



**Magnolia Sieboldii—Korea's
National Flower**

Written by Associate Doctor **Hong Kyong Sik**,
Vice-President of the Central Botanical Garden

CONTENTS

Magnolia Sieboldii–Korean Species	2
The Flower of All Flowers	3
Propagation of Magnolia	6
Planting and Caring for Magnolia	12
The Magnolia Design	14
Poem; Magnolia	15
Song of Magnolia	18

**Our magnolia is as beautiful
as a peony; it is so fragrant
with lovely leaves that we can
be proud of it throughout the
world.**

KIM IL SUNG



The more than one hundred countries of the world all have their own national flowers.

Each country chooses a national flower that is especially beautiful, of which its people are fond, and which relates to the features and culture of the country, its legends and traditional life style and its customs; the economic value of the flower and its symbolic meaning are also taken into consideration.

Some countries choose such lovely national flowers as the mume, carnation, rose or tulip; others worship the lotus that grows in ponds as a sacred flower, and yet others make their national flowers the red chile-bells belonging to the Liliaceae family so that they will remember for ever the blood shed by their people in the noble war for independence.

Korea's national flower is *Magnolia Sieboldii*.

In its full shape and beauty, magnolia symbolizes the national character and mettle of the resourceful and indomitable Korean people.

Magnolia Sieboldii—Korean Species

Magnolia is a deciduous, broad-leaved tree belonging to the Magnoliaceae family. It is a Korean species which has been propagated in wide areas of the country from ancient times and has existed throughout the time-honoured history of our nation.

It grows thickly in all areas that are at a lower altitude than 1,400 metres, so excluding the mountainous regions of such northern areas of Korea as Jagang and Ryanggang Provinces.

In particular, it thrives at the foot of mountains of such

areas as Kangwon, North and South Phyongan and South Hamgyong Provinces.

It also grows naturally in some areas of northeast China and Japan. But, the Korean peninsula is the original centre of the worldwide distribution of the tree.

Magnolia grows well in places where the average annual temperature is 8-10 degrees C., with the minimum temperature being 30 degrees C. below zero and the maximum, 33 degrees C.

It requires good soil and humidity for growing; it does not grow well in extremely dry soil or in standing water.

It grows well in loamy sand which is half in shadow and contains a great deal of nutrients and a reasonable amount of moisture, as well as in clayey loam mixed with some gravel.

Many shoots grow from the crown of the root of magnolia. There, if left alone, it forms a cluster like shrubs.

Its roots do not grow deep, the main part generally going down to some 40 centimetres below ground level; it has a small number of straight roots and many lateral roots and fibrous roots.

Magnolia is extremely resistant to the cold and to damage by blight and harmful insects.

The Flower of All Flowers

From time immemorial many people have given the name *ran* (orchid) to fragrant and beautiful flowers.

President Kim Il Sung called Korean magnolia the *Mokran* (Mok means a tree—Tr.) in the sense that it is a *ran* which blossoms in a tree.

Magnolia has unusually attractive flowers and a sweet

fragrance. Furthermore, its fruit is fleshy and its leaves are attractive. So this flower is loved by the Korean people.

One day in May 1964 President Kim Il Sung visited the Central Botanical Garden. When he saw a snow-white magnolia in full bloom giving off its unique fragrance and with its sturdy branches, he said that the flowering tree seemed to represent the resourcefulness of the Korean people because its flowers were large and the tree was sturdy.

In the world there are hundreds of thousands of kinds of flowers that bloom and wither in season. But not many of them are beautiful, fragrant and bear fruit.

The beauty of magnolia is in its form above all else.

Its stem, leaves and flowers are all attractive.

Magnolia grows to a height of some 2-5 metres, and its stem is greyish brown or greyish white and smooth.

The twigs are of light-brown fibre.

Its leaves are oval or obovoid and are also alternate. They are some 6-20 centimetres long and 4-10 centimetres wide with a short petiole. The margin of the blade is straight and smooth; at its base it is narrow, but it spreads out to become wide at the top.

The upper part of the leaf is dark green and smooth and the lower part is whitish green with light-brown fibre; the leaves are eventually shed. There are between 6 and 13 pairs of veins, with those at the lower part of the leaf being bulbous.

Although there are regional differences, the leaves generally begin to appear at the beginning of April, and by April 25 they cover the whole crown of the tree. At the end of October the leaves turn yellow and after a while are shed.

The particular charm of magnolia is in its full and beautiful flowers.

In May and June when the earth is covered with verdant

growth snow-white flowers with a diameter of between 7 and 10 centimetres begin to bloom at the tips of its smooth branches. Six to nine conelike petals open one after another and, from among them, yellow pistils and pinkish and light-purple stamens make their appearance.

The sizes and colours of the petals and the pistils and stamens are so harmonious that the more one looks at the flower, the more one is fascinated by it.

Magnolia is fresh and upright so that people call the flower the symbol of love and happiness, hope and the future, as well as of firm faith.

