



Kongetsu

West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 10 No. 5

May 2006

Mollie Hollar, Editor

2006 Schedule

Fri, May 5: Set-up for All-State

Sat & Sun, May 6 & 7: Michigan All-State Bonsai Show

Thurs, May 18: Show re-cap and photos

Sat, June 10: Open studio/BYOT

Sat, July 22: BYOT, styling, wiring, general care

Weekend of Aug 19 & 20: Trip to MidAmerica Bonsai Exhibit & Show in Chicago

Sat, Sept 16: Tanuki/phoenix graft workshop

Fri, Oct 13: Set-up for Club show

Sat & Sun, Oct 14 & 15: Club show

Thurs, Oct 19: Planning meeting for 2007

Sat, Nov 18: Potluck & auction (location TBA)

All events are at Meijer Gardens unless otherwise noted. Thursday meetings are 7:00-9:00 PM, and Saturday workshops are 9:00 AM to Noon. More details will come in future newsletters as events draw nearer.

Late for an Important Date

I apologize for the lateness of this newsletter. I had it all ready so that you all should have had it today – then as most of us can relate to, a part in my computer decided it had had enough and quit working. Ah, technology . . .

*Smile returns and bows
to the smell and feel of soil
in my fingernails.*

-Andy Walsh

Ah, Spring!

It's really here! I assume most of the rest of you have been experiencing the same kind of weather I have for the past few days: gorgeous sunny days, just warm enough to work outside without a sweatshirt but cool enough not to make us miserable; and nights cool enough to slow the growth of some plants, but not so cold as to freeze out the buds on our flowering trees. This is one of the prime examples of why I still live in Michigan.

Our next Club event, and one of the most important of our season, is the Michigan All-State Bonsai Show. If anyone needs another show brochure, just let me know and I'll get one out to you.

Set-up for the show begins around 11:00 AM Friday and will continue into the evening. Vendors and the other clubs come in at different times to set up. If you have time Friday afternoon or evening, your help would be greatly appreciated. The same applies to tear-down at 5:00 PM Sunday.

During the show it helps if we have two or three people at our exhibit area. Again, if you have a few hours on Saturday or Sunday afternoon, get in touch with Anita Buckowing (the coordinator-in-training) and let her know. She is at mruckowing@yahoo.com or 616-878-9877.

I can't stress enough how important it is for members at every level of expertise participate in this show. I keep hearing "Oh, I'm not good enough yet to exhibit any of my trees" or "I don't have any trees that are of show quality." Please remember that this is an educational show. As such we need to have all kinds of trees, all kinds of plantings, in all kinds of containers – training pots are fine – at all stages of growth and development. While there has been some discussion about making this a judged show (more about that at a later date), one of the main reasons we are able to have the show at Meijer Gardens is because they are an educational organization and All-State is an educational show. We need to be educating people who come to the show, demonstrating to them that this is a wonderful stress-reducing hobby that everyone should try.

So new or advanced, please bring in a tree of yours to exhibit. We want to make this a show that people will commit to coming back to see year after year.

Also, if you haven't signed up for one of the various workshops offered, you might call Vickie or Molly at the Gardens (616-975-3147) to see if there are any openings. There will also be some great demonstrations going on throughout the weekend. If you'd like to do one, call Anita or Ed Hilton (231-519-0359) to see what's available.

Anita's Corner

Returning in the NEXT newsletter - BOOK REVIEW!
 The next newsletter will include a review of THREE books by Masakuni Kawasumi.
 Also in the NEXT newsletter - a review of the All-State Show!

Bonsai Haiku

Recently, I had the opportunity to learn a little bit about Haiku (a form of Japanese poetry). While the following poems follow the basic format of 5 syllables, then 7 syllables, & then 5 syllables again, they are CLEARLY free-form Haiku & were just written for my own fun. I hope you enjoy them!

BEAUTIFUL BONSAI

Beautiful Bonsai
 Clip, Shape, Grow, Feed, Grow,
 Wait, WAIT; Obsession?
 Maybe.....

