

Book Review

Peter Del Tredici

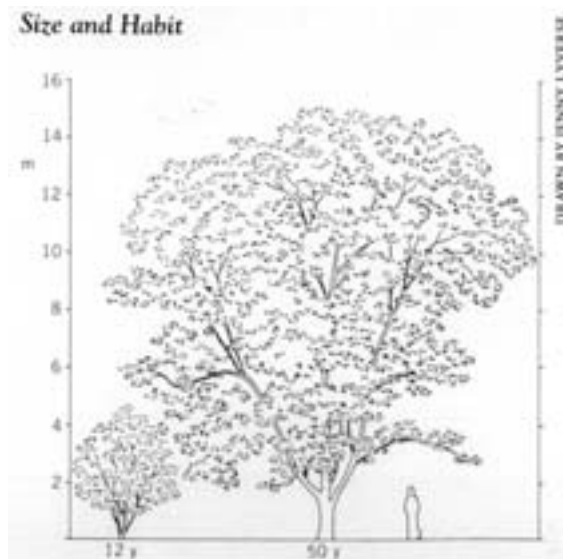
Landscape Plants for Eastern North America, 2nd edition. Harrison L. Flint. John Wiley and Sons, 1997. 852 pages. Hardcover. \$95

When the first edition of Harrison Flint's *Landscape Plants for Eastern North America* appeared in 1983, it offered an alternative to many other books in the field. In particular, its strong graphic display of plant adaptation as well as its excellent line drawings by Jenny Lyverse provided a visual approach to how plants might fit into the landscape and what their habitat requirements are. The excellent graphics made the book particularly useful to landscape architects who need to visualize the forms of the plants as part of the design process.

After being out of print for a number of years, the long-overdue second edition of Professor Flint's classic work is again available. While the "Cultivars" and "Related Species" sections for most of the one thousand entries have been greatly expanded over the first edition, the book retains its primary focus on the horticultural characteristics of the species themselves. Compared with other, more cultivar-focused books, Flint maintains a measure of objectivity about the plants he describes and presents a refreshingly nonjudgmental portrait of a given plant's horticultural strengths and weaknesses.

One of the most useful features of the first edition was the twenty-four appendices at the end of the book, which categorized species according to their various horticultural attributes—size, shape, function, adaptation, and seasonal interest. The number of appendices has been expanded to forty-seven, and they cover a much broader range of plant attributes. Again, for landscape architects and designers, these lists should prove extremely useful.

On the negative side, the second edition still retains a small selection of about twenty-five herbaceous "groundcovers," included, I suspect, for the sake of completeness. The decision



Magnolia virginiana.

to include herbaceous plants may have made sense in 1983, but given the book's overwhelming concentration on woody plants, and the subsequent emergence of perennials as a subject area in their own right, their inclusion makes little sense.

I was also disappointed that not all of the author's comments appear to have been updated since 1983. For example, the entry on *Eleagnus umbellata*, the autumn olive, reads: "This shrub is trouble-free, requiring no maintenance other than pruning to develop fullness and to control size when necessary." Nowhere is it mentioned that the species has become a serious pest throughout much of the East because of its invasive tendencies. On the other hand, the entry on the Bradford pear has been updated to include a thorough discussion of the problems associated with the plant's upright structure. All in all, the publication of the second edition of *Landscape Plants for Eastern North America* is an opportunity not to be missed by anyone who missed the book the first time around.