Treasures from China and Asia: Plants, People and Experiences
Asian Treasures

For thousands of years, Western peoples have been looking to the East for knowledge, culture and "treasure". Silk, spices, art, gems . . . And plants.
Asian Treasures

- Many familiar ornamentals with Asian origins
Asian Treasures

• Overview:
  – Give perspective about origin and development of ornamentals
  • Reasons for so many Asian ornamentals
  • History and culture of China and Asia in relation to ornamental plants
  – Show examples of new Asian plants
  – Discuss adaptability in Florida
Why so many Asian ornamentals?:
Greater Plant Diversity

Why?
- Larger land mass
- Greater exchange of species with tropics

- Tropics are refugia for plants during "ice ages"
- More land in the tropics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Species (Guo, Ricklefs &amp; Cody, 1998)</th>
<th>Eastern Asia</th>
<th>North America</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ferns</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnosperms (like conifers)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>118</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angiosperms</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>15,827</td>
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</tbody>
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Why so many Asian ornamentals?:
Greater Plant Diversity

- Why?
  - Mountains and geology are "older"
  - Varied topography coupled with "ice ages" resulted in many fragmented habitats that allowed species to gradually adapt and subsequently form new species (Qian & Ricklefs, 2000)
Why so many Asian ornamentals?:
Greater Plant Diversity

Why?

- SE China and SE North America have similar climate and weather patterns (compare hardiness zones of each)
Why so many Asian ornamentals?

- Longer period of stable civilizations
- Asia has had continuous civilizations for 5,000 years
Why so many Asian ornamentals?

- Longer period of stable civilizations
- Continuous civilization allowed art, culture & agricultural/scientific knowledge to accumulate
  - Stable agriculture led to large populations and development of cities
Why so many Asian ornamental plants?

Cultural stability and prosperity allowed the luxury of creating gardens for beauty (not food) and thus selecting plants for ornamentation.
How did they get here?

- Chinese and Asian history, culture, and civilization
- History and background of Asian plant introductions
Seeking Asian Treasures

Silk Road: primary trade route for 3,000 years for treasures (luxury items) from the East

- Silk, satin and other fabrics
- Spices, perfumes, medicines
- No plants!
Seeking Asian Treasures

• Age of Exploration (15\textsuperscript{th} – 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries) was triggered by the European market for Asian luxury items (and Marco Polo!)
  – Spain and others developed new sailing technologies for new trade routes
  – Still, Asian nations tightly controlled trade & travel
Seeking Asian Treasures

• 18th and 19th Centuries:
  – Gunboat Diplomacy
  – FINALLY: plants enter the picture!

• Influx of Asian luxuries led to infatuation with all things Asian; Asian porcelain and fabrics often depicted beautiful plants
Asian Treasures

19\textsuperscript{th}/early 20\textsuperscript{th} Centuries:

- Unrestricted travel in Asia
- New tech: Wardian Case
- Botanists and nurserymen
  - Fortune, Henry, Sargent, Wilson, others
  - By 1850: camellia, abelia, evergreen azalea, forsythia, Japanese wisteria, crapemyrtle, star magnolia, Japanese yew, Japanese maple
  - Ginkgo and dawn redwood
Plant Explorers bringing back Asian Treasures

- World War Interruptions and Communist Interregnum
- 1970s "Opening" of China: new era of plant exploration!
- Explosion in recent plant expeditions thanks to
  - Easier travel to China
  - Easier movement within China
  - Collaborations with Chinese scientists
The 2nd International Symposium on the Family Magnoliaceae
China: Food
American-style Food in China
Modern Day Plant Explorers

• Explosion in recent plant expeditions in Asia (and especially China) thanks to
  – Easier travel to Asia
  – Easier movement within China
  – Collaborations with Asian nurserymen and scientists
Modern Day Plant Explorers: Japan
Todd Lasseigne - Ted Stephens
Podocarpus macrophyllus 'Royal Flush'
Lespedeza liukiuensis 'Little Volcano'
Magnolia figo var. crassipes
Modern Day Plant Explorers: China
South China Botanical Garden
Nanjing Botanical Garden
Dave Creech – Prof. Yin
Prof. Yin – Bald Prof. from Florida
Modern Day Plant Explorers: Vietnam
Alocasia maccorhizus 'Shock Treatment'
Adaptability to Florida?
Adaptability to Florida?

