



# YAMA KI NEWSLETTER

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

April

2005

## MARTY SCHMALENBERG LECTURE/DEMONSTRATION SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 2005 - 1:00 PM MEETING AT THE BARTLETT ARBORETUM

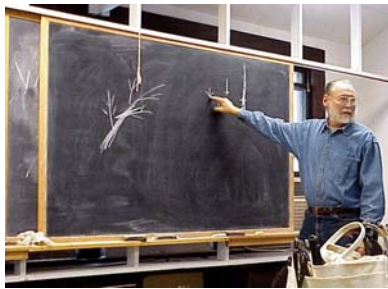
You don't have “to be in England now that April's here” (*Robert. Browning*). April is a great garden month and bonsai enthusiasts benefit from local activities. On April 23rd, following MidAtlantic's Spring Festival 2005, YAMA KI's monthly meeting offers the opportunity to learn from *Marty Schmalenberg* in a return visit.

*Marty*, a bonsai artist and teacher, is the head of the Asian Studies Department at Blair Academy, NJ. In addition to administrative duties, he teaches Japanese, Chinese, and Korean history. His presentations to bonsai organizations are well-rounded as he enriches his horticultural and styling knowledge with background in the historic, cultural, philosophical, and aesthetic facets of Japanese society. *Marty* is active in suiseki groups as well as in bonsai clubs.

## BERNI'S MARCH MEETING ON PINES, PINES, PINES

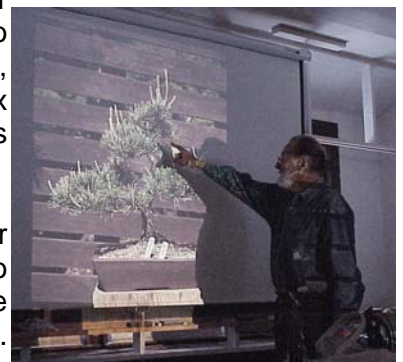
The March meeting, held on a day which predicted the arrival of spring, had a good turnout for both segments. On the morning of March 19, *Berni Gastrich* held a Pine BYO workshop for members who needed help styling and/or healing any variety of Pine. As your editors arrived for the afternoon segment, a number of smiling folk, toting pines were wending their way to their cars to store them prior to the general meeting.

The afternoon found an attentive membership listening to and questioning our resident Pine (*Pinus*) maven – *Berni Gastrich* – as he took us through the first of several sessions dealing with that vast and treasured plant family. He started with generic guidelines with the suggestion that the ideal time to repot Pines is when the smallest buds show a tiny bit of green. Roots will also have white tips, perhaps as much as 1/2" long and resembling tiny asparagus.



Bonsai designers are interested in initially building a strong trunk with good taper. Grow the tree in an oversize container, like a wooden wine crate, since it is difficult to do much of the work while the trees are in the ground - but a large volume of coarse soil is needed. Plan which limbs are to be sacrifice branches (ideally in the rear to avoid frontal scars). Let the candles grow long, remove them after “bleeding” time (July/August). From now until that time, with an expansive hand,

fertilize with a balanced fertilizer which has a high nitrogen content and water heavily. Also, cut back the leader and some branches. Flex the trunk in order to damage the floem and help create taper. You can do this weekly during the spring, but not in mid-summer's dormant time; then continue the practice for about six weeks after Labor Day when another growth spurt occurs. When the tree has developed taper and is the size you want, it is time to start styling.



At this point, *Berni* moved from discussing generic Pine issues to the specifics for Japanese Black or five-needle Pine. Over a two-year period, in Spring, repot to smaller containers in order to reduce rootage and create leaf reduction. Trim the roots on two sides, front and back one year, and the remaining sides the next year. Use smaller soil particles, but not river sand which is too smooth. In coarse sand, the root tips split and become multi-roots. Fertilize weekly with a high-nitrogen chemical liquid fertilizer (e.g., Miracid ®) and keep the tree in FULL SUN. Between June 25 and July 14 (approximately), as candles start to show differentiation into pairs, remove candles. Stop all nitrogen at this time and reduce water. You can accomplish this by exposing only 50% of the soil when you water [use a pie tin with

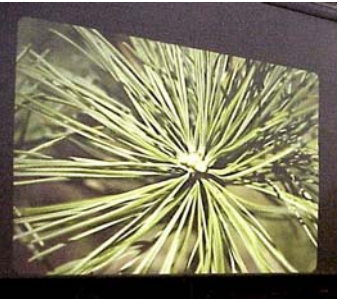
Illustrating needle pruning

slits at the base of the trunk. As you water, the slits will reduce the amount of water getting to the soil. Rotate the pie tin each time you water).

