

Tale from the Garden!

Garden plants are divided up in our minds into those that are tough & can be left outdoors & those that are tender little flowers, which will wither & die at the merest hint of frost. But sometimes there are advantages to giving tough plants a bit of protection, & the Victorians had a trick or two up their sleeves. In the days of 'Downton Abbey', the 'big house' employed umpteen gardeners, as well as having a walled kitchen garden in which the produce for Mrs Patmore's kitchen would be grown & brought to the cook daily. There was almost always a range of greenhouses devoted to flowers as well as fruit. There would be Gardenias for the master of the house's buttonhole – the Victorians liked nothing more than forcing hardy shrubs out of season so that they would have a succession of blooms. The Victorians showed us that to fill the house with unexpected flowers, the greenhouse is the way to go! If you have a greenhouse standing idle, from now until April when you might plant your tomatoes, why not bring some shrubs in to bloom early & brighten up your home? Forsythia, Magnolia, Flowering Currant & Lilac can all be given extra protection & encouraged to flower weeks in advance of their normal season. Many people are already starting to celebrate the Christmas season in light of all the gloom which has dominated our lives recently, putting up decorations & beginning the countdown to Christmas Day – and why not? Whatever will brighten up our lives now, must surely be worth it!

People have loved magnolias for thousands of years. Magnolias are thought to be one of the first flowering plants to evolve on Earth. Fossil remains show that magnolias have been around for some 100 million years. Magnolia plants existed before bees, meaning that the flowers had to evolve to encourage pollination by beetles. Clearly, magnolias have found a great way to survive. Who knows? They may even survive long after human beings become extinct. Therefore, a magnolia means stability and grace through the ever changing ages. The message behind the Magnolia flower is to always be stable in life and to go through life with your head up high.



Each variety of Magnolia is stunningly beautiful with large, fragrant petals & they are to be seen increasingly decorating parks & gardens. These wonderfully striking shrubs and trees are guaranteed to make a big impact wherever they are grown. Magnolia are prized for their large goblet, tulip or star shaped flowers that come in shades of white, pink, purple and even various variations of white and yellow. They make fantastic ornamental garden trees or shrubs, with the flowering season ranging from early spring to late summer.

The King of the Sun, Louis XIV, sent the Botanist Charles Plumie to explore the world for plants and collect the most beautiful species for the Garden of Versailles. In the spring of 1740, Plumie arrived back with a large magnolia. The name of magnolia was given in memory of the French botanist Pierre Magnol (1638-1715), director of the Botanical Gardens in Montpellier, who helped scientists determine that plants came in families & not just species.

There seem to be as many symbolic interpretations about magnolias as there are people who love them:

- ❖ In Victorian times, sending flowers was a discreet way of lovers sending messages to each other. Magnolias symbolized dignity and nobility. This symbolical meaning is mostly derived from stories and myths surrounding the Magnolia flower's origin. This flower is going to let the other person know you are highly respectable and you feel a great amount of appreciation for everything this person has done for you.
- ❖ The beautiful Magnolia is no wonder, a symbol of beauty. Every person compared to this gorgeous flower is simply beautiful and it is a pure evidence of how life can be beautiful. In

ancient China, magnolias were thought to be the perfect 'Yin' symbols of womanly beauty and gentleness.

- ❖ In the American South, white magnolias are commonly seen in bridal bouquets because the flowers are thought to reflect and emphasize the bride's purity and nobility.
- ❖ According to Feng Shui, the Chinese practice of using energy forces to harmonize individuals with their surrounding environment, a magnolia planted in front of the house attracts the energy of pleasure and rest, and if it is planted behind the house symbolizes the slow but sure acquisition of wealth.
- ❖ Magnolia benefits have been known since ancient times. In its traditional medicine, the Chinese and Japanese have used the medicinal extract of its bark for 2000 years. Today, this extract is used in medicine, but mostly in the cosmetics industry. Many shampoos & bath preparations use extract of magnolia for its scent & health benefits.

So, we might be going through ever-changing times, but we will evolve & adapt to harmonize with the life that surrounds us. We must continue through life with our heads held high, we will survive, one family in Christ.