



Ashe Magnolia

Magnolia ashei

Michaux

The Ashe magnolia is native only to a very small area – a few counties – in the Florida panhandle, yet is hardy in zone 6 if not too exposed. Considered by many to be a subspecies of the bigleaf magnolia, *Magnolia macrophylla*, it is very similar but with distinct differences. It never attains the tree stature of the bigleaf, only growing as a shrub or small tree up to about half the height of the bigleaf.

The flowers of the Ashe magnolia are very fragrant, and can be very large, up to a foot across. The plant will flower when only four years old. The leaves are smaller than those of the bigleaf magnolia, reaching only about two feet long, more similar in size to those of the Fraser magnolia, *Magnolia fraseri*, or the umbrella magnolia, *Magnolia tripetala*. All these magnolias, plus the pyramid magnolia, *Magnolia pyramidalis*, are the American representatives subgenus *Magnolia*, section *Rhytidospermum*. There are also six Asian species in this section.

The Ashe magnolia appreciates a well-drained, humus-rich soil and is quite shade tolerant. Of course, it will make a better specimen tree with higher light levels, as well as having more blooms. They are often as wide as they are high, especially when grown in the shade. They need regular watering in dry times. Plant it where it is sheltered from harsh winter winds.

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