



Kongetsu

West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 15 No. 7

August 2011

Mollie Hollar, Editor

2011 Schedule of Events

Sat, Aug 20: Potluck & silent auction

Sun, Aug 21: Tree marking trip

Thur, Sept 15: Prep for fall Club show

Fri, Oct 14: Set-up for fall Club show

Sat & Sun, Oct 15 & 16: Fall Club show

November meeting: Date TBD, planning meeting for 2012.

All events are held at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park unless otherwise noted. Thursday meetings are from 7:00 to 9:00 PM, and Saturday meetings/workshops are from 9:00 AM to Noon unless otherwise noted.

So Much to Share So Little Space

Since I began working on my new website (www.basicallybonsai.com) I have found myself discovering even more amazing websites than ever. Because so many of our members don't have access to computers and the Internet, I am sharing in our newsletters as much of that information as space allows.

However, if any of you have a special request for something you'd like to see info on here, please let me know. I'm always open to suggestions.

Last Month

Our July demo and workshop led by Pauline Muth were the most popular events in recent years. Pauline is such a great instructor and so patient with all our questions. I know everyone learned something, and it was a very enjoyable evening and morning.

It was made doubly enjoyable for me due to the attendance of a good number of my veteran students. I'm still getting comments about how much they learned and how glad they were that they could attend. They are making great progress in our classes, and some have very nice beginner trees. I'm looking forward to our October Club show so they can exhibit their treasures.

Since our expenses for these events were more than we had anticipated, I urge you to attend the following event.

This Month

Our annual silent auction and potluck are coming up on Saturday, August 20, at Steve and Michelle Kuchta's house (directions/map on page 6). We're changing things around a bit this year so read this carefully. We're going to set up for the auction beginning at 10:00 AM and then do some of the bidding provided we get set up fairly quickly. *Please* try to be there as close to 10:00 as possible. It's ok if you don't have anything to bring to be auctioned. You can still help to set up.

This is the way the silent auction works:

1. **If you have any bonsai-related items you don't use or don't want any longer, bring them along with a list of reasonable beginning prices.** These items could include tools, pots, books, magazines, seedlings, pre-bonsai, bonsai, and clay figures. Even something like Japanese gardening books might bring in some money. (The profits from the auction will all go to the Club, so if you have something you want to sell for yourself you can do that another time.)
2. **When you get to the auction, you will fill out a small bid sheet** with the category of the item (book, plant, tool etc) and beginning bid price. The auction items will be set up on tables.
3. **When we are finished setting up, bidding will begin.** First, you will take a look at everything to get an idea of what you'd like to bid on. Then you'll go back to each item and write your name and bid amount in the appropriate column on the bid sheet next to the item. Do that for as many items as you would like. (Lots would be best for the Club!) As you're bidding, try to keep track of which items you bid on, and return to those items to see if someone else has written in a higher bid. If so, below the other person's name, write your own name again and your new bid. We should be fine with first names and maybe last initials.

Mollie Hollar

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August Chicago Show

In an e-mail from the Midwest Bonsai Society:

Visitors to the 34th Annual Mid-America Bonsai Show & Sale will learn all about this living art form on Friday, August 19 through Sunday, August 21.

The Midwest Bonsai Society presents this show, renowned as the best in the Midwest and one of the top three in the country because it draws enthusiasts from all over the United States.

Visitors can view a judged display of 200 bonsai trees and speak with this year's guest master, Ryan Neil. More than a dozen vendors will offer everything bonsai related, including bonsai trees, raw nursery stock, pots, tools and supplies. Free demonstrations and lectures will be held. Visit www.midwestbonsai.org for more information on workshops. Sale hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on all three days. Show hours are from noon to 5 p.m. on Friday August 19, and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, August 20 and Sunday, August 21. Free demonstrations and lectures will be held on Friday at 2 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Interesting Tidbit

“Many people are attracted to bonsai through a love of nature. Even if you live far from open landscape, with bonsai you can enjoy the magnificence and beauty of nature recreated on a manageable scale, because the specimens have been inspired directly by the way in which trees grow in the wild.” (from *Bonsai* by Harry Tomlinson)

(Auction cont)

4. **At the end of the bidding time each item will be awarded to the highest bidder.** You will need to have cash or check to pay for your new bonsai acquisitions.

