

Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - May 2006

Well rat traps don't seem to be working on my vermin (AKA squirrels) problem. So far this year they have completely destroyed two trays of mini Iris accent plantings, a tray of mini Hostas, a white oak, two Japanese maples, some red maples I have been growing in preparation for a grove, and a tray of Japanese maple cuttings. Oh, and they did their best to pull newly repotted azalea and larch out of the pots. Thank goodness for wire. Plus the normal aggravation of them pulling the moss off of everything and digging around in the pots for hidden goodies. Any suggestions? Guns are illegal to use inside the city limits.

Coming Attractions

May will be a jammed packed meeting. We will be talking about show presentation, tips to help make your trees look their best. We will be explaining how bonsai are judged, and how the points are awarded. There will be an opportunity for having an evaluation of your trees at the show. This is strictly optional, there is no requirement for this if you don't want to participate. However, some of us have been wondering how our trees would do in a judged show. There is a check box on the registration form if you want a particular tree evaluated. And after the break, we will have a black pine workshop. The club has obtained 25 black pines and they are available for the low price of \$15. There are 10 that have not been claimed yet. They are of similar size as the one Ken showed off at the last meeting, about 3/4-1" caliper and two feet tall. We will be there to help with the pruning and styling decisions that can be made this year and the June newsletter will have care instructions in it with tips culled from April's Boon demonstration. If you have kept your past issues, (November, 2002 and September, 2004) there have been articles on Black Pine in tree of the month. Also, Ken will have several pots with 5 each of the trident maples that went unclaimed at the forest planting workshop. I believe those are available for \$15 each.

The club is getting ready for the June Show on Friday 16th, Saturday 17th, and Sunday 18th. June is coming on fast and we need to get the rest of the volunteer positions filled. It would be really great if everyone chose to display at least a tree or two. Merrida has asked that people email the club with their registration form or bring it to the May meeting if you know what you are bringing. As always we can take forms in the mail box, but to avoid last years difficulties, it has to be postmarked by June 9th.

Friday Show Setup: Ben William, Sonny, Jack Smith, Zack Clayton, Ken Schultz, _____

Tree Drop off: 5:30 - 7:00 PM : Everyone

Registration: Merida, _____

Vendor assisting Setup: Ben William, John Hill, _____

Saturday Morning Tree Drop off: 8:00 - 8:30. But, Please bring your trees in Friday evening.

Saturday Workshop: Ben William, John Hill, Pootsie

Club Table: _____, _____

Visitor Tree Table Experts, Saturday AM: John Hill, Zack Clayton

Visitor Tree Table Experts, Sat PM: Zack Clayton, _____

Food/Snacks Saturday: Ben William, Sonny, Laura and Damian, Deena Harris, Michael Baird

Security/Docents:

Sat AM 10-2 : Jack Smith, _____, _____, _____

Sat PM 2-6 : Jack Smith, _____, _____, _____

Sunday Workshop: Ben William, John Hill, _____

Club Table: _____, _____

Visitor Tree Table Experts, Sunday AM: Pootsie, _____

Visitor Tree Table Experts, Sunday PM: Zack Clayton, _____

Security Docents:

Sunday AM 10-2 : Sonny ,Mike Holbrook , Greg Ackers , Zack Clayton , Denny Sackett

Sunday PM 2-5 : Sonny , Mike Holbrook , Greg Ackers , Denny Sackett

Food/Snacks Sunday: _____, _____, _____ ie. Not a soul

Tree Pickup 5:00 PM : Everyone

Sunday - Tear Down: Ben William, Sonny, Jack Smith, Dan Binder, Jerry and Danielle Sipple

Vendor Assisting Tear Down: Ben William, John Hill, Pootsie

For those of you who made it to the April meeting you know how good it was. We had forty folks who came out to see Boon Manikuvipati work on the Black Pine. He shared with us some of his observations on bonsai culture in general and a lot on black pines in particular. Some of the general things he shared was the importance of organic fertilizer - he uses poo balls during growth season along with every other week soluble fertilizer with low nitrogen. He recommends switching around brands of soluble fertilizer to mix up the micro nutrients more than just a single brand would supply. He also uses what most of us thought was an unconventional soil mix but it works with the fertilization methods. I'll write more about that in next month's newsletter.

