

Magnolia kobus var. *stellata* 'Centennial' 'Centennial' Star Magnolia¹

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Introduction

Star magnolia is one of the hardiest of the magnolias. It is a small tree or large shrub, 15 feet tall with a 10 to 15 foot spread. Typically branching close to the ground, the multi-stemmed form develops with a dense head of foliage. Star magnolia makes a wonderful patio, lawn specimen, or accent tree. Lower foliage can be removed to show off the trunk and to create more of a tree form. Otherwise, the persistent lower branches and oval to round form lend a "large bush" look to the plant. When planted against a dark background, the branching pattern and light gray trunk will show off nicely, particularly when lighted at night. The leafless winter silhouette looks great shadowed on a wall by a spotlight at night. The white flowers have a slight touch of pink coloration, and are produced in spring before the leaves appear, even on young plants. They are extremely fragrant, unsurpassed by most, if not all other star magnolias. Flowers are usually not as sensitive to cold as saucer magnolia, but they can still be injured if cold weather arrives during flowering.

General Information

Scientific name: *Magnolia kobus* var. *stellata* 'Centennial'

Pronunciation: mag-NO-lee-ah KOE-bus variety stell-AY-tuh

Common name(s): 'Centennial' star magnolia



Figure 1. Flower - *Magnolia kobus* var. *stellata* 'Centennial': 'Centennial' Star Magnolia

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

Family: *Magnoliaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 8 (Figure 2)

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: near a deck or patio

1. This document is FPS-359, one of a series of the Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Revised October 2023. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.

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Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

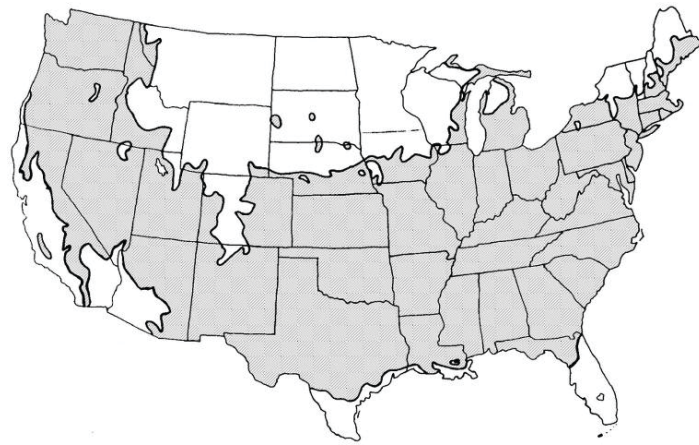


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 12 to 20 feet

Spread: 12 to 18 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: symmetrical habit with a regular (or smooth) outline and individuals having more or less identical forms

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white; pink

Flower characteristic: spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: irregular

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; no thorns; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: brown

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; slightly alkaline

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Star magnolia is intolerant of root competition or dryness, and plants grow slowly, perhaps one foot per year. Plant in the full sun in a rich, porous, and slightly acidic soil. It is reportedly hard to transplant successfully and, in the north, should be moved balled and burlapped when actively growing. In USDA hardiness zones 7 and 8, transplant in late winter while the plants are still dormant, transplant after the growth flush in the spring, or plant from containers at any time.

There are a few other cultivars: 'Jane Platt'— new, superior type with many pink petals when opening; 'Keiskei'— flowers purplish on the outside; 'Rosea' (pink star magnolia)— pale pink flowers; 'Rubra' (red star magnolia)— purplish flowers, darker than 'Rosea'; 'Waterlily'— pink flower buds, white flowers, flowers larger with narrower petals. The "Little Girl" hybrids have an upright habit and flower later than the species, thus avoiding frost injury in most years. They include 'Ann', 'Betty', 'Jane', 'Judy', 'Randy', 'Ricki', and 'Susan'.

Pests and Diseases

Basically, trouble free although scales of various types may infest twigs and leaves. Magnolia scale is the most common scale and can be one half inch across. Overwintering scales can usually be 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.

None particularly troublesome. Magnolia may be subject to leaf spots, blights, scabs, and black mildews caused by a large number of fungi or bacteria. 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 regularly.