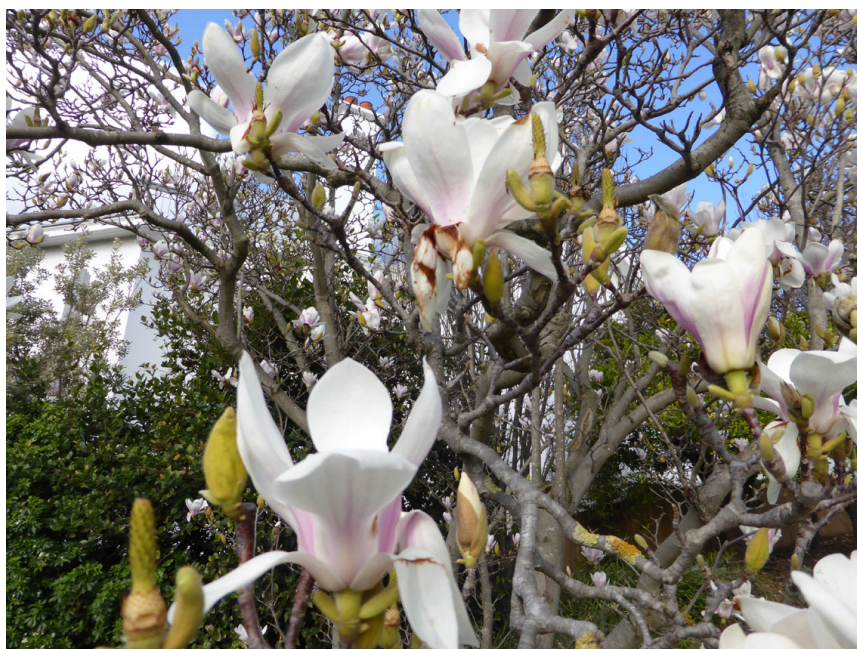


Magnolia



Left: *Magnolia*
Above: *Manglietia conifer*, GBG

History

These plants are true survivors. They flourished in Europe when the climate there was similar to that of today, as fossilised remains dating to around 100 million years ago have been found there. Following the Ice Ages, the plants survived in Northern China, regions of Japan and in eastern North America.

They therefore evolved before bees and are pollinated by beetles. Their strong carpels have developed to protect the flowers from creeping and eating beetles that could inhibit the pollination.

Human Cultivation

Magnolia denudata was seen as a symbol of purity and from the 7th century AD was cultivated in temple gardens in China. It was called the “Jade Magnolia”.

Magnolia officianalis bark was and is used in Chinese medicine for dementia, cancer and heart disease.

Magnolia liliifera was used as grafting stock.

In Japan Magnolias were grown for ornamental purposes in pots, and known as “shidekobushi”.

Introduction to Europe

In 1780 the first Magnolias from Asia were sent to Europe, and spread from there to the Americas.

In 1688 the first American specimen was sent to Britain by John Bannister, a missionary. His specimen was the only one in Britain when the man whose name it was to carry died in 1715. These plants had long been extinct in Europe.

Modern Collection and Hybridization

Most other varieties date from the 20th century. Plant collectors commissioned George Forrest and Ernest “Chinese” Wilson to hunt and gather new plants, and they brought back various species of this new genus. They then “owned” the plants.

A lot of beautiful hybrids have now been developed – around 40 and counting. Many display the characteristic of the flowers growing before the leaves each year, making a wonderful spectacle.



Gardens map over the page

www.friendsgbg.org.au

Phone: 5222 6053

Family: Magnoliaceae

Genus: *Magnolia*

Species: 242 species shown in The Plant List, including species previously in *Michelia*.

Origin: From East Asia to the Americas

Location in GBG:

In the beds on each side of the Camellia Walk and between the Jubaea and the Copper Beech, in the 19th Century Garden.

Time of flowering:

Late winter, early spring

Origin of its name:

The genus was named for Pierre Magnol (1638 – 1715), French botanist and Professor of Botany and Director of the Royal Botanic Garden of Montpellier.

Linnaeus never saw a plant, but adopted this name, given by earlier authors, as the name for the genus.

Formation

The flower and seed reflect the long existence of this plant.

The flower develops in a bract rather than sepals. The perianth is undifferentiated between petals and sepals, but has tepals in 3 or more whorls.

The flowers are bisexual.

Modern Identification

The genus is now divided. We now have subgenus *Magnolia* from the Americas and *Yulania* from Asia.

The genus *Michelia*, from Asia, has been recently brought into the subgenus *Yulania*, as it is much more closely related to this group than any of the species in the subgenus *Magnolia* from the Americas. There are several *Michelia* specimens in the GBG.

The Plant List shows the genus *Manglietia*, from Asia, as needing more work to clarify its naming and its place within the family Magnoliaceae. *Manglietia conifer* in the GBG has beautiful cream flowers.

State Flowers

The *Magnolia grandiflora* is the state flower of both Louisiana and Mississippi.

Geelong Botanic Gardens Map



★ *Magnolia sp.* (including *Michelia*)

★ *Manglietia conifer*



This information was developed
by Jenny Dean
Volunteer Guide
Friends of
Geelong Botanic Gardens

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