

The March, 2002 Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter

In February I was complaining about stark white granite. Don Schricker was nice and emailed back that there is a dealer in Cincinnati that handles "Texas Grit." It's used for sand blasting. The color is beige and he says it works well on Bonsai. This made me think of another blasting grit called "Black Beauty." It might also look good for a path in a grove or mixed in as a top dressing to darken the color.

Get ready for the Forest Bonsai Workshop!

Remember that at 9:00 on April 6th, which is a Saturday, we will be meeting in a classroom at the Conservatory for the forest workshop. Dan will arrange to have the tree bundles and soil, including 'muck'. You will need your tools and a pot for the planting. If you have not paid for your slot yet other people are waiting. Anyone who pays at the March meeting will get in as a paid participant, so if you have signed up but haven't paid yet, you need to bring your check or cash to the March meeting. Mr. Valvanis charges a \$5 per bundle handling fee. So a \$30 Hornbeam bundle of ten trees cost \$35. - Just a heads up on costs. Trees still available are Trident Maple, Japanese Maple, and Japanese Beech.

Several members have asked about "pots for a forest" since we don't have any in stock at the club right now. My first choice if you can't find anything high fired at Oakland Park or Plantland would be a terra cotta humidity tray that measures 14" or more in diameter. These are sold to go under terra cotta flowerpots and are unglazed. Get a ceramic drill bit at least 1/2" in diameter. Drill holes in the bottom of the tray for drainage and wiring. These pots will usually cost less than the drill and will last for several years. I have bought them in two styles. One is a deep dish that is about 2-3" deep in the sizes we want for this planting and I would recommend looking around for it. The other is a shallower tray with rounded edges that looks nice but may be a little harder to start your forest in successfully. If all else FAILS, as a last resort you could use one of the plastic trays of this same description, but they tend to flex and will disrupt the roots. But it's better than nothing. Just take several swipes across the bottom with a saw to cut some grooves into it for drainage or drill it with a 1" spade bit spinning backwards. If you call me the evening of April 5th and remind me, I'll bring those tools with me. ZAC

The March meeting

It's getting to be Spring again, well, get ready to repot and do all those chores that go with our hobby in Spring. Our March meeting will be on "soil" mix. Everyone seems to have ideas about THE BEST SOIL MIX. We will have some made up ready to go for your repotting convenience. For those who are looking to make their own this year I have some recipes for you. The portions are by volume - either by the cup for the small pots or few plants, or by the bucket if you have a lot to do. We will be sifting and mixing starting about 12:00 or 12:30 before the meeting, come on down and help out -- you'll get a hands on soil mix experience. And I have found I learn a lot more in a work group than I do from just reading.

| Who | Turface | Haydite | other | Pine Bark | other organic |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| MBS hulls | 2 | | 1 | vermiculite | 1 compost |
| Zack | 5 | | | | 2 coffe grounds |
| Southern Growers | | 50-80% | | 50-20% | |
| Canada Importers | | | 100% | Grus (decomposed Granite) | For Bare Root! |
| CBS 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 granite | 2 | |
| CBS 2 | 60% | | | 40% | |

MBS = Milwaukee Bonsai Society
CBS = Columbus Bonsai Society

But I also have started using brick chips to replace some turface and I have some cocoa bean hulls that I want to try this year. (The office coffee club membership changed and I'm not getting as many grounds. And yes, I fully expect to get grief for this again.)

I hope you are starting to see a lack of trend here. The Best Soil Mix is the one that works for you. If your trees grow well in the club mix, go for it. If you want to spend the money on a commercial soil, go ahead. Just pay attention to what your trees are telling you about the mix you are using and your watering schedule and compare that to care sheets that talk about the soil needs of field trees. They will tell you if it likes upland sand ridges that are well drained or rich bottom soils that stay a little moist. Look at what you have in the pot and how it retains water. The advantage of a club mix is that it has a proven track record for most trees grown by members in the climate of the area. An average good mix is better than an exotic import that you don't water enough.

