



Kongetsu

West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 11 No. 3

April 2007

Mollie Hollar, Editor

2007 Schedule

- Sat, April 14:** Fieldtrip to Gee Farms
- Sat, April 21:** Repotting, BYOT, *afternoon*
- Fri, May 11:** All-State Show set-Up
- Sat & Sun, May 12 & 13:** Michigan All-State Bonsai Show
- Sat, June 16:** Dwarf rhododendron workshop
- Sat, July 21:** Fieldtrip to Jack Wikle's home & Hidden Lake Gardens bonsai exhibit
- Sat & Sun, Aug 18 & 19:** Club trip to Chicago Show
- Thurs, Sept 20:** Pines with Frank Mihalic
- Fri, Oct 12:** Set-up for fall Club Show
- Sat & Sun, Oct 13 & 14:** Fall Club Show
- Thurs, Oct. 18:** 2008 Planning Meeting
- Sat, Nov 17:** Training pots

All events are held at Frederik Meijer Gardens unless otherwise noted. Thursday meetings are from 6:30 to 9:00 PM, and Saturday meetings/workshops will be from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM unless otherwise noted.

There will be notices at the front door of the Gardens telling which room we'll be in.

April Bonsai 101

Bonsai 101, before the workshop on April 21, will be a repotting demonstration. It will start at 1:30 PM and go directly into the workshop. If you are not very experienced in repotting, you would benefit from this session. Otherwise, you can be there at 2:00 for the workshop.

Spring?

Without reading back, it seems to me I mentioned something about spring finally being here in last month's newsletter. That's rather hard to believe looking out my window today at my snow-covered truck, trailer and lawn. . . Nope, I just checked that last newsletter and what I said was that "Spring Is Coming." So is Christmas, right? One thing about Michigan, though, we know that at some time, spring actually *will* be here. And I've heard enough comments about global warming to last me a while.

Events for April

Our first event for this month is one that may very well become at least an annual one for the Club: a field trip to Gee Farms. This is a huge nursery between Lansing and Jackson, just southwest of Stockbridge. Those of us who made the trip last year were thrilled by what we found there. I've included a partial list in Column 1 on the next page.

So that we can carpool, we'll meet at the Ionia/M-66 exit off I-96, east of Grand Rapids. There is a gas station there, and we'll meet at the south side of it at 8:30 AM. I'll be driving my truck so if you have a small vehicle I just might have enough room to bring home your purchases. For those of you who prefer to drive on your own, directions are below. We'll be going even if it's cold, but not if it's pouring down rain. If you're not sure, call me before 7:30 that morning.

Directions to Gee Farms for Saturday, April 14

1. At the Ionia/M-66 entrance onto I-96, go east toward Lansing.
2. Drive 24.4 miles, merge onto I-69, which is still I-96.
3. Drive 4.9 miles where, at exit 97, the road name changes back to I-96 toward Detroit.
4. Drive 9.8 miles. At exit 106A, take the ramp to the right onto US-127 toward Jackson.
5. Drive 8.2 miles. Just past Mason, take the ramp to Kipp Road. At the end of the ramp, turn left (east) onto Kipp Road.
6. Drive 2.0 miles, turn right (south) onto Dexter Trail.
7. Drive 6.5 miles, turn right (south) onto Williamston Rd.
8. Drive 7.9 miles, bear left (east) onto Base Line Rd.
9. Drive 0.2 of a mile, turn right (south) onto Bunkerhill Rd. In less than 0.1 of a mile you will arrive at Gee Farms at 14928 Bunkerhill Road.

Gee Farms phone: 517-769-6772 My cell phone: 616-302-3373

Our second event for April is the annual repotting workshop, on Saturday, April 21. ***Please note that this workshop begins at 1:30 PM*** in the Frey Room. Bonsai 101 will be at 1:30, followed by the workshop at 2:00.

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A Partial List of Gee Farms' Plants Good for Bonsai

Many of these are pencil-size around for the smallest size.

