

June Club Meeting: Wednesday 28th ~ Refinement Pruning. Do not miss it!!

MAY MEETING MINUTE REVIEW

By Jerry Peters, Recording Secretary

7:00 PM SOCIALIZING

Three new guests were present and welcomed to our club. Coffee was brewed and appreciated by coffee drinkers.

There is always a buzz of conversation between club members. I appreciated seeing Ron Milostan, hearing of his travels out West. Welcome back to other members who traveled during the winter months.

7:30 BRING YOUR OWN TREE MEETING

Several members brought trees to the meeting for club members design comments. I trust each person enjoyed and profited from the experience, as I did.



Special attention to detail was demonstrated by Bill Heston during our BYOT meeting

I brought in a Ficus Salicifolia over rock bonsai, which I started seventeen years ago. Today the tree has large roots that have grown together and cling solidly to the rock. I found the rock from a site in Saudi Arabia, during a business trip there. I was blown away when a club member identified the composition of the rock and knowing where the rock came from sent me a photo of the actual site.



Jack Wikle provided knowledgeable advice to Jerry's ficus salicifolia

As for my tree, several suggestions were made to improve branching and top of the tree. I will over time make changes and eventually have an acceptable all around bonsai tree.

I trust other members who brought trees in for member comments found the experience as worth while as I did.



Everybody benefited from the club's collective experience. Connie Bailey explained the tree's growing patterns.

SCHEFFLERA OVER ROCK WORKSHOP WITH JERRY MEISLIK

This month's workshop was provided by our very own Jerry Meislik.



About Jerry "Bonsaihunk" Meslik:

My interest in bonsai began as a teenager when I visited the bonsai exhibit at the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens. In 1977 while living in Florida my interest was re-kindled after seeing some Ficus bonsai. Since then

I have been actively studying trees and how to grow them in containers and creating bonsai. I have been fortunate to have exposure to many excellent bonsai teachers. My knowledge increased as I traveled to foreign countries to study their bonsai and design concepts.

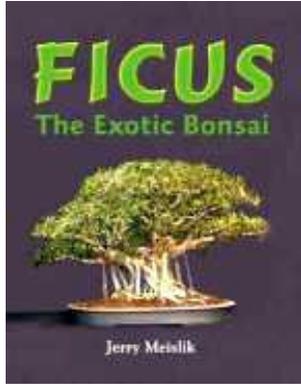
Inside this Issue:

- A Bonsai Close-up on Raft Style.....2*
- Photography Tips (Part III).....3*

My interests in bonsai are varied but among my special interests are tropical/indoor bonsai and the use of native materials for bonsai. With indoor bonsai I can grow plants that I could not grow outdoors and have a year round hobby. I am also very interested in finding native and unusual materials and refining the bonsai art to be in tune with our own materials and culture.

Over the past ten years I have had the opportunity to teach and lecture about bonsai. I have also written and published a book, Ficus: The Exotic Bonsai as well as being active in writing articles on various bonsai topics.

I am available to lecture, teach and demonstrate bonsai by appointment. I may be contacted at bonsaihunk@hotmail.com.



This Ficus salicifolia is in the banyan style. The tree is approximately 35 years of age, and was grown and trained by the famous ficus grower Jim Smith of Vero Beach Florida. Jerry acquired the tree from Jim in 1999.

Schefflera Ficus trees were used in this month's workshop, brought over from Hawaii. We had a great time learning about this easy to take care species.



Joan Wheeler created a very interesting ficus over a rock composition under Jerry's enjoyable instructions.

Bill Heston imparted additional advice to all attendees. Schefflera ficus is one of the easiest trees to grow and cultivate. It can tolerate low light levels if necessary, but it will best thrive under plenty of sunlight and constant high humidity.



Jerry Peter's excitement was evident as he was preparing the roots and looking for the best angle to place his tree in the pot.

Everyone was extremely pleased with their final creations.



At the end of the workshop Jerry graciously accepted to pose with some of us to complete this unforgettable workshop. Alfonso Tercero with Jerry Meslik.

A BONSAI CLOSE UP ON RAFT STYLE-- IKADABUKI

By Pauline Muth copyright © 1999, updated 2002

In this style of bonsai, the artist emulates the tree that has fallen in the woods and over time has rooted in the debris of the forest floor. The branches reach up to the light and each branch forms itself to resemble an individual tree. The all over appearance is of a string of trees or mini forest attached along a single connecting root or several roots from the same root mass.



The root, of course, is the original trunk that the branches develop from. The trunk may have some bends creating a sinuous raft or may be straight. If the trunk is flexible, you can wire it and add dimension to the final product by bending the trunk to give it more shape. The branches that eventually look like trees arise from the front, back and top of the fallen trunk. The more varied the positioning of the new trunks, the better the forest design will show depth.



