

A Bit of Magnolia History from Vancouver, B. C.

Alleyn Cook

Another precocious Asian, *Magnolia kobus*, achieves the same great size of the others in variety *borealis*, but is unique in its exceptional hardiness. Additionally, *M. kobus* can take a very long time to set its first buds. However, in time, small white flowers are produced in huge numbers.

In the early 1970s a British Columbia nurseryman from the Fraser Valley wanted to enter the magnolia market, and so he imported 1,000 *M. kobus* seedlings from Japan to use as understock. His idea was to bud the rare species onto these very hardy trees. (At that time our garden was the only one with a wide selection of the exotics. Neither The University of British Columbia Asian Garden nor Van Dusen Gardens were then in existence.) By trimming the lower branches of each tree we were able to provide a great deal of scion wood.

The project was a failure; the percentage of "takes" was minute. By this time, the understock, *M. kobus*, had grown too large to use again and were sold to the Vancouver Parks to use as street trees. The nurseryman repeated this quest for exotic magnolias by importing another 1,000 *M. kobus*. As with the former, the majority became Vancouver street trees.

We used a considerable number of these seed-grown *M. kobus* in Stanley Park, Vancouver, B. C. to link together the 30 flower beds of the Ted and Mary Greig Rhododendron Garden. In all, seventy *M. kobus* were located in the beds and along the main road. When either in flower or in golden fall color a sense of continuity was obtained throughout the whole area. It certainly is a beauty in its own right. ♪