



Kongetsu

West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

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September 2006

Mollie Hollar, Editor

2006 Schedule

Sat, Sept 16: Tanuki/phoenix graft workshop, 9 AM-Noon

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.

2006 Attendance

While I'm thrilled to be able to bring quality events to our members throughout the bonsai season, I have again become increasingly concerned about the low attendance at our meetings and workshops this year. I felt that our schedule offered some of the best topics we had had in several years. Our membership numbers almost 40. Yet month after month, we see the same few people. I think it's time to look at why.

One of our members told me several years ago, when this was first bothering me, to look at it this way: everyone's membership dues were helping to pay for our programs. If only a few showed up, that meant we could each have more personal time with whoever was leading a workshop. While I agree with this in concept, it's difficult for me to accept in practice.

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Faking It

Our tanuki workshop is still on for Saturday in the Frey Room at the Gardens. Vance Wood had a family emergency but I've replaced him with Eric Newton from the Kalamazoo club.

We have five participants and one observer. We certainly have room for more so even if you'd just like to come to see how it's done, be at the Gardens at 9:00 Saturday morning.

Remember, participants, you'll need to bring your piece of driftwood (unless you've notified me you need one) and your tree (ditto) as well as a pot (ditto again), and you'll need the power tools to make the groove(s) for the live tree to fit into. The Club will provide soil, wire, raffia, and screws or nails for fastening your tree to the deadwood.

In October

Our big event for October is the Club Fall Show. Set-up will be Friday, Oct. 13, beginning at 5:00 PM, in the two large rooms in the lower level of Meijer Gardens. We do need people to help set up as we will have table leg extensions and coverings to put on, and backdrops to assemble. Please call (616-754-2351) or e-mail (hollar@chartermi.net) me if you can be there. I'll be setting up my vendor booth so will not be able to help as much as I'd like.

The show is Saturday, Oct. 14, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and Sunday, Oct. 15 from Noon to 5:00 PM. We will need to have people who can be with the exhibit for periods of two hours or more. Again, if you can help on either day, or perhaps just on tear-down after 5:00 Sunday, please contact me. It's important that Club members be available to answer questions during the show. We do get new memberships at this show, and that's always good for the Club.

Rather than the on-going demonstrations we usually have, this year there will be scheduled demos/lectures Saturday at 11:00 AM, 1:00 and 3:00 PM, and Sunday at 1:00 and 3:00 PM. There will also be "show tours" at 2:00 PM each day. On Saturday, Tim Priest will lead show spectators on a tour of his viewing stones, or *suiseki*. . **We are still in need of someone to lead a show tour at 2:00 PM on Sunday.** This would entail merely leading a group around to various trees and talking about different aspects of each tree. **If you would be interested in doing this, call or e-mail me for more details.** Remember, folks, this is *your* Club and we need you to help support this show.

On Thursday, October 19, we will meet in the Frey room at the Gardens at 7:00 PM. This is also a very important event for our Club. We will be electing officers and planning our schedule for 2007. Again, this is *your* Club. Without your assistance and participation, we would not be able to have all the great events that we do. So please come to this meeting and help plan for the 2007 season.

I guess it's partly because of this that I am questioning whether I will again run for the position of president for 2007. Perhaps it's time for new blood to infuse the Club and bring in new ideas for fresh events.

Then again, maybe what we need is to get new blood in the form of new members, inexperienced and experienced. It's interesting how many people I run into in this area of Michigan who say they would love to learn to do bonsai. And occasionally someone will tell me they've done bonsai for years and weren't aware there is a club in this area. I don't travel with Club brochures unless I'm doing something bonsai-related. Maybe it's time I stick some in my purse.

I think something else we definitely need to do is advertise our Club. We need to contact the Grand Rapids Press and all other area newspapers, not just sending a press release but actually talking with someone there to see about getting an article about bonsai and/or the Club in their paper. I'd like to see posters advertising the Club made up and taken to area nurseries. We should be contacting any place that has anything to do with plants and trees.

Since our 2006 season is almost over, this probably isn't a very good time to start advertising. But I think winter is a great time for us to develop a plan of attack. So if you're interested in helping our Club to grow, please call or e-mail me, and we'll see what we can do about getting together to discuss this.

To SUPERthrive® or Not to SUPERthrive®

There has been interesting discussion lately on the ABSForum about whether or not plants and trees benefit from the use of SUPERthrive®. For my part, I've used this product whenever I have repotted anything ever since I started bonsai about 15 years ago. If I have time, I soak the bare-root tree in water with SUPERthrive® before I put it into the pot, then soak it again after it's potted, for at least 20 minutes each time. SUPERthrive® is made of up various vitamins and hormones, and is advertised as aiding in greater root growth, blooming and fruiting, and just about anything else any plant can do.

However, when I answered with a like reply to the forum, I got back answers from a couple of rather well-known (though not Masters) bonsai experts in other areas of the US. They both stated that they don't use SUPERthrive® (although one used to) and their trees do just fine. That inspired me to do some research.

I found the following on a plumbing website that was advising how to get rid of roots that have grown into exterior pipes. It helps us to understand how roots grow:

The Root Of The Matter

To understand root control, it helps to have a basic understanding of the biology of roots and their growth.

