available in New Zealand and most will be available in Britain by next winter. Felix Jury has effectively ended his hybridizing career, although he continues to garden actively. His son Mark has taken on the commitment to plant breeding and continues the attempt to constantly improve and refine. The search for improved color range and even better plant performance will continue in rural Taranaki for some years to come. ♣

Overleaf—Magnolia 'Vulcan.'

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