

Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - May 2007

For those of you at the April meeting this will make sense, if not take my word for it. After I got the monster yew home I started working on what Jose advised on its styling. I'm repositioning it in the pot this weekend - new front, tilted to emphasize the trunk line, and cutting back to one trunk. When I took the raffia off the major bend it held. The branch was healthy under the wrap. It was a wonderful learning experience. Just one problem. When you split a branch like that to do extreme bending, you need to do it in live wood. That was not an option for this manipulation. The split went from dead to dead wood. The life line was intact, but looking at the branch I realized that no amount of work was going to disguise that split in a way that I was going to be happy with it. I'll play with carving it, but it's gotta go. Besides, I like the new line and crown better without the distraction and it will be a better tree without the second competing trunk.

Coming Attractions

Boon Manakitipivart will be with us on May 20 - Boon has studied bonsai in Japan. He has won the Ben Oki Award and many other awards for his bonsai. Boon lives and teaches in the San Francisco Bay Area. We are very lucky to have him scheduled.

On May 20, Boon will create a Saikei, a kind of bonsai diorama. We have secured a large shallow oval pot from Franklin Park. Come watch how this is done! Boon will select the forest trees from 10-14 Shimpaku whips. "Tom Thumb" Cotoneaster will be used for the understory planting. Miniature host and other smaller plants will be used to accent the rocks that will be arranged to create the scene. I can hardly wait to see this demo! The completed planting will be donated to Franklin Park as a new addition to their collection.

If you were at the meeting last year with Boon working on the black pine, you will remember what a natural teacher he is. I am looking forward to learning from him again as it seems many of the techniques used for a Saikei will also be useful for a grove or forest planting. Plus I like the look of Saikei and want to learn the methods for myself.

And of course, June is coming at us fast. June, the month of shows in central Ohio. Dawes is the first weekend and our club show is the third weekend. Its Father's Day weekend and we will have vendors with trees, pots, tools and almost anything else you would desire. Workshops for your kids or grandkids. An advice table for those hard questions. Demonstrations. And as always, trees, beautiful trees. Look over your collection. Pick out your best or your favorite few and bring them to share with us. Last year we had over 100 trees and visually, it was a tad busy in the exhibit area. This year we are asking members to limit their display to no more than five. This is why I mention picking your best and your favorites. We will have evaluation available again this year, at your option. I think this is a wonderful tool to get pointers for how to improve your trees as the scoring points are set out and comments are provided as to why points were awarded.

There is a new registration card this year. You can fill it out in word and print it off or you can hand print it neatly. Either way, bring one for each tree and any accent plants or stands that you are showing. We will trim and fold it at registration. Thank you.

We are still looking to fill some spots needed for a successful show. The basics are covered, but some areas need one or two more people. What better way to come to the show, support the club, and enjoy sharing your passion for small trees than assisting? Low impact and fun to boot.

And here is a message from John Young - As “Sheriff” of the Security Committee for the 32nd Annual Columbus Bonsai Society Show next month (Saturday, June 16 and Sunday, June 17), I am “alerting” all of you of the urgent need for volunteers to help with security at our show. There are three time slots available on both days (10:00 A.M. - 12:30 P.M., 12:30 P.M. - 3:00 P.M. and 3:00 P.M. - 5:00 P.M.)* YOUR help is needed to keep an eye on YOUR trees during our show.

*Note: If you already signed up at last month's meeting for either a morning or an afternoon shift, you may choose one of the shorter, daily shifts listed above instead.

Please send me, John Young, an E-Mail at jyoungjfy@sbcglobal.net or give me a call at (614) 267-4168 and let me know which time slot you would like to sign up for on either Saturday or Sunday. “Deputy” Doc Gurevitz, my faithful Security Committee sidekick, and I promise to “Keep It Simple and Make It Fun!” for you. The time will go by quickly and you will have the chance to share your bonsai knowledge with the general public. So please take the time and help your club out. You might even get a chance to give that one piece of information that someone is missing to choose bonsai as a hobby. [I can personally attest that hearing someone say “I'm doing bonsai because of Zack.” Is a huge ego stroke. -Editor]

Thanks in advance for your help.

