



Kongetsu

West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 14 No. 5

June 2010

Mollie Hollar, Editor

2010 Schedule of Events

Thur, June 17: *Walk-down for MABA, 7:00 PM
Fri-Sun, June 25-27: *MABA convention
Thur, July 8: Tropical repotting
Fri, July 23: Frank Mihalic deadwood demo
Sat, July 24: Frank Mihalic deadwood workshop
Sat, Aug 14: *Silent auction & potluck
Sept: TBD
Fri, Oct 15: Set-up for Club Fall Show
Sat & Sun, Oct 16 & 17: Club Fall Show
Thur, Oct 21: Planning for 2011
Nov: TBD
Events *not* marked with a * take place at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park. Specifics of each event will be given in each month's newsletter.

Bonsai Haiku

*beside my bonsai
completing the composition
sits my accent frog*

This is the last bonsai haiku that I collected from some forgotten source. Who among you can come up with more of them?

*Adopt the pace of nature: her
secret is patience.*
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Huge, Important Event This Month

The event we have been planning for two years is actually happening in two weeks! The 2010 MABA Convention at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in downtown Grand Rapids will be Friday, June 25 through Sunday morning, June 27, with set-up on Thursday, June 24.

It is very important that we have assistance from all members for this show. We have held the pre-work to a minimum, planning for most of the help from Club members during the show.

Our first event for this month is a walk-down of the site of the convention **on Thursday, June 17. NOTE THAT WE ARE MEETING AT THE AMWAY GRAND at 7:00 PM.** Luckily the areas in which the show is taking place are fairly contained so this meeting shouldn't be very long. I will have a chart of volunteer positions so that you can sign up for the job you'd most like. I have included that list below so you can give it some thought before the meeting. In case you can't make the meeting, *please call or e-mail me to let me know where you'll be helping.*

I can't stress enough the importance of having everyone help for this show. Things can quickly fall apart if we don't have enough volunteers. Please plan to be there. If for whatever reason you can't afford the registration cost please let me know so we can see if we can work something out.

Volunteer positions:

Set-up (mostly helping vendors): Thursday 4:00-10:00 PM

Exhibit set-up: Thursday 4:00-10:00 PM, Friday 7:00-8:00 AM

Registration: Thursday 5:00-7:00 PM, Friday 8:00 AM-5:00 PM,
Saturday 8:00 AM-5:00 PM

Assist in demos and workshops throughout the convention (need four for each time period)

Exhibit throughout to watch trees and answer questions

Tree waterer (occasional)

Raffle ticket sales

Tear-down Sunday after Noon

Give this some thought so you can sign up for your chosen position next Thursday at the Amway Grand by the reservation/check-in desk at 7:00 PM. Remember that another show of this caliber will not happen again in our area for a good many years.

Interesting Articles

I have collected several excellent articles from the Columbus (Ohio) Bonsai Society newsletter. Since this is the appropriate season for most of this information to benefit you, I'll be including several in this newsletter.

Mollie Hollar

616-754-2351

hollar@chartermi.net

520 W South Street, Greenville MI 48838

Dawn Redwood, Metasequoia glyptroboides

By Ken Schultz

I have a Dawn Redwood planted in my back yard. Several line the left side of the 11th hole at Mental Memorial Golf Course (formerly Bolton Field). Therefore, you may rest assured that Dawn Redwood is outdoor hardy to central Ohio. Seedlings are frequently offered for a few dollars; literally a stick in a pot. However, because they grow very quickly their trunk will thicken up in a few years.

When I think of Dawn Redwoods, I associate them with Sequoia, Bald Cypress and Larch. All Dawn Redwood come from a grove found in western China in 1947, previously thought to be extinct.

An article found on the Pittsburgh Bonsai Society's website states that 24 seeds went to Cleveland in 1948. All 24 germinated; one of these is growing in the Japanese Garden in Rockefeller Park in Cleveland. Since then horticulturists have developed several varieties including a Golden Dawn Redwood.

Metasequoia have a lacy compound leaf that, while it looks similar to Taxus, is deciduous. The foliage is actually finer and thinner than Taxus and the new growth has light green spring coloration. The foliage is tender and allowing your bonsai to dry out could result in the tree's death. The temptation is to keep them too wet, but that only promotes root rot. I know, because the roots grow so rapidly they can plug the drain holes in a pot. The poor drainage will result in rotting roots and dead trees. Whenever I repot Redwood, I find that the roots have coiled 3-4 or more times around the pot; frequently creating
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Maples - A Deeper Look at Technique Revisited

By Zack Clayton

A lot of books and magazine articles advise that you should let the shoots [of maples] elongate and then pinch back to two or three buds. Repeat with the new growth. This is generally what I do and it works nicely to get the basic structure in place. But, if I kept that up then every year, I would be adding two to four leaf nodes at the end of every branch. How long will it take a mame to outgrow itself at that rate? I grow mostly larger trees but even on a two hand tree, it adds up over time. I have started cutting back to one node but that just slows the expansion down a bit. I find leaf pruning to be a much better way to do this as it forces back branching and ramification that lets me get rid of those outreaching heavy twigs. It is still not perfect though.

