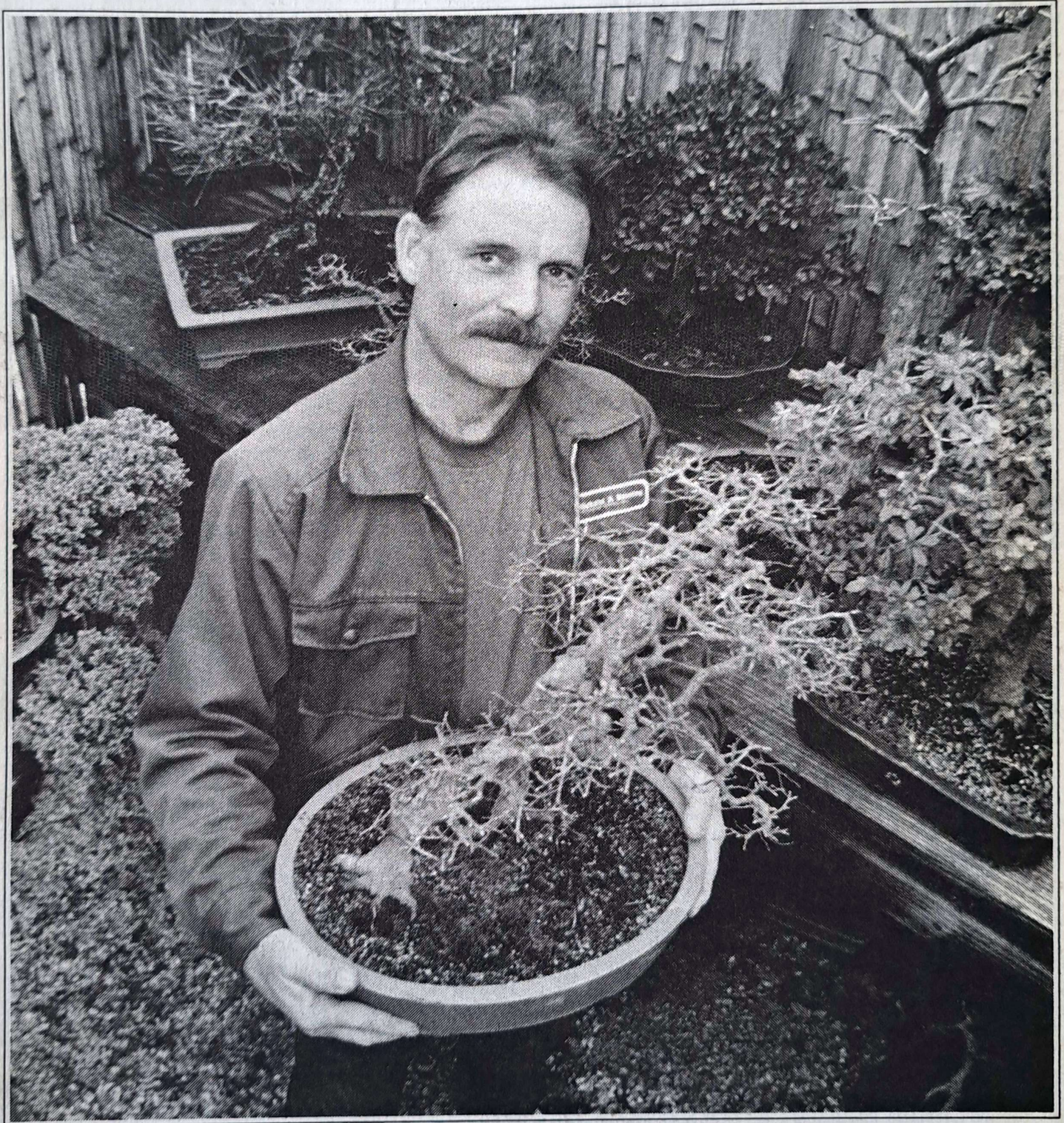


Louisiana's **NURSERYMEN**



BONSAI MASTER

Vaughn Banting is Louisiana Nurseryman of the Year

Inside: Simplified Chart of Accounts • Get 1 in '91 • Bigleaf Magnolia

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Louisiana Association of Nurserymen

Why Join LAN?

- LAN expresses the collective voice of the Green Industry in Louisiana. LAN members sit on the Horticulture Commission and lobby for legislation that affects nurserymen.
- LAN promotes professionalism through a Certified Nurseryman training manual and testing program.
- LAN sponsors scholarships for horticulture students in universities across Louisiana.
- LAN supports research on topics important to nurserymen. One LAN grant supported a comprehensive study of Green Laws. This study will assist Louisiana communities in passing their own Green Laws.
- LAN schedules an annual short course jointly with the Mississippi Association of Nurserymen. This event draws more than 900 participants and more than 100 exhibitors. The course meets alternately in Mississippi and Louisiana, usually on the second weekend in January.
- LAN is subdivided into nursery regions (e.g., the Central Louisiana Association of Nurserymen, the Northwest Louisiana Association of Nurserymen). Through these groups and through the annual short course, you'll meet others in the Green Industry. You'll get ideas, find suppliers or buyers, and meet a lot of enjoyable, dedicated people.
- LAN is a participating member of the huge TAN-MISSLARK trade show, which meets annually during the summer. It is the world's largest nursery show, and provides you with access to almost any nursery product imaginable.
- LAN members receive this magazine, plus supplementary mailouts from LAN secretary Dr. Warren Meadows and executive assistant Elizabeth Pope.
- LAN offers members special services, such as training tapes for those seeking to comply with OSHA hazard communication standards.

To: Officers and Members, Louisiana Association of Nurserymen

I hereby apply for membership in the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen, subject to the approval of your membership committee. I agree that the decision of the membership committee is final.

Should I wish to cancel my membership at any time in the future, I agree that I must do so in writing to the secretary no later than the last day of December of the current fiscal year. Failing to do this, I acknowledge my liability to LAN for the current year's dues.

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Affiliation _____

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Applicant's Signature _____

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(growers, retailers, landscapers, etc. Dues are based on gross sales: <\$100,000, \$35; \$100,000-\$250,00, \$50; >\$250,000, \$100.)

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Will you get one in '91?

