

# Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - April 2003

Remember the meeting is the 4th Sunday of the month this time - April 27th!

## Snacks for the meetings

We are still looking for someone to coordinate the snacks and refreshments for the club meetings. You are not responsible for supplying all of the goodies, but we need someone to coordinate the people who do bring them. Also, if you haven't volunteered to bring something in a while, this is a good time to think about it. Wouldn't it be nice if the new coordinator had the rest of the year lined up as soon as they took over? What the coordinator is responsible for is getting the coffee and tea supplies and keeping the receipts for the treasurer to reimburse these costs. If you are interested, talk to a Board member at the next meeting. If we don't get volunteers for this, we may come looking for someone or we could decide we can function without coffee. - Naah, we'll come looking.

## Our Show

Plans are underway! The Vendors list includes Ken Huth, Mike Scheid from Cincinnati, and Gary Wood from Alabama. Unfortunately show regular Dale Cochoy told us he had scheduled something else that weekend, but it gave us a chance to invite two new vendors that we wouldn't be able to have at the show otherwise.

Mike is the Cincinnati clubs' tropical expert. He has studied with Jim Smith and many of the other stylist in Florida for 20 years. Also, he has worked with most of the masters that have been in Cincinnati and the surrounding areas. The last several seasons have been spent working with Jim Barrett and other California masters working with junipers and pines. He says his favorite tree is the one that is in front of him at the present. Mike's demo for 2:00 Saturday afternoon will be a Juniper prostrata from southern Florida. Even though they are found in the south they survive up here quite well..

Gary is both a Grower and a Potter. I know he is bringing lots of pots to Columbus and I hope he will have some large ones for those of us with "two man" trees.

Speaking of the show. We are still looking for volunteers for Friday afternoon setup and registration, Sat/Sunday "sheriffs patrol" and general presence at the club table during the show. And then takedown after the show on Sunday. This one is relatively easy, you have to help to get your trees back.

## Bonsai Classes

Franklin Park Conservatory will be conducting a three class series on bonsai. May 7, 14 and 21, 6:30 – 8:30PM. Mark Ryan, Dan Binder, Zack Clayton and Ken Schultz will co-teach. Course content will include; the history of bonsai, proportion and balance, styles, selection of plant material, care, potting, wiring, and a tree to style and pot. Sign up will be through the Conservatory. I believe the cost will be \$100 with a 10% discount for Conservatory and Bonsai club members. We estimate that half the cost will be in the materials that will be provided.

## Coming Attractions

April's meeting will be on week later than normal to avoid conflict with Easter. April's meeting will be Sunday the 27th. Please make a note on your calendar. The meeting topic on April 27, will be Mark Ryan, FPC, on controlling pests and diseases. Then we are asking club members to search their collections for those trees they created in Workshops gone by. We would like to see both your successes and failures.

This years field trip is scheduled for May 4 to Ken Huth's place. He has promised to have the barbecue hot with goodies to eat and plants priced to sell. He has shared about some of the plants he is getting in this year and they sound pretty nice. Ken's nursery is about 2 hours away near Akron. If you need that Azalea for the May workshop, Ken says he has some. Meet at 10 AM -at the north end of the Polaris Target parking lot. Its the second light west of the I-71/Polaris ramps. Hopefully everyone will be there at 10:00 and we can organize cars and leave by 10:20 - 10:30. I suspect we won't be back until about 6:00 PM. Ken Schultz has 16 signed up so far, so please let him know soon if you want to come along.

For our May 18 (normal 3rd Sunday) meeting, an azalea workshop featuring Tom McCormik has been confirmed! This will be a "bring your own tree" workshop. Spaces are limited to 12. The cost is \$25. These are filling up quickly. All members should plan to attend this session, which will start at NOON. Tom will start with a lecture on azalea care and training. He said he will bring a couple of his trees to illustrate his presentation. Tom is a teacher by trade, and is well know in the bonsai world. Tom is the current president of MABA, the Mid America Bonsai Association, (our club is a member) and he serves as a director on the American Bonsai Society Board. I am really excited about this session; I don't believe the Club has featured azaleas in over 7 years. You should plan to attend, even if you aren't planning on participating in the workshop. Please contact Ken Schultz or send an email to the club address if you want to participate, this will be first come - first served, and only 3 spaces are left.

MABA 2003 Convention - July 3-6

The convention offers an outstanding array of international and local artists along with a great variety of workshops and excellent raw materials. The tree exhibit should be tremendous with two levels of cash prizes. Check out the vendors area and join in the celebration. For information and photos visit our website, <http://www.maba2003.com>. Dave Radlinski, Chairman

Things to do in April

Despite T.S. Eliot's near cliché that "April is the cruelest month of the year,/ breeding flowers out of the dead land," for bonsai April is the month full of promise: It stays light out longer, temperatures moderate, sap runs and all the nurseries and garden centers explode with possible subjects for our pruners. Of course for our trees, April is full of extremes that foil the neophyte, trash the tropicals and generally drive us nuts, what with frost one morning and soft rain the next. What is one to do with the trees? Probably the best action is no action. What if a few frail buds freeze black and die back? A frost when the leaves, flowers are about to open saves pinching back new, soft growth. Keep in mind: the early leaves serve only to provide energy so that later growth can flourish. If primary leaves are killed by frost or freeze, the tree will look distressed but it acts like an early leaf pruning. and best of all the tree is probably adapted to it.

