



## *Magnolia kobus* var. *stellata* Star Magnolia<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

Star Magnolia is the hardiest of the Magnolias (Fig. 1). It is a small tree or large shrub, 15 to 20 feet tall with a 10 to 15-foot spread. Typically branching close to the ground, the multi-stemmed form develops with a dense head of foliage. Star Magnolia makes a wonderful patio, lawn specimen or accent tree. Lower foliage can be removed to show off the trunk and to create more of a tree-form. Otherwise, the persistent lower branches and oval to round form lend a "large bush" look to the plant. When planted against a dark background, the branching pattern and light gray trunk will show off nicely, particularly when lit up at night. The leafless winter silhouette looks great shadowed on a wall by a spotlight at night. The white flowers are produced in spring before the leaves appear, even on young plants. Flowers are usually not as sensitive to cold as Saucer Magnolia, but they can still be injured if cold weather arrives during flowering.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Magnolia kobus* var. *stellata*

**Pronunciation:** mag-NO-lee-uh KOE-bus variety stell-AY-tuh

**Common name(s):** Star Magnolia

**Family:** *Magnoliaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 8 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; near a deck or patio; specimen

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

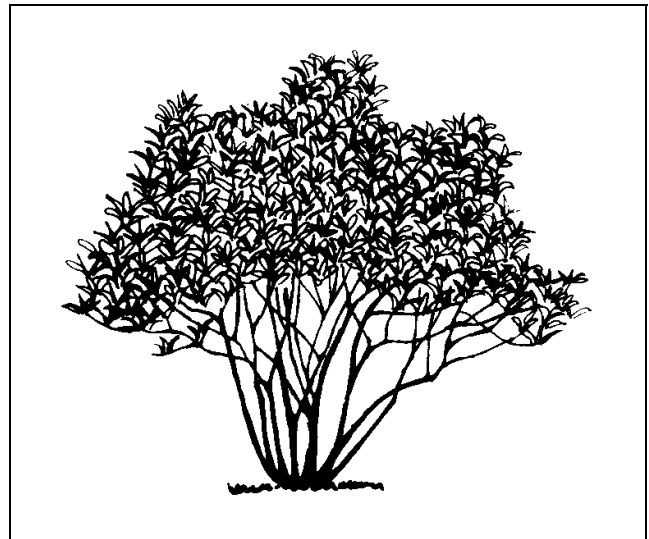


Figure 1. Middle-aged Star Magnolia.

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 15 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** round

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** oblong; obovate

**Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** copper; yellow

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** spring flowering; very showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** elongated; irregular

**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** 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

**Current year twig thickness:** medium; thin

### 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:** none

**Soil salt tolerance:** poor

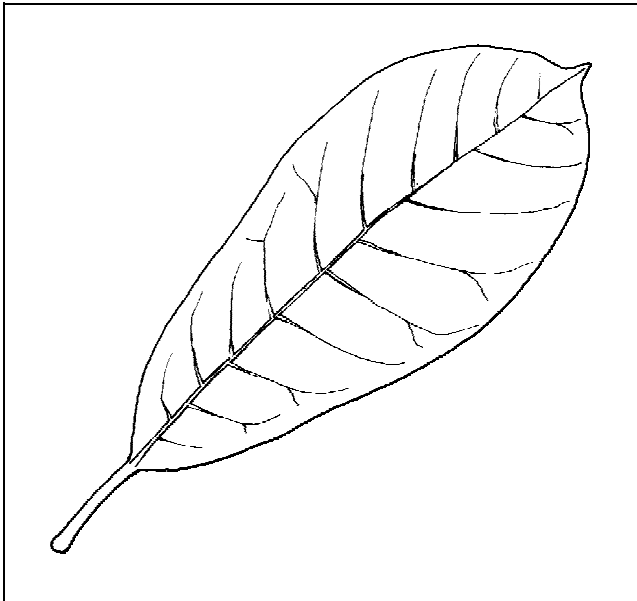


Figure 3. Foliage of Star Magnolia.

### 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:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Ozone sensitivity:** tolerant

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

Star Magnolia is intolerant of root competition or dryness, and plants grow slowly, perhaps one foot per year. Plant in the full sun in a rich, porous and slightly acid soil. It is hard to transplant successfully and in the north should be moved balled and burlapped when actively growing. In USDA hardiness zones 7 and 8, transplant in late winter while the plants are still dormant or plant from containers at any time.

There are a few cultivars: 'Centennial' - some pink in petals; 'Jane Platt' - new, superior type with many pink petals when opening; 'Keiskei' - flowers purplish on the outside; 'Rosea' (Pink Star Magnolia) - pale pink flowers; 'Rubra' (Red Star Magnolia) - purplish flowers, darker than 'Rosea'; 'Waterlily' - pink flower buds, white flowers, flowers larger with narrower petals. The "Little Girl Hybrids" have an upright habit and flower later than the species, thus

avoiding frost injury in most years. They include 'Ann', 'Betty', 'Jane', 'Judy', 'Randy', 'Ricki' and 'Susan'.

### Pests

Basically trouble free although scales of various types may infest twigs and leaves. Magnolia scale is the most common scale and can be one half-inch-across. Overwintering scales can usually be controlled with horticultural oil.

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

### Diseases

None particularly troublesome. Magnolia may be subject to leaf spots, blights, scabs, and black mildews caused by a large number of fungi or bacterium. Leaf spots rarely require chemical controls. Rake up and dispose of infected leaves.

Canker diseases will kill branches. Cankers on branches 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 regularly.