

## ***Magnolia x soulangeana*: A ripe fruit and seeds**



The fruiting body of the *Magnolia x soulangeana* is an aggregation of fruitlets, called an aggregate fruit.

Each fruitlet is contained within a follicle, which splits along its back seam when it is ripe.

The follicle may contain one or sometimes two fruitlets.

The fruitlets have a bright red fleshy outer layer called an aril; its colour helps to attract feeding birds. These are not immediately detached from the follicle when it opens, but remain connected and often hanging by a thread-like funicle until birds eat and then disperse them.

Even in good conditions, few of *Magnolia x soulangeana*'s aggregate fruit survive to maturity; most drop early. For trees growing toward the northern limit of the range, the short season also means few trees produce fully mature fruit. I have seen a difference in the number of aggregate fruit formed over the last three years. 2009 seemed to be a bumper year in relation to 2008 and 2010.

Notice the difference in size and shape between this ripe aggregate fruit and the one at a similar stage in the picture “A year in the life of a *Magnolia x soulangeana* tree”<sup>1</sup>.

This aggregate fruit clearly shows the spiral scars left by the tepals in the greyer section and the spiral scars left by the stamens at the base of the receptacle.