**Magnolia kobus**

Kobus Magnolia

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

**INTRODUCTION**

A striking tree in summer or winter (Fig. 1). Dropping its large, six-inch leaves in fall without any spectacular display of color, Kobus Magnolia forms an attractive winter specimen with its rounded silhouette and multiple trunks originating close to the ground. Supposedly grows 30 to 40 feet tall but is most often 25 feet or less in an open, sunny landscape site and is capable of reaching 75 feet in height in its native forest habitat. In an open site, spread is often greater than height with 25-foot-tall trees 35 feet wide if given the room to grow unobstructed. Branches gracefully touch the ground on older specimens as the tree spreads, in a manner not unlike open-grown Live Oaks. Allow plenty of room for proper development.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

- **Scientific name:** *Magnolia kobus*
- **Pronunciation:** mag-NO-lee-uh KOE-bus
- **Common name(s):** Kobus Magnolia, Northern Japanese Magnolia
- **Family:** Magnoliaceae
- **USDA hardness zones:** 5 through 8A (Fig. 2)
- **Origin:** not native to North America
- **Uses:** container or above-ground planter; specimen; no proven urban tolerance
- **Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

**DESCRIPTION**

- **Height:** 25 to 30 feet
- **Spread:** 25 to 35 feet
- **Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette
- **Crown shape:** round; spreading
- **Crown density:** dense
- **Growth rate:** slow
- **Texture:** coarse

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)
- **Leaf type:** simple
- **Leaf margin:** entire; undulate
- **Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); obovate
- **Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate
- **Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

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Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: yellow  
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: pink; white  
Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; spring flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; irregular  
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches  
Fruit covering: dry or hard  
Fruit color: pink; red  
Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; no significant litter problem; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; no thorns  
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure  
Breakage: resistant  
Current year twig color: brown; green  
Current year twig thickness: medium; thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun  
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained  
Drought tolerance: moderate  
Aerosol salt tolerance: low  
Soil salt tolerance: poor

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem  
Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time
Ozone sensitivity: tolerant
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible
Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Kobus Magnolia should be grown in full sun or partial shade on any well-drained soil. Probably not for poorly-drained areas but supposedly tolerant of soil with an alkaline pH.

The cultivar ‘Wada’s Memory’ has black-green leaves, large, six-inch blooms and an upright or columnar growth habit (at least in youth). It will be available at selected nurseries.

Propagation is easily done by cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern but occasionally bothered by scale as are other Magnolias.