To create this style in a pot, we lay down a one sided tree keeping most of the tree's roots in the soil. Should the root mass be too large, a cuff made from a plastic pot can be fashioned around the bottom side of the root ball to hold in more soil for the first year. In later years the root mass will slowly be reduced from the top and the cuff will be removed. If there are any branches on the side we are laying down, they must be cut off. When the tree is laid down in a long pot, the upright branches are then trained as upright trees in a forest style. Be sure that the branches that are chosen are not in a direct straight line to assure some depth to the planting.



A scraping of the trunk where it will lie down and treating the wounds with wood rooting compound (Hormodin 3) will facilitate root development. The soil mix should be rich enough to stay moist easily without being wet. You must secure the trunk to the soil in such a way that movement will not be possible for a couple of years. Set up multiple wires in the bottom of your tray to tie in the trunk well. The use of plastic tubing over the wire will prevent damaging the trunk when you wire it in place on the tray for species that damage easily. Remember that some trees have spiral vascular tissue that could lead to problems with keeping the branches alive when you bend the trunk to the soil. Pulling a bit of the bark where you scraped it on the bottom will show the path the vascular tubes.

Wiring the branches that will become trees can be done prior to bending the tree over. If you do the new trunk wirings before laying the tree down, it will be easier because the tree will still be firmly rooted in its pot. Develop the trees with distinct sizes and shapes. The largest, thickest branch should be the number one tree. Ideally it should not be an end tree but should be within the forest group.

The tree heights should decrease as the diameters decrease. Each tree should become part of a forest grouping with as much depth as possible. (Refer to Forest Planting for arrangements of trees in a forest.)

Once the trunk is tied down, arrange the new branch trunks as the forest trees. Then wire and arrange the branches on each tree.

As time passes and the roots develop on the bottom of the trunk, you will slowly reduce the top of the original root ball. Be careful not to do this too soon. You could kill your new trees that are being fed by those original roots. The younger the original material, the less chance you have of branch damage.



Be sure to protect the original root ball so that the tree will receive enough water and nutrients while new roots are developing. Also continue to style and develop the forest as the roots are developing. A good system can take years to form. Watch the wires carefully and cut them away before damage occurs. If you used a wire to shape the trunk, it bears careful observation. The tie wires must need loosened to allow for growth but then must be refastened to prevent delicate new roots from being damaged.

A simply made training tray can help you develop a great raft planting. Using strips of lumber for sides and pegboard for the bottom, a training pot can be made that will allow you to easily fasten down the tree. Another method is to use a sheet of plastic needlepoint material no smaller than 8 squares to the inch as the base inside your pot. Many tie down wires may be used with this material. Secure the entire material into the pot.

Traditional pots for the raft style are long and rectangular although other styles of forest pots including store slabs may be used.

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PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS

How to take better pictures of your bonsais

By Carl Bergstrom

This is the continuation from the last 2 months' newsletters and the last part of this article in how to improve your photographic skills when taking photos of your bonsai.

Tip 7: Use a photo editor (but use it sparingly!)

You will dramatically improve your photography if you use a photo editor to crop your images and to adjust the image slightly. I use [the Gimp](#), a freely distributed photo editor that rivals expensive commercial products such as Adobe Photoshop. The gimp offers advanced features including layers, masks, filters, scripting, cloning, color correction, and more. The Gimp is available for [UNIX](#), [Macintosh OSX](#), and [Windows](#) operating system; I've found that it works smoothly on all three platforms. The on-line book [Grokking the Gimp](#) provides a detailed tutorial covering many of the Gimp's features. What can a photo editor do for you? Here's a rather extreme example. I've started with an unusually bad initial photograph, and corrected it with a few simple steps.

Before



After



Let's go through these steps in detail.

Adjust the angle

The original photograph is off from horizontal by about one and half degrees. I've rotated the image back one degree to compensate. The gimp offers a "corrective" rotation tool; you simply align the rotation grid with a strong horizontal or vertical line in the image.



Crop the image

After rotating, I've cropped the image to a more appropriate size. I find it easier to shoot an overly-large frame and then crop down than to try to select the exact frame when taking the photography. This also gives me latitude for angle adjustments, as above.

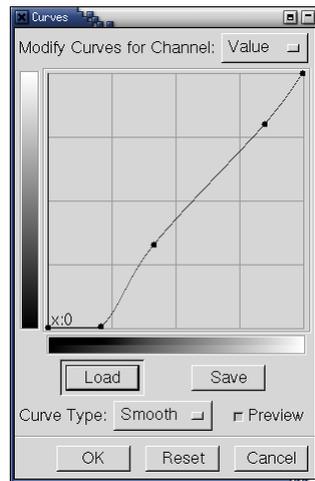
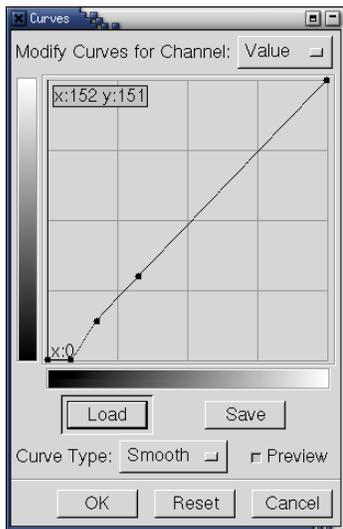
If you plan to share your image on the internet, crop relatively tightly, so that you can make best use of the photo size. If you are photographing a vertical display, crop to a vertical (portrait) frame. Crop a horizontal display to form a horizontal (landscape) frame. And always be sure to leave enough background around the tree that it feels balanced and naturally positioned within the frame.

