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Winthrop University

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# Winthrop's Magnolia Tree Selected as 2010 Heritage Tree

## Quick Facts

- The stately magnolia attracts considerable attention during the holidays when it serves as the university's Christmas tree.
- It has stood as an idyllic icon in front of Tillman Hall for decades.



ROCK HILL, S.C. - Trees SC, formerly the S.C. Urban and Community Forestry Council, has selected Winthrop's Southern magnolia as the **2010 Heritage Tree**.

The magnolia has stood as an idyllic icon in front of Tillman Hall for decades. Although its exact age cannot be determined, the tree appears on aerial photos from the mid-1910s. The stately magnolia attracts considerable attention during the holidays when it serves as the university's Christmas tree.

The **Trees SC Heritage Trees program** was developed in 2004 as a way to identify, celebrate and recognize the remarkable trees that evoke great community spirit in South Carolina. Previous winners are Charleston's Angel Oak, 2005; Aiken's Oak Allee, 2006; McClellanville's Deerhead Oak, 2007; Irmo's White Oak, 2008; and Clemson's Centennial Bur Oak, 2009.

**DeeAnna Brooks**, assistant to the president for university events, worked with members of the 125th year anniversary committee to nominate the historic tree earlier this year.

"The magnolia is a living landmark that, by its location and use, has become part of Winthrop's legacy. We often say our community members have made Winthrop a better place for their having been here, but clearly this tree has, too," **Brooks** said. "Who could argue for a tree more deserving as Winthrop celebrates 125 years of history and tradition?"

Brooks accepted the award Oct. 28 at Trees SC's annual conference in Charleston, S.C.

As early as 1935, the Winthrop community decorated and hung lights on the 40-foot-tall magnolia during December. From 1955-69, Winthrop students, faculty and staff would gather around the lighted tree to sing Christmas carols on the evening before they were to leave for the holidays. The official holiday campus tradition began in 1969, with student groups performing carols and locals strolling through the luminary-lit campus.

During December, residents and visitors to Rock Hill counted on the lit tree to boost their holiday spirit. Now hosted by the Student Alumni Council, the tree lighting is part of Rock Hill's ChristmasVille, an annual four-day celebration of the holidays.

The magnolia survived Hurricane Hugo in September 1989. A significant portion of the magnolia was sheared off during the storm, but it was deemed healthy enough to survive and has flourished. Winthrop's 10-person grounds department monitors, cuts and trims the tree, one of 900 trees on the main campus.

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