

## Magnolias in Oregon

A look back at the 1994 annual meeting in Eugene, Oregon

Although the weather was not always cooperative, the 1994 annual meeting was a huge success, thanks to our hosts Roger and Marj Gossler. The warm welcome they extended made meeting attendees feel like guests rather than "registrants." And of course.....what splendid magnolias!

The meeting began on March 18, a cold, rainy Friday evening, at the Valley River Inn in Eugene, Oregon. The hotel was situated, as one might expect from the name, right on the water with a nice view of the river and its adjacent parks. Dinner at the hotel was accompanied by welcome remarks from our host, Roger Gossler. The after-dinner auction was, as usual, a lively affair with a signed copy of Neil Treseder and Marjorie Blamey's beautifully illustrated *The Book of Magnolias* (now long out of print) perhaps being the highlight of the auction. The book was donated by August Kehr.

Things really got underway Saturday morning as we heard speakers on various topics of interest to all gardeners. Michael Thompson, a professional photographer whose illustrations appear in many gardening magazines, first spoke on garden photography. We learned several new tricks which many of us at once put to use (or at least attempted to do so) on our garden visits later in the day. Mr. Thompson's humor and beautiful slides made his talk a hit.

Harold Greer, of Greer Gardens Nursery in Eugene, spoke on woody companion plants. Again, we were treated to beautiful slides, particularly of the rhododendrons for which Greer Gardens is noted. Martin Grantham, Horticulturist at the University of California Botanical Garden, Berkeley, talked about his experiences collecting and growing magnolias from Mexico and Central America., and Dr. M. J. Harvey discussed how to make the "Eight Little Girls" fertile and his

experiences breeding magnolias.

At mid-day we formed a caravan to Gossler Farms Nursery in Springfield, where we were treated to a lunch second to none. Marj Gossler kindly opened her home to us, where we were served homemade lasagna, breads, salads, and dessert—all prepared and graciously served by the local Hardy Plant Society. After lunch we toured the nursery and saw many of the magnolias for which Gossler Farms is known. The biggest attractions were *M. dawsoniana* 'Clarke' and *M.* 'Caerhay's Belle.' Growing side by side, they were show-stoppers and cameras were clicking. Another favorite was *M.* 'Marj Gossler,' a Phil Savage hybrid between *M. denudata* and *M. sargentiana* var. *robusta*. *M. kobus* var. *loebneri* 'Spring Snow' was also popular and loaded with flowers.

After a couple of hours at the Gosslers, the wagon train of magnoliaphiles proceeded to Hendrick's Park in Eugene, where we were treated to a tour of the grounds. A beautiful public park, Hendrick's Park is known mostly for its rhododendrons, but it has a very nice assortment of magnolias as well. Highlights of our tour included *M. sargentiana* var. *robusta*, *M. sprengeri* 'Diva,' and a lone flower on *M. campbellii* var. *mollicomata* 'Lanarth.'

The banquet on Saturday evening was followed by an informative talk by Steve McCullough on tissue culture of magnolias. Steve is director of the tissue culture laboratory at Briggs Nursery in Olympia, Washington. This is probably the most successful magnolia tissue culture program in the U.S., and we very much enjoyed Steve's talk, as this topic was new to most of us.

Sunday morning began with the business meeting, after which Dorothy Callaway signed copies of her book *The World of Magnolias*, published just a month before the meeting. Later, several short talks were presented. Harry Heineman showed us slides of his beautiful garden in Scituate, Massachusetts, and focused on magnolias that were not in bloom during our visit in conjunction with the 1993 Boston meeting. Ferris Miller showed us slides of his newly-selected cultivar *M. kobus* var. *loebneri* 'Raspberry Fun'—a seedling of 'Leonard Messel' with 16-18 tepals, with flowers concentrated at the ends of the branches. Martin Stoner, a plant pathologist at California Polytechnic Institute in Pomona, talked about



Frank Galyon, of Knoxville, Tennessee, smells the flowers while other TMS members visit with one another at the Gossler Farms Nursery display garden.

keeping magnolias healthy, and Richard Schock, nurseryman and new chair of the TMS seed counter, gave us insight into the possibilities of variegated plants in the landscape. Richard showed us slides of many of the beautiful variegated forms he has acquired (and I do mean *many*).

Some members stayed for optional local tours Sunday afternoon, and a trip to Portland on Monday, not wanting to miss an opportunity to visit more gardens and see more magnolias! Although it rained off and on all weekend, the sky usually cleared just in time for garden visits.

Some of the members nearly elected to set up residence at the O'Byrne garden visited on Sunday afternoon. An extended and extensively planted rock garden, it frequently recalled to mind the lines of a song from some forgotten operetta, "the pampered pansies do conspire to bring us to our knees." Here, however, it was hellebores as black as night or any of myriad other fine plants. Fortunately there were items for sale, including an epimedium that now lives happily in Tennessee.

The Greer display garden was filled with many treasures as

well. Some excellent magnolias occupied much of our time: not the least the Jury hybrids in the lath house that were in full, magnificent bloom. These hybrids certainly deserve the praise they have received and the excitement they have generated in the last few years.

Monday morning, 35 people visited the Portland garden of John and the late Jane Platt. A *M. campbellii* var. *mollicomata* was in breathtaking bloom near the house. The original plant of *M. kobus* var. *stellata* 'Jane Platt,' now considerably and surprisingly larger than on a previous visit, reigned near the incomparable rock garden at the top of the garden. Again the near black hellebores attracted much attention. Occasional bouts of sleet and snow drove us to the terrace for coffee and wonderful sand dollar cookies. The garden, as always, was perfect.

Before our box lunch in the park, the group visited the garden of Dr. and Mrs. William Corbin. The highlight of the visit was a large *M. dawsoniana* about 45 feet tall with a 2' diameter trunk. Also a specimen of *M. sprengeri* var. *diva* 'Burncoose,' with its rich pink flowers.

The Portland crowd then spent a too short time at the Japanese Garden, sited high above the central portion of the city. The view demanded that you look outward and the garden lured your eyes back in.

Powell's Bookstore is a very dangerous place. Occupying most of a city block and offering books of all persuasions, new and used, one could enter there and happily never emerge. Isn't there a poem about a cup of cafe latte, a book and thou? Well there should be.

Many thanks to Roger and Marj and all the people who helped make this meeting such a huge success. ❁

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*Reported by Dorothy J. Callaway with Monday tour notes by the Editor.*



*Magnolia dawsoniana* 'Clarke'