



Kongetsu

West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 11 No. 4

May 2007

Mollie Hollar, Editor

2007 Schedule

Fri, May 11: All-State Show set-up, 3:00-8:00 PM

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.

Bits and Pieces

Moss on the trunk of a tree looks pretty, but did you know it can be harmful to the tree? Especially with a tree that is in a lot of shade, the moss will hold in moisture and could eventually rot the trunk. So be sure to keep moss off the trunk and any exposed roots of your trees.

Also concerning moss, if you cover the entire surface of the soil on a planting with moss, two things could happen. One, the moss could absorb too much
(cont page 2 column 1)

April Events

Yes I know, they've already happened, but both events in April were such a success that I wanted to write specially about them. First was our trip to Gee Farms for plant material. I'm pretty sure no one left without finding something that will surely show up at one of our shows in the future. For those of you who haven't ever made it over there, they have some excellent plant material which is their stock for selling as landscape trees sometime down the road, but which make excellent bonsai material for us. An added bonus was that six or eight members of the club from Ft. Wayne met us there and we were able to have lunch with them. I had met two of them at the All-State Show previously – a great bunch of people. It was truly an enjoyable day all the way around!

Our repotting workshop was very well attended. Most people were there to get in on the Bonsai 101 session, a repotting demo, and others came in during that half-hour. The give-and-take of helping each other throughout the workshop was one of the things I like about this group. New methods of every aspect of bonsai are always cropping up, and it's through these workshops that we all find out about current ways of doing things.

The Big Show in May!

Here it is already time for the All-State Show. For you newbies, it's the 9th Michigan All-State Bonsai Show, and while the number of workshops offered has gone down, the quality of our presenters is definitely still at the excellent level.

As in all events of this magnitude, much has changed for this year. So that the clubs from the east side of the state have better time to bring in their trees, the exhibit won't open until Noon on Saturday but the vendors will be in business and other events will be happening. I'm still having a bit of difficulty understanding the way the exhibit is to work, so I'll just include Anita Buckowing's instructions here (with some small changes by me):

New this year are:

- 1) A full Suiseki Exhibit – exhibitors are encouraged to display their Suiseki (viewing stones). Exhibitors are asked to display up to 4 stones. See the entry form available later in this newsletter. Suiseki entries are asked to be limited to no more than FOUR per exhibitor. The only exception to this is that we do reserve the right to have our local suiseki "guru, Tim Priest, add stones from his personal (extensive) collection if needed to make a "full" display – we realize that Suiseki is a "newer" art in our area & many people just don't have them to display.

(cont page 2 column 2)

water so that water doesn't get to the roots. And two, the moss could keep water from evaporating off from the surface and the roots could stay too wet, especially if your soil doesn't allow the water to flow freely through it.

So remember these two things: be sure to have enough Turface or other inorganic matter (sand, Akadama, etc.) so that water flows through the soil, and when applying moss, leave a corner of the soil uncovered.



I had an interesting experience last weekend meeting someone from Colorado who was in the area doing a lecture and workshop on bonsai who apparently considers himself enough of an expert that he has written a book. But throughout our discussion I was struck with how little he really knows. I'm not going to share his name or the name of the book, but I will share some of the "mistakes" he was committing. All this is in the way of giving some hints of what to watch out for when you buy bonsai trees, pre-bonsai, or other plant material from someone you don't know well.

First, none of the plants this man had were in anything vaguely resembling bonsai soil, and he seemed rather proud of himself that he could get away with that. Always be sure you check the soil a seller uses. That will tell you how dedicated the person is to his or her plants.

Second, what he was selling were bonsai only in the technical sense that they were
(cont page 3 column 1)

2) We're inviting ALL bonsai artists/enthusiasts to exhibit their trees, regardless of whether they're affiliated with a bonsai club/society or not. To this end, the exhibit is not going to be organized by club affiliation. Rather, the trees will be placed for exhibit by Steve LaWarre from FMG and Dead Bull of the Sakura Bonsai Society. Also, because we're opening up the exhibit to more than just the Michigan clubs, we are limiting the number of entries to FOUR per exhibitor (exhibitors are allowed to display additional trees in the CLUB DISPLAY if they're a member of a Michigan Club -- see below).

3) These Michigan Clubs have been invited to set up a CLUB DISPLAY: West Michigan Bonsai Club, Ann Arbor Bonsai Society, Bonsai Society - Kalamazoo, Four Seasons Bonsai Club, Sakura Bonsai Society, & San Toshi Bonsai Society. The clubs have been encouraged to set up a SHOWPIECE display exhibiting the benefits & activities of their clubs (with the hope that they may get some new member sign-ups). To encourage the participation by these clubs, EXHIBITORS will be voting on a CLUB CHALLENGE AWARD for the best display. A trophy to keep & a trophy to "keep for a year" will be awarded to the winning club.

