The Ann Arbor Bonsai Society generally meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens: 1800 N. Dixboro Rd. Ann Arbor. Please join us at 7:00 pm for socializing. The program starts at 7:30 pm. Dues are \$25.00 for the year 2006. http://www.annarborbonsaisociety.org

April 2006

Volume 3 Issue 4

April Club Meeting: Wednesday 26th Heavy Pruning: Branch & Root. Do not miss it!!

MARCH MEETING MINUTE REVIEW

By Jerry Peters, Recording Secretary.

7:00 PM SOCIALIZING

36 Members attended our club meeting this evening. There were also 3 guests.

7:30 PM PROGRAM

Planned Workshops

Registration help needed to assist Joan Wheeler for workshops. Work involved includes; collecting money, give out instructions, distribute wire etc. Contact Joan if you can give her assistance.

- * April 5th Deciduous Forrest or Clump Workshop – 6:30 to 9:30 pm in room 125 at MPG
- * April 12th Larch Forest Workshop – 6:30 to 9:30 pm in room 131 at MBG
- * May 4th Marco Invernizzi Workshop – Bring Your Own Tree, Registration Fee \$35.

6:30 to 9:30 pm room 139 MBG, Observers welcome for fee of \$5.

- * June 19th Jerry Meislik Schefflera Root over Rock Workshop 6:30 to 9:30 pm in room 125
- * MPG Workshop fee \$35. Plus pre purchase of either a small tree kit \$24. Or large tree kit \$72. Deadline for reservation is May 20th. (See March's newsletter for full details)

LIBRARY NEWS

Robert Bishop presented "Bonsai Europe" magazine for club member

information and that various DVD's are available from the Library.

SHOW AND TELL

Jack Wikle presented: "Understanding PH Management for Container Grown Crops" as a follow up with regard to last months meeting. Book passed around for those interested.

Jack also showed three miniature trees beautifully grown under fluorescent lights.

- * Firethorn (Pyracantha Coccinea)
- * Cypress
- * Chenise Sweetplum (Sageretia Thea)

Clive Taylor displayed a maple forest planting for the club to marvel at. Trees were expertly wired and beginning to leaf out.

Drywall tape, waterproof, yellow color, suggested as a less expensive drainage cover, than the usual plastic versions. Tape is available at Home Depot. Tip provided by Nathan Foster.

Lois Vorrath displayed a selection of her beautiful hand made pottery for club members to purchase.

Robert Bishop presented a wire caddy that stores and dispenses various size wires. "Bonsai Europe" magazine also has a more elaborate wire caddy version. Contact Robert for additional information.

MAIN EVENT

Everything you ever wanted to know about the Larch with Bill Heston.

LARCH

- *Member of the pine family
- *Deciduous conifers, which shed their leaves in the fall and bear cones

similar to those of their evergreen relatives.

*The needle-like leaves turn yellow in autumn before dropping.

*Needles form in early spring.

*Needles tend to be long and floppy. To achieve shorter needles, pinch back shoots during entire growing season.

*Trees do not like prolonged summer heat.

*American Larch – Northern States and Canada

*Dahurian Larch – cold climate

*European Larch – zone 2

*Japanese Larch – zone 4

*Deadwood – Cuts heal rapidly

Larch Styles

- *Single specimen
- *Root over rock
- *Forrest on slab

Collecting

*Early spring before buds form or late summer

Soil Mix

*Basic soil mix

Pictures of various larch trees were shown.

Ouestions

*How do you develop lower branches? Let upper branches grow

*Color of pot? – Terra Cotta or White would be two choices

Inside this Issue:

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PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS

How to take better pictures of your bonsais. By Carl Bergstrom

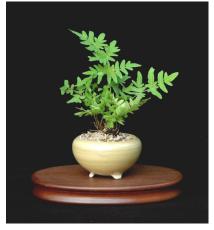
We present this article since we believe it is important to record the progress of your bonsai, either by using a journal and/or taking pictures of your trees.

It always brings a sense of accomplishment and personal satisfaction to view your tree from its humble beginnings as a cutting, graft, air layering, nursery stock, collected material, etc. all the way to its present state.

