



# September 2008 Newsletter

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*positioning the  
branch  
bending it here  
... now there  
Oops! ...  
accidental  
pruning*

## “A Pinch of this....”

### Staring down the barrel...

#### Term of the month: ACCENT PLANT

An accent plant is a small plant displayed next to a bonsai. Accent plants typically are for when a bonsai is on formal display at a show or exhibition. Accent Plants can include any perennial, bamboo, or grass.

Well normally in September, many of us would be in the process of winding down the growing season. However, here in Central Ohio we are in the crunch period of planning and organization for the Ohio Bonsai Exhibition. At the time of writing this there are only about 45 days and falling until all the vendors and guests, arrive. Have you signed up to volunteer your time? Why not? As hosts of this event, there is a lot for us to do. We need vendor liaisons, door monitors, Workshop participants, Security monitors, etc. most of all we need trees for our clubs display. Please do not be afraid to offer your best trees for our tables. If you do not want to bring the tree in take a good photo of it and bring that in. Preferably, this is in front of a black or neutral background so that all the details are visible without interference from other trees, grass, etc.

In addition, do not forget to come on the 14<sup>th</sup> (not the 21<sup>st</sup>) for our potluck and White Elephant sale.



Rich Uhrick

## This month's program

**September 14, 2008: Member's White Elephant Sale & Potluck**—we will be at Franklin Park Conservatory in Meeting Room B&C the festivities to begin at 1:30 pm. Also for those who were not able to make the August meeting, we plan to hold the final auditions for our Club's show tables. Remember you should plan to use an accent plant or stone and a stand for your tree, so bring them too to show the composition of your display

## Upcoming Programs

**October 25 & 26:** Remember we have invited seven other clubs. Each one gets two tables. Therefore, we want to identify the trees that will have table priority. The final show design is in the works. As Show Co-Chair, I know that some of the vendors have asked about showing a tree or two. We are hoping for 100% participation.

I will be circulating signup sheets for various "jobs". We will need at least three at our Club table each day to handle workshop registration and shirt sales. Then we will need six assistants to help unload vendors and re-load them on Sunday. There will be set up on Friday and Tear Down on Sunday. We also want door monitors for each workshop. No one without a pass is to enter. Finally, let us talk about food. Right now, we are trying to figure out where, but we all know this group likes to eat. Because of the remodeling we are unsure if there will be space for meals. We will be using Meeting Rooms A&B for the Workshops.

 Ken Schultz



## President's Message- Mark Passerello

My Presidential message this month is short and sweet-Please come join us for some good food and bonsai fun at our annual picnic and white elephant sale. Don't forget the change of date!

## The Role of the Stand

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### THE BASICS

Few issues pertaining to bonsai carry as much uncertainty and controversy as does the correct use of the bonsai stand when displaying our trees. Many of us feel at home when shaping our trees, but suddenly tread on shaky grounds when the issue of display stand comes up. This is mainly due to the fact that we have no problem being inspired by our landscapes and our trees, but cannot easily relate to a bonsai stand, an accessory originating from the traditions of the Orient. Of course, bonsai came from the same cultures, but we easily adapted it to our own image of Mother Nature. The stands, however, that is a different story. To complicate the matter, we tend to display our bonsai in an informal setting, thus giving ourselves a lot of leeway on the use of the stand. When it comes to formal displays, we tend to use the same liberal approach. That is when the controversy starts.

An often-heard comment is the following: *"Bonsai is not a Japanese art form anymore, so I am not going to follow the rules observed in a formal tokonoma display. Who are they to tell me what to do?"* I agree that we should not follow anybody just because it is their tradition. That may not be the right reason for an artist to make choices. But do we really understand why they are doing it the way they do? I suspect that if we did, we could make the right choices for ourselves as well. There is a lot to learn from a thousand years-old tradition. We do not need to mimic our teachers after striking out on our own, but they can certainly provide us with the tools we need if we aspire for mastering this art form.

Let us have a quick look at the pot and the stand. From a design standpoint, they have two common characteristics: balance and symmetry. Some of them are more formal than others, but they are usually perfectly symmetrical. I say usually because, as we know, there are also boards, slabs and bamboo mats that are asymmetrical.

