

Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - October 2002

Remember this comment from last month?

“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.”

It came home with added force when we were contacted to give a value estimate for some stolen trees by an insurance adjuster who happened to know about CBS. The only thing that let the claim get settled was a couple of pictures of trees in their pots that were taken on an asphalt driveway. Not the best reference photos, but at least the bereaved owner had something to turn in to insurance. How many of us can even say that?

Call for Refreshments!!!

If you like your cookies muffins or other munchie food, we need you to call Pat Radloff. The person who was signed up to bring the Snacks for the October meeting is going to be in Hawaii. I mean really - where are their priorities? Hmm, there’s some good bonsai in Hawaii. This now means, no one is signed up for October. This is a Plea for someone to call Pat Radloff to sign up to bring the snacks for one of the next three months Oct, Nov, or January.

Tools and Pots

Our Fall order has arrived. Tools and pots will be available at the October meeting along with soil mix. Our shipment from Lotus International features pots 12" to 18" in size. Most are unglazed. New in the tool bin are jin pliers at \$17.50. We also have stocked up on wire of various sizes that you may need for the Art Skolnik Workshop.

Arthur Skolnik Workshop

Art Skolnik has been a guest of the Columbus Bonsai Society twice in the past ten years. This month he will be conducting a “Bring your Own Tree Workshop” The workshop will begin at 11:00 AM on Sunday, October 20, and will wrap up when all the tress have been worked on or a plan is developed. All members are invited to observe - This WILL be the meeting. Workshop space is limited to 14 participants. Cost is \$25 to bring a tree. Sign up by calling John Hill at 871-0298, or email him at johnjap@aol.com. Even if you have to come later than 11:00, it should be worth while, we want the participants to talk about what they learned about their tree and how their particular design challenge was solved. Harping on photographs, this is definitely a before and after picture event.

Art lives in Toronto Canada. He first became interested in Bonsai in 1980. In 1984 he was invited to live and work with a bonsai grower in Japan. He lectures and demonstrates on bonsai, viewing stones, and Japanese Gardens. In fact during the summer Art is very busy with his landscaping business.

On this trip to Ohio, Art will be lecturing at the Cincinnati Club, the Dayton Club and then ours. I always like to think we've saved the best for last. I encourage you all to sign-up quickly. Art has shown us his skill with collected Arbor Vitae, and American Larch. Art said he hopes that he will be bring some stock with him, but he is uncertain of what he will be permitted to bring, as there are now many new restrictions on imported plant materials.

A word from the President

November 17 meeting - We will feature a Q&A session. To become better acquainted we are asking members to share how they got started -and to bring a tree - alive or dead... Then Dan Binder will discuss tools, their use, care and sharpening. Bring a tool(s) and your sharpening stones that you want to work on, we will have advisors standing by to help you.

December - we will be identifying a place to hold the Annual Holiday dinner. We hope to announce a demonstration/presentation. Also we are considering a silent auction. If you have a preference, let the Vice Presidents know.

Finally, the Board will be meeting December 3 to plan a calendar for 2003. Ideas or suggestions may be forwarded to the Board member of your choice. If you want to see something in particular, let a board member know what it is. We think we guessed your wishes pretty well this year, but we don't claim to be mind readers.

A Book Report

Bonsai in Your Home: an Indoor Growers Guide
By Paul Lesniewicz

This book is among the coffee table sized books in my collection. It was originally written in German in 1991 and was translated and released in the USA and Canada in 1994. I remember that I was initially attracted to this book by the photograph of a flowering bougainvillea on its cover. Indeed one of the attractive features of this book is its numerous full-page color plates, many of trees in flower.

As with several other books, Bonsai in Your Home is organized into a history-horticultural section, and then a section devoted to the care of individual species. The care section covers about 100 species, some that I have not seen in other bonsai books. These include; jade, Monterey Cypress, gardenia, fuchsia, Crepe Myrtle, Lantana, and Schefflera. Each of the entries in this section begins with a paragraph telling about where the plant is from, its natural growth habit, and then its general care and bonsai use. Under this the major entries are: Location; Watering; Feeding; Transplanting; Soil; Pruning; Wiring; and Propagation. I noticed that the introductory paragraph for Lantana mentions that it is a favorite of the whitefly.

The first section of the book also has some interesting inclusions. One is a list of bonsai and their lighting requirements in lumens. Ficus benjamina and serrisa are listed at 1000, and schefflera at 800. Lantana is listed at 2000. The author supports immersing a plant in water, something that I

used to do when I only had 15 trees. The first section also has several landscapes, which include a water garden for indoors.

Since many of us want to have bonsai “in our homes” this book is on my list of ones to check out. The Club does have it, as do some of the local libraries.

Tree of the Month

Taxus Species - Yew

There are several species of yew which for our purposes can all be treated the same. *Taxus baccata*, English yew; *T. cuspidata*, Japanese yew; and *T. x media* a hybrid, available in many garden centers are the main bonsai candidates. These three all have many cultivars with various foliage coloration and growth habits that make for good or bad bonsai characteristics. A local native, *T. canadensis*, has a very shrubby growth habit with multiple thin trunks and would be more difficult to work with. The best options for specimen trees may well be landscape rescues that are leftovers from renovation projects. You have the advantage of 20 to 40 year old stock grown in the ground and sheared for dense foliage. The disadvantage of these trees is you have to dig them up and all the ramification is probably at the branch ends. A big potential disadvantage is that all parts of the yew and seeds except the fleshy fruit is poisonous . Be careful working around children or pets that eat plants.

