

August 2026

Plant of the month

Magnolia 'Yellow Lantern'



Common Name: Yellow Magnolia
Scientific Name: *Magnolia* 'Yellow Lantern'

Family: Magnoliaceae
Genus: Officially named by French botanist Charles Plumier in 1703 to honour another French botanist, Pierre Magnol (1638-1715), who was the first to develop the concept of plant families.



This is one of a small number of yellow magnolias bred in the second half of the twentieth century from the only true yellow species of magnolia, *Magnolia acuminata* (Cucumber Tree) native to North America.

Magnolias evolved during the Cretaceous period at least 95 million years ago. Magnolias evolved with beetle pollinators. Due to this relationship magnolia flowers have robust floral parts, leathery tepals to protect from crash-landing beetles and tough carpels (female parts of the flower comprising the style and stigma) to avoid damage from beetles' mandibles feeding on pollen. Beetles visit flowers in search of protein rich pollen produced by the male floral parts (stamens). The carpels mimic the stamens to help trick the beetle into visiting all floral parts.

To reduce the risk of self-pollination the flowers open in the morning and the stigmas are receptive to pollen all day. At night the inner tepals close around the carpel, progressively the stigmas close and the anthers attached to the stamens then release their pollen onto trapped insects. Beetles emerge in the morning and fly to another flower or tree ensuring cross pollination.



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Parentage

A hybrid between *Magnolia acuminata* var. *subcordata* 'Miss Honeybee' (a variety of the Cucumber Tree) and *Magnolia x soulangeana* 'Alexandrina' (Pink Saucer Magnolia).

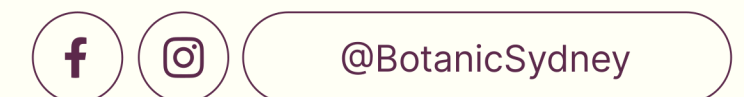
Description

An upright single-trunked, pyramid-shaped tree to 10 metres tall. Leaves are large, mid-green with prominent venation.

Flowers

Flower buds are covered in distinctive hairy bud scales known botanically as perules, which are shed as the flowers mature. Flowers are fragrant, tulip-shaped and creamy yellow with light pink tinges at the base of the blooms. Magnolias have floral parts known as tepals. This is a collective term for petals, usually the colourful part of flowers and sepals which tend to be green, leaf-like structures under the petals in most flowers. In magnolias, petals and sepals are similar and thus known collectively as tepals.

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