We can start with looking at the symmetrical stands first. Below we can see two examples of a pot placed on a stand. In Figure 1 the pot is exactly in the center of the stand. The entire set-up has one axis of symmetry that goes through the center of the pot as well as the center of the stand. The two form one visual entity. Their placement, relative to each other is *neutral*. The role of the stand is to be an extension of the pot and elevate the tree into a more formal and dignified position. It adds dignity and prominence. It is also highly decorative.

Figure 2 shows an asymmetrical placement of the pot. We have two axis of symmetry that forces us to look at the pot and stand as two separate entities. Depending on the position of the pot, we can shift back and forth the visual center of gravity of the stand/pot universe.

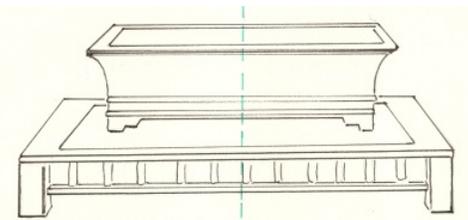


FIGURE 1

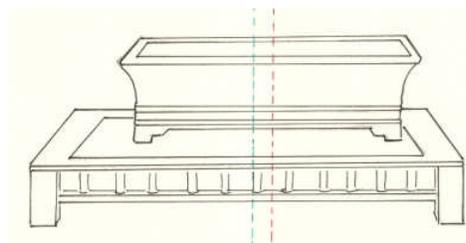


FIGURE 2

Comparing the two pictures, the first one has a static balance. The second one carries a certain tension and movement caused by the displacement.

At this point, the two placements are neither right nor wrong. Their appropriateness will depend on how they influence the overall presentation.

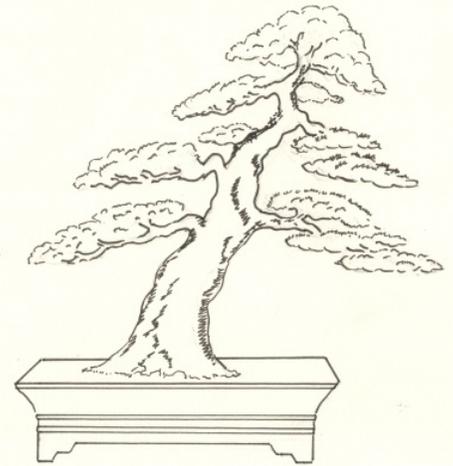
Now we will introduce the bonsai into the picture. Here is a slanting tree. It has perfect balance due to its correct placement in the pot.

I want to spend a little time on the concept of balance, because for some of us it seems to play a key role in the placement of the bonsai on the display stand. There are several types of balance, when we apply it to bonsai. The first one is the tree's *anatomical balance*. I borrowed this term from Robert Steven, who in his book, *Vision of My Soul*, so eloquently defined this key concept. It has to do with the correct proportions, relative to each other, of the trunk, branches, and nebari, in order to evoke the image of an old tree. The second one is the tree's *design balance*, which has to do with the overall shape of the tree. The last one is the *correct placement* of the tree into the pot.

When all of the above are done successfully, we can conclude that the tree has an overall aura of balance (it is important to distinguish between balance and movement: a tree that has movement should also have a dynamic balance). This is why I have brought the concept of balance into this treatise: some believe that the tree has to be placed in a certain position on the stand, in order to achieve balance. They automatically place a slanting tree to one end of the stand to "balance the composition."

I would categorically dispel this myth as false. If the tree already looks balanced in the pot without a stand, than the stand has no business of trying to balance it further. The stand has many other roles, but balancing is not one of them. If you need a stand to balance your tree, there is something wrong with it in the first place, and the stand is not going to fix that.

Here is the tree placed on the stand. It is in the center of the stand, has a strong slanting movement that extends beyond the edge of the stand, and yet it has perfect balance.



