

The January, 2002 Newsletter

Wow, Its a new year and it finally got cold. It seemed we were going to be locked in perpetual late fall there for a while. I suppose the trees are still dormant but there is more of a chance of things drying out if its above freezing and you aren't thinking about watering the plants every day. A week slips by, and then two, and all of a sudden the moss dries up and blows away. Or the squirrels run away with a tree to add to their nest.

Last month I mentioned pond sludge as a squirrel deterrent - it only lasts until rain washes it down into the beds. They came back and got the rest of the stuff after that hard rain we had. Oh well, I'll just have to keep watch for seedlings coming up in odd spots next year where they survived. No change from last year and situation normal since I'm usually on the lookout for volunteers.

Are you starting to consider what you will be repotting next year? Will you need a new pot, different shape, larger size, different color or texture? Start thinking about this now. The club will be placing a pot order in March for arrival in April. We can order special pots for you as easily as we can order generic crowd pleasers. If you have a favorite pot supplier, share it with us. Order your pots and save on shipping. We will be placing a wire and tool order at about that time also, so figure out what you want to get.

ZAC

Vice President Sandy says:

Hello and Happy New Year. We at the CBS Board hope you plan to join us at this year's club meetings, designed to help you further perfect your bonsai collection. January's meeting will kick-off with a presentation from a long-time club member, Tom Holcomb. He plans to emphasize the bonsai basics, unraveling the mysteries that surround our hobby. This will be a great lecture for beginners. As well, I'm sure those of you with a bit more experience will gain some pointers to take home with you. Tom comes to us with many years of experience, a great sense of bonsai style and a background rich in horticulture.

Vice President Dan says:

CBS is pursuing cooperative programs with some of the other plants societies. Since several people have expressed interest in small orchids as accent plants, and or shared pot culture, we have invited members of the Orchid Society to attend the Sunday meeting. If you see a stranger introduce yourself and ask them about their interests. If they are with the Orchid Society we may learn more about a different aspect of our plant passion while they talk about theirs. If the person got a new Bonsai for Christmas, then we can share our knowledge and tips with them and steer them on over to Tom's presentation.

Winter Wonder Land!

by: Ken Schultz

Winter is tough on bonsai enthusiasm. Things grow so well outside. I feel that only pure neglect of watering can kill a tree; well that and poorly timed repotting. Now that I have finally had to place my trees into winter storage, various signs of tree related stress have manifested themselves. Some species remain thirsty, and must be constantly monitored to make sure that they haven't dried out. Other species slow down, this is harder to recognize, these trees use less water, so care must be exercised in preventing root rot. And some trees brought little six or eight legged passengers in with them that are now hatching out and multiplying. I just saw some aphids on a sheffelara! Action must be taken quickly, but caution must also be exercised to protect our cats.

Each year I try to guess, will it be OK to leave "this" azalea outside, should I put it in cool storage, or put it under lights in the basement. This year I opted for cool storage on a number of them, but the long warm Fall got to one of them already. Too much sun and too warm weather made it, you got it, too warm, and one of the azalea's got missed in the watering schedule. I don't think it will make it, but I haven't given up yet. I've also sprayed twice already, once for gnats, once for whitefly and now I'll be spraying those aphids! I am also fighting scale on several of my orchids, but they don't fly from plant to plant.

I find that I must discipline myself to spend time with the plants in the house in the winter. At the same time, I try to fit in a round to check to make sure squirrels, mice or deer haven't gotten into the trees I stored outside. The burlap and styrofoam windbreaks need to be monitored to make sure they aren't damaged by high winds.

I wish you all luck in the task of tree care that will be with us until the weather once again warms, and they can safely grow outdoors again. (It will be awhile, I just checked and its 29 degrees outside.)

Tree of the Month

Scientific: Ficus benjamina. Common: Benjamin or Weeping fig. Family: Moraceae

The Ficus genera is large, with over 800 species and thousands of cultivars. Most of these are from the old world tropics. F. benjamina is native to India, SE Asia and Northern Australasia. It can grow to 40 or 50 ft. in the wild and prefers full sun to dense shade and moist well drained soil. The amount of light will influence growth habit.

It is common in most plant shops and is a good starter for beginners, being a fast grower and fairly tolerant of growing conditions. In full sun, a fig will have a full dense canopy, but in deep shade it will have an open canopy and fewer leaves with thin weeping branches. It is a tropical,

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and must be kept indoors for the winter, and anyone who has gone through more than one season with a Benjamin will know they shed. A lot!

Even though it's a tropical, the *F. benjamina* has a distinct seasonal variation that it evolved to. Dry and Monsoon. *Benjamina* prepares for the dry season by shedding its leaves. It reduces leaf mass because in the dry season it would not be able to support the full canopy. When the monsoon returns the leaves are replaced with new growth and the canopy returns. So, the survival mechanism for *F. benjamina* is leaf drop. They prefer to be kept in the same environment and will drop leaves for any change. This includes fertilizing and using "leaf shine".

We can use this to our advantage in bonsai. Bringing it into the house in fall will cause leaf drop. Trying to acclimate it won't help much. Let them drop. Prune and bend to shape with the branches clean. Fertilize and let it grow out. In the spring, return it outside after the temperatures are back above 50 deg F and let the leaves drop. Prune and bend to shape. Now the growth pattern is going to be very thick and dense and (eventually) give you those nice thick trunks we all seem to like.

