

# A Short History of the A.M.S.

by John M. Fogg, Jr.

Since our Society will soon be reaching the end of the second decade of its existence, it seems worth while to place on record a few observations concerning its beginnings. To make this account as complete as possible I shall be forced to repeat several of the comments made in my "Plea for Registration" in Vol. XVI, No. 1 of *MAGNOLIA* pp. 20-22.

In that account I said that during the autumn of 1959 I was asked by the Arnold Arboretum to serve as national registration authority for new cultivar names in *Magnolia*. At the meeting of the International Horticultural Congress in Brussels in 1962, this responsibility was broadened to an international level, and I was asked to continue as registrar on that basis.

In between these two dates I decided that it would be helpful to compile a list

of all of the names of species, varieties and cultivars of *Magnolia* believed to be in cultivation. This was a prodigious task, involving a search through books, periodicals and nursery catalogs. My wife performed yeoman service in this undertaking, scrutinizing, among other publications, every issue of the *Gardener's Chronicle*, dating from its very first volume in 1841!

By August, 1961, I had assembled a list of 174 names of taxa of *Magnolia* thought to be grown in the United States, Canada and Western Europe. This list was mimeographed and mailed, in duplicate, to more than 100 institutions (gardens and arboreta), nurseries and individual growers in this country and abroad. A covering letter explained the purpose of this survey and requested the recipient to add the names



*Springtime scene with Magnolias at U.S. National Arboretum, Washington.*

of any species, variety or cultivar which we might have overlooked.

The response to this request was gratifying beyond all expectations, and resulted in the addition of several scores of cultivar names which had escaped our attention.

Along with the answers to our questionnaire were suggestions from several respondents that consideration should be given to the establishment of an American Magnolia Society or something with a similar name. Realizing, as I did, that there already existed a "society" for almost every group of plants from *Abelia* to *Zizyphus*, I was at first lukewarm to the suggestion.

Then, Herbert White of Woodbine, Illinois, in a letter to me dated November 17, 1962, wrote: "Professor J.C. McDaniel in the March issue of the *Illinois Quality Nut Tree Newsletter* says that a Magnolia Society will probably be organized this year and if anyone is

interested in a newsletter at \$2.00 a year, he should write to Dr. Fogg at the Morris Arboretum."

So, Joe jumped the gun on me, and immediately I began receiving checks for \$2.00. What was I to do?

Fortunately, at about this time, I had entered into a correspondence with that prince of men, the late D. Todd Gresham of Santa Cruz, California.

Todd encouraged me to proceed in this enterprise, and said that if I would consent to serve as President pro-tem, he would function as Secretary-Treasurer.

And so, with such flimsy credentials, our Society got off the ground early in January 1963. Although it is impossible to name an exact date when this event took place, the following excerpt from a letter from me to B.Y. Morrison has some bearing on the matter. Writing on January 28, 1963, I said: "I enclose copies of my Magnolia letter of January 15. Although it went out only a short two weeks ago, I know of at least 20 acceptances."

The letter referred to here was addressed principally to the botanists and horticulturists who had answered my questionnaire inviting them to enroll as members of the new organization which was to be called the American Magnolia Society. The response was very encouraging, and the names of more than 200 charter members were printed in the first issue of our *Newsletter*, which appeared in February 1964.

In the meantime, I had written to Mr. Julian Williams of Caerhays Castle, Cornwall, saying "Our young organization has acquired some seventy members in less than six weeks."

As might have been expected, we were bitterly criticized at first for forming still another plant society. The American Horticultural Society urged us to join with it as one of its affiliates.

At the meeting of the A.H.S. held in St. Louis in October 1963, I put this matter before the members of our own



*M. tripetala* as flower opens



group who were there in attendance, and it was unanimously agreed that we could accomplish more by maintaining our autonomy and establishing our own channels for the communication and exchange of ideas and information. I still believe that this was a wise decision.

The first meeting of our Society was held at the Goldsmith Civic Garden Center in Memphis, Tennessee, in March, 1968, with about 50 members in attendance.

At this meeting, a full account of which appeared in Volume V, Number 1 of our *Newsletter*, I appointed a nominating committee to submit a slate of officers, and the following were elected: president, Joseph C. McDaniel; vice-president, Walter S. Flory; secretary-treasurer, Philip J. Savage Jr.; editor of *Newsletter*, John M. Fogg, Jr.