This is the first of four sections devoted to give you tips to improve your photographic skills with an emphasis in bonsai.

Tip 1: Use a backdrop

To show your bonsai to the best of its potential, you need to remove distracting elements from the background. The best way to do this is to use a backdrop. I usually use black velvet so I'll focus on that here --- but other colors or fabrics may be equally appropriate. Photek makes nice backdrops in a range of colors; duvetyne fabric reportedly provides very nice light-swallowing black at a relatively low price

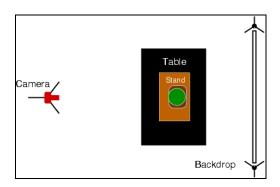


Color

A black backdrop makes the tree "pop" out, whereas light colors provide a softer, more balanced look. In the Kokufu albums, black backdrops are used primarily for flowering trees, and occasionally to highlight the white bark of deciduous trees such as beech or the white deadwood of junipers. An off-white backdrop is used for the majority of the trees.

Position

I position the backdrop at least 5 feet behind the tree, for two reasons. First, the distance makes it easier to keep my reflectors or light sources from throwing light on the backdrop. Second, the backdrop will be out of focus when the tree is in focus - and thus little lint marks, creases, etc., are less likely to be visible.



Exposure

Using a black backdrop confuses the light meter on most cameras; the meter expects a scene to be roughly 17% grey instead of the much darker value of a black backdrop. If you don't correct for this, you'll end up with a photograph where the tree and background are too bright, or "washed out." To compensate underexpose the image by using a shorter shutter time (or small aperture) than expected. I typically get good results by under-exposing by 1.3 to 1.7 stops.

If you are using a white backdrop, the light meter also gets fooled, but in this case the problem is reversed. If you don't correct for it, you'll end up with an image where both tree and background are too dark. To compensate, you'll need to slightly overexpose the image by using a longer shutter time (or larger aperture) than expected.

If you'd rather avoid the problem than compensate for it, you can use a neutral grey or blue backdrop. These colors are usually close enough to the expected 17% grey that you will not need to adjust your exposure time.

A cheap alternative. For those of you who don't want to invest in a stand and photographic backdrop, there are cheap alternatives. The picture below was taken using a one-dollar piece of blue posterboard, bent into a rounded curve.

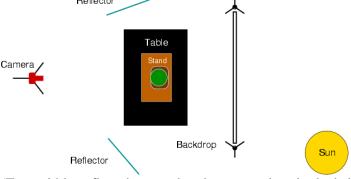


Tip 2: Plan your lighting

Good lighting makes the difference between a mediocre photograph and a good one. I like to use natural light, though with a high-quality artificial lighting setup I could probably do even better. Under natural light, I find

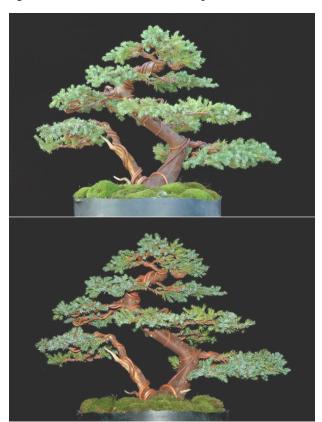
that I get my best results when I position the tree in the shade on a sunny day or a bright overcast day. I bounce light back onto the tree with a set of reflectors; this creates a sense of depth. You can either buy a set of reflectors at any good photography store, or you can make your own by taping crumpled and re-flattened aluminum foil to a piece of posterboard.

Accounting for natural light, our previous setup diagram might look something like the following:



(To avoid lens flare, be sure that the camera lens is shaded from the direct sun.)

Some enthusiasts suggest shooting at night by flash, with nothing in the background. While this works in a pinch, I find that the flash-by-night approach creates an image that is too flat and too high in contrast. Compare the photographs below. The top one was taken with a black backdrop under natural daylight; the bottom one was taken at night with a flash and no backdrop.