Hornbeams

Ginkgo – many varieties (mostly \$35 and up)

Mulberry & contorted mulberry

Small-leaved elms

Fanciful Forest miniature

conifers and cotoneasters

Full-sized and “Tom Thumb”

Cotoneasters

Japanese maples (definitely the most expensive)

Weeping beech

Birches

Weeping junipers

Pagoda dogwood

Linden

Larch

Kingsville & J. Morris dwarf boxwoods

European beech

Hungarian/Italian oak

Sophora (Chinese scholar tree or Japanese pagodatree)

Dawn redwood

Stewartia

Dues are Due!

Be sure you have your 2007 dues in to our treasurer by April 15. After that time we will need to remove your name from the mailing list. See the last page here for details of how much and where to send your check.

Soil Ingredients

There will be extra Turface and pine bark at the repotting workshop in case you need more than you have now. It's \$1.00 a pound for either one, and you'll need to bring your own containers. I'll bring the scales!

This is the best time to pot or repot, just around the time that deciduous leaves are popping out and your tree is gathering energy for the year's growth. Depending on your level of experience, you may bring one or two trees to repot. If you have nothing to repot this year, just come to assist other people and contribute your comments and experience to the group.

It's interesting to me to read books published 20 years ago and compare them to ones published in the last five years. Until recent years, it was considered good practice to thoroughly trim and wire the top of the tree at the same sitting as trimming the roots and repotting. In fact, the old adage was to have the foliage and branch pile equal in size to the root pile when you were finished trimming. I did that for many years, and have very few of those trees left alive.

So the common practice now is to do the two processes – top trimming/shaping and root-pruning – at two different times. Now that's not to say you can't do any work at all on the top at this workshop, but if you do have major trimming to do on the foliage and branches, it would be best if you could get that done now. It'll be fine to do what wiring needs to be done at the workshop.

For novices, if you have an unshaped plant, pre-bonsai, or nursery material, you can do the following before the repotting workshop:

1. Take the plant out of the pot. Scrape away some of the soil to uncover the surface roots and the base of the trunk.
2. Study the root/trunk base and the branches to see which side looks best and might become the front of the tree. Put a small stick in the dirt on that side.
3. Begin to shape the top of the tree by cutting away branches that won't be in the final design of the tree. But remember, you can always cut it off later, but you can't put it back once it's cut.

Completing these steps will ensure that you will have enough time for the entire repotting process. If you have any questions, be sure to call me before the workshop.

The Club will provide soil for both conifers and deciduous, wire, and screening. You will need to bring your plant(s), pot(s) and tools. If anyone needs a specific type of pot that you don't have, e-mail or call me. I have a lot of pots that aren't on my website. I can photograph some of them and get the photo(s) to you before the workshop if you let me know right away.

A Little Excitement

To add a little interest to our newsletter, I've come up with a photo/story sharing idea. I have a folder full of photos I've cut out of newspapers and magazines over the years that are of plant-related subjects, such as enormous root systems on giant trees, a close-up of blooming moss, oddly shaped trees (lots from Hawaii), and the one I'm including on the next page.

Chances are there are two or three others among our Club members who do somewhat the same thing. So I'm challenging you to collect
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2007 Michigan All-State Bonsai Show

It's getting close to that time again, and I'm sure we're all getting anxious. Last month I sent the program with the newsletter, and I hope you've gotten signed up for your workshops. It's very important that we all support the show not only by bringing our trees to exhibit, but also by taking part in the events of the weekend.

Although the tree exhibit will not open until Noon on Saturday, vendors will be open for business at 9:00 AM, and workshops and other events will be going on. Next month's newsletter will be devoted largely to last-minute tips on getting trees in show order and what will be needed from members.

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

photos of interesting plant-related stuff, give or send them to me (e-mail is fine), and I'll publish them in the newsletter. If you have old bonsai books or gardening books with weird stuff in them, send it in. If you have stories about unusual trees or plants, send them in. Anything plant-related will be fine. Who knows, someone might get an idea for a bonsai planting!

Check out the roots on this one!

A couple weeks ago volatile weather hit Southern California, and brought down this Chinese elm in the San Fernando Valley.



2007 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.

Mollie Hollar



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