Tree of the Month

Azalea, Rhododendron Indianan - by Ken Schultz

Azalea are among the most popular of the flowering species used for Bonsai. In Japan there are entire shows devoted to just this one species. While a truly outstanding specimen can cost over \$800, good nursery stock that can be trained into bonsai can be purchased for \$5.00 to \$30.00. If you like to start cuttings, a select branch from an azalea in your yard can be rooted for free.

Azalea has the unfortunate reputation of being difficult. They aren't, they're just different. If you have grown them in your flowers beds, you are probably familiar with some of their likes and dislikes. My first attempt at keeping an Azalea, as a bonsai was a variety sold for Valentines Day with pink and white-stripped flowers. Being a non-hardy variety, I kept it indoors in the winter. It lived for 4 years before I over-watered it to death. Since then, I have focused on using nursery stock with much better success.

The natural growth pattern of azalea is that of a shrub. This means they want to be a multi-stemmed bush, with weak apical growth, so their lower branches grow vigorously compared to their apex. Growth starts about mid March. Normally, they flower late May to early June. In Japan Satsukie azalea mean "Fifth Month" because they flower in May, the fifth month. Their flower buds begin to develop in August for the following year. Leaves grown in the summer turn

color and drop in the fall, leaving a cluster of leaves around the flower buds. Because azaleas are shrubs, they will resist developing the trunk. Interestingly, this trait causes them to easily back bud. Shoots will actually need constant thinning.

The Japanese swear by the use of Kanuma - Acadama Soil to grow azalea in. So far, I haven't tried it but those who have swear by it. I use our soil mix with an extra dose of Zack's favorite organic additive, used coffee grounds. Since azalea does best with a pH of 5.0 - 5.4, the acidity must help. Also, while the soils must drain well, it must retain some moisture, again the coffee compost helps. Peat moss is too wet. The roots of azalea will form a dense mat. If you don't repot them every 2 - 3 years the root mass will become like a brick. Whatever you do, don't leave nursery stock in field soil or straight peat moss. Repotting can be done from mid March until new spring growth gets active.

Fortunately, most insects do not attack azalea. Planted in a flowerbed they can be attacked by black vine weevil. But this is not a problem in a pot. However, fungus and mildew can be. This can be controlled with Orthene or Mifenoxan. Neem oil may also be used.

If you are looking for nursery stock, try "Hino Crimson "or "Coral Bell". Look for small leaves and a good trunk line. Wait until early March to do major root work and repotting the first time. When you select the branch structure you plan to keep, leave a stub. Taking a large branch can kill a section of the bark down the trunk. Similarly cutting major roots can lead to specific branches dying.

Following repotting or significant branch styling, flower bud removal will help the plant's health and will result in vigorous back budding. This is best done right before the buds become active. Remove them at their base. The energy traveling up from the roots will be diverted to dormant buds all along the branches. If you missed an early repotting, it can be done just as the flush of new leaves begins to appear but avoid a major root or branch removal.

Do not fertilize while the azalea is flowering. And meticulously remove all the dead blossoms. If you don't, the plant will send energy to develop a rose hip like seed structure. This will weaken the plant itself. Once you fertilize, growth will be rapid. Allow the stems to put out 6 - 8 leaves (more on weak parts, such as the apex), and then pinch back to two leaves. Thin small extra branches after flowering or in late May if you de-flower the plant. During the summer, you will need to continue the pinching regimen until late July. Stop then to avoid pinching off next year's blossoms. Continue to fertilize unless temperatures are hitting the 90's. Full sun is ok except in mid afternoon. I keep my azaleas in light shade.

In the fall it is ok to remove the inner leaves, they will fall off by winter anyway. This exposes branches to light and air and encourages dormant buds to develop. This improves ramification. After flowering the azalea will send out five branches from virtually every branch kip. You will need to keep only two of them. Usually one of these new branches will be growing straight up. Except for the apex, remove these. Of the remaining four branches, remove the strongest, normally the longest. I usually take out the one growing in a direction that I don't need.

