



Horticulture News

March/April 2009

Japanese Magnolia

by Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

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Japanese, or Saucer Magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangiana*) is a multi-stemmed, spreading tree 25 feet tall with a 30-foot spread and bright, attractive gray bark. Growth rate is moderately fast but slows down considerably as the tree reaches 20-years of age. Large, fuzzy, green flower buds are carried through the winter at the tips of brittle branches. The blooms open in late winter to early spring before the leaves appear, producing large, white flowers shaded in pink, creating a spectacular flower display. However, a late frost can often ruin the flowers in all areas where it is grown. This can be incredibly disappointing since you wait 51 weeks for the flowers to appear. In warmer climates. The late-flowering selections avoid frost damage but some are less showy than the early-flowered forms which blossom when little else is in flower.

This tree grows best in a sunny spot where it can develop a symmetrical crown. It can be pruned if planted

close to a walk or patio to allow for pedestrian clearance but probably looks its best when branches are left to droop to the ground. The light gray bark shows off nicely, particularly during the winter when the tree is bare.

Saucer magnolia prefers a rich, moist but porous soil. It will tolerate poor drainage for only a short period of time. Growth will be thin and leggy in a shaded spot but acceptable in part shade. Saucer Magnolia dislikes dry or alkaline soil but will otherwise grow very well in the city. Transplant in the spring, just before growth begins, and use balled and burlapped or containerized plants. Older plants do not like to be pruned and large wounds may not close well. Train plants early in their life to develop the desired form.

Generally this magnolia is pest free. Scales of various types may infest twigs. Magnolia scale is the most common scale and can be one half-inch-across. Overwin-

tering scales are usually controlled with horticultural oil applied in the spring.

Tulip-Poplar weevil (sassafras weevil) feeds as a leaf miner when young and chews holes in the leaves as an adult.

This tree is usually disease free. It may be subject to leaf spots caused by bacteria or a large number of fungi. Leaf spots rarely require chemical controls. Rake up and dispose of infected leaves.

Canker diseases will kill branches, but can be pruned out. Keep trees healthy with regular fertilization and by watering in dry weather.

Verticillium wilt may cause death of a few branches or may kill the tree. Prune out dead branches and fertilize with high nitrogen fertilizer.



Program Announcements

Biannual Master Gardener Plant Sale

Friday April 3rd 9AM-2PM

Saturday April 4th 9AM-2PM

Our biannual plant sale has Master Gardener-propagated plants, select trees and shrubs and “goodies “ for your garden, including custom painted planters. Attend classes by horticulture experts including Rebecca Jordi - Horticulture Agent III and others. Melaleuca mulch will be on sale for \$3.50 per bag. Don't miss the best sale Nassau County has ever seen! All proceeds benefit the Nassau County Master Gardener program and the volunteer community projects they perform in Nassau County.

Location

Yulee Satellite Office
86026 Pages Dairy Road
Yulee, FL



Landscape Matters

Turfgrass

Wednesday March 18th, 2009 10 - 11AM
Master Gardener Nelson Peterson

Vegetables

Wednesday April 15th, 2009 10 - 11AM
Master Gardeners Howard North & Bertie & Marshall Tanner

Location

Demonstration Garden
Nassau County
Government Complex
96135 Nassau Place
Yulee, FL

Spotlight on Nassau Gardens

February Winner - Nan & Jim Sands

This lovely garden has us hankering for Spring! It belongs to Nan and Jim Sands of Amelia Island. Note the creeping fig decorating the stucco walls over the arched windows, the bleeding heart vine growing on the palm tree. Formosa azaleas, originally in the Gerbing Nursery, decorate the front of the house under the windows. The far left side of the house sports large white camelias. Nan also grows beautiful hybrid tea roses in her back garden on the marsh.

To be considered for Spotlight on Nassau Gardens, send a digital photo, with a description of your garden, along with your name, address and phone number to atwoodca@bellsouth.net For more information contact Rebecca Jordi at 548-1116.



Pretty Perennials - Balloon Flower

The Balloon Flower or Chinese Bellflower (*Platycodon grandiflorus*) gets its name from the way each flower bud swells before its petals unfold. Balloon flowers are one of the easiest perennials to grow, and they bloom in profusion in mid to late summer, when many other perennials begin to fade.

The upward-facing flowers bloom in shades of blue, pink and white. The plants form a low, neat mound and bear 2- to 3-inch cuplike blossoms accented with delicate purple veins and yellow stamens. Bal-

loon flowers are a cottage garden standard, and they are excellent for cutting. To make the flowers last in the vase, sear the stems with a match immediately after cutting.

Balloon flowers need lots of sun but appreciate a little shade in the afternoon in summer. Water regularly as plants are not drought-tolerant. Plants need two or three years to become well established. They disappear completely in fall, so mark their location to avoid accidentally digging up the fleshy roots. Undisturbed plants grow back

in late spring.

Balloon flowers are seldom bothered by insects, and they are very cold-hardy. Start new plants from seeds in spring, just after the last winter frost, or in summer, up to 2 months before the first fall frost. Seeds require light to germinate, so press them lightly onto the soil, and don't cover. You can expect flowers the second year.