Depending on how long the set-up and bidding take, we'll eat either after set-up or after the bidding. We'd like to eat around Noon but we can be flexible on this.

So what do you need to bring? A dish to pass for 15-20 people, in one of the following categories:

- Snacks
- Main dish
- Salad/Veggies
- Dessert

I'd like for someone to volunteer to bring paper plates, plastic tableware and paper or plastic cups. If you would like to do this, please contact me at one of the contacts on page 1 by Wednesday, August 17. We have found over the years that we get a fairly good variety of dishes by just giving categories, so you don't need to let me know about anything else.

Our annual silent auction is an excellent opportunity especially for beginners to obtain many bonsai-related items without spending a lot of money. I know, although I haven't sorted, and I'll be bringing a lot of seedlings and pre-bonsai that I've had for several years and haven't yet done anything with. So come and be prepared to stock up!

Also in August

A few months ago Skip and I met Steve and Michelle Kuchta at her grandmother's property near Lowell to look over the variety and sizes of trees that would be available for the Club members to collect. What an amazing trip! I was amazed at the different kinds of trees there are, and the sizes of some of them. I guarantee that anyone who wants to build their collection *for free* will be anxious to make this trip. This from Michelle:

Tree Hunting Day – Sunday, August 21

Steve and Michelle Kuchta will host (weather permitting) a **Tree Hunting Day** at Michelle's Grandma's House in Lowell. Pauline LaDue has 40 acres, most of it wooded. There are both conifers and deciduous trees. (Not to mention trillium, chicory, creeping jenny, hawkweed, lily of the valley, etc) We'll meet in the driveway at 10:00am, and start walking at 10:15-20. There will be mosquitoes and pricker bushes, so long pants are *highly recommended*. There may be poison ivy, so be forewarned. Good shoes are necessary, too – sneakers or hiking boots are great. Depending on turn out, how far people want to walk, and how long they want to stay, we could walk back to the house around noon and throw a picnic. Afterwards, we could go walking some more. FYI – We can use the restroom in Grandma's house, but at the far edges of the property, we may be a 30 minute – or more! – walk away.

This is a great opportunity to find some very reasonably priced trees. All it will cost you is time & effort! We will return to harvest trees in the spring, date TBD.

Interested? Call Michelle at 616-881-5568 to RSVP.

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Other Tidbits

Masaru Yamaki's Views on Appreciating Bonsai

Each bonsai has its special quality. Some express changes in the four seasons, while others express the elegance of nature in a pot.

Bonsai is not limited to expensive trees in a classic shape. Indeed, by using excessive wire or growing unnecessary branches in order to create a classic shape, the artist may fail to express the tree's essential beauty.

Trees best expressing bonsai no kokoro (the spirit of bonsai) are often marked by unaffected simplicity. Even if the tree has a slender trunk, it can still touch one's heart deeply, conveying with overflowing vitality the beauty of nature in fields and mountains.

-Edited by WBFF Correspondent, L. K.

Did You Know . . . ?

Bonsai most likely originated in China over 2000 years ago. A Chinese legend from the Han dynasty mentions it. It is called "pen-jing" or "pun-sai" there.

Brooklyn Botanic Gardens received its first collection of 32 bonsai in 1925. The collection now numbers over 700 plants!

One reason for the popularity of bonsai is that it could be easily packed up and moved by migrating families, carried over long distances, and re-established in the household when the family was settled. It was also more available for medicinal use that way.

The oldest tree in the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens collection, a Sargent juniper, was 850 years old when it was added to the collection in 1971.

(Tree hunting cont)

If weather is questionable (either rain or TOO hot or both), call Michelle to see if Tree Hunting Day is a go / no go.