Although the Society has not met on a regularly scheduled annual basis since 1968, it has held the following six meetings: San Francisco (1969); Mobile (1970); Philadelphia (1971); Washington (1977); St. Louis (1979) and Seattle (1980). The next meeting is scheduled to take place at the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University.

At each of these sessions Professor McDaniel has remained as president. Since Joe is certainly one of the top Magnolia authorities in this country, the Society is indeed indebted to him for being willing to continue to guide its destinies. The Society is also deeply grateful to the other members who over the years have served as officers. Their names and titles will be found in the issues of our publication.

When Joe McDaniel issued his proclamation that anyone who sent me \$2.00 would receive a newsletter he really let us in for something. Any kind of printed vehicle involves two considerations which are as different as the two faces of a coin. On one side there is the financial problem: are there sufficient funds to cover the cost of secretarial help, art work, printing and



*Winter buds of M. sprengeri 'Diva'*

mailing? On the other face is the question of content: is there on hand copy of such a caliber as to satisfy a discriminating readership?

With these two factors in operation it soon became evident that any thought of issuing a quarterly publication was mere fantasy. In fact, we often considered ourselves lucky if we could publish a single issue in a year. Either we had sufficient material, but the treasury was depleted, or funds were available but there was insufficient copy to fill our pages. I recall that on one occasion Todd Gresham, acting in desperation, compiled a list of imaginary "questions to the editor" and proceeded to answer them himself!

As indicated above, I was elected editor of the Memphis meeting in 1968. This made an "honest man" of me at last, for I had already gotten out five issues of our *Newsletter*. That this was possible was due largely to the generous efforts of a fellow member, Mr. George O. Slankard, a publisher in Sesser, Illinois. George had been present at the St. Louis meeting of the American Horticultural Society in 1963, and when the question of a newsletter was brought up, offered to do our printing for us at cost.

My function as editor was surrendered in 1973 to Phil Savage who added it to

his duties as treasurer. It was under his administration that for the only time in our history we actually published four issues in one year. Hats off to Phil!

Joe McDaniel served as interim editor for one volume, after which our *Newsletter* passed into the very able and expert editorship of its present incumbent, Harold C. Hopkins.

No account of the history of our organization and its *Newsletter* would be complete without paying tribute to such members as Joe McDaniel, Phil Savage, Phil Seitner, Frank Santamour and many others whose contributions have furnished the life blood which has kept us moving forward.

At present (1980) our Society contains 374 members, including an impressive representation from foreign countries. There is every reason to believe that our membership will undergo a steady increase in this number.

Although the "official" date of our founding may be January, 1963, I like to think that its real beginnings date from 1961 when so many persons recognized the advantages of such an organization and urged its formation.

## Stick With Your Ecosystem

One bit of advice I can offer: in breeding and growing, stick with your ecosystem. *Michelia dolisopa* is said to be more hardy in England. Yet, *M. figo* is more hardy here (Atlanta). There are many factors other than temperature to observe. Many plants that are hardy with us are not hardy with Hillier's Nursery in England and vice versa. Plants from China and Japan have an ecosystem similar to the eastern U.S. As you move more toward the Himalayas, the plants are more adaptive to a western (U.S.) or maritime ecosystem. —S. Christopher Early

## Overlooked

"So many Magnolias have attractive leaves, and most people overlook this feature. Most also overlook the beauty of the fruit in the fall. The red or purple new growth of some cultivars also adds interest. We selected a seedling *M. grandiflora* this spring that had terrific, deep red new growth (about the color of redleaf Photinia) that lasted about four weeks before turning green. A large tree like this would be a sight to see.

"Maturity has more to do with the pod set than the plant size does. Vigorous growing plants don't usually set as many pods as less vigorous plants. Hand pollination will increase seed-set on most cultivars. Many will set pods readily when so pollinated, even though they seldom set pods otherwise." —Kenneth Durio in a Round Robin letter.

## Rare Native Plants

*Magnolia ashei* (Weatherby)  
*Magnolia pyramidata*  
*Stewartia malacodendron*  
*Rhododendron chapmannii*  
*Rhododendron austrinum*  
*Rhododendron speciosum*

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