Look at how much the lighting affects the texture of the tree. In the upper photo, the tree is soft and lush. You could almost nap among the boughs. In the lower photo, the foliage is spiky and harsh. The photos were taken 12 hours apart, and the tree hasn't changed at all --- it's all in the lighting. Sometimes you may wish to achieve something closer to the spiky appearance of the latter photograph, for artistic effect. Even if you do, direct light or strong reflected light is probably preferable to a head-on flash.

Tips 3 & 4 will be included in the next month's edition:

Tip 3: Shoot from a tripod.

Tip 4: Create depth of field and minimize distortion

Extracted from Carl Bergstrom's article, for more details visit: http://octavia.zoology.washington.edu/bonsai/photography/camera.html

BONSAI FROM THE WILD BY NICK LENZ IS BACK!

We noticed that in the latest issue of Bonsai Today the Nick Lenz's book *Bonsai From The Wild* is being republished as a revised and extended second edition. It will be soon published by Stone Lantern.

As you know this was the book recommended by Bill Heston during his presentation on Larch this past meeting. Unfortunately the publisher had previously deemed it as Out Of Print Indefinitely. It is not in print yet, but we are working in securing copies at a discounted price. More details to come about how and when to place your order.

SOIL MIX INGREDIENT AVAILABLE

By Jack Wikle

Had seen this product in use by a well-known Milwaukee area bonsai grower and wished it was available locally. Then, recently, I've discovered that the same attractive red-brown "starter chicken grit" ("No. 1 Cherry Stone") can be purchased from the Cutler-Dickerson Co., 507 College Ave., Adrian, MI, 49221. Ph. 517-265-5191. Cost will be "a little over \$5 for a 50 lb. bag.

The proprietor is willing to order to meet demand. Delivery to him takes 7-10 days, so call in advance to confirm availability.

SAGUARO NURSERY TOUR

The Saguaro Nursery staff has invited AABS to a tour of the nursery on May 10th at 6 PM. They will offer a tour of the nursery and a 10% discount on plant material.

They have a wide assortment of conifers, dwarf conifers, woody plants and alpine plants of interest to bonsai enthusiasts.

If you want to attend this event please contact Bill Heston (734) 662-8699 so he can give the Saguaro staff a rough head count prior to the tour.

Saguaro Nursery is located on W. Five Mile Rd. about one mile north of N. Territorial Road. It is a short distance from the US 23-N. Territorial Road interchange.

Follow this link for a map:

http://maps.yahoo.com/maps result?addr=470+W+5+MILE+RD&csz=WHITMORE+LAKE%2C+MI+45457&country=us&new=1&name=&qty

2006 MICHIGAN ALL STATE BONSAI SHOW

May 6th and 7th, 2006 Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm and Sunday from 12 to 5 pm

When it comes to bonsai, we'll go out on a limb.

Whether you're new to the art or an old hand, you'll absolutely delight in the eighth annual Michigan All-State Bonsai Show. Hosted by West Michigan Bonsai Club, it features all six Michigan bonsai clubs and societies, displaying more than 100 of their very best trees.

Marvel at them (and you will), then cast your vote for your favorite tree for the People's Choice Award.

In addition to the displays, vendors specializing in finished bonsai, prebonsai stock, pots, tools, books and other supplies will be on hand for the weekend.

There will be bonsai pottery demonstrations, educational displays, and styling demonstrations featuring bonsai society members.

But the best way to learn about bonsai is to get right into the kitchen yourself and work under the guidance of a knowledgeable instructor. That's why it's good thinking to attend one of the bonsai workshops. They're guaranteed to challenge and motivate beginners as well as more experienced bonsai enthusiasts alike.

If you prefer to observe rather than participate, a special workshop "observer rate" is available.

Workshops qualify for Michigan State University Advanced Master Gardener education credit.

Jack Wikle and Robert Bishop will be transporting trees to and from Grand Rapids. If you want to exhibit a tree, it must be ready by Friday's afternoon, May 5th since the exhibit will be set up on Friday's night. There will be a large vending area where trees, tools, pots, etc. can be purchased. For more information and workshop details visit:

http://www.meijergardens.org/calendar/event.php?id=226

SHARING OUR BONSAI KNOWLEDGE

We are looking for a volunteer to go to the Lyons School in Brighton on Sunday October 1st to speak about the wonderful world of bonsai during a series of educational events organized by the Brighton Historical Society.

