

Schleppy time down south

Opelousas, Lafayette, Gloster

by Harold Hopkins

Something about the people, the place(s), and the weather at the American Magnolia Society's 1982 annual spring meeting turned it into a kind of magic, despite some unexpecteds that perhaps shouldn't have been so. Those with whom we've compared notes say they had an enjoyable time and learned something, and that's how meetings are ultimately judged. It was probably good treatment, weather like a baby's kiss, and a gratifying number of Magnolia surrogates that did the trick. The meeting was divided among two sites in Louisiana and one in Mississippi and because of the distances from point to point things didn't always come together on schedule.

Conspicuously absent was the anticipated abundance of blooming Magnolias, done in by tricky weather. For the truth is that practically all the Asiatics had already flowered and faded two or three weeks beforehand. As one native put it: "We had no spring. We went right from winter to summer, without a transition." Even though most of the Asiatics had popped and gone, it was still a bit early for the more dependable show of the native (summer flowering) kinds. No matter. There were plenty of other flowers around to be admired.

The combination of very decent things that did arrive together produced a crowd of well above 50, a good turnout as AMS attendances go. Included were many enthusiastic old or

new magnoliaphiles we hadn't met before, plus those wonderful folks who inflate the attendance figures—the spouses and relatives. Everybody put in considerable hiking, lots of looking and listening, and a great deal of riding. From the lingering leavetakings taking place in the balmy late afternoon sunshine, at the somewhat fabulous Gloster Arboretum not so far from Natchez-Under-the-Hill and the River, we're convinced that just about everybody was reluctant to acknowledge the meeting was at an end. It helped hearten many of us for several more weeks of struggle with winter's grip.

Good treatment as referred to here means the friendly and unflagging efforts of the hosts, members of the Gresham A.M.S. chapter, to make everybody feel welcome and wanted. A notable though not the only instance of this was the concentration of Kenneth Durio's wife Belle and her deputies on



Touring USL campus at Lafayette.



In the magnolia woods at Gloster.

filling everybody up on Cajun food and lagniappe. The cheerful help of the numerous Durio clan kept many an overenthusiastic member from getting lost along some bayou. The personal attention Sara Gladney paid to the comfort and ease of every person who arrived at Gloster was reward enough to make the job of getting there worthwhile. The unfailing kindness and interest of all, including the faculty people at the University of Southwest Louisiana at Lafayette, left no room for improvement.

The Society's 1982 meeting opened at dusk Friday, March 12, with a kind of candles-and-incandescence reception at the Durio home, an adjunct of the showplace Louisiana Nursery in Opelousas, a dozen or so miles north of Lafayette. Each member was furnished with refreshments and a bagful of mementos attesting to the attractions of southwest Louisiana, then was led into a country dining room and a table loaded with both conventional fare and local dishes such as crawfish etouffé, a bayou country specialty.

After attending to their appetites the Society's board got down to business and elected Phil Savage president, succeeding Joe McDaniel, whose illness prevented him from attending or standing for office. Kenneth Durio was elected vice president succeeding Phil and Dick Figlar was re-elected secretary-treasurer. The group adopted

and signed a resolution expressing the Society's appreciation for Joe McDaniel's long service, created for him the special office of president emeritus, and voted to present him a life membership card.

Hashing out business, the board adjourned late in the evening and then we, personally, encountered a minor handicap. We thought we were driving back toward the motel at Lafayette, but we weren't. A wrong turn had us well on the way to Baton Rouge before Dean McCoy discovered our error and we got ourselves to bed around 2 a.m.

Saturday morning the Durios did a capital job of directing the cars and vans to the campus of the University of Southwest Louisiana in Lafayette, by way of the "Cathedral Oak," a majestic specimen of the southern liveoak, *Quercus virginiana*, that has an incredible spread of well over a hundred feet. At the university's Ira Nelson Horticulture Center, Society members were welcomed by Ellis Fletcher, dean of the College of Agriculture, who later conducted a tour of the campus and its extensive plantings, including many unusual specimens of *Magnolia grandiflora* and various hollies. There's also an alligator pond but we saw none. Apparently they submerged in terror at our thundering approach. Dr. Dennis



Sara Gladney receives Gresham award from Dean McCoy.



Some of delicacies at Durio's included boiled crawfish (foreground). That's Ferris Miller at right.

Wollard of the faculty led a tour of the Nelson Center.

At the morning meeting, President Phil Savage described pests and diseases of Magnolias and their control, and Ferris Miller talked about the expanding collection of Magnolias—now around 200—growing at his Chollipo Arboretum on the tip of Taean Peninsula, in South Korea. Ferris has collected and grows three forms of *M. sieboldii* at Chollipo, that is, those with purple, crimson, and yellow stamens. Ferris later distributed young seedlings of the rare, yellow-stamen form to all attending, and offered seeds of various plants to members from Chollipo's seminal distribution.

