



# YAMA KI NEWSLETTER

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

February

2010

## SELECTING TREES FOR BONSAI & WIRING TECHNIQUES WORKSHOP SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2010 @ 12:30 PM BARTLETT ARBORETUM

Two of our most experienced members will be presenting a two part program on Saturday, February 27<sup>th</sup>. First up will be *John Cotoggio* who will discuss what you need to look for when purchasing or collecting a tree for training as a bonsai. *Mike Pollock* will then present a wiring workshop covering various techniques for wiring... to create a great bonsai from that tree you bought at the nursery. Of course, using *John's* selection ideas...doors open at 12:00 with start at 12:30.

### BUYING THE BEST BONSAI MATERIAL AVOIDING THE EMOTIONAL PITFALLS AND BUYER'S REMORSE *Lead by John Cotoggio*



We've all experienced an urge to buy a bonsai or a piece of raw material on an emotional level. Sometimes this works out well, more often we end up buying poor trees and wasting time developing them, or wasting money getting rid of them.

In this discussion we'll talk about the best way to identify good material to make the best bonsai possible. Brave senior club members will confess to their mistakes to help you avoid the same fate. If you're brave and really want to learn, bring the last tree or shrub you've purchased.

### WINTER WIRING WORKSHOP *Lead by Michael Pollock*



Mike

Wiring is one of the few areas in bonsai where objective rights and wrongs exist. We wire our trees to control their shape, and although aesthetic considerations come into play in wiring too, the main goal is for the branches to hold the shape we desire.

We have all been fascinated watching world-renowned bonsai artists wire their demonstration trees. We've heard them recite the "rules" and techniques. But, somehow, when we are back home wiring our trees, we hesitate when we guide the wire around the trunk in order to bend the branch - - over or under?? Learning by doing is so much more effective than reading or observing. Even when we feel confident, actually "doing" under supervision indelibly reinforces our knowledge and technique.

In this workshop we'll use fallen branches in place of our trees. Chenille stems (formerly known as pipe cleaners) will sit in for copper or aluminum wire. No tools are necessary. There may even be a prize for the best wiring job of the day. Wiring is a major skill necessary for creating good bonsai. Don't miss this chance to learn, or improve, this essential technique.

Note: The *Kleimans* (co-editors of the YAMA KI newsletter), could not attend the January meeting. Most of this issue was written by *Norm Geisinger*, *Mike Pollock*, *John Cotaggio*, *Berni Gastrich*, and *Gail Therrien*. The photos are courtesy of *Norm Geisinger* and *David Castro*.

# JANUARY'S BONSAI HORTICULTURE PANEL DISCUSSION

*Norm Geisinger*

It was a freezing cold day but that did not stop 25 club members from attending the meeting and getting great/expert information about soil, watering, fertilizing and pesticides. Thanks to our four panel members: *Berni Gastrich, Mike Pollock, John Cotoggio* and *Gail Therrien* for taking the time to prepare and doing a great job presenting their topic and leading the discussion. There was a lot of participation in the discussions which expanded and enhanced the presentations and handouts. The following is a summary of each presentation prepared by its panel member.



## BONSAI SOIL

*Berni Gastrich*



*Berni* performed a demonstration illustrating the difference in drainage qualities of bonsai soil mixes. He had equal amounts of bonsai soil of different kinds, e.g., akadama, kanuma, topsoil, the regular three-part bonsai soil, sand etc. in different pots. By adding equal amounts of water to each pot, the quantity of water that quickly drained from the soils dramatically demonstrated the difference in the water retained by each type of bonsai soil. *Berni* also discussed the nutrient retentive properties while demonstrating the water retentive properties of different soils. The essential concept is that we want a soil which holds water and nutrients inside each particle but has excellent drainage of the inter particle spaces to prevent root rot. The following are the major points of his presentation:

The function of soil in a bonsai pot is to:

- \* Stabilize the bonsai, i.e. keep it upright. Without this weighted mass between the roots, the tree would fall over.
- \* Act as a reservoir for moisture, nutrients, mycorrhizae etc. The current thinking on soil is that it should be composed of relatively large stable particles which absorb moisture into the particle along with nutrients, etc.
- \* Create air spaces between the particles to allow excess water to drain out. to have a pH suitable for the species being grown.
- \* Provide the environment for bacteria, mycorrhiza, etc.

Additional good characteristics:

- \* enough rigidity to avoid becoming mushy from day in, day out, watering.
- \* Sharp edged particles which cause root tips to bifurcate thus creating a mass of fine root hairs. These are the only parts of the root capable of absorbing water and nutrients.

Soil components:

- Granite grit. . . . . weight and sharp edges
- Surface<sup>®</sup> . . . . . a natural clay which has been baked almost like a flower pot, and then broken up into small particles. It holds moisture and nutrients.
- Akadama<sup>®</sup> . . . . . a superior Japanese equivalent of surface
- Kanuma<sup>®</sup> . . . . . similar but with lower pH
- Pine bark. . . . . broken into small particles. It encourages mycorrhiza and bacterial flora as well as holding moisture.

Sand and Peet Moss are no longer used because they hold water where there should be air spaces.

## FERTILIZERS

*John Cotoggio*

- ✿ We need to fertilize because the soil composition does not hold nutrients for very long and does not produce them.
- ✿ It's important to have a consistent program/regimen to have healthy, vigorous trees.

