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## West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 13 No. 9

October 2009

Mollie Hollar, Editor

### 2009 Schedule of Events

**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.

### Successful Sale

Our thanks to all of you who turned out on a cold sometimes-sunny day for the opening of my showroom and the collection sale. I was thrilled with the number of people who came, including many from outside WMBC.

Several of the collection trees are still available. Consider making an appointment to come out and see these trees, and purchase one or four to add to your own collection. We also have quite a few plastic and mica training pots remaining, all of which have almost give-away prices.

We would like to not have to take care of these trees for another winter, so almost any reasonable offer on them might be accepted. Just call or e-mail (contacts info at right) for an appointment to see the collection items, or to visit my new showroom.

### It's Fall!

Judging by the 26 degree temperature we experienced here last night, I think we can officially say Autumn has arrived. Then there was all that cold rain we got in the past couple weeks – well, we do choose to live in Michigan so we have to expect all that.

I must apologize for getting this newsletter out so last this month. What with preparing for the opening of Basically Bonsai's showroom and the collection sale Saturday, Oct. 10, as well as other events I've been planning and executing for my other business, time again got away from me.

### October Events

This Thursday, Oct. 15, we will be meeting at Meijer Gardens from 7:00 to 9:00 PM, in the Frey Environmental Room in the lower level. Julie Francke, Meijer Gardens employee, has asked for a few minutes of our time to show us something new that the Gardens has been trying out for their plant shows, what they are calling for our show the Bonsai Discovery Cart. This is part of what she had to say about it:

"We've developed several Discovery Carts [which] . . . serve a "show and tell" purpose, a way to engage visitors, share fun insights, answer questions, and if possible provide an opportunity to touch something. For the Bonsai Discovery Cart we could:

- Feature a few live bonsai from the Meijer Gardens collection that illustrate some of the different styles people will see in the show.
- Display samples of the potting soil and tools.
- Include wire and a branch (or dowel) that people could try to wire.

"We could even invite people to "guess" which tree on the cart is older or the age of the trees (to illustrate that the *actual age* isn't important, and "looking old is beautiful").

"As you can tell, I'm just starting to think through this. I am open to ideas and suggestions!

"We may have this cart out during the week to help publicize the Bonsai Show. But we never have enough docents on the weekend, so it would be great if your club members could help. I could even bring the cart to your meeting on October 15 if that would be helpful."

I also suggested information on American bonsai, design principles, and pots among other things. If you have any other suggestions, contact me (contacts below) or Julie at [jfrancke@meijergardens.org](mailto:jfrancke@meijergardens.org) by Tuesday.

Also at our meeting this week we will be planning our 2010 schedule  
(cont page 2, column 2)

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Remainder of article from September's newsletter:

### **Determining Which Plants Need Dormancy**

When determining whether or not a plant can be grown indoors, the strongest clue will come from its natural environment. If the species is native to a temperate climate area that receives regular freezing winter temperatures, it will be impossible to grow this plant continuously indoors. It can only be an indoor plant if you can also satisfy its dormancy requirement by providing it with the requisite number of hours of temperatures under 40F.

### **How to Give Plants a Dormant Period**

It is not easy, but some people have become adept at growing temperate plants indoors by giving them a dormant period each year. This can be done by keeping plants in the refrigerator, in a cold garage, or outside until the dormancy requirements are met. The plants are then brought back into the house and growth is reinitiated by providing warmer temperatures and increased day length with grow lights. This is not a procedure for beginners, and if you wish to try it, expect failures until you learn the proper techniques and the eccentricities of each species.

If, for some reason, you cannot keep your temperate plants outside all winter to give them a dormant period, here is how you can do it can do it in the refrigerator: First (if  
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of events. I'm attaching here a sheet of suggestions for activities, and I'd like members to bring their own ideas too. This is one of the most important meetings of the season because it will ensure that all the information and experience you would like to gain will be scheduled for next season.

### **First Topic for Thursday**

Our planning meeting for the next year always includes election of officers. I have spoken to several of you about this, and it will be one of the first things we talk about Thursday.

I have served as president of WMBC for all but a few years of its existence. Due to my business developments and my husband's (un)employment status, I can no longer put in the time with WMBC that I always have. I will try to continue as newsletter editor, but we need to either find someone else to serve as president, or form a new position of Event Coordinator or something similar. I am unable to attend all the events because I vend at shows many weekends during the year. It's not fair to the Club as a whole and several individuals when I must ask someone else to lead a meeting for me.

