

Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - August 2005

Remember the big elm I mentioned last month that had severe crisp on all the top branches? I'm pleased to report that it is recovering, but I lost this year, and some of last years, twiggyness. Yes, it's a word and that's my story and I'm sticking with it. The recovering sprouts are straggly but I didn't lose the tree. Can't say I'm as lucky with a nice Scots Pine I had though. Sigh.

Mary Miller spoke to us awhile ago during her Bouganvilla workshop and I just found this gem in my files: Fertilize every week and don't worry about brand, buy what is cheapest. Alternate brands and pay attention to the numbers. If you want flowers, buy something with a high phosphorus (middle) number. If you want growth, a high nitrogen (first) number. Whatever you buy, follow the application directions. The companies do a lot of research into producing these for best results. When you fertilize one day with our soil type, the next day when you water you wash it all out anyway. So the plant only benefits from what you give it that day. There is no sense in diluting it.

Coming Attractions

In August we will all be back together for a Tropical Workshop. We hope to secure some \$25 dollar trees to conduct a hands-on workshop. Both ficus and pomegranate were mentioned so I will be checking their availability. Also August is the normal time for our annual elections. The roster this year (drum roll please) is:

Dan Binder, President
Ken Schultz, Past President
Mark Passerello, 1st VP
Chris "Pootsie" Conomy, Secretary
Ben William, 2nd VP
Richard Gurevitz, Treasurer
Denny Sackett, 1 Year Board
Merrida Weinsein, Librarian
Ross Lebold, 2 Year Board
Zack Clayton, Newsletter Editor
Wendy Fissel, 3 Year Board
Jose Cueto, General Member and Advisor

Ficus Workshop at Our August Meeting

Besides the excitement of our Board Member Elections and the sale of raffle tickets for the Classic Bonsai of Japan book, we will be offering a ficus workshop.

- \$15 for a medium size (6" nursery pot – 1" caliper) or
- \$25 for a large (8" nursery pot - 1.5' caliper)

You will receive a Kiki Ficus and a suitably sized glazed pot. The Club will provide soil, and several Board members will be available to provide assistance. Three other varieties of Ficus will also be available if Kiki is not your favorite. If you are not familiar with Kiki it has leaves that are slightly shorter and wider than Narifolia. Of the Ficus varieties available these offer a good number of branches that should style out into an attractive tree.

So bring your tools and your checkbook and be ready to have a lot of fun!

September Picnic

The Club traditionally hosts a picnic for our meeting in September (3rd Sunday in September, 9/18/05). This year we will be at Whetstone Park/the Park of Roses. If you turn off at 3923 North High Street (Library) and follow the Park road as it winds toward the right just after you cross the creek you will see a shelter house. The shelter house is free and un-reservable so we will have scouts out early to 'hold down the fort'. Also the Club will bring drinks, a variety of regular and sugar free. The Club will also provide plates, napkins, and plastic-ware plus we will have a grill set up so if you have something that needs BBQ-ed it will be ready to go. Otherwise bring a covered dish – potluck style - to share. The picnic will begin at 12:00 noon instead of 2 PM and we will linger as long as you like. Members can bring a few sale or trade items, make sure you put a sticker on your pot to identify it as yours – traditionally we have the dog show and so if anyone has a living tree that is in a bonsai pot and want to enter the “dog” competition, don't be shy. Finally as a value added, we will also have a program, nothing to long but since we are an educational organization and we want as many members as possible to come out and join us, we will have a demo or presentation. Look for more details on this in the September newsletter, and make plans now to attend - rain or shine!

And a Teaster for October

In bonsai circles, Keith Scott needs no introduction. A well regarded bonsai artist and popular speaker and demonstrator, Keith will be sharing some insights and information about junipers and pines during our October meeting. Based near Pittsburgh, Pa and long associated with Phipps Conservatory there, he has developed a national following in the field of bonsai. Keith has visited Columbus a number of times previously, and long time club members have shared stories of fascinating work shops and very engaging demos presented by this masterful bonsai artist. This meeting promises to be a high light of our year, and Keith has been gracious enough to leave it very informal and open ended - he's interested in talking bonsai and answering questions for as long as everyone else feels interested! Plan on keeping your colanders free for this regular meeting. Details will follow in upcoming newsletters, but as things stand now, the meeting will be at the usual place and time.