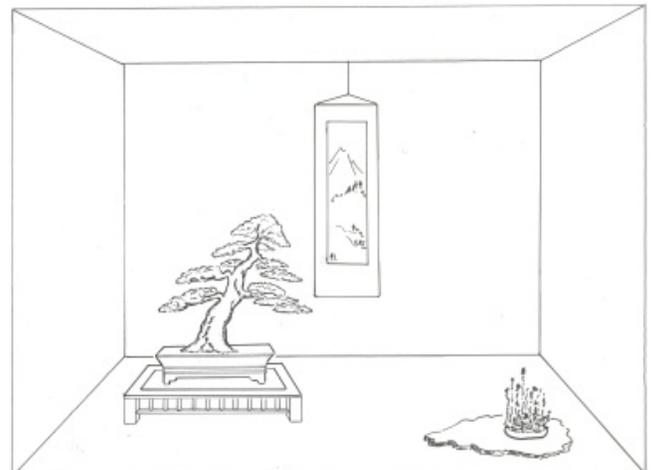
**FIGURE 3**



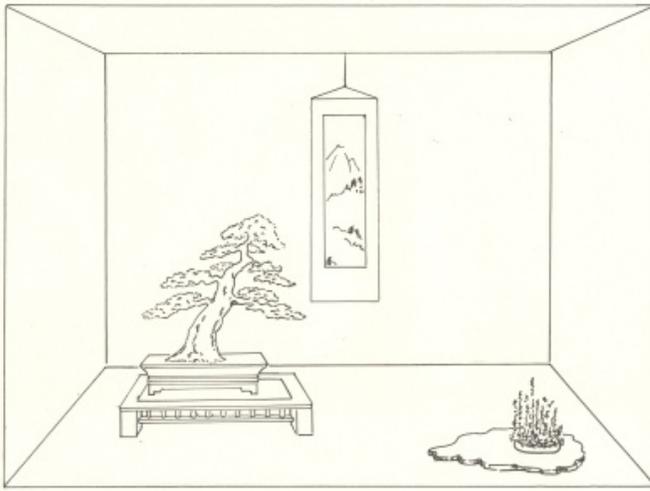
**FIGURE 4**

Now let's change the arrangement by shifting the tree to the left side of the stand. This little shift added absolutely nothing to the picture. Instead, we introduced new forces and tensions to the tree/pot/stand unit. The pot and stand are clearly separate entities. We introduced a new moving part into the harmony that existed before. The question is why would we do that?

Let's look at the first example of display. It is a formal 3-point display. The slanting tree is exactly in the center of the stand. The neutral and symmetric position of the pot/stand unit lends a stable and formal grounding to the tree and does not distract from the overall harmony of the whole display. Remember: a formal 3-point display is an exercise in minimalism. Every little unnecessary detail can disrupt the perfect harmony.



**FIGURE 5**

**FIGURE 6**

The traditional 3-point formal display places the pot in the center of the stand. It is the most efficient use of space that maximizes harmony. It avoids the redundancy of creating a little balanced space in the close proximity of the tree, and instead, concentrates on the overall harmony and balance of the three elements throughout the entire display area.

It warrants mentioning that the point demonstrated above does not conclude that we cannot create of a pleasing display when placing

the pot off-center. However, that is not the point. The point is that if we want to maximize balance and harmony, we should follow the above-described practice. It is a simple demonstration that introducing extra elements and dynamics into the picture will diminish its effectiveness.

### WHY DO WE STILL DO IT?

Recent discussions and inquiries within bonsai circles revealed that many people still like to place the pot off-center. The reason is simple: they regard the stand not simply as an extension of the pot and a device to elevate and dignify the tree, but as a display area. This is a very important distinction worth repeating: they are not using the stand as a pedestal, but as a display area. This changes everything. One obviously does not like to place the tree in the center of the display area, but off-center. The tokonoma itself does not place the tree in the center.

To aggravate this trend, following digital photography and the Internet, we see more often the pictures of bonsai instead of displays of real bonsai. The pictures are mostly close-ups, meaning that if the tree is on a stand, this stand occupies 90% of the area around the tree. Therefore, the stand is virtually the display area. If the tree has a strong lateral movement, the artist will try to "compensate" for it by placing the tree off-center.