Boosting membership is job #1 for new LAN President Richard Maxwell. He wants to bring in 300 new members this year. Maxwell asks that all LAN members do their part by bringing in one new member during 1991. Those who do will get an "i got 1 in '91" lapel button and will be eligible for special prizes to be awarded at the LAN-MNA trade show in January 1992. The first 50 who sponsor a new member will have their admission paid for the TAN-MISSLARK trade show in Dallas, this coming August.

The incentives notwithstanding, the best reason for bringing in a new member is the satisfaction of making Louisiana's Green Industry stronger through LAN. The new member you bring in will grow professionally through the short course and trade show, the LAN publications, the Certified Nurseryman's

program and the opportunity to meet other nurserymen.

To bring in a new member, photocopy or tear off the application for membership (opposite page) and

take it to a friend in the Green Industry who hasn't joined LAN yet. You'll help LAN become an even stronger voice for Louisiana's nurserymen.

THEY GOT 1 IN '91

New Member

Tropical Interiors _____	Amos Savoy
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The Odom Presidency

Richard Odom concluded his presidency of LAN during the January Short Course and Trade Show. Under his leadership the association moved ahead in many areas, among them:

- the LANSAR (scholarships and research) Fund grew to almost \$70,000. This endowment will provide permanently endowed scholarship and research support for the Green Industry.

- LAN developed a strategic plan (reported in Winter 1990 issue of this magazine) to guide future growth toward established goals. The four goals are: to develop a cohesive voice to represent the Green Industry; to promote professionalism; to develop new horticulture practices that are sensitive to the environment and that promote the quality of life; and to help others understand the benefits of plants. The plan includes many strategies to achieve these goals.

- LAN is on a much stronger financial standing, primarily from the success of the Short Course and Trade Show.

- LAN has hired its first full-time staffer, Elizabeth Pope, who will improve member service, coordinate membership and promotion of LAN, and help administer the short course, certification program and many other association endeavors.

- LAN revised its constitution for

the first time since its inception in 1954. The changes reflect the needs of a growing, modern nursery industry.

- LAN helped coordinate the disaster loan program following the record low temperatures around Christmas 1989.

- LAN helped bring about a horticulture curriculum at the Alexandria Vo-Tech School.

- LAN funded a several-year study of Green Laws. The research was conducted by LSU faculty member Austin "Buck" Abbey and several graduate students. This project resulted in a directory of Green Laws in the state and a model landscape ordinance that will assist communities in forming their own landscape ordinances.

Abbey also wrote a five-part series of articles, the "Green Law Notebook," for this magazine, which gave details of how these landscape ordinances work in various Louisiana cities and towns. By promoting Green Laws, LAN does more than stimulate a market for plants and landscape services. These laws improve the quality of life for all people, by protecting existing vegetation and by requiring environmentally sound, esthetically pleasing urban development.

- LAN worked with the Farm Bureau to draft a bill for the coming legislative session that will require

the state to use landscape architects in planning new state construction.

- LAN revised its Certified Nurseryman's Study Guide.

- LAN contributed \$5,000 to the Sidney Meadows Fund, a project coordinated by the Southern Nurseryman's Association. This fund will create an endowed scholarship in the name of Sidney Meadows, one of the South's most influential and best-loved nurserymen. A Louisiana native, Meadows headed Flowerwood Nursery in Mobile, Ala., for decades. SNA will offer a Sidney Meadows scholarship in every Southern state.

- LAN began the process of reviewing insurance companies to achieve a group insurance rate for LAN members. This process will conclude later this year.

For these and many other accomplishments during his tenure, Richard Odom received no pay. Rather, the considerable time he devoted to advancing the Louisiana nursery industry *reduced* the time he was able to devote to his own nursery business. Next time you see him, thank him for his work on your behalf.

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Louisiana's Nurserymen

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Editor Mike Maher
Contributors Severn Doughty
Warren Purdy

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Standardize and Simplify Your Chart of Accounts

BY WARREN PURDY

In the first six articles of this series, we discussed in some detail the symptoms of the "Green Industry Disease," diagnosed as "profitlessness." In future articles we will discuss various proven methods to make your firm more professional, successful and, most important, much more profitable. The first system will be the Standardized and Simplified Chart of Accounts.

The most important tool for use in everyday managerial duties is a properly formatted and meaningful Statement of Profit and Loss, which is developed from the Standardized and Simplified Chart of Accounts.

You can't have one without the other. In far too many instances, management requests more and more additional detail on the Statement of Profit and Loss from the bookkeeping department. Not only does this put an added strain on the overburdened staff, but on management as well.

Managers do not have the time to study and digest all of the information supplied to them in the financial statement, and still have time to execute their many other duties and responsibilities. I have seen many firms that have 150 or more accounts on their Statement of Profit and Loss, and it literally takes hours to assimilate the facts as presented. It follows, therefore, that the request for extra detail (although

well intended) loses its significance to management and the real facts from the Statement of Profit and Loss go unused and unheeded in making sound business decisions.

I have seen many Statements of Profit and Loss that are very misleading, to say the least, as the Income from Operations is commingled with Major Subcontracts and Other Income (Non-Operational). Direct Operating Costs, Administrative Expenses, Major Subcontracts and Other Expenses (Non-Operational) are also intermingled. It is very important to know whether you are making a profit from your own operations or whether the profit is derived from the Major Subcontracts or (Non-Operational) Other Income.

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Believe it or not, I know of two firms that were actually losing money on their own operations (unknownst to them at the time) and were staying alive with the markup on their Major Subcontracts. After consulting with them, they are now using a new Standardized and Simplified Chart of Accounts and a properly formatted Statement of Profit and Loss. They are no longer relying on their Major Subcontracts to stay alive.

Keeping this in mind, I would like to recommend that you limit yourself to a maximum of 52 Income and Expense Accounts for your Statement of Profit and Loss. The big problem in this scenario is how to combine the accounts and place them in their proper section on the Statement of Profit and Loss. It has been said that, if you ask 100 accountants what comprises Direct Operating Costs and Overhead, you'd get 100 different answers.

However, there is a logical and accurate method to arrive at the proper distribution of the accounts in their proper place on the Statement of Profit and Loss—for management purposes only and not for your accountant's discretion for ease of filing tax returns.

Let's start with the most abused section of the chart of accounts; Administrative Expense, more commonly referred to as "overhead" by the accountants. What is or what comprises the administrative department of any firm? The administrative department is nothing more than a service bureau with the primary duty of informing the direct operating department whether it is achieving its goals or falling short. This department could be subcontracted, but it would be very inconvenient to do so. The administrative department does not make any money in itself, although it does assist the direct operating section in

becoming more successful by its timely and accurate financial reports. Furthermore, this department of any company is vitally important, even though it is highly neglected by many firms. It is the very lifeline to the success of your company.

