

*M. X soulangiana* 'Burgundy' after fourteen inch March snow. Little damage resulted.



## Magnolia notes from the Ticino (Switzerland)

by Sir Peter Smithers

In recent years, we have been pleased with the flowers and growth of some of the newer cultivars in the *M. X soulangiana* family. This part of the world is soulangiana-land, if ever there was one and there is plenty of material to judge by. 'Sundew', by any standard is exceptionally fine. The blooms are slightly smaller (but very little) than the immense flowers produced here by 'Grace McDade', but the plant is more floriferous, more rigid and treelike in growth, and flowers in the main season whereas Grace is a couple of weeks later. There is an unusual suffusion of color in the bloom, almost orange. Our plant, purchased from Pickard in 1970 at about 18" is now a massive thing about 15' tall and heavily branched.

Another outstanding performer here is *Magnolia X soulangiana* 'Burgundy'. Once again this season it has proved the point. It is rather denser as a grower

says *M. obovata* is the Asiatic counterpart of *M. tripetala*, but I think it's closer to *M. macrophylla*. It took 21 years for *M. obovata* to come into flower for us, but it was worth waiting for. *M. soulangiana* 'Lennei' bloomed for us the first time this spring. It's nip and tuck in this area for *M. grandiflora* and *M. X Freeman*'.

Harold Hopkins, Bethesda, Md. (editor) - Because Flight No. 2 encountered a long holding pattern on the way, some of my notes were written as early as November and some as late as mid-June. Through personal participation (seed collecting), I was one of the fortunates who knew the "Seed Counter" had become a reality the past fall-winter, so I ordered a half-dozen packets and all are germinating well, unlike some received from other society seed distribution, which have, since planting in late April, produced only two seedlings so far (June 15). Thanks to Counter Proprietor, Joe McDaniel, and the AMS member contributors for getting them to me in such good condition!

I have done some modest crossing (which anyone can do if he assumes from the start that there will be a certain percentage of failures including some attempts genetically impossible) but I have my heart set on one project: Putting pollen from Phil Savage's big-flowered, big-leaved *M. tripetala* 'Bloomfield' on a big-flowered *M. virginiana* var. *virginiana* (six inches across) at the National Arboretum here (by permission) in an attempt to produce *M. X thompsoniana* hybrids with larger flowers and, I hope, with hardiness and other characteristics equal to Joe McDaniel's *M. X thompsoniana* 'Urbana' (that he produced a dozen years ago to confirm previous conjecture that this 150-year-old garden hybrid originating in England actually had two American parents). A couple of dozen flowers have been daubed and tagged and that's more than I can possibly germinate and grow to flowering size, so I'm hoping that if many of the crosses take (should know in a couple of weeks), fellow AMS members who have growing room and a similar interest in getting such plants into the hands of gardeners can help to grow and compare and evaluate any hybrids produced for the future benefit of Magnolia addicts and just plain gardeners. But perhaps I ought to let the chickens hatch before counting them! If they do, the main problems this year will be tourists pulling down branches to see what those funny looking little tags say, and Nature's own equalizers, the squirrels, and other hungry fauna.

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