



***Magnolia x soulangeana*: Maturing blooms**

This *Magnolia x soulangeana* branch developed its flowers in mid April 2010; a little later than in recent years. The year before, the tree was flowering well by the end of March. In early spring the flowers generally develop from terminal buds on bare branches. In colder climates, fewer *Magnolia x soulangeana* blooms set seed as the flowers often mature before many of the pollinators appear. Late frosts can damage the tepals, turning the tips brown. Occasional flowers appear throughout the summer.

The flowers are bisexual and show the plant's primitive ancestry. The petals and sepals are called tepals and are virtually indistinguishable from each other. They are fairly thick in texture and tough enough to support and withstand the beetles that pollinate the flower. The early spring flowers are elegant, almost white on the inside with varying degrees of pink through purple on the outside, shading darker towards the base.

The flower parts, tepals, stamens and pistils, are arranged in spirals around the cone-like receptacle; a pattern found in some fossil plants.

This picture shows the flower maturing from a firm upright state, to a condition where the tepals gently relax and open, as the reproductive parts become ready to release the pollen.