



# Kongetsu

## West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 13 No. 4

May 2009

Mollie Hollar, Editor

### 2009 Schedule of Events

- Sat, May 9:** Wiring and prep for All-State Show  
**Fri, May 15:** Set-up for All-State  
**Sat & Sun, May 16 & 17:** Michigan All-State Bonsai Show  
**Thurs, June 18:** Ciment fondu form making  
**Sat, June 20:** Making ciment fondu planters\*  
**Sat, July 18:** TBA – outside presenter  
**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.

### Fantastic News!!!

I've been communicating with Kathy Shaner, the only female Japanese-certified bonsai Master, and she has agreed to be our headliner for MABA 2010! Plan now to sign up for any of her workshops.

### Definitely Spring

Ah, warm air, the smell of spring flowers, and those myriad tiny green maple flowers falling all over everything from not one, but two huge maple trees in my yard. It's all part of the reawakening of nature after another harsh winter in our beloved Michigan. And *finally* we can be doing some serious work on our bonsai, one of the truly marvelous things about the season.

Already this year we have accomplished more with our bonsai than in most of last year. The reason for this is not necessarily positive: my husband has been laid off from his job, at least until fall. I do enjoy his being home, and we are getting a lot done around here.

At the moment we're concentrating on repotting. I have seedlings and plants that have been in nursery pots for far too long and now have a large part of their root systems growing out the bottoms of the pots. I have bonsai that have lost their shape and most of the soil in the pots because the roots have "eaten up" all the soil and the roots are all that's left.

I did experience something yesterday that I'd like to share. I have a cascade-style juniper of some soft, fuzzy kind that I thought last year needed to be repotted but didn't get done. During the winter the pot broke in half from top to bottom, so it was my first tree to be repotted. I had thought, since it was in the same pot for four years, it was desperate for repotting. However, when I took it out of the pot – an easy thing since all I had to do was separate the two halves – the roots went only about half-way down into the pot. So any unhealthy appearance was not from it being pot-bound. The tree did make it through the winter beautifully in spite of its broken pot. So all I had to do was find a replacement pot for the large one it had been in. But since the roots weren't extensive, the pot I chose didn't have to be as large as I'd feared. One tree down.

The second one I repotted, a Cole's hemlock, had been in the same pot for five or six years. Two of its main branches had died, and there were many dead secondary and tertiary branches as well. The foliage had thinned and shortened in the past two years. Since it's long been one of my favorites, I knew I had to get to it ASAP. But imagine my surprise when – again – it wasn't pot-bound at all. In fact there were minimal roots. What I did discover though was that the Turface and pine bark it has been potted in had broken down so thoroughly that the bottom three or so inches was a nice wet mud. My mistake with this one had been having too much pine bark and not enough Turface. Of course we don't use the Turface at all any longer, so in repotting I filled the bottom two inches with straight aggregate, then did a definite two-to-one mix of aggregate and pine bark for the rest. I'm pretty sure it'll be happier in this mix, but I'm not sure that the tree will survive.

Another mistake, this one more serious: I had been very lax about fertilizing my trees for way too long. The solution with both the juniper

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## More Vocabulary

**Adult Foliage** - The mature leaves of a tree that has one type of young foliage and a distinctly different leaf shape at maturity.

**Air Layering** - A propagation method that creates conditions to encourage roots to form on the trunk or branch which is above the ground on a tree. [If you might be interested in learning about this ask me for directions.]

**Apex** - The top portion of the tree.

**Bract** - A small leaf found near the flower on the stem; it differs from the other leaves in shape and color.

**Broad-leaved** - Leaves that are flat and relatively broad as compared to needle shaped or scale-like foliage. [Usually in reference to evergreens, plants that do not lose their leaves, i.e. azaleas, rhododendrons, etc.]

**Callus** - Corky-texture tissue that forms over a wound on a trunk or branch, e.g. a pruned branch.

**Cambium** - A narrow layer of cell tissue growing between the bark and the wood of woody plants. In live wood, the cambium is green and moist.

**Collected tree** - A tree taken from the wild for training as bonsai.

**Compound leaf** - A leaf composed of two or more separate but similar parts, called leaflets.

**Conifer** - A tree that bears cones containing seeds. [Most conifers are evergreens.]

**Crown** - The upper part of the tree where the branches spread out from the trunk.

**Cultivar** - A variant plant produced in cultivation. Named cultivars are identified by the parent species followed by the cultivar name, e.g., *Acer Palmatum* 'Deshojo'.

and the hemlock: I mixed Holly-tone in with the soil. This is a powdered fertilizer for acid-loving plants – azaleas, rhododendrons, and conifers – that is by my side now whenever I report any of those kinds of trees. In relating the details of our March meeting with Jon Holwerda talking about pests and diseases, I told you about fertilizers. It's time for me to listen to myself.

## Events for May

This is a big month for us, with the Saturday, May 9 workshop and also the All-State Bonsai Show.

The person I had hoped could join us for a wiring workshop can't be there, so it'll be a short demo and then wiring practice for all of us. I'll have a hand-out that was written by a wiring expert and other tips for you. In order for you to get the wiring experience before you work on your bonsai, you will need to bring one or more branches from any kind of tree in your yard that has secondary and tertiary branches in varying sizes and lengths. The Club will provide all the wire you'll need.

