

many superb plants sent to me by him personally: *stellata* 'Chrysanthemumiflora,' 'Iolanthe,' *denudata* 'Forrest's Pink,' 'Ballerina' and others not yet flowered which, coming from him, I am certain are true. I do not know how it came about that plants were sent out from the Treseder Nursery which were sold as vegetatively propagated plants but in fact were seedlings.

So far as nurseries are concerned, the selling of great tree Magnolias can hardly be a lucrative business. Few customers will pick out a plant to flower 15 to 30 years hence. And since all stocks of such things are necessarily unflowered when sold, it is difficult for a nursery to check the truth of its stock once there has been any confusion. In an imperfect world confusion sometimes happens even in the best nurseries! The word then is, *caveat emptor*. Never buy a great tree Magnolia if you can obtain scions from the original tree and have them grafted for you. Only then can you be sure that you have the right thing. If you cannot arrange that, have a very serious talk with the nurseryman with a view to finding out where he got his scions, and when you get your plant, look to see that it is in fact grafted. Personally I would never accept a cutting-raised plant unless the origin of the cuttings could be clearly and unmistakably proven. Take my word for this: I know — now.

A less perfect union

Sir Peter Smithers and John Gallagher as well (see coverage of the Tarrytown meeting) express their concerns mainly about seedlings of named plants that are sold as the named plants. But in the United States, and probably overseas too, a person who orders a named magnolia that has been grafted may receive, not the desirable cultivar ordered, but the understock plant used by the grafter.

It is too easy for a graft to fail, the dead scion to disappear with no trace, and the unwary purchaser to think he

still possesses the named clone represented by the departed scion. This can happen in a nursery before a plant is purchased, or it can happen after it is bought and planted in the garden.

In the nursery the graft is made and the plant is then usually grown in a pot or in the ground at a holding site where it may not be inspected frequently. The grafted scion may be rejected and snap off, or wither from stress or an incomplete union, or a rampant understock's new shoots may arise from beneath and smother it.

When the nurseryman fills an order, the plant may be retrieved and sold or shipped without close attention to the graft union. The first time the unwary purchaser may learn he didn't get what he ordered — and some uncritical purchasers probably never find out — is when the first flower appears. Foliage or other plant characters may give away the secret, but identifying such characters can sometimes call for more expert knowledge and greater detective work than spotting a plebian flower.

The nurseryman is not dishonest, but the result is still tragic — and years may pass before the melancholy denouement emerges. Something like this once happened to a plant I had purchased from the reputable Maryland magnolia specialist nurseryman Henry Hohman, and I found myself with a *M. kobus* understock plant instead of the *M. stellata* 'Water Lily' I had ordered. I quickly forgave Mr. Hohman, realizing that his age and poor health probably made it impossible for him to give close attention to the Magnolias he was holding for sale. But I still would have liked to have that 'Water Lily' I ordered.

This note is added simply to suggest that even when a graft is legitimate, things can go agley. Reiterating Sir Peter's warning, the purchase of named Magnolias calls for particular caution by the purchaser, and close attention to the plant itself, both when purchased and afterward. — Editor.