The accounts that comprise the Administrative Expense section of your chart of accounts are: Part of the owner's or officer's salary; clerical office salaries; administrative payroll taxes, insurance expense and benefits; computer expenses; administrative auto expense; telephone; professional services; office rent; office supplies; company promotion and travel (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, etc.); contributions; bad debts; dues & subscriptions; general taxes (e.g., property taxes, franchise taxes); administrative depreciation; administrative amortization; administrative miscellaneous expense (e.g., bank charges, coffee); and interest expense. All of

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these Administrative Expenses should not exceed 10% of the Income From Operations, except in rare instances.

The next section of the chart of accounts is the Major Subcontracts Income and Expense accounts, which normally do not carry the same markup as your own work and really should be segregated so as to give a clear picture of your own operations and not fall into the trap of the two clients described earlier.

The other two sections of the Chart of Accounts which are non-operational are Other Income, which includes discounts earned, interest income and Miscellaneous Income; (i.e., equipment sold above depreciated value); and Other Expense, which includes discounts given, bonuses (e.g., incentives, pensions and profit sharing) and miscellaneous expense (e.g., equipment sold at less than depreciated value).

Now that you have identified the Administrative Expenses, Major Subcontracts, Other Income and Other Expense sections, all other expenses will fall into the section of the chart of accounts known as Direct Operating Costs immediately above the Gross Profit from Operations section of the Statement of Profit and Loss. They are: direct labor, casual labor and minor subcontracts, materials, freight, equipment rental, yard expense, yard labor, equipment operation and maintenance, equipment labor-mechanic, miscellaneous job costs, communications; managers', superintendents' and purchasing agents' salaries and their expenses; operating payroll taxes, insurance expense, employee benefits, depreciation expense, amortization expense, salesmen's, estimators' and designers' salaries and their expenses; commission expense, and direct advertising and marketing.

The one additional Direct Operating Cost account is interest for the interiorscape contractor who leases plants to their clientele. For the interiorscape contractor, this is another cost which increases their three biddable items of labor, mate-

rials and equipment to four, as interest becomes a biddable item. Most interiorscape contractors have to borrow money in order to finance the lease operation and this should be segregated from normal interest on working capital loans and equipment purchase contracts which appear in the Administrative Section of the chart of accounts.

You will notice that I have not included a section called *Cost of Goods Sold* or *Cost of Sales* (as referred to by the accountant). The

accounting profession defines the term *Cost of Goods Sold* as a beginning inventory plus purchases (materials) less ending inventory. When this figure is subtracted from "Sales From Your Operations," this should equal your Gross Profit. I believe this is a misleading computation for The Green Industry. The Green Industry, and especially the contracting segment, requires materials and all of the other Direct Operating Costs outlined above to arrive at a true "Cost of Goods



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Sold," which I refer to as Total Direct Operating Costs, and an accurate Gross Profit computation.

When you adopt a Standardized and Simplified Chart of Accounts, your Statement of Profit and Loss will appear as follows:

- 1) **Income—Sales From Your Operations**
- 2) **Direct Operating Costs**
Gross Profit From Operations
- 3) **Administrative Expenses**
Net Profit From Operations
- 4) **Income From Major Subcontracts**
- 5) **Expenses for Major Subcontracts**
Net Profit From Major Subcontracts
Net Profit From All Operations
- 6) **Other Income (non-operational)**
- 7) **Other Expense (non-operational)**
Net Profit Before Taxes

Standardization and Simplification of your Chart of Accounts will produce numerous results for your firm. Just to mention a few:

1) It will give management accurate information in order to make more timely and competent decisions. It will also give them the result for more accurate costs when it comes time for the estimating and bidding process.

2) Simplification. Ease of reading and interpreting major accounts. It is far easier to see just one account; i.e., equipment operation and maintenance, as one total rather than six or eight accounts which have to be added to determine what the final results are. This alone will speed up the decision-making process.

3) It takes far less time for the bookkeeping department to code invoices when the number of accounts is reduced. This minimizes the chance for errors.

4) If certified audits or reviews are to be performed for your firm, you will discover it takes the auditors far less time to audit 52 accounts than 150.

In summary, I believe you will find that you will have more meaningful information at your fingertips for making faster and sound management decisions when this system is installed. It will further allow you more time to do the things you do best—which can have nothing but an overall beneficial effect on your company.

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Odom Thanks LAN

Commissioner of Agriculture Bob Odom spoke briefly to nurserymen at the LAN-MNA short course, to thank LAN for its help with providing plants for the Department of Agriculture Building. "We have the nicest building in state government" Odom said.

New Trade Show Site

The January 1992 LAN-MNA Short Course and Trade Show will be held in the Biloxi-Gulfport area, because of scheduling problems with the Jackson, Miss., site. Normally the annual show alternates between the two state capitals.

Group Insurance

J. C. Patrick, LAN board member, heads a committee that will evaluate a number of insurance companies, to develop a group insurance program as an additional benefit of membership in LAN. This committee will present a recommendation to the June LAN board meeting.

Ira Nelson Scholarship Retained

The LAN board has affirmed that it will continue awarding a scholarship in the name of Ira Nelson, one of the founders of LAN. Nelson was a widely respected horticulturist at the University of Southwestern Louisiana. Through plant collecting expeditions to Latin America, he introduced many new tropical plants into cultivation. In particular the yellow-flowering amaryllis, *Amaryllis evansia*, was of great value to plant breeders and received national acclaim when he introduced it from Bolivia in 1954. He also introduced a chartreuse and a pastel form of amaryllis, as well as the red passion flower. One iris species he discovered in Vermilion Parish is named in his honor, *Iris nelsonii*. He helped initiate LAN's first annual trade show, held in Lafayette in 1964. A year later he was killed in an auto collision near LaPlace, as he was returning from judging a flower show in New Orleans.

New LAN Officers, Board Members

Richard Maxwell of Maxwell's Nursery, Shreveport, became LAN President in January. First Vice President is Steve Adams of Adams Nursery, Forest Hill, and Second Vice President is J. C. Patrick of ProScape, Baton Rouge.

