

# Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - January 2005

## Presidents Column

Every bonsai grower needs a flowering quince, *Chaenomeles japonica*. They are not remarkable plants for bonsai though. They are not very hardy and need some winter protection. Also their wood is brittle and not easily wired, they don't seem to produce much foliage and so are slow growers. In my collection 10 months out of the year the quince is a weak team member. However starting in January and then climaxing in February the quince is mighty and steals all attention. Flower buds have already started to swell on my specimen that is in the enclosed porch where it over winters, foreshadowing the drama that will unfurl. Some of the flowers will be creamy, some orangish and others slightly pink. When all the flowers are on display every thought of the quince's weaknesses for bonsai culture are gone. Attention is riveted on the blooms and the hope of the coming Spring that is expressed by them. This buoys the mood, brightens the day and sharpens the anticipation for the season to come.

Other plants come on in this way such as the deciduous Japanese azalea (*Rhododendron*) which will begin to spring to life but later in Winter. Indoor plants also bring on a flush of flowers when the days lengthen such as the *Serissa*. Nothing though quite does it for me as the quince. I have already been heartened by the growing flower buds and have become just that much more invigorated for the coming bonsai season by this plants culture.

The CBS too has become invigorated planning for this years programs. We look forward to a Franklin Park Tour this month on the 4th Sunday (instead of the third), and many excellent programs to come. So stick with CBS for another year and you will be encouraged and educated in many ways to pursue this hobby. We always want to hear from you and soon that should become easier when we debut our web page. Many good things are in the offing that I hope you all will enjoy, maybe even enjoy as much as the bonsai grower admiring the quince in January preparing to flower.

## Coming Attractions

Next year is looking like fun already. The January meeting will be the fourth Sunday on January 23rd. Gary Clarke, the Conservatory's Director of Horticulture will give CBS members a behind the scenes look at the plant collections and sculpture show that is on display. We will break into two groups and while one group tours we will discuss winter care tips for indoor plants then we will switch so that each group is small enough to get an effective tour with Gary.

February meeting will tap the talent of longtime CBS member and recent bonsai pottery artist, Tom Holcomb, who will teach us Tree Biology. Within the last 20 years biologists have begun to understand trees differently. For those that want a heads up search the internet for Alex Shigo, father of modern arboriculture.

March 20, 2005 – A Day with Artist Jim Doyle

Who is Jim Doyle? Jim is a teacher and horticulturist. He earned his degree in horticulture from Delaware Valley College. Jim started Nature's Way Nursery which features dwarf conifers, Japanese maples and many other pre-bonsai. He has studied with many artists and visited Japan and China to study bonsai and import materials. Jim Doyle has over 30 years of involvement with bonsai, including the American Bonsai Society Board of Directors.

**Shimpaku Juniper Workshop:** On March 20, two programs will be presented. The first beginning at 9:30 will be a Shimpaku Workshop. Twelve individuals will be able to participate for a fee of \$75 each. This fee includes a fine one-gallon pre-bonsai Shimpaku juniper provided from Nature's Way Nursery. Participants will need to bring their own tools, wire, soil and a pot (Since this is a styling workshop, I suspect something plastic that will hold a one gallon root ball will be sufficient.) This workshop is limited to the first twelve paid registrants. You may pre-register by e-mailing [kasceppsm@aol.com](mailto:kasceppsm@aol.com) but your payment is needed to guarantee your spot. If there are more than 12 registrants, I will track a standby list, so that if someone discovers they can't participate, stand-bys will be notified in the order received. Workshop Observers fee is \$5. The Workshop will include an in depth discussion about the care of Shimpaku juniper bonsai.

**Tree Critique:** Critique Participant fee is \$25. Register as above, and if possible send in the scientific name and current style of the tree you are planning to have critiqued. The Critique will start at our regular Club meeting time. Jim Doyle will critique ten trees of your fellow club members. He will share ideas on improving the styling and development of these trees. My suggestion is that you may wish to pick that difficult tree or one that you have shown, but you know it could be even better with a little expert guidance. Since a critique does not provide time for cutting and wiring, I suggest that you bring something to mark branches and paper to take detailed notes.

Register early so that you don't get shut out! ~ Ken Schultz

In April we are contemplating a Korean Hornbeam forest planting demonstration with club material. Jose will be planting the forest in a pot donated by Bob Puseker and we will be raffling this to the membership after it is established and healthy.

Tree of the Month

One Branch, Two Branch Three Branch, More by Ken Schultz

When you buy nursery stock – study the nabari and the trunk very carefully when making your selection. To change either of them will take many years. But don't sweat the branches too much, with back budding you can grow new ones. I wish I could say that this was universally true in all cases, including Hinoki Cypress but it is not. You need to consult a care guide for that particular species, but a lot of the "traditional" bonsai varieties do back bud.

As you develop a tree it goes through three stages. The first is nursery stock that has too many branches and you must make those first nerve-wracking cuts, which decides the style that the tree will be developed in for some time. The "intermediate, developing tree may have more branches than the show tree will. It may have "sacrificial branches" that you allow to grow to improve the

trunk's thickness. Then there will be the refined show ready tree. As you work on your tree's development you may find that the tree will go from show ready, back into an intermediate phase and then back to a show phase repeatedly.

There are two ways to train branches, by wiring or by "clip and grow". This second method is actually the one originally used, but wiring has become more popular because the results are usually immediate. Actually we use both methods. When a branch is wired, you may shorten it; before you cut the end off you need to look at the direction of the last bud you are leaving because that bud will be the new direction the branch grows. Also a number of buds will develop where you have cut the branch. As these buds develop, you decide which ones stay and which to remove. You may want to leave a few extras, just in case. I have had cases when the "selected bud" fails to grow.

