

MEMBERS' FORUM



SOWING SEEDS OF DELIGHT

As an AHS member, I enjoy participating in the annual Seed Exchange program. Each year I like to try some varieties new to my garden. This year, I decided to try Italian climbing zucchini with my grandchildren. They had great success with it, as you can see in the photo (above). The vines covered their hideaway tunnel, and at the end of the season, they hauled away the extra squash for the deer to enjoy outside the garden fence.

Sandra Willis
Corvallis, Oregon

MISSING MAGNOLIA FAMILY MEMBERS?

Gil Nelson's article on native magnolias in the September/October 2008 issue was great. It mentioned that there are two genera in the magnolia family. What happened to the others, like *Michelia*?

Kris S. Jarantowski
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Gil Nelson's response: Traditional classification systems—based primarily on grouping plants that share a common set of morphological features—have distin-

guished as many as a dozen genera, including *Michelia*, within the magnolia family. More recent schemes, however, attempt to reflect true evolutionary lineages and to assign generic names only to groups that are considered to be monophyletic—composed of a single ancestor and all of its descendants—in nature. These findings reduce *Michelia* (and several other traditional genera of the magnolia family) to sections of the genus *Magnolia*, giving the affected species new scientific names to reflect the changes. Hence, such plants as the popular banana shrub (*Michelia figo*) become true magnolias (to wit, *Magnolia figo*). The classifica-



Michelia figo, above, is now *Magnolia figo*.

Member Services

We love to hear from our members! If you have questions about your American Horticultural Society membership, would like to become a member, renew your membership, give a gift of membership, or update your mailing or e-mail address with the AHS, please call (800) 777-7931 ext. 119 or e-mail us at membership@ahs.org.

tion followed by Magnolia Society International and presented on its website (www.magnoliasociety.org) is representative of these modern interpretations and is the one followed in the article.

GIVE DESIGNERS MORE CREDIT

As a garden designer, I was disheartened and even insulted by the excerpt “Plants with Presence” from Scott and Lauren Springer Ogden's new book, *Plant Driven Design* (September/October, 2008). The line that caught my eye—and kept being emphasized within the article—was “The designer sits at the board...”

Most designers, including myself, do sit at their boards sketching a plan—but not until they have visited the site, interviewed the clients, and considered the site, ecosystems, etc. I would hope that all garden designers are interested in heightening their awareness and knowledge of the latest movements in garden design.

I consider the Ogdens and other garden designers my colleagues. They would have better served their fellow designers by positively promoting an ongoing education into the habitat gardens they design without classifying others in the profession as mere “drawing board designers.”

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PLEASE WRITE US! Address letters to Editor, *The American Gardener*, 7931 East Boulevard Drive, Alexandria, VA 22308. Send e-mails to editor@ahs.org (note Letter to Editor in subject line). Letters we print may be edited for length and clarity.