

# RPG Times

Fall 1999

A Publication of the Roots Plus Field-Growers Association of Florida



## Sell What's Here

*by Jack Siebenthaler, Registered Landscape Architect*

Where do trees come from? That's a strange question, but what does it mean? To the grower, they come from cuttings, seed, liners, tissue culture, or other sources from which they are grown on. To the landscaper, they come from the grower. The same for the retailer.

But what about the specifier, be he a landscape architect or a landscape designer? Do the trees "come from" his imagination? Do they come from a more realistic source, such as a current listing from a monthly updated mailing, or do they come from a visitation and verification of what is in the ground or container?

It is certainly important to know what is available at any given time in order to provide satisfaction in the landscape process. Too many times, it is the unknown factor of availability which stymies the satisfaction of accomplishment of the plan in the intended sense.

Today's tree lists are constantly changing. It is not enough to simply read some unchanging catalogue listings which offer the same trees from year to year. It is necessary to know the source and to trust the availability as listed. The best way to accomplish this is to visit selected nurseries on a recurring basis or to at least contact them by phone for an update.

Currently, there are shortages in many sizes and species of desirable landscape trees. And many of these will not be changing very soon. The problem, simply stated, is that there is an ongoing demand for many good choices in the most commonly used sizes. The answers to the dilemma lie in different areas.

Consider substituting species and varieties. There are many satisfactory alternative selections which can make good choices. Don't get locked in to just a few repeats.

Consider the use of different sizes, possibly with a mixture of sizes/species to make the landscape presentation more interesting.

Your choices may be challenging, but they are not impossible. After all, the better planner is the one who works a bit more at his job!

## Don't miss this years RPG Field Day!

**Advanced tree production, planting and establishment workshop:**

*One day of hands-on field training for Florida's Green Industry*



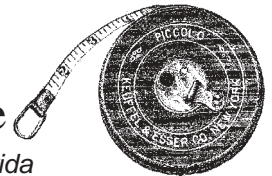
**Wednesday, December 8th  
Stewart's Tree Service**

*More information and  
registration form are inside*

## DBH or caliper:

### Know the difference

*by Dr. Ed Gilman, University of Florida*



When I was in college studying to be a forester, my classmates and I learned that DBH was used to refer to tree trunk diameter at breast height. Diameter at breast height is trunk diameter 4.5 feet from the ground. This remains the standard method for recording trunk diameter in the woods in the traditional forestry industry. However, it has no place in the horticultural or nursery professions.

The standard for measuring trunk diameter in urban forestry and in the nursery and landscape industry is trunk caliper, not DBH. Trunk caliper is the measurement of trunk diameter 6 inches from the ground. If trunk diameter measured 6 inches from the ground is greater than 4 inches, then measure diameter 12 inches from the ground. It is as simple as that.

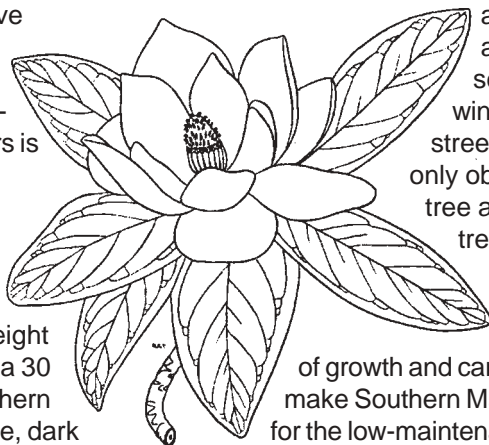
If you are in the landscape or nursery industry, or are planting trees in the urban forest, or you are specifying or inspecting trees planted in your city, do not use DBH. DBH has no meaning and is inappropriate for urban and suburban landscape plantings. The Florida grades and standards for nursery stock published by the Florida Department of Agriculture and accepted as the standard for nursery stock for more than 35 years uses caliper to specify trunk diameter. Please leave DBH where it belongs, i.e. as a useful tool for measuring trees for timber sales in the forest.

# Species Spotlight - *Magnolia grandiflora*

by Edward Gilman and Michael Marshall

This large, stately, native North American evergreen tree with its large, beautiful, saucer-shaped, fragrant flowers is a Southern landscape tradition. It has been selected as the state tree of Mississippi. Capable of growing at a moderate rate to a height of 80 feet or more with a 30 to 40-foot spread, Southern Magnolia forms a dense, dark green pyramidal shape, the lower branches often bending to the ground. Form and growth rate on seedlings is incredibly variable. Some are dense and make great screens, others are very open with large spaces between branches; some have a narrow, almost columnar form, others are as wide as they are tall. Select from the many available cultivars to ensure the desired shape and density. The trunk on large specimens can grow to more than three feet in diameter, and frequently grows straight up through the center of the crown.

The five to eight-inch-long, leathery, oblong, shiny leaves are shed as new foliage emerges but the debris is well-hidden by the dense foliage of the lower limbs, if they are left on the tree. Some people consider this litter a nuisance when the large, slowly-decomposing leaves drop on the sidewalk, lawn or patio. The underside of the leaves is covered with a fine, red-brown fuzz which is more prominent on some selections than others. In late spring and sporadically throughout the summer, huge, 8-inch-diameter, waxy, fragrant, white blossoms open to perfume the entire garden. Fuzzy brown cones follow these blooms, ripening in fall and winter to reveal bright red seeds which are used by a variety of wildlife. Long-used as a striking garden specimen, Southern Magnolia can



also serve as a dense screen, windbreak or street tree. The only objection to this tree as a street tree might be the falling leaves and fruit. Its ease of growth and carefree nature make Southern Magnolia ideal for the low-maintenance landscape. With proper pruning, Southern Magnolia trees can also be used as an interesting espalier.

