



January 2008 Newsletter

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Newsletter

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Refreshments

*Snow brings the
New Year.
Followed by a
thaw the next.
Winter in zone
five.*

“A Pinch of this....”

More Resolutions

Well, I know I gave you things that you can do for your club last month, but here are a few more. These come from the current president of the American Bonsai Society, Pauline Muth, and are perfectly aligned with our “So you....” program feature at this month’s meeting.

-  I will only grow the number of bonsai I can really take care of and keep in excellent condition.
-  I will wire at the correct time and I will unwire BEFORE the tree grows into the wire.
-  I will fertilize correctly and on time.
-  I will keep up with trimming the trees.
-  I will learn about a species before I work with it.
-  I will bring my bonsai to club meetings to show it off or to get advice when needed.
-  I will water by hand so I can inspect my bonsai for problems.
-  I will only collect trees in legal areas and only in amounts I can work with or share with others.
-  I will work only on healthy stock.
-  I will take time to learn more about bonsai, to enjoy my bonsai and to share them with friends.

 Pauline Muth, Mohawk Hudson Bonsai Society



Rich Uhrick

This month's program

1 - 2 PM Tom Holcomb will be presenting "Bonsai 101" - including tree growth and techniques on keeping them alive. This presentation is also known as, "So you got a Bonsai for Christmas and it died". My first exposure to the Columbus Bonsai Society is when I attended this presentation, taught by Tom and Max Puderbaugh in 1991-2.

2:00 General Club Announcements - Mark Passerrello

2:10- Ken Schoenfeld will lead the discussion on "What to do with a Yard Collected Yew." Ken is a 30-year CBS member and had lead demos on bonsai for CBS and Dawes.

5-minute break

2:45 - 3:30 Erodium. (See this month's Tree of the Month article) - 30 plants and 20 pots will be available. You can provide your own pot. Ken Schultz said he would bring some potting soil and some sphagnum moss. If it is cold, bring something to take your plant to your car in like an insulated lunch bag. The tools you will need are scissors and tweezers. While some varieties of Erodii may be, hardy these come from California and thrive at temperatures above 50. Plants will be \$5 each and pots \$1. Depending on the number of participants a 2 for price may be available. They also make nice root over rock mame' so you may want to bring a rock and suitable planter. Erodium also can act as accent plants. The ones we will have bloom with small double pink flowers.

President's Message- Mark Passerrello

Welcome to 2008

Seems like whenever I sit down to write a President's message, the first subject to pop up is always the weather! Central Ohio's weather is usually unpredictable, and the start of January 2008 seemed more like the middle of April, but we seem back on track now. Given the few days that it was close to sixty degrees, most bonsai trees will hardly notice.

The weather may be always changing, not always for the better but upcoming changes in the club will hopefully be all for the good. This year marks a real change in the agenda for every meeting, with time given to questions and interaction given to all members of any skill level before the regular meeting program. This month is a real bonus for those folks who have received a bonsai as a holiday gift. Long time club members Dan Binder and Tom Holcomb will lead a session beginning at 1:00pm on our regular meeting day that we are calling "Bonsai 101" or "So you got a Bonsai for Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza or Solstice Observance". If you or some one you know (they do not have to be a club member) got a tree as a holiday gift, or would just like to brush up on bonsai basics, this will be a fun and informative session. The regular meeting will start up at 2:00pm.

Speaking of Tom and Dan, there are some interesting developments to report. Tom will be joining the board to fill the open Director seat, and on behalf of the club, we welcome him and thank him for his willingness to serve.

The January issue of OHIO magazine featured a short article about bonsai that quoted our own Dan Binder, in his role as bonsai curator at FPC. Northeast Ohio bonsai gurus Art and Frank Mihalic were also quoted in the article, which was some good publicity for the hobby in general and a nice notice for Franklin

Tom will be joining the board to fill the open Director seat, and on behalf of the club, we welcome him and thank him for his willingness to serve.

Park. If you would like to check it out online, see

<http://www.ohiomagazine.com/OhioHome&Garden/report.asp?ID=4B1CD3E1C7C3455A96354C57768293D5>

Attention caffeine junkies and those with a sweet tooth: we need a refreshment coordinator for meetings. The coordinator does not actually have to bake or buy the goodies; just organize a sign up list for folks to take a turn at providing the treats for each meeting. The refreshment coordinator also takes care of set up and tear down of the coffee equipment at the meetings. If you are able to take on this duty, please let me know.

