

March 2008 Newsletter

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**Newsletter
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Richard Uhrick

Refreshments

*Lamb-like it
begins.
But beware the
ides of March,
And the Lion to
come.*

“A Pinch of this....”

In like a lamb?....

Term of the month: RAMIFICATION

This is simply the process of splitting the twigs and branches of bonsai to form smaller sizes and shapes.

This is possible by pruning, but can also occur through leaf reduction.

This is one of the most interesting issues I have put together yet. Mostly due to the fact that we have so many contributors with valuable information to add to the “Let’s Talk Dirty” section that begins on page 4.

Last month we included a letter and information about the possible budget cuts and their effect on the National Arboretum and its Bonsai and Penjing collections. If you wish to see more about the possible ramifications of these cultural budget cuts please follow this link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxMHF0jJ3i4>



Rich Uhrick

Our panel of soil “experts”



This month's program

José Cueto will present a slide presentation on the various styles that can be found in Bonsai (see "What style is your bonsai"). José is a frequent contributor to our society and we are very fortunate to have him with us. For those of us who bring trees to work on he will be available to assist us in solidifying or even restyling. Obviously, he would prefer to help us with trees that we have had for some time, but might simply be stuck on where to go next.

Upcoming Programs

April: Kelly Adkins will be doing a workshop on Elms. Kelly reports that he will be able to provide Smooth Leaf Elms in two sizes for our workshop. The larger size will be \$85 (including workshop fees) and will have a trunk caliper of about $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Cut back several times they have not been refined in any way. The smaller size will be \$65. While smaller, they also have been cut back. Each size will include some single-trunk, and some multiple-trunk.

Please remember that workshop by payment of your fees your space is reserved. A sign up sheet will be available at the March 16 meeting. If all slots fill up, we will take standby names with phone numbers, just in case someone needs to bow out, we will let them sell their spot to the standby list individuals.

I hope to have a photo or two and a bio for Mr. Adkins for our next newsletter. It is my understanding that Mr. Adkins is a long time Cleveland Bonsai Society member.

President's Message- Mark Passerello

See you at the meeting

Topic of the Month

"What style is your Bonsai?"

For the past, several years I have helped teach the Beginners Bonsai Class at Franklin Park Conservatory. We use the ABS course outline and one of the sections is about the different Styles of bonsai. Most of the books that I have reviewed have a section, usually with drawings, that show the various styles. At the March meeting Jose' Cueto will do a presentation about bonsai styling concepts and then help you with the tree you have brought. When I have read Bonsai Today, ABS, or BCI's magazine they sometimes feature an article about "restyling" a tree that has grown out. Many times, they show a series of photographs that show the first styling. However, long-term development is wherein the real secret lies. How to take a tree from collected or nursery stock to a work of art does require patience, a good eye and imagination.

I looked at several books; some show a schematic or a series of silhouettes representing the various styles suitable to the species of tree. Gordon Owen uses these in the Bonsai Identifier. John Naka lists a number of sub classifications with drawing showing how the position of the branches can

*"...the five basic classical styles:
1) Formal upright- Chokkan, 2)
Informal Upright- Moyogi, 3)
Slanting – Shakan, 4) Semi-
cascade – Han-Kengai, and 5)
Cascade – Kengai."*

make quite a difference in the look of the tree. Nevertheless, let me focus on the five basic classical styles: 1) Formal upright- Chokkan, 2) Informal Upright- Moyogi, 3) Slanting – Shakan, 4) Semi-cascade – Han-Kengai, and 5) Cascade – Kengai.



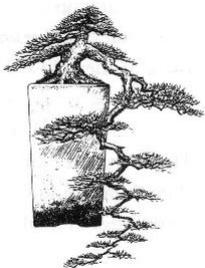
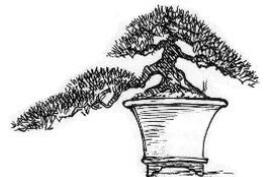
Chokkan is the rarest because it is so difficult to find a straight trunk with taper to make into a believable bonsai. It is easiest to see the Scalene Triangle in this style. Frequently the branches slant downward, but not always, and the branches can start 1/3 of the way up or cluster near the top portion. The pots for formal upright trees can be round or square. Pines are typically in drum pots, which are unglazed and usually dark brown.

