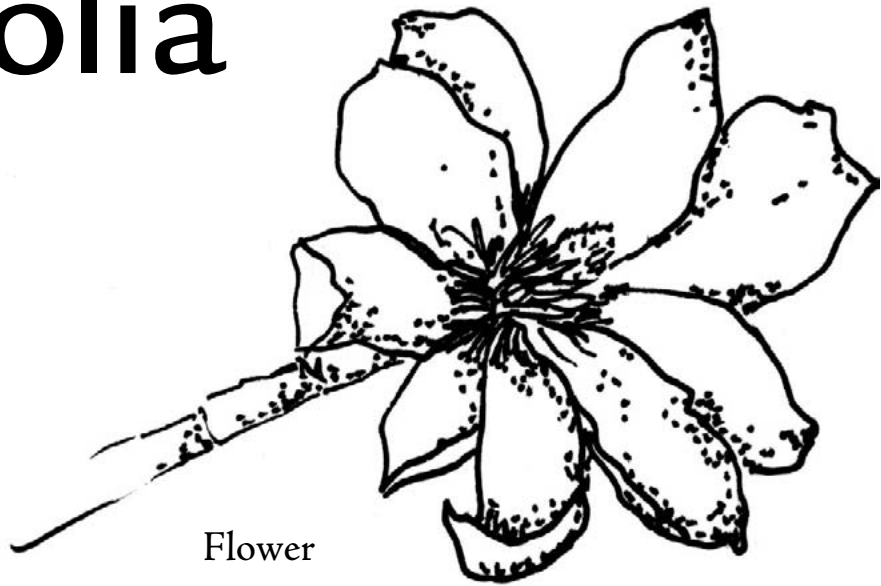


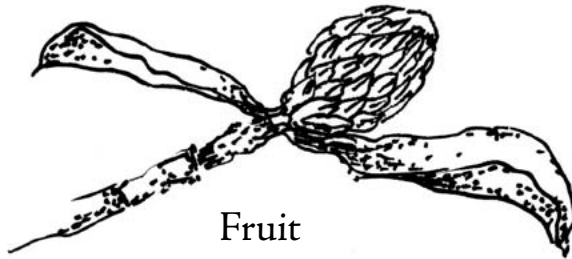
Magnolia



Bud



Flower



Fruit

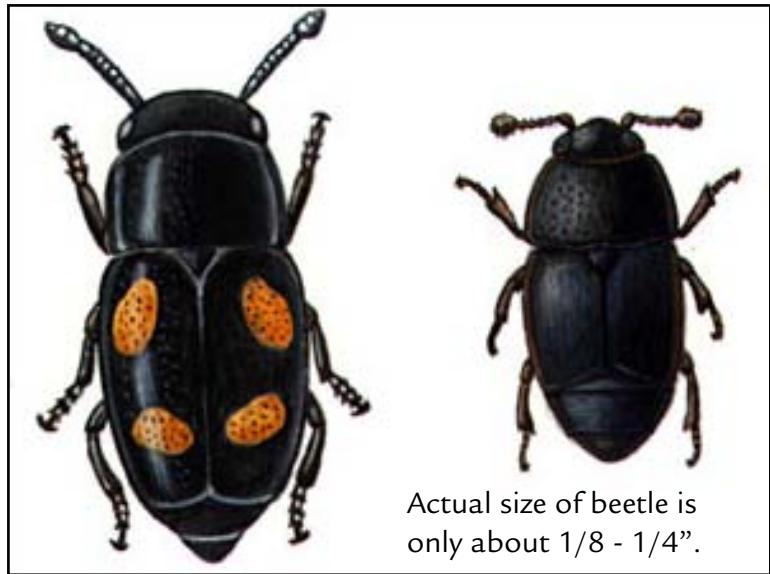
Experts believe that the oldest magnolia fossils are about one hundred million years old, making magnolia one of the oldest flowering plants. The natural range of magnolia species includes eastern North America, Central America, and Asia. Eight species of magnolia are native to the United States.

Generally speaking, most Asian magnolias (such as *Magnolia lilliflora* and *M. denudata*) bloom early in the spring on bare branches, before any leaves cover or compete with the blooms. Most American species (including sweetbay magnolia *M. virginiana* and southern magnolia *M. grandiflora*) bloom later, after leaves have been produced. This difference in timing of bloom reflects the different climates where magnolias evolved: spring in temperate Asia progresses without severe frost once the plants start growing, while the spring in eastern North America is always punctuated with late frosts.

► What magnolia trees can you find in bloom today on the grounds of the Arboretum?

Nitidulid beetles

Magnolias evolved earlier than bees, when beetles were the main pollinators. The nitidulid beetle body color ranges from reddish brown to black, in some cases with red, orange, or yellow patterns on the elytra (wing covers). The beetles penetrate the closed bud, crawl between the tight petals and enter the flower chamber to pollinate the receptive stigma.



Julie Martinez, Scientific Illustrator

Did you know?

Magnolias are named after French botanist Pierre Magnol (1638–1715).

While an increasing numbers of hybrids can be found around the globe, a research study from 2007 found that 131 of the world's 245 known wild magnolia species are now threatened with extinction.

The northernmost colony of magnolias native to the United States (*Magnolia virginiana*) can be found growing in the Magnolia section of Gloucester, MA. The sweet bay magnolia swamp has been a botanical shrine since its discovery in 1806. In 1889, a wealthy merchant who summered here, preserved this land in his will by creating Ravenswood Park.

The southern magnolia (*M. grandiflora*) is barely hardy in Boston. It is much better suited to warmer areas south of New York and in the western US. Have you seen the Mississippi state quarter? Magnolia is the official state flower of both Louisiana and Mississippi.



Collections Up Close: Majestic Magnolias on Saturday, April 12, 1:00–3:00

Explore our world-class magnolia collection as flowers bloom and new leaves unfurl. Take a guided tour, participate in drop-in activities, look under a microscope, and chat with knowledgeable staff and volunteers.