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# *Magnolia hodgsonii* and other magnolias in Sikkim

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On the IDS tour to Sikkim in May 2010 we found a few trees of *Magnolia hodgsonii* (*Talauma hodgsonii*), this very handsome low-altitude magnolia growing as widely spaced trees of about 12m high in the wild forest up the Teesta valley near Mangan at an elevation of about 1500m.

The huge stiff leaves are up to 60cm long (2ft) and the trees were just coming into flower; the petals are thick and waxy with a very strong scent. The tree is named after Brian Hodgson, who was the British Resident in Kathmandu

*Magnolia hodgsonii* growing at about 1500m in the wild forest up the Teesta valley in Sikkim.

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The painting of *Magnolia hodgsonii* (*Talauma hodgsonii*) by Fitch, from Hooker's *Illustrations of Himalayan Plants*, which was published in 1855.



*Magnolia globosa*  
in flower bud.



*Magnolia hodgsonii*  
growing in Sikkim.

and befriended Hooker when he arrived at Darjeeling in 1848. It is superbly illustrated in Hooker's *Illustrations of Himalayan Plants*, 1855.

Other magnolias seen were *M. campbellii* (named after Archibald Campbell, British Political Agent in Sikkim who negotiated Hooker's entry into Sikkim in 1849) at about 2500 metres which had already flowered before our visit (incidentally it is from all accounts always white in Sikkim—so why is it coloured pink by Hooker?); and the lovely *M. globosa* with its beautiful silky leaves and covered in flower buds just beginning to droop to flower in a few weeks time.

Of the michelias, now of course all magnolias, we saw were *M. doltsopa*, *M. velutina* and *M. cathcartii*, after John Cathcart, formally a Judge in the Bengal Civil Service who was recuperating in Darjeeling when he met Hooker. Following his death in Switzerland in 1851 his sister gave about 1000 of his drawings to Kew, from which Hooker chose a number for inclusion in his wonderful book of 1855, *Illustrations of Himalayan Plants*.