Moyogi in contrast is probably the most common. I know a great many of my trees are Informal Upright. The trunk curves with the apex located over the basal flare, or Nebari. The first branch should be located on the outside of the first curve. Then a back branch or a slightly smaller branch should be located on the next outside curve. Ideally, the curves come closer together as do the branches as you go up the trunk of the tree, until you get to the top third where branch location is less critical. Oval pots are best for informal upright. Rectangular pots are for trees that are more masculine. Flowering and deciduous trees often are in glazed pots.



Shakan may be either straight or informal. Slanting is denoted from formal upright or informal upright because the apex is not directly over the base or Nebari. However, the apex is usually within the limits of the rim of its pot. Almost any pot shape will do, with slanting look to determine if the pot appears to balance the weight of the tree so that it appears to be able to keep itself from falling over. Shakan pots can be a bit deeper than Moyogi.

Han-Kengai or semi-cascade has a trunk or main branch that grows down to between the rim of the pot and the bottom of the pot, but not below the base of the container. The Han-Kengai may have an apex above the bend that leads to the part of the tree that extends below the pot's rim. Pots should not be overly shallow or deep like a full cascade pot; otherwise, almost anything goes. Again, make sure that the pot has enough visual weight that it does not look as if it will tip over.



Kengai or cascade trunks extend below the base of the container. When shown they must be displayed on a suitable Dai or stand. It seems that beginners want a cascade juniper because they have seen one in a book or photograph. There may or may not be greenery above the sharp downward bend of the cascade portion of this style. In nature cascade occurs on cliffs or mountains where the trees survived felling by heavy snow or erosion on a steep stream bank or ocean shore. Cascades may even occur growing into or on stone. The pots should be deeper than they are square or round. I have never seen a specimen cascade in an oval or rectangular pot.

Other styles presented, but not discussed here are Root over rock [**Seki-Joju**]; Broom [**Hokidachi**]; Windswept [**Fukinagashi**]; Twin [**Sokan**] and Triple Trunk [**Sambon-Yose or Sankan**]; Clump [**Kabubuki or Kabudachi**]; Raft [**Ikadabuki**]; Two tree [**Soju**]; Forest [**Yose-Uye**]; Literati [**Bunjin**]; Saikei (natural scene); Weeping and Deadwood [**Sharimiki**]. So, pick out a tree to bring with you to the March meeting and do not forget to take some before and after pictures. In addition, bring your tools and wire too. Since March is the beginning of repotting season, at least for deciduous trees, you may also be able to repot your tree.

LET'S TALK DIRTY!

HOW'S YOUR SOIL MIX? By Jack Wikle (with permission)

Quick and simple measuring of total porosity, water retention (after-drainage), and air-filled space (after-drainage)

Needs:

-  Dry soil mix
-  Common 8.5 oz. "foam" coffee cup
-  Measuring cup calibrated in fluid ounces
-  Water to fill measuring cup
-  Tool (pocket knife?) for slashing drain holes in foam cup

Procedure:

1. Fill foam cup completely with dry soil mix.
2. Pour water slowly into soil mix adding as much water as possible; stop just short of overflowing.
3. Allow to set for 15 minutes and add more water if possible to bring back to almost overflowing level.
4. Record amount of water used then empty measuring cup.
5. While holding foam cup of saturated soil mix over the empty measuring cup, slash 3 or 4 openings in the bottom edge of the foam cup and catch the water that drains out in the measuring cup.

6. Record the amount of drainage water collected.

Interpreting results:

Total porosity is equal to the volume of water accepted by the soil mix. Be very skeptical of any mix that does not accept 4 or more ounces of water (5 ounces and even more is a better goal).

Air-filled space (after-drainage) is equal to the amount of drainage water collected. Drainage of less than 1.5 ounce or more than 2.5 ounces is reason for concern too. Too little air-filled space is a problem because it limits the availability of oxygen to plant roots. (Oxygen diffuses 10,000 times faster through air than through water!)

Water retention (after-drainage) is equal to "water accepted" minus drainage. This is an indication of water available for plant use; but, unfortunately, this is not absolute because some of the water retained will be held so tightly on and within individual soil mix particles that it will not be available to plants.

Note: You can calculate a percent by volume figure by dividing a fluid ounce measurement, obtained following the instructions, by 8.5 and then multiplying the result by 100.