What to Wear:

Long pants
Sneakers / Hiking boots

What to Bring:

WATER
Bug spray
Sun block
Hat
Work gloves (for handling thorny/prickly trees/bushes etc)
Brightly colored ribbons / strings to mark trees for harvest next spring
Tree identifying books
Camera to snap photo of tree / tree location
Notebook to record tree characteristics / location
Fanny pack / back pack to carry water, ribbons, tree books, etc
Cooler & Picnic lunch (if you want to stay for a picnic)

Where to Go:

Grandma Pauline LaDue
13290 36th Street SE
Lowell MI 49333

How to Get There:

From I-96:
Take exit 52, Alden Nash Avenue.
Go north (if you're coming from Grand Rapids, this is a left turn).
Turn right (east) at Cascade Road (first traffic light).
Turn left (north) at Segwun Avenue (first cross street).
Turn right (east) at 36th Street (Dirt road. 36th Street "T's" into Segwun).
House is on the right (south) side of the road; it is white with black shutters & 3 stall garage.

There are lots of trees blocking your view of the house, so drive slow, or you'll miss the driveway.

If you go past McBride cemetery, you've gone too far.

If you're really lost (or running late) call Michelle. 616-881-5568.

Michelle has been so thorough that I can think of little to add, except to call attention to last item under What to Bring: cooler and picnic lunch. Grandma's property is gorgeous, and you'll enjoy just sitting in the huge backyard and looking around. I encourage the lunch – bring your own sandwich and drink etc.

More Information on Bonsai

In keeping with my intentions to give you as much information as possible, the article on the next two pages is from the Columbus (OH) Bonsai Society's newsletter – just an idea for a future planting!

PREPARATION FOR GROUP PLANTINGS

I know several of the club members got the bare root bundles from Dan this year. As promised, they were very nice, with various size trunks and height variation to match for a good forest planting. There is just one problem with getting bare root bundles. They have a pronounced tap root and a few lateral roots. There are not enough laterals to support the tree's nutrition needs and certainly they are rarely if ever physically strong enough to support the tree. There is some prep work to do before these go on a slab.

This is also true even if you salvage seedlings from a flower bed in your yard. The darn things think they need a tap root for some reason and it is always too long to go in a tray. Even if it is flexible enough to bend, you want to get rid of that thing. Otherwise, you have one big root to one side and not much else. What to do, what to do?

Here is what I do. Get some of those black plastic utility trays from one of the big box hardware stores. They sell them for concrete mixing or as "oil pans". They are 5-6 inches deep and are usually 18x30 or 24x36 inches. I have cut round holes and screened them but it is a pain and the plastic is not stiff enough to wire them in securely. I now either cut short slots in the bottom with a saw or punch lots of holes with a pair of old pruners. Either works fine. I fill them about 1 inch deep with old growing media. Yeah, old soil mix. I do not know why but it works better than fresh. Probably for the same reason that old rooting sand works better for cuttings.

Now get your bare root stock together with a pail of water. Take one and tease out the roots and find a place to amputate the tap root about 3 inches below the soil surface. Dunk it in the water and plant it in the pan and dump more of the old soil around the roots. Rinse and repeat. For this first step, I put them in rows about 3 to 4 inches apart. If they are really puny, I may get closer. I have had up to fifty maple seedlings in a pan like this. After the pan is planted, soak the soil and keep them well misted for about a week and then water and fertilize as normal for you.

Year two. (Figs 1 & 2) Leaf prune and get some ramification started. This year the lateral roots are going to grow and strengthen.

Fig 1: After one year



Fig 2: After trimming and defoliating.