Azaleas also have the reputation of having brittle wood, resistant to bending. Everyone has a story about snapping a branch while trying to bend it. Interestingly it is recommended to wire in late winter or early summer after flowering is done. If you remove a branch, apply cut paste to reduce die back. A clean cut with a very sharp tool is essential. There are many photographs of beautiful azalea bonsai to use as your model. Usually, they are grown in as informal upright "pine" style. I do have a Hino Crimson raft planting. Azalea are also used in Saikai; I have even seen them used to simulate the mountain laurel under story as its mountain pine trees. I have even seen a mini rhododendron ("Blue Gem") in a literati style.

I know this sounds complicated, but the results are well worth the effort. No bonsai collection is complete without an azalea or four or five.

Style and Growing Tips

Point Scale for Judging - American Bonsai Society Criteria

- 1) Overall Artistic Effect - 20 points.
Essentially this is the overall WOW factor. The tree says "bonsai" to your personal ideals.
- 2) Roots - 10 points: root arrangement/location 5 points and ramification 5 points.
- 3) Trunk - 10 points: taper 5 points and bark (clean) 5 points.
- 4) Branches - 10 points: location 5 points and ramification 5 points.
- 5) Scale - 10 points: Not the bug but size as it relates to the tree, pot etc.
Leaves/needles 5 points and fruit or flowers 5 points.
- 6) Soil surface/moss - 5 points. Some slope is okay, no weeds, and no moss on trunk.
- 7) Training Techniques - 15 points: Pruning (scars inconspicuous) 5 points, Wiring (right size, neat, not loose or cutting in) 5 points, and Tree position (in the pot and for the style) 5 points.
- 8) Health/Horticulture - 10 points: Water/Fertilizer (based on leaf size and color) 5 points and Insects and diseases (now you can look for buggy scale) 5 points.
- 9) Exhibiting Standards met - 10 points: Tree looks like it has been groomed 5 points and pot is clean and with a stand or appropriate accessories 5 points.

The potential total is 100 points. There were 23 pages that go through these Judging Criteria. Each item has further discussion on awarding or subtracting points - depending on how you see Judging. For example - points are awarded for Surface roots are clinging to the soil surface and indicate age and stability. Conversely points may be subtracted for roots above the soil surface. Another example is for branches - points can be awarded for the lowest branch having the largest diameter, or points can be subtracted if it doesn't.

Book of the Month

Bonsai Manual for Appreciating, Judging and Buying Bonsai. See Style and Growing Tips.

Bonsai Here and Beyond the Outerbelt

The Bonsai Series at Franklin Park Conservatory

A comprehensive beginner's course on this ancient form of gardening. Students receive their own tree and learn the basics of bonsai in a hands-on repotting and styling session under the expert guidance of FPC horticulturist, Mark Ryan and members of the Columbus Bonsai Society. Learn the history of bonsai; compare traditional and American styles; and receive information on basic plant care including soil preparation, fertilizing and pest control. Times: Wednesdays: April 12, 19, 26 6:30-8:30 pm

Instructors: Mark Ryan, FPC Horticulturist and members of Columbus Bonsai Society

FPC Members: \$95, Non-members: \$105 Fee includes tools and nursery-stock tree

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.

May 21: Refining your Styles - getting ready for the show. How to judge lecture.

Black Pine workshop.

June 10-11 Mid-Ohio Bonsai Show at Dawes

June 17-18: Ohio Bonsai Show at Franklin Park Conservatory.

July 16: BYOT workshop - maybe that tree you got at the show.

August 20: Tropicals - NOT FICUS

September 17: Field Trip to Adena and garden tour.

October 15: Chamaecyparis and Off Beat Junipers - Perhaps a guest master.

November 19: Ramification and Fall wiring.

December : Holiday Dinner

President - Daniel Binder

Past President - Ken Schultz

1st Vice President - Mark Passerello

2nd Vice President - Ben William

1 year Board - Denny Sackett

2 year Board - Ross Lebold

3 year Board - Wendy Fissel

Treasurer - Richard Gurevitz

Secretary - Chris "Pootsie" Conomy

Librarian - Merida Weinstein

Newsletter Editor - Zack Clayton

Resident Advisor - Jose Cueto

Refreshment Coordinator - Vacant

email to: ColumbusBonsai@hotmail.com