



Kongetsu

West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 12 No. 2

February 2008

Mollie Hollar, Editor

2008 Schedule of Events

March 21: Pines with Steve Pilacik, lecture/demo

March 22: Pines workshop with Steve Pilacik

Thur, April 17: Repotting

Sat, April 19: Bring Your Own Tree, show preparation

Sat & Sun, May 3 & 4: All-State Show

Sat, May 17: Trip to Gee Farms

Sat, June 21: Japanese maples workshop/lecture/demo

Sat, July 19: Trip to Stone Zone

Thur, July 24: Tropicals

Thur, Aug 14: Bring Your Own Tree

Sun, Aug 24: Silent Auction

Thur, Sept 18: Show prep

Sat & Sun, Oct 11 & 12: Fall Show

Thur, Oct 16: 2009 Planning meeting

Thur, Nov 20: Winterizing

All events are held at Frederik Meijer Gardens unless otherwise noted.

Mums

If anyone is interested in purchasing the mini-mums this year, I'll have the catalog at the March events.

Looking Forward to March

I am thrilled to report to you that arrangements for our March events turned out even better than I had anticipated. Steve lives in North Carolina and this blurb about him appears on his website <http://home.nc.rr.com/matsumomiji/> (slightly edited):

Matsu Momiji Bonsai Nursery is owned and operated by Steve Pilacik. Steve is known as the American Pine Master. [He] is the most experienced grower of Japanese Black Pine in the United States. Steve has specialized in Japanese Black Pine and Japanese Maples since 1977. [He] has written the book *Japanese Black Pins*, put out the DVD "Japanese Black Pine Expanded," and has also written numerous articles in *International Bonsai*, *Bonsai Today*, *Bonsai Clubs International*, *American Bonsai Society Journal*, and Frank Mihalic's on-line bonsai magazine.

If that isn't enough to pique your interest, you probably aren't very interested in pines. Unfortunately that has been the case for me, but I'm so excited about having a person of Steve's caliber here that I might even do a pine myself in his workshop!

Ok, things are going to work this way: Friday night Steve will do a demonstration and lecture about pines for us. There will be a \$10 charge for this and no limitation on the number of people who can come. It'll be from 7:00 to 9:00 PM in the Frey Room at the Gardens. We will be raffling off the tree Steve works on. More details later about this.

On Saturday morning we will be doing a workshop with Steve from 9:00 AM to Noon, same room as Friday night. This is where things get a bit complicated so I'll try to explain clearly. The workshop can be done two different ways:

- . bring your own pine and Steve will work with you on it; or
- . purchase a pine from Steve *long enough before the workshop for him to ship it to you* and work on that in the workshop.

Steve has some pines that are Master Class which cost \$400 per tree. At right is a photo of one of those.

Steve says these have been out of the ground for over two years and in the Mica pots for over a year. Trunks go from 2.25" and up. If you decide to get one of these to work on, you'll need to make arrangements with Steve. His contact information is on the next page



Bits 'n' Pieces

From Ken Schultz of the Columbus Bonsai Society: Remember, there are two parts to bonsai, horticulture and art. The first step is taking the time to learn the horticulture, so you can keep your trees alive. Horticulture is more important than the art, because you can restyle a tree when it grows out, but if it does not grow, your beautiful creation will only exist in a photograph. This is why we spend time learning about watering, light requirements, fertilizing, repotting, and cold or heat tolerance.



I have information about the following shows for 2008:
April 11-13: MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies Spring Festival, Kerhonkson, NY
June 12-15: Mid-America Bonsai Alliance (MABA) show in Indianapolis.
June 21-22: Four Seasons Bonsai Club show in Troy, MI
June 12-22: American Bonsai Society (ABS) Seminars, San Antonio, TX. I have included information about the New Talent Competition and the John Y. Naka Award contest on pages 5 and 6.
Sept. 4-7: International Bonsai Symposium, Rochester, NY
Oct. 4 & 5: Ann Arbor Bonsai Society show, Matthaei Gardens, Ann Arbor.
Oct. 11-12: 2008 National Exhibition, Rochester, NY.
 This is the first one of these and there are lots of monetary prizes available. Organizer Bill Valavanis encourages everyone to submit a photo of your finest bonsai for the selection process to:

WVN@internationalbonsai.com

This is an overview photo of his trees of this class:



The other, smaller and less expensive, trees Steve has are ones he has grown for shohin, which means they would be of smaller caliper and probably 12" or less in height. They would cost \$65 plus shipping. If you decide you want to do one of those, again you would need to contact Steve directly to make arrangements to have them shipped to you. I assume he would be able to send you a photo of some of them, either by snail mail or e-mail, before you decided which one to get. I think that's the way I'm going to go. ***Steve will not be able to bring any trees with him since he's flying to Grand Rapids.*** So all arrangements must be made ahead of time if you want to buy a tree from him.

