



YAMA KI NEWSLETTER

Learning from each other. Sharing with the community”

June

2008

COLIN LEWIS - PART II JUNE 14, 2008 AT THE BARTLETT ARBORETUM 10:00 AM LECTURE/CRITIQUE, 1:00 PM WORKSHOP

Colin Lewis will continue with the special three session lectures and workshops. Most workshop participants will be returning with the same tree “worked on” at the February meeting. Under *Colin’s* tutelage, they will continue with the styling and maintenance of their chosen bonsai. If there is an opening, members who did not participate in the first workshop, may join the group. The morning session will be devoted to business announcements and notices followed by *Colin’s* analysis of members’ trees and suggestions for styling modifications that can help detract viewers from faults while enhancing its strengths.

PEDRO J. MORALES FEATURED IN APRIL IN OUR NEW STYLE PROGRAM

YAMA KI members came early and stayed late for a day with *Pedro J. Morales*. Naturally, living in Puerto Rico, he is a specialist in tropical material. Nowadays with global warming, grow-lights, and home humidifiers, many more members are interested in trees from tropical and sub-tropical areas so the turnout was excellent.



The morning session began with *Pedro J. Morales*, Convention Chair, and our featured artist giving us an early look at the dynamic new programming for the World Bonsai Convention to be held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, from July 7-13, 2009. This 6th Convention of the World Bonsai Friendship Federation is going to be quite different from its predecessors. A later article (page 3) provides more information about the creative and exciting programs planned for the convention.

Pedro’s opening comments included the reassuring words that “Bonsai is 80% horticulture and only 20% technique.” After many years of study and professional work as a bonsai artist *Pedro* has come to prefer penjing styling for bonsai as closer to nature’s creations and follows how a tree naturally grows. This is in contrast to stylized Japanese bonsai aesthetics which is to suggest the possibility of a tree’s history.

For the morning session (afternoon was a workshop), members brought a bonsai for analysis by *Pedro*. There was also a discussion of the bonsai’s strengths and weaknesses and how the owner should further its development.

The first tree submitted to *Pedro* was the April’s meeting demonstration *Ficus neriifolia*. This tree was drastically cut-back by *Min Hsuan Lo*. *Pedro* agreed with that decision and complimented *Mr. Lo* and our club for taking the long view. He pointed out that *Ficus*, which are native to Puerto Rico, have low, wide growth while those native to Taiwan are long and narrow. To promote taper on *Ficus* trees you must keep them well trimmed and follow standard proportion guidelines. It is easy to propagate *Ficus* by putting root cuttings into repotting soil. He reminded us that aerial roots may produce reverse taper. Thrips are a problem so the trees need both a systemic in the soil and regular spraying. For *neriifolia* variety he uses a lot of gravel in the soil mix.

Many members took advantage of the opportunity to have their bonsai critiqued and found the session rewarding and one which often suggested advanced techniques to improve the level of their tree. For example:

- ✿ *Joann Spence's* Trident maple needs to have a branch air-layered in a bare area. When it has taken, she can remove an obnoxious root. Maples readily accept grafts and this particular one will help develop needed taper.
- ✿ *Joan Thomas's* commercially grown has had too long an association with chemical insecticides and fertilizers. Serissa needs to be treated to organic sprays and fertilizer to maintain its health.
- ✿ *Efrain Torres*, a new member, brought a *Neea buxifolia* for guidance. It is an old specimen. *Pedro* told him to give it full sun which will darken the leaves. He is to put lime sulfur diluted with water on the trunk's black spots, and only use organic fertilizer and insecticides.
- ✿ The next member/client was *David Castro's* *Bougainvillea*. This is a vine, not a tree, which we admire for its flowers not its line or structure. Therefore no style was indicated; the owner can do anything that pleases her/his eye. The wood is soft and readily rots; cut paste is required on cuts. *Pedro* uses the orange label tube of cut paste. Glidden® sells a wood hardener that works well, but it is smelly to work with. *Bougainvillea* take well to orchid (organic) fertilizer, likes to be kept in good light, and should be defoliated every 1-2 years.
- ✿ A 3-trunk *Ficus kiki* brought in by *Irv Kleiman* presented several options. It could be cut down to a 2-trunk mother-child model or remain a 3-trunk. *Irv* opted to keep the 3-trunks which required finding a new front and repotting the tree. In doing so, the tallest trunk would stand out as the main line, with the second trunk about 2/3rds the height and the child about 1/2 the height of the main one. Then staying with Japanese styling, the first branch should be on the tallest tree, the 2nd on the mid-size trunk, and the 3rd branch on the smallest trunk.
- ✿ In keeping with *Pedro's* tropical expertise, *Len Douglas* also brought in a *Ficus*. He needed to defoliate the tree; place it in full sun. The necessary medicinal treatments are Nemoil (no Malathion®) and Osmacote®.
- ✿ *Herb Yanowitz* presented a Kingsville boxwood which is very slow-growing in this climate. It is a transitional shrub which does well out of doors, but can be maintained indoors with success and 'TLC'.
- ✿ *Maggie Limburg's* *Ficus minor kiki* needs full sun and fish emulsion for fertilizer. HB101® is an extract of Cypress, Pine, and Plantain. Mixed 5 drops to a gallon of water it should be used as a weekly spray. The crack on the trunk needs muck as a filler. Scratching the underside of the bark will help develop new roots.



