

Magnolia Meeting '87

by Richard Figlar

Capping off a very memorable month for the Society was the 14th annual meeting of the Magnolia Society at Hendersonville, North Carolina, April 24-26, 1987. Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina—home of many native American magnolias—Hendersonville seemed a fitting place to hold our meeting, and our gracious hosts, August and Mary Louise Kehr, certainly made sure of it. When it was all over, it was to be one of the largest meetings to date with over 70 attending, and one which had an extremely successful plant auction netting over \$2500 in badly needed funds for the Society treasury.

Many members converging on the Hendersonville area from the south were greeted by the welcome sight of many *Magnolia fraseri* in full bloom along Highway 26 as it ascended the 1500 foot level of the Blue Ridge.

The festivities got off to a good start Friday night with Frank Mossman's slide presentation of "Magnolias from England, Ireland, and Switzerland." Frank's talk was particularly interesting in that it included many slides of magnolias of Cornwall which were taken previous to the recent tour. Later that evening Phil Savage revealed his secrets to "Hybridizing Magnolias—Why, Which, When, and How." As usual Phil captivated all of us and certainly whet our appetites for next year's annual meeting to be held at Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Following Phil Savage, Karl Flink, in his "Hybridizing Magnolias—Selecting the Best Parents," described and evaluated the qualitative aspects of using various magnolia species as parents in

hybrid combinations. The study revealed that *M. liliflora*, for example, has an excellent track record as a parent—'Galaxy', Kosar hybrids, \times *soulangiana*, just to name a few—while the spectacular *M. campbellii* has produced very few outstanding magnolia hybrids when used as a parent.

Capping the program Friday evening, Elizabeth McClintock described the "Magnolias at Strybing Arboretum—Golden Gate Park." It is well known that Strybing contains the oldest and perhaps the best collection of tender asian magnolias in North America and her slides certainly bore that out.

The Saturday paper presentations began with "A Review of Magnolia Classification and Nomenclature" by Dr. Fred Meyer, Taxonomist at the U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. While addressing several important issues concerning magnolia taxonomy, Fred revealed considerable evidence to support the rejection of the names *M. heptapeta* and *M. quinquepeta* in favor of *M. denudata* and *M. liliflora*. A more comprehensive paper on this subject has been authored by Dr. Meyer and Elizabeth McClintock and will appear in the August '87 issue of *Taxon*.

Chris Early then entertained the group with his self-taught horticultural know-how in "Inter-specific Hybridization in Magnolias." Chris also brought along a small plant of *Michelia figo* \times *Magnolia virginiana* which he had created by using *M. virginiana* as the pollen parent. Surprisingly, the plant looked more like Sweetbay than its seed parent.

Our final presentation that morning was made by Edmund

Berkeley, Jr., Curator of Manuscripts and University of Virginia Archivist.

The Board Meeting

The Magnolia Society Board met late Friday evening and was attended by a record 14 directors. Highlights of the issues and actions taken-up by the Board are

—The official tax-exempt status of the Magnolia Society has been achieved. All gifts and donations are tax deductible.

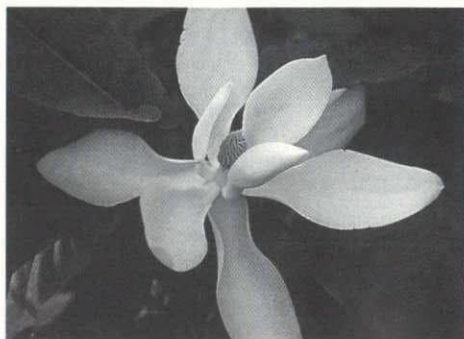
—A small magnolia brochure will be printed and used for various promotional endeavors.

—The Board recommended that the six expiring seats on the Board of Directors—C. Ferris Miller, Robert W. Adams, Larry W. Langford, Roger Gossler, Perry F. Narten, and Dennis A. Ledvina—be reinstated for another 3 years. This was ratified by the general membership the next day.

—A cross reference index for all journals and newsletters of the Magnolia Society through issue #42 has been compiled by Lennarth Jonsson and will be distributed free to all members later this year.

—Beginning in 1988 dues will increase by 3 dollars per year to \$15 (U. S. and Canada) and \$18 (foreign air mail). Individual life membership will increase by \$50 to \$200. Considering that dues haven't increased in eight years this is a modest adjustment and in line with other organizations like ours. More importantly, our dues collections no longer cover the cost of our 2 yearly journals. This has led to using other "unreliable" sources of income like the seed counter to cover these costs. The increase will put us on a more solvent track.

