

August 25th Meeting – Rodney Clemons to Present “Stone Plantings”



Our August Meeting will take place on Wednesday evening, August 25th beginning at 6:30 on Zoom with a half-hour informal chat. The formal meeting will begin at 7:00 with Rodney Clemons presenting “Stone Plantings”. This will be a live demonstration via Zoom followed by a Q&A.

Rodney Clemons was captivated by bonsai in 1973 when he saw a Trident maple forest that struck chords in his heart and artistic nature. Bonsai has been his passion since that time. Rodney is a bonsai artist and instructor. He was a professional landscaper, specializing in Japanese gardens and natural water features. His work has developed his sensitive eye and skill with rock and plant placement which adds realism to his bonsai creations. He studied with E. Felton Jones and enjoyed workshops with many visiting artists like John Naka and Yugi Yoshimura. His style has been formed by studying nature, drawing heavily on childhood memories of coastal Florida. Rodney excels in capturing the tension in nature and translating it to bonsai. He is best known for his unique “rock plantings” and his love of “Kingsville” boxwood. At present he is applying his talents at his nursery, [Allgood Bonsai](http://AllgoodBonsai.com), designing trees and teaching advanced workshops.

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PRESIDENT’S PERSPECTIVE:

Mark Hanner

Greetings –

While it turns out we are not out of the woods, pandemic wise, we are delighted to be holding our annual show as a live event this year. Working within the restrictions of the host universities, we are not yet able to use Matthaei Botanical Gardens, and will instead hold our show at the beautiful Hidden Lake Hardens, near Tipton, MI. The trees will be displayed indoors in the conservatory, and the vendors will be set up outdoors, for sale of trees, pots, and other supplies. Show dates are August 28-29; the show hours Saturday are 11-4:00; Sunday hours are 10-4:00.

Due to the change in venue, we are setting up early on Saturday morning, from 8-10:00; if you have trees in the show (and we sure hope you do!), you need to be there at 4:00 Sunday to pick them up. To speed up the registration process, please fill out two copies of the registration form in advance, and bring with you Saturday morning.

Due to the pandemic’s continuing presence in our community, masks are required in the building at HLG. There is a \$5 entry fee to the gardens, which is waived for members of reciprocal gardens, like Matthaei and Meijer Gardens. There is no fee for show entry this year, although donations will be welcomed to help cover expenses.

In the absence of a live meeting prior to the show, where we usually sign up volunteers to help out during the show, we are asking you to email Kurt Smith to indicate when you are available to help, at: flowerdude27@hotmail.com. Two-hour time blocks are encouraged, and members are also needed to help with tree demos during the show.

Thanks to the many members helping out with planning and staging our show! Look forward to seeing everyone at HLGs (which, incidentally, has a marvelous Hosta Hillside, and an outstanding conifer collection, for additional garden viewing).

Mark

July Meeting Notes

Chris Kehrig

7/28/21 Meeting with Chris Cosenza

Matthei is looking for volunteers to help with the bonsai collection. Jack Sustic is there on Tuesdays and Fridays.

The show will be at Hidden Lake Gardens on Aug 28th & 29th

The auction will be Sept 25th and take place at Hidden Lake Gardens

The speaker for the evening was Chris Cosenza who specializes in creating root stands for displaying trees. They are constructed from a single piece of wood. There is virtually nothing online on how to create root stands, so Chris reviewed how to develop them.

Tools required are an angle grinder with chainsaw disc, die grinder, a dremel with flex shaft, saws, plug in drill, electric sander, and router. The plug in drill is necessary due to battery drill will run out of charge mid job.

Safety items include headphones or earplugs, protective gloves. Clothing should have no dangling strings or be very loose. Long hair should be out of the way. Keep the business end of flex shaft from clothing. Don't hold material in hand, it should be clamped when drilling. Other supplies are brushes, stains/finishes, surgical gloves, sandpaper, wood putty, and rags.

Materials can be found at Woodcraft stores, Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, and neighbors. Be careful of wood that needs to dry out as it can take months.

Types of stands are tall/narrow for cascading trees and lower in for larger trees.

Chris became interested in creating the stands after a Sean Smith workshop. The steps for a basic stand included drilling holes into blank material, making zig-zag cuts, and opening holes with burrs and bits.

There are different methods to creating root stands. They all start with natural material and removal of the bark.

There is the natural method where the design is drawn, waste is removed, clean/sanded, and completed with stain/finish.

Another method is the drilling method where holes are drilled with different bits, unwanted material is removed underneath, and then holes and paths are shaped.

Finally, there is the sculpting and grinding method. Design is sketched on the bottom, material is removed with a chainsaw disc. The material is removed in layers. A die grinder and drill are then used with texture and age gained with specialty bits.

The different woods used in making root stands are Cedar, Bald Cypress, Norfolk Pine, and Walnut. Oak is avoided due to hardness.

When attaining raw wood, the bark should be removed and then stored in regulated temperatures. Wood grinder should be used on seasoned wood. Wood putty can be used to fill in cracks and always use burrs that are smaller than the holes being created.