Guest Artist News

Colin Lewis is coming to Columbus Sunday, April 21, 2002. We have flip-flopped the order of events however. He will present a morning Elm Workshop starting at 10:00 It will feature some nice Chinese Elms that we are getting from Ken Huth. These have been brought into warm shelter to break dormancy earlier than normal so they have long leggy growth and active roots. I have seen pictures of these and they are very nice trees. The afternoon Demonstration at the regular club meeting will be a 30 to 40 year old landscape Taxus with a 5 or 6 inch trunk.

This should be an excellent Morning Workshop and even though we have 15 paid participants, there is still plenty of space for silent observers to listen in on the styling tips and techniques. The cost was set at \$75.00 for Columbus Bonsai Club members, and a \$10 fee for the silent observers.

Book Review

bonsai: a care manual

by Colin Lewis

In honor of our upcoming event with Colin Lewis, I pulled this 1997 book off my bookshelf. As the owner of more than 30 books on bonsai, I asked, "What made me buy this book?" I quickly remembered as I looked it over. First it has "eye appeal", being 9 X 11 inches. A number of pages have full color photos illustrating the subject matter or techniques (wiring, repotting) that are being presented. Second, there are two chapters covering information not normally presented by other authors, "Buying a Bonsai" and "Outdoor Bonsai in Winter". Third, there is a 45-page section presenting a "Tree Directory" of 39 different trees. Each of the entries offers insight into keeping it healthy: when to pot, what its light requirements are, etc. The cost of this book was about \$20. I know that I will be asking Colin to autograph it at our upcoming workshop. And yes, Chinese elm was featured in the directory on page 115! -
Ken Schultz

Tree of the Month - Trident Maple

February's Tree of the Month is dedicated to one of those trees we will work with in the grove planting workshop, Trident Maple, *Acer buergerianum*

Tridents growing in the ground reach 45 feet and 25 feet wide with 3" wide, tri-lobed leaves, glossy green above and pale underneath. Fall colors are shades of red, orange, and yellow. Trident Maples have naturally low spreading growth and multiple stems but can be trained as a standard single trunk. It has moderate growth rate, attractive orange-brown peeling bark, and easy maintenance, and is also highly valued as a bonsai subject. Kieth Scott has rated it as near perfect for bonsai. In bonsai the Trident Maple is a plant greatly suited to forest plantings, with relatively small, attractive foliage, spectacular autumn color and is a very hardy plant that responds well to pruning and training into many different styles. It very quickly adopts an aged, gnarled appearance, usually developing an attractive nebari. Several trident maples (usually in an odd number as is the style for forest plantings) together is extremely effective as is root over rock taking advantage of the gnarled roots.

Tridents will grow in full sun, part sun or part shade. The trident maple is hardy to Zone 4 but the roots are susceptible to frost damage so thick mulch is recommended to protect them or they can be overwintered in a polyhouse. At the very least, this tree should be carefully protected during winterization.

Water moderately in summer, easing off in winter. Fertilize once a week for the first month after leaves appear, then every two weeks during growth. As in most maples, frequent feeding requires increased pinching back. If a liquid fertilizer is used, it should not be sprayed on the leaves, as this may result in leaf burn. No matter what the ads say, most trees will take up fertilizer through their roots.

Train by pinching back new growth to the first two leaves. The tree may be wired at any time during growth, but maple branches are somewhat brittle and it is wise to provide some protection

for the bark. The tree, given ample pot space, will grow rapidly, so it is essential to continually check the wire to avoid scarring. Leaf pruning can be carried out in midsummer (early June in Ohio) to miniaturize foliage and increase ramification. Make certain that the tree is healthy and vigorous before leaf pruning. Total leaf pruning should not be carried out annually, as the tree needs a year to restore its stores of energy. Do not leaf prune the same year you root prune. The trident's leaves reduce readily, but it is more difficult to get short internodes and finely ramified branches. Or, keep new growth trimmed back to two or three pairs of leaves per branch. Leaf cutting in mid summer will help promote new growth and reduced leaf size. Or, several defoliations a season will result in short internodes and small leaves. Pick an expert that you trust and follow their general lead. It's Your tree in Your backyard and you know what works best for you.

