

Illinois, but has not yet flowered. According to Kew botanist J.R. Sealy, and S.A. Pearce [Raffill's successor at Kew], the Lanarth plant had a habit very like *M. × soulangiana* and flowers much like it. They could see no *campbellii* in it, so possibly it is an apomictic seedling, not a true cross. It is certainly hardier than *campbellii*, and has nice flowers, according to Mr. Treseder.

*M. × 'Moresk'* is the place name Neil Treseder gives to a tree at his old nursery in Truro. "It was purchased from Caerhays prior to 1960, but, unfortunately, no record of its parentage can be found." He does give further information on two very similar

cultivars published in the "Check List." Both 'Michael Rosse,' which flowered first at Nymans Gardens in Sussex (illustrated in his plate 42) and the 'Princess Margaret,' at Windsor Great Park (F.C.C. award by the R.H.S. in 1973) are said to have originated from seed of *M. campbellii alba*, and the pollen parent was believed to be *M. sargentiana* var. *robusta*. 'Michael Rosse' is described by Cecil Nice, head gardener at Nymans as fairly erect, with leaves resembling those of *M. campbellii*. It received the Award of Merit when exhibited at a R.H.S. Show in 1968. These three magnolias could have a hardiness problem in most parts of America.

## Marketing Magnolias

by Joseph C. McDaniel

"Marketing," says a writer in the *Chicago Daily News*, "has replaced competition and a self-serving technostucture has supplant-personal motivation." This is not entirely true in the business of producing and distributing ornamental plants, but the trade has become increasingly tied in with conglomerate corporations at both the propagating and retailing levels. A big wholesale nursery in California is now part of the Weyerhaeuser timber organization, Scott Seeds belongs to ITT, and Burpee is part of General Foods. Family or Mom and Pop operations in the nursery business are not extinct, but are increasingly rare except as local outlets.

When it comes to magnolias, the propagators of much of the material that reaches the general market, and the national mail order retailers, do without the advice of our little American Magnolia Society. Some of the big retailers, who are distributing free catalogs by the millions in 1978, do not offer a single magnolia. Others have a limited choice, about what you'd find in a well stocked garden center in spring. But some newer cultivars do get into the general trade, when propagated in large quantities by wholesalers and picked up by national retailers.

Marketing is still important. Magnolias have been propagated in quantity in different parts of the U.S. and Canada, but the long growing seasons in the Sunbelt states have led to considerable

concentration of this activity in California and Western Oregon in the West, and Alabama in the Southeast. In deciduous magnolias those propagated in the South are marketed mainly northward and this has tended to discourage the propagation of those too tender for USDA Zone 6. For adoption by a big national distributor such as Wayside Gardens, the choice preferably should be something like *M. virginiana* and *M. kobus loebneri* 'Merrill,' which would survive winters even in much of Zone 5.

Indeed, Wayside may be responsible for much of the ordinary gardener's exposure to both these two magnolias and certainly for confusion resulting from its insistence on calling the plant 'Dr. Merrill' instead of 'Merrill.' Two eastern wholesale propagators and a former New York-based catalog company in the 1930's popularized *M. kobus stellata* 'Waterlily,' a plant admittedly better in vigor and general performance than the old *stellata* clone, 'Halleana,' introduced from Japan in 1862. One of the wholesalers, John Vermeulen & Son of Neshanic Station, New Jersey, then selected a superior seedling of 'Waterlily,' named it 'Royal Star,' and sold it through advertisements in the trade paper, *American Nurseryman*.

The *M. × soulangiana* cultivars 'Lombardy Rose,' 'Grace McDade,' and 'Lennei Hybrid' all apparently originated as seedlings of 'Lennei' near Mobile, Alabama. These and one or two others were

introduced by Mobile County wholesale nurseries, some now out of magnolia wholesaling.

Patents entered the picture later. The first magnolia to receive a patent (now expired) was the hybrid 'George Henry Kern,' which the late Carl Kern of Cincinnati's Wyoming Nurseries raised from open pollinated seed of *stellata* and named for a son. (The nursery is no longer in existence and some similar hybrids from the U.S. National Arboretum are preferable.)

Patents are still in effect on some California-selected *M. grandiflora* cultivars, three of which were patented for the Saratoga Horticultural Foundation and one for Monrovia Nurseries, one of the biggest ornamental nursery stock suppliers in the country. All the plants from Monrovia are container grown and their "MN" labels are a familiar sight in retail nursery centers of the Midwest and Southeast.

Monrovia's *M. g.* 'Majestic Beauty' has developed well in Alabama yards and even at Benton, Illinois, before the severe winter of 1976-77. It is not as outstanding in Opelousas, Louisiana, as Saratoga's 'Samuel Sommer' but has had more advertising and marketing, so is more often seen in the southern states. Other cultivars of *grandiflora* on which Saratoga controls the patents are 'Russet' and 'San Marino,' both described in the *Check List of the Cultivated Magnolias* (1975). Some of the propagation is now done at various nurseries licensed by Saratoga, but all, so far as I know, are California wholesalers. These patented four were not the first *grandiflora* cultivars to be commercially propagated on the west coast ('Exmouth' and 'Victoria' were among older ones), but they probably have done much to kill the market there for seedlings, unselected *grandiflora* plants.

No patent is involved in the English-originated *M. kobus loebneri* 'Leonard Messel,' but Burpee's 1977 catalog writer apparently thought his firm had the exclusive mail-order offering of this cultivar in America. I had imported a scion in 1970 and later sent wood to the propagator for Gossler Farms Nursery, so that Gossler's little catalog offered it at least a year before Burpee.

Gossler and the Hetzers at Little Lake Nursery in California both carry a much longer list of magnolia cultivars than any general nursery in America, though

Treseder and Hillier in England ordinarily have comparable lists. I occasionally get inquiries as to where one can obtain certain unusual species or cultivars at retail in the Southeast or "east of the Rocky Mountains," and have to reply that I don't know.

Fruiting and flowering plants developed by breeders at some universities are now routinely registered for patents and so are the magnolias the Brooklyn Botanic Garden selects for introduction from its breeding work. The U.S. National Arboretum is an arm of the U.S. Government (USDA) and its introductions have been unpatented and have been released for propagation by a considerable number of wholesale firms.

Competition is not dead among U.S. and Canadian nurserymen. There are some who do not believe in plant patents in theory, but who will stock a popular patented plant anyhow, particularly new roses. There are some instances of unlicensed propagators being apprehended in the propagation of a patented clone without a license. Sometimes a nurseryman may have become an instant "breeder" just to patent a plant that was actually discovered or developed by someone else. But on the whole, even though a plant patent does not certify a plant's superiority, only its differences from others previously known, the law protecting plant patents has encouraged the breeding and selection of asexually propagated plants. The successful breeders have benefited in retaining a monopoly for 17 years and the public has more new plants to choose from.

New magnolia cultivars, patented or unpatented, will be introduced in the future; if a cultivar is attractive in appearance, has good potential adaptation to a wide area of cultivation, and is readily propagated, its breeder should consider getting a patent. But he should not expect a great market for a new cultivar simply because it is new. The acquisition of new magnolias by the general nursery and their acceptance in the mass market seem to be slow.

For AMS members and others who make their own choices on the basis of personal taste and unbiased information, let's hope that such specialists as Gossler and Little Lake will continue to offer a wide selection of good plants, old or new. By the time Sears or K-Mart has it, it should be old stuff to the magnoliaphile.