Here's Steve's contact info:

Steve Pilacik
 7520 Troy Stone Dr.
 Fuquay Varina NC 27526
 919-753-8331 after 4:00 PM and before 9:00 PM
LPilacik@nc.rr.com

Be sure to contact him soon so you have plenty of time to get your pine. Of course you can always go to one of our local nurseries and buy a new pine to work on too. Isn't it great to have a choice?

Registration for the workshop is on page 8. Deadline to register is Monday, March 17. Cost is \$20, or \$10 to observe for non- or inactive members. I will open this up to the Kalamazoo club if it's not filled by March 14.

I t's Still Winter

Do remember that it's important to keep our bonsai in winter storage until harsh winter conditions are pretty well over. Yes I know, living in Michigan makes it difficult to do that. Assuming that you've provided protection for them from winds, heavy snow and ice, if you have covered them completely so that the snow hasn't been able to get at this, they will still need to be watered until they're brought out in the spring.

If you're as tired of winter as I am, there are a couple of things you can be doing in preparation for the busy spring repotting season.

First, this is an ideal time to mix large containers of soil mixes. If you have room, do different containers of soil for conifers and deciduous bonsai. Remember to sift it if there are really small particles. It's amazing how much easier repotting is if you already have the soil ready.

Second, if you quickly put away empty pots in the fall, you might not have cleaned them thoroughly. The best way to clean used pots is to wash them with a weak bleach mixture to be sure there won't be any left-over pests you don't want to invade the next tree you put in them.

More Bits 'n' Pieces

I haven't included Brussel's Bonsai's Rendezvous in the list above because it's not really a show, convention or seminar.

It's just an absolutely fabulous weekend in which you can learn an enormous amount about a lot of different things with bonsai, enjoy meeting new bonsai people from all over the country, and have some of the best Southern cooking I've ever tasted. It takes place over

Memorial weekend, May 23-25 and as usual has some fantastic Masters coming in to do

workshops and demonstrations: Cheng Cheng-Kung from

Taiwan, Marc Noelanders from Belgium (His book is

marvelous!), Jose Luis

Rodriguez from Puerto Rico,

Suthin Sukosolvisit from

Massachusetts, and Kathy

Shaner, now from Alabama

since she moved from the West

Coast. I know I talked a lot

about this event in January's

newsletter, but I can't stress

enough what a great experience

this is. I've organized a lot of

large events for hundreds of

people in the past 30 years, and

this is one of the best organized

I've ever been to, with every

last little detail seen to. If you

do decide to go, you don't have

to take any of the workshops.

You'll pay the registration fee

and still be able to see all the

demonstrations and watch all

the workshops. But if you want

to take a workshop, be sure to

get signed up right away since

some of them have already

filled. Contact them at

http://www.brusselsbonsai.com/about_us/rendezvous08.shtml

Third, you can do some trimming on those trees you have in winter storage if you can get at them. Winter is a good time to do this since you can easily see the branch structure on deciduous trees. I wouldn't do anything very detailed, but certainly if you have trees you haven't worked on yet, or not for a while, there are long branches you know will have to go. Perfect example of this is the quince I bought two years ago. I still have them in their nursery pots, and the branches have really gone crazy. Next week I plan to trim down those branches and find the general style it'll end up with.

Fourth, I have included a copy of a very good record sheet that came from the president of ABS a few years ago. This is an excellent time to start your notebook of records of all your trees and the work that's done on them. If you have a computerized program to do this, get started on it!

And last, if you have indoor bonsai, be sure you're checking regularly for pests. It's much easier to tackle this before they get bad.

Freedom of Creativity

If I were studying for my Doctorate Degree in some area of horticulture or art, I'd definitely write my dissertation on bonsai. As it is, I've been jotting down enough thoughts – and certainly sharing enough thoughts in past newsletters – that I may have enough to write a book one of these days, or at the very least one of the small ABS booklets. And what would it be about?

