



# Kongetsu

## West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 13 No. 7

August 2009

Mollie Hollar, Editor

### 2009 Schedule of Events

**Sat, Aug 22:** Annual silent auction & making muck\*

**Sat, Sept 19:** Bring your own tree (BYOT) & repot bonsai mums

**Thurs, Oct 15:** 2010 planning meeting

**Fri, Oct 16:** Set-up for Club show

**Sat & Sun, Oct 17 & 18:** Club show

**Sat, Nov 7:** Possible marking of trees for 2010 collecting

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

Events marked with an asterisk \* will be held elsewhere.

### Events at Meijer Gardens

*Gardens & Broadway Package*  
– Aug. 18-23

*Dahlia Show* – Aug. 29-30

"If you travel to Tokyo and have the great good fortune to dine at the exclusive restaurant called Happo-en, you might be able to get a look at the oldest bonsai trees in the world. The specimens kept in the restaurant's private garden have been lovingly cultivated for between 400 and 800 years."

### Gone Again

I am again unable to attend this month's event due to vending at a festival.

### Is It Summer Yet?

They say we had the coldest July on record and I'd have to agree with that. Our veggie garden isn't where it should be at this point, and instead of putting them away, my jeans and sweatshirts are still out. Maybe these past few days are an indication of what we'll have for the rest of "summer" but who knows? My husband always says it gets hot just around the time kids have to go back to school. My year just gets more and more . . . well . . . interesting. Dad has a new hip, Skip is still a man of forced leisure, and my business has slowed to a crawl. While my bonsai have been cared for better than in previous years, my passions have shifted toward my needlework in search of better financial results.

There are several tasks we should be concentrating on at this point of the summer. The obvious is watering. We've had such a cool summer compared to most in recent history that you might tend to think you can miss a day or two . . . or three. Then before you know it your deciduous trees are wilting and your tiny stuff is screaming for water. In order to avoid all this, check your most tender trees at least daily even when it's cool and we've had some rain. When they are getting dry your other trees will soon need water too.

Remember to check the wire on your trees often. The fast growth of secondary and tertiary deciduous branches can cause wire to bite into bark within weeks. While most conifers grow more slowly, don't neglect their wire either.

Don't stop fertilizing yet – there's still time for a fair amount of beneficial growth before the fall slow-down. Both foliar and root growth should still be encouraged through use of the appropriate fertilizer. Obviously your spring-blooming trees no longer need a fertilizer that encourages healthy flowering, although if you've been very brave and attempted to bonsai something like a Rose of Sharon you'll still need that flower encourager. At this point you could be adding ammonium sulfate for dark green color, and Epsom Plus for plant vigor, disease resistance and root development. (I do, of course, just happen to sell these.) And rapeseed cakes may need to be replaced to provide proper general fertilizing until cold weather and growth slow-down. Regularly putting Superthrive in your watering can when you water indoor trees will encourage continuous root growth and healthier tropicals.

### This Month

Our event for August is a two-for-one and one of the most fun and beneficial of the season.

Mollie Hollar



616-754-2351



[hollar@chartermi.net](mailto:hollar@chartermi.net)

520 W South Street, Greenville MI 48838

**Please Call – Important!**  
*If you plan to go to the auction, please let me know at the phone number or e-mail at the bottom of page 1.*

### A Few Notes on Compost Tea

- What we do with chemicals can actually interfere with what is going on naturally. Try to stay away from chemicals as much as possible.
- Beneficial bacteria stick to soil, while chemicals wash out.
- Using chemicals causes osmotic shock, which over time wipes out the good stuff.
- A bag of “spoiled” alfalfa meal or bales is good to put on your garden, lawn and bonsai.
- Foliage *does* take in nutrients, so spray your compost tea on it. (See more below.)

### More on Foliar Feeding

Until recently it has been unclear as to whether or not foliage takes in nutrients. The following is part of an article from Kaizen Bonsai Ltd.

#### **Foliar Feeding of Plant Nutrients & Bonsai**

“Plants of all types are capable of absorbing nutrients and moisture through the stomata or pores within their foliage. This is a proven fact. However for many years, horticulturists have debated the merit of foliar feeding of plant nutrients. A commonly held opinion is that foliar nutrient feeding is best employed only where a specific minor element deficiency may exist. Dramatic and fast correction of such nutrient deficiencies are generally always seen from such foliar applications. (cont next page)

At our annual silent auction you can grow your plant collection and pick up a new supply of bonsai tools, pots, and other items for very reasonable prices.

