



MAGNOLIA

Newsletter of the
Southern Garden
History Society

"The Laurel Tree of Carolina"

from Mark Catesby, 1733

(MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA)

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Editor's Note

We have delayed publication of this, our fall issue, in order to publish under our new title and masthead; we proudly submit them now for your judgement.

Richard Low Evans of Atlanta designed the masthead; Florence Griffin, also of Atlanta and a member of the SGHS Board, has provided the following comments about the title, which was selected by the Board at the fall meeting in Chapel Hill:

Magnolia

What more appropriate name for a newsletter of the Southern Garden History Society than Magnolia. Early naturalists visiting our southern states exulted in the beauty and majesty of this imposing evergreen tree native only to the region. Among all of our indigenous plants, Magnolia grandiflora has through the years come to be regarded uniquely as a symbol for the South.

In 1861, the year of his state's secession from the Union, Albert Pike of Arkansas wrote a song, "The Magnolia," containing these lines:

What, what is the true Southern Symbol,
The Symbol of Honor and Right,
The Emblem that suits a brave people
In arms against number and might!--
'Tis the ever green stately Magnolia,
Its pearl-flowers pure as the Truth,
Defiant of tempest and lightning,
Its life a perpetual youth.

French blood stained with glory the Lilies,
While centuries marched to their grave;
And over bold Scot and gay Irish
The Thistle and Shamrock yet wave:
Ours, ours be the noble Magnolia,
That only on Southern soil grows
The Symbol of life everlasting;--
Dear to us as to England the Rose.

General Pike, hailed by modern historians as the most eminent Arkansan of his time, was born in Massachusetts and migrated in the early 1830s to the Southwest, where he was a teacher, editor, lawyer, and soldier.

The Southern Garden History Society newsletter is not the first periodical publication to adopt the name Magnolia. At least one historical precedent was Philip C. Pendleton's monthly magazine published in Savannah in 1841 and later in Charleston in joint editorship with William Gilmore Simms. It is interesting to note a few accolades that this Magnolia received. The Edgefield (S.C.) Advertiser predicted: "...MAGNOLIA will be the finest flower the sunny region of the South has yet produced." The Franklin (Tenn.) Review pronounced it: "...emphatically Southern in the rich freshness of the leaves it unfolds before us." The Portland (Maine) Tribune says: "The Southerners should be proud of this work."

For the first issue of Magnolia (January 1841), Mrs. Ellen B. H. Freeman of Pensacola, Florida, addressed a poem to the tree for which the publication was named. Here are excerpts:

Pride of the South, in thy splendor expanding,
Stately and firm, like her sons, thou are standing...

Henceforth as our emblem of national glory
Thy name shall be echoed in song and in story...

Nineteenth-century sentimentality regarding the magnolia had been preceded in the eighteenth century by awe and amazement on the part of the naturalists who saw the tree for the first time. From Georgia on September 28, 1765, John Bartram of Philadelphia, just appointed botanist to His Majesty George III, described Magnolia grandiflora in a letter to Peter Collinson of London: "...100 feet high, and 3 or 4 feet in diameter. What a noble sight!"

The celebrated Philip Miller, Keeper of the Chelsea Physic Garden from 1722 until his death in 1771, wrote at length of Magnolia grandiflora in the 1757 edition of The Gardeners Dictionary, calling it "one of the most beautiful ever-green Trees yet known." He goes on: "As this Sort is a Native to the warm country, so it is a little impatient of Cold... There were a great Number of young Plants in England before the Year 1739; but a great Part of them were destroyed by that severe Winter: and since then, there have been but few good Seeds sent to England ... and as almost every Person who is curious in Gardening is desirous to have some of these beautiful Trees in their Gardens, so the Demand for them of late has greatly increased their Value ..."

John Bartram's cousin, Humphry Marshall, author of Arbustum Americanum (Philadelphia, 1785), the first American imprint on native trees, called Magnolia grandiflora the Ever-green Laurel-leafed Tulip Tree and wrote, echoing Miller: "This is allowed to be one of the most beautiful ever-green trees yet known, but is impatient of cold."