Well, the above practice gives a new role to the stand. However, it does not hurt to remind ourselves that the stand was not originally designed to serve as a display area. We simply put the pot back on-center, and chose a correct display area for the tree/stand unit. Rather than trying to alter the tree/stand unit to match an inadequate display area.

When displaying bonsai in real life, placing the pot off-center creates redundancy. Our eyes wander from the tree to the accent plant and the other elements of display, sensing the harmony of the display. Then, as soon as we realize that the pot is off-center, we need to shift our perspective, focusing on the mini display area created by the tree and the stand. Then, we need to shift focus again, looking at the big picture and display area. It is similar to those drawings where one can see different forms when refocusing one's eyes, such as a vase that also shows a kissing couple.

### WHAT ABOUT THE EXCEPTIONS AND INNOVATIONS?

In art, nothing is set in stone. We can always find circumstances when placing the pot off-center would actually improve the display. It is important to know though, that these are not formal 3-point displays. One example would be when we have limited display space, on a display table for instance. There could be cases, where leaving a large slanting tree on the center of the stand would crowd the visual center of gravity into one side of the picture. We would need to compensate for that by shifting the tree to the side. This shift would make the stand into a display area and create open space where needed. We need to do this in cases when the space around the tree is mostly the surface of the stand and there is not much room beyond that.

Another instance is the use of slabs that suggest landscape around the tree. An irregular slab lacks symmetry, and therefore a dynamic balance and a sense of space occurs when placing the tree off-center.

As we notice, expanding the space to the right of the group enhances the austerity and simplicity of the image. Often, literati trees are displayed on irregular slabs, conveying impressions similar to the above.

In conclusion, when displaying bonsai one needs to focus on the overall display area with all its elements in order to determine whether assigning a new role to the stand creates any improvement. Stands and pots are designed with symmetry in mind, and there is a strong reason for respecting that in our displays.

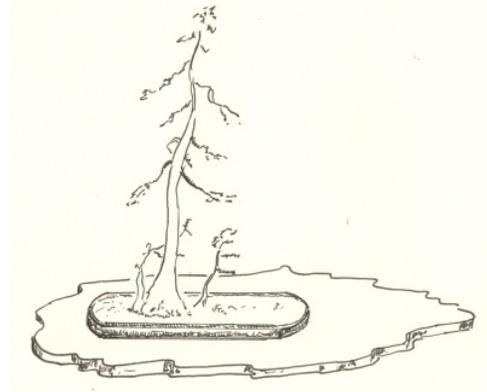


FIGURE 7

### Looking at Your Collection in September

It is time to look at your trees, not only for the show in October, but to see just how they did outdoors this year. How did they grow? Read the signs to evaluate them. They will tell you if your fertilization regime was OK, how you did at watering, pest control and whether they really liked the spot, you picked for them in your yard.

New growth will tell you a lot. No new growth or an abundance of buds for next year also will give you clues as to things you can improve on. I looked at my trees, or as Linda said, our Lilliputian Forest, and saw that I needed to reorganize because the two big trees that I had been using for Sun Control were doing too good of a job. Clues were long internodes (space between leaves on new growth), growth leaning to the light, not even (remember trees need to be turned about 90 degrees monthly. Also, I thought an additional problem was trees too close together. No new growth is different. No growth is bad. It means that your tree did not have the strength to make new leaves and stems. Weak, spindly growth is another sign. This is different than small leaves then larger leaves spaced out further. Elms will start by throwing small leaves, but after about three new leaf nodes they start running wild, with bigger and bigger leaves, further apart.

Consistent fertilization should give good dark green color (unless it's a chartreuse or variegated foliage plant). Fertilization should also give you many new buds on your evergreens for next year, including flower buds on your azaleas. But now that it's September, remember to taper off; you don't want tender growth when the first frost hits. Dan Binder's Natal plum blossom crop for those at the August meeting showed the power of kelp or seaweed fertilizer. Last year after reading about using Bonsai Gold (slow release poo balls) on evergreens late in the fall, I tried it. My trees looked and performed wonderfully this past spring.