Brent Walston suggests this aggressive method. Let them grow wild for 2 or 3 years until the roots completely fill a large pot and there is a noticeable decline in vigor. The internodes shorten and the leaves get smaller. At this point do major pruning, shortening them to under a foot. The depleted state of the roots due to the root bound conditions prevents them from forming the typical coarse growth that usually results following such a pruning. Performing this operation in summer will have an even more dramatic effect, since in essence it is a radical defoliation. Root pruning and repotting can take place at the same time.

Repot in spring, before the buds open. Roots grow very quickly, so annual repotting may be necessary for young trees; older trees tend to need repotting every 2-3 years. If root die-back has occurred during the winter, trim off old root matter to allow room for new growth. This may indicate that the roots have frozen or the soil is not freely draining. The USDA states that Trident Maple should be planted in any well-drained, acid soil and is quite tolerant of salt, air pollution, wind and drought. Like other maples, some chlorosis can develop in soils with pH over 7 but it is moderately tolerant of soil salt.

Tridents are generally pest and disease free, but are vulnerable to caterpillar attack.

Tree of the month - Beech

This month's second tree is Beech, Fagus sp. with about 12 species and a growing number of cultivars. Most common in Ohio is the American Beech, Fagus grandifolia, the only native beech in North America. This tree does not show up in nurseries often as it is intolerant of pollution. This is unfortunate for it will grow to 120' tall by 70 to 80' across and give wonderful dense shade. If you are driving in a city and see a mature beech it is probably an American beech left over from before the house was built.

European Beech is the most common species available at nurseries and comes in at least 12 cultivars ranging from almost black purple to golden foliage. Fagus sylvatica is more pollution tolerant than F. grandifolia. It has leaves that are 3/4 to 2" in size that will further reduce in pot culture. For 2 hand to small bonsai, the Japanese beeches, F. crenata and F. japonica have leaves about dime to quarter size.

Beech is a climax species, so they do well in shade as smaller specimens but will tolerate full sun except in the hottest weather. They prefer well drained rich soil so add extra organic content to your potting mix. They grow well in medium to shallow pots, tolerate wet soil and are hardy to Zone 3. Be sure it never dries out, this is why the extra organic content is recommended. Protect the beech from intense sun; it does better in a filtered location. It will let you know if it is not happy. While beech is hardy, protect it from wind and late winter sun, Japanese species may not survive below 20 degrees F.

Leaves are simple, alternate, deciduous, elliptical in shape, and coarsely serrate with parallel lateral veins running to the margin teeth. The leaves have the same general appearance as hornbeam. In spring the beech develops cigar-shaped buds. These buds are rather tender. The beech protects these buds by retaining its dead leaves throughout winter. Because of this the dried leaves should not be removed from the tree. Twigs are slender, gray, and zigzag with the long, pointed, "cigar" buds. Bark is blue-gray, thin and smooth. Fruit is a group of four brown triangular nuts enclosed in a spiny bur.

Use a fertilizer with more nitrogen than phosphorus or potash: 15-10-10 for example. Do not feed for the first month after bud burst. Then feed every two weeks until the end of summer. Increasing feeding for *F. sylvatica* in late June-early August encourages the development of a second growth spurt. If *F. sylvatica* is watered especially well in late June to early August, it may have a second growth spurt. Okay, a healthy European Beech may have a second growth spurt.

Leaf pruning every second year in late spring is important to reduce the size of the large leaves. It is safer not to defoliate the beech completely, or in the same year that it has been repotted. Prune new shoots from 3-5 nodes to 1-2 nodes.

Beech grows slowly, and does not require much pruning. Because beech does not produce secondary buds, do not to allow the internodes to become too long. It is best to do most shaping through pruning. Because of the apical predominance of the plant, prune the top back hard, and prune lower branches only as needed. The Jan/Feb 2002 *Bonsai Today* has an excellent article on how to prune Beech. Beech can be wired, but it should not be left on longer than three months. The bark of the beech is delicate and needs protection. Any scars will persist beyond your lifetime.

