Magnolia virginiana - Sweetbay Magnolia *(Magnoliaceae)*

*Magnolia virginiana* is an upright large shrub or small multi-trunked tree that has excellent semi-evergreen foliage, fragrant creamy late spring to early summer flowers, good brown-red autumn fruits, and layered graceful branching. Sweetbay Magnolia has four-season ornamental appeal, with no danger of freezing damage to flowers.

**FEATURES**

**Form**
- large shrub or small tree
- to 20' tall x 15' wide
- upright oval, becoming rounded with old age
- multi-trunked with layered sympodial branching
- abundantly available in B&B form
- slow to medium rate

**Culture**
- full sun to full shade
- needs acid soil for best performance
- tolerant of wet sites

**Foliage**
- dark green above and glaucous silvery-green beneath (contrasting ornamental bicolor effect when the breeze blows)
- semi-evergreen to deciduous
- alternate
- elliptical to 6” long
- lustrous and waxy above
- green, slowly abscising in winter

**Flowers**
- cream
- May-June and sporadically later
- sparse but noticeable and showy against a solid green background
- extremely fragrant when sniffed close-up

**Fruits**
- green solid aggregate fruit turning into a splitting fruit in Sept., exposing many bright red seeds

**Twigs**
- green, turning to gray in second year
- raised leaf scars
- terminal buds much larger than laterals, both of which are lightly pubescent

**Trunk**
- light gray and smooth

**USAGE**

**Function**
- foundation or specimen shrub or tree

**Texture**
- medium in foliage and bold when bare
- open density in foliage and when bare

**Assets**
- good four-season tree (outstanding summer and autumn foliage, spring and summer flowers, autumn fruits, and winter sympodial branching)
- wet site and shade tolerant
- no disappointment in flowers due to chilling damage like other Magnolias
- bicolor foliage in the breeze

**Liabilities**
- abscised leaves when wet can be slippery when walked upon
- slow growth

**Habitat**
- Zone 5 to 9
- Native to eastern and gulf coasts of U.S.

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**
- small trees or large shrubs for multi-season interest
  (Acer ginnala, Amelanchier species, Cornus kousa, Parrotia persica, Viburnum cassinoides, etc.)
- trees that flower in late spring or early summer
  (Liriodendron tulipifera, Koelreuteria paniculata, Magnolia grandiflora, Stewartia species, etc.)

**Cultivars - Variants - Related species**

**Magnolia grandiflora** - Southern Magnolia
waxy large dark evergreen foliage contrasts well with the sparse but fragrant creamy-white large summer blossoms that adorn this large southern mansion type of tree; to 70’ x 40’ in the South and a stately tree; marginally hardy in zone 5 and much smaller, suffering frequent foliage winter burn (place in a north- or eastern-facing protected site, or within a grove of protective trees, since this is a broadleaf evergreen)