Half a dozen members took the afternoon workshop and others stayed as silent observers. It was so productive a session that we closed the Education Building just before being evicted for the evening.



Maggie Limburg



David Castro



Mike Pollock



Robert Roffman

Mike Pollock has submitted the following three photos of one of his trees (*Ficus microcarpa*) from the workshop. There's the before from last year, a first styling picture from last year and the tree after the workshop. *Mike* added that the new front was suggested by *John Cotaggio*.



Before styling



First styling



New styling

GLEANINGS FROM PEDRO MORALES

- ✿ Try to do root cutting in the 1st quarter of the moon's phases. His experiments with this quirky timing have been dramatically successful for survival rate.
- ✿ A Good insecticide/fungicide is 1 teaspoon lime sulfur to a gallon of water.
- ✿ Nemoil also does double duty.
- ✿ When selecting rocks for a planting look for texture and variation.
- ✿ Dehead early scattered flowers on Azalea. Then within 40 days the entire tree will blossom.

The month's tokonoma was a *Ficus exotica*, about 20 years old in training 1-2 years. *Mike Pollock*, its owner has it in a container made by Walsall Ceramic Studios of the UK, perched on a *Sean Smith* display stand. Unfortunately, *Irv* forgot to take a photo.

An extra *Juniperus procumbens nana* was left over from the last novice class series. It was raffled at the end of the morning and *Efrain Torres* took it home.

John Cotaggio brought in a number of cuttings, some of which he sold, others were gifts to attendees.

WORLD BONSAI FRIENDSHIP FEDERATION

Attendees will find next year's World Bonsai Convention much more interactive with programs designed to highlight tangential topics of bonsai such as sketching, photography, and rock hunting. There will be several competitions including one for creating a bonsai using 2 coils of wire, each a different color; one for creating a bonsai from one color of wire...each session limited to four hours. There will be contests for quality newsletters and websites and photography in several categories. There will be team events and relays, all bonsai related. You will be able to visit private bonsai collections and the Bacardi Rum factory.

There will be traditional and non-traditional bonsai demonstrations by internationally renowned artists from several continents. Yes, vendors will be there. AND you will be able to “import” live material because staff people from the USDA will be on site to certify your purchases. You will get bargains at raffles and at silent auctions.

The web site www.worldbonsaiconvention2009.com (as soon as it is completed) will have registration capability and detailed information about the artists and events.

**FIRST NATIONAL BONSAI EXHIBITION
OCTOBER 11-12, 2008 ROCHESTER, NY**

If you feel that one (or more) of your bonsai is worthy of taking its place in an exhibit dedicated to present some of the finest bonsai in the United States - act now! Submit a photo(s) of your finest bonsai for the selection process by July 1st to WNV@international-bonsai.com. Check this website: www.internationalbonsai.com for full details.

In addition to the recognition and admiration of bonsai enthusiast, you may win a cash prize. *Colin Lewis* has introduced the HÔ YOKU AWARD for creative western formal display. The exhibit trees will be judged and awarded at First National Bonsai Exhibition. The first prize is \$1,000, the second prize is \$300, and the third prize is \$200.

The guidelines are: to create a formal display (one that achieves the aesthetic goals of the traditional Japanese display) using an original concept and incorporating western elements.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE SLATE

The Nominating Committee, chaired by *Gail Therrien*, has submitted their recommendations for candidates of officers and directors for our new fiscal year. Elections will be held during our July meeting. The candidates have all indicated their willingness to serve:

Officers:

President *Norm Geisinger*
Vice President..... *Mike Pollock*
Treasurer..... *Irv Kleiman*
Secretary..... *Lavanya Muller*

Directors:

Until 2009 *David Castro, Charles Muller*
Until 2010 *John Cotaggio, David Cruz*
Until 2011 *John Ruggio, Rupen Kiskanyan*

SUPPORT NEEDED FOR THE NATIONAL BONSAI FUND

Budget cuts in D.C. is endangering the National Bonsai collection housed at the National Arboretum. If your not a present supporter, please add the National Bonsai Federation to your charities list. A basic membership is only \$35. Check the NBF website <http://www.bonsai-nbf.org/site/membership.html> for more information and join online.

