

Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - January 2003

Well, it's been a year that we've been trying the new newsletter format and in general people seem to like it. We've had a few requests for tweaks here and there. Some of you miss the more informal style of Ross and that's fine by me. I prefer informal, but this is probably the first time in my life someone's insinuated I'm too formal. I know that's not what they meant, but it's still a first. Look for more spontaneity. There has been a lot of favorable feedback about the amount of information in the newsletter. Thank you, and a HUGE thanks to all the board members and participating members who have provided the content you've read over the past year. One editor doesn't make this sort of newsletter happen, it takes a crew. Even one article a month from a different member can make a difference in what you read here. So - If you have a favorite tree, a book you really like, an insight on some method of styling, or just want to sound off - send me an article. I can edit it if you want the help (that's what my position says anyway) or I can run it as is. Either way you get to see your name in print.

The board wants to start getting more advanced information into the newsletter so you have a three month lead on what our coming attractions are. This will help the board focus on what needs to be done and should help you schedule your attendance so you don't unexpectedly miss a program you really wanted to see.

A word from the President

Literati in January

Our January 19 meeting will focus on the Literati style. Our Club's own expert, Jose' Cueto will make a slide presentation on this widely recognized style. Jose' makes presentations among the bonsai clubs here in the Midwest, and we appreciate that he is willing to share his expertise and experience with us. Jose' plans to bring some trees from his collection to help illustrate the literati style. During the second portion of our meeting, John Hill (V.P.) has offered to bring in a Jack Pine that he recently purchased to evaluate its literati potential. Should the tree prove to be suitable, styling will take place!

So now you're thinking, literati? A meeting devoted to this weird style? Peter Chan states in *Bonsai*, "Of all the styles in bonsai, the literati style is probably the most sophisticated. It is a beautiful style, both elegant and lovely yet deceptively simple. It is not to everyone's liking, however, and is generally an acquired taste. To appreciate it fully requires a certain degree of understanding that only comes from education and an appreciation of Chinese art."

Indeed, many of the books in my collection briefly present the various recognized styles of traditional bonsai. Several go beyond the typical one paragraph summary. Following are a few excerpts about literati. "The focal point of the design is the trunk, so it should be full of character." Colin Lewis says in one of his books. The branches are limited to the uppermost part of the trunk and bear just enough foliage to keep the tree healthy and vigorous. Literati gets their name from the calligraphic style of ancient Chinese artists; in Japan these artists were called *bunjingi*. In the *Sunset* book it states that "Ancient Chinese scholars and artists known as literati (learned ones) painted mountain landscapes and depicted picturesquely gaunt trees whose angled

trunks and sparse branches bespoke a struggle for space and sun light. The literati style recalls those venerable survivors, evoking images of countryside in which spectacular scenery and harsh conditions manage to coexist.”

True to these descriptions, literati trunks are tall, thin and the branches are in the upper part of the tree mimicking wild old pines that have lost their lower branches. These slender trunks may be straight, slanting, or slightly curved. Darlene Dunton notes in her book, that the apex should occur at some point over the base of the tree for balance. In Paul Lesniewicz’s book he states, “This form allows for the utmost in artistic expression.”

Pots are noted to be simple inconspicuous containers, either round or slightly irregular and unglazed. The trees are generally juniper, larch, and pine.

Coming Attractions

For January we will have Literati and possibly Styling and Wiring.

In February we will all have the chance to make pots. This was one of our best attended programs 2 or 3 years ago and at the club picnic John showed us his son’s workshop and kiln. We have prevailed on him to lead us in a Do It Yourself Pottery workshop. They will supply the clay and firing. If you want to try a larger pot for a grove or forest planting, that can be accommodated. See the sign up sheet at the end of the newsletter.

In March we will have “Episode VI - Return of the Pots”, our normal sales table with commercial pots and tools, and Soil and Fertilizer. The Hands-on program will be working with a small group of members on a tree provided by the club. We will have a knowledgeable person assigned to each group to explain the vision and plan for the tree.