I have very few mame sized trees, let alone mame maples. I have just started adding them to my collection the last couple of years. I have begun experimenting with trying the Sumo method of growing small trunks.

Basically this is where you let a tree grow on for a couple of years to add girth to the trunk and then chopping that seedling to force a latent bud low on the trunk to become the new leader. Repeat until you have a suitable thick little trunk with some built in taper to start growing branches. I have had reasonable success doing this in the ground and in oil pan nurseries. I think the oil pan gives better results as the trees grown in the ground want to grow deep roots and tend to have longer internodes. I have better results keeping the potential for mame in the container. I can control the fertilizer application and pest control [is] a little better too. Oil pans have enough soil mass that they have very even moisture levels unless you forget to water it for more than a week in July.

There are ways to grow and maintain small maples with tremendous ramification. The key word here is maintain. Now, if it is possible to maintain the size and shape of a mame maple for 30 or 50 years, why not apply those techniques to the shohin and larger size trees that I grow? I have them in the size I want and the branch structure basically defined. Now, what do I do to maintain them for the long term?

Most of these are not instant gratification techniques. The methods detailed here will take time to achieve results. But then, they are techniques to hold the line on style and size for our lifetime. First, be sure that you do everything to maintain the vigor and health of the tree that you can. You will be stressing it with these techniques but they should be okay if they are otherwise in good condition.

In the spring, let the tree grow for 6 to 8 weeks. In central Ohio, this will usually be around the 2nd or 3rd week of May. Then, before the new growth starts to lignify, cut them back to the original bud location and leaf prune everything that is left. In about 2 weeks, you will see new buds forming at the branch ends. Pinch these off also, do not let them develop. In about another 2 weeks, you will start to see small buds at most of the branch and twig junctions. Take off any of these that are growing vertically up or down, but leave the horizontal buds alone. They will be the basis for your style maintenance. Select the buds that support the form you desire and pinch off the other buds after they leaf out. At some point, you will start removing some of the older branches and just use the younger wood/buds for the style
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Redwood (cont)

a root mat at the bottom of their pot. As opposed to Bald Cypress, Dawn Redwood comes from well drained upland areas, where the soil drains well. They need annual repotting. Fortunately, they can take severe root pruning. When repotting, position the roots to develop a good buttress, which they will do in a relative few years.

Also, because they grow rapidly, they want to be a tall straight tree. This makes them a styling problem. Almost every Redwood, Cypress and Sequoia that I have seen has a flat top and the trunk hollowed. The exception would be groves of seedlings that look good for a short time. In nature, the tree develops an inverted teardrop shape. As the name implies the bark is reddish, as is the foliage in the fall before it drops off.

Because of the thin foliage, some dappled shade is advisable in the summer; full sun is OK in the spring. When your tree matures, it may produce cones similar to Larch. Cones are usually only on trees that are 20-30 years old. If you collect the seeds and stratify them in your fridge, you may be able to sprout your own forest.

To help fatten your trunks, you may want to plant your Redwood in the ground. Be advised deer will bite out the top.

When you style, you will find that Redwood back bud all the way to the trunk. The best time for pruning is mid March, before they start active growth. It is possible to totally remove branches and expect buds to develop where you want them.

My research advises weekly feeding while they are growing.

(cont page 4 col 1)

Maples (cont)

and foliage pads. Always arrange to leave one bud on the tip of a branch. This severe pinching is how these trees exhibit a minimum of growth.

Now where I have not followed my own advice is I read this in early spring and then forget to do the complete new growth removal and extra pinching at the right time. And timing seems to be important for this to really work right; that or removing all the new growth.

If you are preparing the tree for a show, try to time this so that you have new bud and leaf growth about a month old for the display. In theory, this whole cycle may happen twice for central Ohio. Please note: Everything works in theory, why can I not live there? Areas with a longer summer or very early spring may be able to push this to 3 times a summer. I think I would want to try it correctly once first. Just watch out for August and dry heat. These conditions would not be good for this treatment. I think that for the whole Midwest this would prevent three cycles.