LITTLE TREES

I like little trees
 Artistic, Creative, Fun!
 They make me happy.

FINALLY SPRING

Ah, finally Spring!
 Flowers blooming, birds singing...
 OH, Snow?!? MICHIGAN!

Record Keeping

Keeping track of what you do when with your bonsai is a very important part of the process. You should record repottings, major top trimmings, type of fertilizer needed and how often to use it, and any other details that are important to the health of the tree. Remember too to keep a photo record of its development.

Anita's Page - Important Information

All-State Bonsai Show is May 6 & 7; prepare your trees TODAY!

This is just a reminder that the All-State Bonsai Show is May 6 & 7 @ Frederik Meijer Gardens. Your trees should be brought to the Gardens on Friday, May 5 between 1:00 & 6:00 p.m. unless alternate arrangements have been made w/Anita Buckowing (269-792-1342 @ work or 269-792-4438 @ home or 616-304-3951 cell ph) or Ed Hilton (616-887-5534 @ home or 231-519-0359 cell ph). If your tree is extra heavy, please plan on helping us get it set up properly.

Here are some "tips" on preparing your bonsai for exhibition:

1. Make certain the tree is healthy & free from disease & insect infestation. Spray the tree w/insecticide approximately a week before the exhibition. This allows any & all insects to be destroyed plus allows the odor of the insecticide to dissipate.
2. Make sure that the tree is well-groomed & trimmed properly. Remove any non-essential dead branches, brown needles, damaged or bug-eaten leaves. Trim any excess growth. Clean the bark to remove dirt, algae, & moss (taking care not to damage the bark). If needed, use a 50% water/50% white vinegar combination sparingly on moss on the trunk to kill it (be careful not to get this solution on any moss that you DON'T want to kill!). Soil should be refreshed if needed by taking off the first layer (1/4" or less) & placing a new layer of fresh soil in the pot (making sure to level it off).
3. Wired trees are allowed. If your tree is wired, please check that your wiring is neat & representative of your best wiring skills. Since this is a teaching show, the exhibiting of a wired-tree is encouraged!
4. Make sure that your tree(s) are thoroughly watered BEFORE bringing them to the exhibition. While the trees will be inspected throughout the weekend & lightly watered as needed, it is still a really good idea to give them a good drink prior to the show; just make sure that they're not dripping when you bring them in.
5. Pay attention to the condition of the pot; many pots will have accumulated water salts from winter that should be removed. Use a fine piece of steel wool or a SANDFLEX block to remove any stubborn deposits (dipping the steel wool in vinegar often helps too). REALLY stubborn deposits can be treated with LIME AWAY or a similar product. Wash the outside of the pot thoroughly & on unglazed pots apply a light coating of oil (Johnson's Baby Oil or any other non-toxic oil works for this). Now, use a lint-free cloth & remove any excess oil. This will give the pot a pleasant patina without making it greasy. You can also use a chamois @ this point to give the pot an extra burnish (it will look brand new!).
6. If you plan to display your tree w/moss around its' base, please make sure that the moss is as healthy & insect-free as the tree. Old moss should be removed & replaced w/fresh moss if possible. If you don't have any @ your house, visit a local green-zone & you should be able to find some @ the edge of any lawn-areas.

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New Source

I got a very interesting phone call last week from the new owners of a nursery near Ann Arbor. I talked first to a woman who was contacting people who are associated with bonsai clubs, inviting us to a guided tour of their nursery. When I began questioning her about some things I thought might help their endeavor, she handed me over to the owner. Here are some details of our conversation:

It's the Saguaro Nursery (I didn't ask if they carry cacti.) and has a Whitmore Lake address (470 W. Five Mile). Ben, the owner, said to be sure to call them for directions because there's some road construction or something going on that makes MapQuest, or another of those, dangerously inaccurate. They are open from Tuesday through Sunday, 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM. Their phone number is 734-449-4237.

Apparently they have not only outdoor bonsai material, but also indoor stuff. He mentioned bougainvillea, ficus (2" to 6" pots), dwarf hibiscus, and dwarf fuchsia.

