

Naturalizing Magnolias

A working definition of a weed is any plant that you have more of than you need. On the grounds of an older garden apartments development in Bethesda, Maryland, hundreds of Magnolias are produced as weeds in a normal year.

These vigorous young plants germinate from seeds thrown by five large trees of *M. kobus*, which apparently were planted at the same time the apartments were built during World War II. The trees burst into heavy flower in March at the same time as others of their kin. They are about 50 to 60 feet high and the trunks near the bottom are two feet in diameter, arising singly from the root mass without suckering.

The seedlings come up in every part of the area where there is no thick turf, some as much as 50 yards away from the mature parent trees. Those not sprouting strongly from the crevices of various shrubs and from against building foundations are beheaded regularly by mowers used in grounds maintenance. New growth arises promptly from the stubs.

The apartments are sited on a slope and the *M. kobus* trees are mostly toward its bottom. Farther up the slope are a half dozen *M. acuminata* trees planted in scattered locations. Some of these are heavy seeders and some not, but I've yet to see a *M. acuminata* seedling beneath any of them. It's ironic that dozens of *M. kobus* seedlings sprout beneath a couple of 60 to 75-foot *M. acuminatas* that are 50 or so yards up the slope from the *M. kobus* trees.

My feeling is that this and possibly other varieties of *M. kobus*, and perhaps a few other Asian species, may under favorable conditions become naturalized in some regions of the United States and that in unmanicured parklands and recreational woodlands these would be a welcome addition, especially when they burst into flower ahead of almost any other tree. As stands of trees they would provide an impressive early spring spectacle. As understory trees they may thrive somewhat farther north than our native woodland dogwood and be

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from indigenous native stand

strong 3 yr. seedlings \$15.00 each

MAGNOLIA macrophylla

from selected native tree \$12.50 each

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