



Kongetsu

West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 13 No. 6

July 2009

Mollie Hollar, Editor

2009 Schedule of Events

Thurs, July 16: BYOT 7-9 PM

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.

This Month

It was necessary to change the topic *and date* (see schedule above) for this month's meeting from having an outside speaker I had planned on, to doing a bring-your-own tree workshop.

I wouldn't recommend repotting unless you have a fairly small conifer. But any kind of tree can be pruned and wired at this time of year.

I will not be able to be there because I will be spending that day from dawn to dark in Butterworth Hospital with my mother-in-law while Dad has a hip replaced. Bob Goddard has agreed to be there in my place. Be sure to bring your tools and wire. We'll be in the Teaching Greenhouse – ask at the front desk for directions if need be.

Summer Heat

It rained last night, just enough to make things really wet and sticky today. Trouble is, I don't think there was enough rain to really water our bonsai.

Our most important focus during the summer must be making sure our bonsai get enough watering to actually get all the way through the soil. A good way to do this is to watch as you're watering to see that the water runs out the drainage holes in the bottoms of the pots. I have some cascades that I have to keep coming back to as I'm watering everything until I can see water draining out the bottoms. Remember that any fast-draining soil mixture that is suited for bonsai drains out most fertilizers that are remaining in the soil with each watering. (If, like some of our members, you use only straight Turface or aggregate, a practice that is great for root development but bad for those of us who don't get around to watering some days, you have to fertilize with each watering.) So you need to put some nutrients back in when you water. That's why I highly recommend either cake fertilizers on the soil surface, or fertilizer particles or pellets mixed in with the soil. That way every time you water, a little bit of the fertilizer gets into the roots.

But back to watering. The following comes from Brussel's Bonsai Nursery:

Proper Watering

The Ideal

"Proper and timely watering is one of the most important functions a bonsai artist does. Without water, a plant is unable to transport, create, or utilize energy. Water is also necessary to discard wastes.

Common Mistakes

"There are two major mistakes: too much water, and too little water.

"Too much water leads to soggy soil. The excess water, over time, will literally drown the roots. A well-draining soil mix will help avoid this.

"Too little water is obviously bad, also. If the water level in the soil drops too low for too long, the fine root hairs that dump wastes and draw up nutrients will die. Again, a good bonsai soil mix can help by retaining moisture.

"A bonsai soil that is well-draining, as well as moisture-retaining, will help take much of the guesswork out of watering. It will also help protect a bonsai from mistakes in watering.

Sad Notice

I was notified by our member Dave Tomczak this week that former member Chuck Hiddema has died after a lengthy battle with cancer. Chuck and his wife Susan owned CS Bonsai in Muskegon. They had vended at the All-State Show and our Club show for several years.

Upcoming Events Around the Country

Sept 10 - 13, Rochester, NY

International Bonsai Symposium

Shohin Bonsai at the Airport
Holiday Inn, Rochester, NY.
Featuring Nobuichi Urushibata,
Peter Warren, Julian Adams,
Harvey Carapella, Sean Smith,
Suthin Sukosolvisit, Erik
Weigert, Jack Wikle, and Bill
Valavanis. Contact
WNV@internationalbonsai.com,
<http://www.internationalbonsai.com>.

August 29th-30th, 2009 AABS Bonsai Show

Saturday and Sunday
Location: Matthaei Botanical
Gardens, Ann Arbor
Annual showing of Society
member's trees. Over 100
beautiful trees from all sizes
and species will be on display.
Workshops, demonstrations and
vendors, will be available.

If anyone's interested I can get
you information on events
coming up in Hawaii.
Personally I'd love to see any of
those!