In general your first branch should be the thickest, because on a tree it would be the oldest. Because of its age it should grow downward due to the forces of weather and time. Branches generally should not emerge from the inside curve of the trunk, but the outside. The second branch is generally on the opposite side from the first. It should have a growth habit similar to the first branch because it too has experienced the same forces of nature. One cannot grow down and two – grow up. Because trees are like sculpture, the third branch is frequently on the back of the tree. As you go up a tree the branches become younger, and therefore thinner and closer together.

Another guiding principal is that the first branch should be at least one third the way up the tree's trunk. Above two-thirds it is OK for the branches to be upward growing and close together because this part of the tree is young. Normally one of the branches near the height you want your tree to be, is wired upward to create an apex with significant taper. In bonsai it is quite common to saw off much of the height of a tree to make it look older and improve its taper. I have seen bonsai where each step in taper is where the branch was selected and wired, then cut again, and again as it was allowed to grow to its present height.

Older trees tend to have fewer branches. Branches that are too close together will shade out the lower ones, causing them to weaken. These shaded lower branches tend to get leggy with tufts of leaves at their ends. This makes them difficult to shorten to maintain the overall shape of the tree. On some pines and Hinoki Cypress it may be impossible to get back budding even if you expose the lower branch to light, after it has lost its foliage. Wiring is constant as you refine and ramify (increase twiggy-ness) of the older branches. Remember that bonsai stock will want its new foliage to grow up and look young. It needs to be wired out and down. To maintain the shape of the branches you will need to constantly select which buds to allow to grow and which to trim or eliminate. The Japanese larch that I have needs to be constantly pinch and shaped.

Now is a good time to view your deciduous trees. Some trimming may occur now, but major branch removal, and repotting should wait until spring. Wiring can occur now too - provided your fingers can handle the cold. At least now, you don't have to worry about catching a leaf under the wire you are wrapping around the branch. Don't bring them inside to work on! And put them back on the ground and mulch them in where you have been storing them when you are done. It is important not to thaw them out or allow them to break dormancy and think its spring. I

lost 5 Japanese cedars (cryptomeria) by bringing them to my Mom's with me to work on – four years ago at the end of February. I worked on them in her Florida room, then placed them in a breezeway when I was done. I returned them to their winter flowerbed when I got home. They were all dead by June.

Recommended Bonsai Books Copyright ©1996 Pine Garden Bonsai

Kate Bowditch and Max Braverman, joint proprietors of Pine Garden Bonsai Nursery, began writing book reviews for *Bonsai*, The Journal of The American Bonsai Society in 1981. They jointly served as regular book reviewers for that publication.

#### Introduction to Chinese Bonsai

When Hal Mahoney first demonstrated a typical Chinese Pen Jing rock construction with trees, few in his audience at that 1983 Festival of Learning, had seen or heard of these unusual bonsai. Hal's talk was followed by a display of Penjing from China at The Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and elsewhere in the country. The following three books have played a role in introducing Americans to the bonsai of China.

#### Man Lung Artistic Pot Plants - Wu Yee-sun

1974, Wing Lung Bank Limited; N.F.S.

This privately published volume displays Mr. Wu Yee-sun's collection of bonsai, a collection ranging from traditional Japanese pieces to characteristic lignan (cut and grow style) of southern China, to Penjing, compositions of tree and stones. With more than 350 illustrations, many in color, this volume is certainly worth the trouble, perhaps risk of sending \$10.00 U.S. to the Office of Information, Hong Kong Baptist College, 224 Waterloo Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong. A wonderful book.

#### Penjing, The Chinese Art of Miniature Gardens - Hu Yunhua

1982, Timber Press / Am Horticultural Soc.

There is a profound difference between the Chinese, Penjing, approach to bonsai, and that of the Japanese. Nowhere is this more clearly brought home than in The Shanghai Botanical Garden, which has a large section devoted to Bonsai, so large that one may wander and become lost. This volume by a curator of the garden, Mr. Hu, who has visited the U.S. frequently, presents many of the characteristic Chinese trees from The Shanghai Garden, and begins with a section in which Mr. Hu shows how it is done.

#### CHINESE PENJING, Miniature Trees and Landscapes - Hu Yunhua,

Trans: Karin Albert-Shue, 1987, Timber Press, Portland, Or; \$39.95

There's another world of bonsai out there, and Mr. Hu's book is a guide to it. Considerably more sophisticated in production than his earlier volume, each page gives views of trees or containers from a different bonsai world. The book consists of a well balanced mixture of how to and display of plants and styles and glorious containers.

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 23 - Note - 4th Sunday of the month! Club meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory with a tour of the current show.

February 20 - Club meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory. Tom Holcomb on Botany of trees.

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 – Master Bonsai Artist - Jim Doyle - Nature's Way Bonsai Nursery - Critique and specimen workshop - 2 events - same day

April 17 - Club meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory. A Korean Hornbeam forest planting demo

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

May 15 - Club Meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory. A mini Mugo Pine workshop.

May 28-30, 2005 5th Annual World Bonsai Convention, Washington, D. C.

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

June 18-19 - 30th Annual Columbus Bonsai show. It's not too early to start thinking about what you want to show. Just think, you have months to get it ready for looking its best – pot, wiring, best accent plant, best display stand. At this point you have the time to do it up in traditional style.

July Field Trip to Cincinnati Krohn Conservatory

August Tropical subjects w/cutting exchange

Sept Picnic

President - Daniel Binder

Past President - Ken Schultz

1st Vice President - Mark Passerello

1 year Board - Jose Cueto

2 year Board - Ross Lebold

3 year Board - Denny Sackett

Treasurer - Richard Gurevitz

Librarian - Merida Weinstein

Newsletter Editor - Zack Clayton

Refreshment Coord - Vacant

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