Adjust the intensity levels

The initial photograph is washed out, the backdrop is grey, and a lens flare glares on the right side of the tree. By adjusting the intensity levels of the image, I'm able to get a black backdrop and crisp, saturated colors that you see in the final image.

Because I started with such a bad initial image, this comes at the expense of a slightly unnatural color to the base cloth. Had the initial image been properly exposed, much less correction would be required.

To adjust intensity levels, select **Image: Colors: Curves** from the Gimp menus. This brings up a dialog box as shown below. Adjust the "value" channel. To correct the sample image here, I used the following curve →



For a properly exposed black backdrop, I use a more "neutral" curve such as the curve ← to the left.

Resize and compress the image.

If I plan to share an image over the internet, I want to resize it and compress it to a small file size, with minimal loss of image quality. I don't want to lose my original large-size, uncompressed image files, so I always save under a new name when resizing and compressing.

For sharing on the net, you want the image to appear comfortably within a web browser or email program. To ensure this, I typically resize an image to be no larger than 600-800 pixels along its longest dimension. (800-pixel is actually a bit too tall to fit onto most browser screens at 1024x768, so you might want to restrict the vertical size to 700 pixels or so).

When sharing photographs on the net, you also want to keep file sizes small, and this requires some compression. Most internet sites will accept photographs no larger than 50 or 70 kilobytes. To compress your image to this size, save it image as a JPEG file at about 75% quality; this automatically compresses the image file without too much loss of detail.

Certain images may need to be saved a higher quality to look good; play around and see what works for you.

Use your photo editor sparingly

I tend not do much else in the photo editing program. I don't like to retouch my images using the clone tool or to snip stray leaves using an airbrush. For me, that crosses the line from photograph to virtual image. Similarly, I don't like to augment the color saturation or shift the color balance.

You can get really stunning autumn colors that way, but I don't think it's worthwhile. Partly, I want to record and represent the tree as close to accurately as is possible within the bounds are artistic necessity; partly, I prefer nature's subtlety to the pop of digital enhancement.

Tip 8: Don't blame the camera

Obviously, you'll do well to use the best camera that you can get your hands on. But if you don't have access to professional quality equipment, don't despair. You don't need high-end equipment to get very nice photographs that will be entirely adequate for sharing on the web.

To illustrate, I'll conclude this article with a set of kusamono photographs taken with a very cheap one megapixel point-and-shoot digital camera. These days, you can find a better camera than this for under \$100 on the

internet. These are not my best photographs, but they show what you can do even using very basic equipment.



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Extracted from Clark Bergstrom's article, with permission from the author. For more details visit:

<http://octavia.zoology.washington.edu/bonsai/photography/CrowsGuide.html>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January Club Meeting.....Jan 25th
Slide show & discussion of the National
Bonsai & Penjing 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 Mr. Bill Heston

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

April Workshop.....Apr. 12th
Larch Forest Workshop, Wednesday's
evening 6:00 pm to 9:30 pm. Larch
Forest Workshop with Cyril Grum. We
will update our existing Forest(s) and
help people start new ones.

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
TBD

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

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

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

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AABS AD HOC COMMITTEES

The AABS President, Bill Heston, is ex-officio member of all committees except the Nomination Committee.

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(webmaster@annarborbonsaisociety.org)

The Ann Arbor Bonsai Society is affiliated with the American Bonsai Society (www.absbonsai.org) and the Mid American Bonsai Alliance.

Deadline for submissions to the newsletter is the 5th of the month. Contact us at: aabsnewsletter@yahoo.com.

You can pay your Club's dues at the next AABS meeting or mail it to:

~Joan Wheeler

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Wanted. If you have a tree, bonsai pot, tool or anything else bonsai related that you don't need anymore and it is still in good condition, consider donating it to our club. Donations to the club are always accepted. In most cases many donated trees or other materials have been raffled among the attending members during our monthly meetings.

We want to remind all club members that everyone is required to give 10% of the total sales for any items that sell at our monthly meetings.

This is a long standing policy that has not consistently observed, since it is starting to fade from our collective memory.

The 10% fee will apply to all sales at our meetings or through this newsletter until the board approves a change.

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 the member's corner section.

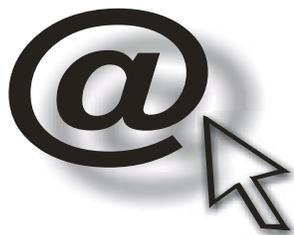
Together we can further improve this newsletter for our reading pleasure.



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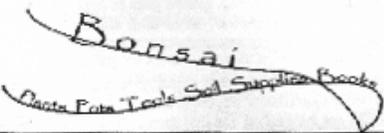
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