

Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - June 2006

Vermin do not like Pepper emulsion very much! Thanks to Richard Uhrick for reminding me of my favorite home cure guru, Jerry Baker, and his pepper recipe for repelling squirrels. Now I just have to figure out what the reapplication rate is as I water everything off. And all those maple trees that got leaf pruned are coming out in style, they have back buds and a much reduced leaf size compared to the monster that I brought in from my growing bed. How did your seeds from the february meeting sprout? I have a dozen korean hornbeam, several pitch pine, two edo spruce and an unknown quantity of trident maples. Unknown because they started sprouting after the tray they were in went outside and got regular maple seeds in from the first round of maple spinners. I'll need to sort out the tridents from the red maples after a few more leaves come out.

Coming Attractions

The club is getting ready for the June Show on Friday 16th, Saturday 17th, and Sunday 18th. Fathers Day weekend is coming on fast. Get out there and look at your collection and pick out your best several trees. 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. As always we can take forms in the mail box, but to avoid last years difficulties (we had a mail box glitch), it needs to be postmarked by June 9th, or as soon as you get this in the mail.

Friday Show Setup at 3:30. Ben William, Sonny, Jack Smith, Zack Clayton, Ken Schultz, and anyone else who wants to help. Tree Drop off: 5:30 - 7:00 PM : Everyone, especially if you haven't turned in a registration form ahead of time.

Tree of the Month

Japanese Black Pine *Pinus thunbergiana*

Evergreen that grows to 80 feet with a 40 foot spreading canopy and has 3 to 5 inch needles with a large, grayish-white terminal bud. Doesn't sound very appealing as a bonsai does it? Yet this is, according to many authors and masters, the King of bonsai -- the Japanese Black Pine.

General plant needs are very tolerant, including:

Temperatures from zone 8 to 4, Winter protection for potted trees in zone 4.

Partial (5 hours minimum) to full sun.

Moist (not wet) to dry soil conditions.

Acidic pH range of 3.7 to 6.0 and salt tolerant to a wide variety of soil conditions.

No serious pests but look out for saw fly larvae in spring and needle cast if it is a wet year..

Native to Japan, China, and Korea

Oh, and did I mention? It's suitable for bonsai.

Now, that being said, in bonsai there are some additional care issues that come with the container. Black Pines must have free draining soil, and will get root rot and have poor growth if the soil does not drain well. This may point to Boon's insistence that his soil for all trees is 1 part pumice (or perlite), 1 part small lava rock, 1 part akadama (or Turface or Haydite), 5 % 1/4"

Horticultural Charcoal, and 5% Granite (Turkey Grit). This mixture is guaranteed to drain well, yet hold moisture. The board is working on locating sources for pumice.

Pruning is critical. Old needles must be removed in the fall after the weather cools and growth stops. Fall is a good time to prune away this year's current growth. In spring, new growth will show up as upright candles. Long candles must be "removed completely", leaving about a 1/4" stub to allow the formations of auxiliary buds. Traditional texts will say that medium candles can be pinched back to half their length, and the smallest candles should be left alone. Boon recommended decandling starting with the weak candles first, being sure to leave a 1/4 inch stub for the new buds to form around. Waiting for 10 days and then taking out the medium candles, and then following ten days later with finishing off the strongest candles last. This allows the weaker candle buds to have a head start on their formation so there is not a huge difference in the vitality of the secondary buds that will form later.

If there are multiple candles from growth points in the spring, an alternative he suggested was to leave 5 buds per point at the top of the tree, 6 in the middle third, and 7 on the lowest third. Another time to do this would be in the fall after growth stops when you are pulling off the old needles and notice the buds forming up for next year. Note: do not take off old needles or buds if the tree is weak. If you have a tree in a weak condition, let it grow out for a year and then resume training. For this growing on for tree health only take the apical candles off in spring.

Heavy pruning should only be done in the early spring. Do not cut to bare wood when you prune. The tree will die back. Also, do not prune back past last year's needles. To thicken the trunk, you will need to grow a sacrifice branch(s) -- either a sucker near the base of the tree (Lucky!), or a top branch from the back of the tree or other place where the later pruning scar can be hidden by foliage.

Boon uses organic cake fertilizer on the tree (from his description I think this is about one cake per 6"- 8" of pot rim) and every other week with a balanced liquid fertilizer. He switches the fertilizer around to take advantage of the varying micro nutrient formulations in the different brands. The timing of fertilizer use is as soon as growth starts in spring to the 1st decandling. Then he waits one month and starts again and continues until fall.

Sources:

Carol Ness as part of the Interactive Design and Development Project funded by the Kellogg Foundation. Mary Miller, Project Director. Diane Relf, Content Specialist, Horticulture.

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Charles E. Mashburn, http://www.brusselsbonsai.com/care/care_sheets/JapaneseBlackPine.html.
USDA Fact Sheet ST-480.

Lecture notes from Boon Manikuvipati

~Zack Clayton

Style and Growing Tips

Repotting Notes

While giving us the lowdown on Black Pine, Boon also gave us a great crash course in repotting techniques during the demo. He shared his soil recipe with us (see the Black Pine article above). Almost everyone noticed that this recipe has no organics in it. The organics are supplied by the fertilizer cakes and supplemental liquid applications every other week. The horticultural charcoal in the mix provides support for the microrhiza fungi that are needed for good root health.

To repot, first clip all the bottom wires and the screen holding wires. Clip them off at the drain or wire holes so the tree will just lift out of the pot with no wire drag. When you lift the tree, push under the first branch to lift the tree. This will prevent damage to the trunk bark. Judging from the comments in the room, this was a major “A Ha!” moment for most of us watching. Once the tree was out of the pot, he emphasized working on it from one side. By this I mean he did not rotate the root mass around as he cleaned out the soil. It stayed with one edge in contact with the table the whole time as Boon used a root hook, a pair of angled tweezers, root scissors, and a root cutter to clean up the bottom of the root ball. Boon recommends root work every time you repot the tree.

To prepare the pot for the tree the procedure of wiring in the screens and tie down wires threaded into the wire holes went normally. Boon prefers to use a four wire tie-in that doesn't touch the trunk. After the base layer of soil went into the pot and the tree positioned, the wires were tied to each other in a rectangle that held down the roots. Boon recommended tying the wire at the highest point of the rootball last. He does this by going in one direction (counterclockwise in this case) around the pot with each wire tied at the surface of the roots to the next wire. It's much easier done than described. The tree is wired in so that the line of visible nebari is at the top level of the pot. He recommends against having the soil mounded up above the pot edge.

After the soil was added around the edges and top of the root mass, Boon used a chop stick to work in the soil to the roots. Normal, except he stressed that a linear motion (like a sliding lever) did a better job of settling the soil than the commonly used circular motion. This prevents as many roots being worked to the surface, and also lets larger particles get to the bottom instead of smaller particles that would work down with the circular motion with the larger particles “floating” on the top. When the soil is worked in, he gently pounded each side of the pot with his fist to firm everything up. And then trimmed any fine roots that were sticking up above the soil. With the flat soil surface water will not run to the edge of the pot and the entire root mass will get water. ~ Zack Clayton

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.

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

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