

# November, 2006 Columbus Bonsai Newsletter

## Random Thotz

If you ever get a chance to come to a board meeting, you might want to take advantage of the opportunity. The discussion can get downright wierd. We somehow got onto the topic of pressure sprayers - the hand pump variety. Now some of these ideas will have to wait for next year, some will work for you inside this winter. Doc opened by saying he uses one to water the plants on the back rows of his growing benches. That was followed by Ken using them inside during the winter. I use them for application of full strength liquid fertilizer after a light watering from a hose. Doc uses 1/4 strength fertilizer every time he waters. I suppose you could use one for application of pesticide and I will be hitting my trees this weekend with some dormant spray out of the unit. I had scale on some of my maples and this is a good time to use the dormant spray.

## Coming Attractions

November will feature outdoor and indoor winter care. We will have a review of Wikleism 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 ginala article last month Ken mentioned 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.

December we have a meeting date for dinner at Hong Kong Buffet on Tuesday, December 5. Gathering at 6:30, Dinner at 7:00. Hong Kong Buffet is at 1831 W Henderson Rd - in the plaza on the SW corner of Reed and Henderson. We are planning a Speaker on Viewing Stones.

## President's Message - Mark Passerella

Welcome to Fall-or is it Winter? In typical Central Ohio style, the weather has changed, again, and again, and again! Winter temperatures seemed to arrive at the end of October with some bone chilling lows, then recently shot back up to Indian summer highs. Seems hard to believe, but as disconcerting as these climactic changes can be for we humans, the trees we care for usually take them in stride with no problems. Every year at this time, when the temperatures dip and I wake up to find frost all over the landscape, I get a shiver of panic seeing bonsai sitting out on the growing benches. Intellectually I know that as long as I have not left a tropical outside too late into the season, that any hardy tree will be able to take some frost with out a problem. But I always have that moment of wondering, and need to take a moment to remind myself all is well,

just let the trees be trees. They have been putting up with Central Ohio weather much longer than I have!

If you have that same sort of panic attack thinking about getting your trees ready for winter, the Club's November meeting will be a great opportunity to share ideas and ask questions about that annual bug-a-boo: Winter Care. Ken Schultz will lead a discussion of winter care practices for all types of trees. The second half of the meeting will be another valuable subject, as Zack Clayton covers tool care and sharpening. A craftsman is only as good as their tools, and a dull or worn out tool is sometimes worse than no tool at all.

As we move into a new season and soon move into a new year, on behalf of the board of directors I want to encourage every member of this group to feel very welcome to participate fully in what the club does and how it operates. Coming to meetings can be a very informative and enjoyable way to learn new things and hang out with good people who share a common interest. But there are other ways to become more involved. This newsletter always has room for your articles, book reviews, opinion columns or wild rants on bonsai, horticulture or any other related subject. Also welcome is assistance organizing and presenting the talks and demonstrations that are a part of many meetings. You don't have to be an expert to do these things, just willing to put in some time and effort! And of course one of the most appreciated ways to make a meeting better is to provide a treat-homemade or store bought-for the mid meeting coffee break. Talk to hospitality coordinator Erma Pierce if you'd like to help out "feeding the troops".

## Tree of the Month

Lavender Star Flower, *Grewia occidentalis*

I have seen this plant sold under a variety of common names; Star of Bethlehem, Star of David, and Lavender Star Flower; this is why knowing a plant's Latin name helps to prevent confusion and properly identify the plant. However, I suspect that this plant's name changes based on one's perception of political correctness. Regardless of the common names used, *Grewia* is native to Australia and Africa. In its native habitats it is a hardy plant that survives in all kinds of conditions including dry desert, coastal dunes, mountain forests, wooded grasslands and rocky terrain.

*Grewia* is a multi-stemmed tree that grows up to a height of 12 to 15 feet. Though deciduous, it can remain evergreen under favorable conditions. The leaves are slightly tapering, dark green, and shiny but hairy. They have irregularly toothed margins that give them a decorative look.

The tree remains in bloom round the year. However, between October and January and in spring it has numerous two-shaded purple flowers. While not normally seen here in Ohio, it has dark brown and four-lobed fruits that give the tree an additional common name "Cross Berry". When ripe the fruit turn reddish brown. The fruits have high sugar content and are used for making

milkshakes and brewing beer. The tree has several medicinal qualities. Shampoo made from its bark is used to prevent the graying of hair;(I better get some) and bark soaked in hot water is used to treat wounds.

You can propagate this tree by cutting the new growth or using seed in the spring. Keep in mind that propagation by seed takes about 14 to 21 days to germinate but temperatures must be around 70 degrees. Usually small plants can be found for \$4-\$6, though I spotted a small Grewia selling on the Internet in a bonsai pot for over \$40. While one source of information claimed that it can also withstand frost and drought and can be grown both in full sun and in shade. Another advised against temperatures below 40 degrees. I bring my two inside when the temperatures get low and they seem to be getting ready to lose their leaves. I suspect that they could be put through a period of dormancy, like Bougainvillea, though I don't usually let either go completely dormant. Jose' advocates it and says it improves blooming.

As a landscape plant in our southern states it grows in a healthy manner when planted in compost soil and watered regularly. It makes a prized garden plant with its slender branches hanging down in curving arches. It also attracts birds and butterflies.

Grewia blooms with one to three flowers on a thin stem from spring to fall. The pointy petaled flowers are two-tone lavender. The sepals are tipped in yellow. This type of bonsai needs full sun, as well as intermediate temperatures. For soil, the Grewia does best with a mix of two parts peat moss and one part sand. I have used our regular mix with one part potting soil added to the 1-1-1, turface, chicken grit, and orchid bark mix. The soil should remain moist, but be careful that it is not waterlogged once you bring the plant indoors or root-rot could result.