Japanese growers remove approximately 1/3 of the candles each week over a three-week period. They start at the bottom third and first remove the weakest candles, then, medium size, and finally the strongest ones. Our tutor follows the *Shaner (Kathy)* method: all in one session, completely remove the tiniest candles without leaving any stub; cut the mid-size candles leaving a stub equal to double the thickness of the candle; just before you cut the candles, apply a shot of liquid nitrogen, then remove the largest candles leaving a stub about three times the diameter of the candle.



Do not fertilize until about September 1st when you will return to a mild, balanced fertilizer with the addition of nitrogen for two weeks. Darkening of needle color is the clue for when to do this. Then weeks three and four of September, or into early October, add organic fertilizer cakes on the soil and use Miracid® for bud-set. For the balance of October remove organic feed and reduce nitrogen. Dormancy begins to set in, so that some time after November 7th, to reduce chlorophyll, begin to pull needles from branch tips, but not the smallest ones. On the strongest branches leave 5-6 pairs of needles, on mid-sized branches leave 7-8 pairs. Since there is no sticky sap at this time, it is ideal for wiring but not for radical bending.



BLACK PINES (*thunbergiana*) are susceptible to needle cast which will have no symptoms for a year or two after infection. Use a preventive fungicide (e.g., DACONIL®) every two weeks from Spring until late August. Drench the tree from its underside be certain to cover every surface. For mealy bugs, wooly adelgids soak the tree with Malathion® and a "spreader sticker" spray of soap. Malathion® is a general insecticide which is useful as are horticultural oils. Use either every ten days for three applications. Presume that red spider mites exist on Black pines. Spray with a garden hose at full strength on a regular basis, especially in hot weather; just blast them off. You can do this weekly to all Pines, but allow oil spray to sit for 14 hours first. In winter, Black pines are less winter-hardy than many other species, but with zero sun and wind they will survive. The problem consideration is root temperature not air temperature. And winter is an excellent time to prune and wire this material. The species grows and thickens well, buds back readily, and is relatively problem free and drought resistant. It has great bark texture with dark green needles.

In selecting Black pines, look for thickness of trunk along with taper and some curves. Remember that the major disadvantage is that the fight over needle length is endless.

WHITE PINES (*parviflora*-Japanese five-needle pines) are very varied both in needle size and color. In spring they require full sun, but do not get nitrogen and very little water. In late April or very early May candles show little bumps but you cannot see the new needles. Finger break the candles do not cut them. If your tree is large, leave 1/4 - 1/3 of each candle; if medium or small, leave about 1/2 of the candle. After candle break use very little nitrogen (such as that found in organic fertilizer cakes) and relatively little water. When the needles are full length (shorter than last year's?) And color change shows, gradually add low nitrogen and balanced organic fertilizer. Then in September, just before Labor Day, use Miracid®. About October 10, stop nitrogen but it is okay to leave the fertilizer cakes. Generally, in both the U.S. and Japan, white pine has been grafted to Black pine understock. When you are looking for material, try to find inconspicuous grafts or a tree where a thick foliage pad will be able to cover the graft. Also try to find stock with naturally short needles. White pines are subject to red spider, scale, and mealy bugs. Treat them with horticultural oil (3 weeks in row) as the needles expand.

REPOT promptly at the first sign of bud-swell and when you see white tips on root ends. If your pot does not have a lip, you can try lifting the tree by its trunk. If the outer soil stays, it does not need repotting. Do not repot when your Pine is in vigorous growth.

SOIL for Pines should be non-organic since their roots do not like a wet environment. If you are using a deep pot, use a coarse drainage layer at the bottom. All others use a soil which allows about 25% air space to remain between particles after watering. *Berni* has found that Akadama® holds nutrients longer than does Turface®. In any event, the soil mix should not have peat moss since it gets too fine and clogs the interstices of the mix.

Sprinkle the roots with water and dust with mycorrhiza (a mold which has a symbiotic relationship with Pine roots) before repotting. *Marty Schmalenberg* (April 23 lecturer) also sprinkles the surface of a repotted Pine with some. For two weeks after repotting, keep the soil in the pot above 40° (moving the pot indoors/outdoors if need be). It must be kept out of the sun and wind; do not let it dry out but use limited water for about 3 weeks.

MOISTURE levels are important. Use a moisture meter consistently. It should show some moisture. Gradually expose the tree to sun and after about four weeks start to fertilize. Organic cakes such as Biogold® and GreenKing® are good. Use them several times a year.

