



# YAMA KI NEWSLETTER

Learning from each other. . . . . Sharing with the community”

November

2010

## SEAN SMITH’S FOCUSE ON BONSAI CONTAINERS NOVEMBER 13, 2010 AT 12 NOON THE GREENWICH GARDEN EDUCATION CENTER

We all look forward to seeing *Sean Smith* again - this time teaching us tips on repairing bonsai containers. Last visit Sean taught us how to cut stone. Members who have attended any MABS Spring Festivals have seen his display of artistic carpentry.

In 1944 *Sean* established his business - Custom Oriental Wood-craft, where he makes bonsai display tables and carves daiza for renowned bonsai and suiseki enthusiasts around the world. He is internationally known for his skills in bonsai and suiseki and has garnered many awards in both fields.

“In 2001, Mr. *Arishige Matsuura*, President of the Japanese Suiseki Association, proclaimed *Sean* the number one daiza carver outside of Japan. In 2003, *Sean* was the first American to exhibit an American Suiseki in the Japanese National Suiseki Show at the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo, Japan. In 2004 *Sean* was asked by *Senji Morimae* to visit Japan to study bonsai and suiseki at his nursery located outside Tokyo. *Sean* now spends several weeks a year continuing his studies with *Morimae-san*. In 2005 he was invited to study Zen in Daitokuji-in, at the sub temple of Hoshyu-in in Kyoto, Japan. *Sean* also studied daiza carving in Hamamatsu, Japan, with Japan's leading daiza carver, Mr. *Koji Suzuki*. *Sean* was his first and only student.

*Sean* is also a contributing editor of the North American Viewing Stone Society, and the International Stone Appreciation Society and a member of the Nippon Suiseki Association, European Suiseki, and past president of the Susquehanna Bonsai Club, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. *Sean* is also a director on the National Bonsai Federation in Washington D.C.”\*

Bring your checkbook - Sean will probably bring pots, stands, trays, etc. for sale!

\* from <http://www.bonsai-bsf.com/resources/artists/artist.php?uid=56>



## NOTES ON OCTOBER’S MEETING WITH MARCO INVERNIZZI

*Lavanya Muller*

*Marco* suggested that people should prepare their trees before bringing them to a workshop. This means clean the bark and make sure your tree is firmly anchored in its pot (even if it is in a nursery pot).

### Styling tips:

- ❁ When you begin considering how you want to style a tree, start by looking for the details that you will not be able to change.
- ❁ When looking for the best front of your tree, start to eliminate any view that definitely cannot be the front due to serious flaws in the tree’s appearance from that direction.
- ❁ When your tree has a trunk that curves in one direction, you generally don’t want that trunk to come out of the ground at a 90° angle.
- ❁ When you change the planting angle, be sure you tip the tree in the direction that makes the nebari appear thicker, not thinner.

- \* To emphasize the leftward lean of a tree, plant it far to the right in its pot. To do this, you have to “get permission” from the roots. If too many of the roots are growing to the right of the trunk, you won’t be able to do this, at least not right away.
- \* It is not a good idea to do major styling and repotting at the same time. Allow one growing season in between. If you repot a tree in 2010, just let it grow at least until the end of spring 2011. No pinching or pruning. Wires can be removed if they are beginning to bite into the bark.

#### Tips on creating better shari:

- \* If you need to remove parts of a live vein, or get very close to a live vein while working on *shari*, do it in late May or June, which is peak growing season. If you are removing bark from a dead area, you can do it at any time.
- \* Shari should always have at least a little bit of curve. No straight lines!
- \* Cut into the bark holding the knife at a 90° angle.
- \* To avoid cutting yourself, don’t over-sharpen your carving tools. Just press firmly.
- \* Lime sulfur disinfects and bleaches wood. To prevent wood from rotting, use a wood preserver/hardener after the lime sulfur has dried. Wood preserver should be water-based and non-glossy.
- \* Live veins on opposite sides of the trunk will create an oval-shaped trunk, instead of round, which you can feel with your hands, even if you can’t clearly see it.

