UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM

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Magnolia kobus: Kobus Magnolia[1]

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Introduction

A striking tree in summer or winter. Dropping its large, six-inch leaves in fall without any spectacular display of color, Kobus Magnolia forms an attractive winter specimen with its rounded silhouette and multiple trunks originating close to the ground. Supposedly grows 30 to 40 feet tall but is most often 25 feet or less in an open, sunny landscape site and is capable of reaching 75 feet in height in its native forest habitat. In an open site, spread is often greater than height with 25-foot-tall trees 35 feet wide if given the room to grow unobstructed. Branches gracefully touch the ground on older specimens as the tree spreads, in a manner not unlike open-grown Live Oaks. Allow plenty of room for proper development.



Figure 1. Mature *Magnolia kobus*: Kobus Magnolia
Credit: Ed Gilman

General Information

Scientific name: *Magnolia kobus*

Pronunciation: mag-NO-lee-uh KOE-bus

Common name(s): Kobus Magnolia, Northern Japanese Magnolia

Family: *Magnoliaceae*

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

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: specimen; container or planter

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

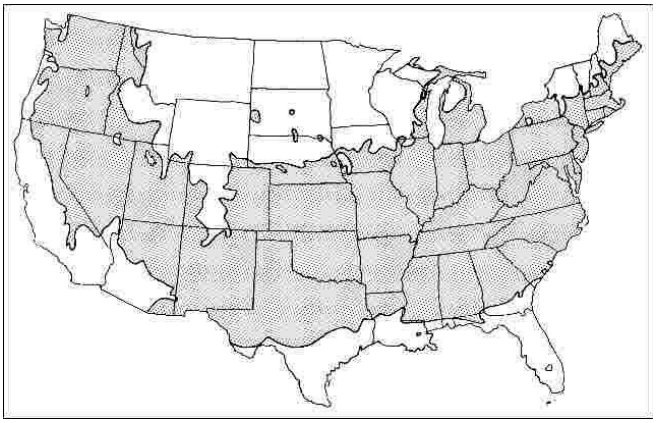

Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 25 to 30 feet

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: round, spreading

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire, undulate

Leaf shape: obovate, elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: brachidodrome, pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

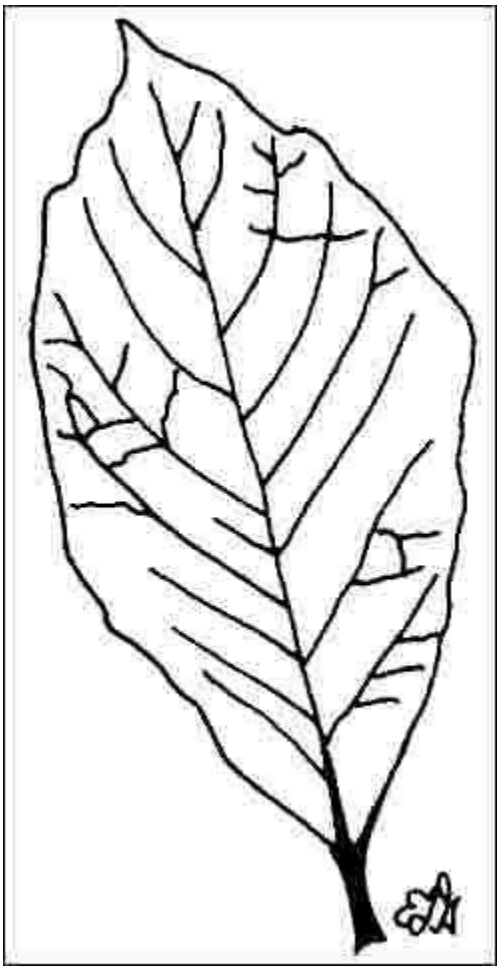

Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray, pink

Flower characteristics: very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: irregular, elongated

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: pink, red

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green, brown

Current year twig thickness: medium, thick

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade

Soil tolerances: sand; loam; clay; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Ozone sensitivity: tolerant

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

The lightly-fragrant blooms which appear in spring before the new leaves unfold are ivory-colored to pale pink and four inches in diameter. Young trees flower poorly. The pink fruits which develop split open to reveal bright red seeds, which sway from slender threads before dropping to the ground.

Kobus Magnolia should be grown in full sun or partial shade on any well-drained soil. Probably not for poorly-drained areas but supposedly tolerant of soil with an alkaline pH.

The cultivar `Wada's Memory' has black-green leaves, large, six-inch blooms and an upright or columnar growth habit (at least in youth). It will be available at selected nurseries.

Propagation is easily done by cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern but occasionally bothered by scale as are other Magnolias.

[1] This document is ENH-538, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture. Original publication date November 1993. Revised October 1998. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu for the currently supported version of this publication. © UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 *To learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water and natural resources, visit ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/*.

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