Ok, for those of you who are bonsai purists – and there's nothing wrong with that – you might want to skip this part. But for the rest of you, I have to share my feelings about following Japanese rules when we do bonsai.

Several years ago I wrote an article on following rules when we're engaging in something artistic. In it I quoted authors of several books – Peter Chan, Deborah Koreshoff, and Susan Resnick – talking about the rules.

In her book *Bonsai: Its Art, Science, History and Philosophy*, Koreshoff tells us that, around the time of World War II when Westerners were becoming interested in bonsai, Yuji Yoshimura and "one of his English pupils, published the first really comprehensive and practical book on bonsai . . . to explain the difference between container-grown trees and bonsai . . . It is from this work that the 'rules' of bonsai emerged that were intended initially to point out the difference between a potted tree and a bonsai. This classification of styles has, over the years, helped Western growers immeasurably in the production of bonsai rather than bushy pot-plants but, at the same time, to those who consider them as being rigid and unbendable rules, the trees either lack character or the grower becomes disheartened when he finds that most trees do not grow according to the rule book.

"The 'rules', in effect should only be regarded as guidelines. . . . if every tree followed the 'rules' exactly, art would disappear. To be successful in the shaping of bonsai, the grower must learn to make an artistic compromise between the 'rules' or 'perfect' form on the one hand, and the individual characteristics of the tree in front of him, on the other."

And Even More

For those of you who have access to the Internet, our webmaster has done a fantastic job of listing all the items we have in our Club library on our website www.wmbonsai.org, click on Book List. If there's something you'd like to check out at our next event, you'll be able to reserve it and be sure you'll get it. You can also look at the list to see if we have a book you've been considering buying and get a good look at it before you buy to be sure it's something you really want to own.

2008 All-State Show

I will attach the flier for the show to the e-mail that I send this newsletter with, or a hard copy to those of you who don't get your newsletter by e-mail. Essentially the arrangements for the exhibit are much the same as last year except that each club is not able to have its own tables. All trees will be mixed in a general exhibit, which will be set up by Dean Bull and Steve LaWarre of Meijer Gardens. No more than five trees can be brought for exhibit by any one individual. The rules are pretty strict for this, so if you have any questions, be sure to contact Anita Buckowing at 888-792-1677 or mruckowing@yahoo.com. We'll be having a couple of new vendors this year too. If you have any other questions about the show after you've gotten the information I have, you can check at http://www.meijergardens.org/calendar/events.php?publish_date=04/27/2008

Knowing the part about why Yoshimura wrote this book helps us to understand that rules should be learned as artistic design principles, not as hard-and-fast requirements for us to create bonsai. The "branch A-branch B-branch C" rule is rather ridiculous to me because trees are just not like that in nature. But using that rule as an artistic guideline helps especially novices to understand that branches don't all come out of the trunk at the same places – or shouldn't for the tree to appear natural. I particularly like what Koreshoff says about bonsaiists who consider the rules to be rigid and unbendable. In fact, all in all what she wrote in those two paragraphs pretty well sums up the way I feel about following rules.

It has been very satisfying to me to hear comments from some of the Masters about following these rules. At Rendezvous last year, Roy Nagatoshi said it's not necessary to follow the rules, that you should "do your own thing." And at the Four Seasons Bonsai Club's show last summer, Bill Valavanis said, "There are no bonsai police." More and more, "western bonsai" is developing with people from various parts of the world creating their own styles. There has been a lot written about "American bonsai" in the past few years as well, which is largely bonsai created to please its owner rather than the bonsai community as a whole, or the Japanese Masters.

So, as I used to tell my writing students, learn the rules first, then do it your own way!

2007 Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phones: Home _____ Work: _____

E-mail: _____

(Check one:)

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

(Check one:)

I prefer that my newsletter be e-mailed to me.

I prefer a snail-mail copy of my newsletter.

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.

The Joshua Roth New Talent Bonsai Competition

The Joshua Roth New Talent Bonsai Competition is an annual competition to recognize and promote new bonsai talent in North America. First prize is a round trip airline ticket to Japan. The first stage of the competition is a judging of photographs of previously designed trees. The second stage will be the actual production of a bonsai during the "ABS Learning Seminars 2008", which will be held in San Antonio, TX at the El Tropicano Riverwalk Hotel on June 19-22, 2008.

