

Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - January 2004

Over the coming 6 months you are going to notice that we get moved around a lot. The Chihully at the Conservatory Exhibit has exceeded crowd expectations and there are several things about it we need to be aware of. First it is a much needed cash generator for the conservatory. We could look at this as the choice between having the building all to ourselves and then having to look for a new home, or that having big crowds means our place is secure and provided for. It also means that when you come to a meeting on Sunday afternoon, you may have to walk for a ways to get to the building. In December people were having to park in the street. The parking inside the courtyard gates is no longer available to us. It is drop off and pick up only. Do you know where the Davis Center is? You will probably find out this year. that will be our overflow location for at least one meeting this year. I will be sure the newsletter tells about this and will probably send a short email reminder just before the meeting.

Coming Attractions

On January 18, we will have Gail Penner talk to us about photographing our collections. She is in the Sept-October- 2003 issue of Bonsai International Magazine with an article entitled "Some Tips on Photographing Bonsai". There are 4 photos with the article illustrating the subject matter. We will have one of the conservatory trees to use as an example for the visual part of the talk. Bring you own trees in a cooler or bare, and a camera so you can see what is being discussed. Gail is a member of the Greater Cincinnati Bonsai Society.

February will be our discussion of soil and repotting and kick off the series of talks about getting a tree ready to show. There are a lot of things that will contribute to a show ready tree. Even if you don't have the ability to do all of them, any one will contribute to the visual appeal of your tree, so this is a good program for beginners as well. We will have the tools and pots available.

Book report and Tree of the Month

All in one: WIKLE-ISM AND WHY IT WORKS

Have you converted to Wikle-ism yet? After the fascinating-and well attended program given by Jack Wikle at our October meeting, I know I am not the only one to be fascinated by the little trees he grows and equally interested in the method he uses to keep them growing and healthy.

In a nut shell, Wikle's method consists of:

- * Trees are small-in bonsai terms shohin or mame
- * Trees are grown under ordinary "shop light" florescent fixtures with cool white type bulbs
- * Watering is done by immersion, followed by a dose of very light fertilizer at every watering
- * Trees are indoors year round

Using this method, Wikle has had great success, both with types of plants we expect to see indoors, but also those that seem better suited to outdoor growth. On of the big hits of Wikle's presentation is when he pulls adorably tiny trees out of a well worn metal ice chest. He produced

a dandy looking juniper that astonished many “experienced” bonsai growers when he revealed it had been growing indoors for about two decades.

Seeing and hearing what Wikle was up to was a real inspiration to me. Like many Central Ohio Bonsai growers, I have some tropical/warm weather plants that are very happy outside in spring, summer and early fall. They would come inside and the countdown would begin-it was always a race between them and me to see if I could coax them into living until spring when they would be free from an artificially lighted prison and go outside again to enjoy all the sunshine they could soak up. I started out with fluorescent lights, and had decent success for a couple years, but seeing a need to up-grade the equipment, I invested in a 400 watt metal halide grow light. Ten years later, I’m glad to not be using it. It made the growing area hot-about 10 degrees, and would singe leaves that got to close. It certainly added to a heftier electric bill, and I never saw good steady even growth in the plants, they seemed to be very etiolated, though that may have had as much to do with watering and fertilizing as it did with light. I watered with a traditional watering can and fertilized on a very hit or miss basis.

Every year I would lose a plant or two because I missed a watering and it dried out, or it got over watered and the roots got sick. I didn’t invest in any of the expensive gear that moves or adjusts the lights position to cover a wide area, so I had a smallish circle of usable light and beyond that a no-mans land (no plant land) where things did grow well. It was worst for the taller plants, since their tops got light but the bottom part of the foliage mass faded away.

Through attrition or choice I have gotten rid of any indoor tree that isn’t shohin or mame. A Green Island Ficus that I have had for 15 years, a tree that I wanted to develop into one of those barrel trunked trees that impress on first sight-and which was never happy all winter- is now cropped and trimmed to a height of 7 inches. All my indoor plants are arranged in two lines under a pair of shop light fixtures. I immersion water and use a dilute fertilizer every time. So far things look very good, plants are growing, I’m enjoying being around them, and I’m shelling out less money to American Electric Power, so I’m sold on the virtues of “Wikle-ism”.

Observing even for this short space of time here is why I believe Wikle is successful with his set up-and how the rest of us can emulate that success. First the size of the trees is ideal for indoors where light is at a premium. Small trees are much easier to provide more than adequate illumination. Watering by immersion is the most thorough way insure the trees have proper moisture, and makes sure that every part of the soil mass than can absorb and hold water will do so. Pots watered by immersion also drain better, the large volume of water being worked on by gravity to insure that all excess water leaves the pot. Fertilizing at every watering makes nutrition available on a continual and regular basis-no guess work or complicated record keeping. Being indoors gives the trees a very consistent and even environment, so growth is regular and predictable, and there are no extremes of temperature or rain to make life hectic. Tiny trees that would need extensive pampering and special care if kept outdoors are much easier when grown indoors in this manner. I think it is an ideal way to grow small bonsai.

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 18 – Photographing your collection with guest speaker Gail Penner.

February 15 - soil discussion and making, repotting, and getting show ready.

February 28 - Dawes Work Day, 9:00 at Dawes Arboretum

March 21 - Gary Woods on Black Pine and workshop/ meeting lecture.

April 18 - Getting a tree show ready, what the professionals do - Also help and advice on trees you are considering for the June show. Focus on Maples

June 19 and 20 - The Columbus Bonsai Society Annual Show. Yes it's on Fathers day again.

June 18, 19, and 20 - MABA and BCI in St Louis, Mo

July 18 - Tropical weird and wonderful bonsai with hands on workshop for club trees.

August 14-15 Workshop, guest artist to be announced.

September 19 - Club Picnic, TBA

October 17 - Saikei - (ground landscapes)

November 21 - Fall show and demo

December - Dinner TBA - and something else?

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1st Vice President - Dan Binder

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