Dues will be payable January 1 of each year **with a \$3 premium being charged for dues received after March 1.** Again this is similar to other societies and makes the difficult job of Secretary/Treasurer far more bearable.



Magnolia fraseri

—San Francisco (Strybing Arboretum) has been selected as the Society's meeting place for 1989.

Members desiring photocopies of the minutes of the Board meeting may obtain them by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to
Minutes, Phelan A. Bright, 907 S. Chestnut Street, Hammond, LA 70403 USA.

Field Trips

Meeting field trips included the Biltmore House and Gardens at nearby Asheville, NC, and of course the Kehr garden in the Hendersonville area. Famous landscape designer Frederick Law Olmstead laid out and planted the gardens at Biltmore some 100 years ago. Magnolia Society members toured the house and strolled through the beautiful gardens which included many magnolias, especially *M. ashei* and even a blooming *M. cordata* (syn. *M. acuminata* var. *subcordata*).

The Kehr garden was truly a magnolia collector's dream. Augie's "magnolia paradise" is situated on a 3/4 acre tract of highly organic, silty loam soil which is several feet thick. Magnolias are planted 6 feet apart in 12 rows of 300 feet in length . . . it doesn't take much math to realize that there are over 500 magnolias planted there! Members were impressed with the stout bushy

growth of Augie's polyploid plants of *M. sieboldii*, *virginiana*, and *stellata* (see picture) as well as the abundance of unusual hybrids such as *M. campbellii* × 'Iolanthe', *M. sieboldii* × *ashei*, *M. sieboldii* × *officinalis*, and many others. Augie's new yellow magnolia, 'Sundance', was just finishing its bloom while *M.* × *brooklynensis*, *M. cordata* 'Miss Honeybee', and others were showing their first flush of flowers.

General Business Meeting

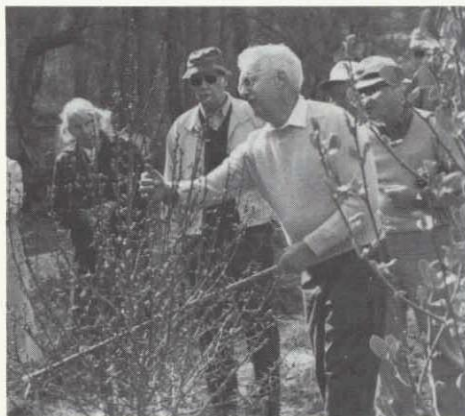
At the general meeting which was held Saturday morning, the President reviewed the previous night's actions of the Board of Directors and asked the general membership to join him in applauding Ken Durio, our immediate past President, and Harold Hopkins, our departing long-time Editor, for their hard work and key efforts in helping to transform our once small society into a recognized major horticultural organization. The membership welcomed Larry Langford, our new Editor, and pledged to "keep the articles coming."

The banquet Saturday night featured speaker Dr. H. M. Cathey, Director of the U. S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. His paper "*Magnolia grandiflora*—Our Noble International Emblem" was delivered synchronously with a background of prerecorded classical music. Citing the fact that *M. grandiflora* is the most widely planted tree in the world whose origin is in North America, Dr. Cathey called for the nation to crown the Southern magnolia America's first national tree. Dr. Cathey then expanded on this theme that great plants like *M. grandiflora* can and should be made better, and in order to improve plant performance in the landscape, we must locate, identify and redistribute to nurseries the **best of the best**. The key to doing this, according to

Dr. Cathey, is through a sophisticated data collection system tied into a national register and computer evaluation system. The culmination of this program would include a comprehensive Plant Performance Guide for North America, including a redrawing of the plant hardiness zone map.

Following Dr. Cathey's presentation, Fred Meyer announced that the National Arboretum would like to establish the site of the **National Magnolia Collection** at the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. He went on to say that, "we expect to add a full-time curator of our magnolia collection in the near future . . ." Needless to say this action was overwhelmingly applauded by the Magnolia Society members, as this announcement served as the crown jewel of what had already been a very successful and enjoyable meeting.

The plant sale immediately followed the banquet. This year's sale featured more plant donations than ever before. Thanks to Joe Hickman, our tireless auctioneer, and the many generous plant contributors and purchasers, the Magnolia Society netted over \$2500 for the Society's treasury. Thank you, again, everybody, see you all next year in Bloomfield Hills.



August Kehr with polyploid plant of *M. stellata*.