Watering tells a story too. Limp foliage may be due to dryness – but check to be sure. Sometimes limp foliage means you are drowning a tree and it cannot breathe. Does it need repotting? Does water puddle on top of the soil rather than soaking in? It is not the right time for repotting most of our trees, so tie a ribbon to remind you in March that this tree needed to be repotted this year! Did your tree get too much sun and not enough water? This is shown by brown toasted edges, maybe on a Japanese maple, or other thin foliage tree. It needed more shade. Was your tree still wet when you watered each time? If growth is or was poor, you may have caused root rot, smell the soil, it will not be pleasant. Trees should never be wet 100% of the time. Just do not let them dry out, especially the Serrisia!

Did your tree flower? A lot or just a little? If you prune now, be careful, you can cut off next year's blooms; it is OK if you mean to do that. But frustrating, when you don't realize it until it fails to bloom in the spring. Blooming a lot can exhaust a tree's strength, especially if you let it follow on with lots of fruit, or seeds. Bonsai need crop management.

Pest and disease control may have been and is still needed. Did aphids, Japanese beetles, or other insects attack your collection? Did your maples suffer from viral wilt? Has mildew attached? As I mentioned I spray regularly. This year Japanese beetles hit a porcelain berry and a linden. I have seen white fly on a squash in the garden and I sure don't want to risk finding them on a tropical later when I bring them inside. I recommend spraying your trees about 3 days before you bring them in to prevent having to fight bugs from day one!

Weeding is a task that I do continuously. I try to remove the whole weed. Chickweed and erianaria are pervasive. If you do not get the whole weed, at least remove the flowers or seed heads. Because of the root systems, weeds are stealing the nutrients from the fertilizers you add. I have heard some people claim that a weed or two helps them gauge when it's time to water. Remember even weeds use water too. Pick them out.

As you organize, you should group trees that will need to come in as soon as it gets cold, those that are a bit tougher and then those that will stay outdoors. I group Azaleas, Rhododendrons, Kingsville Boxwoods and Japanese Maples together in a shady location. The Pines are out in the middle, the junipers are where they get sun – but some shade, the deciduous are where they get a bit more shade, and the tropicals are being weaned to get ready for the basement- The spot is more shady than some had been enjoying.

I finally fenced the winter spot; I got tired of rabbits getting at them. I will need some new burlap before the snow flies. But, I plan to check wire that's on. I usually remove wire before going into winter if I put it on 3 months or more ago. Then I rewire some plants now. Wiring is something that the Japanese do to evergreens in the winter months. We might schedule a pine-wiring event for November as a BYOT.

 Ken Schultz

# FOR COLUMBUS BONSAI SOCIETY MEMBERS ONLY....



<i>OHIO BONSAI EXHIBITION 2008 TREE AUDITION FORM</i>	
Name	
Phone	
Common Name	
Scientific Name	
Yrs in training	

# Ohio Bonsai Exhibition

October 25 & 26, 2008



Hosted by the Columbus Bonsai Society and  
Franklin Park Conservatory



## SEE

**Bonsai Trees from Ohio's Clubs and Artists**

## SHOP

**Bonsai, tools and pottery from Ohio vendors:**

Staselwood Bonsai

Ken's World of Bonsai

ARTISTTREES

The Nursery at Onion Creek

Wildwood Gardens

Wild Things Bonsai Studio

## LEARN

**From Ohio professionals:**

John Brannon

Dale Cochoy

Frank Mihalic

Jeff Carr

Ken Huth

Tom Holcomb

*Check our website for workshop information*

*[www.columbusbonsai.org](http://www.columbusbonsai.org)*

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

I have the new C.B.S. membership cards for 2008; so please see me if you don't have your card yet. 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.

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 [jyoungjfy@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jyoungjfy@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.