So I am asking you all to come prepared on Thursday to help solve this dilemma, come with ideas as to how we can restructure the Club so that we can continue with the many fine programs and events we've had over the past many years. I will not be totally absent from all events, but I do need someone else to coordinate speakers and topics for 2010. I will always be available for help in this. I just can no longer do it all myself. You're all aware that any organization is only as effective as its volunteers, so it's time for some of you to step forward and become a bit more active in our Club.

Another thing we must discuss is when we will meet. We changed to mostly Saturday morning events this year, but many of you are unable to attend on Saturdays. Be prepared to discuss whether we want to do all Thursday evenings, all Saturdays, or a mixture of the two.

### **Final October Event**

Our Club show is coming up this weekend, with set-up occurring Friday evening from 5:00 to 8:00 PM. We always prefer to have all trees for exhibit delivered on Friday so that we're not racing around on Saturday morning to finish setting up.

We will also need people on Friday to help set up the exhibit tables. This entails merely getting the table covers and bamboo mats in place since the Gardens will have the tables up. Then on Sunday at 5:00 PM we will need people to help in taking table covers off and putting them in tubs.

During the weekend, the show will be open on Saturday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Sunday from Noon to 5:00 PM. We need volunteers to be there to talk to people coming in – nothing any member can't do. If you don't know an answer there will always be another member there to help. Bob Goddard and I will be vending and available. So come whenever you can during the weekend to help educate the public about our collective passion!

possible), keep them outside and let them enjoy a few light frosts. Ideally, four to six weeks of decreasing day length and mild cool weather where the temps are around 25° to 35 °F at night, will adequately prepare them. If this is not possible, just keep them as cool as possible as late as possible in the fall, and then put them in the fridge.

The above preparation is not strictly necessary, but it does keep them healthier and minimizes the refrigerator period. Going directly from a growing state (AFTER a full season of growth) into cold storage will not adversely affect any temperate climate plant. They will just go dormant in the fridge, drop their leaves, etc. Some precaution against drying out in the fridge must be taken, especially in modern frost free refrigerators. You can wrap them loosely with plastic, but do allow some circulation. Take them out weekly and check to see if they need watering. They still must be watered normally when they begin to dry out. Light is not necessary as long as the temperature is low, about 35 ° F or lower. If you have the option to keep the temperature hovering just above freezing, it will minimize fungal problems. At a minimum, keep them in the fridge for six weeks, longer is fine. After six weeks, they will have the 1000 hours of chill considered necessary for most temperate climate plants. You can then  
*(cont in next column)*

take them out and return them to growing conditions. This may be inside, but . . . this will almost certainly mean good air circulation, grow lights, and added humidity such as a growing chamber or small greenhouse. In the beginning, it is far more important to learn how to properly water, prune, fertilize, and repot your tropical bonsai than it is try to manipulate the dormant period of temperate climate species.

And finally, why is there so much apparent conflict in the advice of individuals and books on which plants can be grown indoors? The key goes back to my opening statement: All plants are outdoor plants, but any plant may be grown indoors if you give it what it needs. Some people have discovered what a particular temperate species needs, others have not. As a beginner, stick to tropical plants, such as Ficus species, that have no dormancy requirements for indoor growing. Match their natural growing conditions as closely as possible. As you gain experience you may want to try to grow some temperate species indoors by providing them with a yearly dormant period.

### November Possibility

In the next couple weeks, Skip and I will be checking out the possibility of collecting trees in a member's woods next spring. Our November event would be all of us going to the woods and marking the trees for digging in the Spring. Check for details in November's newsletter, along with other notes for 2010.

#### *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

# Ideas and suggestions for Club activities during 2010

## 1. Lecture subjects

- Repotting, including soil discussion
- Styling
- Tools and equipment
- Pots
- Plant physiology
- Lectures on specific species of trees; please list the species \_\_\_\_\_
- General Care (watering, light, etc.)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Activities

- Open studio/bring-your-own-tree workshop (everyone brings trees to work on)
- Collecting trip
- Auction
- Photo session of trees belonging to club members
- Trips to see other bonsai collections, exhibits, etc.; specify \_\_\_\_\_
- Tree workshops
  - Specify type of tree(s) you'd be interested in \_\_\_\_\_
  - Specify the price range you would be interested in:
    - Small starter tree, \$15 - \$50
    - Larger, more established tree, \$50 - \$100
    - Larger, older, high quality tree, \$100 and up
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Please list any knowledge, skills or talents that you feel you would be able to share with the Club members (lecture, workshop, etc.). \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Please list any activities you would be willing to help plan and organize. \_\_\_\_\_