



Magnolia x soulangiana 'Alba' 'Alba' Saucer Magnolia¹

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INTRODUCTION

Saucer Magnolia is a multi-stemmed, spreading tree, 25 feet tall with a 20 to 30-foot spread and bright, attractive gray bark (Fig. 1). Growth rate is moderately fast but slows down considerably as the tree reaches about 20-years of age. Young trees are distinctly upright, becoming more oval, then round by 10-years-old. Large, fuzzy, green flower buds are carried through the winter at the tips of brittle branches. The blooms open in late winter to early spring before the leaves, producing large, white flowers shaded in pink on the outside of the petal, creating a spectacular flower display. However, a late frost can often ruin the flowers in all areas where it is grown. This can be incredibly disappointing since you wait 51 weeks for the flowers to appear. In warmer climates, the late-flowering selections 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* 'Alba'

Pronunciation: mag-NO-lee-uh x
soo-lan-jee-AY-nuh

Common name(s): 'Alba' Saucer Magnolia

Family: *Magnoliaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 9A (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; espalier; near a deck or patio; shade tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

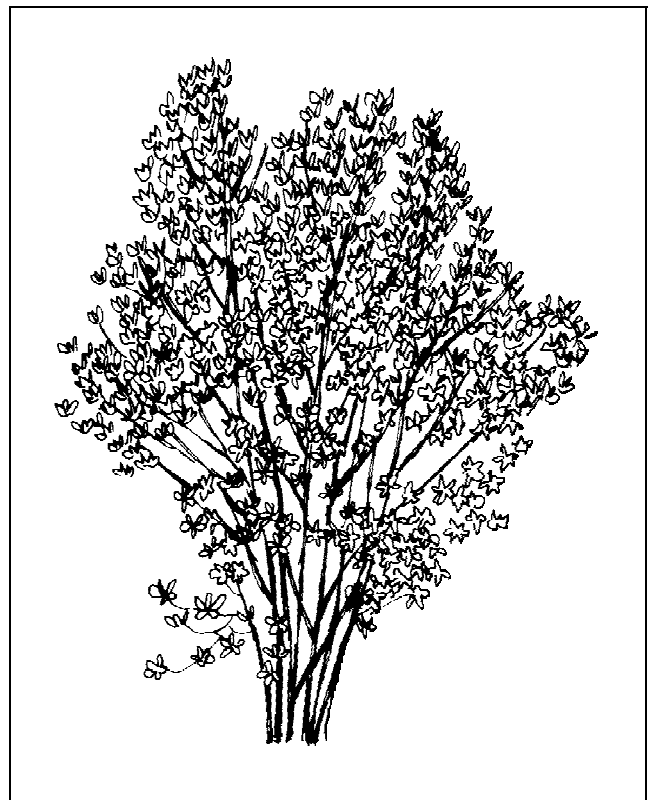


Figure 1. Middle-aged 'Alba' Saucer Magnolia.

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

DESCRIPTION

Height: 20 to 25 feet

Spread: 20 to 30 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-387, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.
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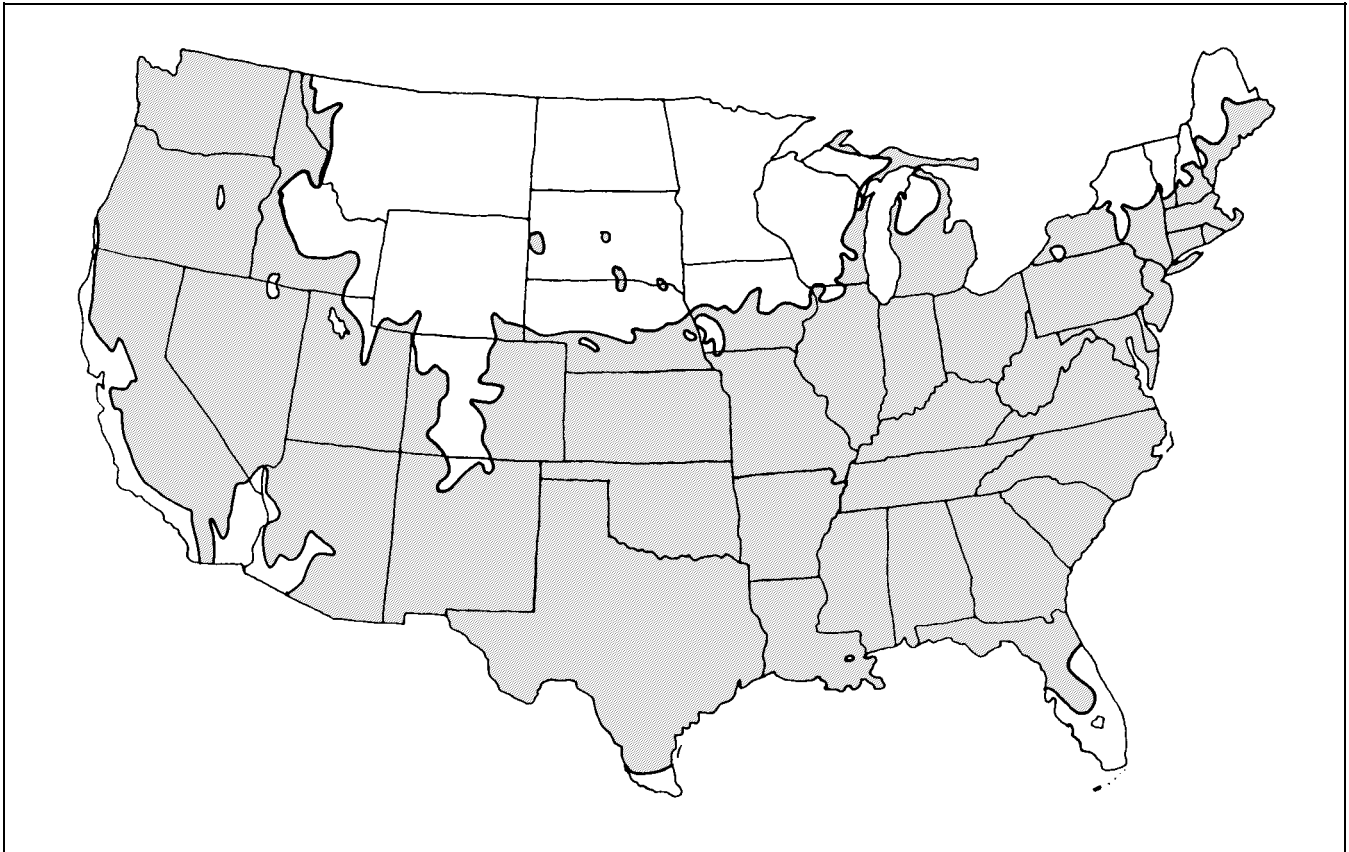


