

# *Magnolia x soulangiana* 'Speciosa': 'Speciosa' Saucer Magnolia<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This cultivar of Saucer Magnolia is a multi-stemmed, spreading tree, 25 feet tall with a 20 to 30-foot spread and attractive gray bark. 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

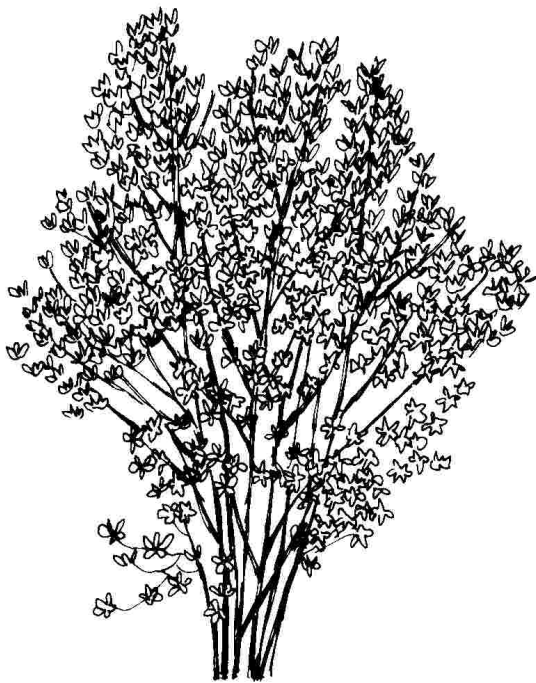


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Magnolia x soulangiana* 'Speciosa': 'Speciosa' Saucer Magnolia

oval by 10-years-of-age. Large, fuzzy, green flower buds are carried through the winter at the tips of brittle branches. The blooms open later than the species, in mid spring before the leaves, producing large, white flowers shaded in pink, creating a spectacular flower display. It is less susceptible to the frosts which often kill the flowers of the species and other cultivars. In warmer climates, the late-flowering selections such as 'Speciosa' and 'Verbanica' avoid frost damage but are not as spectacular as the early-flowered forms which blossom when little else is in flower.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Magnolia x soulangiana*

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

**Common name(s):** 'Speciosa' Saucer Magnolia



Figure 2. Range

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**Family:** *Magnoliaceae*

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential

**Uses:** specimen; deck or patio; container or planter; espalier; shade

**Availability:** not native to North America

## Description

**Height:** 20 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 20 to 30 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular

**Crown shape:** upright/erect

**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:** pinnate, brachidodrome

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** yellow

**Fall characteristic:** showy

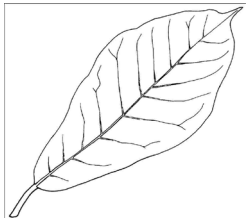


Figure 3. Foliage

## Flower

**Flower color:** white/cream/gray

**Flower characteristics:** very showy

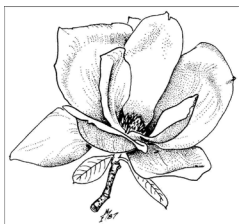


Figure 4. Flower

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** elongated, irregular

**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** red

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

**Pruning requirement:** little required

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** 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:** none

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** yes

**Outstanding tree:** yes

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

## 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: 'Alba' - flowers almost white; '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'; 'Spectabilis' - flowers almost white;

## 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.