

Magnolias at Home and Abroad

by J. C. McDaniel

A sesquicentennial anniversary we can celebrate in a small way is the first introduction of *Magnolia X soulangiana*. It was in 1827 that Soulange-Bodin (in Ann. Soc. Hort. Paris 1:90-95) announced this hybrid. Now, 150 years later, one of Soulange-Bodin's clones is still planted more than any other deciduous Magnolia. More than 100 cultivars of similar parentage have been named and the end of new soulangiana cultivars is not yet in sight.

This year one English commercial grower, Pickard's Magnolia Gardens, Stodmarsh Road, Canterbury, named 13 new selections made there among seedlings he raised from *M. X s.* 'Picture,' a Japanese introduction that Phil Savage has rated excellent in his garden. It has larger and more substantial pink flowers than ordinary *soulangiana*, but its continued weakness in central Illinois is that most flower buds start out too early and are hurt by freezes in early spring.

Canterbury, where A. A. Pickard has his establishment, is advertised as a cold climate, which it is when compared to, say, Cornwall, in southwest England, but it seldom gets as cold there as it does, for instance, in Little Rock, Arkansas, during the average winter. Frank and Sara Gladney, who have visited there, say Pickard has excellent nursery stock. One thing in which he leads other English (or European) introducers is the frequency with which he has submitted papers to register cultivars with the American Magnolia Society. Both *M. grandiflora* 'Saint George' and *M. X soulangiana* 'Sundew' (another presumed seedling of 'Picture') were registered 31 December 1968. One drawback for would-be customers outside Britain: Pickard does not ship. English gardeners may pick up the new cultivars when they are ready at the nursery, where the prices are very reasonable.

Phil Savage ordinarily (but not in 1977) has seed on cv. 'Picture' (syn. 'Wada's Picture') at Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. He is raising crossed seedlings from it. Wada in Japan also has some seedlings of 'Picture' under observation.

Two other cultivars in Japan impressed Dr. David G. Leach last spring: *M. X s.* 'Dorsopurpurea' and a larger flowered clone of *M. heptapeta* (syn. *denudata*) than he has seen in America. Both are in the Check List of Cultivated Magnolias, and the Yulan (listed as *M. denudata* 'Japanese') has a source tree for scions at Phil Savage's. Wada listed them both for export in his long ago (ca. 1925) catalog. At least one American nurseryman imported the improved "conspicua" soon afterward, but did anyone bring 'Dorsopurpurea' to America or England? If anyone has seen it this side of Japan, will he please write me about it? Wada's brief description: "Immense flowers like *M. conspicua* [now *heptapeta*] but with pink suffusion on the interior." The Japanese taxonomic botanist Makino in 1929 described "*M. dorsopurpurea*" as a new hybrid species.



Brooklyn Botanic Garden's No. 391, is shown above. See note inside front cover

Leach has a Japanese correspondent who probably can mail some 'Doropurpurea' scions if it is not grown already nearer to home. It sounds too interesting not to be tried in America.

One hybrid of Yulan for which I predict a bright future is the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's No. 391, a cross of *M. acuminata* X *M. heptapeta*. Members at our Washington AMS meeting in April saw Dr. Lola Koerting of BBG put on slides of the attractive, light yellow flowers. My trial graft of this (probably the first west of the Hudson River) had the same attention-getting flowers later the same month. I think No. 391, whatever it's named when it receives a patent, will fill a need for a hardier-in-bud, later flowering, and more rapidly growing tree than the old Yulan. Unfortunately it seems to be a non-fruiting "mule," but several breeders are trying out further crosses of the combination.

Yes, we still have some *M. grandiflora* trees around central Illinois and most of them have green leaves now, but they weren't evergreen above the snows of last January. The record cold month (with an official low of -21°F in Urbana), combined with hard, drying winds, reduced the branches on all *grandiflora* (and hybrid cv. 'Freeman') here. The previously evergreen clones of what I'll still call *M. virginiana* var. *australis* (including cv. 'Henry Hicks') lost leaves and some lost their thinner branches. Flowering was reduced on the *australis* and was absent on the *grandiflora* at Urbana this year. Severe damage also occurred on some trees southward in Herrin and Benton, Illinois, but others there had good fruit crops when observed in August. *M. g.* 'Majestic Beauty' survives with Joe Hickman in Benton, but did not bloom this year.