

Magnolia ‘Pure Joi’: A New Variegated Magnolia from Thailand

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Magnolia champaca and its hybrids and cultivated forms, such as *Magnolia* × *alba* (DC) Figlar, are very popular cultivated plants in Southeast Asia. They are evergreen shrubs or small trees with exceptionally fragrant white, cream or pale yellow /orange flowers. All of these species and hybrids have long been included in the now-obsolete genus *Michelia*. The status of some of these cultivated plants is still very much disputed, but Thai magnolia specialists believe that some have almost certainly come to SE Asia from China or India. All of the various kinds are especially popular in Thailand, where plants with fragrant flowers are greatly valued and widely grown. They are offered for sale in many nurseries and every plant market. Old specimens of a number of interesting forms can be seen in the grounds of Buddhist temples throughout the country.

In 2003, Mr. “Joi” Suchin Srikaseme, a nurseryman in Phanom Sarakarm, Chacheung Sao Province, found a variegated sport of a magnolia in his nurs-



ery. It appears to be a hybrid between *M. champaca* and *M. baillonii*, with long, oval evergreen leaves and showy, fragrant white flowers (see photo on previous page). The green leaves are irregularly splashed with yellow to cream. He began to propagate his plant by grafting, and introduced the plant commercially in Thailand in 2006. It is vigorous and easy to grow, with reasonably stable variegation. Although each leaf is different from the others in its variegation pattern, inspection of his crop of hundreds of plants showed that very few plants have reverted to all-green leaves. This novelty is very distinctive in bloom, with its white flowers contrasting with the yellow-splashed foliage.

In cultivation this is a small tree, taller than broad, growing to about ten feet in five years when planted in the ground. It can be easily maintained as a shrub or small tree by pruning and thinning the branches. In the United States, this variety can be used in the garden in frost-free areas such as parts of southern California, the Gulf coast, Florida, and Hawaii. It is very adaptable as a container plant in colder climates as long as it has bright light when it is indoors, and can vacation outdoors in light shade in summer. It requires rich, well-drained soil, and it is not drought-tolerant, but is otherwise not demanding in cultivation.

The variety is named for Mr. Joi, who found the plant (see adjacent photo). He is a kind and cheerful man, and it has been a joy to know him. In the United States, a few plants are available by mail order from Asiatica Nursery (www.asiaticanursery.com).

