



Kongetsu

West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

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2006 Schedule

Fri, Oct 13: Set-up for Club show
Sat & Sun, Oct 14 & 15: Club show
Thurs, Oct 19: Planning meeting for 2007, 7:00-9:00 PM, lower level, FMG
Sat, Nov 18: Potluck & auction (location TBA)

Random Thoughts from Ron Martin, Tokonoma Bonsai, South Carolina

- Did you ever notice that sometimes those bonsai “rules” get in the way of making good bonsai? Too many of us do things just because that is the way it is supposed to be done. Or at least that is how we think that they must be done. Somewhere, someone put it all down on paper and it became the law. No one knows who that someone is or how they came up with the “rules.” They are just there. The first branch must be 1/3 the way up the trunk. A branch is here because it is supposed to be and not simply because that is where it looks the best. The list goes on and on. [And we become] slaves to what we think must be.
- Or has just about everything in bonsai already been done before. Like you were told in school are we doomed just to continually repeat what historically already has been done?
- Have we been beat to death by convention or are there just so many ways to style a tree and still make it look like a tree?

Almost Done

Our 2006 season is winding down, and events for this year are almost at an end. However, what we have left is very important and I'd love to see involvement by every member of the Club in these events.

First, set-up for our fall show is coming up this coming Friday, Oct. 13, from 5:00 until 8:00 PM. The show this year is going to be in the lower level rooms that are the first ones down the left-hand hallway at the bottom of the stairs. It's really two rooms opened in the middle, so it should be a great space for our show. CS Bonsai and Basically Bonsai (that's me) will also be there vending, and the vendors will be in the same room as the exhibit this year, which should work out really well for all of us.

We do need help for set-up since we need to add table leg extensions and put covers on a number of tables. You certainly don't need any kind of experience – not even bonsai experience – to assist in this. The more people we have to help, the more quickly we will get it done. I will be there by 5:00, but I also have to set up my vendor booth so won't be able to help much with the exhibit set-up.

I would love to have *all* Club members bring at least one bonsai to exhibit. We are an educational organization, and the purpose of this show is for spectators to see bonsai created by people with all levels of experience. Whether you bring something small, large, or in-between, please bring something to show off your talent! Trees and plantings should be brought Friday evening so we won't still be arranging the exhibit when people are coming in Saturday morning.

Show hours are 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Saturday, and Noon to 5:00 PM Sunday. We still need people to, as one member put it, “do guard duty” with our exhibit for both days. If you can put in just two or three hours, it would help a lot. It's so much better to have Club members there to answer spectators' questions than not to have anyone around.

As I mentioned last month, member Tim Priest will be doing a “show tour” on Saturday at 2:00 PM talking about suiseki. If you have any suiseki (viewing stones) that you would like to exhibit, please bring them. I think I'll bring one or two of my own. Suiseki is becoming more popular and a much more common part of big shows nation-wide.

On Sunday, the show tour will be led by our very own Carlos Marcano, also at 2:00 PM. I think this will be a very popular part of our show. Even experienced members of the Club will be able to gain some insight into others' trees with Carlos's explanations.

We do have one more important event for October. Our officer elections and planning meeting for 2007 will be on Thursday, Oct. 19. Again, I would like to see large participation for this. It's vital for all members to have input about the kinds of events we have for every year. Please be there and bring your ideas. See more about this on p. 2.

Warning

For those of us who have hemlock bonsai, this information was in the Grand Rapids Press recently.

“The state Department of Agriculture says another potentially devastating insect is infesting some of the state’s trees.

“The hemlock woolly adelgid has been attacking hemlock trees, which are popular landscape evergreens and an important component of hardwood forests in northern Michigan.

“A landscaper recently alerted officials about white, cottony masses on hemlocks that were planted in 2003 at four sites in Harbor Springs. The trees came from the same nursery in West Virginia. It marks the first time the insect has been discovered on Michigan’s native hemlock trees.

“The hemlock woolly adelgid is among the most serious exotic forest insect pests to have entered Michigan. . . Experts from the state agriculture and natural resources departments and MSU are working on a plan to eliminate the hemlock woolly adelgid, which could cause some trees to be destroyed while others will be treated with insecticide. . . The insect is transported by wind, people and animals.”

From the ABSForum I found: My instructor, Kathy Shaner, recently came upon the idea of placing a tree in a large bag overnight with
(cont on next page)

And In November?

The last event scheduled for our 2006 season is a silent auction and potluck lunch or dinner. However, I have not heard from anyone that a location has been found or could be considered. I can only guess from this lack of input that there is little or no interest in this event.

This goes back to my ramblings last month about member interest in our Club. While I love being with the people who do come to our monthly events, I can’t help but wonder why others pay full membership and we don’t see them at all. I would greatly appreciate hearing from anyone out there who doesn’t come to meetings and other events. Let me know what we’re not doing for you. Tell me if our schedule isn’t exciting, useful, or educational enough for you, or perhaps you don’t feel comfortable with the topics that are chosen. Do we need more beginners’ sessions, teaching bonsai basics? I sometimes do lectures/demos/workshops titled Bonsai 101. One of the clubs from which I get monthly newsletters has beginners come a half-hour early to work on basic stuff with more experienced members. Would you like to see this done in our Club?