Eligibility requirements

Any person who lives in North America, including Puerto Rico, is eligible. He or she must have been involved with the art of bonsai for less than ten (10) years. Any past winner or runner-up is ineligible to enter. Participation in the second stage is limited to two (2) competitions.

First stage submissions

Each contestant shall submit photographs of at least three bonsai that he or she has personally styled. More than one picture of each bonsai is preferred. The photographs do not have to be of publication quality; however they should show the talent of the artist to the best advantage.

All of the photographs submitted shall be enclosed in a single presentation folder with the photos enclosed in clear plastic sleeves. A brief description and history of each bonsai shall also be enclosed. Taped to the back inside cover of the folder shall be an envelope with the completed application form. There should be no identification on the photos or on the outside of the enclosed envelope. Mail all entries to:

Harold Johnson
Competition Chairman
6806 Knotty Pine Dr.
Chapel Hill, NC 27517

First Stage Submissions must be received before **Friday April 18, 2008**. Entries from artists whose photographs indicate the most promise will be selected to participate in the second stage of the competition. Contestants selected for Stage Two will be notified prior to Thursday May 15, 2008.

Stage Two

Each contestant selected for the second stage of the competition must come to the ABS Learning Seminars 2008. Each contestant must pay his or her own expenses to the Convention.

Each contestant shall:

- 1) Be provided with turntable, pre-bonsai material and wire by the Competition.
- 2) Furnish his or her personal tools. Power tools are acceptable.
- 3) Be given an eight (8) hour time period in which to style the material into a finished bonsai.

The competition will begin at 8 AM and will close at 5 PM, on Thursday June 19, 2008. There will be a one-hour lunch break.

Repotting of the finished bonsai will not be done during the competition.

Judging

Four of the major presenters at the Convention will judge the completed bonsai. In addition, all registrants at the ABS Learning Seminars 2008 will be able to vote for their personal choice. The "popular vote" is worth one vote. The artist whose bonsai receives the majority of the five votes will be awarded the title of "Best New Bonsai Talent of 2008" at the Saturday evening Banquet.

Questions may be emailed to Harold Johnson at haroldjrntbc@yahoo.com

An application can be obtained from Harold Johnson, or on <http://absbonsai.org/seminars/ABS2008/application.html>

John Y. Naka Award... have you sent in your entry?

The American Bonsai Society is pleased to announce an annual award to be given in honor of John Y. Naka. This award will be given to a North American Bonsai Artist who exhibits the spirit of artistic design taught by Master John Y. Naka using native North American material as exhibited by one of his or her bonsai.

Requirements:

The Artist

1. Any bonsai artist who is a citizen of a North American country is eligible.
2. Applicants must be a current member of the American Bonsai Society.

The Bonsai

1. Must be from nursery stock or collected material styled exclusively by the artist submitting it.
2. Must be plant material that was entirely propagated and grown in North America.
3. Must not be a previous winner of this award.

The Application

1. For each entry the artist must submit three identical photographs no larger than 8 by 10 inches of the front of the bonsai. No retouching of the photograph is permitted.
2. The bonsai description form
3. The artist information form

All of the above must be submitted by March 15th, 2008. Go to <http://absbonsai.org/NakaApp.pdf> for an application

The Judging

1. The American Bonsai Society Board of Directors will appoint 3 judges to review the applications submitted and select the winning bonsai.
2. The judges will be given only the Bonsai Information Sheet and a photograph NOT the name of the artist.
3. Applicants will be notified by email or post of the results on May 1, 2008.
4. Photographs and paperwork will become the property of ABS and may be used in its publications.

The decision of the judges will be final.

The Award

The American Bonsai Society will present the winner with the John Y. Naka Award at the ABS Learning Seminars 2008 in San Antonio, Texas.

For Questions Contact: ABS at gduncanABS@buckeye-express.com or

The American Bonsai Society
P O Box 351604
Toledo Ohio
43635-1604

Registration for Pine Workshop
Saturday, March 22, 9:00 AM – Noon

Name _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

I am an active member of WMBC ____ I am NOT an active member of WMBC ____

Non- or inactive members, please write a check for \$10 for the demo and/or \$20 for the workshop made out to WMBC and send it to:

Mollie Hollar
WMBC
520 W South Street
Greenville

For more information, call me at 616-754-2351 or e-mail at hollar@chartermi.net.