



# YAMA KI NEWSLETTER

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

October

2003

## YAMA KI BONSAI SOCIETY’S 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2003 @ 6:00 PM THE WATERS EDGE, GIOVANNI II IN STAMFORD, CT

What has happened to ten years? Many members remember our 20th anniversary which was held at the Tarrytown Hilton Inn. The daytime program consisted of simultaneous bonsai demonstrations presented by *Yuji Yoshimura*, *William Valavanis*, and *Marion Gyllenswan*. Lectures were also presented by *Mr. Yoshimura* on “Foundations of Rock Appreciation” and by *Vincent T. Covello* on “The Use of Rocks in the Garden”. The evening program consisted of a dinner celebration, “Reminiscences”, and an exhibit of bonsai styled by members.

We now celebrate YAMA KI’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a festive dinner at The Water’s Edge Giovanni II restaurant in Stamford (travel directions below) with fellowship, reminiscences by founding members, favors for all members, and an opportunity to win the elegant shohin Japanese juniper procumbens nana bonsai styled by *Suthin Sukosolvisit* after dinner. We will begin at 6:00pm with a cash bar, socializing while members continue to arrive. At 6:30 the first course and salad will be served while *Adam Hume* and *Mike Ivany* greet us and review the program for the evening. *Suthin Sukosolvisit* will present his lecture on how to create a shohin (under 10”) at home using a Japanese juniper procumbens nana and possibly a Juniper shimpaku or Japanese maple at 8:00 pm. The created bonsais will be awarded as door prizes. The formal part of the evening will end about 9:15 or 9:30; we are welcome to stay and socialize as long as we wish.

The Juniper procumbens nana is one of the most popular evergreen in the U.S. It is a very popular bonsai material sold at fairs and malls because it is very hardy and long-lived, even under adverse conditions. But wait until you see what *Suthin* can do with it!



Bonsai photos from Suthin Sukosolvisit’s website:  
<http://www.royalbonsaigarden.com/>



Japanese juniper



Juniper shimpaku

*Suthin Sukosolvisit* has become one of the East Coast’s major bonsai artists and teachers. Born in Thailand, *Suthin* has won that country’s National Bonsai Award three times. In 1995, after emigrating to the U.S., he and his wife founded the Royal Bonsai Garden in Massachusetts where they now also live. Involved in Bonsai since 1970, he has gained extensive experience with tropical bonsai as well as with shohin sized bonsai. He has extended his expertise to Japanese maples, black pine, and root over rock styling. We have been fortunate to have had *Suthin* conduct bonsai workshops, lectures, and demonstrations in the past and always eagerly await

his next visit. We again have an opportunity to learn from his elegance of styling and deep knowledge of horticulture in an intimate setting.

If you plan to attend, we must receive your reservation by Friday, September 26<sup>th</sup>. Call or email *Irv Kleiman* (212-724-7840) or [irkleiman@rcn.com](mailto:irkleiman@rcn.com) to get your reservation in on time, and mail your check to YAMA KI so it arrives by October 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **DIRECTIONS TO THE WATER'S EDGE, GIOVANNI'S II RESTAURANT**

From I-95 South, Exit 9: Turn left at the end of the ramp, and then right at the next light (Route 1). Go down the hill through 2 short lights, the restaurant is on the right immediately after the second light.

From I-95 North, Exit 9: Turn left at the end of the ramp onto Route 1. Go through 3 short lights, the restaurant is on the right immediately after the third light.

### **YAMA KI BONSAI SOCIETY AT THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN OCTOBER 17 - 26, 2003**

October provides YAMA KI members the opportunity to bring its bonsai message to a very wide audience. October 17-26, in the Enid Haupt Conservatory of the New York Botanical Garden, is the schedule for our presentation of fine bonsai to a public interested in horticulture.

For many visitors to the exhibit, it is their first introduction to real bonsai (as opposed to "mallai"). It is their first introduction to bonsai as a hobby, not only a display vehicle for professionals. It is an opportunity to talk with people about keeping alive or styling their bonsai gifts or mallai. It is an opportunity for NYBG staff members to view the development of bonsai which they have seen at our shows in past years and to ask questions about some of our new stars.

It is not too late to check with *Gail Therrien* if you have a bonsai which you think meets the criteria for display at the Garden. Contact her by phone: (914) 244-1320 or by email: [galtbon@aol.com](mailto:galtbon@aol.com).

In addition, it is URGENT that you contact her and let her know when you will serve as a docent at the exhibit.

### **SPECIAL SEPTEMBER 22<sup>ND</sup> MEETING WITH DAVID DE GROOT**

This issue of the newsletter has been prepared and mailed prior to our special September meeting. A report including photos and gleanings from *David De Groot's* lecture and demonstration will be included in the November issue.

If you receive this notice prior to September 22<sup>nd</sup> and have not called to **reserve a free buffet dinner**, do so now! Failure to tell the Hospitality Committee that you will be at the Education Center may find you with only bread and water before the lecture and demonstration. Call *Phyllis* (914-723-5369) or *Rhoda* (212-724-7840).

