

Professor Liu Yu-hu (1917–2004)

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A prominent figure in the study of the Magnoliaceae, Professor Liu Yu-hu of the South China Institute of Botany died May 18, 2004 at the age of 87. Professor Liu's botanical career spanned the major episodes of modern Chinese history: the Sino-Japanese War (1931–1945), the Civil War (1945–1950), and the Communist era (1950–present). He was associated with the Chinese Academy of Sciences for over 50 years in various positions, finally settling at the South China Institute of Botany (Guangzhou Province) in 1962, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Note

Professor Liu's name is sometimes seen in its Cantonese form, Law Yuh-wu.

Professor Liu's major research interest was the classification and conservation of Magnoliaceae in China, and he was the leading Chinese botanist in this field of study for many years. His research included the description of many new taxa. For example, Professor Liu's draft treatment of the Magnoliaceae for the *Flora of China* [<http://hua.huh.harvard.edu/china/mss/volume07>] recognizes as valid 19 species and two varieties described by Professor Liu and his students, by any standards a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the Magnoliaceae. In addition, following a traditional botanical approach, Professor Liu elaborated a generic classification in which Magnoliaceae were grouped into 16 genera, two of which he described himself (Law, 1984). Modern studies using DNA sequences (e.g., Azuma et al., 1999, 2001; Kim et al., 2002;), and morphology (e.g., Figlar, 2000, Figlar & Nootboom, 2004) do not support this arrangement, recognizing instead two genera only: *Magnolia* and *Liriodendron*. Nonetheless, Professor Liu's generic names remain in use by many Chinese botanists. Professor Liu devoted much time and effort to the conservation of Magnolias and other rare plants. He established an important living research collection (the Magnolia Garden at the South China Institute of Botany) and was the Director of the South China Propagation Centre of Rare and Endangered Plants. Just last year, Dr. Liu's career and accomplishments were honored by the publication of the new book dedicated to him "*Magnolias of China*," (Liu et al., 2004) for which he served as honorary "Editor in Chief." It was a fitting tribute to a long life spent in service of the Magnoliaceae.