



# Kongetsu

## West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 13 No. 8

September 2009

Mollie Hollar, Editor

### 2009 Schedule of Events

**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:** Fall 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

### Special Sale

On Saturday, October 10, Skip and I will be hosting a special sale at our home. Part of it will be the Grand Opening of my storefront for Basically Bonsai. The other part will be the sale of a bonsai collection for which we have been caring for over a year now.

Including in the collection sale are bonsai trees of all sizes, pots of all sizes, and many bonsai supplies including three fairly large turntables.

I will be sending out special invitations to the bonsai community in this area of the country (including all of you) so that these items won't spend yet another off-season in our care. I do want to let you all know about it first so you can make definite plans to attend.

We'll be offering light snacks, and Basically Bonsai purchases will be 10% off on that day.

### Winding Down

The 2009 bonsai season is indeed winding down, although I occasionally feel that it has hardly begun what with all the cool weather this summer. Perhaps it's also partly because I've become involved in so many other activities since last spring, an unplanned necessity due to my husband's non-employment situation. Whatever the reason, Autumn is almost upon us and That Cold Season (I don't like to name it at this point) will be following.

So what should we be doing with our bonsai at this point in the year? Repotting is definitely *not* something we should do with our deciduous, and since many of our tropicals are entering their slow-down period the most we'll want to do with them is to prepare for bringing them indoors for . . . That Season. Many bonsaiists who know a lot more about conifers than I do say it's ok to repot many of them in the Fall – I can't speak from experience on that.

And as for trimming, all I would do now is some minor shaping if you're planning to put something in our Fall Show in October. It might be very difficult on any new growth if we get cold weather soon. I will be putting a few of my trees in bonsai pots and doing a bit of pruning for the show, but I'll not disturb the roots much (definitely no cutting) and will return them to their nursery pots immediately after the show.

Fertilizing should also cease or slow down now. Of course if you've had fertilizer cakes on the soil surfaces it isn't necessary to remove them. Most of them are probably almost used up by now anyway.

Watering too can be slowed, but since we've been having some really warm, sunny days, be cognizant of your trees' needs and be sure to check them daily. Particularly since we haven't been getting any rain to speak of for a while, you'll need to keep watering probably daily at least for a while.

In the November newsletter I'll include some information for wintering for those of you who are going through that process for the first time.

### September Event

This month we'll be working on our trees to prepare them for our Fall Show. Bring any trees you want to enter if you'd like some assistance on what to do to prep them for an exhibit. In the October

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### *For Sale*

A 4 L model parts cleaner for bonsai tools. Does a fantastic job on your tools (or anything else that needs cleaning) in only a few minutes. Toss in your old yard pruners with 10 years of sap and crud build-up and clean them spotlessly (no exaggeration) in only a few minutes - even removes rust. Holds about 15-20 tools at one time. \$425. One year old and like new - only used 4 or 5 times.

<http://www.sharperetek.com/sharperetek-ultrasonic-cleaner-model-sh150-4l.html> Contact Al Fassezke at [fassezke@chartermi.net](mailto:fassezke@chartermi.net).

### *Yet More For Sale*

I received the following e-mail from former Club member Susan Hiddema:

"I would like to let your club members know that I am selling the inventory from CS Bonsai.

"Since Chuck's death I am finding that all these trees are too much for me to handle. I am trying to sell before the snow flies. The automatic sprinklers are taking care of them now, but I don't want to overwinter them.

"The inventory includes about 1,700 trees, 200 bonsai pots, growing benches, photography setup, shipping supplies, plastic pots and trays of various sizes, books, and some tools. The tool business is a not included, as it is a franchise.

"If anyone is interested, contact me at [csbonsai@live.com](mailto:csbonsai@live.com) or call 231-759-8850.

have someone do a write-up on bonsai mums for the show, adding some information about what you need to do to get them to bloom at a specific time. Please let me know if you'd like to work on this for a special mum exhibit.

I will also bring one or more of my trees that I'll "repot" for the show so you can see how I carry out this process.

Also, if you're having a problem with any of your trees, show-ready or not, bring them along for help from our members.

### *Remainder of article*

This is the rest of the article from the August newsletter on foliar feeding.

"In bonsai cultivation it is a fairly simple task, upon re-potting, to improve our soil characteristics and raise the CEC of the soil in order to help the plant to thrive. On the down side of course we are growing a plant in a very limited volume of soil that will be very quickly stripped of any inherent plant nutrients, hence our relative pre-occupation with "feeding" our trees. Foliar feeding can be a valuable aid to maintaining healthy bonsai, not just a 'pick me up' for a sickly plant.

"Armed with the knowledge they dug out of the research journals, commercial agricultural chemists began developing foliar feeding formulations. Their continuous product improvement and research has resulted in products containing not only specific plant nutrients, but also natural plant sugars that aid rapid entry and movement into and through plants, plus cytokinins extracted from seaweed, now stabilized for several years of shelf life.

"Cytokinins (a class of plant growth substances or plant hormones active in promoting cell division, and growth) together with nutrients aid natural plant defence mechanisms to resist many plant diseases and insect pests. We know that healthier plants, like humans, are better able to resist many pests compared to those in stressed, poor condition. Also we can see that the weakest plants are the ones most often attacked by insects, disease and mite pests. So a relatively small amount of plant nutrients, foliar-applied can result in a greater volume entering into the plant than is possible by root feeding alone. This fact can be exploited by the bonsai grower to great advantage because it enables us to get nutrients into a plant who's root system has been recently disturbed following re-potting or collection from the wild.....Thus aiding recovery.