You can also help by writing to your congressional representatives urging them to contact the Chairs of the Senate and House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees to restore the funds needed to maintain the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum. They are: The Honorable Herbert H. Kohl, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture and The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture .

PRUNING AND PINCHING

by Brent Walston*

Introduction

Pruning and pinching deciduous plants is an integral part of bonsai. It is how we create and maintain the fine branch structure and the pleasing outline that is essential to the beauty of the plant. Most people learn how to do this by rote, not really understanding the growth principles behind the methods they practice. This article explains in inexcusable detail the *why* of pinching and pruning.

Pinching versus Pruning

First, let's discuss the role of 'pinching' as opposed to 'pruning'. Pruning is used (with reference to branches) to shape the branch, change the direction of the branch, and create taper within the branch. This is all done by pruning back to a bud aimed in the direction that you want it to go. This is usually done to a shoot with several internodes to be removed or with a larger lignified (woody) existing branch. It doesn't matter if you use concave cutters, your fingers, pruners, or chain saw, as long as you do a neat job.

Pinching can achieve the above for very small branches on some species, but for the most part, when we speak of pinching, we are talking about achieving ramification, or twiggyness. When pinching the scaffolding of the branch is complete, it only needs detail work or ramification. This is done by removing the tip of the growing branch, usually removing two nodes of a three node shoot (a node is where buds appear or leaves grow). This does two things: 1) it shortens the branch, 2) it releases the buds behind it, interrupting apical dominance. The buds are held from opening by the release of a hormone (auxin) manufactured by the last (terminal) bud. Now the remaining bud is free to open *and* the buds behind this one.

The result is that by pinching out the terminal bud, or removing a two or three bud shoot, several of the buds remaining on this stem are free to open. Usually one or two will open before the new terminal bud starts forming the hormone and stops the process. Thus, where you once had a soft straight shoot with *increasing* internodes (usually), you now have two buds opening forming a forked branch with shorter internodes and achieving ramification.

Achieving Shorter Internodes

I emphasized increasing above, because what most people have never bothered to observe (at least I never see it mentioned) is that the first two or three internodes of a released bud (achieved by pruning) are shorter than the internodes of the rest of the expanding shoot. By pinching back to one or two buds, we take advantage of this phenomenon, keeping the short internodes sections and discarding the strong shoot with the longer internodes. This is most important as we reach the outer portions of the branch which, like the branches on the trunk itself, should have leaves and nodes closer together as we approach the extremities.

Internode length is also influenced by the season and growth rate. Recently repotted plants will form longer internodes. Plants heavily fertilized in the spring, or pruned in the winter will also form longer internodes. Plants fertilized and/or pruned in early summer (but not spring), will form shorter internodes.

Armed with this knowledge, you will be able figure out how to achieve your goal. But of course you have to know what your goal is, and that is always the most difficult part, especially for beginners, who have not seen enough trees to know what they want to do.

Alternate versus Opposite

In addition to this, some knowledge of the species is important, because not all woody species react in the same way to pruning (although in general they do). There is also the major distinction that divides the woody species, those that have alternate leaves (buds), and those that have opposite. Alternate species are in general easier to work with, since the last bud will open before the one before it. This creates a strong main branch extension from the last bud and a weaker, smaller branch fork (secondary) from the next to last bud. Just keep this in mind and nature will do the rest.

In opposite species, the two buds are directly opposite each other and will often open simultaneously with equal strength. If not corrected this will give a fan pattern rather than a strong branch, weak secondary pattern usually desired for bonsai. If one bud is nipped out as they expand, one can mimic an alternate species. The same thing is achieved in the training of Black Pine, where great care is taken to make sure that all the branches fork, whereas in nature they would form whorls. Only after many years of wear and tear would they be reduced to forked branches.

Creating Branches

You must form a branch before you can ramify it. It doesn't matter how many internodes are in the first section of the branch, the only thing that matters is whether the branch will sprout from where you cut it to form a bend or create a secondary (side branch) and a new main extension. In general, if you remove the end of a branch, or otherwise prune it, you will change its direction, since a bud on the side of the branch will break and start the new extension in a different direction. The same is true for chopping the trunk. If you want a straight branch, don't prune it. Pinching buds at the end of the branch, means just that. Remove the one terminal (and its leaf) and leave the other buds and leaves alone. The bud at base of the next leaf will be the first to open and form a new shoot in a new direction. The rest of the branch may or may not have leaves, it is of no concern to us here. A branch for pinching purposes constitutes one straight section, or twig, with buds and possibly leaves but with no side branches. Each branch, twig, or shoot if you prefer has only one terminal bud, at the very end of the shoot.