Four new members have joined the LAN Board of Directors: Steve Bellanger, New Orleans, Banting Nursery; Clyde Gehron, DeRidder, Gehron-Teed Bark Co.; Roger Mayes, Baton Rouge, Louisiana Nursery Outlet; and Rick Webb, Amite, Louisiana Growers.

Continuing officers are treasurer Walter Imahara, Imahara's Nursery, Baton Rouge; Dr. Warren Meadows, executive secretary; and Elizabeth Pope, executive assistant; both of Baton Rouge.

Continuing board members are Severn Doughty, Cooperative Extension, New Orleans; Gerald Foret, Gerald Foret Nursery, New Iberia; Fred Hoogland, Hoogland's Nursery, Bossier City; Harold Poole Jr., Harold Poole Nursery, Forest Hill; and John Kavanaugh, Kavanaugh's Nursery, Ruston.

Greenhouse Meeting

The 21st annual conference and trade show of the Louisiana Greenhouse Growers' Association will be held June 20 and 21 in Baton Rouge. For more information, contact Dr. Dennis Wollard at USL Box 44433, Lafayette, LA., 70504, or call him at (318) 231-5348. LGGA includes

both ornamental and vegetable growers.

Brasseaux's Contributes to Gateways

Brasseaux's Nursery near Breaux Bridge has contributed 10 large live oaks to the Gateway Lafayette project, the cover story in the summer 1990 issue of this magazine. They join dozens of other Green Industry sponsors who have donated plants to this massive landscaping project along the I-10/I-49 intersection. Brasseaux's also contributed trees to a gateway planting along the Breaux Bridge exit from I-10.

Upcoming Meetings

The American Association of Nurserymen Convention and Trade show will meet July 11-15 in Orlando, Fla. Atlanta will host the Southern Nurserymen's Association Aug. 2-4. The TAN-MISSLARK show will be in Dallas this year, Aug. 16-18.

LAN Assets

At the 1991 LAN Short Course and Convention, LAN treasurer Walter Imahara reported that LAN's total assets are \$107,000, up \$3,000 from the same time last year. Of this sum, \$98,500 is in certificates of deposit. Dues remained at the same level as last year, \$10,300, Imahara said. Most of LAN's money is devoted to endowments for scholarships and research. The scholarship account is \$35,000 and the research fund is \$34,654.



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Apply by July 1 for Research Grant

LAN will make up to \$3,000 in grant funds available for Green Industry research, according to Dr. Severn Doughty, LAN board member and research director.

Possible topics for research include landscape maintenance, plant propagation, weed control, container or field production, economic studies, pest control, water management, environmental concerns, retail garden center operation, greenhouse production, arboriculture, plant development and breeding, and related topics.

LAN is now requesting proposals from experts in universities and experiment stations across the state. Deadline for application is July 1. Awards will be announced in August.

Researchers who want to seek funding should contact Doughty at (504) 486-4054, or Dr. Warren Meadows at (504) 766-3471.

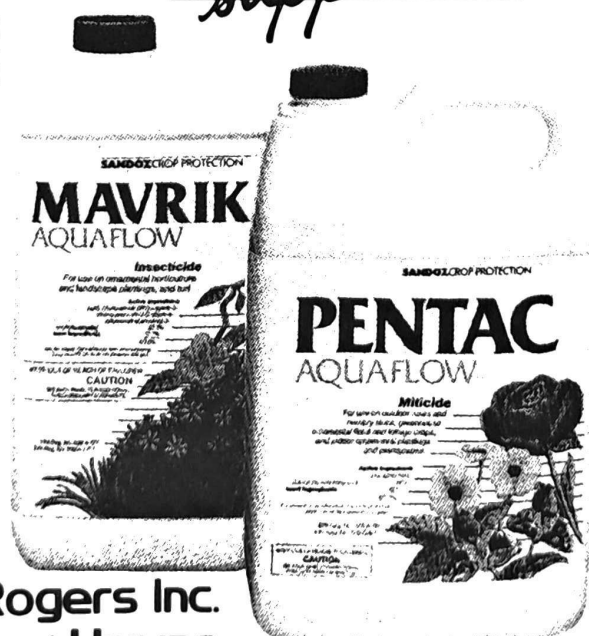
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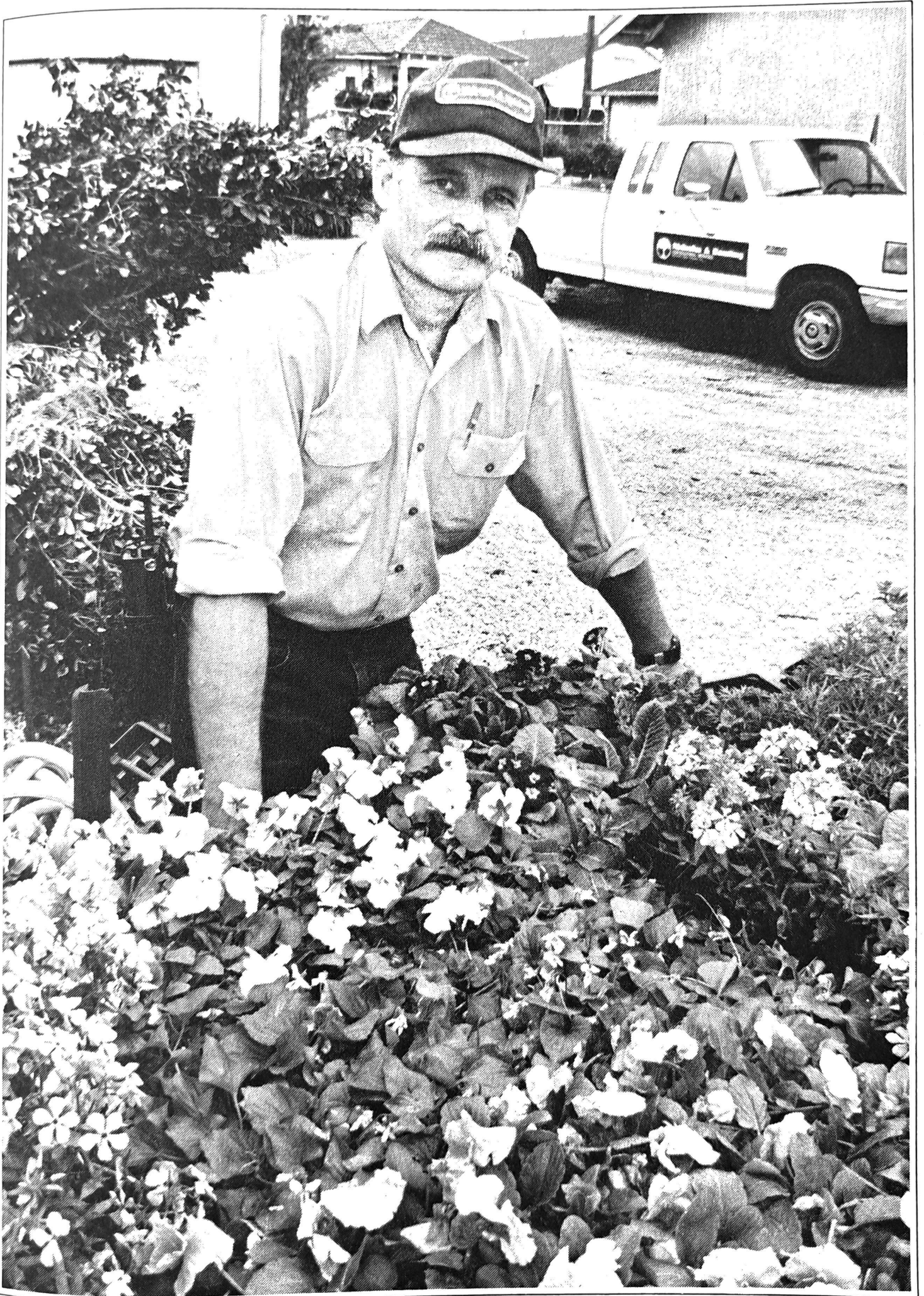
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NURSERYMAN OF THE YEAR