John Bartram's son William describes numerous sightings of Magnolia grandiflora in his Travels (Philadelphia, 1791), using such adjectives as glorious, sovereign, towering, stately, grand, great, majestic. He sometimes calls it the Laurel Tree or the Laurel Magnolia.

In his description of Magnolia grandiflora in The North American Sylva (Philadelphia, 1818), French botanist F. Andrew Michaux says: "Of all the trees in North America, east of the Mississippi, the Big Laurel is the most remarkable for the majesty of its form, the magnificence of its foliage, and the beauty of its flowers."

The cut in the masthead of our newsletter comes from Mark Catesby's Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands (London, 1731). It is interesting to note that this Magnolia grandiflora plate, one of the two -- or possibly three -- plates in the entire work not done by Catesby himself, was supplied by the German illustrator, George Dionysius Ehret. The description, however, is Catesby's own: "This stately Tree perfumes the woods; and displays its beauties from May till November, producing first its fragrant and ample blossoms succeeded by its glittering fruit. It retains the leaves all the year which, being of two colours, have a pretty effect, when waved by the wind, displaying first one side and then the other."

It seems to us appropriate here to harken back to the editor's page of the first issue of our nineteenth-century namesake, which was a literary magazine. Philip C. Pendleton extolled:

Our readers may rest assured that ... no opportunity will be allowed to pass nor means spared to make the MAGNOLIA a magazine worthy of their support. And like our beautiful plant, from which it takes its name, the pride of the South, an evergreen and laurel, with which to crown the successful competitors in the arena of literature, and under whose branches, and beneath whose shade are to be embalmed and preserved the sparkling thoughts, the gems of poetry, and even the graver disquisitions of the philosopher. Come on, then, all ye competitors for the laurel crown.

Gentle readers, members of the Southern Garden History Society, send us your news items. Compete for the Laurel Crown!



Old and New Business

DUES: Notices for renewal of membership were mailed to SGHS members in August, 1984; the response has been excellent. The Society now has more than 200 members, including two patron and several institution members. If you have not yet sent your dues for the 1984-1985 year, please do so as soon as possible.

MEMBERSHIP BROCHURE: A new brochure, prepared by Hugh G. Dargan, Board member of Columbia, S.C., is now being printed. Society members may request copies to give or mail to friends interested in becoming members.

TAX EXEMPTION: The Southern Garden History Society, a corporation, has received a determination letter from the Internal Revenue Service dated October 24, 1984, stating that the society is exempt from Federal income tax. Under provisions of the Internal Revenue Code, donors may deduct contributions to the society for income tax purposes and gifts and bequests to the society are deductible for gift and estate tax purposes.

Sometimes people speak of a "tax exempt number." The society does have a taxpayer identification number, which is its employer identification number. However, there is nothing about a taxpayer identification number or employer identification number that indicates that the organization is exempt. Sooner or later the society's name should appear in an IRS publication which is a cumulative list of exempt organizations and to which contributions are deductible.

The IRA determination is based on the assumption that the Southern Garden History Society's operations will be as stated in the application for exemption. The purposes of the corporation as stated in the articles of incorporation and by-laws are:

1. the promotion of study of the history of landscape, gardening, and horticulture within the area covered by the society;
 2. publication of annual transactions related to this study;
 3. location and indexing of relevant material;
 4. formation and maintenance of a library of relevant documents;
 5. preservation of such documents, plans, etc. connected with the study of Southern garden history which may be acquired by the society; and
 6. collaboration with the American Horticultural Society and other similar organizations with the same objectives to preserve and advise concerning the restoration of historic gardens and landscapes.
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THIRD ANNUAL MEETING: Our membership meeting will be held at Annapolis, Maryland, on April 26-27, 1985; Board member St. Clair Wright is now completing preparations; our winter newsletter will include detailed information.

