



Township of Bernards Shade Tree Commission

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Magnolias (*Magnolia species*)

The earliest blooming magnolia in our area is the Saucer magnolia (*Magnolia x Soulangeana*). It is often chosen because it blooms very early in the spring, but the bloom time is sometimes not very long because the blooms are affected by cold weather and turn brown. But it is a hardy tree growing to 25 to 35 feet high in full sun to part shade.

The Star magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*) is gaining in popularity. It blooms later and hence the bloom period is longer. It features multiple strap shaped tepals that bloom in late winter to early spring. It may be multiple trunked growing to about 20' feet high and is more shrub-like. There are many other recently developed magnolia cultivars that feature a variety of flower colors including yellow and red shades.

A native summer blooming magnolia is Sweetbay magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*). It is native to the southeast U.S. but its range extends as far north as New York. It is multi-stemmed growing to 15 to 20 feet high. The leaves are elliptical and shiny. The 12 petal flower blooms appear in June and continue to July. Its lemon like flower fragrance makes it attractive for patio areas. It grows in sun and shady conditions and is tolerant of wet soil. There are some cultivars that are evergreen in our area.

The Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) is a large impressive tree; all of its horticultural features are big-time. The leaves, five to eight inches long and half as wide, are exceptionally thick leather like and glossy green. The undersides of the leaves are tan and feel like felt. The flowers are large, up to 12 inches in diameter and very fragrant, and the seed cones are up to four inches high and rose colored. If you remove some flowers and float them in a bowl and you will experience lemon like fragrance for a couple of weeks inside. The height may reach 90 feet. Native to the south one may see this magnolia on plantations and

other large properties. It's a signature and nostalgic plant of the southeast, but there are several cultivars have been found that are hardy in our area; among them are 'Edith Bogue' and 'Bracken's Brown Beauty' which is a smaller version of the species.

The cultivar 'Edith Bogue' is named after a woman by the same name who bought it at a nursery in Florida in 1917 and planted it in her garden in Montclair, NJ. Over the years it has been shown to be hardy in our climate. The size and characteristics are identical to the species.

The cultivar 'Bracken's Brown Beauty' is a product of the Ray Bracken Nursery in Pelzer, SC. It is a smaller and more upright version that attains a height of 40 feet and a width of 20 feet. The leaves and flowers are about half the size of the species making it more suitable in a medium sized landscape.

The Cucumber Magnolia (*Magnolia accuminata*) is a large and cold hardy native tree that grows to 65 to 80 feet high and 35 to 60 feet wide. The common name is derived from the appearance of the fruit that resembles a small bumpy cucumber. Its natural distribution is southern Canada into Ohio and western Pennsylvania and down the Appalachian mountain range into the southern states. It is sometimes used as a shade tree but is not particularly ornamental compared to other magnolias.