

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

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Introduction

Star magnolia is one of the hardiest of the magnolias (Fig. 1). 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 lit up 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. Flowers are usually not as sensitive to cold as saucer magnolia, but they can still be injured if cold weather arrives during flowering.



Figure 1. 'Royal Star' star magnolia

General Information

Scientific name: *Magnolia kobus* var. *stellata* 'Royal Star'

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

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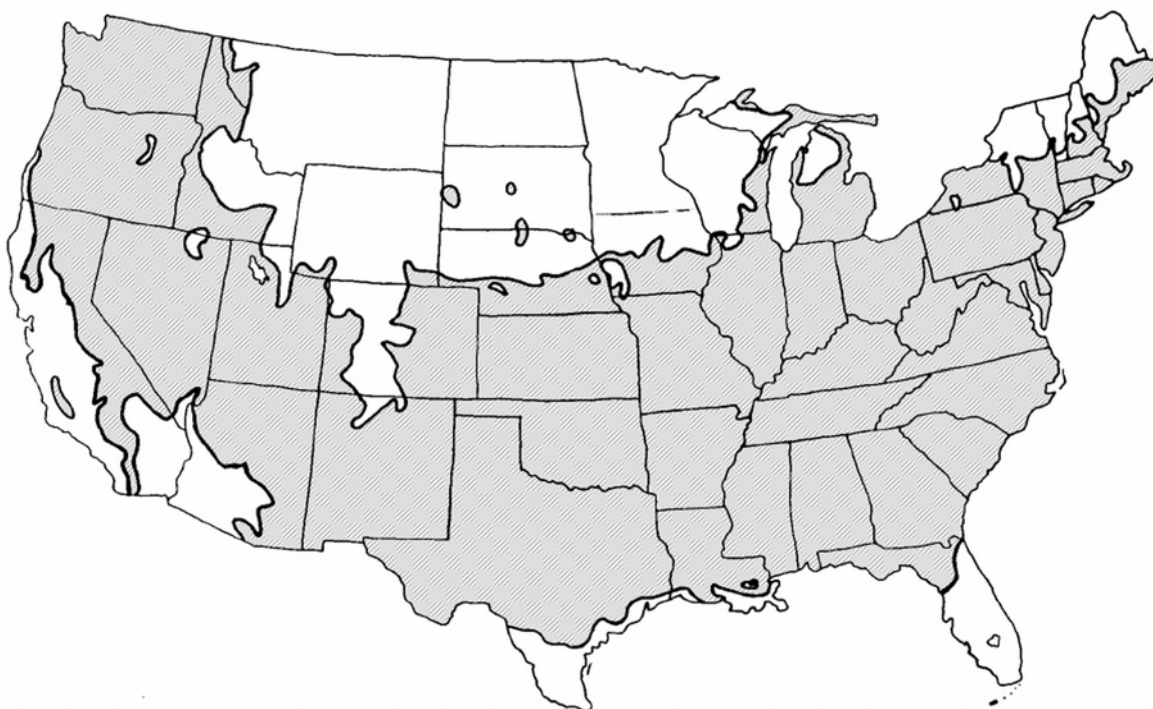


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Common name(s): 'Royal Star' star magnolia

Texture: medium

Family: *Magnoliaceae*

Foliage

Plant type: shrub

Leaf arrangement: alternate

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 8 (Fig. 2)

Leaf type: simple

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Leaf margin: entire

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Leaf shape: obovate

Origin: not native to North America

Leaf venation: pinnate

Uses: near a deck or patio

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

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

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Description

Height: 12 to 20 feet

Fall characteristic: not showy

Spread: 12 to 18 feet

Plant habit: round

Flower

Plant density: moderate

Flower color: white; pink

Growth rate: slow

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; pleasant fragrance



Figure 3. Flower of 'Royal Star' star magnolia

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

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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 acid soil. It is 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 or plant from containers at any time.

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.

Pests and Diseases

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.

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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.