

Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - September 2004

This is Renewal month for all continuing members. If you joined Columbus Bonsai Society for the first time in June or at the show then you are signed up for 2005 already. If you are a continuing member then you know the drill. Get me a completed membership form and a check. Please do not turn in just a check or cash. It makes it very hard to track who has or has not renewed. I get grief about it every year. This year it will be easy. If I don't get a form, you didn't renew but you may have made a donation. Thank you. It's your choice.

On my continuing rant about Vermin (more commonly called squirrels) I used to have a developing grove of Amur Maples. I have two left. The rest were chewed of at the base of the trunk and there is no sign of resprouting. So - If you have delectable, tasty trees in a pot near any pathway for squirrels to get into your yard, keep an eye out for damage. I purchased some spring arm rat traps and will see if that helps any.

Ken's Bonsai World : We had a really beautiful day for Ken's annual Fall BBQ. Seven clubs had members there, we had 9 people who made the trip. Treasures and bargains were found by all that went. Akron, Ann Arbor, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Pittsburgh and Sandusky were represented. All totalled there were probably fifty bonsai enthusiasts there. Keith Scott bought one of Ken's really big pots, it was really good to see and chat with him. Dan Binder took some pictures - I can hardly wait to see them!

Coming Attractions

September 19 is our club picnic. The picnic this year is at Ken and Linda Schultz. A map is attached for members. Ken says to park at the office park behind the house, his road is under construction and its hard to get in the front. As always there will be a Member Sale of bonsai related items. The Golden Dog Trophy contest, Plenty of good potluck food, friends, family, and fun. Ken is going to have Badminton and Croquette set up in the far back yard for kids and spouses. This is a great social event for the ones close to us who tolerate our passion, but don't always share it. RAIN OR SHINE.

The Golden Dog Trophy is open to all members who have a hopeless styling challenge. In the years past it has been awarded to presidents, officers, and members with that "special tree" that should probably just go in the compost or be free released. The criteria for entry is simple, just bring in your living, most dog ugly, tree in a bonsai pot that has presented you with the most trouble or that you just are not willing to admit defeat with it. The winner will get custody of the trophy for a year and be memorialized with a dog tag on the Trophy with your name and year of award.

I wanted to let you all know that the Columbus Bonsai Society will have a booth at Inniswood Garden's "Affair of the Hort" on September 25 (10-7) and 26. (11-5). 18 horticultural societies will have booths with items to sell and there will also be commercial vendors. Each of the 18 societies are scheduled to make a presentation. The Bonsai presentation will be at 1:15 on Saturday. If you haven't been to Inniswood - its on Hempstead - north of Dempsey and south of Schrock. The Gardens themselves make this a worthwhile destination.

Saturday, October 9 9-5, Sunday, October 10, 12-4 p.m.

9th Annual Carolina Bonsai Expo at The NC Arboretum. The premier bonsai show in the Southeast. Featuring outstanding trees from bonsai clubs across the Carolinas, Tennessee, Georgia and Virginia as well as selections from the Arboretum's own collection. Free demonstrations, an extensive bonsai marketplace and a live auction. Join us also in celebrating the completion of Phase I of the Bonsai Exhibition Garden.

http://www.ncarboretum.org/PublicPrograms/Events_2004.htm#October

Tree of the Month

Growing and Developing Maples and Black Pines From Seedlings from Bonsai

This is a synopsis of three articles written by Brian Gershuny on the Okami Gardens Bonsai website. <http://home.comcast.net/~okamigardens/> I hope Mr. Gershuny doesn't mind me picking through the sixteen pages of text to pass some words of wisdom on to our Club's members. The three articles are actually "Growing Seedling for Bonsai"; "Developing Maples From Seedlings"; and "Developing Black Pines From Seedlings". First let me note that this takes time and patience – but then what in bonsai doesn't; the author notes that it takes him 8 years to grow a decent maple and 5-9 years for a black pine. The incentive is that he gets great trees at a very low cost (as long as you don't add up the amount of time). His nursery is in New Jersey. So I'm guessing his seasons are at most a few weeks ahead of ours.

To get started, select seedling from catalogues now. Many offer seedlings in bundles of 10, 20, 50 or 100 (share with your friends). He uses his culls as gifts. These fall and winter purchases should arrive in the spring. Most are shipped bare root from March to early May. Be ready to plant them in 6" pots when they arrive. He suggests a soil made of 2 parts commercial soil mix, 1 part coarse sand and 1 part perlite.

