

Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - September 2002

There is no meeting this month, We have a Picnic from 1:00 to 5:00

Because of the OSU game on Saturday, the Picnic is Sunday, September 15.

A separate page with directions is included for all the local members. Bring a potluck dish to share and any trees or bonsai related materials you want to sell or auction off. As usual the club will be asking for a 10% share from your proceeds. I know there will be three of the nerifolia there that Dale left with us from his workshop. 2 small and one large.

If you haven't taken a picture of the trees in your collection, now is a good time. If you have a computer, and even better idea is to go digital. If you don't have a digital camera already, an adequate tree documentation camera is about \$75-100. Paste the picture into your notes.

A word from the President
September Care
By: Ken Schultz

Last month I suggested that you should take a close look at the wire on your trees. If you didn't, look now! Also you need to look at the overall health of your trees. If your tree is weak from this hot summer, you may need to figure out how to do a little triage before winter. This might include light feeding of a 4-10-10 fertilizer. Whatever you do, you don't want to trigger a lot of leafy growth that won't have time to harden before the first freeze (yeah, I know, WHEN, you're asking). Soft new growth is not likely to survive.

You also need to start debugging the trees and pots that are going to come inside. This is easier said than done. I am always amazed at what hatches out when plants are brought in from the yard onto my light racks. Also some tropicals might do better if you begin to move them to shadier locations. Typically, plants that have been out in nearly full sun will lose their leaves if moved suddenly into our home dungeons.

Be careful to adjust your watering in symphony with the possible drastic changes in Ohio's weather. It affects evaporation and your tree's water usage may vary greatly. Too much water can cause root rot.

Finally you may want to begin thinking about where your trees will be placed when the weather gets really cold. Now is the time to look for fence posts and burlap if you will need to build a screen; not when the cold winds are blowing up your kilt. Remember that sun and wind are your enemies in winter. Evergreen foliage can be "burned" by either. Also you don't want your plants breaking dormancy if you have a few warm days. Some mulch material for the pots can be picked up fairly cheaply now, but will be impossible to find in December. You may even want to "plant" a few trees directly in the ground.

A Book Report

Sunset Bonsai: An Illustrated Guide to an Ancient Art
By the Editors of Sunset Books and Sunset Magazine

Who of us has not at least looked at the Sunset Bonsai book? It is probably the easiest book on the subject to find. I recently picked up a copy of the 1996 3rd printing at a book outlet. It has revised text and photographs from the first 1965 edition. TO me the newer edition photographs had trees that had matured from the first edition. Perhaps this is because the hobby is maturing in the United States. There are more photos and less drawings too.

Though only 96 pages long, this book is packed with good basic information about bonsai. In the “What is Bonsai” section, the editors point out that the first bonsai collection outside Japan was in 1907 at Windsor Castle in England. The next section is “The Design of Bonsai: Artistic Principals, Bonsai Styles”, design aspects of the trunk, branches and container choices are discussed. A section on bonsai classification includes a discussion on Size. Zack will be relieved to see the section includes “Extra-large bonsai ...36 – 60 inches, though it reports that the most common sizes are 6” to 24”. Styles covers both single tree and multiple tree plantings, as well as Root Styles.

The third section, “Off to a Good Start” presents different places to obtain bonsai materials. Photographs show a selection of one-gallon nursery stock and then goes into a section about collecting from the wild. This section gives tips on when and how to dig. It then shows how to prepare a plant for a training pot by root pruning. It also discusses positioning, watering and initial care. There is even a discussion on adding moss. (I recently found a site that sells moss for those who can't grow their own, go to www.mossacres.com)

The next section is key to your continued interest in bonsai; it is the section on “Care and Training”. Items such as location, watering, fertilization and pest control are covered. The training part of this chapter covers wiring. Inside this section is a little two-page bonus, an article on “Chrysanthemum Bonsai”. After repotting, Jin and Shari are presented as a method of convincing the viewer of artificial age.

The final section before a short encyclopedia of trees and shrubs suitable for bonsai is a 4-page section on “Bonsai on Display”. I must admit to being guilty of violating the tip on leaving 8 to 12 inches between trees to allow each tree to develop independently. This section devotes a page to “Winter Quarters”. A subject we will be covering at either our October or November meeting, if the weather ever cools down! ~ Ken Schultz

Tree of the Month

Ficus nerifolia - Willow Leaf Fig

The following is a summary of notes taken during our last month's program and workshop on ficus nerifolia with Dale Cochoy. Dale had brought with him several examples from his own collection. We began with discussion as to whether Ficus nerifolia and salicifolia are different species. Dale contended from what he has learned that they are one and the same. As an aside, Pedro J. Morales (from Puerto Rico), in his article on Ficus for Bonsai Today, vol.55, 1998-3,

pgs 39 - 43, identifies each as a separate species. Mary Miller, in her article on Ficus Characteristics...Bonsai Today, vol.. 67, 2000-3, pgs. 52 -56, refers to them as the same.

Dale explained that ficus nerifolia are best worked on in the months of June/July/August, as hot and humid weather is almost preferred. It is even an okay time of year to repot; just take the usual precautions to not let roots dry out while you are working.

