

Gresham Hybrids at Gloster

by Joseph C. McDaniel

Who in America has flowering trees of any of the seven cultivars named by the late D. Todd Gresham from his cross of *M. × soulangiana* 'Lennei Alba' with *M. × veitchii* 'Peter Veitch'? These are 'Crimson Stipple,' 'Delicatissima,' 'Heaven Scent' (formerly 'Reder Than'), 'Rouged Alabaster,' 'Royal Flush,' 'Spring Rite,' and 'Sulphur Cockatoo.'

Though bred at Santa Cruz, California, they have been propagated mostly by Hillier Nurseries, Winchester, England, after Mr. Gresham failed to interest California nursery propagators in them. Gossler Farms Nursery in Oregon in its catalog carries 'Rouged Alabaster,' which is called hardy, and which has flushed flowers to 12 inches across. Little Lake Nursery in California is now building up a supply of Gresham hybrids.

This was such a rewarding cross that Mr. Gresham repeated it on a larger scale. Several hundred 'Lennei Alba' × 'Peter Veitch' seedlings were sold as young plants to Frank and Sara Gladney, who planted them out at the Gloster Arboretum (Miss.) in 1966. About 90 percent had come into

flower by 1978. This year was a particularly good season for early magnolias, and we have tagged several trees of this and other Gresham crosses (particularly 'Rustica Rubra' × 'Peter Veitch') for trial propagation and further study. Those taking part in the study include Drs. John Giardano and John Smith of Mobile; Ken, Belle, and Tina Durio of Louisiana; and Joe Hickman and myself from Illinois.

At least three of the 'Lennei Alba' × 'Peter Veitch' hybrids at Gloster had flowers wider than 12 inches. Their color is on the pale side, with some trees nearly pure white, but most with pink to rosy shading on the tepal bases, extending part way up the tepal outside. Some of the 'Rustica Rubra' × 'Peter Veitch' seedlings had deeper colors.

Gloster is in southern Zone 8, so the seedlings selected there will still need to be tested for hardiness farther north. We know that *M. × veitchii* is hardy to Zone 7 and *M. × s.* 'Lennei Alba' is hardier, probably to Zone 5. Hybrids of the two should be intermediate, but they will have to be tested on an individual basis.

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