For outdoor bonsai, Ben mentioned mini conifers, elms in 3" to 4" pots and up, hornbeams, bald cypress, and pines. I stopped him there because it sounded as though he could have gone on a lot longer.

Just as a side note, my preference at this point is definitely Gee Farms for bonsai material. But I do like to let you know about different nurseries.

7. Please have the following information about your tree available on a separate sheet of paper (so that we can complete the display cards):
 - a. Species of the plant (common name plus Latin name if known)
 - b. Year training began
 - c. Approximate age of the tree if you know it (best guess otherwise)
 - d. Your name & the name you have given the tree (if you have named it)
 - e. Club affiliation, if any
8. Stands for your bonsai are encouraged but are NOT guaranteed to be used if we find that we're running into space issues. Please label your stand in an unobtrusive location with your name, telephone number, & what tree of yours you would prefer be placed on this stand. Masking tape works well for this & doesn't do any permanent damage on most materials (test it first to make sure!)
9. Accent Plants are also encouraged. Please make sure that you provide the same information as you supply for the bonsai tree & again, please also give us directions as to which of your trees you want it displayed with.
10. We are also displaying SUISEKI this year (in case you had not heard). We had a small display last year & are encouraging WMBC members to display their Suiseki. If we have a good response, we'll be opening up this display to all of the participating clubs in the future. Suiseki are a great addition to our show & we're excited to be displaying them to the public.
11. Don't forget to pick up any & all materials that you have brought to the exhibition on Sunday, May 7. Frederik Meijer Gardens closes @ 5 on Sunday & you should plan on your trees being exhibited for this full time. Hours for Frederik Meijer Gardens (and the All-State Bonsai Show) are: Saturday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Sunday, 12 p.m. - 5 p.m.
12. Above all else, remember that the All-State Show is a TEACHING exhibition. We really encourage every member to exhibit @ least one tree! It is amazing what you personally will learn about your tree by having others view it, plus it is really important for the PUBLIC to see trees created by people of all ability & development levels.

This information was derived from a wide variety of sources, including but not limited to: personal experience, teachings from MY bonsai teacher, a partial adaptation from "How to Prepare a Bonsai for Exhibition" by Randy Clark, as printed in BONSAI, JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN BONSAI SOCIETY (unknown issue date), and a small portion from <http://www.gsbfbonsai.org>, the official website of the GOLDEN STATE BONSAI FEDERATION (check it out, you'll be glad you did!).

Shading or "Blackclothing" for

Bonsai Chrysanthemums

The chrysanthemum is regarded as a photoperiod plant, which means that it reacts to the lengthening or shortening of the day and night periods. Where the days are longer than 12 hours, the average plant continues vegetative growth but does not form flower buds. On the other hand, as the nights lengthen, vegetative growth ceases and flower buds are initiated. For this reason, the chrysanthemum is also known as a "short-day plant." Because of this reaction to light and dark, it is possible to change artificially the date on which any given cultivar will bloom by varying the light intensities to which the cultivar is subjected. Thus, in addition to pinching, the growth of chrysanthemums can also be controlled by regulating shade and light. In effect, what this amounts to is an environment of artificial days and nights.

Varieties of chrysanthemums differ in the number of dark hours which they require to change from vegetative growth to the initiation of flower buds. This difference may range from **9 hours of darkness for early bloomers** to **14 hours of darkness for the late types**. Consequently, familiarity with the normal bloom period of the variety is necessary before simulated conditions can be imposed. To force the flower into blooming at a certain time, the plant should be protected from light during the late afternoon and early morning in order to provide an unbroken stretch of darkness.

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Bonsai Mums

Some of you already have your little chrysanthemums for growing into bonsai. The ones we still have here are in great shape. I'll be bringing them to the show for those of you who don't have one (or more) yet.

Part of this newsletter is instruction on how to care for and train your mum for a bonsai. Ed Spaans was wondering how to get his decidedly upright plant to be a cascade. He had contemplated growing it upside down, but I discouraged him from such action. He's already been sent these articles, along with a note on wiring delicate plants.