Saturday afternoon was given to inspection of the operation and plantings of the Louisiana Nursery in Opelousas, Kenneth Durio demonstrating grafting techniques and pointing out several newer Magnolia hybrids, including some late bloomers which still bore flowers. Among these was the sensational yellow-flowered Magnolia 'Elizabeth,' bred and offered to the nursery trade by the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Ourselves, we were much

impressed by a superior specimen of one of our favorites—*Magnolia liliflora nigra*—with long buds and large flowers of as deep a purple as we've ever seen, almost black on the backs of newly opened tepals.

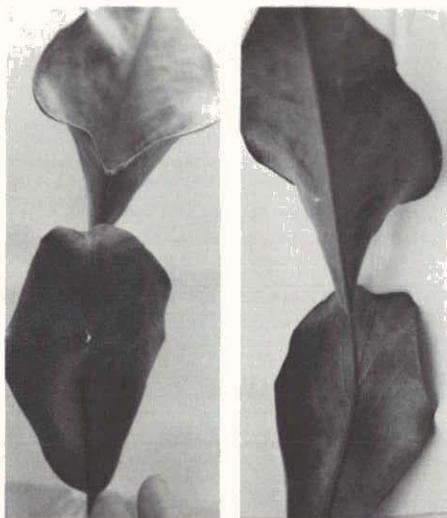
The Durio specimen came from Joe Hickman, who got it from an Illinois nurseryman, who got it from the Netherlands. At Louisiana nursery, most of the magnolias are planted on raised beds to compensate for the sluggish drainage that can occur in the bayou country after frequent rains.

Back in Lafayette, Saturday night, the Society's third Todd Gresham award was presented to Sara Gladney at a banquet ceremony. The first two awards went last year to Jack Fogg and Joe McDaniel, who have been the stalwarts of the Society during its 20-odd years. Sara and her husband the late Frank Gladney have devoted much of the facilities of the Gloster Arboretum to improvement of Magnolia culture, first by receiving, protecting, and perpetuating the hundreds of Magnolia hybrids developed in California in the late 1950s and early 1960s by Todd Gresham, and second, by inviting several members of the society to take over selection, naming, and distribution of the outstanding among these hybrids.

A well articulated color photo slide presentation by Dick Figlar described



USL Ag Dean Ellis Fletcher displays variegated *Magnolia grandiflora* plant.



Magnolia grandiflora's foliage variability takes some kind of cake with this leaf growing out of a leaf (front and back views shown). Bon Hartline says the whole tree is that way. It's somewhere in Missouri, but we didn't catch the exact location.

his last year's visit to view the tender tropical species, *Magnolia splendens*, in its Puerto Rico rain forest habitat (see article, this issue). Chris Early showed a number of his favorite color slides.

After breakfast Sunday, everybody boarded cars and vans for Gloster Arboretum, 75 or 80 miles distant in southwest Mississippi, north of Baton

Rouge and east of Natchez. Carl Amason was too trusting of our navigating and we didn't make the optimum turn on our way through Baton Rouge. Result: we saw a little more of the countryside than we'd planned. Some others were delayed too, and the tour of Gloster's Magnolias, only a few still in bloom, didn't get under way for a time.

Gloster is all the good things Joe McDaniel and others have written about it, a magnificent collection of native and foreign plants holding their own in heavily timbered country. A Georgia-Pacific mill lies between the town and the arboretum. The Gresham hybrids planted at Gloster in the early 1960s have in many cases been enveloped by Gloster's lovely woods.

The main tour was led by Sara Gladney. Satellite tours formed too, led by whomever walked the fastest. The mixture of indigenous and cultivated plants in their woodland setting so beguiled some strollers that there were side tours and mini tours. Enough Gresham hybrids were flowering to hint at the riot of color that obviously had lighted up the forest a couple of weeks before.

Like the Louisiana Nursery and other points south, Gloster suffered some damage from the low, low temperatures of the past winter, but it wasn't so obvious as at Opelousas. A fine specimen of *Magnolia delavayi*



Sniffing Gelsemium sempervirens 'Pride of Augusta' on USL campus.



One view of the huge 'Cathedral' oak in Lafayette.



Gresham hybrid at Gloster with 12 tepals.

had been killed to the ground, but Dick Figlar found a green shoot arising from the root mass and pronounced it spared. Tom Marek and I found marvelous collections of things like *Stewartia*. The grafts of *Magnolia dealbata*, the Mexican relative of *M. macrophylla* introduced to this country a few years ago, are doing fine, and differences from the latter appear to be slight.

