



Magnolia macrophylla Bigleaf Magnolia¹

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INTRODUCTION

This North American native tree is deciduous in most areas but semi-evergreen in the Deep South (Fig. 1). Bigleaf Magnolia grows slowly to 30 to 40 feet and spreads 20 to 25 feet forming a rounded, broad canopy. The leaves of Bigleaf Magnolia are truly large, 12 to 32 inches long and 7 to 12 inches wide, when found in the wild and somewhat smaller when grown in landscapes. These leaves are bright green above with a fuzzy, silver/grey underside, creating a beautiful, two-toned effect with each passing breeze. From May to July the showy, fragrant blossoms appear, each 8 to 12-inch-wide, ivory-colored bloom having a slight rose tint at its base. These blooms are followed by the production of 2.5 to 3-inch-long, hairy, red, egg-shaped fruits. Bigleaf Magnolia trees must be 12 to 15-years-of-age before they begin to bloom.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Magnolia macrophylla*

Pronunciation: mag-NO-lee-uh mack-roe-FILL-uh

Common name(s): Bigleaf Magnolia

Family: *Magnoliaceae*

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

Origin: native to North America

Uses: shade tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

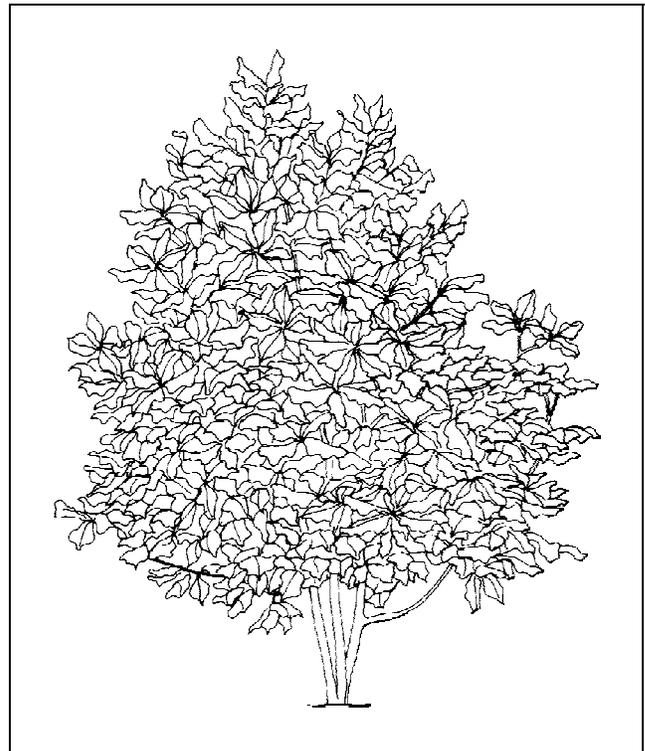


Figure 1. Young Bigleaf Magnolia.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 30 to 40 feet

Spread: 20 to 30 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: oval

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: medium

Texture: coarse

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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: 18 to 36 inches; 12 to 18 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; summer flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown; green

Current year twig thickness: 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: No entries found.

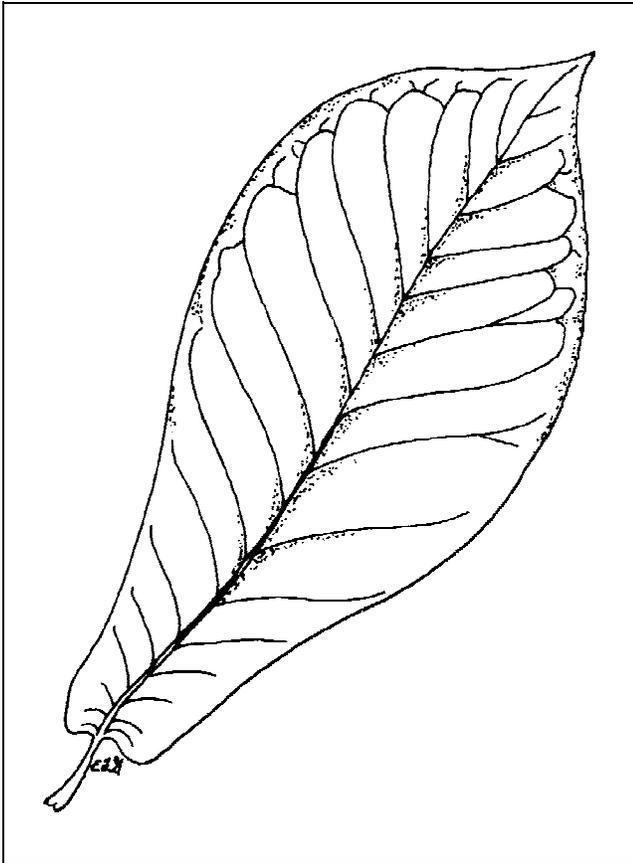


Figure 3. Foliage of Bigleaf Magnolia.

somewhat picky in its requirements. In its native habitat it is found on rich, moist soils.

Cultivars include 'Palmberg', with very large flowers, and 'Purple Spotted', flowers with purple markings in the center.

Propagation is by seed or softwood cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

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

The tree may be rather short lived in many landscape sites unless its cultural requirements are met fairly closely. Branches break easily in wind storms and ice-laden branches snap off. The large leaves decompose slowly after they fall and blow around on the ground creating litter which some people will find objectionable. It may be best to locate this tree in a ground cover bed where leaves can drop and filter down beneath the low growing plants unseen.

Bigleaf Magnolia should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained soil, and does not tolerate wet soil or drought. It appears to be