As far as fertilizer, you want to feed the Lavender Star Flower about three times a year with a product containing acid. In addition, because this type of tree tends to become chlorotic, you should provide it with an iron supplement once a year. Miracid, used for Azaleas and Rhododendrons, or Rose food works fine.

Grewia should be cut back after each bloom season to maintain the desired bonsai shape. Grewia are fairly fast growing and should be of interest to all levels of bonsai enthusiasts. Linda had one that was developing into a very nice bonsai – when Sara offered to buy it. After that, I bought two of those little \$3.99 starts at Oakland. Doc loves the flowers on these too.

## November Care Tips

If you haven't already, clean your soil surfaces of debris. This makes spring care easier and can help eliminate pests. Now that the leaves have fallen, spray with some dormant spray to eliminate any unseen eggs and other pests, see the Random Thotz at the top of the newsletter. IT isn't quite time for you to set you plants down yet this month for storage, but 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. Buy your mulch now if you don't have it yet if you bury your pots. Next month it will be hard to find. Wait to set you pots down until there has been a string of cold frosty nights in a row. That way

the vermin, mice, voles, and other munching critters will have located their dens for the winter and will not make one in your mulch next to that smorgasboard of succulent bonsai bark. If you are actually going to bury a pot - now is the time to dig the hole and get it in the ground, but don't mulch it in yet. If you wrap your storage area with wire or burlap, get it now.

Now that the leaves have fallen you can do early winter pruning for those species that will tolerate that. Sometimes I do that so that the late summer growth will fit under the bench. Don't do that if you want to strike cuttings however. That will wait until spring for almost all species. If you have collected maple seeds or acorns plant them now and protect the site from squirrels with pepper or chicken wire - preferably both.

## Book of the Month

Bonsai Aesthetics, by Francois Jeker

As you may guess, I am always looking for fresh material to review for our newsletter Book Report Column. Last month, when I was renewing my subscription to "Bonsai Today", I ordered Bonsai Aesthetics and Craig Coussin's soon to be released book. Bonsai Aesthetics has a 2006 copyright; unlike last month's 42-year old book, this has good quality color photographs and drawings.

Be prepared for the luxurious use of double gray pages between chapters, with one-word titles. The chapter on Asymmetry was six paragraphs. Generally, I classify bonsai books into one of three categories. Occasionally an author tries to write a book that covers two categories. The three categories are; coffee table books, how to, and tree classification and care. Coffee table books are usually oversized, with full-page color pictures of trees that are usually old. How to books cover the history of bonsai, pots selection, tools and pruning techniques and may have several projects using young nursery stock. Tree classification and care books have a page or two on specific species of trees used as bonsai material.

Bonsai Aesthetics attempts to be a coffee table book and a how to project book. There are fourteen full-page photos of truly great old trees of the author's favorite currently living artists (with the exception of John Naka). However, the book is not oversized, and each photo is accompanied by two drawings, one showing the trunk line and the others showing how the foliage forms a scalene triangle.

The photo-artist section, which is the middle section of this book, is followed by a section called "The Project". The Project is followed by an example. The Project advises us to take a picture of the tree we want to work on. From the photo make a tracing of the Nabari and the base of each branch. Use the tracing to then determine where the tree's apex will be. I had trouble identifying with the "Example" because it was a collected tree that was very one sided. I felt that the author was trying to show us that there is a bonsai in every tree, even one as challenging as this one.

Since this is not your typical book, I saved the first part to review last. The first part of the book lays out the rules of what makes a good bonsai. Having co-taught the ABS beginners class at Franklin Park for the past four years, I raced through this part. However, we learn by repetition and re-enforcement so let me list the titles of the “rules chapters”. Each chapter had either drawings or photographs to help illustrate the concept. The Nebari, The Trunk, The Branches, Deadwood, Equilibrium, Impulse, Rupture, Compactness’ Asymmetry, Rhythm, and Unity.

In college, I took a class called Aesthetics. Its essence was that art affects us all, but its effect is based on our life’s experiences. This was brought home when Jeker, who is a current French/European artist, points out that Americans perceive a tree that grows upward to the right as showing strength. For Japanese, the tree grows up and to the left. Regardless of what emotion the tree may evoke, we appreciate it as art.

## 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.

**November 19:** Winter Care/Outdoor-Indoor and Tool Sharpening (bring your dull tools) .  
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.

<b>January 21</b>	Back to Basics – Soil, Fertilizer, Pests, Problems, Pesticides
<b>February 18</b>	Pot Selection – Hypertufa II – another chance to make a pot
<b>March 18</b>	Speaker
March 31	Delaware Garden Show -Olentangy Liberty High School, 3584 Home Road
<b>April 15</b>	Carving, Pruning and Wiring – Jose Cueto
May 2, 9 and 16	FPC Beginners Bonsai Class
<b>May 20</b>	Speaker
<b>June 16,17</b>	32 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Bonsai Show
June 21, 22, 23, 24	ABS Show – Virginia Beach
<b>July 15</b>	Flowering Bonsai – Fuchsia, Chrysanthemum, Rosemary, Hibiscus, Hawthorne and others
<b>August 19</b>	Tropicals – Member In Meeting Show
<b>September 16</b>	Picnic at TBA – Demo too ?
September 23	Field trip and BBQ at Ken Huth’s
<b>October 21</b>	Demo – Jose Cueto
<b>November 18</b>	Speaker
December	Holiday Dinner

And a final word -  
From Tom Pillichody -

I heard of a crazy old coot  
Who sold bonsai to rubes out in Butte.  
The stones were askew,  
(He shoulda used glue)  
But the cuttings had started to root.

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