Magnolia x soulangiana ‘Lennei’

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Introduction

Young Japanese or Saucer Magnolia are distinctly upright, becoming more oval, then round by 10 years of age (Fig. 1). Blooms open in late winter in the southern part of its range to early spring in the northern part of its range before the leaves emerge. Flowers are large, shaded in deep pink on the outside of the petals, white on the inside creating a spectacular flower display. Even young trees can develop a beautiful flower display. I consider this to be one of the best cultivars. However, a late frost can often ruin the flowers in all areas where it is grown. In warmer climates, the late-flowering selections (see the species writeup) avoid frost damage but some are less showy than the early-flowered forms which blossom when little else is in flower.

General Information

Scientific name: Magnolia x soulangiana ‘Lennei’
Pronunciation: mag-NO-lee-uh x soo-lan-jee-AY-nuh
Common name(s): ‘Lennei’ Saucer Magnolia
Family: Magnoliaceae
Plant type: tree
USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 9A (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 7: year round
Planting month for zone 8: year round
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: near a deck or patio; container or above-ground planter; espalier
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 20 to 25 feet
Spread: 15 to 25 feet
Plant habit: upright; round
Plant density: open
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: coarse
Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: undulate  
Leaf shape: obovate  
Leaf venation: pinnate  
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous  
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: yellow  
Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white; pink  
Flower characteristic: spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: irregular  
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches  
Fruit cover: dry or hard  
Fruit color: red  
Fruit characteristic: rarely fruits

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: no thorns; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems  
Current year stem/twig color: brown  
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun  
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic;  
Drought tolerance: moderate  
Soil salt tolerances: unknown  
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

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Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

The tree is best used as a specimen in a sunny spot where it can develop a symmetrical crown. It develops an open canopy but flowers fine in a partially shaded spot. It can be pruned up 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.

Transplant in the spring, just before growth begins, and use balled and burlapped or containerized plants. Pruning wounds may not close well, so train plants early in their life to develop the desired form to avoid large pruning wounds.

Pests and Diseases

It is generally pest free, but scales of various types may infest twigs and foliage. Magnolia may be subject to leaf spots. Canker diseases will kill entire branches.