President's Column

The Board of Director's has given their unanimous approval to increase Club dues by 200% in a secret ballot vote late last month...really!?! – No not really. The Board however is giving their complete support to changing next year's Club show in an exciting way. We would like to host an all Ohio show that would seek to include club trees from all the Ohio bonsai societies. We are working out details and of course need the support/permission of the Conservatory to expand some of the activities that usual occur.

We are looking at asking each Ohio club to display about ten of their member trees for the weekend, with approximately 8 groups in Ohio we would still have our regular sized show but each Club would create their our individual tree signage and be given a couple of display tables to set up as they would like. The CBS would continue to do the registration and provide care and security. Plus set-up and tear down as always.

Also we will expand some of the other program offerings. We hope to have a master bonsaiist to open our show and provide us with a demonstration. In addition we would like to double the number of vendors that we will invite. Finally some Board members are investigating an evening event like cheese and wine tasting Saturday evening and a social hour for unwinding, always a good idea.

Look for opportunities to help out with this event as the year unfolds. Those that regularly help with the annual show – we hope you will want to help with this special edition. Michigan bonsai clubs have been holding an all-Michigan show for several years and several of our Board have attended and report back that the all-state format is fun and interesting to see what other clubs are producing. Let's get started with our own statewide version and give the state Up North some friendly competition.

Trip Report from August

The trip was a once in a life time event - Dave Radlinski gave us a very nice tour at the Krohn - he explained how he manages the Loan program there. If a member whose tree is on loan doesn't come in once a month to maintain it - it goes home. He strives for variety, so that there are only a few duplicate species. If a tree gets bugs their Conservatory only allows non-chemical pesticides - so it might get sent home. The Tropical room is a controlled environment and seemed to be air conditioned, he says after 9 months a tree needs to be taken out so that it can rest.

We then went to Mike Scheid's - He's their member - vendor. He has an interesting collection and had some trees and wire for sale. Trees were expensive - I asked about an Itegawa Shimpaku in a 2 gallon pot - and he said because I was a Club member it would only be \$200. He claimed the non Club price was \$299.

Then we went to Tom McCormick's - He has 50 trees - they are all top notch and show ready. He has really nice benches. All trees were in tokonama or Sara Rainer pots. He winters his trees in his garage. His yard is about 2 acres - the rear half is mature woods. The house is a 2 story brick with a walk out basement on one end - the garage is rear load - the benches are arranged along his drive turnaround and his deck.

We stopped for Frosties on the way back - the group got back to FPC by 6:24 - Only 5 in my van (Ross F, Sandy S, Sonny M, Linda and me) - 5 no shows - The Youngs, the Kirks and son and Ruth and Loyd V met us at the Krohn and we caravanned around - so there were 12 total.

The down side is that Linda wants me to build new benches - the upside is that I want to. Tom's collection is a show stopper - Ross Fillmore took lots of pictures. I did too - but when I got home last night - I got the blue screen of death on my PC - It was the only bad thing that happened to me all day. I also took about 20 - 35 mm photos.

Dave Radlinski is scheduled for knee replacement surgery August 2. I talked to Tom a little about an All- Ohio SHow. He asked if we had a Free Place to hold it - and commented that maybe we could make it happen once - because most Clubs do not have a place that will host a show for free. ~ Ken Schultz

Tree of the Month

Ficus salicifolia (also known as *F. neriifolia regularis*): Willow-leaf Fig

The Genus *Ficus* is a big one, with over 2,000 varieties in the warmer regions of the Globe. Many of these varieties are regularly cultivated as bonsai. *Ficus* in general are somewhat forgiving but must be brought indoors in fall (which usually is accompanied by a significant leaf drop). [There are several *Ficus* articles on other species in our archives - Ed.]

Ficus salicifolia is a popular “fig”. They are easy to care for and manage, and given the proper conditions are rampant growers. Occasionally a fig especially the *salicifolia* will be stressed in the extreme and result in a complete leaf drop, don’t give up just yet. A scratch of the cambium could reveal a green layer and with patience and proper care the tree may come back with a complete set of new foliage. What constitutes good care?