Vaughn Banting grins and shakes his head slyly as he reviews the photos of his recent trip to Colombia. The pictures—souvenir shots by a professional photographer—show expensively dressed Latin Americans clustered in various groups around him. At the bottom a caption explains that they are pictured with *El Maestro Vaughn Banting*.

This genial New Orleanian is a world-recognized master of bonsai, the art of miniature plant culture.

Continues on page 14



A bonsai gallery



A spruce pine, contorted by wires that surround the trunk and branches.



Banting created and popularized the flat-topped style of bonsai pruning to allow this young cypress to mimic the inverted-cone top of an ancient tree.

“These are some incredibly wealthy people,” he says of the smiling faces that surround him in the photographs. “Their parties begin at 9 and last ’til 5 in the morning. Caviar everywhere; Henry Moore sculptures.” He shakes his head again.

He shows photos of one of his hosts’ villas, an edifice lined with Italian marble and replete with soccer field, basketball and tennis courts, pool, gardens—and armed guards. One photo shows the host’s horses eating salad from a tiled trough.

Banting had been in Colombia for a several-day show devoted to bonsai plants. He judged a competition and demonstrated special bonsai effects.

“The whole idea of bonsai is to make a small plant look like a replica

of a really big tree,” he explains. “One demonstration I did turned 27 *Ficus benjamina* into a miniature forest.”

This is accomplished through judicious pruning. Some bonsai trees are forced to grow into cascading or asymmetrical shapes by wires and “jacks”—splints that cause an unusual twist or turn in the plant’s structure.

Most people think that bonsai trees are incredibly old. “The focus of bonsai is the *illusion* of age, not the actual age,” Banting says. “You impose a form on the plant by making seven or eight prunes over three to seven years, depending on how fast-growing the plant is.”

Bonsai growers contort their subjects into various accepted styles, or patterns of growth: slanting style,

formal upright, informal upright, broom style, forest style.

Banting invented the “flat-topped” style that characterizes the look of a bonsai cypress tree. It mimics the bare trunk at bottom and the inverted cone of greenery at the top of an old bald cypress.

Bonsai growers around the world adopt these styles and enter their bonsai creations in competitive shows, judged by experts.

The Colombia show was not Banting’s first performance as *maestro*. He was *meister* two years ago in a month-long lecture series in South Africa. “They worked me hard but managed to work in some tourism, too.” He tells a tale about almost losing his camera to an adult male baboon who climbed into his car in Kruger National Park.



An informal upright juniper.



A slanting-style water elm collected from Catahoula Lake, one of Banting's "bovine masterpieces" that has been browsed by cows.

He has given many lectures in the U.S., and writes for *Bonsai Clubs International Magazine*, *Bonsai Journal*, *Florida Bonsai* magazine and others. His wife is past president of Bonsai Clubs International.

Banting says he was first attracted to bonsai when he was 13 years old. He later studied horticulture at LSU, and after a tour of duty in Vietnam—where he caught a machine gun burst in the knee—he returned to New Orleans and began a landscape service.

One of his clients, impressed with Banting's enthusiasm for bonsai and tropical plants, paid his expenses to Japan for further study. Banting also studied with John Naka of Los Angeles, one of the acknowledged masters of the art.

Banting formed the Greater New

Orleans Bonsai Society in 1972, and has brought Naka to its meetings several times.

Although most bonsai plants pictured in the popular media are conifers like black pine, almost any woody plant can serve the cause of bonsai. In his suburban Metairie back yard Banting cultivates bonsai azaleas, swamp maple, cypress and hornbeam, as well as the traditional pines and junipers.

Two of his creations, a broom-style water elm and a forest-style grouping of swamp maples, have been included in the National Bonsai Foundation Collection in Washington, D. C. They are among 50 plants selected by experts as the best in the U.S.

Bonsai seems shrouded in mystic oriental esthetics and practiced by

the kind of people who rake rock gardens while chanting mantras. Banting doesn't fit this mold, however; he's too pragmatic. In fact, he credits cows for helping to shape the water elm in the national collection.

"I call them my bovine masterpieces," he says of his bonsai water elms. "The water level in Catahoula Lake (north of Alexandria) is controlled, and as the level falls, it forces the elms into a false dormancy. Cows will come along and browse their tops, effectively pruning them." Banting comes next, searching the drawn-down lake bed for plants stunted into pleasing bonsai forms by fluctuating water and hungry cows. He applies the finishing touches with shears.

Banting's widely recognized work



Banting consults the directory for his memory telephone, to place a plant order from his "rolling office." He has both a cellular phone and a radio system to keep in touch with his crews, clients, suppliers and office.

as a bonsai master earned him the 1991 Nurseryman of the Year award from the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen. But the award also recognizes his work as one of the leading landscapers in New Orleans.

He has been in business about 20 years, starting with one helper and a van. Now his company does about \$1 million in business a year, with four crews and seven trucks.