This month's newsletter marks the start of a recurring feature. Jack Wikle has offered to provide us with articles he has written in the past. We will be reprinting them here, under the heading 'Revisiting Wikle Bonsai Writing'. Thank you Jack, for providing these informative articles to add to our newsletter

Revisiting Wikle Bonsai Writing By Jack Wikle

Tell Me Why It's Dying

From time to time I am asked about a bonsai that just isn't doing well, the tree that fails to thrive and seems to be dying. "Tell me what's wrong?" "Should I spray it with an insecticide or should I use a fungicide?" "How about giving it more fertilizer?" "Isn't there anything else I can do?"

More often than not, wishing I could be more discerning, I have to admit – especially lacking evidence of insect infestation – that I can only guess at what the actual problem might be. I know there has to be a cause. I just don't know what it is. After all, trees are genetically programmed not just to survive but to thrive even under less than ideal growing conditions.

Following this confession, the usual next step is an item by item review of a surprisingly short list of basic requirements for plant survival and health: light, water, some essential nutrient elements (the kinds of things available from fertilizers), favorable temperatures, and adequate carbon dioxide and oxygen availability. Notice soil is not included here. This is because plants, even those as complex as trees, can be grown without soil if their other basic needs are met. Even so, we know that "soil mix" (typically soil-less mix) has a major impact on a bonsai's health.

Now item by item:

Light. As the energy source for all chlorophyll bearing plants, adequate light is extremely important. Of course some kinds of plants have much higher light requirements than others. In spite of this variation, we can say that outdoors most trees, shrubs and vines will grow reasonably well with exposure to as much sunlight as possible. But, full sun about half a day with some shading during the hottest part of the afternoon is even better especially for species that tend to burn in extreme heat.

Indoors, some plants, again will do well in direct sun from a window. Yet, it is my impression that caring for most indoor trees is easier if they are positioned to receive good window light without exposure to direct sun. Some species adapted to weak light will even survive, though

growth is slow, if kept very close to a north-facing window. In relying on window light, it is important to rotate the bonsai regularly so all its sides get their turn in the best light possible. Not doing this eventually results in a tree very weak on the side away from the sun.

Experience tells us that another indoor option is to rely completely on artificial light from a two-tube, forty watt, fluorescent light unit. Operated sixteen hours a day, with tubes no more than a few inches from the tree's foliage, this kind of light source is adequate to grow many kinds of trees very well with no other light required. (Replacing the tubes annually works well.)

For much greater indoor light intensity and the stronger growth it produces, some bonsai enthusiasts now use metal-halide lights – much brighter but also much more costly to purchase and to operate than fluorescent tubes. Metal-halide lights are readily available from most suppliers of indoor gardening equipment.

Water. Water is not just one of the raw materials for photosynthesis. It is also indispensable in many other aspects of the plant growth process. No bonsai can live un-watered but it is important to understand that keeping soil constantly full of water can be detrimental too. Not watering when really needed causes quick death; overwatering results in slower death. Most successful growers check their bonsai for water needs daily. If the soil mix seems definitely moist, most bonsai will be healthier waiting another day. An alternating cycle of wetting and drying is the goal. Be aware also that many kinds of plants will do better grown in smaller pots holding less soil mix so they dry quickly rather than in larger pots where the soil stays wet.

Water quality is another concern. Using hard water (water containing lots of dissolved minerals) can cause problems if not thoughtfully managed. If mineral free or almost mineral free water is available, use it, especially for the declining tree. Rain water, water from a dehumidifier, water discharged from an air conditioner, reverse osmosis water and distilled water all work well. Water "softened" by substituting sodium, from salt, for the minerals displaced should be avoided.

The main issue here is that minerals (salts) that the tree can't use, from the water, from the soil mix and from fertilizers, can gradually accumulate in the soil. When growing any bonsai, but especially using very hard water or "softened" water in trying to save a weak tree, it will

help if the soil is flushed regularly. This can be done by applying enough water at each watering that an amount equal to one fourth to one third of the pot's volume comes out of the drain hole(s). This approach is in contrast to minimal-drainage-watering in which the pot is immersed briefly, or water is applied to the soil surface only until some dripping begins.

Fertilizers. When not available from the soil and air in adequate amounts, the sixteen or so “essential elements,” nutrients the plant must have to survive, can be provided by applying some kind of fertilizer. Choosing a brand or an analysis (measure of the product's nutrient element concentration) does not seem to be critical. What is important is to apply some fertilizer but not overdo it. There is much wisdom in the old nurseryman's adage, “Use half the dosage recommended on the package twice as often as recommended.” Some successful bonsai growers are using one fourth to one half the recommended concentration as often as once or twice a week during active growth. Where time to get the work done is not a problem, applying one fifth the recommended dosage as a follow-up to every watering can work very well. Regularity in fertilizer application is especially important when growing trees in a soil-less mix.

Although essential to survival, the nutrient elements supplied by fertilizer are actually required in very small amounts compared to water, carbon dioxide and oxygen usage. Unless the tree is in active growth, stored reserves may be all that are needed.

