

Bird Friendly Native Plant of the Month

JANUARY 2016

NC NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

REEDY CREEK NATURE PRESERVE



**Bird
Friendly**
NATIVE PLANTS

Magnolia virginiana

Photos by Will Stuart

Magnolia virginiana Sweetbay Magnolia

Garden Aristocrat

As William Cullina says, “Magnolias evolved around 25 million years B.B. (before bees)” and the petals are designed to withstand the feeding of their pollinators—the beetle.

Fragrant and Beautiful

Sweetbay Magnolia has many reasons to be both bird friendly and people friendly—the beautiful and sweet smelling magnolia blossoms are simply compelling. And, the dark green leaves which are silvery on the underside, are semi-evergreen providing winter interest and screening.

A variety of birds enjoy the red berries found in the seed cones including yellow-bellied sapsucker, red-eyed vireo, red-cockaded woodpecker, towhee and eastern kingbird.

Sweetbay Magnolia also provides nesting sites, shelter and food for birds and mammals. If you want to

“Magnolias are the masterpieces of native trees...9 species are native to North America. Magnolia flowers first appear in the fossil record during Cretaceous period (135-70 million years ago)...making the bloom in your garden an aromatic link to prehistoric times.”

Gil Nelson -*Best Native Plants for Southern Gardens*

enjoy tiger swallowtail butterflies include Sweetbay Magnolia in your garden as their larval plant.

Landscape Uses

Sweetbay Magnolia is often used as a large shrub, and can be used to form a screen or as a specimen tree.

Occasional pruning of the oldest stems can maintain an open and shapely form where the beautiful blossoms are within view. It would also look nice as a patio container plant.

Typically found in moist swampy areas, it is an excellent choice for those sunny lower areas of the garden where water collects during rainy seasons or in a rain garden. However, it can also survive average soil with part shade. Size for a mature tree can reach 50 feet tall and a multi-trunked specimen can spread to 20 feet wide.

Companion plants include Inkberry Holly, Swamp Azalea, Titi, Virginia Sweetspire, High Bush Blueberry, and Red Maple.

Bird Friendly Native Plant of the Month is a joint effort of the NC Native Plant Society and Audubon North Carolina.