A magnolia flower usually blooms for about a week, while a tree is in bloom for some 60 days all together. A magnolia attracts people not only because of its handsome flowers but also because of its unique fragrance.

When it is in full bloom, its fragrance reaches far and wide, fascinating people still more by its beauty.

A foreign poet composed a poem after scenting a magnolia in the valleys of the Myohyang Mountains. In his poem he wrote: The fragrance of most flowers is sweeter when one is near them, but magnolia gives off a sweeter fragrance the farther one goes from it. Its fragrance is sweeter than that of all other flowers.

There are hundreds of thousands of kinds of flowers in the world, but many of them do not bear fruit.

Not only does magnolia bear fruit but also its fruit, too, is attractive.

At the tips of the branches where the flowers have bloomed appear ear-shaped fruit 3 or 4 centimetres long.

When one sees the attractive fruit that resemble jade ornaments swaying in the breeze as they hang from every branch, one involuntarily stretches out one's hand to them.

After the fruit has ripened in September, it becomes red and bursts. Then two purplish-brown seeds, hanging from funicular threads, emerge from each small capsule.

Magnolia is very valuable.

The flowers serve as spices and the leaves and bark are used widely in producing medicines to reduce blood pressure because they contain magnolin and magnoliamin. The wood is used for the manufacture of craft works because it is hard and glossy.

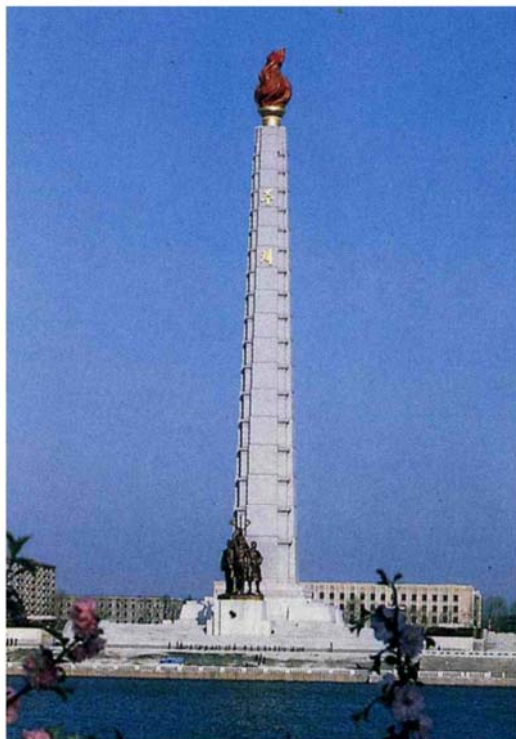
When it is in bloom magnolia increases people's happiness because of its beauty and fragrance, and in autumn it is loved still more for its fleshy fruit, and even its leaves, bark and pith give people pleasure. So it can be said that of all flowers, magnolia is that in which we take the greatest pride.

Propagation of Magnolia

Magnolia propagates by seeding and through vegetative propagation.

If we pick the fruit of magnolia in the middle of September and keep it in semi-darkness for some time, the seeds appear. The seeds do not germinate well because their surface is oily. So they must be rubbed with sand to remove the oiliness; then they should be dried in the shade for 4 or 5 days so that they contain some 20 per cent moisture. Then they should either be sown in fields from the end of September to the first part of October or vernalized and then sown in April of the following year.

Vernalization is done in such a way that immediately after



The Tower of the Juche Idea. On the wall of the stereobate of the tower are carved in relief Kimilsungia and magnolia, symbolizing a great reverence and the best wish to President Kim Il Sung.





Magnolia





**Magnolia pattern
decorated in the
International
Friendship
Exhibition**





Magnolia mosaic in the Yonggwang Station of Pyongyang Metro



Triplets born in Korea receive a silver sword or a gold ring on which magnolia is carved.

Handicrafts on which a
magnolia is described.



the seeds are collected, they are mixed with wet sand and buried outdoors, or they can be stored for 180 days in cellars where the temperature is about 0-5 degrees C. and the moisture is some 75-80 per cent.

Should the vernalized seeds not sprout well, temperature of 22-24 degrees C. and adequate moisture should be provided for about 10 days to allow them to sprout fully prior to sowing.

Some 5-10 grammes of seeds per square metre should be sown either on ridges or hills by the method of hill seeding or drill seeding and they should be covered with earth to a depth of 2 or 3 centimetres. When the buds have grown to some extent they should be thinned out.

A magnolia which has grown after seeding comes into bloom for the first time after 5 or 6 years.

What is basic to the vegetative propagation of magnolia is the grafting.

In order to hasten the flowering period, grafting is done by using 2- or 3-year old seedlings as the stock and the branches of flowering trees as the scion. Either cleft grafting is conducted in spring or square bud grafting in June and July.

Propagation is also done through layering, division and cutting.

Planting and Caring for Magnolia

Magnolia grows comparatively well even after being transplanted.

When the tree is being transplanted the rootlets may be damaged because of the long, principal roots. Therefore, it is a good idea to cut, in the spring of the previous year, the long

roots of a tree which is to be transplanted so that it will be able to strike many rootlets before being transplanted.