What Makes Our Club Run?

Members know that a few of us stand up and talk about coming attractions. But you may not be aware of how this happens. On the first Tuesday evening (7 pm) of each month the people who serve on the Board of Directors (look at the end of the newsletter to see their names), meet to plan our meetings and discuss ways to foster interest in the Art of Bonsai.

These meetings are open to any of the members who wish to attend. If you have some ideas that you would like to present, please come to any of the meetings. Also the Board is annually elected, and sometimes due to circumstances that come up over the year, a Board member is unable to attend board meeting, therefore, participation from the membership would help to bring fresh ideas. Come and let us know what you think would make an interesting program, or if you see a task that could benefit from your expertise - step up and volunteer! Remember we are a volunteer organization, and your time and effort are valuable to us in crating a better bonsai club.

As you look at your interests in Bonsai, consider what lights you up and how you like to share. Some of us are teachers and like to share how to do it. Some like to get groups together and talk, some like hands on learning, some like to write - letters, articles , how to DIY. There are many ways to contribute to the club and to the hobby. The club meetings reflect the ways the Board is

comfortable in sharing. If you have an idea, we want to hear about it. If you want to Lead it, let us know and we can get a session for you.

President's Message - Mark Passerello

Having a few bonsai bite the dust, it might seem like plants have only a slight will to live and give up the ghost at the least provocation. It can be frustrating to take time and effort-and sometime money to get a bonsai started only to have it shrivel and die, seemingly for no reason at all. Though it might seem that trees die easily, the opposite really is the case

I had this proven just the other day while do the usual sort of spring cleaning that goes on this time of year. Right at the inside of the corner created by the garage and the front porch is a small area that is covered in mulch and is where the hose reel and a large pot of bamboo are located. While watering the bamboo and then rolling up the hose, I noticed what I thought was a weed popping out of the mulch right up against the house wall. Looking closer I thought the leaves

looked rather like an apple or other “useful” tree so made to see if it was worth collecting. Imagine my surprise when I gave the little trunk a tug and the whole thing popped right out of the mulch, revealing the green plastic margarine container I had planted it in a few years ago.

Seeing the container reminded me just where the thing had come from. In the fall my son's kindergarten class was doing a unit about apples, and after a session of slicing apart apples to reveal the inner workings, the teacher had each of the students pick out a few seeds and plant

them in individual Dixie cups that the students had laboriously labeled with their names. The kids had fun getting dirty, as kids will, but I was sure they would be a bit disappointed when the seeds just sat there-apple seeds need a dose of cold so they will sprout, its nature's way

of letting the seed know winter is over and it's safe to sprout. Since these seeds were right out of newly harvested apples, they probably had not had their required dose of cold (doing this artificially is called stratification and is done all the time in the nursery trade) and would

not grow. To make a long story interminable, to make sure the kids had some sort of little plant to look at, I dropped of a collected crabapple that I had dug up not long ago, it was perhaps three years old.

It sat on the teacher's desk for a while, then in my son's school cubby for a while longer before it got hauled home with the rest of the stuff school kids accumulate. Getting two kids and their related supplies and paraphernalia into the house, I dropped the crabapple seedling near the

front porch thinking to deal with it later.

As you can see that later was six months later. It might seem like not big deal, since crabapple seedlings make it through the winter all the time, but from a bonsai standpoint this was almost remarkable since the little tree was in a south facing location and got no special care or

protection, which would seem to be a recipe for trouble. But this little tree had the pluck and determination to hang on and not just make it through the winter, but burst out in leaf strong and green in the spring. Considering what we do to trees as part of the bonsai hobby, we can all be well aware that trees have an incredible will to live and grow.

At this time of year, seeing a tree we liked or maybe even loved not make it through the winter even after lots of care and attention, it can be frustrating. Spring reminds us to learn from the mistakes and always keeping looking for those bright new buds.