Here's the first trick – put the seedling in a bucket of water mixed with mud to keep the roots dark. Look at the roots. The taproot will need to be cut to 1-2" below the soil line. If there are no feeder roots, he advises to wrap 2-3mm aluminum wire around the root a few times like a tourniquet. This wired tree will need to be planted a little deeper. The tree will grow fibrous roots above the wire, and next year the length below can be cut off.

That's it – except for daily watering and feeding – for the first year. Most trees should get full sun with a little shade in the afternoon.

Maples: At the end of the first year – in the fall after the trees have lost their leaves, prune 3-6" from the base and apply cut paste. He says this encourages side branches that will help to thicken the base. Remember maples die back below a cut an inch or two in some cases. Shelter them from the wind and mulch their pots for the winter.

* Year 2 – leave mulched until all frost threats have passed. Then move them to 1.5 feet apart. Let the branches grow until late June, then cut to a node or side branch where you want to change direction of the trunk. Late August- September - At this point he decides whether he will continue pot culture – or move them into the ground. Only growth in the ground will develop

heavy trunks. (You'll need to read the original here – too many details for the space we have in the newsletter.) He prunes the top, and takes out weaker side branches. He notes that too many branched at one-point causes ugly lumps on the trunk line. The trees in the ground are space 3-4 feet apart.

* Year 3 - prune branches from the inside curves.

* Year 4 – After the leaves mature- pick a front. Prune off the thickest branches (smaller makes the trunk look older in comparison. Leave no stump. Leave the sprouts around the cut at first, thin to 1 or 2 after a year. In August cut through the root on the front side of the trunk – about 16” from the trunk.

* Year 5 – June – cut off large branches. July root prune the right side. August – root prune the back. Cut off branches that won't be a part of the final design.

* Year 6 – If you're happy with the trunk– its time for a training box. His are 2' squares of 2X4s with plywood bottoms. They are dug just after bud swell.

Black Pines: Pines have 2 growth spurts a year. In late spring candles (new growth) hardens off by July. The second flush of growth starts in late August – that hardens in September. New buds develop for next spring. If roots are damaged now (or pruned) the tree is weakened and may die. Major cuts may be made just before the second growth spurt. Pruning can also be done in winter. Pruning should stimulate latent buds when timed to just before the growth spurts.

It will take a pine a year or two to recover from transplanting – never bare root an older pine. Full sun stimulates budding, short growth and back budding. Pine soil is coarser than that used for deciduous trees because they are more prone to root rot.

In the winter protect them from wind damage. Mulch the pots with shredded leaves.

* Year 2 - Cut the seedling back to 3”-5” in late March. (I remember Gary Wood saying something similar) The photo shows that some greenish trunk and a dozen of so needles are all that's left; the cut is at a 45degree angle. He says to cut the needles in half to let in the light. Then he wires this little bit of trunk to give it some shape. Bending the trunk in the direction you wrapped the wire. (He sets long straggly seedling with no lower buds aside without cutting them and wires them too.) He says to keep the wire on until it cuts in –this cutting in causes rapid thickening. However you must remove the wire before the bark grows over it. Be careful not to wire over the buds or flatten the needles to the trunk. The scar will heal over in two years. The pots are then placed 1' apart. Fertilize and water – but no more pruning this year.

* Year 3 - In April transplant the seedlings in 10” pans that are no more than 5” deep. The soil mix he uses is 2 parts coarse sand, 2 parts perlite, and 1 part nursery soil mix. Turkey or chicken grit or Turface can be used in place of the sand. Spread the roots out and arrange them – but do Not prune them. Use Rootone or other hormone powder. Keep the plant at the same depth in the new soil as it was last year. After planting, soak them in Superthrive. Place them 2' apart, water and fertilize until winter. Then cut the top shoot back to the lowest branch on that stem. Push the pots together for winter and mulch.

* Year 4 – In Spring, spread the trees 2' apart and fertilize and water until June – start looking at trunk lines and decide which trees will be large, medium or small. Wait until August – then based on where the front is – prune off any thickening branches in the front. Before you put the

trees away for winter, cut back any long branches to the first secondary branch from the trunk. Shorten secondary branches as well. Trim out some of the needles that are 2 or more years old.

Medium (remember when you sorted them) bonsai are repotted now into squat 5 gallon containers with as little soil disturbance as possible. 13"X10".