A Book Report

The Bonsai Book of Practical Facts by Jerome Meyer

This is a book I checked out of the Club library. It isn’t an easy read, but its packed with jems and information. It’s like an organized scrap book of 25 years of notes about bonsai. I would say its primary value is as a reference to use with a specific problem. This would be my first “go to” book to find a solution to a problem. There is a good chance there is something in here to help you out. To just read it is a little like reading a lecturer’s notes. If you’ve heard the speech its easy enough to follow along, but tough going if you haven’t.

That said, there are some really good parts for just browsing. There are sections with before and after pictures (all B&W, no color) and a half page of text explaining what was done, and why. This is on of the real strengths of this book. It not only tells what was done to a tree, but the reason for doing it that way.

The chapters include; styling “birth”, soil, training, wiring, moss, watering, fertilizing, winterization, pest control, and display, with small nuggets thrown in as one or two page items.

These are detailed in the Table of contents and an extensive index. If I had a problem that was covered in this book, I am confident I could turn to it in 30 seconds or less. This book is 126 pages of collected bonsai wisdom. ~ Zack Clayton

Tree of the Month

Desert Rose (Adenium obesum)

I have owned a desert rose for several years. It was originally purchased at De Moynes Nursery near Ohio Dominican College. I purchased it because it has a very thick trunk, and it flowers. To me it seemed to be related to the jade family, and actually its care is quite similar. The leaves are not quite as thick and tend to grow near the tips of the branches. The pink flowers are 2" long and are trumpet shaped. While in Hawaii I saw two of them at a bonsai nursery, and much to my surprise it was wired. I have never tried to wire mine as its bark is tender and fleshy. As you might have guessed by now, this plant is a tropical from the desert region of east Africa. In the wild it is a bush that grows approximately 6- 10 feet tall.

In the winter I bring it indoors and keep it on my lighted plant stands in the basement. The book says it needs a rest period and will do well in a bright spot at temperatures between 54 and 61 degrees. During the winter they say to water less and cease fertilizing. In the summer they recommend fertilizing from spring to late summer with liquid bonsai fertilizer (I use the same stuff the rest of the plants get, a 10-10-10 and sometimes a little liquid African violet food).

It is suggested that this plant be repotted every two years, immediately following the rest period. I tend to use a very small pot for the tree size, but the two books that I have in which desert roses are pictured used larger pots. I have picked a larger blue pot for the next repotting. They recommend a 2-2-1 mix of loam, peat and sand. I have used our bonsai mix with some houseplant potting soil mixed in.

Pruning is recommended whenever the branches have reached their desired length. Again they suggest that this be done in early spring, right after the rest period. They warn you not to come into contact with the sap, as it is poisonous. The pruned off branches can be rooted much the same as rooting jade. Allow them to dry out for a few days and then plant them in a 1-1 sand peat mixture to root, keeping the mixture slightly moist. ~ Ken Schultz

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. The meetings are open to members.

January 19 - Jose Cueto presents Literati - Styling and Wiring.

February 16- John Hill & Son - Pot Making

March 16- Soil & Fert. - Group Styling - work in groups on a tree supplied by the club.

March 31 - Last day to get the low price for attending MABA. On April 1 it will go up by \$50.

*April 27 - Pests (Mark) - Club Trees from the past - Not on Easter.
May 4 - Optional - Road trip to Huth's ??
May 18 - Guest - TBA
June 7-8 - Dawes Show, Dawes Arboretum.
June 21-22 - Show - BYOT to show off.
July 4-5-6 - July 4th weekend of 2003. The Mid-America Bonsai Alliance and the Bonsai Society of Greater Cincinnati invite you to attend MABA 2003. The symposium starts on Thursday evening July 3rd with a demonstration by guest artist Salvatore Liporace. You'll find a full day of demonstrations on Friday and workshops on Friday evening, all day Saturday and Sunday morning. Check this Webpage: <http://maba2003.com> for the details.
July 20- Art Patznik - BYOT
August 17 - New Club Trees - (Clump styling??? lead by Jose???)
September 21- Picnic
October 19 - Fall Show
November 16 -4 stations - Pots/Trees/Tool sharpening/Winterization
December - Holiday dinner

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