

Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter - June 2007

This is one of my favorite months for Bonsai. It is our show month, the weather is nice for being out and tending plants, the trees are out and looking their best, and it isn't so beastly hot. Well, normally anyway. This year we've had a couple of scorchers already. I have most of my leaf pruning done now, but it isn't too late for working your trees. It has been said that the best time to work on your trees is when you have time to work on them. Notice I said best time, not the ideal time. It is late for some activities, but not prohibitively late. I usually bring a couple of trees to the show and set up an informal demo near the club table that attracts questions. I function as sort of a verbal FAQ. For some reason, when I'm not behind a formal demonstration table, I get the questions. As a benefit, I also get to spend some quality time with a few trees. This year I will be working on the yew from April, and maybe one or two others. The space is available, if you want to show off a tree that isn't ready to display, this is an option. Just be prepared for public interest.

Coming Attractions

The June Show is coming at us fast. June, the month of shows in central Ohio. Dawes is the first weekend (tomorrow as I write this) and our club show is the third weekend June 16 and 17. That is Father's Day weekend and we will have vendors with trees, pots, tools and almost anything else you would desire; Workshops for you, your kids, or grandkids, an advice table for those hard questions, the popular "Iron Bonsai" and 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 around 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 is there to enjoy the show, support the club, and enjoy sharing your passion for small trees than assisting? Low impact and fun to boot. 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]

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. Please send me, John Young, an E-Mali 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.

* 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 shifts listed above instead. Thanks in advance for your help.

1-2-3 Ready for the Show

To prepare for the show there are just a few things that we ask. Following these recommendations will help make your tree show ready.

- 1) Make sure your tree is healthy. Please, only insect free or disease free specimens.
- 2) Pull the weeds from the soil surface at home. Top off with fresh moss or soil and make it look as natural as possible.
- 3) Remove sickly or bug eaten leaves, or really large leaves. Remove brown needles from your pines or junipers.
- 4) Clean the outside surface of your pot. Remove any mud or salty build up that has accumulated around the edge of the pot.
- 5) Look at the silhouette of your tree. Is it the shape you want? Trim back outliers. Too much pinching and pruning right before a show may make your tree look scalped, so be gentle.
- 6) Attempt to properly identify the common and scientific name of your tree.
- 7) Bring your show trees to FPC after 5:00 pm Friday night. If you absolutely can't be there Friday then come before 9:00 AM Saturday morning with your Registration page(s) complete.

See you there!

President's Message - Mark Passerello

In the interest of newsletter space Mark has graciously deferred to show related items.

Tree of the Month

On Hiatus for June.

Book of the Month

Ortho's All About Bonsai

Ever wonder who would buy a bonsai book in Lowes? Did you guess it was the guy who writes book reports for the club newsletter? Well I did; and I know that I was not happy because I paid the listed price and you all know how I love a bargain. I thought it looked a bit like the Sunset book, but it is not at all. The Sunset book has lists in it of plants that can be used as bonsai. The Ortho book has twenty-five Bonsai Plant Profiles. The plant profiles vary in length from one to three pages. Each page has a very good photograph of the species being discussed. As I

mentioned at one of our recent meetings, you get ideas about the tree you want to design from photos in books. The Profile section (page 69-120) covers the list of care concerns plus special features, foliage, and bark. They also list “cultivars”; these are the varieties most suited for bonsai.

The first part of the book has very nice photos replacing the drawings found in the older Sunset books that I have. However, the chapter on pruning resorted to color drawings. The Chapters cover the normal array; potting and repotting, pruning and shaping, caring for your bonsai. I found it very nice that the section on styles and motifs used photos and not drawings. To me the photos added a realistic element, though a few of them were the classic photos that we have all seen from the National Arboretum.

I found the fact that this book cites only American references and sources a true benefit, Ortho is actually headquartered here in Ohio; Ortho, is now owned by the Scott’s Company. The information is all relatively new, as the book is copyrighted in 2004. Many of the other books I have reported on are either European or Japanese. The sources of materials, references and Internet sites listed are all USA. While I paid full price it was only \$14.95. ~ Ken Schultz

Horticulture and Style

Watering Concepts By Ken Schultz

I will by no means cover all the nuances of watering in this short article. However, more plants are killed from too little or too much water. I have read that the last skill a bonsai master teaches his students is watering and that this part of the student’s training is the most critical because the tree will never recover from errors in watering, but they will recover from errors in pruning.

My mom swears by using rainwater, she has two rain barrels and uses the water ever time she waters her violets. Why is it better? Because treated tap water has calcium and other softening agents added as well as the disinfectant – chlorine. Fluoride is added to prevent tooth decay. If you are going to water with tap water and you don’t have a great number of trees, fill your containers and let them sit over night, these last two chemicals will off-gas and the water will cause less damage. Once I bring my trees inside for the season, I use water from the dehumidifier. It is essentially distilled water; I add soluble fertilizers to it once a week. If you are serious about the water issues and money is no object, there are deionization systems that you can buy. These even come with a pump and watering wand. An Orchid growing friend of mine has one for his plants, I’ve been asked to vacation water, it was very nice to use.

