



Members of Magnolia Society International are cordially invited to the 2019 Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois, scheduled for May 3-5 with a post-meeting tour on May 6.

When thinking of regions of the world to cultivate Magnolias, the upper Midwestern United States is likely not the first that comes to mind. Hot humid summers and bitter cold winters make hybrids containing *M. sargentiana* or *M. campbellii* very difficult to cultivate-and forget *Magnolia grandiflora*; the only broadleaf evergreen we're likely to see is boxwood. However, though a challenging climate, many species of *Magnolia* are surprisingly hardy, and thanks to the efforts of regional breeders including past greats like Phil Savage and Dennis Ledvina, there are many outstanding *Magnolia* specimens to be seen throughout the Midwest.

The annual meeting will be called to order on Friday evening, followed by two speakers, Matt Lobdell and Andrew Bunting. Matt is Head of Collections and Curator at The Morton Arboretum, Andrew is Assistant Director of the Garden and Director of Plant Collections at Chicago Botanic Garden, and both are responsible for overseeing the development of the plant collections at their respective institutions. During their talks, Matt and Andrew will provide an overview of the growing conditions of the region as well as recommended *Magnolia* species and cultivars.

Saturday morning, May 4th we head north to the famous Song Sparrow Nursery. Song Sparrow Nursery in Avalon, Wisconsin, was created by world renowned plantsman, Roy Klehm. Roy's mail order nursery is known for its vast selections of *Hemerocallis*, *Paeonia*, *Hosta*, perennials, *Clematis*, and trees and shrubs. In recent years, Roy's nursery has become one of the top purveyors of magnolias in North America. All his magnolias are grown on their own roots (not grafted). For years, he worked closely with magnolia hybridizer, Dennis Ledvina, helping Dennis to bring many of his magnolia cultivars to market. Roy has continued to release new cultivars based on Ledvina's genetics and hybridizing work. There will be an opportunity to purchase plants at Roy's Song Sparrow Nursery. Following lunch, we will head toward The Rotary Botanical Gardens in Janesville, Wisconsin. This small 20-acre botanical garden boasts 24 different garden areas and over 4,000 different plants. Director of Horticulture Mark Dwyer and his staff will offer guided tours of this botanical gem in southern Wisconsin.

Two speakers are currently scheduled for Saturday Night: Dr. Todd West, and Dr. Murphy Westwood. Todd is Professor of Woody Landscape Improvement at North Dakota State University. Attendees to the Sweden Meeting in 2017 will recall his lively and well-received talk on the subject of developing hardy Magnolias and other woody plants able to thrive in the harsh landscape conditions of USDA Zone 3b North Dakota. Todd will provide an update on his breeding work and new selections of interest from NDSU's program. Murphy serves as Director of Global Tree Conservation at The Morton Arboretum, where she works to save tree species from extinction through global collaborations. With nearly 50% of the world's magnolia species considered threatened, endangered, or otherwise at risk, attendees will

enjoy being informed on the efforts to keep the future of magnolias secure and will learn of some methods in which they can share their knowledge to assist in such.

On Sunday, May 5th, we will visit two of the region's most prominent horticultural institutions: Chicago Botanic Garden and The Morton Arboretum. Chicago Botanic Garden will be the first stop. The Chicago Botanic Garden was developed in the early 1970s in Glencoe, Illinois as a project by the Chicago Horticultural Society and is located about 20 miles north of downtown Chicago. Today, the 385-acre garden has 30 distinct garden spaces, including 12,500 different plants in the permanent collections. The botanic garden is considered one of the premier botanical gardens in the world with extensive initiatives in plant conservation/science, horticulture education, community agriculture, horticulture therapy and garden displays. While at the Garden there will be an opportunity to tour on your own or have guided tours of the magnolia collection by the horticulture and curatorial staff. That afternoon, we'll travel to the town of Lisle for a visit to The Morton Arboretum. The Arboretum was founded in 1922 by Joy Morton, founder of Morton Salt Company and son of J. Sterling Morton, Secretary of Agriculture under President Cleveland and founder of Arbor Day. The Arboretum consists of over 1,700 acres of display gardens, plant collections, and managed natural areas and a staff actively engaged in education, plant conservation, and the pursuit of practical scientific studies. Members will enjoy tours of the grounds and collections, featuring a multitude of *Magnolia* cultivars recommended for planting in the region, as well as several species of surprising hardiness including *M. macrophylla* var. *ashei* and *M. fraseri* var. *pyramidata*. Our meeting will conclude that evening at the Arboretum's Thornhill Education Center, a facility constructed on the site of the original Morton family mansion and preserving the mansion's library. Following dinner, per tradition a lively auction will occur where members will have the opportunity to bid on Magnolias and other plants and items of interest.

Members able to stay an extra day will be treated to a post-meeting tour to nearby Madison, Wisconsin. The first stop will be the Olbrich Botanical Garden. Olbrich is a county run botanical garden that showcases exquisite garden design combined with well-curated collections. Director of Horticulture Jeff Epping will meet the group to tour the gardens and magnolia collection. Jeff is internationally known for the promotion of gravel-garden technology which will be on display for our visit. Also on the agenda is a visit to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum. The UW Arboretum features three garden collections: a Wisconsin Native Plant Garden, a Viburnum Garden, and the Longenecker Horticultural Gardens. The latter is 35 acres in size and boasts over 2,500 taxa of plants, including several prominent *Magnolia* specimens.

Despite less than optimal growing conditions, the upper Midwest boasts impressive horticultural institutions and many hardy plants, including Magnolias. We hope to see you there!