Please make plans now to join us for another exciting exchange of information and enthusiasm for the study of historic gardens and landscapes.

Other Meetings

The Second Annual Pemberton Hall 18th Century Studies Symposium will be held Saturday, March 30, 1985, at Salisbury State College, Salisbury, Maryland. Topics include 18th-century furniture, gardens, vernacular architecture, music, archeology, and agriculture.

"To Garden Finely": American Pleasure Gardens of the Colonies and Early Republic is the title of the keynote presentation this year, to be presented by Dr. George B. Tatum, architectural historian and garden scholar.

For more information write Pemberton Hall Foundation, 313 Lemmon Hill Lane, Salisbury, MD 21801; or call (301) 749-0124 or (301) 742-7524.

The fifth conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes will be held in Old Salem, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, October 3-5, 1985. All members of SGHS will receive registration brochures.

Southern Garden History Society was organized by participants in the 1982 conference at Old Salem.

The conference planning committee is presently planning this year's meeting, and requests suggestions for speakers or topics of discussion: Landscape Conference Committee, Old Salem, Inc., Salem Station, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27108.

Books

Mary Palmer Kelley, ASLA, whose The Early English Kitchen Garden was published recently (available from Garden History Associates, 2211 Park St., Columbia, S.C. 29201; \$10.00 each, and \$1.25 for postage), is preparing a companion study, The Early American Kitchen Garden, for publication in 1986.

Christopher Weeks, editor of Where Land and Water Intertwine: an Architectural History of Talbot County, Maryland and Between the Nanticoke and the Choptank: an Architectural History of Dorchester County, Maryland (available from Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland 21218; \$14.95 each, plus \$1.50 each postage), writes that he has stressed gardens, particularly in the Talbot County volume. Mr. Weeks plans to attend the Third Annual Meeting, and can likely recommend interesting tours of the Maryland countryside to our members who attend.

Flora Ann Bynum, chairman of Old Salem's Landscape Restoration Committee and author of Old Salem Garden Guide, will research and write an illustrated book on the botany and horticulture of early Wachovia under contract with Old Salem, Inc. The project is expected to be completed in 1986.

Information Provided

Sarah G. Tillman of Natchez provides the following information about the heather bell, in answer to the editor's inquiry in our summer issue:

"heather bell, A bell-shaped corolla of one of the common heaths, Erica cinerea or Erica tetralix."
(Hunter and Morris' Universal Dictionary, 1904)

Later sources identify bell heather as one of the European heathers.

Pam Puryear (707 Holland, Navasota, Texas 77868), editor of "The Old Texas Rose", newsletter of an informally associated group informally known as the Texas Rose Rustlers (They take cuttings, not plants!), and Dr. William C. Welch of Texas A & M University are active in investigation of Texas cottage gardens and old roses in Texas gardens. Among many interesting topics in the newsletter is that of the roses of Thomas Affleck (1812-1868), the Natchez nurseryman who attempted to move his nursery to Washington County, Texas between 1856 and 1860, but who lost much of the stock in a steamer fire, and died shortly after the Civil War after struggling to rebuild the nursery during that difficult period.

SGHS members who attended our Second Annual meeting, held at Natchez, heard Dr. Harvey Cotton discuss Affleck's career there as a nurseryman.

Information Requested

Old Salem's Landscaping Guide for Residents, including a list of authentic plants suitable for use in gardens and landscapes of the Upper South that are being restored for periods through the 1850's, is now being revised. The publication lists plants known to have been grown in Salem before 1850; plants known to have grown in other gradens of the same climate zone (zone 8) are also listed.

SGHS members are requested to send lists of plants grown in the South before 1850 to Flora Ann Bynum at the SGHS address. The list will be helpful to all garden restorations of the region. The revised guide will be available for a modest fee, and will be provided free of charge to those who contribute new information to it.

We thank you for your contributions to this issue of our newsletter, and earnestly request more news from all our states of the Southern region.

