

Dandy and Mr. Patrick M. Synge, and a fine chapter on "Propagation of Magnolias" by the famous nurseryman, Mr. H. G. Hillier. Two fine color plates of *Magnolia sargentiana robusta*, one the Frontispiece, an excellent black and white photo reproductions make this book a prize worth the search.

Usually not too difficult to obtain is a nice book by Mr. Douglas Bartrum entitled "Rhododendrons and Magnolias", published in 1957 by John Gifford Ltd., of 125 Charing Cross Rd. in London. It is more of a primer than the other books, but has fine photo reproductions by Mr. J. E. Downward.

Our faithful supporter, Mr. Neil Treseder, told me in a recent letter that his new Magnolia book awaits only the color plates to be completed, and when it is, the Newsletter will carry full directions on how to obtain this latest and most up-to-date work on our favorite genus. ★★★

Backyard Exploration in Szechwan

by PHILIP J. SAVAGE, JR.

Most of us are accustomed to thinking of plant hunters as they would be depicted in a Hollywood film, wherein a pith-helmeted Rock Hudson hacks his way through smothering jungle and hostile natives, (one of which is a gorgeous dish), to find the tree that combines all beauties.

In Chinese plant hunting, at least, this has not always been accurate. Some of the most valuable ornamentals brought from the 'Land of Flowers', have been long domesticated cultivars that are quite common in private and public gardens there. In the western provinces, in particular, it would appear that many native trees and shrubs, well regarded as ornamentals in their homeland, still remain to be introduced to western cultivation. Among the genera of the Magnoliaceae, *Manglietia* and *Michelia* are represented by handsome ornamental species. Some of these may, in fact, be cultivars, or even hybrids, considerably altered from their typical appearance.

Szechwan province has often been called "China's Wild West", which would lead us to consider it comparable to Wyoming, or Montana in population density. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The state of Montana, for example, has less than five people per square mile of area, as against Szechwan, with three hundred and sixty-five people per square mile overall, and a mind boggling density of 1,610 per square mile in the farmlands. Although mountainous, and containing large areas of alpine forest and scrub, all soil capable of being cultivated has long since been put to the plough. Far from being a "frontier", in the meaning we attach to that word, Szechwan was settled, civilized, and supporting a huge population many hundreds of years before the eastern, and to us more familiar, coastal provinces of China.

The trees around Buddhist temples have provided both herbarium

specimens and seed, and it is probable that such a temple grove, on Mount Wa, one of Szechwan's three "Sacred Mountains", contained the tree of *Magnolia sargentiana* var. *robusta* from which Ernest Wilson was fortunately able to gather seed.

About twenty-five miles northeast of Mt. Wa, (or Wa Shan, if you prefer), near the large city of Kiating, is the well known Mt. O-Mei. An enormous block of hard limestone, its flattened top is eleven thousand feet above sea level, and a majestic ninety-seven hundred feet above the surrounding countryside! Wilson notes that, "Upwards of seventy Buddhist temples and monasteries are to be found on this mountain, with upwards of two thousand priests and acolytes. The whole mountain is, or rather was, church property, and only the land on the lower slopes, suitable for cultivation, has been sold."

There is a very interesting folder in the *Magnolia* cabinet of the Harvard Herbarium entitled, "Flora of Mt. O-Mei, Szechwan", with origin given as, "Herbarium of National WuHan University." The front of this folder is annotated "Indetermined", by Harvard because botanists must always regard cultivated plants with suspicion.

Among some interesting specimens in this folder are the following:

H. C. Chow No. 11416. "Cultivated shrub, flower red, April 14, 1940."

This specimen is a *Magnolia* flower with twelve to fourteen narrow tepals, suggesting a form of *Magnolia kobus* var. *stellata*. The description, "flower-red", is intriguing.

H. C. Chow No. 10000. "Cultivated."

This would appear to be *Magnolia liliflora*, with very small, sharply acuminate leaves.

H. C. Chow No. 9777. "A large *Magnolia*."

Probably *M. sargentiana* from the dense, even pubescence under the leaves. (Wilson also collected *M. sargentiana* on O-Mei Shan).

H. C. Chow No. 12095.

A very badly damaged flower described as, "red", which could be *Illicium henryi*, at various times included in the Magnoliaceae.

H. C. Chow No. 9405. "A *Michelia*".

Perhaps *M. figo* but possibly *M. yunnanensis*.

In the collection are several cultivated *Manglietias* noted as shrubs or small trees and with flowers described as pink or red. Some locations, such as "Garden of Mr. — are given. These specimens would appear to be forms of *Manglietia duclouxii*, which has been collected in northeast Yunnan, one hundred miles or so south of O-Mei Shan, and described as, "a small tree or shrub, petals purple to rosy, obovate, clawed, 3 cm. long, very fragrant."

Clawed tepals, constricted toward a pointed tip, or shaped like the bow of a canoe, are often seen in our native *Magnolia acuminata*. Tepals 3 cm., or one and one-fifth inches long would indicate a flower about three inches across, or only about the size of a good Sweet Bay blossom.

What a pity the Society can't dispatch Jim Merrill, our migratory *Magnolia* climber from Painesville, Ohio to O-Mei Shan disguised as a Buddhist monk. His "Jewel in the Lotus" prayer might not sound too convincing, but he would surely bring back a coolie load of interesting seeds!