4) Tree & Suiseki delivery will ONLY be accepted on Friday, May 11, 2007 from 3 – 8 pm & Saturday, May 12, 2007 from 8:30 – 10:30 am. These delivery times are FIRM delivery times to ensure that there is sufficient time to place all trees in the exhibit area.

5) All exhibitors will need to complete the Entry for (attached to this newsletter); forms will also be available @ the delivery table. All trees &/or stones in the EXHIBIT area will be assigned a number upon delivery (a number & a letter for multiple trees by the same exhibitor). The individual trees/stones will be tagged with this number. Each exhibitor will be given a card with this number that they'll need to present to pick up their trees/stones AFTER 5:00 pm on Sunday, May 13, 2007. Numbers will also be assigned to the CLUB display trees after the CLUB displays are fully set-up to ensure that these trees can still be voted upon for the People's Choice Award. Exhibitors are also encouraged to add their own identification sticker/label to their entries.

6) The PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD voting forms will now include a few lines for COMMENTS. If a form has a comment, it will be forwarded to the appropriate artist (either at the show or via mail after the show – it is important that entry forms be fully completed to allow us to do this mailing as needed).

Please contact Anita Buckowing (show coordinator) @ 269-792-4438 or via e-mail mruckowing@yahoo.com if you have any questions or comments about the show.

cont page 3 column 2)

plants in pots. Only the tiniest plants were in bonsai pots. All other pots were quite deep and were simply flower pots.

Third, the plants weren't really trimmed as bonsai. Again it was obvious to me that he hasn't taken care and time to have actual bonsai, yet he was marketing these plants as bonsai.

We see people like this occasionally, parked along the road sitting by their vans with all those cute little junipers. They always tell you, "Oh yes, you can grow these inside." They are perfectly safe because, by the time your cute little juniper dies, he'll be long gone.

So just be sure you know your sellers. Don't be fooled by fancy talk – anyone can read a book and spout off impressive-sounding terms. Be sure you know the seller at least by reputation. I'm familiar with many bonsai nurseries and individuals who well bonsai, so if you're not sure about someone, give me a call and I can at least tell you how to find out if they are reputable. I hate to see anyone waste money on something that is doomed before they even buy it. But even more, I hate to see bonsai getting a bad name because of disreputable sellers who aren't really interested in our art.



There, I'm off my soapbox for this month.

The mums are in! I got them yesterday, and they look great. For those of you who ordered some, I'll have them at All-State. And yes, I will pot them up today. They come with the roots wrapped in moss and plastic. So get ready to grow a great mum for the fall show!

(cont page 4 column 1)

Be sure to check out the entry form on page 5 since there are more restrictions there. I must admit to total ignorance concerning all this since I was just sent the information a few days ago. I urge you to read over all the instructions carefully, and if you have any questions at all, call or e-mail Anita.

Our Club will apparently have only two tables on which to exhibit our trees. ***This does not mean we want fewer trees!*** We will make do with the space we have. I would like to have our display set up Friday so please try to bring your trees in between 3:00 and 8:00 PM. I don't really know what is meant by a "showpiece display." Had we known *during* our April workshop that there were so many changes we would have taken time to discuss this. But I have the utmost faith in this group's creativity, so I'll just ask everyone to try to think of ideas and call or e-mail me with them. Then we'll just have to set up as we go along. I do have a large shoji screen that belongs to our webmaster, and with her permission I'll bring that along for our display.

And since the show has done such a turnaround, I invite all Club members to attend the meeting for the 2008 show, which will take place on Sunday hopefully before Noon. See Anita or Julie Francke for the time.

New Business!

Our very own Bob Goddard has started a new endeavor, making ciment fondu planters for bonsai and actually for anything else you might want to do with them. He's one of our most artistic members, and these planters are very creative and innovative. He has slabs, crescent shapes, one that I call a volcano, and many, many others. And he'll be vending at the All-State Show! Be sure to check out his booth.

And Old Business

I assume that we will still be needing Club members to be at the show throughout to answer questions and visit with attendees about bonsai. Don't worry about not being experienced enough to answer questions. I'm sure you'll find that, once you start talking to people, you'll do just fine. And there will hopefully be an "older" member of the Club there to help you out.

I like to try to have at least two people there throughout the exhibit times. No one will need to come until Noon on Saturday, and I don't honestly know what the set-up situation will be, but one way or another there *will* be chairs so whoever is on duty won't have to stand the whole time.