Soil—Freely draining soil is especially critical – *Ficus* in general will tolerate many soil types but in general a three to one (3:1) mixture of haydite or turface to bark or compost will allow the plant to create the fine feeder roots we strive for.

Light-- Obviously more is better. These are tropical trees, and length of daylight is just as important as intensity. *Salicifolia* creates long, narrow lancelet leaves, so keeping daylight at a maximum will help keep leaves in scale with the design. I have been told that *Ficus nariifolia* is a small leaved cultivar of *salicifolia*. I would suggest extending, through the use of artificial light, the tree's 'day' to 16 hours. Bottom heat is also welcomed.

Pruning-- Can be carried out pretty much anytime. See styling.

Feeding-- Every two weeks during growth, every 4-6 in winter, using a half-strength plant food or a bonsai fertilizer.

Repotting-- every 2-3 years, although some will grow rapidly enough that yearly repotting may be necessary. *Ficus* is the single most forgiving bonsai in terms of repotting season. The best time is before a new growth spurt, especially in spring, but *Ficus* can literally be repotted any time of year if reasonable after-care is given. Roots can easily be pruned by half. Basic bonsai soil is recommended, although *Ficus* tolerates many soil conditions.

Styling-- *Ficus* are suitable for most styles of bonsai, but are especially suitable for styles which make use of their property of extensive rooting, such as air-root and root-over-rock styles. *Ficus* can be used for all sizes of bonsai, although, obviously, the small-leaved species make the best miniature bonsai. Leaf pruning can be used to reduce leaf size. *Ficus* can be wired, but become quite stiff when lignified, and thus are best wired while the shoots are a bit green. Watch carefully to see that the wire doesn't bite in, as *Ficus* is a very fast grower. Prune back to 2-4 leaves after 6-10 leaves have grown. *Ficus* will bleed milky latex profusely. Many books recommend use of cut paste or other sealant for this reason. I've tried it, and found it to be more trouble than it's worth, since the oozing latex makes it difficult for the cut paste to adhere. In any case, when the latex dries, it forms its own natural seal. Some recommend using a dull pruning tool on *Ficus*, as a clean cut made by a sharp tool tends to bleed more than a ragged- edged cut.

Pests-- Scale seems to be the biggie, also thrips, anthracnose fungus and various forms of rot.

Some *Ficus* will lose leaves if over watered or given too little light. ~ Dan Binder

Book of the Month

Book of the Month: *Creating Bonsai Landscapes* by Su Chin Ee

I found this book at the Village Bookstore for \$9.95; it has a 2003 copyright. Su Chin Ee was born in Singapore but now lives in Kent, England. The focus of this book is not on creating bonsai or the care of specific varieties of trees, its focus is on penjing landscapes. However the author could not resist putting in a few short pages about the basics but quickly gets into the making of rocks with "ciment fondu" over chicken wire. She then paints them with watercolors to make them look like natural rocks. She creates eighteen very different landscapes in this book. One even has a small water pump hidden in it and the water spills out into a rectangular glass base. There are seven horse figurines in the scene. Another of her water landscapes even has a goldfish in the water surrounding the island.

There are eighteen landscape projects in this book. The trees range from Japanese maple to Shimpaku, flowering cherry and crabapple. One had a fuchsia that the author says she has had for twenty years. At the base of the artificial rock it is planted in is an erodium. Granted this book is NOT about traditional bonsai, but the beauty of the miniature landscapes may fascinate 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.

August 21 - Club meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory. Elections. Tropical subjects w/cutting exchange

August 16 - Dawes - fertilizer making

September 18 - Picnic

Sept 20 - Dawes - Road trip/Demo

October 16 - Club meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory. Guest artist Keith Scott. Tentatively a Scotts Pine/Juniper Demo and tree critique.

Oct 18 - Dawes - Over-Wintering

November 20 - Club meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory.

Nov 15 - Dawes - Pot selection/Orientation

December TBA - Holiday dinner

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Past President - Ken Schultz

1st Vice President - Mark Passerello

2nd Vice President - Ben William

1 year Board - Jose Cueto

2 year Board - Ross Lebold

3 year Board - Denny Sackett

Treasurer - Richard Gurevitz

Secretary - Chris Conomy

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