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Crown shape: round; upright

Crown density: open

Growth rate: medium

Texture: coarse

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: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: spring flowering; very showy; winter flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; irregular

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

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; showy trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

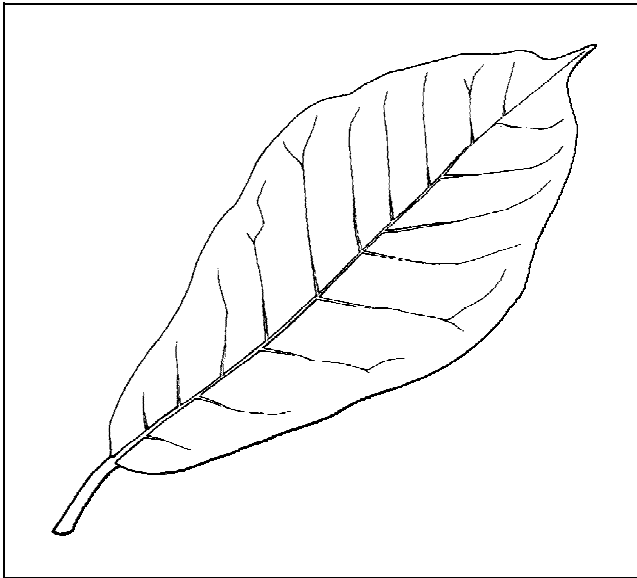


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Alba' Saucer Magnolia.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun;
tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic;
well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

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

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

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

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 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.

Saucer Magnolia grows best in a sunny location in rich, moist but porous soil. It will tolerate poor

drainage for only a short period of time. Growth will be thin and leggy in a shaded spot but acceptable in part shade. Saucer Magnolia dislikes dry or alkaline soil but will otherwise grow very well in the city. Transplant in the spring, just before growth begins, and use balled and burlapped or containerized plants. Older plants do not like to be pruned and large wounds may not close well. Train plants early in their life to develop the desired form.

Some Saucer Magnolia cultivars will be hard to find: 'Alexandrina' - flowers almost white; 'Amabilis' - flowers white; 'Andre LeRoy' - flowers dark pink to purplish outside, cup shaped; 'Brozzonii' - flowers white shaded with purple; 'Burgundy' - deep purple flowers, blooms earlier; 'Grace McDade' - flowers white with pink at the petal bases; 'Lennei' - flowers rosy purple outside, white flushed with purple inside, flowers large, blooms later; 'Lilliputian' - slow grower to 10 to 15 feet tall; 'Lombardy Rose' - similar to Lennei except flowers continue to open for several weeks; 'Niemetzi' - upright growth; 'Rubra' - ('Rustica', 'Rustica Rubra') - similar to 'Lennei'; 'San Jose' - large flowers nearly as dark as 'Lennei'; 'Speciosa' - similar to 'Alba' but it is last of the cultivars to bloom, a tall, upright, fast-growing tree; 'Spectabilis' - flowers almost white; 'Verbanica' - flowers clear rose pink outside, late blooming, slow-growing to 10 feet tall.

Pests

It is generally pest free. Scales of various types may infest twigs. Magnolia scale is the most common scale and can be one half-inch-across. Overwintering scales are usually 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

It is generally disease free. Magnolia may be subject to leaf spots caused by bacteria or a large number of fungi. 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 with high nitrogen fertilizer.