Other Vendors

So Bob Goddard will be vending, and I will too, but there are a few others you'll certainly want to visit. Jeri Kiel will be there with her wonderful bushes, hopefully a Japanese maple or two and maybe even some blueberries – they make great bonsai! C&S Bonsai will have all those cute little plants they raise, along with a bunch of big ones I would think. Will Heath is coming from the Detroit club; from what I understand he raises mosses and will be selling them. And one of our favorites, Wildwood Gardens from Ohio, will also be gracing us with their presence. They have gorgeous plants and pots as I remember. Come early for all the good deals!



For our August event, we have scheduled a Club trip to the Chicago show on the third weekend. However, due to circumstances beyond my control (i.e. needing to make \$\$\$ rather than spend it!) I will be staying at home and vending at Greenville's annual Danish Festival.

However, if there is a group of members who want to attend the Chicago show together, I am more than willing to make hotel arrangements for you, or to give you all the information so you can do so yourselves. Just call or e-mail me to let me know and we'll see what we can do to get something organized.

Also, if people are interested in having another event in August, such as a BYOT workshop, let me know and we'll get something scheduled. I'll miss you all if I don't see you for a whole month!



Speaking of Sandflex blocks – which I did just to the right in the other column – I have been finding numerous uses for them. They are just a big block of sand and a rubber compound that wears down as you use it. Besides using it to clean my tools (yes, I finally got around to that), I'm sanding down little 1/4" pieces of wood that I'm using to make tiny (6" x 5") shoji screens, and it works wonderfully! The blocks come in fine, medium and coarse, and there really is quite a difference. A really great thing is that you can cut them down to any size to get into little spaces. The wrapper says you can even use them to restore the nap to suede! You can use it either wet or dry, so the uses are endless! You should try one out – I'll be selling them at the show.

Preparing Your Trees for Exhibiting

Many of these suggestions are common sense but some are not. You should have enough pride in what you are doing to share a little of your art with others, and that's why I strongly encourage *all* members – *especially novices* – to bring your trees to show. The directions for the exhibits this year sound a bit formal, but since I assume this is still an educational show, we want to be sure that people viewing the exhibits know that they too can do bonsai successfully.

Following are a few tips to help you prepare:*

1. Your tree(s) must be in healthy condition and free from disease or insect infestation. Try spraying with insecticide a week or so before the show just to make sure. Don't do it the day before. The odor of the insecticide will be offensive in the exhibit room.
2. Make sure the tree is well groomed and trimmed properly. Remove dead branches, brown needles, and damaged or bug-eaten leaves. Trim excess growth. Clean the trunk and surface roots to remove dirt and moss, being careful not to damage the bark. An old toothbrush works well for this.
3. Make sure your trees are thoroughly watered *before* bringing them for the show. We will have people lightly watering or "icing" them (putting ice cubes on the soil, but *not* on the moss) throughout the weekend, but it's a good idea to water them well before the show. Just be sure they're not dripping when you bring them in.
4. Use a fine piece of steel wool or a Sandflex block to remove any water salts which may have accumulated on the outside of the pot. Dipping the steel wool in vinegar might help too. Then wash the outside of the pot thoroughly and give the outside surface (unglazed only) a coating of oil. Johnson's baby oil works well, as does any other non-toxic oil. After applying the oil, use a lint-free cloth and remove as much of the oil as possible. The objective is to give the pot a pleasant patina, not to make it look greasy. The result will be a container which looks like a brand new pot.
5. When you bring your trees in, be sure to have the following information for the display cards (which I'm also assuming we'll still be able to use):
 - a. Species of the plant – Latin and/or common names
 - b. Year training began – not the age of the tree, but the year you or a former owner began the process of bonsai on the tree
 - c. Approximate age of the tree if you know it. If you don't, it just gives people something else to discuss about our trees!

We're all looking forward to another successful, educational, fun show and with your help, it'll be all of those things!

*Adapted from "How to Prepare a Bonsai for Exhibition" by Randy Clark, Bonsai, Journal of The American Bonsai Society.

_____ Entry Number May 12 & 13, 2007

2007 Michigan All-State Bonsai Show Registration Form

The West Michigan Bonsai Club presents the Ninth Annual Michigan All-State Show @ Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

1000 East Beltline NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525 (ph 616-975-3147)

www.meijergardens.org

www.wmbonsai.org

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____

Participants may display 4 trees + 1 tree in a CLUB display (as a member of the club). No more than 5 trees are allowed per participant due to space constraints. Please list the trees that you intend to display (we realize that this is subject to change due to the "show readiness" of each tree):

Tree #1 Species _____

Year Training Began _____ Approx Age of Tree _____

Tree #2 Species _____

Year Training Began _____ Approx Age of Tree _____

Tree #3 Species _____

Year Training Began _____ Approx Age of Tree _____

Tree #4 Species _____

Year Training Began _____ Approx Age of Tree _____