

The Winter of '63

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A hit movie entitled, "The Summer of '42," is making the rounds these days. A season which made no hit at all with gardeners in western Pennsylvania was the winter of '63, the coldest in modern times, when the temperature plunged to 35 degrees below zero at Brookville, Water mains four feet beneath the ground froze; the native *Rhododendron maximum* lost its buds; and twigs on hemlocks were killed. Thousands of my hybrid rhododendron seedlings at my hybridizing and trial grounds were destroyed.

Brookville is in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains, not far from Kane, beloved by TV weathermen for its notably low temperatures, and often described by them as "the icebox of Pennsylvania," a rather quaint designation for a generation of bright eyed meteorologists who wouldn't know an icebox if it bit them. Brookville is in USDA climatic zone 5a.

Few members of the American Magnolia Society have gardens which must endure such severe conditions, but the relative hardiness of the magnolias I was growing at that time may be of interest.

- M. acuminata* - no injury.
- M. cordata* - 100% bud loss; no wood injury.
- M. cylindrica* - very slight injury.
- M. denudata* X *sargentiana* var. *robusta* (my cross) - severely injured.
- M. fraseri* - no injury.
- M. X 'George Henry Kern'* - no injury; subsequently bloomed normally.
- M. hypoleuca* - branch tips killed.
- M. kobus* var. *borealis* - no injury.
- M. kobus* var. *nana compacta* - branch tips killed, 1 to 3".
- M. liliflora* var. *nigra* - slight injury.
- M. X loebneri* - slight injury.
- M. X loebneri* 'Merrill' - slight injury.
- M. macrophylla* - branches of one specimen froze back; another uninjured.
- M. X 'Picture'* - moderate injury, which later proved fatal.
- M. salicifolia* - one specimen uninjured and bloomed normally; another very severely injured.
- M. sieboldii* - killed.
- M. X soulangiana* 'Alexandrina' - slight injury to branch tips.
- M. X soulangiana* 'Grace McDade' - moderate to severe injury.
- M. soulangiana* 'Brozzoni' - moderately injured.
- M. soulangiana* 'Lennei' - severely injured.
- M. soulangiana* 'Liliput' - severely injured.
- M. soulangiana* 'Rustica' - severely injured.
- M. X soulangiana* 'Rustica Rubra' seedling - small plant killed.