Magnolia x soulangeana –
A developing flower bud - actual size

a) **Dormant winter bud**

The terminal bud produces leaves throughout the summer, but lies dormant during the early winter. From late January or early February the bud starts to be increasingly and visibly active before flowers appear in April..

b) **Swelling terminal bud**

Early in February the dormant terminal bud starts increasing in size. Visible here is the suggestion of a leaf emerging from the caduceus bract, but this is a residual development from the autumn prior to the bud's dormancy. It is now no more than part of the protecting bract. Below the terminal bud, smaller buds are visible. They also have hairy bracts and will develop into leaves.

c) **Bud shedding hairy caduceus bract**

The terminal bud continues to increase in size, sometimes shedding the hairy bract to reveal another one underneath. On this occasion, the shedding has revealed a new leaf underneath, but the bud continues to develop.

d) **Hairy bract splitting in two to reveal flower –** *side view*

The terminal bud that previously produced leaves, now produces the magnificent Magnolia blooms. At the appropriate time, the bract starts splitting to reveal a tightly furled flower inside.

e) **Flower protruding from hairy caduceus bract –** *view from above*.

The flower pushes its way out of the bract, the tepals straightening as they come.

f) **Flower protruding from loosened bract –** *side view*

As the flower pushes its way out of the protective bract, the bract loosens and eventually drops off.

g) **A two-part caduceus bract**

A very small bract that loosened from the developing bud at an early stage.