Fertilize when growing with a balanced fertilizer. Wait for those leaves to start coming out after leaf drop. The leaf color can help you diagnose what is going on. Moisture stress will usually cause yellow leaves to drop, and light changes will usually cause green leaf drop.

Jose Cueto does a lot of his maintenance shaping to make a nice canopy silhouette. He keeps the growth in bounds by pinching and bending the branches by hand. He says, "As far as keeping the figs looking 'neat', I'm constantly pinching them, especially in the summer months when they are growing most vigorously. I normally let the shoots elongate 2 or 3 nodes before cutting them back into the silhouette, which is usually the "umbrella" I liked to use for this variety. That's another reason why it's good to have a drawing, sketch or picture showing the 'right' size and silhouette intended for the bonsai, to ensure it doesn't grow out of proportion." Jose doesn't use much wire on established figs. He bends the branch in his hands until he can just feel or hear the cambium start to break and then he leaves it. He does this when he waters and says he gets very quick results with this method

The main problem with *Ficus* in general is they are poisonous! They can cause dermatitis, and allergic reactions are caused by exposure to the sap. Symptoms are itching, cough, and wheezing following frequent contact and exposure to sunlight. People with latex allergies are commonly susceptible. So, after working on your figs, wash your hands!

Book Review

Cultivating Bonsai by V. Tridi, 1998 print in Italy
review by Ken Schultz

This small book (8"X6" - 95 pages) has a cover price of \$12.95. There were three things that caught my eye and caused me to add it to my collection of books: 1) It has a nice balance of

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photos to illustrations, 2) The trees in the photos are not little twigs, nor are they show stoppers, that are out of the average hobbyist's reach, and 3) There is a chart of 16 popular bonsai species listing; pruning of branches and shoots, wiring, repotting, watering needs, fertilizing, and other

care tips.

In the chapter on Bonsai Styles, specimens suitable to the style are listed. There is an illustration and a verbal description along with some training tips. Group bonsai styles are well covered such as clumps and rafts. There are eight rules listed for developing "Clinging to Rock Style Bonsai".

The Pruning chapter covers tips for pomegranate, eleagnus, and carmona. There are illustrations showing how to direct branch growth through pruning. There are a few pages dedicated to conifer shoots and how to thicken a trunk. One caution that the author provides is wire should not be applied in the same year as the tree was repotted. He feels that it is difficult for a plant to withstand two closely occurring procedures that require an enormous expenditure of energy. After wiring the author suggests that the tree be placed in a shaded area protected from drafts and it should be well watered. The Chapter on repotting is also well done. A small chart provides tips on the shape of the pot and the tree style for which it is suited.

As with all books, remember to check where the author lives (Verona, Italy), sometimes it effects the type of advice given. I mention this, because pomegranate is listed with other outdoor species in this book.

Raffle In Progress

We are still collecting tickets on the Ponderosa Pine that Andy Smith donated to the club at the last show. It is at Ken Schultz's house now and is still healthy after almost a year. This will make someone a real nice windswept, cascade, or literati.

Bonsai Here and Beyond the Outerbelt

Unless otherwise noted, The Columbus Bonsai Society meets the third Sunday of every month at 2:00 pm. at the Franklin Park Conservatory. Board meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 in the Franklin Park Conservatory library.

Jan 20, 2002 - 2:00pm Regular CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory - Bonsai Basics - Tom Holcomb and Orchids and Bonsai - Cultural Commons

February 17, 2002 - 2:00pm Regular CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory - Making Training Boxes, and Indoor Light (the light store guy)

February 21, 2002 - Lecture / Demonstration and Workshop by Art Skolnik - Cincinnati Club

February 23, 2002 - Dawes Work day - Meet at Dawes at 9:00. Bring a dish to pass for lunch.

March 9, 2002 - Dublin Asian Arts Festival

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March 17, 2002 - 2:00pm Regular CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory - Soil, Fertilizer, and pest Control -

March 22, 2002 - Lecture / Demonstration and Workshop by Gary Marchal - Cincinnati Club

April 6, 2002 - Workshop - Forest Planting - Dan Binder

April 18, 2002 - Lecture / Demonstration and Workshop by Colin Lewis - Cincinnati Club
April 21, 2002 - 2:00pm "Regular" CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory - Colin Lewis
 Demo and Workshop (full day)
 May 16, 2002 - Lecture / Demonstration and Workshop by Roy Nagatoshi - Cincinnati Club
May 19, 2002 - 2:00pm Regular CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory - Air Layering -
 Elm Demo - Ken Schoenfeld - Pots and Trees - Jose Cueto
 June 1 - potential road trip
June 22-23, 2002 - CBS Show - Note, this is one week later than our normal meeting.
July 21, 2002 - 2:00pm Regular CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory -Japanese Maples-
 John Harris / Make a Tuffa Slab/pot
August 18, 2002 - 2:00pm Regular CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory - Tropical
 Workshop
September 15, 2002 - Annual Picnic
October 20, 2002 - 2:00pm Regular CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory - Fall
 Show/panel judging
November 17, 2002 - 2:00pm Regular CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory -
 Winterization/Wiring and Pruning that can be done Now
December 15, 2002 - Holiday Dinner

Members are encouraged to add events to this list. We probably should focus on events that are within 250 miles and the majors such as MABA, BCI, and ABS.

And a final word -

I have a little bonsai tree,
 That lives inside the house with me.
 I call it "my pooh"
 - and it loves me too,
 (A weird form of debauchery)

Tom Pillichody

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