"We do more restoration than new construction—old Garden District homes that have become overgrown. I like to design with my foot. I show up on the job site with plants and place them in consultation with the client. If the client sees them in place, seldom do I bring plants back."

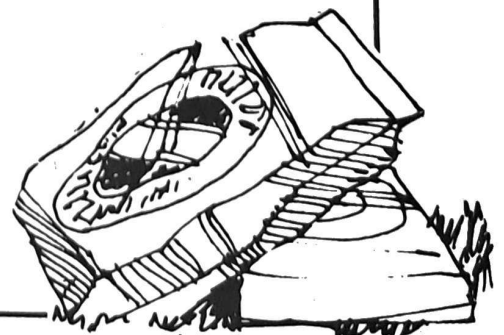
Having renovated a landscape, Banting offers a maintenance service.

"We visit each client weekly or we don't take them on as a client. We have 75 accounts that average \$300 a month. We don't cut lawns; strictly horticulture. We run two maintenance and two landscape crews,

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To keep his crews moving and his clients happy, Banting processes a lot of information. "As I drive, my truck is my rolling office," he says. "Two of our trucks have phones, the others have radios. We started out with phones in all our trucks, but that got too expensive. For \$60 a month, these radios give us unlimited air time.

"I have 40 numbers programmed into the memory of the phone in my truck. If a customer requests plants, I can usually order them within the hour."

Behind the seat of his extra-cab truck, Banting keeps tools, books, a client list and index cards for plants that clients order over and above their landscape maintenance contract. All special orders are transferred to computer for billing.

He also keeps a black book of special events: clients' parties that will require additional garden preparation.

Banting maintains what he calls a "cheat sheet" of interesting plants.

He has dabbled for years in orchids and bromeliads. He favors others for landscaping. "Some of my signature plants are African irises and dwarf Indian hawthorn."

Although he has retained his enthusiasm for plants, Banting is keen on business, too. "Our profit is respectable for this size operation," he says. His firm's name is Nicholas and Banting, but Banting became sole owner in 1972. The business is now incorporated.

"For many years I had trouble finding the right manager. About three years ago James Adaire joined the company and he has really made a difference. He and I share the same philosophy about the business."

Banting also realizes considerable savings from an unusual arrangement with one of his competitors: They share the same business site, on South Rendon in the uptown region.

"We split the lease on an old lumber yard, and share the expenses for a dumpster, plant orders from wholesalers, even secretarial help."

Banting's site-mate is Robin Tanner of Tanner Landscape. "He's a prince of a guy. We could not be in more direct competition, but this arrangement has worked out well for both of us. We share a welding machine, an air compressor, a chipper. Each of us has his own plant holding areas. If either of us owned the whole thing, we'd probably both be unhappy."

Banting says part of his success as a landscaper is a flair for merchandising. As his crews make their daily rounds, they carry plants destined for the whole day's work. "Customers will see others' plants and they want them. We sell a lot of annuals this way. I buy annuals wholesale and sell them retail. We make so much on annuals, it actually negates the cost of labor."

Banting talks fast and wastes no words getting his point across. He exudes enthusiasm for whatever he's presently discussing, be it bonsai or travel or landscaping or business. Yet part of his mind seems to be elsewhere, gauging what progress he has made on a busy day's schedule, considering where he needs to be in 15 minutes, planning whom to call by 3 p.m.

For some people, becoming an internationally known bonsai master would be a life achievement; for Vaughn Banting it is a hobby. This gardener for the Garden District has made ample green in the Green Industry by managing his time relentlessly, and doing well what he loves best.

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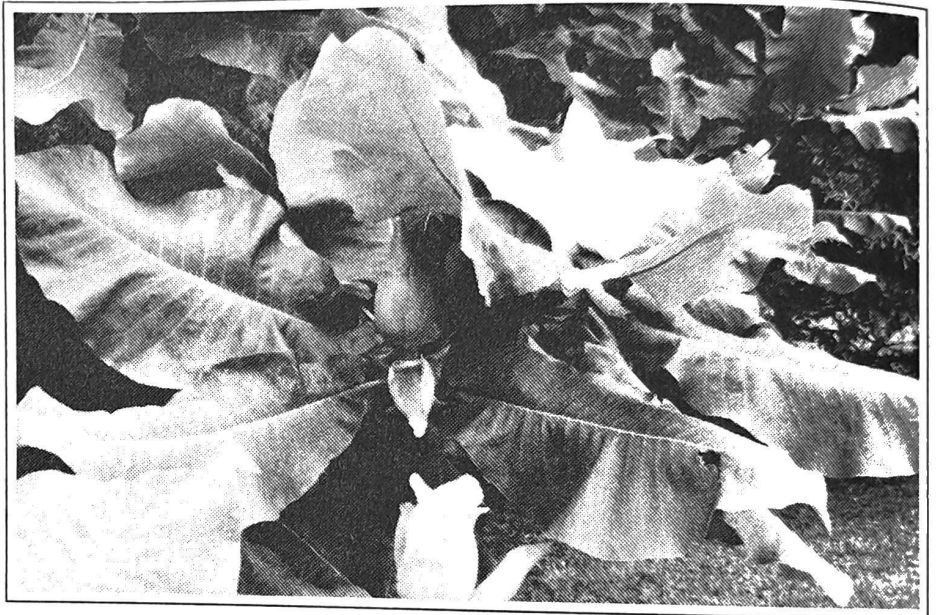
If you don't know Bigleaf Magnolia, you're in for a special treat.

Simply put—it's dynamic. It produces the largest leaves and flowers of any member at the magnolia family. As a matter of fact, Little (1988) indicated that the tree has the largest flowers and leaves of all native North American species, except for palms. Either in the woods or in a landscape setting, this magnolia will draw attention.

Bigleaf Magnolia is scientifically known as *Magnolia macrophylla* Michx. and belongs to the family *Magnoliaceae* (Bailey's *Hortus Third* 1978). However, Robert K. Godfrey (1988) listed it as *Magnolia macrophylla* Michx. subspecies *macrophylla*. Interestingly, Godfrey also listed *M. ashei* as *M. macrophylla* Michx. subspecies *ashei*. These latter listings apparently reflect updated name changes.