If you want to create more branch buds or encourage growth near the branch tips then you can defoliate the entire tree. Or, if you want to let the ramification develop at the tips, then you need do nothing more. If you want to force ramification back on the branches, then pinch out the tip buds as they start to develop. To defoliate a tree cut the leaves off at the base of the leaf where it attaches to the stem (petiole). Leave the stem attached to the branch until it dries and falls off. This protects the potential bud and allows the tree to adsorb some nutrition out of the stub as it dies back.

What if you want an area of weaker growth to regain its vigor? There are a couple of ways to do this. Just pinch out the stronger leaders and leave the weaker sprouts alone. When you defoliate or do the less severe leaf pruning, leave the smaller leaves on interior or weak branches alone. The other method is to continually take off the larger leaves on the tree. If you figure out the average leaf size then pick off the largest 5% of the leaves. You can do this anytime you see large leaves developing and it can safely continue throughout the life of the tree.

Either technique serves to let light and air in to the interior of the tree. Light on the interior leaves means they are producing more sugars (food) from those leaves and this feeds the cambium layers supported by them. Remember that mineral salts and water flow up the sap wood to the leaves, and produce the sugars that the cambium and roots actually feed on.

If you want to increase the girth of a trunk or branch, use sacrificial branches. Leave these branches alone and do not defoliate, leaf prune, or pinch them. They are growth engines and you will remove them when they have served their purpose at the end of the season. A sacrificial branch can remain on for more than a year or two, but my experience tells me that for the Red, Sugar, Black, and Norway maples that I work with most of the time, a new branch will give me more growth at the next season plus the pruning scar will be smaller. Since they are maples, there will be plenty of available sprouts on a vigorous tree.

To thicken a whole trunk chose a sprout near the apex, or a sprout that will be part of the future trunk line. To increase taper choose a sprout near (below) the point you want the taper to start decreasing. For a thicker branch, treat it as if you were working on the entire trunk with that branch as the apex. The important thing with this procedure is to select sacrifice branches and sprouts that you can delete without trashing the design. This

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Redwood (cont)

They like organic foods. I have seen Japanese Beetles attack them, so they are not pest free.

Current Potential Problems

The recent rainfall presents some possible problems.

Light: If your trees are already in shade, you will have 2 problems. One is that the tree above is providing so much shade your bonsai below is leaning towards the light because of the extra cloud cover. Moving your trees temporarily might be a solution. Remember that under a tree, you WILL find that the big tree provides a rain shadow. The trees out in your yard are SOAKING WET, but the trees under that oak or maple are dry and need watering.

Next is fertilizing; if you use a liquid solution all this rain will wash your fertilizer through the bonsai mix in 4 days or less. Poo Balls or Osmacote type, slow release can be the answer. [My rapeseed cakes work very well for this situation too. – Ed.]

Root-rot: Make sure your bonsai containers are able to drain. [Proper soil is important too. – Ed.] If you have large diameter pots you may need to put them on a slight tilt to help move the water along. Watch out for trees that hold water at the surface when you water, or that seem to still be very wet when compared to ones that you have repotted this year. Skip them when you water everyday – they might need every other day. Whatever you do, pay attention or you may find root rot. This condition can cause foliage to be limp and you will think – Oh, it needs more water, when it is actually drowning.
Ken Schultz again

Maples (cont)

will usually mean something coming off the back of the trunk or the bottom of a branch. As you get to about 10% of the final height of a tree's size, but you still want it thicker, try to choose several branches as the sacrifice(s). This will keep you from having one heavy scar or branch stub far up the tree where it would be out of proportion. Two or three smaller scars up there will be much easier to hide.

Wire or pinch for your growth habit as soon as the branch or trunk will hold the shape. It is much easier to shape a 1/8" whip than a 1/4-1/2" stick. The whip is not as apt to break and you have more time for the bark to heal if the wire scars it. Actually, try to get your wire off before the branch scars. I cannot show data to prove it, but scarred branches always seem to take longer to develop. Whenever scarring occurs, stressing occurs in that area and development seems to slow down as a result.

References:

The Secret of Maple Creation. Keiko Harris and Jean Smith. Bonsai Magazine. May/June 1995. pp 8 - 11. (Translated from Bonsai Sekei. Issue 7.)
The History of the Reshaping of a Trident Maple. Yoneia Zuyo. Bonsai Today 32. 1994-4. pp 58 - 62.

2010 Membership Form

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Mollie Hollar
520 W South St
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Or bring to any meeting or workshop.

How strange that nature does not knock, and yet does not intrude!

- Emily Dickinson

I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in.

- George Washington Carver