• Good and Bad
  – Similar climate and environments means Asian plants should readily adapt
  – Fabulous plants but great potential for us to overlook our North American native plants
  – Potential for invasiveness
    • Kudzu, ligustrum/privet (several), japanese honeysuckle, ardisia, nandina, . . .

• Evaluation is the answer!
Evaluations at UF-NFREC Quincy
Gardens of the Big Bend: "Discovery Garden"
Gardens of the Big Bend: "Discovery Garden"

- Located at UF North Florida REC in Quincy
- Jointly being developed with Gardening Friends of the Big Bend, Inc., a nonprofit support group
Gardens of the Big Bend: "Discovery Garden"

- Focus on evaluating plants
  - Leverage Knox contacts with plants-people to obtain new introductions
- **Seeking gifts to support development**
New Abelias

'Hopley' and 'Canyon Creek'

Drift Roses and 'Rose Creek'
Camellia

'Blizzard' and 'Pink Icicle'
Podocarpus macrophyllus Variegated
Podocarpus macrophyllus
‘Golden Crown’
Chionanthus retusus
Chinese Fringe Tree
Hydrangea Fuji Waterfall
Mahonia Species

Mahonia bealei
Mahonia Species

Arthur Menzies
Mahonia Species

Charity
Mahonia Species

Mahonia gracillipes
Tea Olive

*Osmanthus fragrans* cultivars:

- Fudingzhu (a.k.a. Nanjing Beauty; heavy blooming)
- var. *aurantiacus* (orange flowers)
Osmanthus fragrans 'Fudingzhu'
Osmanthus fragrans var. aurantiacus
Viburnum luzonicum
Luzon Viburnum
Magnolia laevifolia

- 6 – 12’ tall and 6’ wide
- Flowers: 1 – 3”, white, cup-shaped, fragrant, in Spring
- Copper-colored, velvety buds
- N, C, S FL
Magnolia laevifolia

- 6 – 12’ tall and 6’ wide
- Flowers: 1 – 3”, white, cup-shaped, fragrant, in Spring
- Copper-colored, velvety buds
- N, C, S FL
Magnolia moto

- Up to 45 feet tall
- White flowers 2 – 3 inches in diameter, pendulous, globe-shaped
- Spring flowering, N, C, S FL
- Leaves 7½ – 9” x 2½ – 3½”
- Rusty brown hairs on buds and stems (resembles a furry Southern magnolia with small, hanging, round flowers)
Magnolia moto
Magnolia insignis
Red Lotus Tree

- White to pink to red flowers
- Small tree, up to 25’ tall and 10 – 15’ wide
- Flowers late Spring, Summer
- Zones 7-9
- Leaves 5 – 6½” x 1 – 2”, bluish underneath
Magnolia insignis
Lagerstroemia fauriei 'Fantasy'
Fantasy Japanese Crapemyrtle
Campsis grandiflora 'Morning Calm'
Morning Calm Asian Trumpetcreeper
Holmskioldia sanguinea
Chinese Hat Plant
Clerodendrum wallichii
Strobilanthes cusea ~ Asian Bells
Tricyrtis hirta - Toad Lily
Woodwardia orientalis
Asian Chain Fern
Lycoris spp.: Hurricane Lily
A nation of contrasts . . .
where the Old China is quickly fading . . .
...to rapidly develop into a Powerhouse...
... different from what you'd expect...
A nation of contrasts . . . Where communism and Mickey Mouse are side-by-side . . .
... and capitalism is now king...
A nation of contrasts . . .
Where new and old are side-by-side
A nation of people . . .
Not too different from us . . .
Perhaps by working together... We can make a better world.

Magnolia insignis x virginiana
A hybrid of Asian and American magnolias
(Pic courtesy Dick Figlar)
A real garden where one can enter in and forget the whole world cannot be made in a day, a month or a lifetime. It must be planned for, and waited for, and loved into being.

-Ancient Chinese Proverb
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