The auction will work like this:

1. You will sort through all your bonsai stuff at home with an eye toward helping out the Club.
2. Included with this newsletter is a copy of the bid sheets that you’ll need for each item you donate. On each sheet, write the general name, i.e. book, pot, tool, or plant type, of the item and a reasonable starting price. Please copy the bid sheet for more items.
3. Then on Saturday, August 22, bring all your items and their sheets to Mary Lou and Joe’s house (map attached, directions on page 3) around 9:30 AM, where you will place them in the auction areas.
4. At 10:30 bidding will begin. First, you will take a look at everything to get an idea of what you’d like to bid on. Then you’ll go back to each item and write your name and bid amount in the appropriate column on the bid sheet by the item. Do that for as many items as you would like. (Lots would be best for the Club!) As you’re bidding, try to keep track of which items you bid on. Throughout the bidding time, return to those items to see if someone else has bid higher than you. If so, below the other person’s name, write your own name again and your new bid.
5. At the end of the bidding time (about an hour) each item will be awarded to the highest bidder. When all items are awarded, bidders will pay for their items by cash or check. Then we can eat!

When the auction is done the potluck lunch will begin. Everyone will need to take a dish that will serve 10 to 15 people in one of the following categories: main dish, snack, salad/veggie, and dessert. You will also need to bring table service for yourself and whatever you’d like to drink for the day.

After lunch the messy part of the day will begin. Mary Lou will teach us how to make muck. Why, you ask, do we need to learn how to make it? And then what do we do with it?

Muck is made from some unusual ingredients, and used in bonsai for a couple of different kinds of plantings. It can hold plants to the side of rocks to make a miniature mountain with trees hanging off. And it can be used on a relatively flat slab to make a ring to hold bonsai soil in place, for a forest or landscape planting. Once you have learned how to make muck you’ll find myriad uses for it, probably even outside of bonsai. All items for the muck will be provided by the Club.

This will be a long-day event so be sure you plan for it. And **if you plan to be there, please call or e-mail me by August 19 (see bottom of page 1) so we have an approximate number of people for the potluck and the muck ingredients.** Don’t miss this event.

**Foliar Feeding (cont)**

“Dr. H.B. Tukey, renowned plant researcher and Head of Michigan State University’s Department of Horticulture back in the 1950’s, working with research colleague S.H. Wittwer at MSU, first proved conclusively that foliar feeding of plant nutrients really works. Researching possible peaceful uses of atomic energy in agriculture, they used radio-active phosphorous and radio-potassium to spray plants, then measured with a Geiger counter, the absorption, movement and utilization of these and many other nutrients within plants. They found plant nutrients moved at the rate of about one foot per hour to all parts of the plants. Comparing efficiency of plant use of foliar-fed nutrients versus soil-applied nutrients near roots, they found foliar feeding provided about 95 percent efficiency of use compared to about 10 percent of use from soil applications! Likewise, speed of absorption and use by foliar applications was immediate, whereas from soil applications absorption and plant use were both very slow, thus proving a major benefit of foliar feeding where a specific plant nutrient deficiency may exist, be it major or minor plant nutrient.

“The reason that many plants suffer nutrient deficiencies is almost always due to growing media problems. The cation exchange capacity (CEC) is a value given on a soil analysis report to indicate the capacity of the soil to hold cation nutrients. It is a value that indicates a condition or possibly a restriction that must be considered when working with a particular soil. Unfortunately CEC is not a packaged product, it is not something that is easily adjusted. The two main colloidal particles in the soil are clay and humus.  
*(cont next column)*

“The CEC of the soil is determined by the amount of clay and/or humus that is present. These two colloidal substances are essentially the cation warehouse or reservoir of the soil and are very important because they improve the nutrient and water holding capacity of the soil. Sandy soils with very little organic matter (OM) have a low CEC, but heavy clay soils with high levels of OM would have a much greater capacity to hold cations.

“The disadvantages of a low CEC obviously include the limited availability of mineral nutrients to the plant and the soil’s inefficient ability to hold applied nutrients. Plants can exhaust a fair amount of energy (that might otherwise have been used for growth, flowering, seed production or root development) scrounging the soil for mineral nutrients. Soluble minerals or fertilisers applied in large doses to soil with a low CEC cannot be held efficiently because the cation warehouse or reservoir is too small.” (Remainder of this article next month.)

**Directions to Auction and Muck-Making**

Take M21 (Fulton Rd) into Lowell. Turn left on Hudson. Hudson is in the center of town. There will be a gas station on 2 corners and the "Farmers Market" on another corner. Hudson will change its name to Lincoln Lake Rd. Take this road about 3 miles. Watch for the little green signs on the right side of the road for Fallsburg Park. Turn right on Fallsburg Park.

Just past the park entrance is McPherson Rd. Turn right on McPherson and take that 3.2 miles. then turn left on Marble. Take Marble 2.5 miles and turn left on Harkness Rd. You will come to an old farm house. It will say "road ends" but keep going. Our house is the third one past the farm house. *(map attached)*

**2009 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.