Bigleaf Magnolia also is commonly known as Cowcumber, Large-Leaved Cucumber Tree, Great-Leaved Magnolia, Big-bloom Cucumber-tree, Silver-leaf, Elk-bark and Umbrella Tree. The genus name *Magnolia* honors Pierre Magnol (1638-1715), a professor of medicine and director of the botanical garden in Montpellier, France (Vines, 1976). The species, *macrophylla* is Latin for *large leaf*. According to Little (1988) and Coker and Totten (1937), Andre Michaux (1746-1802), the French naturalist and explorer, first discovered Bigleaf Magnolia near Charlotte, N.C. in 1789.

This plant ranges sparsely and sometimes rarely through the south-



Bigleaf's big leaves can exceed three feet in length

eastern United States. Little (1977) depicted its range as primarily occupying southern Mississippi and western Alabama with scattered ranges in Louisiana (Grant and Winn parishes, Ouachita, eastern Tangipahoa, northern St. Tammany and practically all of Washington parishes), 1 county in northern Arkansas, 10 counties in Georgia, 2 in South Carolina, 7 in North Carolina, 24 in Tennessee, 11 in Kentucky, 1 in far western Virginia and 1 county in southern Ohio.

Stupka (1980) stated that Bigleaf Magnolia does not grow in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, but does naturally occur near Boogertown, Tenn., northeast of Gatlinburg and within four miles of the park boundary.

Both Rogers (1924) and Sargent (1965 reprint) reported that this species was taken and is growing in the temperate countries of Europe. Mathews (1915) commented that Bigleaf Magnolia also is cultivated in Boston, Mass. and Little (1988)

mentioned Massachusetts. Many references point to the fact that *M. macrophylla* culturally prefers sandy valleys and loose, moist, acidic, well-drained, fertile soils (Dean 1988, Dormon 1965, Little 1988, Mathews 1915, Odenwald and Turner 1987, Rogers 1924, Sargent 1965 reprint). It also performs best protected by an overstory.

The leaves and stems are somewhat fragile and subject to damage by winds (Brown 1945, Little 1988, Martin 1983, Odenwald and Turner 1987). Brown and Kirkman (1990) even suggested that the branches are brittle and susceptible to ice storms. However, the accompanying photos were taken in the open along a fence just outside of Franklin, LA. The tree is beautifully shaped, and there is slight indication of wind damaged leaves. In an understory setting the plant will be much more open and flowering may be reduced, depending upon the amount of shade. Protection from wind would be advised, however.

As far as its landscape qualities, it's a natural choice when coarse texture is desired. While young, it exhibits a somewhat conical shape but as it matures it becomes more oval. The foliage color is bright green on top, silvery beneath. It will brighten up a rather dark setting, especially a dark green background. The huge white flowers are a masterpiece of beauty and will definitely arouse interest.

Bigleaf Magnolia exhibits a slow to medium rate of growth. It may be used singly as an accent plant or massed to create a dynamic grove of bright green, very coarse textured trees that won't be forgotten once viewed.

In autumn just after the leaves fall from *M. macrophylla* and especially in a natural setting where the leaves will lay as fallen, a silvery, coarse-textured carpet will cover the ground. It can easily be seen at a distance. As Dirr (1983) put it, the ground appears to be "littered with large pieces of green and gray pa-

per." This phenomenon certainly creates added interest in a natural landscape.

Speaking of landscapes, Dirr (1983) also mentioned that Bigleaf Magnolia is not meant for home landscapes but rather for parks and campuses. I couldn't disagree more with this assessment. I've seen a number of home landscapes beautifully adorned with this plant and recommend it especially for informal, woody designs.

M. macrophylla usually reaches a height of 30 to 50 feet. However, Vines (1978) and Godfrey (1988) reported that the largest specimen recorded in Baltimore, Md., measured 59 feet in height with a spread of 64 feet. A more common spread, however, is 25 to 30 feet.

Bigleaf Magnolia has very large, deciduous, entire leaves that range from 12 to 39 inches long and 6 to 12 inches wide. They're obovate to oblong, papery thin, alternate or sometimes appearing like false

umbrellalike whorls. The upper leaf surface is bright green with a silvery pubescent white surface beneath. The apex is acute, obtuse or rounded and broadest beyond the middle. The leaf base is cordate with earlike lobes or rounded lobes. Petioles are 3 to 4 inches long, stout and gray with pubescence (Brown and Kirkman 1990, Duncan and Duncan 1988, Little 1988, and Vines 1976).

The twigs are hairy, stout, brittle and may appear yellowish-green, later turning reddish-brown, tan or gray. The very prominent and large, oval to ovate leaf-scars are present at the nodes. Twig terminals end in large buds covered in white tomentum that is very ornamental especially in winter (Little 1988, Vines 1976). The smooth, thin, light gray to reddish brown, finely scaled bark and strong, thick branches provide an interesting scaffold especially in the winter landscape.

The magnificent, cup-shaped, creamy white flowers appear in South

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Louisiana from May to June (Brown 1972). They may range in diameter from 10 to 19 inches across. The flower has six petals with a purplish to pink spot near the base inside each petal (Krussmann 1977, Little 1988, Vines 1976).

According to some, the fragrance is rather pleasing (Coker and Totten 1937, Dean 1988, Odenwald and Turner 1987, Sargent 1965 reprint) but Bailey (1950) admitted to it having a disagreeable odor. The rose-colored, cone-like fruit, (aggregate of follicles) range in length from 2 1/2 to 4 inches and from 1 3/4 to 2 1/3 inches wide (Brown and Kirkman 1990, Coker and Totten 1937, Dean 1988, Godfrey 1988, Little 1988, Vines 1976). The seeds are bright, orange-red, triangular to elliptic in shape and 1/3 to 2/3 inch long and 1/4 inch broad. When ripe they will be dangling on threads. According to Radford et. al. (1979) the chromosome count is n=19. Fruits should ripen from September through October and can be harvested then.

Bigleaf Magnolia should be pruned after flowering if you want to enjoy its floral display. However, should you wish to collect seeds, prune it sparingly during the dormant season after seed collection. It's best to simply shape the tree to the desired form and proportion. Of course remove any diseased or dead wood or crossing branches.

Propagation of *M. macrophylla* may be accomplished through seeds, possibly cuttings and grating. According to Dormon (1965) the oily, orange-red, outer seed coat (sarcotesta) should be removed before attempting germination. Dirr and Heuser (1987) reported that seeds should be stratified for three months at temperatures from 35°F to 45°F after cleaning them. Low germination percentages (<50%) may be encountered. Vines (1976) indicated that green cuttings may be taken in spring. However, Dirr and Heuser (1987) suggested that *M. macrophylla* not be propagated this way because they don't produce roots readily due to the large pith

area. Budding also will work on *M. macrophylla* and for details consult Dirr and Heuser (1987).