OTHER PINES are Scot pines (*sylvestris*) which are hardy and relatively disease free. Choose by natural needle length which varies among different clones. Use parviflora (five-needle pine) technique, leaving partial candles. Pitch pine (*rigida*) buds back well and is drought resistant. Use Black pine techniques for selection, care, and styling. Its needles tend to a pale yellow-green. Mugho pine (*montana*) grows above the timberline in the Alps where you can find single trunks which are difficult to locate in the United States. It is virtually indestructible. Limber pine (*flexilis*) has non-tapering trunks which you can actually knot. It is a slower growing variety than some of the others and is very sensitive to air pollution. Use White pine techniques for selection, care, and styling. Red pine (*pinus densiflora*) lends itself to literati styling and as with Limber pine, does not taper and is sensitive to air pollution.



### MARCH'S TOKONOMA

Board member *Steve Peach* provided this month's tokonoma: a Shimpaku with a Ponytail palm for its accent plant. *Mike Pollock* announced that as of next month our *Sean Smith* created tokonoma will be on hand to enhance each member's presentation.

### CORRECTION FOR CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*Guy Giudry* will be the presenter for the July 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. There will be a lecture/demonstration at 10:00 am and a workshop after lunch (byol) at approximately 1:00 pm. The workshop material will probably be azaleas. The cost of the workshop will be our cost for the plant material. The workshop will be limited to 10 members.

The schedule published in the March newsletter indicated that the presenter would be *Kevin Goveia*. *Kevin* has been rescheduled for November 12<sup>th</sup> meeting date.

### HELP YOURSELF WHILE HELPING YAMA KI'S TREASURY

Often members have complained of receiving their Newsletter with missing or mutilated pages. Sometimes we receive Newsletters back with the labels missing and we don't know who it was meant for. Other times a Newsletter comes back with no postage (although we double check to make sure stamps are pasted on). There are times when newsletters are returned even though they are addressed correctly.

If you have access to e-mail, why not accept the e-mailed PDF version of the Newsletter in lieu of the print version. You may want to archive your Newsletters on your computer and/or print it with the photos in full color. Incidentally, the saving of paper, inks, and stamps helps our treasury and the environment!

## MIDATLANTIC SPRING FESTIVAL 2005 - APRIL 15-17, 2005

You have read about this premier bonsai event and its prominent artists in these pages during the last few months. Now we want to share the biography of headliner *Hatsuji Kato* of Japan. He currently manages the family's Mansei-En Bonsai Garden in Omiya, Japan. Although following his father's (Saburo Kato) profession, he is an accomplished artist in his own right. He has received several awards in the Sakufu Bonsai Ten professional exhibition, including the exhibition's first prize. *Mr. Kato* has traveled extensively throughout the world teaching bonsai, and is Acting President of the Japan Bonsai Association. His weekend commitment to MidAtlantic includes two lecture/demonstrations, one each on Saturday (Cryptomeria) and Sunday (Juniper); a critique of Exhibit Material on Saturday, and a Bring-Your-Own Workshop on Sunday afternoon. He will also participate with *David Prescott, Cheryl Manning,* and *Andrew Smith* in selecting the first winner of the Artists' Award for Best in Show at MidAtlantic's Exhibition (YAMA KI will have three trees as entrants). *Ms. Mieko Kubota* of Florida will translate for *Hatsuji Kato*.

Our area has few garden centers/nurseries which cater to bonsai enthusiasts so the extensive, quality wares offered by 19 vendors present a select mini-mall for your needs (no mall-sai available). Some are new to MidAtlantic this year and some are returning. These vendors are:

Adams Bonsai	Bonsai Etc.	Bonsai Supply
Bonsai (by George)	Crown Custom Bonsai	Custom Oriental Woodcraft
Eagleville, LLC	Ed & Randall's Premium Soil	Flowerwood Farm
Golden Arrow Bonsai	International Bonsai	Nature's Way Nursery
New England Bonsai Gardens	Oriental Garden	The Osiga Company
Royal Bonsai Garden	Shibui Bonsai	Wild Things Bonsai Studio
Wildwood Gardens		

In addition to shopping, you will have access to bonsai items and trees in three activities which take place every day: there will be a silent auction at the rear of the lecture room, artists' trees by raffle following demonstrations, and a major, fun-filled auction following Saturday night's banquet when the MABS Board inaugurates the presentation of three awards for excellence in Exhibit trees: The Artists' Award for Best in Show chosen by the presenters, The President's Selection, and The Exhibit Committee's Choice.

YAMA KI, as does each member club, participates in putting together this outstanding spring seminar weekend and helping with security at the Exhibit and staffing the Registration Desk. Please call Rhoda Kleiman (212.724.7840) and volunteer your time for an hour or two over the weekend.

