

That Exotic Far Away Feeling!

Magnolias cast their Magic

By Dave Dunn

Rideau Woodland Ramble

The other day a visitor to Rideau Woodland Ramble was marveled at the Magnolias in bloom and suggested it made her think of Vancouver. It reminded me that for us in the Ottawa valley area, Magnolia seem to have the reputation for being an exotic that have no place in our cold northern gardens.

Over the last 25 years we have been challenging that thought here at the Ramble, and have experimented with several forms of Magnolia, both tree and bush forms. The magnolias in bloom now at the Ramble are the ones we have selected resulting from our best luck over all these years.



There are a couple of basics to keep in mind. They love acidic soil, so that means mulch with pine bark, or taking advantage of conifer

stands and their impact on the micro conditions. The other basic is placement. Because the Magnolia sets its flower bud in the fall, you must place them in a location that minimizes the impact of intense winter wind and sun. Finally, it's the plant selection itself. Generally, the Saucer Magnolias (the big old tree form with large Saucer shaped flowers), are not reliably hardy north of the St Lawrence River. The shrub forms, such as the Star Series, and some new tree forms, such as Daybreak and Yellow Bird, are very hardy and reliable.



With that being said, all that remains is to select a good site, and decide the size, shape and colour you would like in your garden.....and then sit back, and enjoy that romantic, far away feeling. You could select Magnolia "Susan", for her reddish-purple flowers, and rounded 3m by 2.5m shape, or Magnolia "Elizabeth", for her primrose yellow flowers and 10m height. Magnolia "Daybreak" has a spectacular bright rose pink, large flower, blooming late in the spring. Magnolia "Donna" has a large white flower. The "Star Magnolia" series (pink, gold and white), are very hardy, and all grow to be about 12 feet, and provide regal spring splendor. A great shrub form to consider. In the parking lot of the Ramble, there is another form of Star Magnolia that id a show stopper...."Leonard Messel". It

has a wine coloured star shaped flower....spectacular! So, if you want that spring glory, and exotic far away feeling, try one of the many new selections in your garden. You will be glad you did. Many of these selections are available at the Ramble. So, Come Ramble, and visit the gardens, open 7 days a week, from 9-5. No admission fee..



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