Balloon flowers are very well behaved in the perennial garden - they don't spread and never crowd their neighbors.



March Checklist

Flowers: Water as needed. Over-watering causes root and stem rot. Opt for drought tolerant plants such as purslane or periwinkle. Group your plants together according to their watering and light requirements. Bulbs will be in full bloom. To conserve plant energy, cut off the old seedpods after flowering. Fertilize perennials this month if you missed last month. Plant poinsettias in landscape during late March. Cut back plants to within 12 to 18 inches of ground level. Pinch back new growth every four weeks until September 10. Fertilize monthly from May to September. Choices for planting include lantana, pentas, salvias, purple coneflowers, buddleia, verbenas, dianthus, petunias, and snapdragons.

Lawns: Rake dead grass to allow new grass to grow. Complete fertilizer can be applied this month. Check your soil first. Phosphorus can accumulate in the soil. Select a fertilizer with a such as a 15-0-15 or 16-0-8. Follow directions on the label.

Shrubs: Prune and fertilize azaleas with acid fertilizer as soon as they finish blooming. Azaleas may be transplanted now as well. This is the time to do selective pruning by doing reduction cuts on long, lanky stems.

Trees: Make sure your younger trees maintain a straight trunk as new growth begins. Remove or do reduction pruning cuts on all limbs competing with the central leader.

Vegetables: Have your soil tested prior to planting. The pH and the nutrient content of the soil is an important factor in production of vegetables. This month's choices for planting are cantaloupes, watermelon and beans.



April Checklist

Flowers: Annuals to plant now include celosia, coleus, coreopsis, dusty miller, geraniums, hollyhocks, impatiens, kalanchoe, lobelias, marigolds, portulacas, rudbeckias, salvia, verbenas, zinnias. Groom to reshape perennials. Prune hard to correct growth problems. Divide overcrowded fall flowering perennials and bulbs. Bulbs to be planted now include achimenes, agapanthus, amaryllis, Asiatic lilies, begonias, blood lily, caladiums, cannas, crinum, dahlia, gladiolus, gloriosa lily and zephyranthes.

Lawns: Water when grass blades begin to slightly fold or have a green-gray color. Stop fertilizing during very dry times. Keep mower height at the highest setting for your grass type. Apply 1 inch of sand to uneven areas for leveling. Allow grass clippings to stay on the lawn.

Trees: First fertilizer application for palms is this month using 4-2-12-4 configuration. Most older trees are fine and can exist with the seasonal rains. Look for aphid, borer, and scale infestations. Caterpillars may be extra heavy this month.

Vegetables: Herbs to plant are anise, basil, borage, chives, dill, marjoram, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, and thyme. Vegetables to plant are cantaloupe, collards, cucumbers, lima beans, okra, pumpkin, yams, peppers, squash and watermelon.



Selected from Florida Vegetable Guide by JM Stephens, RA Dunn, G Kidder, D Short, & GW Simone, University of Florida and Month-by-Month Gardening in Florida by Tom MacCubbin

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

This is the LAST newsletter you will receive via the Postal Service!

If you would like to receive this newsletter in color via e-mail please contact Rebecca Jordi at rljordi@ufl.edu. You will also find the newsletter online at <http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture/newsletter/newsletter.html>

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**Visit us online at
<http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/>**

The enclosed material is provided as one of the many services relating to the educational programs offered by the University of Florida/Nassau County Cooperative Extension service. Our nationwide network of faculty is prepared to provide current information on food, agriculture, marine and natural resource science, energy, nutrition, family, 4H youth, and related fields. We will be happy to help you with additional information upon request. For more information about this document contact the Nassau County Extension Service at 879-1019. (V/TDD via the Florida Relay service is 1-800-955-8771.) For individuals with documented print related disabilities, this publication is available in alternative format upon specific request. The use of trade names in this publication is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product named and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others. Programs are available to all people without regard to sex, race color, creed or national origin.

Nassau County is proud to provide you with this information. Horticulture News is a joint project with contributions by county agents and Master Gardener Volunteers.

Sincerely,



Rebecca L. Jordi,
Horticulture Agent III



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Luscious Leaves - Black Mondo Grass



One of the few “black-leaved” plants in existence, this isn’t “officially” a grass, but its habit and garden use merit its consideration for edging and other landscaping uses. Black Mondo Grass is tolerant of shade, very attractive, and trouble-free in most settings. Rely on it to add dramatic color to the border, garden path, or accent plantings.

Just 6 inches high, this plant spreads about a foot wide, with long, slender, elegant leaves of a purple so dark they appear black. It sets small, bright pink blooms in summer, followed by glossy black berries that remain through autumn into winter, but its primary emphasis is on the splendid foliage. Such a nice change of pace from green- and blue-hued dwarf ornamental grasses!

Dwarf cultivars are also available: ‘Gyokuruu’, dark green grasslike foliage, two inches tall; ‘Nana’, compact, slow-growing, four to five inches tall; ‘Shiroshima Ryu’, dark green and white striped leaves, three to four inches tall; and ‘Variegatus’, green and white striped leaves.”

Grow Black Mondo Grass in any good, well-drained soil. It is highly resistant to heat and drought, but appreciates a winter mulch. Zones 6-10.