The public is invited to attend as a full or partial participant in the conference. The bonsai exhibit and vendor areas are also available on Saturday from 8 AM to 5 PM and on Sunday from 9 AM to Noon. Admission to the exhibit and vendors only is \$5.00.

### GLEANINGS

- ❁ A pot that is much wider at the top than it is at the base is more frost resistant than a pot with perpendicular sides or incurved sides. Incurved pots are also more difficult when it comes to repotting. The root system would have to be sliced around the edges with a sharp knife in order to lift it out of the container. (From the Greater Louisville Bonsai Society Newsletter).

## ROOT ROT

\*The following comments were posted by *Nina Shishkoff* (A plant pathologist) on the web site [www.GardenBanter.co.uk](http://www.GardenBanter.co.uk) as part of a discussion on "Help with Sick Juniper Bonsai." "*Billy M. Rhodes* wrote 'Root rot is caused by a bacteria.'" *Nina's* response:

". . . Almost no root rots are caused by bacteria. After root rot has set in, bacteria will follow, but they're almost never the causal agent. The causal agent is usually a fungus or a water mold. Even these may be coming in after wounding of the roots caused by insects or nematodes(or pruning). Often we refer to "root rot syndromes" to indicate that the etiology is complicated.

Often in plant pathology we refer to the "Disease Triangle" whose sides are "pathogen", "susceptible plant" and "disease-conducive environment". Obviously, you can have a plant but no disease if the pathogen is absent. However, you can have the pathogen present but no disease if the environment is nonconducive. You can have the pathogen and a conducive environment, but no disease if the cultivar is resistant. All three sides of the triangle must be present.

Sides of the triangle: The pathogen: The problem with root rot is that the organisms are almost always nearby, if not actually present. Bonsai growers use nonsoil mixes rather than soil to reduce the possibility that root rot organisms will be present, but if a potting mix is stored on the ground, organisms can invade. Commercial peat can contain water molds (I've isolated pythium from new bags of peat).

Conducive environment: Another problem is that some root rot organisms are encouraged by warm weather (*Fusarium*, *Phytophthora*) and others by cool weather (*Pythium*). In bonsai, the most common cause of root rot is overwatering. The organism is almost invariably already in the soil of a bonsai kept outdoors or which has spent some time in a greenhouse (a colleague who is a world authority on *Phytophthora* in nursery."

\*The web site and comments above were brought to our attention in the March 2005 issue of the [Long Island Bonsai Society Newsletter](#).

## WALTER PALL ON TRADITIONAL VS. MODERN BONSAI STYLING\*

"- - - *Fred Knobloch* has found the following *Pall* statement in his Internet searches, It is a very good statement of the differences between traditional and modern bonsai:

'We all are victims of our bonsai education. We all have learned from books that were written decades ago. The books teach traditional bonsai and not modern bonsai. A traditional bonsai wants to be an Ideal tree; it wants to be noble, elegant, subtle. It should be in the Zen Buddhist spirit of 'less is more' understatement. In traditional bonsai, the use of deadwood is supposed to be minimal, proportions should be 'good'; *John Naka* stated 1:6 (e.g., 10 cm trunk diameter and 60 cm height of tree). One should stand in front of a traditional tree and meditate, get warm, experience good emotions of peace and tranquility. Overall, a very ideal tree in positive words; a boring tree, a tree that looks like so many others, in negative words.

Modern bonsai started about 15 years ago. *Kimura* caused a revolution. A modern bonsai is the antithesis of traditional bonsai. It wants to impress, even frighten you. You stand in front of one, and it blows your socks off. It appears enormous, wild, violent, even. It wants to appear odd; it is totally unabashed, not humble at all. It is the *Arnold Schwarzenegger* tree. The methods are: extreme proportions, much more drastic than 1:6; often 1:2 or even overabundant use of deadwood; drastic bends on trunks and branches, spirals, bizarre forms of living and dead parts of the tree. Overall, a very special tree, a unique tree, a tree that one does not forget, in positive words. An exaggerated, show-off tree in negative terms.

When criticizing a bonsai, we should keep in mind that it is not helpful to ask more drama from a traditional bonsai and less drama from a modern one. It is not always helpful to try to make a modern bonsai more traditional. The whole idea is a different one. It often means to castrate a tree."

\*Reprinted from [Brandywine Bonsai Society's October 2004 Newsletter](#)

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COMING EVENTS

April 15-17 MidAtlantic Spring Festival 2005  
April 23 *Marty Schmalenberg* lecture/demonstration  
May 7 *Horst Krekler* lecture/demo and BYO workshop  
June 18 11 am: *Berni Gastrich* on season-appropriate Pine maintenance  
1:00 pm: Annual Meeting and Auction

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