<p>This issue is sent ahead of schedule as a reminder to get your check and food preferences into the mail, If you intend to come to the YAMA KI's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, the 4th of October, at The Water's Edge Giovanni II in Stamford.</p>
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## FROM OUR ARCHIVES\*

Few remember the origin of the winning design for YAMA KI's logo. We reprint the following article from the first issue of the JOURNAL of the YAMA KI BONSAI SOCIETY from January 1977 (editor *Jerome Meyer*):

### “WHAT IS A LOGO?”

“A logo (logotype) is an identification symbol used by corporations, institutions, societies and individuals. It may be an abstract - it may be a stylized design - but it must identify either through type, graphics or suggestion. The tree is a venerable pine which, to the Japanese, symbolizes long life. The mountain, of course, is Fuji. But let *Ed Watzick* describe the history of this famous Japanese print from a woodblock:

The engaging design, ‘Mount Fuji seen from a Pine Tree’ c. 1830, was designed as a fan print by one of Japan's best known and greatest Ukiyo-e artists, *Utagawa Hiroshige I*, (1797-1858). While other artists designed woodblocks portraying actors in dramatic kabuki roles, or drew portraits of famous courtesans, *Hiroshige* devoted himself to creating poetic landscapes. Some of these sold as single sheet pictures or were bound together as albums, the most famous of which, issued in 1834, is ‘Views of the 53 Stations of the Tokaido.’ This was to bring him enduring fame.

In *Hiroshige's* day, the fan was carried by all classes of Japanese. Fans were of two types, the folding kind (*ogi* or *sensu*) and the more popular rigid form (*uchiwa*). Millions of these were sold either in a solid color or decorated with a poem in calligraphy or perhaps an ukiyo-e landscape. The print was mounted on a frame made from a single piece of bamboo, the upper part split to form the ribs, the lower part used as a handle. Many other artists designed color prints for this purpose. However, *Hiroshige* remains preeminent. Despite the large number of fans then in use, these fragile prints are now very rare.

Although *Hiroshige* was restricted by the rigid boundaries and limitations of this particular form, he has created a masterpiece now happily employed as the Yama Ki logo. I am proud to own the original color print and happy to share its beauty with the YAMA KI BONSAI SOCIETY.

That is why the logo suggested by *Ed Watzick* is just about perfect. Take a look at it in the masthead. At first glance, it may not be apparent, but it is there. The mountain is “Yama”, and the tree of the forest is “Ki.” Put them together and we have “YAMA KI.”

\* There are many interesting articles in past issues and there are many members who have never seen early issues of this newsletter. We will selectively try to include many of them, as space permits, in future issues.

## MIDATLANTIC BONSAI SOCIETIES

No, MABS does not take a summer vacation. Following the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary's highly successful symposium last April, the Board met twice to begin planning the April 2004 Spring Festival.

Again, outstanding artists have been invited (and they have accepted). Please record the dates in your calendars, April 16-18, 2004. Once again, we'll convene in East Rutherford, NJ, a location agreed upon by all eleven participating clubs.

The next MABS Board meeting will be on the morning of October 4th. If you have any items you wish brought before that Board, please email *Gail Therrien*: [galtbon@aol.com](mailto:galtbon@aol.com), *Lucille Miller*: [lucyym@erols.com](mailto:lucyym@erols.com), or *Rhoda Kleiman*: [irkleiman@rcn.com](mailto:irkleiman@rcn.com). Note that we now have a full complement of YAMA KI representation at these proceedings.

## BACK TO BASICS WITH BERNIE

*Bernie Gastrich*

Several months ago you read a column here about the central core of old soil drying out. This was due to the compacted center accepting water much more slowly than the loose peripheral, newer soil.

I recently learned the hard way that the opposite can also happen. The daily deluges we had earlier this year caused all the soil to be fully wetted continuously for several weeks. The newer peripheral soil drained properly, but the central core stayed soaked, resulting in some root rot.

Early in the season this tree was in full sun and used all the water. As the arc of the sun moved north and the oaks leafed out it was in almost full shade. This is when the root rot must have happened. I cannot move this tree alone and had to wait for help. When I did finally move it to full sun we had five days of glorious hot sunshine. The result: the tender newly expanded needles scorched badly. Since the tree had less healthy roots after the rot, it could not provide enough water for the new needles when the tree was exposed to the sun. The damage was so severe that the survival of the tree (my big pine) is still in question.

## SHOHIN

The following is an adaptation of Colin Lewis's 1997 article (on the internet) in which he sets forth his belief in shohin as a sound basis for bonsai studies. We thought it appropriate in conjunction with *Suthin Sukosolvisit's* presentation.

"I not only found out how to wire and prune on a minute scale, but by getting so close to the subject I also learned an awful lot about how plants work.

I like detail ... precision. When I look at my trees I can spend more than an hour contemplating just one. When you look at anything for that long you notice details - the poor ones as well as the good.

... So-called 'finished' trees should be looked at as analytically as a piece of raw material you're just about to style. Shohin is a great training ground for this discipline. In order to have any hope of achieving in a shohin the sort of images you see in larger bonsai, you have to work much harder.