#### Pruning tips:

- \* Start pruning a tree from the bottom and work your way up.
- \* Branches that are very strong can be pruned at the ends.
- \* For branches that are weak, clean up the inner areas and let the ends grow.

#### Wiring tips:

- \* For right-handers, hold the branch from underneath with your left hand and wrap the wire with your right hand...reverse if you’re a lefty.
- \* When removing wire, cut heavy wire beginning at the apex (outer tip) of a branch, not from inside. Unwind thin wire (also starting from the apex) to reduce the possibility of cutting a delicate branch.
- \* Wire has to touch the bark. If there is no contact, the wire won’t hold the branch in position.
- \* If you are wiring a branch that you want to bend downward, the first wrap should come over the top of the branch.
- \* If you are wiring a branch that you want to bring forward, the first wrap should come from the back of the branch.

#### Raffia tips:

- \* Use natural raffia, not artificial. Natural raffia swells when it absorbs water, then shrinks when it dries, creating tight support for the bark and branch it is wrapped around. It disintegrates as it ages, gradually releasing the tension on the branch.
- \* Make your raffia bunches with at least 10-15 strands, but knot the end using only one strand.
- \* When you place the raffia on the branch, point the knot toward the apex of the branch.
- \* Flatten the raffia bunch and overlap several strands as you wrap, being careful to keep it flat and not allow it to twist as you wrap it.
- \* When applying raffia, hold the branch with one hand, using the same amount of pressure to hold the branch as you use with the other hand to pull the raffia tight.
- \* If you have to add another length of raffia, overlap the first bunch 2 full turns around the branch, then continue to wind toward the end.
- \* To tie off the end, twist two strands around each other a few times, then cross them in opposite directions around the branch and make a knot.

### Larch tips:

- ✿ Wire when the needles are off. The ideal time is just before the buds begin to swell in early spring.
- ✿ The apex of a larch in nature tends to be gently curved, downward, not pointed.

### Yew tips:

- ✿ A yew branch can be pruned in spring at any place, as long as there is at least an inch of live needles behind the cut. In fall, you have to make sure there are healthy buds behind the cut; otherwise the branch might die back.
- ✿ Be very careful not to let wire bite into the branches of a Yew. The bark of a Yew won't roll over to close that scar.

### Miscellaneous:

- ✿ When pruning a conifer in autumn, don't prune all the way back to the juvenile foliage. Leave some mature foliage.
- ✿ Some Junipers have foliage that will never make excellent bonsai. Consider the growth habit of the foliage when selecting starter material.
- ✿ Branches are like a coat for a tree. The more branches the tree has when winter begins, the more likely the tree is to survive the winter. Therefore, it is better to do your pruning in spring.



The tokonoma display tree was *Mike Pollock's* Korean hornbeam which was last shown at the 2nd National Bonsai Exhibition in June. The pot is by *Nick Lenz*, stand by *Sean Smith* (our next speaker), and the accent is a pair of Japanese ceramic squirrels holding their Winter nuts.

### **FESTIVE TIME APPROACHING**

Our annual holiday celebration will be on **Sunday**, December 12th this year! As has been our custom we'll have a pot-luck luncheon with great food brought by all attendees (set-up and clean-up activities by members).

After we leave the groaning board we morph into our semi-annual AUCTION mode. Again: members bring in trees, tools, soil, books, magazines, accessories (all bonsai related) and PLANT MATERIAL.

*This note is to get you into a festive spirit and a thinking mode about what you can bring.*

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COMING EVENTS

Nov 13 12:00 pm *Sean Smith* re: How to repair fine  
bonsai containers.

Dec. 12 12:30 pm Annual Holiday Party & Auction  
Note SUNDAY date

Remember to check our website ([www.yamakibonsai.org](http://www.yamakibonsai.org)) for updates and latest information

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