

## Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - October 2006

Okay, so we didn't have elections at the August meeting, but we will have the election at the October meeting. That being said, have you renewed your membership yet? Many of you have not. Please renew your membership now or at the meeting prior to the elections. Memberships officially expire in September and you have to be a member to vote. This will be the last newsletter you receive if you have not renewed.

Slate of officers: President: Mark Passerello  
VP 1 Ben William  
VP2 Ken Schultz  
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Trustee (2 Year) Wendy Fissel- with focus on member service  
Trustee (1 year) Denny Sackett  
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Editor Zack Clayton  
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President Emeritus Jose Cueto (Ex Officio)

There has been some issues with getting the domain handling switched over to our host, but there should be good news at the meeting. Keep trying the new website and it should be up and running soon. It's a nice one. If the elections go as planned, Pootsie will be the webmeister, but the bones of the site and the hard work that entails were done by Rob and Wendy. Thank you, thank you! To see the fruits of their labor, go to <http://www.columbusbonsai.org/>. This should be up and active real soon now.

Do you have all your tropicals separated out and in inside yet? I spent all of Columbus Day getting stuff ready to come in and making space for it. The weather report for late week and the weekend looks grim. Michelle is in DesMoines and they are usually about three days ahead of us. They are getting hard frosts and high in the low fifties. Our forecast (depending on who you pay attention to) is the same or snow showers. Bleagh!

### Coming Attractions

October is shaping up to be an interesting meeting - at least to me. Ken found some Acer ginnala at the Cross Creek Nursery in 10-15 gallon pots. They are gorgeous. 2 inch trunk, lots of side branching, about three feet tall. We are going to be using one of them for a preliminary styling demo and talk about maple cae in general. Maples have been subjects for "Tree of the Month" several times, and the styling aspects hold for maples in general. The horticulture for each species varies slightly in terms of soil, wetness, cold tolerance and so forth, but the actual styling does not change that much. We can talk shadow sketching, paint pruning, and so on as these trees are really nice potensai. Some preliminary styling will get them ready for a future master to come in and actually work the tree instead of cleaning up fuzz.

Since there was no Member sale at the September Adena tour, there will be a Member pot and book sale at the October meeting. Bring in your stuff to sell or trade at the October meeting. We will also have a tour of the outdoor collection.

Other news: Mark Ryan has found employment as a systems administrator at OSU. (I'll add the "The" as soon as the school gets around to putting it that way on the Shoe score board/billboard visible from 315, get over it.) We are working with the conservatory as to who our new contacts will be and the impact this has on the bonsai class schedules and our stuff we keep there.

November will feature outdoor and indoor winter care. We will have a review of Wikeism and other survival tips. Also, there will be a session on tool care and sharpening. Pick out your dull tools and bring them in. In the Acer ginnala article below Ken mentions disinfection to prevent disease spread. The point is, if you cut a branch, and notice disease symptoms, do you disinfect your tool then, or do you finish off the work and then disinfect. This seems like a "Duh!" question but if you don't have alcohol or other disinfectant with you, I'll bet you keep working. Spreading the problem at least on that plant. I will have alcohol at the November meeting, and will use it on your tools before I sharpen them with my stones. I'll also have WD-40 to lub them afterwards.

#### Tree of the Month

Acer ginnala, Amur Maple – by Ken Schultz

When I complained about Trident Maples being too sensitive to frost when our winters get really cold; Jose' said to me, "You should try Amur Maple, they're really excellent trees. And they have bright red foliage in the fall." So when I saw bundles of saplings offered in a Gurney Nurseries catalogue, I split a bundle with Zack. Those of you who have been with the club awhile, may recall the clump planting that Jose' did a few years ago. I will try to remember to bring it with me on October 15 when I bring in one of the Acer Ginnalas that I purchased at Cross Creek Nursery for the demo on that date.

These trees are sold as hedge material or small accent trees at many nurseries. If un-sheared they will grow 20-30 feet tall. However because maples respond to trimming by back budding (a looked for bonsai material trait) they can be kept hedge sized, 4-6 feet tall. An article I read said they are ideal for planting under power lines. They have three-lobed leaves similar to those on Trident maple, but as the name implies, Amur Maples are from Siberia and are therefore much more hardy than the Trident. Amur Maple is hardy to Zone 3. Ginnala translates into "little mule" giving testimony to its hardiness. If you are looking for fall color, Durand's Dwarf is purported to have brilliant red foliage making it a desirable cultivar for bonsai. However one I saw had yellow fall color, I'm not sure what cultivar it was. A cultivar called "Flame" was advertised for deciduous hedges, zone 2-8.

When raising this tree in a bonsai pot you may need to be a little cautious with the amount of sun it receives, though more sun results in brighter fall colors. In the ground it will tolerate full sun. In a pot it needs part shade in mid summer to prevent leaf burn. As with most maples they need a

fair amount of water. On hot days the edges of the leaves will dry out if you miss a watering. Fertilize every two weeks with a slow release or low nitrogen plant food (10-10-10).