Although yews are sometimes displayed as shohin size bonsai, they are often styled in a much larger size, perhaps because of the landscape rescue limitations or potential. In any case yews make very good large specimens, in the 18" to 42" size range. This size will be difficult to handle physically, not only due to the pot size and soil weight, but because the wood is extremely dense. Fresh yew wood does not float. The tree, bare rooted, may be over 70 pounds. One nice characteristic of yews is they produce their feeder roots close to the main root mass. You can root prune safely to within 12" of the trunk and not impair the tree significantly.

Kevin Wilson suggests that if you have the luxury of not lifting the tree immediately, to cut the tree down to size and to leave it in the ground until the following spring. This lets the remaining foliage use the entire root system for a year of growth. Then when you do lift it the foliage can help support the growth of a new root system. This would probably be good advice with most collected trees. I have done this with a large elm and it made very good growth over a summer before collection.

Yews backbud easily on old wood as long as there is some foliage farther out to feed the new bud growth. Remember, the roots supply water and minerals to the leaves, the leaves supply sugars back down to potential bud sites and the roots. If you have a trunk section that isn't back budding, make sure its getting direct sun, and then try wounding the bark if its being stubborn. Stab into the wood with an ice pick in several places where you want buds to form. You should see growth within a year. Since yews backbud like this, the branches may be allowed to grow out and thicken with relative safety. The thickened branch may then be pruned back to make the foliage more compact. Yews have an apical growth dominance and this has to be included in any pruning schedule you set up. It finger pinches easily on the new light green growth, but you will

need scissors after it darkens. You can prune just about any time of year, just like hedges, but summer may be the best time to thin out foliage 3 years old or older to allow light into the interior. This allows back budding in the foliage pads. If the foliage pads have achieved full size for your design all new growth at the tips may be removed safely in the spring.

Repot in the spring just as the buds become visible, or later in the fall if you don't bother the roots too much. Spring is the best time for root pruning, although a rescued specimen can be transplanted any time. (What other option is there?) A well draining soil is preferred. It should be on the coarse side and they seem to do well with less than normal organic content. They tolerate, even prefer, dryer soil conditions that would destroy a maple or beech so a well draining soil is very important. Yews like a slightly acid soil, but will yellow if there is too much acid. After repotting, put yews in a shaded location. they will tolerate full sun but prefer to be shaded most of the time. In the wild, yews grow as an understory tree or bush. In spite of a slow growth rate, yews need repotting every 3 years as the fine roots will form a fibrous network and fill up all the pore space in the soil, blocking water penetration.

In spite of the density and hardness of the wood, yew bends relatively easily. On large branches the bark should be protected with a wrapping, and if the bark starts to slip, back off, and make the bend slower in time. This is most likely to happen in spring and early summer. Tie downs work well for the heavier branches if you can find an anchor point on the plant or pot. It may take two applications of wire to make a radical change and still need another 6 months of a light tie down to firmly fix the new position. Remember that yew was used for bows and is very springy and resilient, but live wood will take a bend over time. Copper wire will be stronger than aluminum for this.

Fertilize from spring after bud burst to fall with a balanced or a flowering fertilizer every two weeks. High nitrogen does not seem to do any bonsai good. because of the soil preference, an occasional dousing with something like Miracid liquid fertilizer would probably be okay, and a light application of Epsom salts in spring doesn't seem to hurt.

Yew will make a convincing bonsai in every style but broom, grove, and forest. You might have to really work at a full cascade due to the apical dominance. The wood resists rot and will take carving well if your design tastes run to creating dramatic dead wood. Although it will be difficult to achieve, some dramatic root over rock trees exist in nature.

Sources:

Colin Lewis. *Bonsai Survival Manual*. Storey Books. 1996.

Jerry Meislik. *The Yew*. www.bonsaihunk.com/yews.html

Charles Herbert Otis. *Michigan Trees*. University of Michigan Press. 1972.

Lee Verhoorevort. *Profile of Yew Bonsai*. www.talkbonsai.com/Yew.html

Affair of the Hort - Inniswood Metro Park

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.

October 20, 2002 - 11:00 - Bring Your Own Tree workshop. Register to bring your own tree for advice from Art Skolnik. The workshop is the meeting for those people who just want to come observe and hear the comments on styling and care.

November 17, 2002 - 1:00 bring a tree for advice from our Board. 2:00pm Regular CBS Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory - "How I got started" - Tool Time with Dan Binder and - Naked Bonsai - show off your ramification!

December 10 ? , 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 -

The Board normally meets on the first Tuesday of the month at Franklin Park Conservatory. The meetings are open to members.

President - Ken Schultz

1st Vice President - Dan Binder

2nd Vice President - John Hill

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Treasurer - Dick Guervitz

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Newsletter Editor - Zack Clayton

Refreshment Coord - Patrica Radloff