Consider the Species

The other thing that you need to know, is how each species grow. For example, how *Ulmus parvifolia* grows in response to pruning. This species is dense with dormant buds embedded in the bark as well as the single bud contained in the leaf axil. When you prune this species, you get branches all over the place. This is the beauty of this species for bonsai, and also the reason I tell folks not to worry about branches until the trunk is formed, since you can easily get branches wherever you want them by simply pruning it hard.

Pruning this species hard will give you a little fuzz ball of branches. These are very soft and succulent, and there are very many more than you need. If you begin to prune them off as they emerge you weaken the plant and many of them will die back. Let them grow out about six to eight inches, or more, so they can harden and have a better chance of surviving. Then you can remove the ones you don't want and start thinking about what to do with the ones remaining. If you want one to fork at a certain location, prune it there. You can see that you must have an image of the tree that you want to obtain before you can proceed.

One the other end of the spectrum you have species like beech, *Fagus*, that have strongly determinate buds. Beech will usually only form one set of buds and leaves a year, although an occasional hard pruning will force dormant buds to break. Since you can't rely upon buds breaking wherever you want them, you must plan ahead and rely upon pinching as your main tool of branch formation as well as for ramification.

And finally

In a beginning bonsai book, you might get the advice, "let a shoot grow three sets of leaves and pinch it back to one or two". While this, in fact, may be good advice, you can see from the above that it's not quite that simple. Knowledge is power.

* *Brent Walston* is the proprietor of Evergreen Gardenworks and a prolific author of bonsai articles. You may want to add his website to your list of bonsai resources: www.evergreengardenworks.com.

Are you checking your YAMA KI B O N S A I A L M A N A C regularly? Note that this page lists activities for just the first two weeks of June.

If you don't have a copy of our almanac, contact *Irv Kleiman*. If we have enough interest, we'll run another printing.

SCHEDULE FOR BONSAI CARE AND RELATED ACTIVITIES					
Month: June		Date: 1 - 15		Week: 1st & 2nd week	
SPECIES >	HARDY			TRANSITIONAL/ NOT HARDY	
	EVERGREEN		DECIDUOUS	FLOWERING & FRUIT BEARING	ACCESSORY PLANTS & GRASSES
ACTIVITY	NEEDLE	BROAD LEAF			
Fertilizing	Yes ¹				
Location	Outdoors ²				
Pests & Diseases	Spray as required ³				
Potting	No	Yes			
Propagation	Yes				
Pruning, drastic	Yes				
Trimming, Maintenance	Yes ⁴				
Watering	As required ⁵				
Weeding	Yes				
Wiring	Yes, as required				

NOTES	SPECIAL REMINDERS
1) No feeding after defoliating until first new leaves open. 2) Full sun as much as possible. 3) Watch for chewing pests on leaves. 4) This month is the last chance to defoliate, except Trident Maple and Zelkova. 5) Give extra water to broad leaf species because plants are reaching full growth.	Make note of bonsai societies annual outings and plant sales.

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES?

Yama Ki dues were due May 1st. Individual member @ \$40; Families @ \$50; Full time student \$25. If you can't make the June meeting, mail your check to: Yama Ki Bonsai Society; 165 West End Avenue - 12D; New York, NY 10023. Please make sure you indicate any changes in your snail-mail address, email address, and/or phone number.

OFFICERS

Norm Geisinger. President
Mike Pollock. Vice-President
Irv Kleiman. Treasurer
. Corresponding Secretary
Steve Peach. Recording Secretary
Gail Therrien. Immediate Past President

DIRECTORS

David Castro, John Cotaggio, David Cruz,
Kevin Goveia, Rupen Kiskanyan, and Lavanya Muller

Co-Editors: Rhoda & Irv Kleiman

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<http://www.yamakibonsai.org>

COMING EVENTS

June 14 10:00 am Colin Lewis: Lecture, critiques, & BYOT 2nd
workshop
July 12 11:30 pm Board of Directors meeting
1:00 pm Annual meeting, elections, & auction
Aug 9 11:00 pm Brooklyn Botanical Garden tour
Sept 13 10:00 am Colin Lewis: Lecture, critiques, & BYOT 3rd
workshop

Remember to check our website (www.yamakibonsai.org) for updates and latest information

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