The tree must be transplanted into fairly fertile soil with a moderate amount of moisture and a lot of humus and in places that are not exposed to strong light for long. After the tree has been transplanted its branches should be thinned out, depending on the condition of the roots.

In the case of a magnolia which used to grow in the mountains, it is a good idea to cut the tree's crown and improve it after it has been transplanted.

A magnolia should be shaped and pruned well.

In order to grow magnolia to look like a cluster, the central leader must be cut, leaving some 15-20 centimetres so that it grows 3 or 4 principal branches; the following year these principal branches must again be cut to a height of 20-30 centimetres so that 2 or 3 secondary branches are produced for each principal branch.

Magnolia has few twigs because it is not able to produce many buds. Therefore, only dry or decaying branches and other unnecessary branches should be cut.

Old or weak trees bear few flowers and are ugly; therefore, they should be improved.

If one wants to grow a magnolia in a pot, all that is needed is bud grafting, root grafting or shoot grafting on 2- or 3-year old trees prior to transplanting them into nursery beds and growing them there for a year before potting them.

In natural conditions the physiological dormancy of magnolia finishes towards the end of December; in about 40 days after it issues its buds again the tree begins to bloom. Therefore, if one wants to control the period of flowering, it should be done in conformity with this. That is to say, the tree should be put to dormancy in natural conditions and then

placed in a greenhouse some 50 to 60 days before it is due to bloom.

The Magnolia Design

Magnolia appeals to the spirit and sentiments of the resourceful and dignified Korean people for its flowers and pleasant form, glossy and proud leaves, sturdy and strong stem and sweet fragrance. For all this it is now the most popular design used by Koreans.

The design of magnolia is either as a single flower or as several of them, with a harmonious arrangement of its lovely and sturdy flowers, leaves and stem.

Dear Comrade Kim Jong Il has led us in creating many literary and artistic works describing magnolia by widely introducing this flower in design, symbolizing the wisdom, uprightness and loyalty of the Korean people. It is used in architectural designs, fabric designs, book-cover designs, handicraft decorations and so on. Thus he has ensured that the mettle of our nation is evident across the whole country.

A golden design of magnolia is inscribed on the “Order of Kim Il Sung”, Korea’s highest order, which was instituted in March 1972.

This flower is also carved in relief in the stone decorations, murals and colourful paintings of many monumental creations such as the Tower of the Juche Idea, the Arch of Triumph, the International Friendship Exhibition and the Pyongyang Metro. Its design is also inscribed on art objects, in handiworks and in fabrics.

Magnolia, Korea’s national flower, is also inscribed on the

gold rings and ornamental silver swords which are given as gifts to triplets and quadruplets, happy children born in Korea.

Composers write songs comparing the most beautiful and noble things to magnolia, and valuable products are named magnolia.

Poem

Magnolia

Ri Kwang Son

*As I look closely at it
It seems to smile, displaying white teeth.
As I carefully peer at it
It seems to contain our noble idea.*

*The white clouds
Drop on it for a short while.
The jade-like limpid stream
Reflects its thoughts in it.*

*The smiling flower,
The white flower,
It has struck root in my country.
It seems to have carefully been wrapped in a white cloth
By the women of this land.*

*On a day when a cutting wind was howling on Mt. Paektu
Our General advanced into the fatherland, gazing at
this flower.*

*In this flower he found the fragrance of the fatherland
And saw its liberation and its future.*

*All the leaves
Seem to be aroma.
All the petals
Look like white gems.*

*This flower is always in my mind,
Never does it disappear.
This lovely flower comes into bloom
In all parts of this land.
Like its strong spirit
It displays all the beauty and resourcefulness of
this country.*

*However busy I may be
I resume my way after gazing at it a while.
Even when I walk at midnight
I call in my mind
Magnolia, magnolia
Our national flower, magnolia.*

*It seems to represent our pure red heart.
Although many thousands of years may pass
I'll live on and on
Keeping a whisper of it in my mind.*

*No matter whether the wind may blow from the west or
from the south,
I'll live on faithfully
True to my pure heart for the sake of the country.*

*My beloved flower, our national flower,
You've come into full bloom in this land
Thanks to the leader.*

Song of Magnolia

moderato, with emotion



Song of Magnolia

*Every blossom of magnolia is in bloom,
It's become handsome under the leader's care,
It's in full bloom on every peak of the Kumgang
Mountains
Expressing our boundless gratitude to him.*

*Scenting the fragrance of magnolia
We'll sing of the beautiful Kumgang Mountains
Conveying the leader's love for ever
We'll live in our socialist paradise.*

*The magnolia of Kumgang could not bloom in
the past
In the rain and wind, in the snowstorm,
Now under the sunrays that overflow this land
Thousands of magnolia have come into bloom.*

*Oh, magnolia, the flower of Korea,
Bloom across this socialist land.*



Printed in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Foreign Languages Publishing House
Pyongyang, Korea
1992