Each Tree is Different How to water

"Each tree should be examined individually, in order to see if it needs water. There are myriad elements that affect how fast the soil in a particular tree dries out. Here are a few:

- species and size of tree
- size and shape of pot
- kind of soil used
- weather and wind conditions

"A maple may use water faster than a pine, for example. And bonsai in smaller pots will almost certainly dry out faster. Bonsai planted in large, shallow containers will dry quickly, as will trees that are exposed to full sun for the greater part of the day.

When & How to water

"Most sources say that watering in the morning is best. Water a bonsai when the top half-inch of soil is dry. For smaller bonsai, water when the top quarter-inch of soil is dry. Do not depend on rain to water your trees. Bonsai grown in a well-draining soil mix (like ours) can be watered daily in spring, summer, and fall. Periodic watering is also necessary in winter to keep the soil from drying out. Never allow the soil to completely dry out.

"Watering should be done with a watering can that creates a soft, rain-like stream of droplets. There are also hose attachments that accomplish the same thing. The idea is to mimic a soft rainshower that will not wash away the soil in the containers. A hard spray from a common hose attachment will almost certainly blast away the soil from your bonsai. Also be sure to thoroughly soak the soil. This means watering until water runs out the drain holes in the bottom of the container."

Another very important thing to remember is that excessive transpiration from deciduous trees or broadleaf evergreens means you need to be sure to water the foliage. Any of our beating-down-sun days in Michigan summers will definitely be bad for leaves.

And when we have those hot sun days, it's possible that your bonsai – particularly the deciduous – will need to be watered more than once. For any trees for which this is a problem, such as Japanese maples, set up a covering with shade cloth placed above the trees.

Be sure to watch carefully how your trees are growing during this time of year. Warm weather and plenty of water will encourage new growth, not all of which you'll want to keep. Pinch or cut off any new growth that isn't desirable for the shape and style you have chosen.

Also, any wiring you have done should be checked regularly. Fast growth means tightening of wire which will cut into the bark, leave wire marks, and in some cases cause you to lose some branches. Check tightness of wire at least weekly.

Events at Meijer Gardens

July 18: Daylily Show

July 18-19: Standard Flower Show

These two shows are another reason we couldn't meet on Saturday!

Did you know . . . ?

According to an article from the GR Press I saved from 2004, the following garden plants are poisonous:

- Monkshood
- Spurge
- Deadly nightshade
- Caroline jessamine
- Angel's trumpet
- Christmas rose (helleborus)
- Poison hemlock
- Black henbane
- Devil's weed
- Morning glory
- Foxglove
- Oleander
- Castor bean

Symptoms range from mild to severe. The author developed hallucinations and severe migraines after handling morning glories. She recommended wearing rubber gloves and long sleeves to keep all plant sap from skin contact. Handling these and other plants in the heat of summer is even more dangerous, when sweating opens pores for even worse transdermal poisoning.

The family of euphorbias, including poinsettia, is toxic, often causing surface blistering of the skin.

So be sure to know your plants to keep yourself, your family and pets safe.

June's Events

Making ciment fondu containers was fun and educational during our two June meetings. I really enjoyed observing how different each person's planters turned out when everyone used the same basic materials. We're still keeping them damp for proper curing. For those of you who didn't do this workshop, I highly recommend that you take part whenever we do it again. My thanks and admiration to Bob Goddard for his fantastic teaching of this unique project.

For those of you who did this two-part workshop, Bob will have the sealer for your container at Thursday's meeting. *Be sure you're there to get your sealer.*

A Few Tidbits

From the American Bonsai Society's magazine:

"Unity is the hallmark of good design. All elements and components should be composed with integrity, in a consistent manner, and successfully applied with the principles of design in mind. Unity will give a sense of visual pleasure if all the elements and components are arranged in harmony, complementary to each other, and with an appealing focal point, instead of competing for attention. When unity is achieved, the thematic message will be more clearly communicated.

"Unity is achieved by not only the implementation of design principles, but also by the integration of horticultural clues.

"Unity without variation is boring, but too much variation without unity is chaotic." (From an article by Robert Steven)

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.