"The best time to foliar feed is late evening to early morning. These are the times when the stomata (the small pores on the leaves) are open. Avoid foliar spraying when the temperature is above 80F and when the weather is hot and dry. Foliar spray when the temperature is 72F or below, when the cells of the leaf are full of water ie. the plant is not wilting and when the air temperature is cooler than soil surface temperature. Most stomata are located on the underside of the leaves so spray from beneath as well as above. As with all fertilizer applications only apply during active growth."

Graham Potter.

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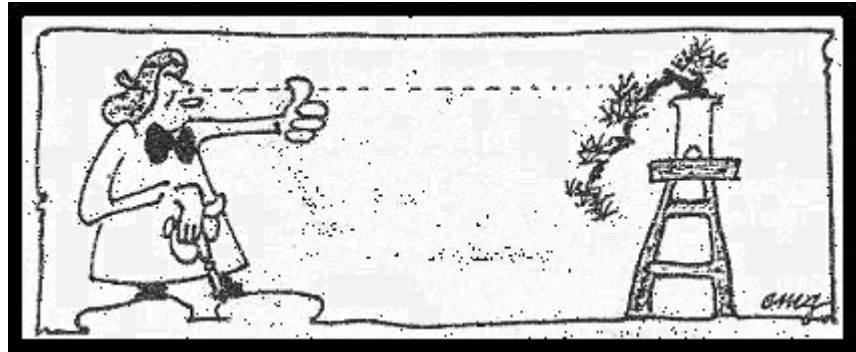
## Contest News

For a number of years **Joshua Roth Ltd. bonsai tool company and the American Bonsai Society** have sponsored a **New Talent Contest** for those who have ten years or less experience. In 2009 the contest will take place at the Golden State Bonsai Federation Convention in Riverside CA, Nov. 5-8. In 2010 the contest will take place at the Mid-Atlantic Bonsai Society Festival in the Catskills of New York in April. Students must go through a qualification round to enter the contest. Details for the 2009 contest can be found at <http://www.gsbfcconvention.com/contest.htm> More experienced members can enter the **ABS John Naka Design Contest**.

Details for this contest are found at <http://www.absbonsai.org/NakaAward.html>.

## From the ABS Forum

Check out the birthday cake his family made for ABS member Carl Rosner. Now that's love!



## **To help you prepare for – That Cold Season – from Evergreen Garden Works' Brent Walston.**

### **What is Dormancy?**

Dormancy is a survival strategy that temperate climate species have evolved to stay alive over the winter. These species have a biological clock that tells them to slow activity and prepare soft tissues for an onslaught of freezing temperatures. Species that have well developed dormancy needs cannot be tricked out of them. If you attempt to give a such as species, for instance Japanese maple, *Acer palmatum*, an eternal summer by bringing it in the house, it will grow continuously for as long as two years. After a maximum period of sustained growth, a temperate climate plant will automatically go dormant no matter what the season or condition. Deciduous plants will lose their leaves, evergreens will curtail all new growth. This is very stressful to the plant and usually fatal. It will be 100% fatal if the plant does not receive the necessary period of cold temperatures required to break the dormancy. To summarize, temperate climate plants require a cold dormant period. They have internal clocks that tell them when to go dormant. The clocks can be tricked to some degree. After a normal growing season, dormancy can be brought on by decreasing temperatures and shortened daylength, or delayed by maintaining summer temperatures and daylength.

### **Cold Hardiness**

Cold hardiness acquisition is also a necessary part of dormancy in temperate climates. Plants begin entering dormancy by setting buds in mid to late summer. Stem tissues begin increasing levels of sugars and carbohydrates in response to lowering temperatures in the fall. By the time freezing temperatures arrive, they have developed enough natural antifreeze to survive freezes. Different species develop different degrees of cold hardiness according to their natural environment. The degree of cold hardiness they can acquire is genetically determined. Roots do not develop cold hardiness in the same fashion and must be protected to a greater extent than top growth in container plants.

### **Breaking Dormancy**

In order for these species to break dormancy and begin growing again they must acquire the requisite number of hours of cold temperatures. For most of these species it is 1000 hours of temperatures below 40F. Once this requirement has been satisfied the plant may begin growing again immediately. The new growth is triggered by temperature alone. If temperatures rise much above 40F for any extended period of time, say a week or so, the buds will break and the plant will begin growing. This can happen outside in January if there is a freak warm spell, or it can be artificially manipulated if plants are brought indoors. A return to cold weather will of course kill the new growth and buds.

### **Dormancy in Tropicals**

Tropical and subtropical plants that have evolved under milder conditions have modest or no dormancy requirements. They are capable of continuous growth at 70F+ temperatures. In fact most tropical species will grow more slowly or not at all at certain times of the year, but this is not related to dormancy. Andy Walsh refers to this phenomenon as 'quiescence'. Temperate climate plants also exhibit this phenomenon, most notably during the hot dry part of summer for desert plants. Growth resumes when favorable conditions returns.

### **Treatment of Subtropicals**

Subtropicals such as Chinese elms, *Ulmus parvifolia*, have little if any dormancy requirements. In colder areas they drop their leaves, go dormant and act like deciduous trees. In milder, non freezing environments, they are evergreen and exhibit continuous growth except for occasional 'quiescence'. They require fairly high light levels and that will be the most difficult factor to maintain. A sunny window is usually insufficient and supplemental light, such as a fluorescent lamp six inches above the plant, is strongly recommended. Most subtropical plants that do not have strict dormancy requirements, still seem to perform better if they have a brief cold dormant period that allows them to lose their foliage. Both Chinese elm and Pomegranate, *Punica granatum*, fall into this category.

[More next month]