Also during the conference the Brighton Book Mobile will visit the site offering books that correspond to the presentation.

The school is open from 1-4 pm, the presentation does not need to last for 3 hours, and it can be adjusted to your convenience.

If interested please contact: Susan Walters-Steinacker, at the Brighton Historical Society at (810) 229-4483.

2006 MABA CONVENTION

The 2006 convention exhibit will be presented in Milwaukee June 22 - 25, it consists of bonsai displays designed and set up by each MABA club.



A Gathering By The Water

The clubs with the best display of trees, accent plants, stones, scrolls and anything consistent with the art of bonsai will win cash prizes.

Awards include cash prizes for First Place (\$300), Second Place (\$200), and Third Place (\$100). Other non-cash prizes will be also be awarded. There is no fee to enter, but

space is limited so reserve your space early.

Competition is open to all AABS members: novice, advanced or professional, all are encourage to participate.

This is the general outline for the exhibit:

Each registered club will be assigned 2-96" x 30" tables with leg risers, table covers and aprons, and white backdrops.

Special thanks to Robert Bishop for volunteering to take our trees to this event. His enthusiasm and participation are very much appreciated. If you want to exhibit your trees contact Robert via email at: quinnterro@buckeyes-express.com.

Each club will design, install and take down its display, using any or all of these surfaces as they see fit. Nothing may protrude into any other space. For more details visit: www.milwaukeebonsai.org

MEMBER'S CORNER

This month's section is provided by our own Robert Bishop on the topic of Penjing and our own Jerry Peters on his experience with Indoor bonsai. Thank you both for your excellent contributions to the club!

The Art of Penjing By Robert Bishop

I have recently begun exploring the Chinese art of Penjing. It can be very rewarding creating an accomplished sense of beauty and serenity. I was inspired to create these miniature landscapes when I fist saw one at Bonsai House.



Penjing Forest with Ficus Too Little–Bonsai House

4

Preeya, the owner and Penjing artist had a few of her works on display and for sale. I could look at them for hours and escape in the microcosm miniature worlds. She taught me how to cement Chinese ying rock together to create convincing landscapes.

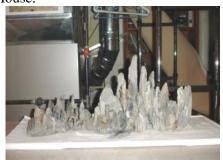
The shallow, white marble trays create a different environment than a ceramic bonsai pot. I pulled my hair out a few times, spending hours in the creation process. You can easily detach the rocks from the cement and redesign them. Pockets are created throughout the composition to house trees. You must use basic art elements and principles to make it look like a distant or close up landscape.



Penjing Tray - Created by Robert Bishop

Perspective is created by using large figurines in the foreground and smaller ones as you go back in space. I studied many pictures of this art form and read Penjing: World of Wonderment by Qingquan Zhao, a great book in the AABS library. Cementing the rocks together is easy, composing them a challenge. I bought a water pump and have a waterfall in one Penjing work of mine.

If you want to expand your artistic horizons, try the art of Penjing, all your materials can be found at Bonsai House.



Penjing Mountains – Work in Progress 1



Penjing Mountains – Work in Progress 2

Member Profile By Jerry Peters

Jerry Peters recently retired from Yamasaki Inc. an Architectural, Interior Design and Landscape Design firm. I continue to work with the firm on a limited consultant basis. My new career is as a full time watercolor artist and I am currently represented in many corporate and private art collections. Indoor Tropical Bonsai is my hobby, which gives me great year round pleasure.



Watercolor of Colmar, France

Ficus Salicifolia For Me

After growing a variety of indoor species, bonsai I decided concentrate and narrow my plant selections to Ficus species + one Bougainvillea. Ficus salicifolia forms the majority of my collection with others including Ficus microcarpa "Green Island", Ficus microcarpa "Retusa", Ficus pumila "Minima", Ficus tiger bark + one Bougainvillea glabra. This narrowing of my collection has been progressing over the last twelve years.