Large bonsai are planted in the ground – in late August or early September – in full sun – in well drained soil. Plant 4-5 feet apart.

Year 5 – Large Bonsai – Fertilize heavily. Pinch candles back in mid-June. 3-5 shoots will grow back.; select out 2-3 shoots in August. In early winter (late November) prune these shoots to 2"-3". Prune off any thickening branches over 1" thick.. Select shoots at the top to change trunk direction. Repeat this procedure for 4 years. Use wire on the branches to get a good angle to the trunk. In the 3rd year in the ground – root prune. In the Spring prune the left and the right side; in the Fall prune the back and the left side. Cut down with a spade at a 45degree angle. When you dig the tree in year 9 – disturb the roots as little as possible; avoid windy and or hot days. He says that he always uses a barrier – like an old tile Or an 18" plywood square under the tree in the hole to cause the roots to spread.

When the tree is almost the final size you want, begin pinching the candles in July so that the secondary growth is shorter. Cut off old needles to force buds further back. Prune branches to develop a refined structure. Dig the pine in the spring, remove any heavy soil from under the root ball, place it into your waiting pot. The tree will be in it for 4 or 5 years so make sure it is appropriate for the tree. Protect it from the wind. Give it a good soaking using Superthrive and Bioplex. Wait until the first winter before wiring and pruning. Pinch the candles in late June.

Year 5 – Medium Pines – Remember, these are the ones in 5 gallon containers – Their training is much the same as Large Pines. Develop movement in the trunk. Pinch the candles of branches to be used in the final design in June. Choose 2 or 3 shoots and trim back to 1-2" in August. Cut off thickening branches over 3/4" in diameter. Cut off any in front. As with large trees let the top grow out- do not pinch the candles or prune these.

Continue annual pinching in June and cutting back in August until the tree is almost the size you want. Cut the top thickening branch off when it is 1/2 to 3/4" thick. Another shoot can be left to go out at the top to continue thickening the trunk.

Wire down branches you will use in the final design while they are thin. Work buds close to the trunk. About the 3rd year in the 5gallon pot the tree should be about the height you want. Let the candles grow out until early July then pinch them back. Cut off the extra shoots in August to 2 or 3. remove the top thickening branch. Cut off 1/3 of the remaining thickening branches. Cut off all needles older than one year to 1/16". Leave all of this year's needles. In fall – mulch and protect from wind for winter as always.

The next spring these trees can be planted in bonsai pots in late April or early May. Use a coarse bonsai mix. The tree will be in it for 4 or 5 years so make sure it is appropriate for the tree. Protect it from the wind. Give it a good soaking using Superthrive and Bioplex. Do not wire

now. Pinch the strong candles in late June. Use ½ strength fertilizer once a week. In winter trim back the shoots, trim off the old needles and wire.

Year 5 –Small Pines – These are still in the 10”X5” pots. Training can begin in the winter. Leave on thickening branches for now. Prune back the branches to be used in the final design. Wire and place in a protected area.

Let the tree grow in the spring until early July. Pinch the candles on the branches you will use in the final design – in early July. Leave the thickening branches and top grow. In August prune out growth – leaving 2 shoots per branch. In early winter pull – or trim off the old needles and thin this years needles to five bundles. Cut off the thickening branches. Mulch for winter. In the spring they will be ready for wire and their first bonsai pot.

Notes: Roots that have grown out of nursery pots during the summer should not be cut off when they are grouped and mulched for winter – they are storing valuable food. Wait until late spring. Trees thicken more on the inside curve – so the bends you put in a trunk appear to straighten out. Pines cannot be rushed – there is no substitute for time. The method described here can also be used for spruce and yew. (White pines do not back bud as well) Do not let the branches get ahead of you.

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.

September 19 - Club Picnic at the Schultz residence, Golden Dog award, food, member's sale.

October 17 - Saikei - (ground landscapes)

November 21 - Fall show and demo - Winter protection for new members

December - Dinner TBA - and something else?

January 16 - Club meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory

February 20 - Club meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory

February 26 - Annual Saturday bonsai workshop at Dawes for their Show sale. - I checked with Keith Stevens and this is a continuing tradition.

March 20 - Annual CBS soil sale with tools and pots.

May 7-8, 2005 Michigan All-State Bonsai Show, Fredrick Meyers Gardens Grand Rapids

May 28-31, 2005 5th Annual World Bonsai Convention, Washington, D. C.

<http://www.bonsai-wbff.org/wbc5/main.htm>

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