If moist, peaty soils are available, Southern Magnolia will thrive in full sun and hot conditions once established. If irrigation cannot be provided periodically, plants located in partial shade for several years after planting seem to grow better. Very drought tolerant when grown in areas with plenty of soil for root expansion, only moderately drought tolerant in restricted-soil areas or in areas with poor, dry soil. Southern Magnolia prefers acid soil but will tolerate a slightly basic, even wet or clay soil. The root system is wider spreading than most other trees, extending from the trunk a distance equal to about four times the canopy width. This makes it very difficult to save existing Magnolia trees on construction sites.

The species germinated from seed is quite variable in growth rate and form with some trees dense and compact, others loose and open. A number of cultivars are available: 'Bracken's Brown Beauty' has an unusually dark brown lower leaf surface and is considered one of the best selections; 'Cairo' has an early and long flowering period; 'Edith Bogue' is the hardiest of the cultivars and will bloom when only two to three-years-old; 'Glen St. Mary' has a compact form, will bloom when

young, is slow-growing, and the leaves have a bronze underside; 'Goliath' has flowers up to 12 inches across, a long blooming period, and a bushy habit of growth; 'Hasse' can be used for a compact, dense hedge or screen; 'Little Gem' has a dwarf upright form, probably to 30 feet tall, small leaves and flowers, is very slow-growing, flowers heavily at an early age and for a long time during the summer (5 months), and has bronze leaf-undersides. It will bloom when only three to four feet tall and is excellent as a pruned evergreen hedge, for use as a small street tree or for use as an espalier; 'Majestic Beauty' (patented) has large, dark green leaves, a pyramidal shape, and profuse flowering; 'Samuel Sommer' has an upright, rapid growth habit and flowers up to 14 inches across; 'Victoria' is very hardy, has small flowers, and rust-red leaf-undersides. Propagation is by cuttings (for the cultivars), grafting, or seed.

Scales of various types will infest twigs and leaves. Magnolia scale is the most common scale and can be one half-inch-across. Overwintering scales can be controlled with horticultural oil. Trees appear to grow fine even with heavy infestations. Tulip-poplar weevil (sassafras weevil) feeds as a leaf miner when young and chews holes in the leaves as an adult. Magnolia borer is a problem on young nursery stock. It girdles the trunk usually just below the soil surface. Control is difficult but attainable with the proper material. Magnolia may be subject to leaf spots, blights, scabs and black mildews caused by a large number of fungi, or a bacterium but they rarely require chemical controls. Raking up and disposing infected leaves may reduce leaf spots next year. Algae can also cause leaf spots. Keep trees healthy with regular fertilization and by watering in dry weather.





# Transplanting Tips - Irrigation Requirements

Size of nursery stock	Irrigation schedule for vigor see notes 1,3	Irrigation schedule for survival see notes 2,3,4
< 2 inch caliper	Daily for 2 weeks; every other day for 2 months; weekly until established.	Twice weekly for 2-3 months
2-4 inch caliper	Daily for 1 month; every other day for 3 months; weekly until established.	Twice weekly for 3-4 months
> 4 inch caliper	Daily for 6 weeks; every other day for 5 months; weekly until established.	Twice weekly for 4-5 months

## Irrigation notes:

1. Delete daily irrigation when planting in winter. Irrigation frequency can be reduced slightly (e.g. 2-3 times each week instead of every other day) when planting hardened-off, field-grown trees that were root-pruned during production. Establishment takes 3 (hardiness zones 10-11) to 4 (hardiness zones 8-9) months per inch trunk caliper.
2. Irrigation frequency can be reduced slightly (e.g. to once or twice each week) when planting hardened-off, field-grown trees that were root-pruned during production.
3. At each irrigation, apply 2-3 gallons per inch trunk caliper to the root ball. Apply it in a manner so all water soaks into the root ball. Do not water if root ball is wet/saturated on the irrigation day.
4. Trees take much longer to establish than 3-4 months per inch trunk caliper. Irrigate in drought the following summer.

The above irrigation requirements chart was reprinted from "Typical Tree Bid Specifications for Florida" which was developed by the Florida Urban Forestry Council and Dr. Edward F. Gilman University of Florida, Gainesville.

## RPG Information

If you would like more information about the Roots Plus Field-Growers Association of Florida please complete the following and return it to:

Roots Plus Growers  
17350 SE 65th Street  
Morrison, FL 32668

☐ Please add me to your mailing list

Please send me information on the following:

☐ Tree Transplanting Research

☐ Tree Transplanting Tips

☐ RPG Membership

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

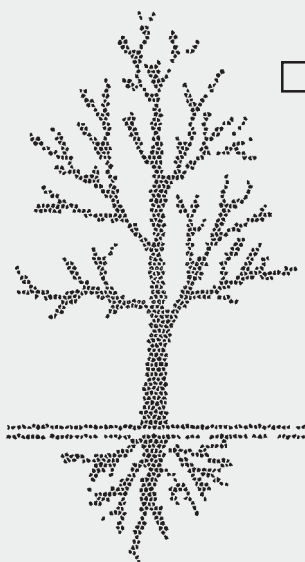
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*Champion Tree Farm*

352-375-6001  
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