Tree of the Month

Erodium reichardii “Flore Pleno” - Storksbill

I have always just called this plant “erodium”. I knew there were several varieties and that they belong to the geranium family. Since I first bought one from Ken Huth and he keeps his plants in his tropical greenhouse, I believed it to be a tropical, or at least a tender plant in our Zone 5 climate. Imagine my surprise when I researched this plant, since it will be the material we will have at our January Club meeting, to find that it is hardy from Zones 4 to 7. I then vaguely remembered seeing them planted in the ground at Wildwood Gardens in Chardon, Ohio. Tony Mihalic said they were a rock garden plant. This proves to be true; several varieties come as rock garden plants. A white variety, *Erodium reichardii* ‘Alba’ is native of the Pyrenees in Northern Spain. It claims to be hardy to 15 degrees [**Fahrenheit**]. As a rock garden plant, they are only 3” tall and 8” in diameter. Michigan State University notes that snow cover enhances winter survival. However, another site warns of crown rot caused by wet winters.

As a rock garden plant, they say it needs fast draining soil and remains more compact with full sun. I find this to be true. Since I did not know they are hardy, for years I have taken them into the basement and probably will continue to do so, at least until I test one outside to see how it does. Linda and I have 5 in the collection and under the lights the leaf stems (petioles) tend to get longer and the leaves become slightly larger during the winter. The references say that while they do well in slightly acidic soil they will do much better with the addition of dolomite lime (something else I will be trying). I note that Ken Huth uses a more potting like soil mix and the only *Erodium* I have ever lost is one that I transplanted into my straight bonsai mix - too course and too fast draining would be my guess.

Imagine my surprise when I researched this plant... to find that it is hardy from Zones 4 to 7.



Like hardy geraniums, *Erodium* are long blooming. Given the right conditions, yours may bloom from June until November. *Flore Pleno* has double flowers that are a dark pink towards purple. I saw a note that said trimming off the seedpods would encourage more flowers. This is where I saw the note that the plants are poisonous, especially the seeds. I would think they are incredibly small and I for one cannot imagine having enough seeds to poison anything.

As bonsai, I have seen *Erodium* used in small pinch pots, as group plantings, root-over-rock, and as accent plants. What we will use as the “trunk” is normally the taproot that develops below ground. Since we will be exposing this root, it may be necessary to plan long range. It you want to develop a root-over-rock, bring a 6” plastic pot, your rock and a mix of bonsai and potting soil. I hope

that you can comb out the plant you get to place its roots over the rock; which you will cover, back almost to its original depth. You will repot your plant every six months, slowly exposing more and more root, until you have only a small part of the rock in the soil. However, by then the plants roots will be in the soil below the rock.

The growth will extend from the tips or each branch and the apex. The leaves at the bottom will be shaded out and you will need to clean off the dead leaves that hang down – sort of like a little palm tree. At the

tips grow the branches and apex will get longer and slightly thicker. While I have not wired any of my Erodium to date, I suppose it is possible to guide the direction of growth.

If you see these as small "Palm Trees" bring a tray or rock with pockets and you can place a few palms on your island. Another popular choice is to use it as a flowering accent plant. Let your imagination run wild.

Moreover, bring a small cooler or insulated lunch bag to take them home in – just incase its freezing outside – because since these plants did not get to go dormant they could freeze rather quickly.

I have ordered thirty plants; hopefully, this will be enough. They will be \$5.00 each. There will also be 20 small pots at a dollar each.

 Ken Schultz

Book of the Month

Bonsai Periodicals

Over the years, I have subscribed to the three magazines referenced in this article. However, I had, let two of them lapse. This year I renewed them and I am glad I did. Magazines have a different effect than books. If you want a book, you must go specifically to a library, bookstore or a bookseller's website to make a selection. Magazines are delivered to your mailbox on a regular basis once you have made the decision to subscribe. For me, this results in rekindled interest in some aspect of my collection. I have been known to take my magazines on trips, and if I notice that I'm near one of the advertiser's locations, I'll made a side trip to their nursery.

There are three magazines currently available to the English speaking public.

