

Meet *Michelia* × *Foggii*

by Philip J. Savage, Jr.

Veteran members may recall an article I wrote for the April 1973 issue of *MAGNOLIA* entitled "Let's Not Neglect *Michelia*." In the last paragraph I mentioned having ten lusty seedlings growing from a hand pollination of *Michelia doltsopa* by *Michelia figo*.

These grew well from the start and showed unusual hybrid vigor. Plant habit is very symmetrical, with strong apical dominance. Although roughly midway between the two parents in twig diameter and leaf size, in actual growth rate they exceed seedlings of *M. doltsopa* I have had, and promise to be tall, slender trees, rather than shrubs. They are all single trunked with no apparent tendency to sprout from the crown and become giant shrubs, as *M. figo* tends to do in climates where it is hardy in the United States.

Two of the plants set a few flower buds in the summer of 1977. Again these were halfway between the bud size of the parents, but the foxy red pubescence on the perules is exactly like that of *M. doltsopa*. When the buds opened in spring 1978, those on one plant were pure white with eight tepals and about the size of a southern sweetbay flower, while the other produced slightly larger flowers, cream-white with a pink edge, or picotee, on each tepal. The "banana oil" fragrance of *M. figo* is present, though not nearly so strong, and I detect no trace of *M. doltsopa's* lemon and melon mixture.

Those who attended the Society's St. Louis meeting in 1979 may recall seeing the slides of these flowers I showed. I said at that time that I had not heard of this hybrid being made, and flowered previously, and that I would like to name the hybrid grex *Michelia* × *foggii* in honor of our Society's founder, with the pink

picoteed clone to carry the grex name as a cultivar 'Jack Fogg.' Jack was kind enough to accept this, and the plants have been so registered. To the best of my knowledge these are the first hand-pollinated hybrids in the genus *Michelia* and may mark a start in the improvement of this beautiful genus. The hybrids are fertile.

The reverse cross, using *Michelia figo* as seed parent, is slightly more convenient to make, since *Michelia doltsopa* blooms earlier than *M. figo*, in my coolhouse at least. I made this cross in 1972 but through stupid overwatering killed all seedlings but one. This one is now a tall spindly sapling with leaves more like its pollen parent *M. doltsopa* in size. It has not yet flowered.

Down in the warmth of Opelousas, Louisiana, *Michelia figo* grows into a



Flowers of cream-colored *Michelia* × *foggii* cv. 'Jack Fogg.'