

## Magnolia grandiflora

## Southern Magnolia

mag-NOE-lee-uh gran-dih-FLOR-ah  
*Magnolia* - Pierre Magnol (1638–1715)  
*grandiflora* - L., large-flowered  
Magnoliaceae



Southeastern United States  
Simple, Alternate  
Evergreen, 40–80 ft.

**M**agnolias are an ancient and primitive group of flowering plants that evolved at a time when Earth was covered primarily with ferns and conifers. The iconic southern magnolia is widely planted throughout California and is the most widely grown ornamental tree on Earth. It can be recognized by the contrasting sides on its evergreen, stiff, leathery leaves: glossy, dark green above and gray to rust-colored and felted below. Its spectacular, fruit-scented, creamy white flowers are borne individually on the deep-green canopy like huge water lilies. They are California's largest cultivated tree flowers, some reaching a foot in diameter. These flowers evolved prior to butterflies and bees and were originally pollinated by beetles and other ancient insects. Pollinated flowers mature into aggregate cones of small fruits, each splitting to unveil a fleshy, scarlet seed.



Seeds and  
mature fruits

Few other trees  
bring such  
a whiff of  
the palace to  
suburbia like  
the southern  
magnolia.  
—Thomas  
Pakenham



Leaves

### California's Eleven Most Widely Cultivated Urban Trees (in order of prevalence)

Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*—most common)  
Purple Leaf Plum (*Prunus cerasifera*)  
London Plane Tree (*Platanus × hispanica*)  
Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*)  
Callery or Bradford Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)  
Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*)  
Mexican Fan Palm (*Washingtonia robusta*)  
Chinese Pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*)  
Indian Laurel Fig (*Ficus microcarpa*)  
Brisbane Box (*Lophostemon confertus*)  
Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*)