None of them are monthly, one is bi-monthly and two are quarterly. Two of them are published by the larger Club organizations. "**Bonsai & Stone Appreciation**" is the official publication of Bonsai Clubs International. www.bonsai-bci.com A one-year membership is \$48. BCI is a worldwide organization and you can see the efforts of artists not only in the US, but from all the other continents as well. This past month there was an

article written by a young bonsai enthusiast who went to Japan to study at a bonsai nursery for two months. Call me Walter Mitty – I'm ready to go!


"**Bonsai, Journal of the American Bonsai Society**" is as its title indicates.

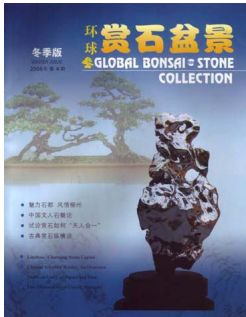
The magazine is published quarterly; an annual membership is \$40. Both the BCI and the ABS magazines carry calendars of upcoming events. You can visit the ABS site at www.absbonsai.org Our Club is a member of both BCI and ABS. I like to read this magazine because articles in it are written by people I know. This past issue has an article on weeds, written by Doug Hawley and Tom McCormack, both of the Greater Cincinnati Bonsai Society. I have taken workshops from both of them. Also the material used and the trees shown are being cultivated as bonsai somewhere here in the USA. At least, I have a hope that I can do the same.

"**Bonsai Focus**" is the third (bi-monthly) magazine. It is \$54.95 for six issues. In the past many of its articles have been translated from Japanese. You will also find contributors from the artists who write for ABS and BCI. This past year, Bonsai Today merged with Bonsai Europe and the last few issues have featured current European bonsai artists. Stone Lantern Publishing, www.stonelantern.com, offers Bonsai Focus. This magazine has become the gold standard. Its photographs and illustrations are always top quality. Unfortunately, most of the material I see in the photographs in Bonsai Focus remains unavailable to us in the US or is out of my price range.

BCI and ABS sponsor annual shows or bonsai events. ABS holds their symposium in the US. This year's event is in San Antonio. BCI meets all over the world, this coming year's event will be in Italy. Both organizations offer discounts to their members.

All three of these magazines can be found in the Club's Library; if you are patient and aren't concerned that you might miss a calendar event, as a member you can check out issues with trees, or styling's that catch your interest; but you have to come to our meetings regularly to make your selections and to return items borrowed. **[See Below]**

 Ken Schultz



From the Circulation Desk of the C.B.S. Library

When the Columbus Bonsai Society library reopens for business at our next meeting on January 20th, the following rules for checking out books, magazines and videos will apply:

1. Only current dues paying members of the Columbus Bonsai Society may check out books, magazines and videos from our library.
2. Either fill out the card that is inside the book or magazine or fill out a check-out form if there is no card inside the book or magazine and for all videos. Include your name and the date you are checking out this item and give the card or form to the Librarian on duty.
3. No more than two books, magazines or videos may be checked out by any member at any one time.
4. Books, magazines and videos may be checked out for only one month.
5. Any books that are designated as **REFERENCE ONLY** may not be checked out.

Please contact John Young if you have any questions or comments about any of these rules. You may either send him an E-Mail at jyoungify@sbcglobal.net or give him a call at **(614) 267-4168**.

As a reminder, if you checked out any books, magazines or videos from the C.B.S. library last year, please return them as soon as possible. They are now **OVERDUE!**

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

We Need Your Ideas

Now that the December holidays are behind us, we would like to have your suggestions and ideas about where we should hold our annual holiday dinner this year. Please contact John Young at jyoungify@sbcglobal.net or give him a call at **(614) 267-4168**. Thank you.

 John Young, Librarian

Bonus tree species

Ficus retusa

Ficus retusa, AKA *Ficus microcarpa* var. *nitida*, is a tropical tree native to Southeast Asia growing to about 60 feet. The tree has alternate, lanceolate dark green leaves about 3/4 to 1" long in pot culture. The bark is lustrous reddish brown dotted with small, horizontal grey flecks. It is considered one of the easiest trees to keep as a bonsai. Common names (shared with other fig species) are Banyan Fig, Taiwan Ficus, and Indian Laurel Fig.

Ficus retusa is a tropical; it must winter inside and should be brought in the fall when the temperature threatens to go below 40 degrees. Temperatures below 40 degrees will cause leaf drop and probably branch die back, or possibly a completely dead plant. Other than that they are pretty hardy.