System & Tree Criteria that Works for Me

Design criteria included: Confine all trees in one area, Grow area has to be automated and generally carefree. I wanted the growing area to be set up in rows with walk spaces so that I can walk into the room and have a feeling of a greenhouse, Tree selections also had to be very tolerant to my indoor growing conditions.

Tree Selection

Twelve years ago I purchased a mature Ficus salicifolia and have had good success with this tree. I considered the plant a living sculpture; in fact this tree was featured and photographed in a bonsai article many years ago.



Ficus Salicifolia

The tree has a front but is pleasing from all sides. The trunk is beautifully tapered, root spread provides a solid base, leaves and canopy are in proportion to the tree. Years later I visited Jim Smith in Florida and selected several additional salicifolias to round out my collection. Each tree does very well under my growing conditions and provides a constant source of enjoyment as I maintain and refine my collection.

Container Selection

Most of my containers are from Sara Rayner. I admire her artistry. Sara was able to produce special container depths to allow more moisture retention due to my extended work travel requirements. I installed drip cords in each container to drain off excess water. Drip cords would be extended into the drip pan water during those long extended business trips. I would also lay a wet newspaper over the soil surface of my bougainvillea to keep my one problem tree happy.

Growing Room

15' X 20' room without exterior lighting. Walls are white. Ceiling is white 2' X 4' suspended ceiling tiles with recessed light fixtures. Floor has 18" x 18" light gray carpet tiles. One 10' work counter with built in storage cabinetry below.



Jerry's Bonsai Growing Room

Lighting

Recessed into the suspended ceiling is two 400 watt metal halide light fixtures and six 250 watt Metal halide light fixtures producing an average of 1400 foot candles of light at plant level. Tree canopy is typically 3' from light fixtures, fixture ballasts are on shelves in an adjoining room to control ballast buzz and dissipate ballast heat. Lights are controlled by an industrial remote timer and provide 16 hours of light each day, year round.

Tree Carts

Carts are manufactured by Metro Wire and have a polished chrome finish with adjustable shelves and on casters. Each cart is 18" X 48" and holds two trees each. Each tree also sit on a 12" X 22" X 2 1/2 black drip tray. All carts can be rolled to the sink for monthly spray of water, close inspection for possible tree problems, leaching of the trees soil and through cleaning of drip trays.

Water

Water comes from a reverse osmosis water system. I have installed a 1/4" coiled hose with a fine spray nozzle that reaches each tree for water as required.



Soil Mix

I currently use bonsai soil mixture purchased from Bonsai House and change the soil only when the soil appears to be breaking down and or retaining more water than I like.

Fertilizer

I use a variety of fertilizers. Trees receive a very light mix once a week on average.

Ventilation

The grow room has an oscillating fan which is on continually. Heating and cooling is provided through the house heating and cooling system. Air filtration system includes several return air grilles through an ultra violet light filter system. Room temperature ranges between 69 to 75 degrees.

Pest Control

Scale is the only problem I seem to have. I use a solution of one cup rubbing alcohol, one tablespoon of dishwashing soap and top off with clear water into a 32 Oz. size spray bottle. I spray on ficus as required.

Defoliation

Each salicifolia seems very healthy and I therefore defoliate each salicifolia every two years or so. This practice gives me an opportunity to observe branch structure and condition. I tend to prune each tree quite vigorously at this time. Trees seem to completely leaf out within four weeks.

Bougainvillea "Galabra"

I purchased this beautiful tree from Jim Smith. This tree has been my one problem tree in that it continues to grow and live but never as well as I would like. Jim had bougainvilleas at his home property line. There was a killer freeze however, after some time Jim realized this bougainvillea was still living. Jim started officially training the tree 1963. I purchased the tree four years ago and only now does the tree seem to be adjusting to my growing room and is displaying thicker dark green leaves, more growth

and greater profusion of flower bracts. The one requirement the tree has is to not be water logged but never dry out. I added nylon / cotton drip strips at each pot opening and have stopped fussing and worrying about the trees survival. Now, I enjoy a beautiful living sculpture that looks better with each passing year.