This only applies to the multiseason survivors in your yard of course. The new or last season purchases may not fare as well. Crepe myrtle really isn't that hardy. Neither is most Ficus. As it is repeated again and again, every everybody has to learn, to know: your yard, light, sun, shade, wind, fences, house, tree protection, and - every plant species that you have.

As you start to do your repotting are you looking for the trees that will show well in June? This is the perfect time to get started on this as you are looking at them up close and more personal than you will until the first leaf pruning. And if you are wiring, remember to wire it pretty for the show, no crossed wires, and wire ends neatly bent or clipped short.

Woody plants have begun to blossom. I have a cherry that I collected two years ago and it is setting buds his year for the first time. Talk about exciting! All bonsai are at their best (If we are so lucky to have it coincide) for showing in their "proper time", at their best color, texture, and vigor. Since we meet every month we have an opportunity to show our trees whenever they are at their best. We don't have to wait for the June show if our trees are flowering in April. For example the azalea, desirable for its showy blooms and long season, is usually exhibited in flower. The rest of the time it is allowed to grow unchecked. In spring, when the flower buds begin to show color, the azalea bonsai is cut back to its form and in so doing some blossoms will be sacrificed for the refined shape.

To get full blossoms on any given plant it must grow. Thus, a juniper, not grown for flower or fruit, can be pinched and pruned throughout the growing season. Most conifers and evergreens can. However, deciduous trees, like a crabapple, will produce long vegetative growth and should not be pruned until spring as mentioned when the flower buds begin to show definite signs of blossoms.

As with all living art, timing is important - with a vision of how the tree is to look. Learn when to cut and do it boldly and with intention. Pruning will not hurt the tree, only removing blossoms carelessly or without patience will harm the tree.

## Fertilizer

For those of you who wish to fertilize your container plants: Fertilizer is not food. The only food plants use comes from the sun and goes through the photosynthetic process to produce growth, but without fertilizer they can't do this well in a pot. In bonsai, the soil is contained, the water and oxygen need to pass through the root system and carry the minerals with them for the feeder roots. Any given fertilizer only supplies minerals and trace chemicals that leech out through watering. If they don't leech from the applied material, the fertilizer doesn't get to the roots.

Use a balanced fertilizer, for example 15-15-15. Use a brand name or use a non brand name, whichever is cheaper. The numbers may change slightly from product to product but they are all basically the same. Also, try not to be taken in by advertisements showing huge pumpkins or gigantic strawberries. One fertilizer will work just as well as another. Also whether the fertilizer is "organic" or not is of no real concern. Use the kind you like, your tree won't care other than it will like the kind that works for your watering and care habits.

All fertilizers are extremely inefficient in bonsai culture. Using tablets, pills, globules, or chunks of fertilizer stuff will work no better and no worse than liquid. The tree doesn't care. The point is use fertilizer regularly but don't make a religion out of it. The tree will survive without fertilizer until it weakens so much that bugs and chlorosis take over and you eventually miss a watering. Then, you get to make up a story about why the tree died. We can rationalize almost anything.

## A Book Report

### The Bonsai Handbook

By David Prescott, consultant editor Colin Lewis

As with most husbands, I am difficult to show for. But this year I was lucky enough to receive two bonsai books to add to my library. (Thank you Linda). This also means that I'm delaying my report on the Craig Coussins "Bonsai for Beginners" book. This is a new book, copyrighted in 2001. The table of contents lists the following chapters: Introduction, Science or Art? The art of bonsai, Your own bonsai collection, Keeping your bonsai alive, Keeping your bonsai healthy, Keeping your bonsai in shape, Repotting, Growing your own bonsai, Starting work, and Directory.

When I do these summaries, I often think, am I telling the members the things that would make them select this book? Should I focus on the tips that I find? Since bonsai is a visual art, I normally talk about the photographs, and they are certainly enjoyable in this selection. The Bonsai Handbook is interspersed with wonderful photographs of trees and informative drawings to illustrate the points of the text. Another feature of this book are highlighted boxes containing text that keys to the title of the chapter. For example in the Keeping your bonsai in shape chapter, the tip is "How Wounds Heal: Wounds on trees and other plants don't heal the same way as they might if the trauma were caused to an animal. That is to say, trees are not able to repair damaged tissue, they patiently set about manufacturing a new layer each year, until the wound is entirely covered over. The length of time this process takes will depend upon the size and nature of the wound and the relative thickness of each new annual ring." The chapter talks about careful pruning, pinching and wiring.