This is one of the figs that will throw a lot of aerial roots under high humidity. This August we had a week of heavy rains and temperatures in the high 90s. I have aerial roots up to an inch long



that I am misting daily to preserve until they make soil contact. The old split drinking straw technique would probably help with this, but so far I am doing fine just keeping them moist. These plants are in partial shade with 3-4 hours of direct sun (in Columbus, Ohio, your location may have different results.) This water/sun regimen is causing them to put on lots of top growth also, the new leaves are medium sized, lush, and the growth is quite dense. The trees I have in full sun are not producing aerial roots, but are only two-year cuttings.


F. retusa grow best in half to full sun with plenty of water. Fertilize with a balanced all-purpose fertilizer or organic blend every week. To prevent die back, prune only when the tree is actively growing. With terminal pruning *F. retusa* will back bud on any recent growth. Older growth will break buds with hard pruning but be sure to leave some green on the branches to keep it alive. Like most figs the latex sap bleeds profusely from cuts but misting with a fine water spray will stop this. The latex that is secreted by figs may cause an allergic reaction or sensitize some people, so it is best to avoid contact with the skin and wash any sap off as soon as possible.

If you want to practice an advanced technique, *F. retusa* will take thread grafts very easily. The fast growth will heal the graft scar quickly and since cuttings root easily, you can practice on spare stock.

Tropicals seem to like to be repotted in the hottest part of summer and Figs are tropicals. *Ficus retusa* is not particular in what type of soil it is potted as long as it is a well draining mix. There seems to be no preference for alkaline or acidic soil or fertilizer treatment. Because of the need for a free draining soil mix pots can be a little deeper than normal or a shallow pot will just need more frequent watering. Just keep organics or fine particles to a minimum. Repotting can be every two years even for mature specimens.

Ficus retusa does not seem to be seriously bothered by insects or fungal pests. It is quite possible to find an occasional scale but the milky sap of the tree seems to discourage most insects. As a precaution, you can spray the tree with an insecticide twice a year. Spot outbreaks can be safely sprayed with rubbing alcohol.

Due to the forgiving nature of its growth requirements and how hard it is to kill *Ficus retusa* is an ideal tree for beginners. I would recommend a winter location in an east window but they might survive a southern exposure with a shade cloth between them and the window to keep the plant from roasting. You for sure want to keep it in a place where you can remember to water it every day during the winter. A dry house and no water will kill a fig faster than anything else I know of.

 Zack Clayton

References:

www.badgerbonsai.org/articles/sp_ficus_retusa.php and Wikipedia.org

Bonsai Here and Beyond the Outerbelt

Unless otherwise noted, The Columbus Bonsai Society meets the third Sunday of every month at 1:45 pm at the Franklin Park Conservatory. Board Meetings are the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm in the Franklin Park Conservatory. The meetings are open to members.

- January 20, 2008** "So you got a bonsai for Christmas" (1PM-2PM) Special Time Club Meeting, including Taxus viewing; Erodium Workshop (2PM – 4PM)
- February 17, 2008** The Ins and Outs of Soils—Dan Binder, Tom Holcomb
- March 16, 2008** Bring Your Own Tree Workshop
- March 29, 2008 Delaware County- Green Thumb Gardener's Fair, Olentangy Liberty High School, 3584 Home Road 8:30am -4pm \$7 admission
- CBS Session at 2:45pm
- April 2008** Slippery Elm workshop—Kelly Adkins
- May 2-4, 2008 Staselwood Bonsai www.staselwoodbonsai.com Spring Open House with Guest Marco Invernizzi www.marcoinvernizzi.com/index_uk.html
- May 18, 2008** Azaleas—Tom McCormick, Greater Cincinnati Bonsai Society
- June 22, 2008** Tropicals workshop-- **New**
- June 14-15, 2008 Dawes Arboretum Annual Bonsai Show www.dawesarb.org
- June 12-18, 2008 MABA Conference, Indianapolis, IN www.MABA2008.org
- June 19-22, 2008 American Bonsai Society Learning Seminar 2008—San Antonio, TX <http://absbonsai.org/seminars/ABS2008/main2008.html>
- July 20, 2008** Martha Meehan's Miniatures www.meehansminiatures.com
- August 17, 2008** Bring Your Own Tropicals workshop
- September 14, 2008** Picnic and workshop
- October 11-12, 2008 National Bonsai Exhibition, Rochester, NY www.internationalbonsai.com/nbe08
- October 11-12, 2008 Carolina Bonsai Expo, Asheville, NC www.ncarboretum.org
- October 25-6, 2008** Annual CBS bonsai show at Franklin Park Conservatory— **New Date**
- November 16, 2008** TBA
- December. 2008** Holiday Dinner