Ficus nerifolia have a great budding capacity. Cuttings root easily as well. I should mention here that within ten days from the workshop date, my nerifolia began to show evidence of multiple buds.

Dale mentioned a couple of interesting styling tips. First was to “cut away the big and leave the little” in reference to initial styling. Given the nerifolia’s tendency to re-bud easily, focus more on the branches you wish to develop. Interestingly, as workshop participants, we all went ahead and styled and trimmed our trees to the point where we thought we wanted them...until Dale made another pass through the workshop room with HIS scissors and concave cutters in hand. As bonsai stylists, we often are conservative, hesitant, leery to trim too much too soon. Ficus nerifolia is a species that’ll tolerate major trimming, down to a “minimalist” tree to promote future development.

“Do the worst steps first” was his second bit of advice, referring to major cuts, changes, root pruning, etc., especially if the tree is “young” in your possession. It is easier to do this work earlier than tackle major changes later on. Plus, if your major changes were too “drastic” and your tree dies...well hopefully you weren’t too attached to it, yet.

Anyone working with Ficus of any sort has encountered the bleeding white milky sap once a branch is cut. Dale suggested spraying or misting the site instantly with water which stops the bleeding. The bleeding is apparently not harmful, just messy.

As for actual styles, Dale referred to one style as a “Florida style” which is the creation of a rounded top. He explained that Ficus grow that way naturally in Florida.

One major pest to watch out for is scale. Dale suggested if you notice scale while over-wintering; on a nice winter day, with temperatures around 60 degrees, take the plants outdoors, spray with a treatment, allow them to sit for one to two hours, hose the plants off completely and bring them back in. Keep checking for new, developing generations. Club members will need to help me here, as I do not recall what particular treatment/insecticide was recommended. Ken Schoenfeld suggested perhaps an oil-based product, such as Neem Oil. (or rubbing alcohol - Editor)

If you summer your ficus and nerifolia outdoors, they must come in for the winter. Dale offered that he likes to bring his tropicals in BEFORE the first frost, especially before dips in outdoor temperatures cause you to begin to heat the house indoors. He explained that the change most drastic to our plants is the change in humidity, so you’ll find a more successful transition moving plants a bit earlier.

It is best to keep plants under lights (ideally timed to 14 to 16 hours a day) or near windows. Dale felt that the quality of natural light in winter is still better than 14 to 16 hours under grow lights. Dale waters an average of every two to three days. You are best familiar with your own conditions, soil mixes, etc. so just remember to pay attention. Dale doesn't put a lot of stock in the value of misting...again household humidity is more of a factor to contend with (add a humidifier in winter?). Fertilize lightly every two weeks and keep trimming to a minimum.

After over-wintering, come Spring, you take the tropicals out in gradual conditions; first to shade and not directly into baking sun. Again watch temperatures and protect from frost (we're still in Ohio, you know). Slowly, over a two week period, transition into full sun..

I admit my notes are scattered as it was a busy workshop. I invite Dale to drop us a line for additions, deletions and corrections. And I wish to thank Dale for his efforts in securing excellent stock and taking the time to travel to Columbus to share his knowledge and experience. I think old and new members alike benefited. -Sandy Schoenfeld

One last interesting article of note is "Ficus Nerifolia, The Gentle Giant", written by Ed Trout from Florida, for Bonsai Today, vol. 7, May/June 1990, pgs. 52 - 54.

Affair of the Hort - Inniswood Metro Park

I want to thank those who have contacted me to volunteer to staff our Club booth on September 28 and 29. I will be contacting you to work out a schedule to ensure coverage. As in past years the club will have a limited number of trees to sell and membership brochures to give to interested visitors. I have volunteered to make a short presentation on Saturday around noon. These outreach efforts are important for the continued growth and interest in the bonsai hobby.

If you haven't been to Inniswood this year, you might be surprised at the changes in this park. A new children's garden area has been opened. The Affair of the Hort is now several years old. There will be two days of program presentations, and over 100 vendors and horticultural societies will pique your gardening interests. I find this event to be nicer than indoor garden events since the setting is really ideal. If you haven't been to Inniswood it is north of Dempsey Road on Hempstead Road on the southern edge of Westerville.

If you are willing to help and haven't signed up yet, please call me [Ken Schultz] at 818-9914. If I'm not home, leave your name and number so that I can call you back and arrange a schedule to ensure that we have at least two volunteers during each shift.

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.

Sunday, September 15, 2002 - Annual Picnic at John Hill's . (See insert)
September 28 -29, 2002 - Affair of the Hort at Inniswood Metro Park

October 20, 2002 - We are working to bring a Bring Your Own Tree workshop. Edtails to follow. 1:00 bring a tree for advice from our Board. 2:00pm Regular CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory - Fall Show/panel judging
November 17, 2002 - 1:00 bring a tree for advice from our Board. 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
January 19, 2003 - 1:00 bring a tree for advice from our Board. 2:00pm Regular CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory -

Remember to tell the new Board members what you would like to see in this space next year!

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. For Example: MABA will be in Cincinnati for 2003. This is an opportunity to help out a nearby club and attend a very educational event - And see some really nice trees.

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