Mature plants generally set one set of leaves per season. In general, beech should not be trunk chopped like other deciduous trees, but rather grown out using sacrifice branches to obtain caliper. Beech will back bud with difficulty. Plants that are to be cut back should be young and vigorously growing. Try not to remove all of the preformed buds or you may lose the tree. Buds tend to form at branch collars, so overly thick branches can be removed and new, thinner ones started in the same location if you leave a small stub. This is true out on branches as well.

Repot in the spring, before bud burst, every 2-3 years. *F. sylvatica* may be repotted in autumn, taking advantage of its second growth spurt - Simon and Schuster's states that more drastic pruning of roots can be done in autumn than spring. Use basic bonsai soil mix but prefers loose acid soil. This may be a place to try out those coffee grounds, as they would be humus and acid.

Several fungi cause leaf spots but are not usually bad enough to warrant chemical control. Bleeding canker forms cankers from which a brownish liquid oozes. Crown symptoms include leaves of smaller size and lighter green color than normal. In severe cases the leaves wilt and the branches die. In this case avoid feeding with high nitrogen fertilizers, as it seems to worsen the condition of infected trees. Beech bark disease occurs when the feeding site of woolly Beech scale is invaded by a fungus. The fungus kills the bark and in the process, the insects. There are no satisfactory controls for the fungus. Control the disease by controlling the scale with horticultural oil. Cankers infect, girdle, and occasionally kill branches. Prune out the infected branches.

Because of its large leaves, beech is generally reserved for medium to large size formal upright, informal upright, and broom bonsai. Because beech grows so slowly, it is a long- term project to grow a specimen beech. This is why young beech are often used in groves and forest plantings.

Raffle Updates

Next up for consideration is a Helen Brabander pot from the last June show. This is a high quality stoneware hand thrown 9” pot in a gray green glaze that has all of Helen’s design sense and attention to detail. Buy your raffle tickets this month because I anticipate this will go at the meeting. Helen has had to bow out of this year’s show as she is having difficulty working with the larger pots. We will miss her in the vending area.

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.

March 9, 2002 - Saturday - Dublin Asian Arts Festival “Celebration of Japan” at Dublin Scioto High School, 4000 Hard Road, 10:00am - 5:00pm. We have committed to staff a booth.

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 - Saturday Workshop - Forest Planting with Korean Hornbeam, Japanese Beech, or Japanese Maple - Dan Binder

April 6 & 7, 2002 - Erie Pa Club Show at Stan's Garden Center in Erie - Jim Doyle, Nature's Way will lecture and Demo.

April 18, 2002 - Lecture / Demonstration and Workshop by Colin Lewis - Cincinnati Club

April 21, 2002 - “Regular” CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory - Colin Lewis Demonstration and Workshop (full day)

May 16, 2002 - Lecture / Demonstration and Workshop by Roy Nagatoshi - Cincinnati Club

May 18, 2002 - Erie, PA and the Buffalo, NY Club are sponsoring Roy Nagatoshi from Fuji Bonsai in California

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 15 - Erie, PA -Bill Valvanis will lecture/demo AM and workshop PM on Styax Japonica

June 22-23, 2002 - CBS Show - Note, this is one week later than our normal meeting.

June 27 - 30, 2002 - Milwaukee 2002 - ABS Symposium at the Four Points Sheraton Airport Hotel - we have programs and registration forms for anyone interested.

July 13 - 14, 2002 - Grand Rapids, Michigan All-State Bonsai Show 2002. Ben Oki, Ivan Watters, Jack Douthitt, Jack Wilke. Registration information at the meeting.

July 21, 2002 - 2:00pm Regular CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory - Overview of Japanese Maples, Many Varieties, One Species - John Harris

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 - Columbus Bonsai Society 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 -

A Bonsai curmudgeon called "Grumps"
Grew a forest all styled in three clumps.
He cut back their wood
Whenever he could.
And now he has nothing but stumps!

Tom Pillichody

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