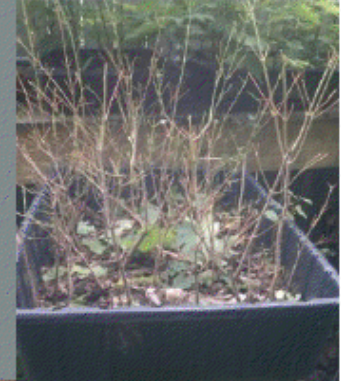


Fig 3: 3rd year roots before trimming



Fig 4: 3rd year roots after trimming



(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

Year three. (Figs 4, 5 & 6) Get thee a strong chopstick (I use a gutter nail), a pail of water, and a new pan. Prepare the pan as for the first year. Get the root mass out of the old pan and start teasing the roots apart. Collect the soil for next year's batch. Top prune at this time for a general shape and branching pattern. You should have some nice lateral roots this time, get them spread out and trim them about 3 inches away from the trunk. Take off an inch or so from the tap root. Dip them in the water and plant them in the pan. Add soil and repeat. I plant them in rows about 5-6 inches apart this time. That is why you needed a new pan. You will go from one to two pans. You are also developing a nice flat root system that will hold the tree in place on a slab.

Year four. Is your slab ready? DOH! That is right; we know how to make them now out of plywood. You can go directly to the slab or you may want to trim any remnant of the tap root at this point, but you are ready to put your grove together with some well-developed trees and a decent root system that doesn't depend on wire to keep everything vertical (just in place and on the slab).

Why don't I just plant them in the ground for this? The roots will grow down instead of out, I want the type of root that grows in bonsai soil, its easier to keep weeds under control in the pan on a bench, its easier to repot in year three and four, and perhaps most important - I don't have that much ground space. Do I use anything in the water? No but a bit of rooting compound or Superthrive probably would not hurt. Yes, this takes a while and a bit of planning and patience, but this is bonsai we are talking about here.

Addendum I just harvested three more pans out of the front yard on Sunday 7/10. I expect better than 80% survival with this method. I pruned the tap root back as already described and cut back to 4-6 pairs of leaves. I have a couple of trunks 3/4 inch in diameter and they are the iffy ones. Not an ideal time to do this but hostas were going in the ground where they were.



Zack Clayton

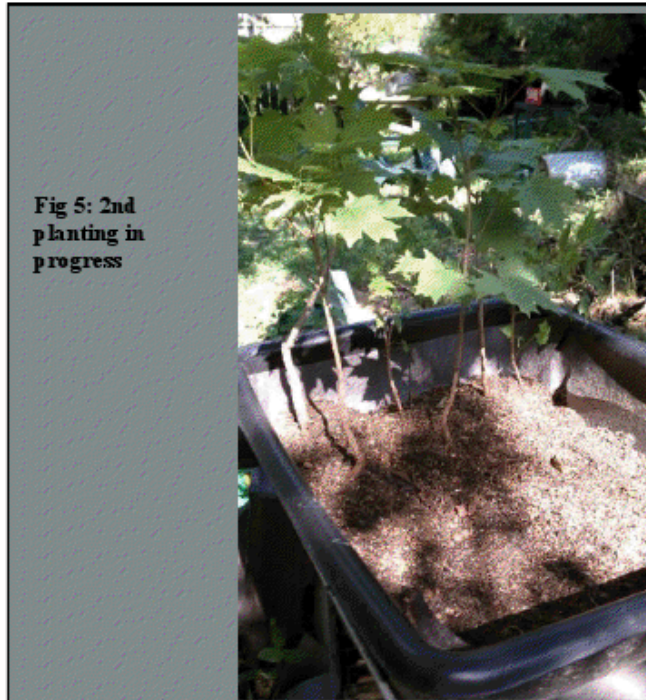


Fig 5: 2nd planting in progress



Fig 6: Repotted in shallow tray—3rd year

Directions to Steve and Michelle Kuchta's house at 4619 Westnedge Ave NW, Grand Rapids:

1. Take the West River Drive exit 91 off from US-131, turn right (west).
2. Turn right on Lamoreaux Dr.
3. Turn right on Westgate Dr.
4. Turn left on Westshire Dr.
5. Turn right on Westnedge Ave to 4619, on the northwest corner.

2011 Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phones: Home _____ Work: _____

E-mail: _____

(Check one:)

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

Hardship membership

(Check one:)

I prefer that my newsletter be e-mailed to me.

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Please make check out to:

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Jane Harrelson

1151 Parnell Ave SE

Ada MI 49301

Or bring to any meeting or workshop.