

# YAMA KI NEWSLETTER

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

February

2004

## PHOTOGRAPHING BONSAI - TECHNIQUES AND TIPS BARTLETT ARBORETUM FEBRUARY 21, 2004 AT 1:00 PM

Our February meeting agenda has changed! After a general discussion on future events and programs, *Mike Pollack* will lecture and demonstrate procedures and techniques for photographing bonsai, saikei, and suiseki. *Irv Kleiman* and *Adam Hume* have volunteered to help and all members who have any special procedures that work well for them are invited to share their knowledge. Bring your camera and bring a plant so that this can be a “hands-on” workshop. If you don’t own a camera, borrow one or purchase an inexpensive disposable camera. An album of your bonsai collection at various stages of development is invaluable!

### NOTES ON JANUARY MEETING’S SAIKEI LECTURE/DEMONSTRATION BY JOHN COTOGGIO



Although a relatively new YAMA KI, member, *John Cotoggio* has a long history in bonsai. He especially enjoys creating saikei because it is “instant gratification.” As an example, his demonstration took about an hour and a half and resulted in a saikei ready for exhibition. All this while talking about his bonsai training, including his apprenticeship years with *Phil Tackill* and studying the books of *Toshio Kawamoto*, the developer of the art of saikei - a “new” style of miniature tree plantings. *John* told us that *Kawamoto* wanted to make bonsai, at that time affordable only to the wealthy, accessible to the general population. Using small

trees and rocks, “nature could be artfully and affordably duplicated”

*John* opened the 2004 programming with a dynamic lecture/demonstration of saikei. He indicated that many varieties of trees are suitable. The trees, however, should be of similar variety but of various heights. Use trees with small leaves or needles and comparable temperature and water requirements, if you plan to mix trees. For the demonstration *John* used Junipers (Little Jamie variety resembling Japanese cedars which are readily available in many sizes), along with cuttings of Kingsville boxwood and some dwarf ferns.\* He has successfully maintained these materials both indoors and outdoors (in our temperate zone). Although trays can be used, *John* prefers a shallow container and then selects some strong, rough-edged rocks to use in the planting. The container should be of earthen color; avoid glazes and colors for a natural look. Use stones that are similar in color, shape, and texture. After placing the rocks, he estimates the number of trees required for the tray, including both focus trees and small accent materials.



Placing the first largest rock



Rocks in place

Important considerations in designing the planting include: the color, size, and shape of the tray/container for the material you wish to use, the overall view including depth, rock placement (which precedes tree siting - even as in nature), and an allowance for an open “path” through the forest.

*John* begins covering pot holes with plastic screening and then builds piles of soil (his choice is 50% each of peat and sand with a little bit of Turface® or Akadama). He carefully partially buries the stones in the soil. The size and placement depends on the depth perception desired, whether a front view with tall trees in front or back view with the shorter trees in front. He reviews many alternative arrangements, before choosing the final rock placement.



Trimming first tree



First tree placed



Placing small boxwoods, ferns, etc.



Final touches and tamping soil

Before beginning to place the trees, he trims them and cuts into their root mass loosening, but not removing, the old soil. Before final placement, he sprinkles on some Superthrive® (which may or may not help). With firm pressure, he puts the trees as close to the rocks as possible, following basic guidelines about not having any two trees in a direct line. He sites his largest tree first and continues tree placement following the basic bonsai triangle composition styling concept. *John* finds that with firm tamping pressure and filling in with extra soil the trees stay in place without wiring or muck.



Ready for exhibition

The planting is enhanced by adding very small trees and plants. In the demonstration he used boxwood and ferns. Where necessary, he added wire to “staple” the accents to the soil. *John* finished the saikei with several varieties of moss and dwarf grasses, cautioning us to place them judiciously and not blanket the soil. An especially useful tool when creating a saikei is a small soft brush to selectively move soil and clean the rocks and container edges and sides.

*Gail Therrien* volunteered to care for the saikei until June when it will be sold at auction.

\**John* purchased the Little Jamie junipers used in the demonstration at Middle Country Gardens, a bonsai nursery in Coram, L.I., N.Y. He said that the nursery cultivates and maintains a large inventory of these trees for sale. Their phone number is (516) 732-5289.