Bougainvillea Galabra

Goals

I strive to achieve ficus trees that replicate nature. To be successful I strive to have a natural mature look to each tree. Good root structure, trunk shape / proportions and good ramification to branches are a must. I also prefer ficus tree leaf canopy be more rounded, as you would observe in a mature tree in nature all the while striving to have each tree look great angles. My growing from all conditions produces a heavy dense leaf canopy, I therefore remove all leaves that are disfigured, point upward or have a yellowed appearance to thin out the canopy. One day I hope to achieve my goals.

Please send your comments or documents to aabsnewsletter@yahoo.com. Don't worry if you don't have a "finished" article, we'll help you to make it right. We will publish them going forward in this new section. Together we can further improve this newsletter for our reading pleasure.

COLLECTING TRIP

By Alfonso Tercero

It was a cold February's morning right in the middle of winter.

We had an opportunity to collect trees from an area scheduled to be

cleared out to make way for condominiums here in Ann Arbor.

I sent out the invitation to the AABS group to share in this great opportunity and I was happy to receive many confirmations almost right away.

9 people showed up bright and early on February 25th, we were very lucky to have Jack Wikle's expertise to guide us through and show us how to recognize the many different species by only looking at their branches and buds, since there was obviously no foliage in winter.



Our tired, cold but very happy group at the end of the collecting day. From left to right: Nathan Foster, Mike Simmons, Robert Bishop, Jack Wikle, Luciani Carvalho, Joan Wheeler, and I was taking the photo. Cyril Grum had already left and Jay Sinclair arrived a little bit later after we took the picture.

We covered the 9-acre area by mid morning and then with the gained knowledge of what to collect we started digging up some crab apple, maple, oak, honey suckle and ash trees. I am including some photos provided by Mike Simmons when we were extracting a rather difficult crabapple clump and a few more of this unforgettable trip.

Thank you to the group above for joining us and special thanks to Jack W. for sharing his knowledge with us and Luciani for bringing us a delicious cheese snack that she baked that morning. Yummy!



Here Nathan and I were busy at work extracting the crabapple clump



11 trees are part of this crabapple clump



Exhausted but pleased with our great finding, it took us more than 45 min. to extract it from the ground



Robert Bishop proudly presenting his newly acquired crabapple tree





Here is Mike at his home following Jack's advice on how to correctly prune roots and preparing his tree to be planted in his back yard

Jack Wikle was showing us the best way to prune large roots to encourage a radial growth all around the already nice base of this oak tree collected by Mike Simmons



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January Club Meeting......Jan 25th Slide show & discussion of the National Bonsai & Penjing collection by Jack Sustic

February Club Meeting......Feb. 22nd
Fertilizer & Pest Management.
Presentation by Dr. Dean Krauskopf

March Club Meeting.......Mar. 22nd Everything you ever will want to know about the Larch -- with Oh! No! *Mr. Bill* (*Heston*)

April Workshop......Apr. 5th Deciduous Forest or Clump Workshop. From 6:30 to 9:30 in room 125 at MBG.

April Club Meeting......Apr. 26th Heavy Pruning Branch and Root

May Workshop........May 4th Marco Invernizzi Workshop, Bring Your Own Tree. From 6:30 to 9:30 pm in room 139 at MBG.

May Club Meeting.....May 24th Bring your own Tree

June Workshop.......June 19th
Schefflera Over Rock -- with (still our own) Jerry Meislik at 6:30 pm, Room 125

June Club Meeting.....June 28th
Refinement Pruning

July Club Meeting.....July 26th Show Clean up help!

August Club Meeting......Aug. 23rd

September Club Meeting......Sep. 27th
Auction

October Club Meeting......Oct. 25th

November Club Meeting.....Nov. 22nd Pot Luck





Ann Arbor Bonsai Society

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The Ann Arbor Bonsai Society is affiliated with the American Bonsai Society and the Mid-American Bonsai Alliance.

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