Because Amur maples bud back easily hard pruning, in fact Trunk Chop, may be used to encourage back budding to get small branches in relation to trunk size. Jose' says they can be put in the ground for a few years to quicken the trunk thickening process. If I do remember to bring in the clump planting, you will see all new branches because the rabbits ate off the old ones last winter! Constant pinching of new growth will lead to good ramification. Allegedly leaves will also reduce to under one inch, personally while I have gotten some reduction, I haven't gotten them down to one inch. However, they are not overly large and the new growth when you do mid-season pruning does stay smaller. As with all maples be careful when wiring to avoid scarring. If you leave wire on too long it will quickly cut in and because the bark is smooth it will look bad for a long time.

Repotting of almost all deciduous trees is done, as this one, in the spring before bud burst. Use a fast draining soil mix with some compost. These maples seem to be tolerant of acid or alkaline soils. Repotting is recommended every two years, though you may find that if yours grows really fast that it will need repotting every year. If you practice defoliation do not do so in years when you re-pot.

Watch for aphids or scale if you have those types of problems. Verticillian wilt seems to be a big problem for maples in the ground, especially in wetter years. If you see leaves wilting for no reason cut off the branch before it kills the tree. Diseased trees have a dark stained center in infected branches. Cut back until no staining appears. Remember to sanitize your tools to prevent spreading the disease.

I think that Americans in colder zones like ours, will find Acer Ginnala to be an excellent substitute for the less hardy Trident.

Pomegranate is reposted due to the second page of the article being lost in the last newsletter. Pomegranate, *Punica granatum* by Ken Schultz

*Punica* was the Roman name for Carthage from which the best pomegranates came to Italy two thousand years ago. Moses had to promise the Israelites that they would still have pomegranates in the Promised Land. These small trees have long been cultivated for their fruit, wood and tannin from their bark. Fine Moroccan leather is tanned using pomegranate bark. Grenadine is a concentrate of the syrup used to flavor drinks. In the wild a tree may reach 20 to 30 feet, though they have a strong tendency to sucker and become shrub like.

I found it interesting that in the U.S., pomegranates have spread throughout the south, and are commercially grown in Arizona, New Mexico and California for their fruit. The pomegranate is native to the Middle East (Iran) to the Himalayas, therefore it likes it slightly dry, and this is why they do not do as well in Florida, too wet! They are also long lived; the Gardens at Versailles have some specimens that are two hundred years old.

They need full sun; though they do have thin leaves, so watch for leaf burn on the edges. The leaves are described as oblong-lanceolate and can be 3/4" to 4" long. The dwarf variety has leaves

that are on the chartreuse side of green with a little bit of a black edge. The petiole has a reddish cast. I find them attractive.

They do need regular watering, but not high humidity. The caution is, “never let them dry out completely.” They are only hardy to Zone 8, and will need to come indoors for the winter. Some people let them stay out until they drop their leaves in dormancy. New growth signals spring, but they can be killed by a late frost. The suggested minimum temperature they can tolerate is 40

Repotting should be done every one to two years. I noted that they will grow in gravelly soil in a wide range of conditions, including alkaline soil. Use a 30% coarse sand, 10 % peat and 60 % soil mixture. Any root reduction should be done gradually. Repot in spring. One source mentioned that Pomegranate, ficus, buttonwood, cotoneaster pyracantha and most bamboos can be transplanted in summer IF proper after-care is taken. That is placing them cool location and not over watering while they recover. The suggested pot color is light blue, though dark blue glazed looks good too. The dark color looks good with the light colored bark. It is suggested that a deeper pot be chosen for the developing root system.

Wire with care; the small twigs are easy to snap. Wire in late spring to autumn. Fertilize ¼ strength. Spring to autumn. In the fall use a fertilizer higher in Phosphorus and Potassium to encourage flowering. After flowering the new growth can be shortened. Actual branch pruning is done in early spring.

While I haven't notice any particular bug problem, perhaps because the pomegranate bark is noted to be very bitter. It contains alkaloids used to treat tapeworms and in Japan is used as a pesticide. However the text says catapillers and stem borers can attack them. Also white fly, thrips, mealybugs and scale are listed as pests.

Since they have a tendency to be a shrub, you will need to keep them suckered. If you want flowers, and who doesn't, remember that they bear their orange-red flowers on new growth. When grown for their fruit, pomegranates tend to have a weeping branch pattern. Bonsai culture tends to result in pinching off potential flower buds. Therefore, you will need to let it grow out for a while if you want it to flower. Allowing bonsai to produce the large fruit will weaken the plant. You might get away with allowing one or two to develop on a larger bonsai, but remove them from smaller specimens. Sorry. It was noted that a mature tree can produce up to 300 pounds of fruit in a season.

There are dwarf varieties that can easily be kept under 2 feet tall and produce double flowers. While I mentioned orange-red, they do come in a number of colors including: white, pink stripped and apricot, and double flowered “Tayosho”. However, the dwarf variety (Nana) most commonly used for bonsai is orange-red.

