

Dr. Galyon reported that "there was neither a brown spot on any leaf nor any bark splitting anywhere on this magnolia."

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Try, try again!

by MARK HAIMES

For those of you who read my first article regarding growing magnolias in Boulder, Colorado (Issue 48), you have an idea of the challenges our weather poses. January 1990 through spring 1991 was no different than what we've come to accept as "normal." The headline in the local newspaper at the end of 1990 read, "1990: A year of extremes for snow, cold, hot, wind." The last snowfall of spring 1990 was on May 12th and we got 20 inches more snow than expected in 1990. There was a damaging hailstorm in mid-July. Winds of 120 mph were recorded just south of Boulder in December. We had 212 consecutive hours below freezing around Christmas including two consecutive days of -24°F. December 1990 was the sixth coldest in over a century with an average temperature of 25.2°F. However, January through April, 1991, was mild and unusually dry.

The following table compares leaf, wood and flower bud damage and other growth characteristics of my magnolias in the past year.

Now for some general comments on each plant regarding information not contained in the table.

Alexandrina—when purchased locally had spider mites, but

responded to Safer soap. Flower buds on plant less than two feet tall (but 100% flower bud loss); less wood hardy than expected.

Burgundy—poor start after 19 days in transit bare root. Removed due to severe dieback after first winter.

Lennei—extensive damage soon after planting resulting in death.

Picture—surprisingly severe dieback two years in row (almost to ground). Vigorous recovery ability and vigorous growth. Slow to harden off. Tendency to crossing limbs noted.

Sundew—much leaf scorch. Much less wood hardy than expected (dieback almost to ground), similar to 'Picture.' Poor growth first season.

Rustica Rubra—same as 'Lennei' above.

Royal Star—stopped growth in fall before 'Leonard Messel' and 'Ann' (but grew late in season). Then hardened off rapidly. Flowered nicely. Blooms slightly less frost resistant than 'Leonard Messel.' However, still one of the best in my garden.

Leonard Messel—bloomed nicely despite transplanting it one month prior in 1990. Flowered well 1991. Flowers are quite frost resistant.

Good leaf color. No leaf scorch noted this year. Grew late into fall. Suffered a limb break on a major branch related to heavy snow-laden leaves. Earlier leaf drop would be an advantage in our climate. One of my favorites.

Merrill—very wood hardy. Blooms less frost resistant than those of 'Leonard Messel' or 'Royal Star.' Leaf hardy.

Spring Snow—much less wood hardy than expected for a loebneri hybrid—less so than 'Leonard Messel' or 'Merrill.' This was true two consecutive years.

Ann—leaf hardy, but not flower bud or wood hardy two years in row. Much less wood hardy than 'Betty' and 'Susan' of the Kosar-Devos Group that I have (but comparable to the extensive dieback on mature wood noted with 'Pinkie'). Had late growth with poor hardening off noted. However, has good recovery ability and moderately vigorous growth. Slugs seem to love this plant. The greenest leaves after a snow in November.

Betty—leaf and wood hardy, but not bloom hardy. Poor growth first year.

Pinkie—bloomed right out of the box. Trivial bloom damage with frost/snow in 1990. Early cessation of growth. Wind-induced small limb break. Extensive dieback almost to ground noted spring, 1991.

Susan—early cessation of growth. Browned leaves remained on plant in fall longer than on any magnolia. Wood hardy. Flower buds were expanding nicely and almost ready to "pop" when they were all eaten. Definitely the best of the Kosar-Devos Group that I have.

Forrest Pink—repeated, extensive leaf and wood damage spring, 1990. Died before establishing. I question possibility of cold/root damage prior to planting.

Galaxy—not anywhere near as hardy in my garden as previously reported elsewhere. However, good recovering ability. Showed poor hardening off.

Marillyn—dieback on late growth was extensive, but moderate damage to mature wood noted as well.

Orchid—flowers not as frost resistant as 'Pinkie.' Early cessation of growth. Leaves very frost resistant. Wood hardy. Its late blooming an advantage in this climate.

Paul Cook—extensive frost leaf damage spring, 1990. Recovered with slow growth and terminal leader dieback. Much less wood hardy than expected.

Sieboldii—early cessation of growth. Not wood hardy, removed. This was a 13 inch plant obtained from a California nursery. However, I am very pleased to report that a seedling only 4 inches tall grown from "wild collected" seed from Korea supplied by Mr. Miller in TMS seed exchange (planted spring, 1990) survived, outside, unharmed and is now beginning spring growth. Thank you Mr. Miller!

The moral of the story: "If at first you don't succeed—try another magnolia! 🌸"

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