It may seem instinctive to try saving a weak or dying plant by applying fertilizer but this effort can actually speed a tree's death. Think of this as somewhat like giving the man dying of thirst -- and gasping for breath at the same time -- a large glass of salt water. First priorities are water as needed but not too much and making oxygen available to the weak tree's roots.

There are two widely accepted cautions that grow from this kind of understanding. First, don't be in a hurry to fertilize a newly potted or repotted bonsai. Wait until renewed growth is evident. And, second, don't apply fertilizer, even in a very weak solution, to a dry bonsai. Water it well first, then give it fertilizer.

Favorable Temperatures. There is not too much to be done here but bear in mind that some temperature fluctuation is healthy, especially night temperatures that are somewhat cooler than day temperatures. Extreme

heat and extreme cold are, on the other hand, definitely detrimental. So, any measures practical in moderating temperature extremes should be invigorating to trees grown in pots, especially those that are struggling.

Carbon Dioxide and Oxygen. Less recognized, but equally as important as light, water and essential nutrient elements, are two gasses, carbon dioxide and oxygen, that plants take in from the air around them.

Carbon dioxide is required as the other raw material (in addition to water) consumed in photosynthesis. (Remember photosynthesis is the process of capturing energy from light while manufacturing carbohydrate which is both energy source and structural material for plants.) Although enriching air with extra carbon dioxide is known to stimulate plant growth, this doesn't seem practical for most bonsai enthusiasts at this time.

Oxygen as most of us know, is released into the air by actively photosynthesizing plants. But, less understood by much of the public, oxygen is also required continuously by all living plant cells to oxidize (to “burn”) carbohydrate releasing the energy required for all their life processes. Since excess oxygen is released into the air by photosynthesizing plants and since the air around us is almost 20% oxygen, one might reasonably assume that scarcity would not occur. The reality is that access to the oxygen needed by plant roots can be a problem.

Since plants have no circulatory system like animals do to distribute oxygen to every cell, roots of most trees are forced to take in the oxygen they need from the soil around them -- actually from the air in the soil around them. When all the soil's space (between particles) is full of water, oxygen availability becomes very limited. Remember that soil physicists tell us, “Oxygen diffuses 10,000 times faster through air than through water.” This is why a porous soil mix that lets some water escape (drain away) and air replace it quickly after watering is exceedingly important to the health of trees growing in pots.

We need to recognize here also that soil depth has a major impact on how much water will drain and how much air will be admitted in the process. The deeper the soil, the less water it will retain so one way to encourage the weak plant is to grow it in a deeper container because the soil doesn't stay as wet. Short of repotting into a deeper pot, dangling a drainage wick of some absorbent material from the pot's drain hole can increase drainage greatly.

A final point about all of this:

Yes, most kinds of trees will grow pretty well if they are given a chance by making sure their few basic needs are fulfilled. However, one has to accept that, in contrast to the healthy tree, that seems to take every stress in stride, the obviously weak tree may be impossible to save. And, if it does survive, recovery will be very slow.

Discard the things too weak to recover and go get some healthy plants. There are many that will thrive under the kind of culture described above.

*February 2009 update of October 2003 AABS
Newsletter column*

Ads in the Newsletter: All members can offer for sale any bonsai and bonsai related materials in the newsletter or at the monthly meeting with no sales fee. AABS Society Members' ads are free to publish in the Newsletter. Deadline for submissions to the Newsletter is the 5th of the month.

Prizes for the Raffle: We are soliciting donations suitable for prizes to be raffled during each general meeting, and, for the Annual Bonsai Show Raffle. If you have a tree, bonsai pot, tool or anything else bonsai related, that you do not use anymore and is still in good condition, consider donating it to the Society. Please see Bill Struhar at any meeting, email Bill at wm.struhar@mail.com or call (586) 468-7169.

Club Logo Now Available: we will embroider the club logo on your garment for \$12 (plus modest additional charge for lined garments).

The logo comes in two forms; light green tree on dark green background, or dark green tree on light green background, with a border on both combinations and AABS lettering and Chinese characters with appropriate contrasting color depending upon the garment color.

Bring your garment in a clear plastic bag to a meeting, select your colors, pre-pay Bill Struhar, and your garment will be ready one or two meetings later. (The vendor may require a minimum of five garments per order)

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The AABS President is an ex-officio member of all committees with the exception of the Nomination Committee.

Fund Raising: William Struhar

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Membership dues are \$25. Please pay by check, written to Ann Arbor Bonsai Society or bring your credit card to the meeting and pay. AABS now accepts credit cards and paypal for membership fees and other AABS activities. Please talk with the Treasurer at the next meeting.

Katie Norder – Treasurer AABS
Attn: AABS Membership
13143 Hadley Road
Gregory, MI, 48137

AABonsaiSociety@gmail.com

The Ann Arbor Bonsai Society is affiliated with the American Bonsai Society: <http://absbonsai.org> and the Mid-American Bonsai Alliance: <http://mababonsai.org>



Ann Arbor Bonsai Society
 1800 North Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-9741


Visit us on the Web:

<http://www.annarborbonsaisociety.org>

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Hours: Wed., Thurs. & Fri.: 11:00 am to 6:00 pm Sat.: 1:30pm to 5:00pm
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