While you could buy pomegranate fruit in the produce department and plant the seeds, you should be able to find the dwarf pomegranates offered for sale from \$5 on up. I saw at least two websites offering them near that price. Mehans in Maryland listed three sizes. In some pictures the tree looks like it or its bark is twisted. I read that this is accomplished by wrapping young stock around dead material. As the dead material rots away the trunk develops a

twisted hollow look that is quiet captivating. While usually seen as an Informal style, cascade, root over rock, forest, and literati are also listed as possibilities. Cutting can be taken to start those forests. Though I have killed one or two, I currently have two small specimens and managed not to kill them last winter. Remember lots of light, 14 –16 hours in the winter, and don't let them dry out.

### October Care Tips

First and foremost, enjoy your fall color show and take some pictures for later enjoyment and record keeping. Set up against a nice western wall with sun or dappled shade and snap away. Clean you soul surfaces of debris. This makes spring care easier and can help eliminate pests. I think this year I will clean moss at least 2 inches away from the trunk. Last year I had some very soggy bark rotted trees that I had left moss on. No more of that. I will plant it for use next spring. After the leaves have fallen, spray with some dormant spray to eliminate any unseen eggs and other pests. If you set you plants down this month, clean your benches before you set your trees under them. 1 part bleach to three parts water will kill mold and other disease virus and bacteria. Let them dry before putting your trees down. This is a good month to buy your mulch if you bury your pots. Next month it will be harder to find.

If you have spindly trunks that you want to thicken, fall is a good time to plant in a growing bed to increase trunk size. Find a spot where the trees will not be disturbed for the next several years, and let them grow inthe ground. It's a good idea to put an old saucer or plate under them to keep the shallow root system intact for later repotting. After two or three years, it is amazing how much increase in size the trunks have obtained.

### Book of the Month

Bonsai for Americans – By George F. Hull

I found this 1964 edition book and thought it would be interesting to compare it to the newer books in my collection. How has bonsai in America changed in the past 42 years? Infact this book was written before John Naka's Bonsai Techniques I. I had trouble getting into the book, lets face it color pictures do help and these were black and white. A majority of the photos show material that had not been in training very long, with the exception of trees from the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens and the Lars Anderson Collection in Boston.

Once I got beyond the uninspiring photos, I discovered the text presented information on how to select nursery stock and develop it into bonsai. Hull notes that bonsai in America in 1964 was limited to California and the east coast with a blip of interest in Denver. I felt frustrated again though in chapter three when he discussed "collections for color" illustrated with black and white photos. The caption said the foliage turns a brilliant Orange-scarlet in autumn. Maybe our imaginations were better back then.

In chapter 4, Hull advocates training your own stock into bonsai due to the high cost of specimen bonsai. He notes costs from \$1,000 to \$7,000. In 2006 dollars this would be over ten times as much, remember gasoline sold for under twenty cents a gallon then and new car could be

purchased for \$2,000. Hull discusses nursery purchases and collecting. The list of appropriate material is divided into general, south, southwest America and Hawaii. I found it interesting that Japanese Black Pine was on the general list and the Hawaiian list! He lists Redbud, Sweet gum and Sparkleberry on his Eastern United States list. I was more familiar with the other listings, but these seemed unusual to me.

The formulas for bonsai soil were also of interest. Consistent with our current thoughts on this subject are particle size and drainage. Hull notes that the small stuff is not used for bonsai soil and the ingredients are a combination of loam, sand and humus. Fertilizer included cottonseed meal, dried manure, bone meal, blood meal and wood ash.

Unlike today's books where pruning and wiring are discussed by the third chapter or the fifth, Hull discusses them in chapter 13, then styles in chapter 14. Root pruning is presented in Chapter 16, the chapter is called "Keeping Them Small- and Healthy"; watering is also presented in chapter 16 and continues in chapter 17. ~ Ken Schultz

### 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.

October 15: Demo on Acer ginnala. Elections. Outdoor collection tour and member pot sale.  
November 19: Winter Care/Outdoor-Indoor and Tool Sharpening (bring your dull tools) .  
December 5: Holiday Dinner – Hong Kong Buffet - Gathering at 6 PM – Dinner at 7, Suiseki Presentation 7:30 PM

The Bonsai Board held a special planning meeting to plan out 2007. There are still invitations to confirm, so until then, "Speaker" note will indicate that we are inviting a special artist to present.

January 21 Back to Basics – Soil, Fertilizer, Pests, Problems, Pesticides  
February 18 Pot Selection – Hypertufa II – another chance to make a pot  
March 18 Speaker  
April 15 Carving, Pruning and Wiring – Jose Cueto  
May 2, 9 and 16 FPC Beginners Bonsai Class  
May 20 Speaker  
June 16,17 32nd Annual Bonsai Show  
June 21, 22, 23, 24 ABS Show – Virginia Beach  
July 15 Flowering Bonsai – Fuchsia, Chrysanthemum, Rosemary, Hibiscus, Hawthorne and others  
August 19 Tropicals – Member In Meeting Show  
September 16 Picnic at TBA – Demo too ?  
October 21 Demo – Jose Cueto  
November 18 Speaker  
December Holiday Dinner

In addition we are discussing some Bring a Tree, advanced skills meetings, and Ken Huth's BBQ.

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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

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Newsletter Editor - Zack Clayton

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