

*Michelia doltsopa* is a genus related to magnolia. Most noticeable difference is that it bears flowers in the axils of the leaves instead of only at the tips of branches and twigs. This species, grown by Stryker, comes from Asia and is hardy outdoors in England. It is an evergreen plant and the flowers are a creamy white. Stryker also collects camellias, and heathis.



Donald Stryker, whose hobby of collecting rare species of magnolias and camellias is described in the accompanying article, made good use of the famous Langlois cheeses from his home town to get started in his garden collecting hobby.

## Land of Cheese and Plants

Donald Stryker Is Building a Reputation at Langlois For the Largest Collection of Magnolias, Camellias

BY DREW SHERRARD

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The town of Langlois on the Oregon coast is known to the general public mainly for its fine cheese and forest products. But to gardeners it is known as a region of great botanical interest, and a place where a remarkable range of garden material can be grown. Some day it may also become famous as the place where the largest collection of magnolia species and varieties in the United States is to be found.

That collection is already well started, most of the species being as yet only young seedling trees or the still smaller ones being raised from these by means of cuttings. Already it numbers more species than any other public or private collection in America, and it is due to the enthusiasm and persistence of Donald Stryker, nurseryman and magnolia specialist, that this young forest of magnolias from the ends of the earth is gradually taking its place in the edge of the Oregon native woods.

Oldly enough the cheese industry has had its part in getting this nursery of rare plants started. Not only Stryker's earnings in the cheese factory helped finance the beginning project, but a few Langlois cheeses distributed in the right places got the magnolias growing.

Stryker had been baffled by the apparent impossibility of getting seed of the rare species. Reading all the garden literature avidly, he found out where the finest garden specimens of flowering age were located in England. To each of several owners of such gardens, he dispatched a fine Langlois-cheese, following it a week later with a letter stating his need of seed and expressing the hope that if they had enjoyed the cheese, they would send him some seed of their magnolias.

Langlois cheeses are very good and Englishmen are enthusiastic gardeners. It worked. The seeds of longed-for natives began arriving, and were given expert care, with the expected results, mostly 4 years old or younger, and of varied sizes.

Raising magnolias from seed is a lifetime job. For instance in England Magnolia Campbellii has taken up to 30 years to come to flowering age. However in Golden Gate park, San Francisco, this same species flowered at ten years, indicating to Stryker and other experts that Pacific coast conditions may be particularly favorable for this genus, noblest of ornamental flowering trees and other rare and desirable horticultural material. It is his hope to establish his collection of this and other fine plants such as the camellia species and eventually arrange for it to become a public botanic garden.

"There is need," Stryker said, "for such a garden in an area with the remarkable climatic advantages the Langlois region possesses. However, I hope to be here for a long time yet, and that is only a plan for the distant future."

An example of how easily plants may be grown here is the collection of heaths which was planted when he first acquired the 100-acre nursery

site in 1943. These, especially the species *Erica justianlowii*, have seeded and crossed till now seedlings and hybrids have been found as much as a mile from the original planting.

About February 1 this year they were in bloom all up the hillside, in sprays of pink-tipped white. Especially successful here have been plants from South America, particularly Chile. These, and New Zealand, South Africa, South Australia and India species have scattered themselves all over the place by means of self sown seed, bearing out Stryker's assertion that this is a fine climate for a botanic garden.

First lily bulbs were grown here for a large wholesale dealer in the Middle West, then gradually by the seed method and plant importation camellias were started. True to his botanical interest, Stryker is more interested in the wild species of camellia than in the more usual hybrids of Camellia-japonica, and has now acquired an enviable collection of these; in fact, he believes it to be the most extensive in the United States, including in it the rare wild species of *C. reticulata* in varied forms, *C. salensis* and *C. fraterna*. These and the magnolias he is continually propagating by seed, cuttings and grafts, the last method least of all, as he prefers his own root plants, especially on magnolias.

Some people are undoubtedly "horn gardeners," and Donald Stryker is one of these. As far back as he can remember he has had an active interest in plants. His mother says that at age four he planted a row of feathers, confidently reporting that he would harvest "chickens next Thursday."

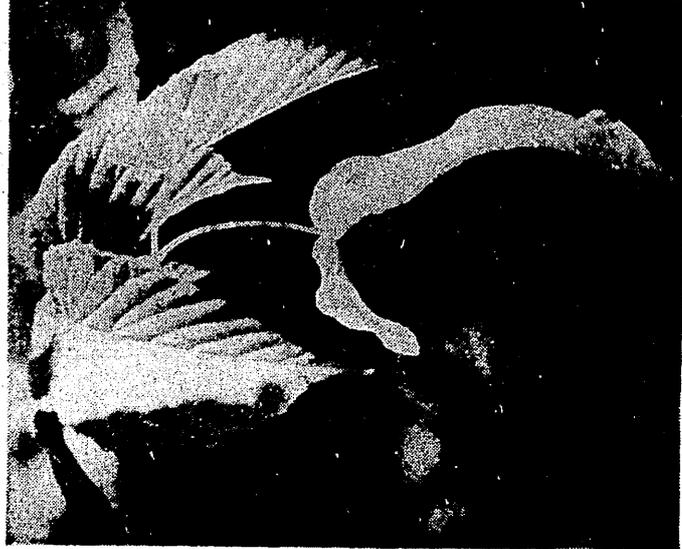
Growing up in Portland gave a future horticulturist the right environment, he drank in gardening ideas all around him. He says three people who really had a direct influence on his decision to make horticulture his life work were Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Fenton of Portland, and the famous Swiss alpinist Henri Corrovois, who visited Portland during his American tour.

Formal education was at the graduate school of landscape architecture, Harvard university, and this was extended with the practical work he had with an eastern landscape and nursery firm in New York and Florida.

During all these years he always had a garden of his own somewhere, if only a collection of potted treasures, which he moved about with him. One of his friends says of him, "When Donald moves anywhere, he goes in a car full of plants and looks just like a float from the Portland Rose Festival."

Leaving all the plants behind for once, this Oregon gardener hopes to set out next year to visit the famous gardens of England, some of them the very gardens his precious magnolia seed came from.

He will visit Scotland and Wales, perhaps the Scilly Isles and a brief glimpse of France, as well as a trip to Eire. He expects to spend considerable time in Cornwall, as that region most nearly corresponds directly to the Langlois region.



*Davidia involucreata*, a rare plant from China, was named after the French botanizing missionary, Armand David. The shape of flower has given it the common name of Dove tree.



*Magnolia delavayi* is an Asiatic species which can be propagated from cuttings as easily as camellias and grows quite readily in this climate. It has large evergreen leaves and a handsome flower as shown in the above photograph.