

# Magnolia hondurensis

A translation of the original description  
Dorothy J. Callaway

The following is a translation of the original description of *Magnolia hondurensis* published in 1974 by Antonio Molina R. [Una contribucion de varias plantas nuevas de America Central, *Ceiba* 18(1-2):95-106.] The first paragraph provided the necessary botanical description in Latin. The second paragraph offered a more detailed description in Spanish and the final three paragraphs contained ecological and ethnobotanical information in Spanish. I was helped with Spanish translations by my husband, Brett Callaway. To my knowledge, this is the first time an English translation of this article has been published.

A contribution of various new plants  
from Central America.

Tree reaching 30m; leaves coriaceous, elliptic, oblanceolate or lanceolate, acute or acuminate, covered with rusty red hairs or glabrescent; single flowered inflorescences terminal or axillary, flowers with a short peduncle, fragrant; sepals 3-4, narrowly oblong or spatulate, apex obtuse or rounded, fleshy; petals 6-9 obovate or spatulate, slightly fleshy; anthers linear or narrowly oblanceolate; seed smooth, rhombic or orbicular, chestnut-colored or reddish black.

Upright leafy trees 3-30m in height, 0.5m in diameter. Bark smooth, greenish-gray to brownish-gray, twigs fragile, the internode short, 0.3-1.7 cm in length, 0.4-0.7 cm in diameter, tomentose to glabrous, rugulose or slightly fissured with age, black. Leaves petiolate, coriaceous, elliptic, oblanceolate or lanceolate, 7.5-19 cm long, 3.5-7.7 cm wide or commonly 6-7 cm wide, green or dark green, glossy, rugose and glabrous on the

front, pale green ferruginous tomentose on the underside, becoming glabrous with age; trichomes simple, margin entire, slightly revolute, acute or acuminate at the apex, acute or sometimes obtuse at the base, central and lateral veins prominent on the underside, densely pubescent or pilose-ferruginous, glabrous with age, lateral veins 12-19 pairs or commonly 14 pairs, curving toward the margin and uniting with others. Petioles cylindrical, strong, stout, 15-25 mm long, 2-2.5 mm in diameter, when young, ferruginous pubescent, with age glabrous and blackish. Inflorescences single-flowered, terminal or axillary, fragrant, short-peduncled, peduncle 0.8-2.3 cm long and 0.3-0.5 mm in diameter, densely tawny pubescent; buds covered by a densely ferruginous tomentose or gold spathe; sepals 3, rarely 4, narrowly oblong or spatulate, 4.0-5.4 cm long, 1.2-2.0 cm wide, obtuse or round at the apex, white, fleshy, stiff, inconspicuously marked with glandular dots on the outside, smooth on the inside; petals 6-9 or commonly 6 white, concave, slightly undulate, obovate or spatulate, 4.5-6 cm long, 1.5-2.5 cm wide, glandular dots on the outside, smooth on the inside, slightly fleshy, sometimes one of the sepals and the petals are bilobed, even nearly halfway through the edge; stamens 61-93, spirally arranged, filaments short, 1-2.5 mm long, chestnut or brown, glabrous, anther linear or narrowly oblanceolate, 11-15 mm long, 1.5-2 mm wide, glabrous, yellowish-brown, acute at the apex, pollen abundant, diminutive, elliptic, smooth, transparent yellow, carpels 23-28, spirally arranged, rhombic, pilose or tawny pubescent or gold; style belted, curved or circular, chestnut, ovules 2 in each carpel; fruit polyfollicular, very similar to a cone, commonly oblong, strongly woody, 3-5.7 cm long, 1.2-3 cm in diameter, chestnut or gray, glabrous or slightly pilose, seeds 2 or 1 through abortion or atrophy, rhombic or nearly orbicular, 8-12 mm long and wide, chestnut or gray-red, smooth, shining, glabrous.

These beautiful trees with their brilliant foliage and white and fragrant flowers adorn our rain forests. They have been cut down without much hope of saving them and no one has taken an interest in protecting them. I have had the opportunity to return to several places where in previous years I found my first samples of this wonderful species that has now disappeared from those places, cut for firewood or to clear

the terrain to cultivate a little corn or beans. Man, with his nomadic agriculture does not care about destroying what little vegetation is left to obtain a parcel of land where he can plant his basic food crops. Later he will abandon the land when he may no longer obtain a harvest and will destroy what little forest that we have to obtain virgin land for cultivation.

For its white, beautiful and very fragrant flower, this species should be selected for our national flower of Honduras instead of the orchid *Brassavola digbyana*. Already there are several countries in America that have selected an orchid as their national flower.

The flowers, when they are boiled, give off a fragrance with the essence of cinnamon, probably the rural people use them as a condiment or a medicinal. When the seed are ground they also have a pleasant odor. The wood is used in carpentry, for tool handles. ❁

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