You'll also need to bring whatever trees you plan to exhibit in the All-State Show, or just trees that need to be wired this season. This workshop is for us to learn how to wire and then to practice where it's needed.

Set-up for All-State is on Friday, May 15 from 5:00 to 8:00 PM. I encourage all of you to bring in at least one tree to exhibit. I assume they will need people to help with setting up tables and coverings, and I know the vendors can always use help too. The show is Saturday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, although the exhibit doesn't open until Noon, allowing you to bring in trees from 8:00 to 10:00 AM. Show hours for Sunday are Noon to 5:00 PM. It's just two weeks before the show so you need to make final decisions by next week of which trees you want to enter. I'll have a sheet for you this Saturday of directions for final preparations for showing your trees. I never received notice of whether or not help is needed in set-up or tear-down, but I know Meijer Gardens people always appreciate an extra pair of hands.

## And in June

To me, one of the most fun workshops the Club ever did was making a cement fondu planter. That was several years ago, and we've finally scheduled making another one. My first one, rather than appearing to be a rock like I wanted, more resembled a squashed sombrero. I think it's still hanging around somewhere, but I've never used it for bonsai (or a hat). I expect most of you have seen Bob Goddard's cement fondu planters that he sells, beautiful creations to use for planting bonsai. Bob will lead the workshops. Last summer he spent time at Rosade Bonsai Studio in Pennsylvania with Chase Rosade, national expert with cement fondu, learning all the ins and outs of making these planters. We'll meet at Bob's house in Walker for the all-day Saturday workshop.

Ciment fondu is a special kind of cement that makes a light-weight planter, so that you could make a slab that is quite large for, say, a forest planting, and still be able to move it about. The powdery cement  
*(cont on page 3)*

## Glossary Continued

**Cut-leaved** - The description of a tree or shrub with leaves shaped in distinctive segments.

**Deciduous** - The description of a tree or shrub that loses all its leaves annually, usually remaining bare-stemmed through the winter and developing new foliage in the spring.

**Dieback** - The death of young shoots or branch tips, due to extreme weather conditions or any of several fungus diseases.

**Divided leaf** - A leaf formed of separate sections emerging from the same base.

**Division** - A method of propagating shrubby plants by dividing the rootball and replanting the separate sections.

**Dwarf** - The description of a variety or cultivar that is smaller than the species plant, though it has the same basic characteristics. Dwarfing can also occur through natural causes; dwarf cultivars are bred to be small.

**Evergreen** - The description of a tree or shrub that retains its leaves year round.

**Genus** - The unit of classification for a group of closely related plants. In a plant's botanical name, the genus is identified by the first word in the full name, e.g., *Acer*. My thanks to Brussel's Bonsai for these definitions.

## Show & Tell

This month we'll be working on trees for the show, but I would like for all of you to start bringing trees every month, whether you have questions or problems, or would just like to share your experiences with one of your trees.

is mixed with water into a yogurt-like consistency and painted onto the prepared form, then allowed to dry for a bit before adding another layer, and another and another until you have just what you want. The procedure for making the planter is quite easy but does take a whole day to complete.

If you want to take part in this workshop you *must* pre-register. Materials will be provided for only a specific number of people, and this is stuff you don't just run to the corner store for when you run out. There is a registration form on page 4 which I will also include in next month's newsletter. **Deadline for sign-up is Monday, June 8.** After this date, if we don't have the maximum number of 10 people, we will open the registration up to other clubs.

This will be a two-part workshop. Thursday evening, June 18, at 7:00 PM we will meet at Meijer Gardens to put together the form. This entails "sewing" fiberglass cloth to a chicken wire form and bending the form to your desired shape. You will need to bring only the heavy needle to this part. The second part is Saturday, June 20. Here are Bob's notes on this workshop:

Cost will be \$35 for each member, \$45 for non-members, which includes most of the material to create a slab. The color of the ciment fondu is a medium grey. I will have some mortar colors that members will be able to use. Size of the planter will be 20" x 12".

Members will need to bring the following materials:

1. **Plywood**, 1/4 inch thick and no smaller than 2'x2' (used to transport home and for curing until dry)
2. **Heavy needle** (3 inches long) for sewing fiberglass (I have the fish line for sewing).
3. **Old paint brushes**, tooth brushes etc. for applying fondu.
4. **Old bed sheet and plastic** to cover wet stone when not working and transporting home.
5. **Small mister** to keep rock and sheet wet.
6. **Work or rubber gloves** for chicken wire and fondu.
7. **Folding table, chair** and hat if it's a sunny day.
8. Look at **stones and rocks** to have some idea as to color and texture, also plan to bring them with you for reference.

Since there is a long period of drying time in between coats of fondu, plan on 4-6 hours for this workshop.

We will have a potluck lunch – more information about this and other details in next month's newsletter.

**Ciment Fondu Workshop Registration**  
**Thursday, June 18, and Saturday, June 20**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Send this form and a check for \$35 or \$45 to Bob Goddard**  
**3693 Dublin St NW**  
**Walker MI 49534**

**Registration deadline is Monday, June 8**

***2009 Membership Form***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phones: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

(Check one:)

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

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