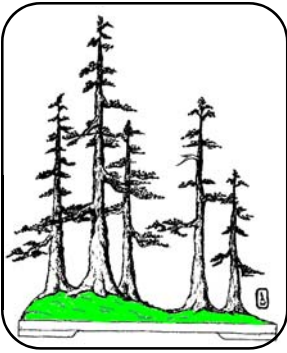
### HAIKU

Like a bonsai tree,  
your terrible posture  
at my dinner table

Author unknown



## MIDATLANTIC BONSAI SOCIETIES UPDATE



MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies has again grown to twelve member clubs with Garyu Bonsai Society (serving Berks, Montgomery, and Western Lehigh Counties of Pennsylvania) having joined this year. The 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Spring Festival convenes on April 18<sup>th</sup> at the Ramada Inn, E. Hanover, NJ. If you need another registration brochure, call the *Kleimans* at (212) 724-7840. It's one of the best bonsai conventions in the United States, with world famous artists giving presentations, workshops, and critique sessions; many carefully screened reliable vendors of bonsai and related materials; and exhibits of some of the prized bonsai that each member bonsai club contributes to the exhibit. Yet, it is not large and intimidating - there is ample opportunity to talk informally with all of the presenters. Best of all - it's close to home. You can stay overnight, come just for the day, or commute each day!

This NEWSLETTER and the next two issues will feature biographies of this year's presenters. *Mr. Donald Torppa* of Cherryville, NC, has been a long time bonsai specialist focusing on the technical aspects of bonsai. He has conducted research projects for improving the growing and training of bonsai. He also has extensive experience as a bonsai hobbyist and stylist. For *Donald's* first appearance at MidAtlantic, he will present a lecture/demonstration on Friday evening, April 18, working with a Japanese white pine tree. On Saturday afternoon he will conduct one of the critiques of the bonsai Exhibit material. On Sunday the workshop which he will present features Japanese maples.

### BACK TO BASICS WITH BERNI

*Berni Gastrich*

A recent discussion, at our December meeting, of how to winter trees, made it evident that a great deal of confusion on the subject still exists.

- 1 Tropical trees do not need, and would be killed by winter cold.
2. North temperate zone trees (95 percent of all bonsai) must have a gradual cooling down through autumn, and then a cold dormant period. The ideal here is a steady 30 to 40 degree environment. Obviously, the ideal is not necessary but you must get as close as you can. Many of my trees have already been down to 12 degrees several times this winter. This is okay. The real danger is that when the soil is frozen the trees must be protected from Sun and wind. These conditions desiccate even leafless bonsai, and the trees cannot replace their lost moisture if the roots are encased in frozen soil. You must find your own location for this. An unheated detached garage is one example. If your garage is warmed by being in contact with your house you can open a window or leave the garage door slightly ajar. This works very well. Dormant trees need no light.

*Phyllis Wishnick* pointed out that Black pines need only a short dormant period. She leaves hers out until about December 15th, and then puts them into a greenhouse. Their native habitat is the relatively warm southern part of Japan, and they need only this short dormant period. This is certainly true, but unless you have this level of expertise about all of the species of bonsai you own, and have a greenhouse, it is safer to keep them dormant longer. I bring mine out in late March and have not lost one in 30 years.

### MEMBER NOTES

*Arthur Sorensen*, a member who joined our Society just this past May 2003, passed away Saturday, January 10, 2004. He was 76 years old. Members will remember him as a slow walking, slow talking, gentle man.

*David Castro* from Jamaica, New York, a friend of *John Cottoggio*, joined our Society at this past January's meeting.

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**COMING EVENTS**

Feb 21 Photography Lecture and Workshop  
 March 20 "B/Y/O" Styling & Repotting Workshop (note this is a change from the 13th)  
 April 16 - 18 MidAtlantic 2004 Spring Festival  
 April 24 *Craig Coussins* Advanced Styling Lecture & afternoon Workshop

**WEATHER HOTLINES**

Connecticut	<i>Nicki Wallhofer</i>	(203) 359-9229
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Westchester	<i>Selma Bernstein</i>	(914) 633-8338

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