

Magnolia stellata 'Lyle's Legacy'

With support from all of you and funds from the Research and Development program, the New Maine Garden Plant Production project was established in 1998. Since then, the list of potential new garden plants from Maine has increased to more than 30 taxa. *Magnolia stellata* 'Lyle's Legacy' is one of them.

Back 18 years ago, Professor Lyle E. Littlefield had grown a lot of *Magnolia stellata* 'Centennial' from seeds. He then distributed the seedlings to different trial areas. Dr. John Smagula received some plants and evaluated them in a trial area in Orono. One of the seedlings has grown well and shown distinguished characteristics, including flowers with a large number of tepals. When Dr. Paul Cappiello joined the University of Maine faculty, both professors carefully examined the plant and found the unique characteristics of this seedling worthy of introduction. In recognition of the great contribution of Professor Lyle E. Littlefield to horticulture, the new cultivar was named after him and *Magnolia stellata* 'Lyle's Legacy' was "born" here in our beloved Maine.

The original plant is now about 14 feet tall and 12 feet wide. It consistently produces abundant flower buds and usually blooms in mid April and early May, about two weeks earlier than 'Centennial' plants in Lyle E. Littlefield Ornamentals Trial Garden in Orono. Leaves are similar to 'Centennial' and the tepals are twice as many as its species and 'Centennial' cultivar. Last spring, I counted 59, 61, and 57 tepals in three randomly picked flowers (see an attached photo).

Mr. Brad Libby, the greenhouse and garden manager, has done some cutting propagation. Preliminary data showed that more than 80% of soft-wood cuttings can be rooted with Hormodin #3 (8000 IBA). The same results have been observed using 8000 ppm KIBA. Other reproduction methods will be studied in order to

produce large numbers of this wonderful new cultivar and satisfy the market.

For the last two years, the rooted softwood cuttings survived well in containers. The cold hardiness should not be a problem because the plant originates from our Maine. 'Lyle's Legacy' is still in the evaluation period and I hope you can have it in your garden sometime soon.

New garden plant production is a long term commitment. Your support and contributions are essential to keeping this program alive. For more information about the New Maine Garden Plant Production Project, please visit <http://www.umaine.edu/maineplants> or write to Dr. Donglin Zhang, Landscape Horticulture, 5722 Deering Hall, Orono, ME 04469-5722, email donglin@maine.edu, phone 207-581-2918 and fax 207-581-2999.

Next time, if you plan to send a plant as a gift or cultivate one in your lovely garden, while strolling through a nursery, please be sure to ask for plants that originated in Maine. A good garden plant not only makes our living environment better, but also improves the quality of our daily life. Please join us and bring our Maine garden plants to national or worldwide attention.

Donglin Zhang
Professor, UMO



Flowers of *Magnolia stellata* 'Lyle's Legacy' (left) and 'Centennial' (right).