The bio-mechanism behind root growth is a continual process at the end of root tips called hydrotropism wherein roots grow toward moisture. Root cells are added at the tips one at a time, which is why roots can penetrate extremely small openings.

Although root growth can occur the entire year, most root growth is concentrated in the fall and winter when external foliage is dormant. [This one really surprised me.] Root growth can also spurt during the spring season at the onset of foliage growth. [Yep, I knew that one.] As roots grow larger, their exterior is covered with phloem, which is living tissue. Immediately under this surface is cambium from which new tissue originates and causes secondary root growth. The center part of roots is called xylem, which is the woody part of the root that causes it to become stronger.

Looking for information on SUPERthrive® on the Internet is an interesting exercise. There are, of course, sites that sing its praises, including the site of the company that makes SUPERthrive® (www.superthrive.com). Glowing claims include use of SUPERthrive® in the digging up and moving of the largest tree ever moved successfully – as noted by none other than the Guinness Book of World Records! Also, it is said to aid in faster, greener, healthier growth in fruit trees, more flowers, better germination – the list goes on and on.

One thing that amazed me in doing my research is that SUPERthrive® was actually invented decades ago. This is from www.bymichaelriley.com/does-superthrive-really-work.html:

Dr. John Thomson, Superthrive's creator, won a gold medal at the 1940 World's Fair in San Francisco for "Scientific Achievement in the Past Decade" for his product. Among Superthrive's hundreds of documented successes is a tree transplant job that took place

For November – HELP!

Our November planned event is our traditional silent auction, this year with a potluck dinner. However, the site we hoped would be available isn't. So we are looking for somewhere to have this event. We can't do it at Meijer Gardens because the auction is not allowed.

We need somewhere with a room large enough to set up about ten 8' long tables, and of course the tables themselves, along with chairs for seating for the potluck. It would be very helpful if a small kitchen were available as well.

I have checked with my local community center here in Greenville and a room is available for a very reasonable price. However, Greenville is a considerable distance for some of you, and I'd like to have a large crowd there.

So if anyone else out there knows of a location that's more centrally located, you know the drill: call or e-mail me ASAP and let me know. I'd like to get this taken care of by the end of September so we can finalize plans.

For those of you who haven't had the opportunity to be a part of our silent auction, the selection of materials available has been extraordinary: tools, books, pots, fertilizer, wire, and usually a really outstanding variety of plant material, bonsai, pre-bonsai and raw plant material. This is an excellent opportunity for you to stock up on supplies you need or want, and on plant material you've been thinking about at very reasonable prices.

sometime around 1950. Eighteen hundred trees were removed from the grounds of the 20th Century Fox Studios and stored outside in varying weather conditions for two years before being replanted along the streets of Century City. According to the company, all of the trees not only survived, but none of them even became sick.

This implies that there has been extensive research done on the use of SUPERthrive®, although others say differently.

Then there are the sites that call it "snake oil." Check out the very humorous one at www.sarracenia.com/faq/faq3600.html. Actually, this is the only site I found that out-and-out called it "snake oil," although others are skeptical.

So does this mean we don't need to give our newly-repotted trees anything to encourage root growth? Of course not. Both of the experts I mentioned earlier use something called Roots2®:

DryROOTS2® is a special blend of natural nutrients formulated for planting or transplanting, turf, flower beds and gardens. Contains organic composts, humus extracts, sea kelp extracts, and other components. Safe to use on newly planted trees, shrubs, gardens, turf and sod. Helps prevent transplant shock and loss. (from www.novozymes.com/en/MainStructure/ProductsAndSolutions/Turf+plant+and+pond+health/Landscaper)

This biostimulant comes in granules and is scattered on the bottom layer of soil just before you wire your tree into the pot. That way the roots are directly on the granules and will gradually soak up what they need as they are watered. Something like using fertilizer cakes only from underground. It also comes as a liquid concentrate.

I've not even seen it anywhere, although it's easily accessible on the Internet, but I'm willing to try different things. So for my part, I plan to get some Roots2® and use it next year when I repot. Maybe I'll even try some when I work on my few tropicals this winter. Look into it, you never know what works best for you unless you do some experimenting. But if SUPERthrive® has worked well for you up until now, just wait for my next report.

New Book

I've done this newsletter in such a hurry this month (still recovering from surgery unfortunately) that I haven't had time to check with Anita for her "corner." So I thought I'd share some tidbits I've found in one of my new books, *Bonsai Aesthetics – A Practical Guide* by Francois Jeker from France.

- Technical skill does not automatically translate into aesthetic or artistic skill.
- An old bonsai amateur in Inazawa [Japan] explained to me that the Western vision of bonsai was going to give a new life to the ... Japanese bonsai.
- Takeshi Seya, bonsai Master, wrote: "Different arts are similar to paths that climb the same mountain. The more we climb, the more the difference between the arts becomes blurred."

2006 Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phones: Home _____ Work: _____

E-mail: _____

(Check one:)

Active membership (\$25.00) Inactive membership (\$6.00)

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.