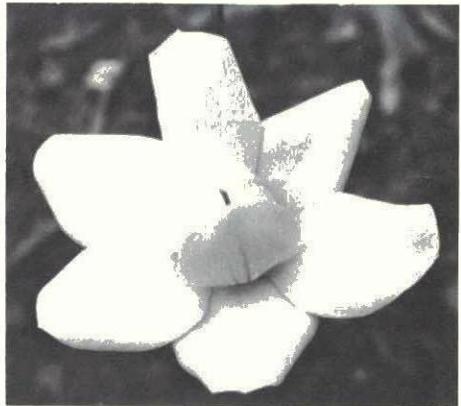
After a period of "visiting," or getting reacquainted, a luncheon of southern fried chicken and the fixings was served by Sara Gladney's staff. The schedule of program presentations was begun in the hallway of the older and larger of the houses on the former farmstead, but there was not enough time left in the day for completion. Dr. Richard Stadtherr of Louisiana State University talked on selections of *M. grandiflora* made at LSU. Bill Dodd, superintendent of parks of Mobile, Alabama, presented a heartwarming portrait and biography of and tribute to the memory of Todd Gresham and gave a summary of Gresham's hybridizing work and the legacy of Magnolias he left. Lola Koerting spoke briefly on Brooklyn Botanic Garden's program of breeding yellow-flowered magnolias at its Kitchawan Research Station at Ossining, New York.

Bobtailed from the events were talks by John Giordano and John Smith plus demonstrations on their successful

propagation method for various Gresham hybrid selections in connection with Gloster Arboretum's distribution program, and a grafting demonstration by T.O. Warren, my fellow swamp rat who enjoys a reputation from his work of selecting and improving native fruit-bearing plants such as persimmon, pawpaw, muscadine, mayhaw, euonymous, mayhaw (hawthorn) as well as nuts such as pecans and hickories.

As time ran out, members headed for whatever airport they had decided could offer them the best way home, including Lafayette, Baton Rouge, Jackson, New Orleans, even Houston. Some took advantage of attractions such as New Orleans to extend their time in the sunbelt. Some overnights at Gloster so as to tour the pre-Civil War plantation homes in the nearby Natchez area the next day. We hope they noticed the timber-size crape myrtles (*Lagerstromia indica*) that adorn the grounds of some of these early homes.

We dallied afterward a few days with relatives on the Gulf coast to catch up on our oyster and shrimp feeding and were entranced by the woodland riot of *Cliftonia monophylla* (black ti-ti), whose pink-white racemes this time of year run honeybees crazy. The whole



Gresham hybrid with nine-inch flower.



*Late-blooming Gresham hybrid in
Gloster woods.*

thing makes us regret, again, that William Bartram had a severe inflammation that temporarily robbed him of his eyesight during his stay in this area just over two centuries ago. Both black ti-ti and ti-ti (*Cyrilla racemiflora*) often keep company with magnolias in south Mississippi, and it appears that ti-ti does the same thing in Puerto Rico (see Dick Figlar's story).

Here's who made it to the 1982 meeting, at least half of them bona fide members:

Dennis Wollard, Kathy Freeland, Carl Ferris Miller, Nancy Hagerman, Joseph Hickman, Philip Savage, Jr., Lola Koerting, Sara Gladney, Harold Hopkins, Richard B. Figlar.

Tom Marek, Frances Marek, Edward Horder, Mae Horder, Virginia Winkler, Ralph Smith, Carl Amason, Lib Dodd, Tom Dodd, Robert MacIntosh, Robert McCartney.

L. Dean McCoy, Dwight Crocker, Richard Stadtherr, Brendan Boudreaux, Tina Boudreaux, Ken Durio, III, Christi Durio, Phelan Bright, Fay Bright, Fred McLeod.

Delyne Lilly, Mike Lilly, T.O. Warren, James Anding, Ben Parry, John Smith, John Giordano, Andrew Rasmussen, Christine Rasmussen, Larry Langford, Chris Early.

Ferry Hartline, Bon Hartline, Larry McNair, Ken Durio, Belle Durio, Dalton Durio, Albert Durio, Liz Wyble, Allen Wyble, Byran Lalonde, Charlotte Lalonde, W.E. Fletcher, JoAnn Fletcher, Bill Dodd.

Photos Slide Project

Larry Langford has volunteered to take charge of putting together the American Magnolia Society's first color slide/ photograph program. Larry will organize contributed color transparency slides and color or black-and-white photographs into units and sets for loan to members and others for showing.

Donors who want to keep copies of prize Magnolia pictures should have duplicates made for contributing to the program. Contributed transparencies and photographs should be sent, along with pertinent information for cataloguing and classifying, to Larry Langford as follows: (by mail) P.O. Box 146, Gibson, TN, 38338; (by UPS) c/o Milan Products Corp., Hwy. 104 East, Milan, TN, 38358.

... Short Takes

Arnold Arboretum's project to "reforest" Ravenswood Park in Massachusetts by using its own progeny is under way. Peter Del Tredici reports that 600 seedlings germinated from seed collected off trees in the park at Magnolia, Massachusetts, were planted on May 2. The park or swamp already has around 60 trees of the sweetbay.

Peter also reports more good news. A half-dozen plants of *Magnolia biondi* two to three feet tall have survived the past winter planted out on the grounds of Arnold Arboretum, and there was no dieback recorded, which means those who have, or will have, one of these plants can plant it outside and be reasonably assured it will survive the winter. Peter's account of what's being done to proliferate this newly introduced Chinese species, including free distribution to members of this society, was given in the same issue of *MAGNOLIA*.