

Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - March 2004

How many of you took Dan's advice and started working on your trees during the warmth in February? I brought in a couple of my maple whips and repotted them and put them under my lights downstairs. I use volunteer maples for most of my experiments. They are inexpensive and easy to replace if I goof. I have found one thing about the Wikle growth method. I had several plants -trees and accent herbs) that I brought in with my regular growing media. The coarser soil I use outside dries out very quickly indoors and it is a struggle to keep the plants moist enough. The ones I have repotted into the finer soil/sphagnum mix are doing much better with water retention.

The soil mixing session was a success and several people made up specialty mixes or just grabbed a particular ingredient that they have had trouble getting hold of. There was enough interest in in larger quantities that we will be looking at placing an order for some bulk material. We also got a couple of leads on where to find haydite. It is used in making lightweight concrete products. If there is a concrete plant near you they may have a "small" pile of haydite on site that could be available for a bulk purchase. Dan says he has checked and they were quite reasonable.

Coming Attractions

In March we will have the Gary Wood workshop. Gary Wood from Mussel Shoals Alabama will be our guest lecturer on March 21. The 12 workshop slots in the morning have already been filled. BUT, we have a second workshop session that will start after the meeting. Gary says that this can be either his trees or bring your own, he is quite comfortable with winging it. If you choose his trees he says he will be bringing Red Pine and Japanese Black Pine. You can do one tree or you may choose to do a Saikei. He will have secondary plants with him suitable for the landscape trays.

By the way, take note of the styling contest mentioned below. Although you wouldn't be able to enter a tree you did in this workshop, Gary says he likes Alberta Spruce and would be willing to work with someone on these trees as well. You could learn some hints from an artist and then apply it to your contest tree(s) at home.

I have a few names that have asked about the second session, so the access will be people who email Columbusbonsai@hotmail.com or leave a phone message with Zack at 844-5764. Members will have a chance to pay for their workshop in order of your reservation. If less than 12 people sign up then slots will be available to meeting attendees.

Whether you are in the workshop or not - plan to attend. At our regular meeting time, Gary will provide a lecture on the raising of black pine as bonsai. Black Pine is one of the traditional trees used by the Japanese as bonsai. Gary raises these and others in his nursery.

Gary will be vending in June at our show. Don't miss out on buying a raffle ticket on the Gary Wood pot we have as his donation from last year.

Alberta Spruce Styling Contest

Alberta Spruce Styling Contest: open to all Club members. We have beginner (styled less than 5 trees so far) intermediate (styled 5 – 25 trees), advanced (more than 25 trees styled by you), and "Saikai" categories.

The "Winners" will get their names in the newsletter - with a photo of them and their tree and a free bag of soil - value \$3. (Other prizes to be determined)

Judging in July.

And just where should you get your Alberta Spruce? From the Club. At the March and April meetings we will be selling Alberta Spruce, \$3 for 1, 2 for \$5, and 5 for \$10.

Alberta Spruce (*Picea glauca albertiana* 'conica'): These conical shaped evergreen may grow to 10 feet tall, but typically is seen in landscapes at 4 – 6 feet. They are hardy in zones 3 to 8, so you may have one growing in your yard now. It grows best in full sun, but the one in my yard is on the north side of the house and does get some morning sun. The only pest that seems to bother it is red spider mite; especially in hot dry weather. It is slow growing, typically only 3" per year. It has dense bright green needles. Occasionally you will see an Alberta spruce trimmed into a spiral or tiered topiary.

Alberta Spruce as Bonsai: I looked through my library and found that half the references pictured Alberta Spruce in Saikai, and they looked very good. On the Internet I found hundreds of listing and looked at a few. These showed solitary trees either formal upright or informal upright. There was a very nice twin trunk that had been in training for nine years. There was one site that had a nearly untrained five-year-old specimen in an oval blue glazed pot for \$49.95.

The Alberta Spruce was discovered in the Canadian Rockies in 1904, so that may explain why they don't appear with the traditional Japanese specimens used for classical bonsai. However Simon and Schuster's Guide to Bonsai states that it is particularly adaptable to bonsai because it can stand both repotting and pruning. Martin Treasure used eight very small trees to create a Yose-uye on a tufa rock in his book *Bonsai Life Histories*. *Sunset Bonsai* shows seven in a long rectangular tray, grouped five and two in the 3rd edition.

Repotting should be done in spring before the buds have opened, do not repot in autumn! Alberta Spruce should be repotted every 3-4 years (2-3 for younger specimens). Keep them damp but not soggy. Feed them half strength miracle grow every two weeks in the spring, not at all in mid to late summer, then resume feeding with a 0-10-10 until mid autumn. As with other spruce, use a well drained mix, 5 parts grit, 3 parts turface, and 2 parts bark.

Pinching and thinning the buds is necessary to keep the tree looking like bonsai. While they only grow 3' a year, I've found that when opening up the tree and letting light reach the inside, buds want to grow up into the branches above. Also watch branch length, upper branches will shade lower ones. To thicken foliage, eliminate the apical bud from each branch before the buds open. New growth is tender and can be pinched with your fingernails.

Because these trees tend to grow upward wire needs to be left on as long as possible. One reference says they should be wire free going into winter, and not wired until we are frost-free. Another says that branches can be wired into position in the fall or winter. Suggesting bending them down more than necessary as Alberta Spruce have a tendency to spring back into position.

Linda and I both enjoy these trees as bonsai, we have three in our collection. ~ 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.

March 21 - Gary Woods on Black Pine and Saikei workshop (10:00) ? meeting/lecture (2:00).
Workshop and Meeting in downstairs classroom of Franklin Park Conservatory.

April 18 - Club tree workshop, \$5 trees will be available to develop our collective skills and to share in coming years. If you have trees from former workshops please bring them in so we can see how they are developing. Bring a shohin sized pot if you want to transplant. Also help and advice on trees you are considering for the June show.

May 1 and 2 - The 2004 Michigan All-State Bonsai Show will be in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Check out the Frederik Meijer Gardens web site for more information about the venue. See: www.meijergardens.org - click Education, click classes, click special programs.

May 16 - Focus on Maples. There will be volunteers available and you are encouraged to bring you own maples for show and tell. Also - Getting a tree show ready, what the professionals do

June 5 and 6 - The Annual Dawes Bonsai show at Dawes Arboretum on SR 13 between Newark and I-71

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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