 Provided by Tom Holcomb

John Naka on Soil

At the February Club meeting, we got the dirt on bonsai soil. If you were not there, it went well, and we talked about many different concepts behind "what is the ideal growing medium" for our trees. At one point, I said that Soil was so important that in Bonsai Techniques John Y. Naka had devoted several

pages (88-97) to describing the particular formulations that he used for each species. He opens his discussion with separating each species into Young or Established, Large or Small bonsai, which affected the portions of his ingredients, and sand particle size he recommended. There is a chart starting on page 117 that establishes repotting frequency based on young or established bonsai. Young trees get repotted on a more frequent basis, whereas established bonsai varied from a 1-2 year cycle to a 3-7 year repotting cycle page. The chart starting on page 117 indicates the best months for you to repot that variety. A chart I should refer to more often.

Small bonsai are designated as 2.5 feet or smaller, and Large bonsai are 2.5 feet or larger. Young bonsai are 4 to 5 years after shaping and first bonsai transplanting. Later (established) are those whose growth is not encouraged. His soil mix components are; 1) Soil, 2) Mulch, 3) Sand, and 4) Wood Charcoal.

Soil: He describes the soil as collected topsoil or that sold by nurseries. Homemade soil is 5 pounds of organic fertilizer (bone meal, cottonseed meal or fishmeal) to each 5 cubic feet of garden soil. Add a bag of compost and a bag of sand. He then says to let it sit in a concrete, cinder block or brick bin (including bottom to keep earthworms out) for 2-3 months before using. He warns against reusing soil, as it is nutrient depleted. Sorry, he does not say how big a bag. Sand usually comes in 50-pound bags and compost in 2 or 3 cu ft bags. I have seen soil ingredients given in cu. ft. measures in other gardening books.

Mulch: Oak leaf mulch is declared to be the "best". Sterilize mulch with boiling water or chemicals to kill insects and fungus he says;

I am guessing this is why Naka says it needs to mellow for a couple of months before using it. Peat moss, and Shredded sphagnum are OK to use too, he says.

Sand: Never use beach or aquarium sand, he says. Use sand from a building yard. Washed river or decomposed granite (Chicken or Turkey grit fits this description). Check the pH to make sure it is not too alkaline. Sand size is important; he grades it into three sizes 1/4" - Large, 1/8" medium, and 1/16" small. Each species and tree size has a slightly different sand size mixture in the chart.

Wood Charcoal: Not readily available – he gives no instruction but it used to be made here in Columbus by cooking coconut hulls and then grinding it for use at water treatment plants and for aging alcoholic beverages. As we discussed, this is "activated carbon or charcoal" used as a water conditioner in water treatment because it absorbs certain gases like ammonia or organic chemicals (e.g. pesticides) from water. Though he does not explain how, perhaps the charcoal holds the fertilizers in the pot longer to make them more available to the plant.

Most trees I see in the show, except those of Zack and José are in the "Small" category. I will present the top 10 or most common (?) trees we have in our collections...I know there are some of you hoping that I list the ones you have, and if I miss them, it does not mean they are not in the book.

Remember I am only presenting the Young Small mixtures for these. Moreover, because I am not presenting Large, there were no entries for Large Sand in this half of the chart.

	Soil	Mulch	Medium Sand	Small Sand
Azalea	0	4	1	1
Conifers	½	2	2	1
Deciduous	1	1	1	1
Elm	1	1	1	1
Ficus/Fig	1	1	0	2
Black Pine	0	2	3	1
Junipers	½	1	1	2
Maples	1	2	1	1
Pines	0	2	3	1
Tropicals	1	3	1	1

Naka shows using enough Large or Medium grain sand to cover the bottom of the pot before placing soil or the tree in the pot. He says cover the surface of the repotted tree with a thin layer of screen (1/8") sphagnum moss or cheesecloth to prevent washing the soil away before watering. He uses B-1 in the first watering (Superthrive or one of the Quick Start fertilizers have B-1), then he says not to fertilize for a month or two after the initial transplanting.