<b>Sept. 14, 2008</b>	Member's White Elephant Sale & Potluck
Sept. 27-28, 2008	Wildwood Gardens BBQ <a href="http://www.wildwoodgardens.com">www.wildwoodgardens.com</a>
Oct. 11-12, 2008	National Bonsai Exhibition, Rochester, NY <a href="http://www.internationalbonsai.com/nbe08">www.internationalbonsai.com/nbe08</a>
Oct. 11-12, 2008	Carolina Bonsai Expo, Ashville, NC <a href="http://www.ncarboretum.org">www.ncarboretum.org</a>
<b>Oct. 25-6, 2008</b>	<b>Ohio Bonsai Exhibition at Franklin Park Conservatory</b>
<b>Nov. 16, 2008</b>	<b>TBA- Possible workshop with any left over material from show. Or pine-wiring workshop</b>
<b>Dec., 2008</b>	<b>Holiday Dinner</b>
<b>June, 2011</b>	<u>ABS/BCI LEARNING SEMINAR IN LOUISVILLE, KY</u>



### 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

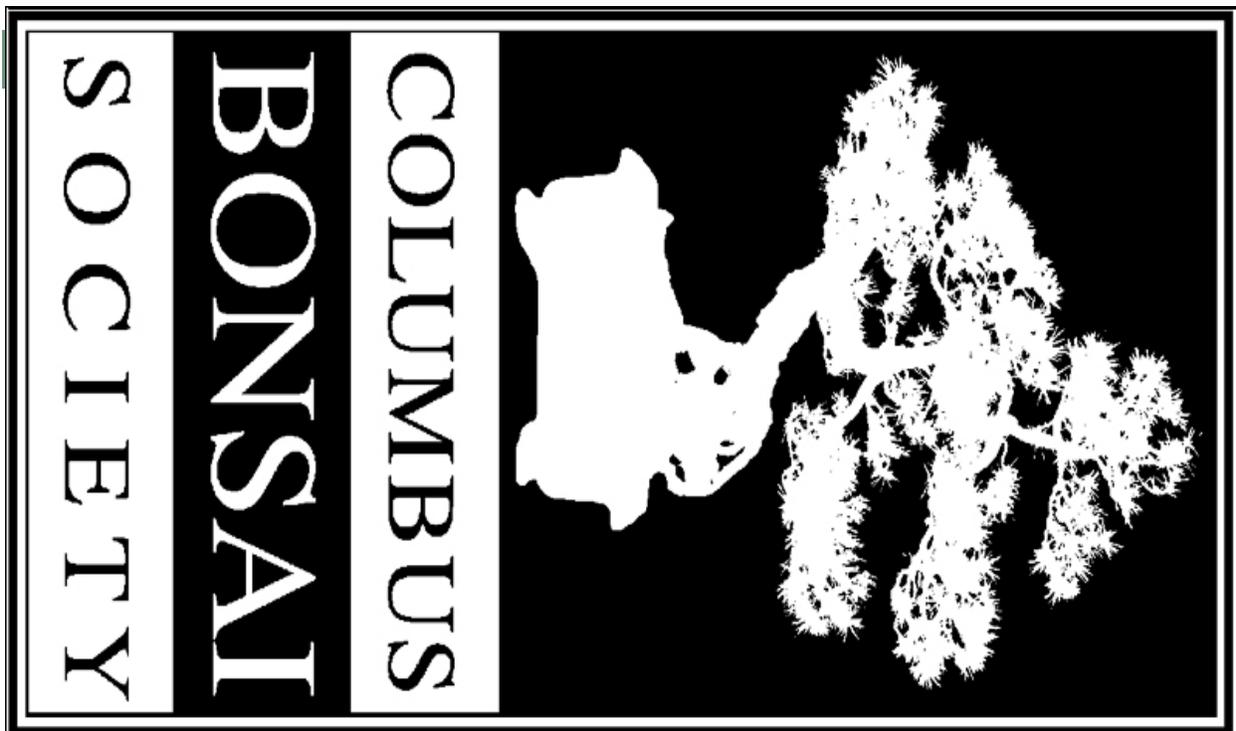
4 3 2 1 6 - 1 9 8 1

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

Regular Club meetings on  
3<sup>rd</sup> 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  
1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month  
at 7:00 pm at FPC