

The magnolias of Goodale Park

Barry L. Weber

Goodale Park is 32.7 acres of prime parkland immediately northwest of downtown Columbus, Ohio. It has been so since 1851 when Dr. Lincoln Goodale purchased the still forested land and donated it to the City of Columbus to be "...forever kept and preserved as a public park."

In 1987 a violent summer storm destroyed or damaged many of the large trees of the park and led to the formation of a group of citizens calling themselves The Friends of Goodale Park, who, in cooperation with the City of Columbus Department of Recreation and Parks, instigated a large planting of new trees the following spring. In a continuing effort, the "Friends" have contributed many thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of hard labor in the re-greening and beautifying of Goodale Park. Nearly 400 trees have been planted since the storm.

Since the land of the park was purchased as virgin woodland and went directly into use as a park (and was neither farmed or built upon), Goodale Park still has areas in it of one of the most rare of all natural resources in central Ohio, virgin soil.

It was one of those precious areas that was chosen to receive a special initiative of the Friends: A collection of magnolias. Beginning in the spring of 1989 and continuing to the present, more than sixty plants have been placed near the center of the park. Due to the strength of the rare soil, the plants have uniformly evidenced strong growth with little maintenance other than a bit of fertilizer once and protective rings of wood chips around their bases. The collection continues to expand and reflects the goals of the founders: the assemblage of new and unusual selections of magnolias thought to be hardy in Columbus, the testing of performance of the various selections and the beautification of this public park. Some of the selections have only single or double representatives but most have been planted in triads and in a fluid attempt at placement by closeness of relationship.

The species, and their selected natural varieties, of the

collection include: *Magnolia acuminata*, *M. denudata*, *M. grandiflora* 'Bracken's Brown Beauty,' *M. kobus* var. *borealis*, *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra,' *M. macrophylla*, *M. salicifolia*, *M. stellata* 'Centennial' and 'Waterlily,' *M. tripetala* and *M. virginiana*.

The binomial hybrids are currently represented by: *M. x loebneri* 'Ballerina,' 'Leonard Messel,' 'Merrill,' and 'Spring Snow;' and *M. x soulangiana* 'Alexandrina' and 'Verbanica.'

The other miscellaneous hybrids include: *M. 'Elizabeth'* (*M. acuminata* x *M. denudata*), *M. 'Galaxy'* (*M. liliiflora* 'Nigra' x *M. sprengeri* 'Diva'), *M. 'Raspberry Ice'* (*M. liliiflora* 'Nigra' x *M. x veitchii*) and the "Little Girl" series: 'Ann,' 'Betty,' 'Ricki' and 'Susan' (all *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra' x *M. stellata* 'Rosea') and 'Jane' and 'Pinkie' (both *M. liliiflora* 'Reflorescens' x *M. stellata* 'Rosea').

Most of the various components of the magnolia collection bloom over a period extending from about the last week of March until about the third or fourth week of April, with sporadic flowering occurring on new growth over the summer months on some selections. The spring display in this collection in Goodale Park should increase in extent and dramatic presence for many decades as the current plants increase in age and size and new ones are added. ♣

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