Columbus Bonsai Society Membership Registration

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (____) _____ -- _____ Date: ____/____/____

Email: _____

Membership: Individual (\$15.00) ___ Family (\$22.50) ___

Check # _____

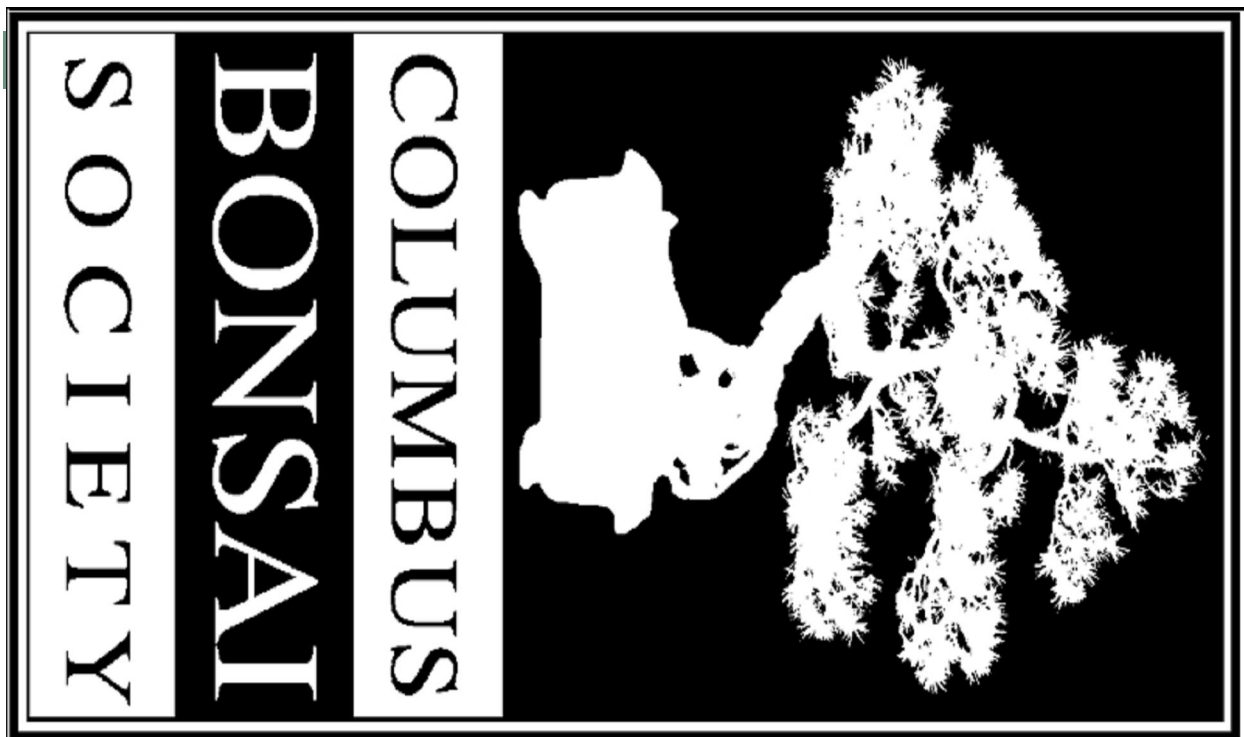
P. O. Box 1981

Columbus, Ohio May your phone number be included in our members list? Y N

43216-1981 Would you like to get your newsletter by email? Y N
(email saves the club about \$.74 to \$.90 an issue in printing and mailing.)

IF family membership, please list other members: _____

Renewal memberships may be paid for more than 1 year at a time



Columbus Bonsai Society
PO Box 1981
Columbus, OH 43216-1981

Questions to:
Columbusbonsai@hotmail.com
[HTTP://Columbusbonsai.org](http://Columbusbonsai.org)

Regular Club meetings on
3rd Sunday of the month
Meetings Start at 1:45 pm
All are welcome to attend

CBS meets at:
Franklin Park Conservatory
1777 East Broad St
Columbus, Ohio 43203

CBS Board meets
1st Tuesday of the month
at 7:00 pm at FPC