Magnolia denudata: Yulan Magnolia

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

Introduction

Also known as Magnolia heptapeta, this broad, spreading, deciduous tree has a relatively fast growth rate and eventually reaches 30 to 40 feet in height with an equal spread. The crown is open and forms a rounded outline several years after planting in full sun. The off-white, saucer-shaped, six-inch-diameter, fragrant blooms appear on the trees before the emergence of the seven-inch-long, dark green leaves. The blooms are followed by five-inch-long, brown fruits which ripen in early fall to reveal the bright red, inner seeds. Although there is no appreciable fall color change, the multi-stemmed, irregular form of Yulan Magnolia makes it quite striking in the winter garden after the leaves have fallen.

General Information

Scientific name: Magnolia denudata
Pronunciation: mag-NO-lee-uh-den-yoo-DAY-tuh
Common name(s): Yulan Magnolia
Family: Magnoliaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 8A (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: little invasive potential
Uses: deck or patio; container or planter; specimen; espalier; highway median
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

Figure 1. Middle-aged Magnolia denudata: Yulan Magnolia
Credits: Ed Gilman

Figure 2. Range


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Magnolia denudata: Yulan Magnolia

**Description**
- **Height**: 30 to 40 feet
- **Spread**: 30 to 40 feet
- **Crown uniformity**: irregular
- **Crown shape**: round, spreading
- **Crown density**: open
- **Growth rate**: moderate
- **Texture**: coarse

**Foliage**
- **Leaf arrangement**: alternate (Fig. 3)
- **Leaf type**: simple
- **Leaf margin**: entire
- **Leaf shape**: obovate, oblong
- **Leaf venation**: brachidodrome, pinnate
- **Leaf type and persistence**: deciduous
- **Leaf blade length**: 4 to 8 inches
- **Leaf color**: green
- **Fall color**: no color change
- **Fall characteristic**: not showy

![Figure 3. Foliage](image)

**Flower**
- **Flower color**: white/cream/gray
- **Flower characteristics**: very showy

**Fruit**
- **Fruit shape**: elongated
- **Fruit length**: 1 to 3 inches
- **Fruit covering**: dry or hard
- **Fruit color**: brown, red
- **Fruit characteristics**: attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**
- **Trunk/bark/branches**: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
- **Pruning requirement**: needed for strong structure
- **Breakage**: resistant
- **Current year twig color**: green, brown
- **Current year twig thickness**: medium
- **Wood specific gravity**: unknown

**Culture**
- **Light requirement**: full sun, partial sun or partial shade
- **Soil tolerances**: sand; loam; clay; acidic; well-drained
- **Drought tolerance**: moderate
- **Aerosol salt tolerance**: unknown

**Other**
- **Roots**: not a problem
- **Winter interest**: yes
- **Outstanding tree**: yes
- **Ozone sensitivity**: tolerant
- **Verticillium wilt susceptibility**: susceptible
- **Pest resistance**: free of serious pests and diseases

**Use and Management**
This small tree is best used as a patio tree for shade and accent due to the low branching habit, attractive foliage and striking gray bark. It would look very nice lining an entrance walk to a commercial building or in a double or single row set back from an entrance roadway or long driveway. Grows well in urban areas but avoid poor, compacted soil. Nice for an urban garden.

Yulan Magnolia should be grown in full sun or partial shade on rich, moisture-retentive soil in an area protected from harsh, dry winds. Plants should not be exposed to overly wet or dry conditions.

Available cultivars include: ‘Japanese Clone’, larger flowers; ‘Lacey’, flowers up to eight inches across. Yulan Magnolia was used as a parent plant along with Magnolia acuminata to produce the hybrid ‘Elizabeth’ which has a pyramidal shape and clear yellow, fragrant blooms.

Propagation is by seed sown immediately after ripening, since they will quickly lose their viability. Sometimes cuttings of these trees are grafted onto Magnolia x soulangiana

**Pests and Diseases**
No pests or diseases are of major concern but occasionally bothered by Magnolia scale as are many other Magnolias.