

## **Tree of the Month, July 2015:** **Willowleaf magnolia (*Magnolia salicifolia*)**

Vancouver, Canada, and Yokohama, Japan, have been sister cities for 50 years; To honour that relationship, Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson and Yokohama Mayor Fumiko Hayashi planted a willowleaf magnolia (*Magnolia salicifolia*) in the Japanese collection at VanDusen Botanical Garden on June 22, 2015.

Willowleaf magnolia is a small tree native to the hills of Japan's biggest island, Honshu, and two smaller southern islands, Shikoku and Kyushu. The common and botanical names refer to the narrow, lanceolate (lance-shaped) leaves, which resemble those of a willow (*Salix* species). Another English common name for this tree is "anise magnolia" because the bark and leaves, when crushed, smell like aniseed (*Pimpinella anisum*). The Japanese call willowleaf magnolia "tamusiba". The fragrant flowers have six or more long, thin tepals that are white at the tip and pink at the base. The flowers appear in abundance in the spring, followed by the narrow green leaves. Trees can reach a height of 12-15 meters after 20-50 years of growth.

Willowleaf magnolia was introduced to western cultivation by Professor Charles Sargent, director of the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard University, who collected seeds from Mount Hakkoda on northern Honshu, Japan in 1892. The species wasn't introduced to European horticulture until 1906 when the Yokohama Nursery Company sent a seedling to Kew Gardens in England.