Bigleaf Magnolia is culturally temperamental. Transplanting is difficult and should be confined to either very young trees or to trees that have been root pruned in the nursery. Late December through February are the best months in Louisiana to transplant it. Odenwald and Turner (1987) recommend using small seedling trees in

the landscape. They further stated that Bigleaf Magnolia is somewhat easy to establish on old, undisturbed woodland soils. Good drainage and moist soils are essential. Container culture is fairly easy but don't allow roots to encircle the pots or otherwise become root bound.

Several varieties are listed. Bailey's *Hortus Third* (1976) lists 'Holy Grail' but doesn't describe it. Halfacre and Shawcroft (1989) list 'Palmberg' with large flowers and



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'Purple Spotted,' which has flower petals with purple blotches in the center. The Durio family, owners of Louisiana Nursery, Rt. 7, Box 43, Opelousas, LA. 70570 (318) 948-3696 or (318) 9426404 in their 1990 catalogue list 'Mississippi Clone' with large leaves and pure white flowers, 'Palmberg,' 'Pure White Clone' with large, creamy-white blooms and larger leaves, 'Purple Spotted,' 'Sara Gladney' that blooms over an extended period of time with pure white flowers and large leaves and 'Whopper' with 19 inch white flowers spotted in purple.

Other nurseries carrying Bigleaf Magnolia include, Natives Landscape Corp., 320 Theard, Covington, LA. 70433 (504) 892-5454 or (504) 892-8698; Oak Haven Farms Nursery and Garden Center, 18377 Blythe Rd., Prairieville, LA. 70769 (504) 622-1058; Bill's Creek Nursery, 82400 Fussell Cemetery Rd. N.E., Covington, LA. 70433 (504) 892-2327; and Shadow Nursery, Winchester, Tenn., 37398 (615) 967-6059, (615) 967-2428.

Vines (1976) listed medicinal uses for Bigleaf Magnolia. Magnolin, a glycoside, is found in the bark. Years ago magnolia bark was used to treat malaria and rheumatism. No mention was made as to how effective the treatments were.

Concerning diseases of Bigleaf Magnolia, I could find no listing in my references. That's not to say that they're free from diseases, however. Hepting (1971) listed several magnolia species and upon reviewing information regarding *M.*

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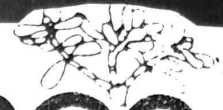
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acuminata, a close relative, only four organisms were listed for this species. Possibly the same holds true for *M. macrophylla*.

Wehlburg et. al. (1975) listed 42 disease reportings on *M. grandiflora*, *M. soulangeana*, *M. virginiana* and other species. Since two of the three species are evergreens, those organisms attacking especially the foliage may not infect *M. macrophylla*.

As far as insect pests are concerned, nothing is listed in the references I consulted. If any of you have encountered disease or insect problems with Bigleaf Magnolia, please send specimens to me for identification.

I have a dried leaf specimen hanging on the wall in my office and frequently I receive comments on its size (19 1/2 inches by 10 1/2 inches). Just imagine if you had a tree growing in the landscape. I'm sure you would get ample comments on it too. It truly is a spectacular plant and one well worth growing.



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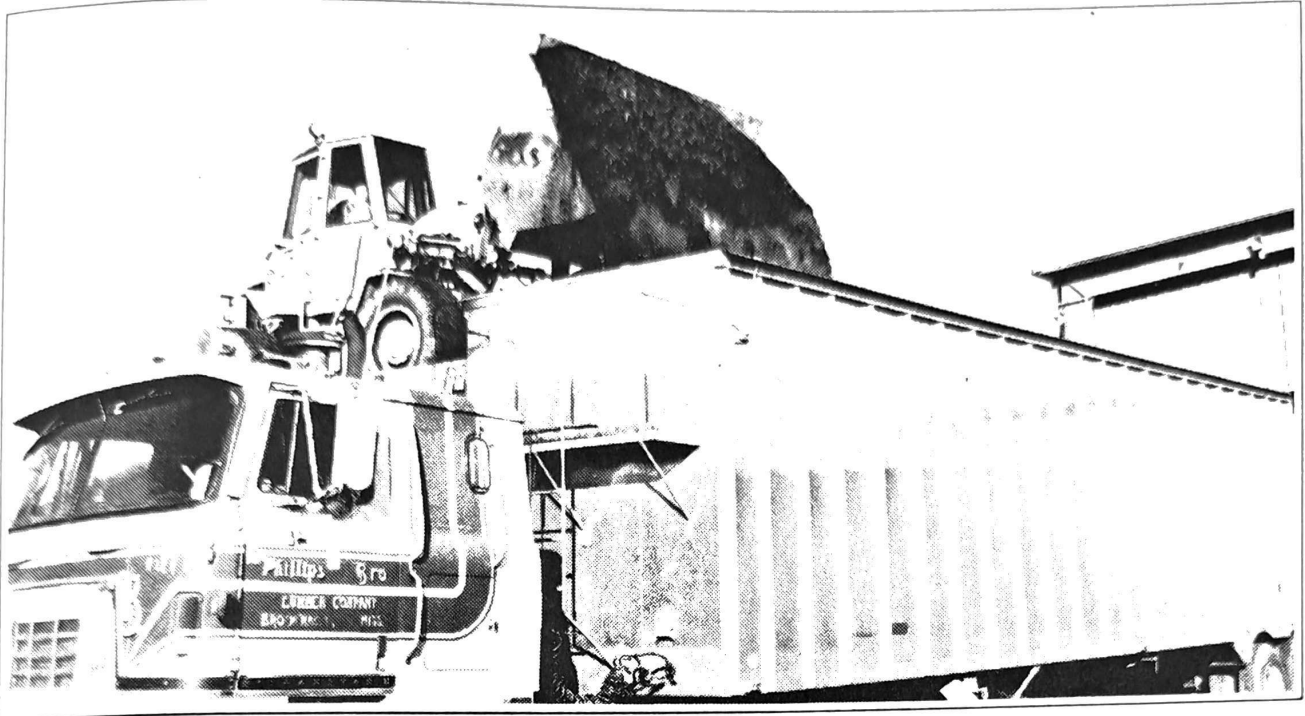
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