The chapter on "Growing your own bonsai" was also well done. It covers subjects from suitable species, using local species to training and cutting seedlings. There was a page that was dear to me (and would also appeal to John Hill and Zack too) about Plants from open ground. This section specifically mentions collecting trees from sites like road construction will save them from certain death. At the same time the enthusiast is cautioned not to dig up the first tree you see, rather check the nebari and trunk before you dig. This is followed with instructions on preparing for the dig, and caring for the plant once you dig it up. The very next chapter is Starting Work: Finding the bonsai within. Subject include, Reducing the root mass and Shortening broad leaf trees. On pages 132 and 133 there is a photo series on putting bonsai skills into practice, showing a nursery cotoneaster being styled into a bonsai.

I know that I have not done this book justice in four short paragraphs, hopefully you will have an opportunity to read it for yourself.

## Tree of the Month

### Tree of the Month: Star Magnolia

Each spring as the trees and shrubs in my yard begin to flower I look at them for bonsai potential. As most of you know I try to read a great deal about bonsai. In my readings I have seen forsythia, witch hazel, Star Magnolia and once an article on dogwood. My initial reaction to the Magnolia was that its leaves are much too large, because I grew up in a home with a Saucer Magnolia in the front yard and a Tulip Poplar in the next to the patio. Talk about a big tree. However the Star Magnolia is quite a bit smaller, and readily available at the local nurseries for a reasonable price. You may want to try one. Not only are the flowers attractive, the bark is a smooth light gray, and the branches ramify quickly.

The Magnoliaceae family has 12 genera and about 200 species. Most are found in east Asia, from the Himalayas to Japan. A few species occur from the eastern United States through Mexico to tropical South America. In the four articles I found (but not the one that I was looking for!) only *Magnolia stellata* (Star Magnolia) and *Magnolia liliflora* are mentioned. In our local nurseries Star Magnolia are readily available. The books describe them as hardy from Zone 5 – 9. Readers Digest Bonsai advises to protect the flowers from spring frosts. About half the blossoms on the magnolias in my yard were browned by a frost this year.

True to form, two of my sources offer different advice. One advises monthly fertilizing and the other, every two weeks. One advises repotting every three-four years in early spring, and the other says, every year before the appearance of shoots. (Personally I look and then decide.) One says – do not let the soil dry out at any time, water daily during the growing season, and the other says water moderately with greater regularity in the summer. Only one mentions that the soil must be acidic, both mention that the plant does well in full sun, but Readers Digest goes on to say that it will also do well in shade. My experience is that too much shade leads to larger leaves. Cultivating Bonsai states that the branches should be pruned before the appearance of shoots, and shoots should be trimmed after flowering to a pair of leaves. Wiring is done after trimming in the summer.

While I did not find the article I was looking for, Bonsai Today, issues 40 and 50 each have an article. The authors are Kiyoshi Sakuraoka and Kazunori Kamiya. The thing I found interesting is that the trees in each article were 22 inches tall, and were obviously different trees. Issue 50 also features trees 33 and 39 inches tall. This is an important concept; a bonsai tree needs to be in scale with its leaves. While the leaves of the star magnolia are smaller than many others in the species, magnolias have fairly large leaves. This interprets into a fairly large bonsai. While Star Magnolia are described as “shrubs” not trees in the gardening books, they are vigorous growers, a shoot may grow three feet in one year. Cutting branch tips results in many new shoot. Remove those not necessary to they style you are trying to achieve. However, timing of pruning is critical as the flowers develop on branch tips. This is why pruning should be done right after flowering. You may find that you will need to prune so that you only allow flowers every other year. Kiyoshi suggests delaying pruning until fall when the leaves fall off, or in the spring before flowering as the time to prune to maximize flowering.

Sakuraoka describes transplanting in Issue 40 as critical to the tree's vitality. He says to remove 99% of the old soil and shorten the roots as much as possible. This encourages the tree to form new roots. He says to take all bottom roots off, leaving only those that extend laterally, this he says will increase the size of the nabari and keep the inner branches in good condition.

The only pest/problem mentioned is powdery mildew. It was suggested spraying from mid June until autumn to prevent mildew. I use orchard spray while spraying my apple trees.

### 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.

April 27\*\*\* - Pests (Mark) Soil (Dan)- Show off - Club Workshop Trees from the past - Note: Not on Easter. 4th Sunday of April.

May 4 - Road trip to Ken Huth's gardens. Meet in conjunction with the Sandusky club. Meet some new friends!

May 18 - Meeting starts at 12:00 noon. Tom McCormick Workshop on Azaleas. Silent observers welcome.

May 17 & 18 - All State Michigan Bonsai Show. Workshops for beginners and advanced artists, demos & retail items at Fredrick Meijer Gardens in Grand Rapids, Mi.

June 7-8 - Dawes Show, Dawes Arboretum.

June 21-22 - Show - BYOT to show off. Note: 4th sunday

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

President - Ken Schultz

1st Vice President - Dan Binder

2nd Vice President - John Hill

Secretary - Mark Passerello

Treasurer - Dick Guervitz

1 year Board - Jesse Welton

2 year Board - Linda Fields

3 year Board - Ben William

Librarian - Merida Weinstein

Newsletter Editor - Zack Clayton  
Refreshment Coord - vacant