 Ken Schultz

Soil pH and water retention study

	pH @ 12°C/ 53.6° F		
	1 minute	1 hour	Retention >1 hour/200 ml
Haydite B	6.89	6.68	170/200
Haydite F.H.	6.88	6.70	165/200
Lava rock	7.23	7.19	175/200
Pumice	6.93	6.55	190/200
Akadama	6.97	6.35	170/200
Kanuma	6.87	6.75	165/200
Sand	7.12	7.14	180/200
Fir bark	5.45	5.13	190/200
Granite "Chicken Grit"	7.09	7.12	180/200
Turface	6.95	6.38	110/200
Rainwater 7.1			
[Acidic pH= <7/ Neutral pH =7/ Alkaline pH= >7]			

The pH and water retention study revealed some interesting results.

1. Fir bark retained very little water after an hour of contact; also, it lowered the rainwater pH significantly.
2. Turface suppressed pH and surprisingly nearly half of the added water was retained (110/200) after the hour of contact.

Turface retained the most moisture of any particle and fir bark depressed pH the most. The traditional CBS mixture taught by Max and in use at FPC is roughly:

- 1/3 turface
- 1/3 fir bark
- 1/3 chicken grit (granite mined in North Carolina)

Some custom mixing for pines or tropicals is advisable. The pH and water retention of that mixture suggests the mix corrects tap water pH well (normally 7.8 - 8.2) and maintains even moisture.

The notion that salts may "stick" to the positively charged clays in Turface may be correct however until too much salt accumulates the Turface/fir bark/granite formula is a good one.

Following Boon's [Manakitivipart] recommendations for a different growing media without Turface and less organic particles one example is 25% mix of haydite, river sand, lava rock and fir bark. This formula would offer a less acidic soil/water pH and less salt retention. The mix would be dryer and should be excellent for pines.

Finally, there is continuing interest in the volcanic soils of Japan - Kanuma and Akadama. Perhaps azaleas would benefit from a traditional mix of the two; however, there is little aesthetic incentive to use Kanuma. Akadama is a different story (in my mind). Several authors have found qualities to recommend Akadama; recently, Jim Doyle and Colin Lewis promote its use. A media containing 25% Akadama, 20% fir bark, 20% sand, 20% haydite, and 15% lava rock is one choice.

Growing media will be on sale at the March meeting. Several sizes and mixtures will be available at member pricing.

 Dan Binder

Turface, Haydite and Akadama

All three products are inorganic material that promotes drainage, aeration and water retention. Perlite is expanded volcanic rock (think mineral popcorn). Turface is fired clay while Haydite is fired shale, either can be used in bonsai culture; use whichever you can find at the best price. They are the domestic equivalent of expensive imported bonsai soils.

Turface try groundskeepers at ball-fields and golf courses. If you decide to purchase, Turface be sure to specify the MVP grade, the size is more appropriate for bonsai. Sifting will also be required to remove the fines of any of these products.

Haydite and bought some in bulk at a substantial savings. Check landscape companies that sell mulch and gravel in bulk.

Akadama is the name from the Japanese words for red and ball, is naturally occurring, granular clay like mineral used as soil for bonsai trees and other container-grown plants. It is surface mined, immediately sifted and bagged, and supplied in various grades. The deeper mined grade is somewhat harder and more useful in horticulture than the more shallow mined grades. Akadama may also act as one component of growing medium combined with other elements such as sand, composted bark, peat, or crushed lava. Akadama darkens when moist, which can help the grower determine when to water a tree.

While Akadama is more costly than alternative soil components, many growers prize it for its ability to retain water and nutrients while still providing porosity and free drainage. For all of its qualities, many others consider the cost of akadama prohibitive or unnecessary. Still others claim that when subjected to cold and wet climates the granules progressively break down into smaller particles, which inhibit drainage; an essential characteristic of bonsai soil. You can avoid this problem by either incorporating sand or grit in the soil mix, or by using the deeper-mined, harder grades.

The product manufactured in the United States called Turface; commonly used as a soil amendment and for surface dressing of baseball infields, is often mistaken for this. However, it bears no similarity to Akadama whatsoever.

 Ken Schultz

Jerry Baker says....

"So why should you care what your soil's pH is? I'll tell you why: the pH level determines how well nutrients in the soil can be absorbed into your plant's roots... If your plant's aren't well fed, they'll be easy pray for any pest or disease that comes their way. And that'll mean big-time trouble for you!"