Tree of the Month

Ginkgo biloba - Maidenhair tree

As frequently as I've seen Ginkgo in the numerous books that I've reported on, I don't believe that I can remember researching a Tree of the month article. Maybe because they really are particular to the variety for smaller leaves, or that the plant does have some "bad" traits that make me wonder what the fascination is to grow it as bonsai. Is it that they live a very long time - over 100 years? However, as Linda and I have started our annual trek to the nurseries in Greater Columbus to whip the acre into shape, I spied a lone "Chichi" Ginkgo for sale at one of them. I wondered if this is the sport that Linda has shown in a number of our past bonsai shows.

Ginkgos were thought to be an extinct species of tree until they were rediscovered in a remote region of eastern China in the late 1600's (Funny, I think of extinct as a more modern concept.). In nature the tree will grow to 75 feet or more and will grow in most soils and tend to be columnar in shape. They are also reported to be nearly pest-free. This makes them popular as a "City" tree-lawn tree, except that the female trees drop a smelly fruit in late spring. In the fall they make up for the smelly fruit by having vivid yellow foliage. However, the leaves fall much too quickly in my opinion.

Ginkgo are hardy to zone 3 through 8, but because the roots have a high moisture content, your bonsai pots will need winter frost protection. Full sun is reportedly OK, but I've kept ours in semi-shade, where morning light is strongest with mid-afternoon shade provided by a large maple tree. Feed twice monthly from spring until September. While young trees (less than 10 years old) may require annual repotting, older trees may be repotted every 2-3 years. Despite the in the ground attribute of growing in any thing, a well draining bonsai mixture is recommended with at least 10% coarse sand and grit. This helps with the winter moisture issue too.

Pruning and wiring are more problematic. Because the tree has a simple branching structure in nature that tends to want to grow upward, wiring branches down to achieve the "old" bonsai look, doesn't work. Almost every photo I looked at hides a stumped back tree. This is why almost all of the authors recommend "Broom" as the style of choice. Some varieties have a saggy bark thing going on the branches, a true sign of old age in Ginkgo. These saggy bark things are called "chichi icho" by the Japanese which means nipple, or zhong-ru by the Chinese which means stalactite.

Because they don't wire well, most training is done by "clip and grow." A number of sources warn that pruning scars will not heal neatly, so avoid cutting off large branches. New branches should be cut to 2-3 buds while still young. If you do wire (and I have) remember that the bark is tender. So you may want to only lightly wire with lighter wire. Also bonsai horticultural techniques do not seem to have much effect on reducing the leaf size, so selecting a small leaved sport is the answer; but expect to pay dearly. If you do take a cutting early in the spring, try rooting it, I have successfully. Those who tried seeds last February will need to let us know how that went.

Some of you might take herbal ginkgo, an extract from the dried leaves that reportedly improves your memory, but I think your bonsai will not produce enough leaves to make it worth your while to collect and dry. Species listed for bonsai include: Aurea, Chichi Ichu, Fastigiata, Laciniata, Pendula, and Variegata.

My thanks to authors Murata, Owens, Resnick, Tomlinson and others who's books I have in my library. ~ Ken Schultz

Book of the Month

Beautiful Bonsai by Bruno Delmer

This nice little book was first published in 2000 in France. It was translated into English in 2002. The color photographs were taken by Jacques Boulay; they add so much to this book that he deserves to be recognized for his contribution to making this book a worthy addition to your bonsai library. I found it at the new Westerville Half Priced Book store. They had several copies when I bought my copy. This book is one that focuses on a few popular specimens (European) and therefore it doesn't try to re-present styles and basic care at length to a great extent, as many beginner type books do.

