From Butter to Cream

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This is not supposed to happen! Butter turning back to cream?

Here is how it should happen: Take a rich, creamy *denudata*. Churn it around in an *acuminata* Hybridizer. And out comes a nice buttery-yellow 'Elizabeth.' But alas, the butter has turned back to cream for some of us.

The first time that I observed this phenomenon was at Richard Figlar's home in Pomona, New York. Although his 'Elizabeth' had pretty cream-colored flowers, the original plant just across the Hudson River at Kitchewan Research Station was an arresting light yellow. His progeny represented a regrettable regression from the plant breeder's creation.

The second time that I observed this, which was of far graver consequence, was in *my own* Chattanooga yard. My 'Elizabeth' flowered a nice yellow for a few years, but then turned to cream. Although its flowers still mirrored the stately elegance of *M. denudata*, they lacked the "shock value" of a tree enveloped with large yellow flowers in early spring. Thank goodness this is not an irreversible chemical process!

The remedy was suggested in a comment made by Dick while touring his magnolia-packed yard. He noted that his soil was extremely acidic, a condition shared with Chattanooga's soil. Could reducing soil acidity around an established fifteen foot tree bring back the yellow? Indeed it could.

For several years now I have spread either pulverized or pelletized lime on the grass under the tree. This has been done whenever I thought to do so and happened to have it handy. Since many roots grow close to the surface in order to