
Sweet bay magnolia

Magnolia virginiana



A Magnolia Native to Massachusetts

Most people are familiar with the showy Asian magnolias that bloom in April before their leaves appear, but are surprised to learn about native North American magnolias. The North American species bloom later, after the leaves emerge. The magnolia native to Massachusetts is *Magnolia virginiana* (**sweet bay magnolia**). Its creamy white flowers are considered by many people to be the most fragrant of all magnolias. Unlike the short bloom time of the Asian magnolias, sweet bay magnolias usually bloom throughout the month of July.

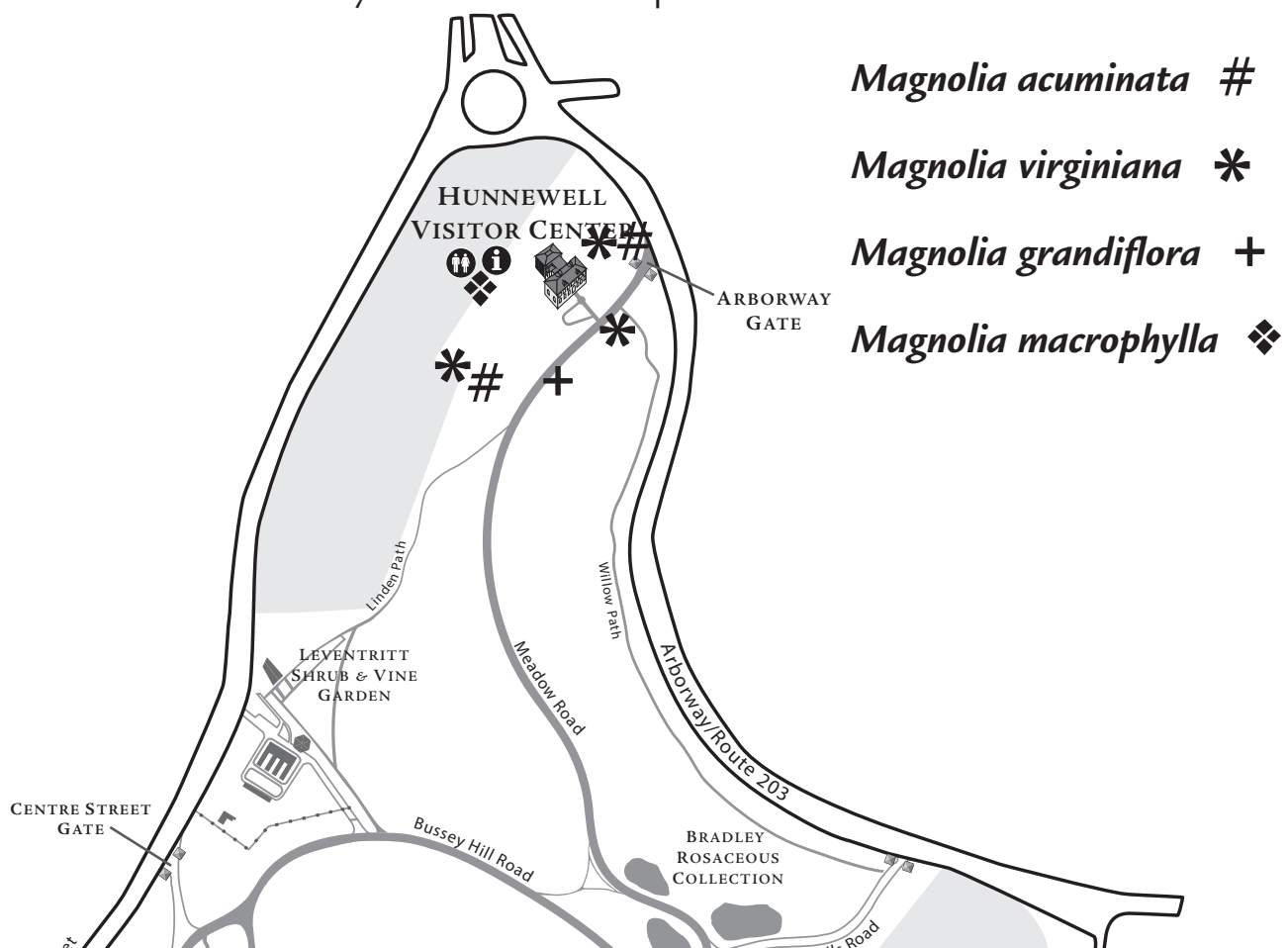
We have several different forms of the sweet bay magnolia at the Arboretum: some are multi-stemmed and some have single trunks; some keep their leaves all winter and others are deciduous; some were collected from the wild in Massachusetts and others come from farther south. This small tree grows well in in wet or even swampy soils near the coast and along streams.

Other American magnolias you might find blooming in July at the Arboretum:

Cucumber tree (*Magnolia acuminata*) is the largest of all magnolia trees. Over the summer, its greenish-yellow flowers turn into cylindrical fruits that look like tiny cucumbers. The fruits develop a pinkish tint when they ripen in the fall, and split open to expose red seeds.

Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) is barely hardy in Boston. It is much better suited to warmer areas south of New York and in the western US.

Big-leaf magnolia (*Magnolia macrophylla*), as the name implies, has the largest undivided leaves of any native American plant.



The **ARNOLD**
ARBORETUM
of HARVARD UNIVERSITY

125 Arborway
Boston, MA 02130-3500
617-384-5209

www.arboretum.harvard.edu