
Magnolia ? champaca

CAROL GURNEY

In 2005 I got two small plants of what is thought to be this species from Peter Chappell, who sadly died in May 2015, who had somehow got them from China, and planted them in different parts of my garden here in Suffolk.

Then in November 2006 we saw a number of large trees of the species on the IDS tour to Burma. They were not in flower at that time of year but the local villagers collect the very strong scented flowers in the spring and bottle them in some sort of preservative and I bought two bottles of this 'scent' to bring home. One I gave to my wife who was not impressed! And the other I took in January 2007 to a *New Trees* reviewing session run by John Grimshaw at which we opened it (see *New Trees, Recent Introductions to Cultivation*, page 483).

Since planting both plants have grown healthily and survived some recent cold winters apparently unharmed, to the extent that I began to question whether they really were *Magnolia champaca* which is meant to be very tender. Imagine my surprise and joy therefore when one of them, now about 5 m tall and ten years old, in late April 2015 produced a mass of scented yellow flowers, which I believe confirms that it is indeed *M. champaca*. The other tree

62
photograph © Carol Gurney



Magnolia champaca flowering in Suffolk (2015).

has grown equally well but was rather shaded under a small oak tree which I have since cut down to give it more sunlight.

I have of course alerted John Grimshaw to these developments and he has promised to update his comments in *New Trees* in due course.

PS. I have since shown the photograph to a number of magnolia experts who think it is not quite right as the flowers should be more orange and have a stronger scent.