The Sections are organized into; Broad-leafed Trees, Evergreen Trees, and Tropical Trees. For an added bonus there is a short section called Kusa-mono, or grasses to go. Each variety has a photograph with a description listing: scientific and common name, age, style, size and shape. Then each has five or six paragraphs that presents the characteristics and a little on the popularity of the plant as bonsai. I found the comments insightful as they are particular to caring for the tree as bonsai. For example one of the notes with the Hornbeam said "The hornbeam can tolerate some sun, but like all broad-leafed trees, it must avoid the burning rays of midday, so keep it out of the sun between noon and 4 PM. At the same time be aware that, if it is too often in the shade, its internodes will lengthen and it will loose its lovely autumn color.

The book covers 50 varieties of trees. It seemed well worth the \$7.98 I paid at Half Price Books. The jacket price was originally \$19.95. I only wish that I could provide the tidbit paragraph from each to the tree descriptions in the book, but without the accompanying picture that serves as the inspiration to the art, it does not begin to do this book justice. ~Ken Schultz

Horticulture and Style

Starting a NEW outdoor Season

Each year I face the unpacking of the outdoor bonsai with fear and hope. What survived? What didn't? Also to avoid last frosts, I've learned to avoid unpacking them too early, or then you get stuck moving them in and out several times. The Outdoor material has been on their benches now for a few weeks. Almost all the trees are showing new growth. The last frost and cold weather did damage some of the new tender foliage, even though my trees were still stored

away. The good news was this year the neighbor's tom cat didn't spray any of them. And because I put up a real fence, I only had rabbit damage on one planting. (They do love Trident maple!)

This being another screwy Ohio spring, the repotting period for deciduous trees went by much too quickly. In fact I think that conifer season is nearly over too. I try to stick with the rule, if the buds are now opening, it's too late. The exception is that the poor thing will die due to being pot bound if I don't repot anyway. In these cases I try to limit root disturbance and just go for a

bigger pot.

There are several things that I learn as I move my trees from storage to display. First, how healthy does it look? Two were dead and one was so sick it has since died. I use this to evaluate how well I protected the trees from the winter cold and winds. This year with the dryness we had in January with no snow and the late frosts, I saw freeze-dry burning on pine needles and azaleas.

However they have since produced fresh growth.

Next there were some "tender" specimens that had several branches freeze to death. Next winter these may go into the house or a spot outside - closer to the house where they may stay warmer. One was an elm. Some elms are related to those that grow in southern China and are NOT winter hardy here in Ohio.

The second assessment is to set aside those trees that MUST be repotted from those that were repotted last year. This sorting (remember I have a lot of trees) saves me from having to find them again. Since it has been warm and windy - I have discovered a few that I missed on the first sort. This year, I made an effort to place the trees on particular benches that have the sun

duration that the trees require. Shadier benches were reserved for azaleas, sunnier for pines and junipers. I forgot to mention that I also discovered which pots were not winter hardy.

With the warmer sunnier days, watering has started. Fertilization is next. But I'll save fertilization for a different article as well as spraying for pests. Remember that those pesty bugs find new growth to be especially tasty. I want to close by mentioning what everyone who wants their trees to be show ready, knows. New growth needs to be controlled. Long spouts or sprouts in places where they aren't needed need to be pinched, cut back or rubbed off. Candles on pines

need to be removed or reduced in length. Candle pinching now causes secondary back budding and also reduces the length of the needles that will grow this year. Juniper pinching should also be used to maintain or create those foliage clouds you want.

This weekend I am bringing the Tropicals up and setting them in a shady area to begin their acclimation to the outdoors. Officially May 10 is Columbus' last frost date.

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.

May 20 Boon Manakitipivart - Saikei Demo

June 9 and 10 Dawes Show

June 16 and 17 32nd Annual Bonsai Show

June 21, 22, 23, 24 ABS Show - Virginia Beach

July 15 Flowering Bonsai

August 19 Tropicals - Member In Meeting Show

September 16 Picnic at Dawes - Jack Wickle on Long Term Development Mame.

September 23 Field trip and BBQ at Ken Huth's

October 21 Demo - Jose Cueto

November 18 Randy Clark on Shohin

December Holiday Dinner