As I’ve said so many times before, this is *your* Club, and it needs your input to be successful. At this point I don’t feel we are successful. Last month I asked for people to let me know if they’d like to help publicize the Club. So far I’ve heard from no one. I do feel that we can enlarge our membership by doing some advertising. I know there are several newspapers in the area besides the Grand Rapids Press, and articles in these would certainly get the word out. There are also a lot of small towns that probably have their own papers. And we all know there are a lot of nurseries in a four or five county area. I expect many of them would be more than willing to put up signs for our Club. But should we bother? If we can’t get current members to attend events, will it make a difference to get new members?

I sometimes wonder if our members even read this newsletter. Am I just wasting my time by doing research and putting this together?

You might guess that I’m a bit frustrated – more than a bit actually. This will be a topic of conversation at our October planning meeting. If you can’t make the meeting, I would greatly appreciate hearing from you in some way, shape or form about our membership and season events.

SUPERthrive Update

Last month I promised to let you know if I got any other information about SUPERthrive, a vitamin mix that many of us use. Andy Walsh, an ABSForum participant, did a survey of about 60 SUPERthrive *users* a few years ago and found that approximately 70% of them said they saw no benefit in its use. My question is, of course, why are they still using it? *(cont on next page)*

a flea collar in the bag with the tree. This seems to take care of most insect problems. If the infestation is really bad, two nights might be better.

In my opinion, Kathy Shaner knows as much about bonsai and pests as anyone in the country. If you do experience the adelgids, you might try this. Pauline Muth, ABS president, adds “you MUST put the tree being treated in shade while the bag is on, otherwise people have ‘cooked’ their plants.” Apparently this is not a new idea and does work for other types of insects. If you try it for anything, let me know how it works and I’ll report back to the membership.

Even though the adelgid problem at present seems to be mostly north of us, keep a watch on your hemlocks for this serious pest. I’ll bring a photo of it to the show this weekend.

Bits & Pieces

About mosses: Below ground the moss plant puts out root-like extensions of its stem. Not true roots, they are more like down, wispy and brief. Even so, these less-than-roots (technically, rhizoids) hold the plant in place. The above-ground part of the moss plant includes a slim stem dressed with tiny leaves in the form of needles, or of scales tight against the stem, or of egg shape or boat shape, or elaborated into miniature fronts. – from *Moss Gardening* by George Schenk

Andy goes on to say:

1. SUPERthrive’s main ingredients are Thiamine (Vitamin B1 – 0.09%) and 1-naphtyl acetic acid (0.04%).
2. Thiamine was promoted as a root stimulant in an article in the Botanical Gazette by Bonner and Greene {not sure who they are – Ed.] in the late ‘30s. Their research could not be repeated (as apparently other work of Bonner could not be) and their claim was discredited by several researchers. Bonner and Greene also could not repeat their results and retracted their original results in a later article, stating sample randomization issues as a possible cause. This information did not stop the companies who began selling it from continuing to sell these products. It is sold to this day as a root stimulant by several companies.
3. 1-naphtyl acetic acid is one of the synthetic auxins (plant hormone). While these synthetic auxins are effective at stimulating root formation on shoots and stems, they inhibit root formation on roots. It is not a good choice to apply auxins to roots. In fact, there were even bioassays developed to quantitate auxin concentration in samples based on root growth inhibition.
4. SUPERthrive is sold with directions to apply WITH fertilizer and the “dramatic effects” of SUPERthrive are only shows in conjunction with fertilizer use.

Andy ended his information with “P.S. Instead of spending your money on SUPERthrive, send it to me and I’ll pray for your trees. I guarantee the effects to be equivalent.”

On the MSN live search listing for the SUPERthrive website it states that SUPERthrive is a vitamin and mineral supplement. We all know that plants need minerals and that trace minerals are very important. But I’ve not seen anywhere that it says plants take in any vitamins. Any botanists among us?

And the SUPERthrive website says there are “50 vitamins and hormones,” yet nowhere can I find 50 vitamins and hormones listed. (See Andy’s info above.) And this: “UNIQUE balance of a great number of the world’s science ‘miracles’ in every drop” yet they don’t list any of these science “miracles.” One label does state “Approximately 25% of total liquid is dissolved solids” – puzzling at best. The label goes on to say “Refuse intelligence insulting substitutes” which they claim are “99½% water.” Sounds a bit like snake-oil language to me. Everywhere the SUPERthrive people make it very clear that it is not a fertilizer, but needs to be used with a fertilizer. Ok then, is the SUPERthrive really necessary?

And so, given the hype on SUPERthrive’s website and the logic coming from other bonsaiists, as well as SUPERthrive’s high cost in recent years, I think, as I said last month, that I’ll give **ROOTS2**® a try next spring, and maybe this winter with my tropicals as I report them. I’ll let you know how things turn out.