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

1. I have the new C.B.S. membership cards for 2008; so please see me if you don't have your card yet.
2. If you have any bonsai (or related subjects) books, magazines, videos or CD's that you would like to donate to the C.B.S. library, please let me know. All such donations should be tax deductible, since we are a 501c-3 non-profit organization.
3. Please return any overdue library books, magazines, videos and CD's to the Librarian at our monthly club meeting so other club members may have access to them.

Thank you.

Please contact John Young if you have any questions or comments about any of this. You may either send E-Mail him 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.

 John Young, Librarian

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.

March 16, 2008	Bring Your Own Tree Workshop with José Cueto on styling
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
June 28-29, 2008	Wildwood Gardens' annual BBQ www.wildwoodgardens.com/wildwood/
July 20, 2008	Martha Meehan's Miniatures www.meehansminiatures.com
August 17, 2008	Bring Your Own Tropicals workshop
Sept. 14, 2008	Picnic and workshop
Oct. 11-12, 2008	National Bonsai Exhibition, Rochester, NY www.internationalbonsai.com/nbe08
Oct. 11-12, 2008	Carolina Bonsai Expo, Ashville, NC www.ncarboretum.org
Oct. 25-6, 2008	Ohio Bonsai Exposition at Franklin Park Conservatory— New Date
Nov. 16, 2008	TBA
Dec., 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

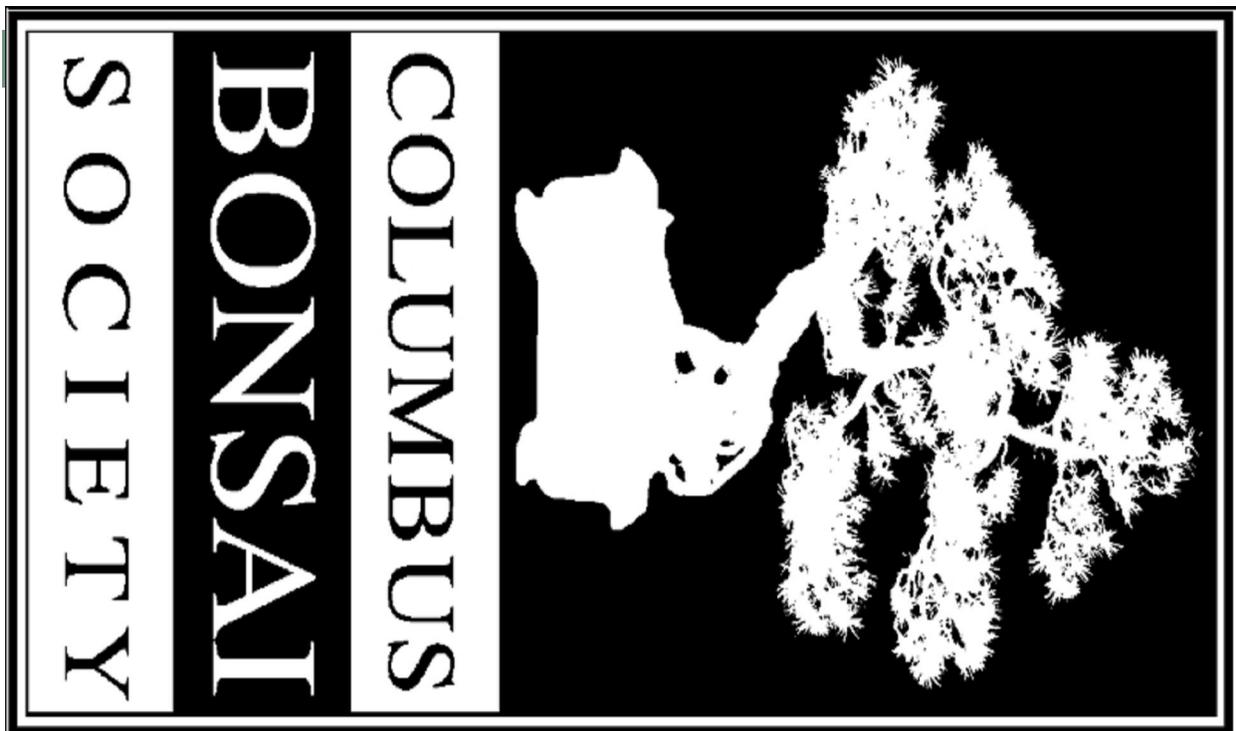
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Would you like to get your newsletter by email? Y N

(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