

# GARDEN NEWS

## MAGNIFICENT MEMORIES, FUTURE JOYS

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**T**he tree donated to us by the President of the RHS last year, *Magnolia x kewensis* 'Wada's Memory', is now planted between the two tulip trees beside Harcourt Buildings. The pleasure in receiving this special tree was tinged with sadness at the untimely death of Peter Buckley only a few months after he had presented it to us, but we hope his generosity and memory will be well served by its growth to maturity.

As was reported in an earlier edition of *InnerView*, the reason for this particular specimen to have been chosen was to replace the sickly *Magnolia x kewensis* (or *salicifolia*) on the other side of the garden, damaged by years of drought, compaction and lack of organic matter, and currently there is no sign of improvement – there is very little evidence of flowering buds, and the leaf buds are minimal. It was recommended that we try a process known as 'terravent', which aerates and decompacts the soil and introduces a mychorizal fungi to promote new root growth. This was done in February and any improvement should be visible within ten weeks, but the odds are not good for its

recovery. Indeed, Jim Gardiner, the magnolia expert from RHS Wisley, has recently confirmed his original diagnosis and believes it will need to be felled before the end of the summer.

In this event the plan is to turf over that area while the tree is examined for any possible disease and to allow the soil time to recover. After a year or more the condition of the soil will be tested, and it can then be decided what should be best planted in its place, though it will not be a member of the magnolia family.

The rest of the programme of tree maintenance has continued throughout the winter and spring, with the last of the diseased and weak trees removed, giving a wonderful opportunity to replace them with unusual and aesthetically interesting specimens, such as *Acacia baileyana* 'Purpurea', although the actual placing of them will have to wait until autumn, the optimum season for tree-planting. So while it is almost certain that that great magnolia, which has given so many decades of pleasure, will have to go, there will be new wonders beginning their lives to bring equal joy in the future.

