

Bloom Baby, Bloom



By Lora Keddle

I love blooms. In the Northwest the first sign of spring is the emersion of crocus and daffodils. When I see these little champs burst from the cold soil it tells me that my true love of all bloomers, the Magnolia, is about to warm my gray days. In March when I see their buds begin to swell all I can think is "Bloom Baby Bloom". The bloom of the magnolia tells me that spring is officially under way.

Magnolias come in two basic types and two basic forms, evergreen or deciduous, and tree or shrub form. The majestic evergreen magnolias are truly amazing, but it's the deciduous varieties that kick me out of my winter grays.

On bare stems, blooms of yellow, pink, magenta, white or purple appear first. Some magnolia blooms look like tulip blooms on barren branches. Hence one of their common names, the Tulip Tree. A couple of amazing varieties in this family are the Butterflies and Vulcan.



Butterflies is a fabulous, rich yellow that doesn't fade. Its blooms are around 4 to 5 inches and are more upright, giving it the appearance of butterflies on a branch. Yellow Lantern come in a pyramid tree form that typically reaches 16 ft tall, but older mature varieties have been found at around 25 feet tall.

The Vulcan Magnolia will stop a crowd with

its vibrant wine color flowers that are around 10-12 in. As a tree form the Vulcan can reach up to 25 ft.

Another style of magnolias are commonly known as the star magnolias. When their blooms open they fold wide open and flat, giving the appearance of a star. Many of these varieties are wonderfully fragrant.



Royal Star Magnolia offers one of the purest white, large, fragrant, double bloom. More often found as a shrub, it is as a moderate grower reaching only 10 -15 feet tall. Like all magnolias it can be pruned to be kept to any size you'd prefer.

If you like the star style, but are looking

for a little more color the Pink Star Magnolia is a beautiful option. Very similar to the Royal Star, but it offers a beautiful blush pink bloom.



Magnolias love full sun and are very easy to care for once they are established. They also make wonderful cut flowers. To bring their blooms inside cut the long branches in the morning when it is cool. You want to pound the cut end with a hammer to make sure the stem will take up the water. Get it into water immediately. Cut branches with tight buds. The warmth of your indoors will make the blooms open inside and will give you more time to enjoy their beauty.

Magnolias, are truly amazing. You'll find magnolias in both European and Asian designs. Their size and style fits into any landscape. Even in my small backyard I've made room for three. Plus there are over 200 known varieties in the world. Go online or visit your local garden center to see why I say you just got to have a magnolia in spring.