For those of you who have Colin Lewis's latest book, *The Art of Bonsai Design*, on page 15 he describes what he calls "air wiring." This is an excellent technique to use at this point in the training of your mum.

A Quick Guide To Bonsai Chrysanthemum Culture

Following is a brief guide to the growth and development of a bonsai chrysanthemum. The culture is no more difficult than growing the average houseplant. As you can see they require only attention to detail and time.

There are several basic rules to be followed when growing one of these plants.

1. The philosophy of growing a bonsai chrysanthemum is to develop what appears to be a mature tree in the span of only 9 to 11 months.
2. A tree is a tree because it has a trunk. If you want your chrysanthemum to appear to be a miniature tree you need a trunk. This is developed by forcing the plant to grow, to grow fast, and to grow a lot.
3. It is a good idea to have a definite style in mind at the beginning, even if you change in mid-stream.

TIMETABLE OF EVENTS:

1. Cuttings are usually taken in November but can be taken as late as March.
2. Plants should be potted into 2" pots as soon as they are rooted, 2-3 weeks.
3. A side shoot is encouraged and allowed to develop. The primary cutting is then removed.
4. Around the middle of February they are potted into their training containers:
 - a. 7"-8" clay pans for larger specimens
 - b. 3"-4" clay pans for smaller plants
5. Plants are moved outside to **full sun** as soon as all danger of frost is past.
6. Pruning and wiring should be done weekly to develop the style of the plant. This is done as soon as the plant is large enough to be worked with.

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2006 Membership Form

Name:

Address:

City:

State/ZIP:

Phones:

Home: _____

Work: _____

E-mail:

(Check one:)

Active membership
(\$25.00)

Inactive membership
(\$6.00)

Inactive membership: Only the monthly newsletter and admission to meetings; extra fees apply for workshops.

Active membership: Monthly newsletter, notification of special events, no extra fee for workshops beyond possible cost of materials, pretty much everything.

Please make check out to:
WMBC
and mail to:

Ed Spaans
947 Orchard SE
East Grand Rapids MI 49506

Or bring to any meeting or workshop.

Process

- A. Take cutting home, transplant into larger plastic pot. Best size pot by summer is probably 2 to 5 gallon.
- B. For soil, use 50% Turface and 50% aged pine bark, or a mix of your choice.
- C. Plant deeply enough to develop a good root system.
- D. Do not allow soil to dry out.

III. Fertilizing

- A. Use a weak solution of soluble plant food, e.g., ¼ strength Miracle Gro, every watering to maximize growth.

IV. Location

- A. Place in full sun *outside* as soon as danger of frost is past; bring inside after frost weather begins. Can be wintered in different ways – topic for later.
- B. Full sun produces smaller leaves, desirable in bonsai mums.
- C. Also creates shorter internode lengths.

V. Pruning

- A. Always remove large leaves after new leaves have developed at their bases.
- B. To grow a fatter trunk, leave as many branches as possible low on the trunk.
- C. *Branches break very easily!* Leave extra branches; they can always be removed later.

VI. Wiring

- A. See VI.C.
- B. Use only very small wire.

VII. Root formation

- A. Gradually expose the roots. Roots exposed to the air enlarge and get a bark-like texture.

VIII. Finishing

- A. About one month before exhibiting, remove unnecessary branches.
 1. Remove branches from front first to allow time to heal.
 2. Leave branches on back as long as possible.
- B. Repot in pot for show just before show. *Do not remove soil from roots.* After show, move back into nursery pot.

“Air Wiring” continued

direction with the minimum of contact. The branch will be shaped later by pruning, but initially you must get the first section right. You need to anchor the wire firmly, but as soon as you reach the shoot, shape the wire in a spiral, but without making contact anywhere. This is awkward at first, but with a little practice you’ll soon be able to wire a perfect spiral in midair – a new party trick! By manipulating this spiral, you can aim the shoot in your chosen direction by altering the angle between it and the trunk or branch with relative safety. You can also introduce curves if you wish, but the main purpose is to establish the first few internodes.