Besides the source of water, there is the issue of delivery, dunking, watering can or hose. Dunking is recommended. Dunking washes built up salts out and the water will enter each and every soil pore space. Then as the pot is lifted from water, air is drawn into the root system. This is essential to a healthy plant. Using a watering can or hose has similar problems. First make sure the holes in the watering rose that you have selected are fine enough to keep them from washing the soil out of your pots. Next make sure that when you water that you totally fill those pore spaces. You can tell by the water coming out of the eye in the bottom of the pot. Water all your trees, then water a second time. In my case this helps to catch the trees I may have missed the

first time thru. If you choose dunking, the pot you use must be deep enough to allow you to submerge your largest pot up to the top edge of the pot. The pot is watered when the bubbles stop coming out of the soil.

Once you resolve yourself to the source of water the next issue is when do you water. This includes both the "Is my plant thirsty?" concept and "What time is best to water?" What time is the easier issue so let me address that first. In the sun a pot gets hot, watering a plant in a pot heated by the sun will cool it, sometimes too suddenly, so think about whether it is too hot. Also the sun can use water droplets like a magnifying glass and they can actually cause spots of leaf burn. Watering in the evening is sometimes the default choice because that is when you have the time. Water on leaves in the dark can be a place for mildew to grow, so morning rather than evening watering is the recommended choice. However, if you have no choice and evening is when you must water, try not to do it too late, and try not to get the leaves on your deciduous trees wet.

The "Is my plant thirsty?" issue is the most critical issue. Watering a tree that is not thirsty can result in soil that stays too wet. And some plants will not forgive you if you let them be thirsty too long. Serrisa is one of these; once they dry out they will not recover – they are truly d-e-a-d. IF you have only a few plants, the best test is to pick them up. Experience will teach you how the pot feels when the soil has dried out. You can also buy a hydrometer. It is a probe that you shove into the soil and it measures the amount of moisture remaining. Make sure you shove it at least halfway down to get to the center soil level.

Frequency of watering is influenced by a large number of environmental factors. Small pots dry out faster than large pots. Dark colored pots will heat up faster than light colors. In fact dark colors in full sun can become so hot that the roots touching the pot can cook. All bonsai pots have feet or legs to ensure that the water can drain out. If it doesn't excess water in the soil can cause root rot. Anyway, on windy days this also means that the pot will dry out faster. Wind also dries out plants with large leaves faster than pines and junipers. Their modified leaf structures, or needles are designed to conserve moisture.

The club soil mixture is designed to be fast draining. Adding an organic (coffee grounds for example) increase the soils ability to retain moisture over a longer period. This is not recommended for most pines. Soil particle size also affects the evaporation rate. If your mixture has too many fines in it because you do not sift, then it will hold more moisture. However too many fines can also plug the screen and prevent the pot from draining properly. Drainage is also affected by the degree of pot-bounded ness that your tree has. Newly transplanted trees are in shock, they will not use as much water. A tree that you should have transplanted last year will be harder to water, you may notice that the water will sit on top of the soil and soak in very slowly. Because there is less soil to root ratio, these pots will dry out much more rapidly. Over time the components you mixed to create your soil begin to break down, making smaller particles too.

Most of us become alarmed at wilted leaves. We believe that the plant is thirsty. Our reaction is to water. If the plant does not recover in 10-12 hours it was not thirsty, rather it is over - watered and suffocating. It can also be suffering from a disease such as Wilt or a fungus. Never (Ok there are a few exceptions) let your tree's pot sit in standing water. Indoors set the pot on a sand or

gravel filled humidity tray. If your outdoor trees are sitting directly on the ground or a hard surface, make sure they can drain properly.

Earlier I discussed the effect of temperature on the color of a pot. Temperature and sunlight are interesting problem causers. Your plant needs sunlight to make food from it, the water fertilizer and soil that you give it. However, each plant has its own unique adaptations developed over centuries of growing in a specific climatic location. This is why you will be more successful when you can provide the micro- climate your trees need. Your plant will let you know if it hasn't gotten enough light or too much – but that is the subject of a different article.

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 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 – Potentillia workshop - BYO or supplied

August 19 Schefflera workshop with Jose Cueto

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

September 23 Field trip and BBQ at Ken Huth's

October 21 TBA

November 18 Randy Clark on Shohin

December Holiday Dinner

And a final word -

President - Mark Passerello Past President - Dan Binder

Old gnarled trees darken the trail: 1st Vice President - Ken Schultz

Where is the temple bell? 2nd Vice President - Ben William

1 year Board - Denny Sackett

Li Po 2 year Board - Wendy Fissel

3 year Board - Chris "Pootsie Conomy

Treasurer - Richard Gurevitz

Secretary - Ross Lebold

Librarian - Merida Weinstein

Columbus Bonsai Society Newsletter Editor - Zack Clayton

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