When you reduce raw material you create large wounds which need to be incorporated in the design of the tree somehow. But on shohin you can't be as drastic or as brash as you can with larger material when it comes to carving jins and sharis. A small plant just won't take the same punishment. This makes you think harder, and that's a good habit to get into.

Then there's things like the proportion of the spaces between the branches to the mass of the branches themselves. And the space between the lowest branches and the ground. This is the most important.

The width of this space, which depends on the relative lengths of the branch and the pot, can tell you where the tree is growing. In simple terms, a narrow pot implies a mountainside, a wide pot implies valley.

... All this is much less 'adjustable' with shohin, and needs much more careful analysis and planning. Shohin teaches you this when you take it on as a serious challenge - artistically as well as horticulturally.

The proportion of the trunk and the pot. The placement of the branches and the spaces between them. The rhythm, movement, the lines and perspective must all satisfy the same aesthetic demands.

Working on shohin develops your ingenuity. Finding ways to tackle these problems and create convincing images on a small scale sharpens up your skills and makes bigger bonsai that much more straightforward.

Shohin isn't an excuse for inferior bonsai by any means. Although it is an opportunity to use material that you might otherwise disregard.

You know how you might take a six feet tall tree and reduce it to two feet in order to make a bonsai. . . . We all recognise this. But given a twelve-inch piece of material, the immediate response is to create a twelve-inch bonsai. Or even to allow it to grow taller to fit your intended design. This is wrong. You should really apply exactly the same approach as you would with larger material. Reduce it to six inches, or less.\*

With shohin you can carry two or three pieces at once, work on the kitchen table or even on your lap! You can pick one up and work on it any time. Fiddle with it, play with it, then put it back on the bench. If you have the urge to work on a bonsai, but you only have an hour or so to spare, then shohin are ideal. They're great for filling in those idle moments. But they do take longer to develop. The growth is that much slower. Shohin teaches you patience.

You can get away with using much less inspiring material too. Because the trunks and branches are that much thinner they can be manipulated easier and so on. A simple, cheap garden centre plant can become a wild mountain driftwood tree, full of drama and movement. You can have total control on shohin, whereas with bigger and older material you have to live with what you've got to a greater extent.

Maintaining shohin is entirely different ball-game to bigger bonsai. I believe that the images at their peak have a limited life - as do all bonsai images, of course. Then they need to be rebuilt, or restyled, or whatever you want to call it. But the smaller the tree, the shorter the life of its peak image. I'd say that once that image has been achieved, you have four to six years before it will need to be almost entirely rebuilt from the main branches out.

Constant pinching and trimming to such a small size produces such fine, compact growth that the shoots become too fine to sustain themselves for long and they lose vigour. Trees just can't take it horticulturally.

It's best to prune hard and regenerate the outer shoots more often. Every three or four years perhaps. But it is hard to destroy an image - especially one that has been so hard to achieve. You tend to try to keep the image at its peak for too long. And when you do decide to rebuild it the process takes longer than with full-size bonsai.

Shohin are more demanding horticulturally, too. The tiny micro environment is disrupted by changes in climate much quicker and to a much greater extent. Sun, wind, cold – all have a much more severe effect on shohin. Miss watering for a day on a big bonsai and it probably won't even notice. Do the same to a shohin and it may well turn its toes up for good. Let the aphids loose for a week and every shoot has been destroyed. A bigger bonsai can outgrow most insect attacks.

Keeping shohin teaches you discipline. You just can't afford to take chances.

But of course you do take chances from time to time. Or you have the odd lapse of discipline. Then you lose the tree. This toughens you up emotionally. You kick yourself for being so careless. But you get used to the trauma of losing your precious creations.

And when, after say ten or twelve years, you have finally achieved an image you are proud of, you exhibit your shohin for the first time. You stand there watching the viewing public walk straight past. They go from one heavyweight to the next, hardly noticing your precious creations. You may overhear the occasional "Aren't they cute?" or "isn't it sweet?". The kids love them!

Exhibiting shohin teaches you humility too. And that's one of the hardest and most valuable lessons of all. So don't concern yourself with the people who dismiss shohin as mere toys, or just a bit of fun. They know no better. It's easy to dismiss something they can't do....

There is no particular merit in having the cash to buy a large tree; or having the facility to collect larger material. That just depends on your personal circumstances and physical strength, not your skills as a bonsai artist.

For me, without the lessons of shohin, my bonsai experience would be incomplete. My larger trees wouldn't be of the same standard. My techniques, horticultural knowledge and artistic ability would not have developed so fully. And I wouldn't have had anywhere near so much pleasure.

That's why shohin!"

\*[Ed. Note: subclasses of shohin are *kata the* (6"-10"), *mame* (4"-6"), *chiisai* (2"-4"), and *taiken chiisai* (less than 2")].

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## COMING EVENTS

Oct	4	YAMA KI'S 30 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Dinner
Oct	17-26	YAMA KI BONSAI EXHIBIT AT NYBG
Nov	8	TBA
Dec	13	Annual Holiday Party & Auction

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