*John's plan is:*

- ✿ Once a week during growing season use liquid fish emulsion/seaweed mix using 2 oz. of each per gallon of water & every other week add a 20-20-20 fertilizer concentrate at half strength to the first mixture.
- ✿ Switch to a 0-10-10 fertilizer concentrate starting in September until the non-tropical trees are put away for the winter.
- ✿ In the Spring start with a few weeks of adding micro-nutrients.
- ✿ Foliar feed your trees, not in full sun...best to do in early morning or in evening.
- ✿ You can add organic fertilizer pellets on the surface of the soil...benefit is that it is a slow release and trees get fed in low dosages each time they are watered.
- ✿ **Do Not**...fertilize a dry, sick/weak or recently re-potted tree.

## PESTICIDES

*Gail Therrien*

GLEANINGS from *Gail*:

- ✿ Use the WEB (Google or other search engines) to research what insect/fungus has attacked your tree.
- ✿ Unlike most fungi, Mycorrhizae (a fungus) is beneficial to a tree's health.
- ✿ The 'active ingredient' in an insecticide is what will kill an insect, and this ingredient may be sold under a number of brand names.
- ✿ If concerned about chemical products getting into the soil (e.g. horticultural oils), cover the soil with plastic wrap or something similar before spraying.
- ✿ When spraying for insects or fungus, do it right the first time by spraying every part of the tree thoroughly at the recommended strength and frequency. This may preclude the need for subsequent treatments and decrease the likelihood of any surviving insects/fungi developing a resistance to the product. Read label carefully and fully, as a tree you plan to treat may have a sensitivity to that product.
- ✿ Do not spray a tree in full sunlight. Shade, early morning or dusk is best (also see fertilizer above).
- ✿ Know the insect's life cycle and treat when the pesticide will be most effective.
- ✿ Buying concentrates is most cost effective, especially when spraying with many eco-friendly products (e.g. insecticidal soaps), which will require repeated treatments.



*Gail's favorites:*

- Diazinon for mites.
- Daconil (active ingredient Chlorothalonil) for fungus.
- Bayer Tree & Shrub Insect Control (active ingredient Imidacloprid) for insects.
- Rubbing alcohol—mealybugs, apply full strength with a q-tip.
- Spray hearty trees with Dormant Oil in spring before bud break to kill many overwintering insects and mites.
- Spray with a general use insecticide before bringing trees indoors in fall, spraying 3 times at 7-10 day intervals.

**Most of all**...having the right soil combined with proper watering & fertilizing will give you strong, healthy trees reducing the chance you will need to use pesticides...which makes for a healthier environment for all.

## WATERING

Mike sought and was granted permission to reprint and distribute a comprehensive article written by *Harry Harrington* on watering. All members in attendance received a copy, and it has been included as a separate attachment for members who could not make this meeting.

## JANUARY'S MEETING RAFFLE

*Norm Geisinger*

We held a raffle at the January meeting which generated \$105 for the club. The raffle items: a suiseki & Japanese print donated by *Mike Pollock*, and a bonsai container from *Norm Geisinger* which was won by *Rima Chatterjee*, new member who joined that day. She hopes to use the pot for the tree she will design in our beginners' course.

## YAMA KI NEW MEMBERS

*Norm Geisinger*

Join me in welcoming these new members to Yama Ki:

*Alice Cooke*; Norwalk, CT  
*Bernie Gordon*; Pleasantville, NY  
*Charles Wordon*; Danbury, CT  
*Eric & Robin Krasnoff*; Old Brookville, NY  
*Harrison Harner*; Danbury, CT  
*Layne Rodney*; Stamford, CT  
*Patricia Coghlan*; Pittsburgh, PA  
*Ralph Padilla*; Bronx, NY  
*Rima Chatterjee*; Bronxville, NY

At our next meeting lets all step up and say "Hello & Welcome"...make them feel right at home

## BONSAI BEGINNERS' COURSE--SESSION #1 SATURDAY, FEB. 27<sup>TH</sup> 9:30-12:00 @ BARTLETT

*Norm Geisinger*

We will have our first of three sessions for our Beginners' Course on Feb 27<sup>th</sup>. *Berni Gastrich* will be leading the program with other experienced members assisting. We will be accepting registrations for the course through Feb 5th...contact *Norm* at: [normc21@aol.com](mailto:normc21@aol.com). The cost is \$150 for members, which covers instruction, a pre-bonsai tree, and a book. Session #2 class is scheduled for March 27<sup>th</sup> also at the Bartlett. Since the Arboretum will be closed for alterations at the end of March. the April 10th class will be held at Sam Bridge Nursery, Greenwich, CT. Program information is on our website ([www.yamakibonsai.org](http://www.yamakibonsai.org)).

## MIDATLANTIC BONSAI SOCIETIES UPDATE

Did you receive your MABS' registration brochure for the 2010 Spring Festival? If not, email or call *Rhoda Kleiman* at (212.724.7840; [irkleiman@rcn.com](mailto:irkleiman@rcn.com)). She will get one to you promptly. Remember, there is an "Early Bird" discount.

Are you able to distribute some of these brochures to garden centers or florists in your area? Again, contact *Rhoda* and she'll bring some to the February meeting for you.

MABS is trying to reach out to future bonsai enthusiasts. Do you have contacts at any of the agricultural schools in our region? If you do, will you distribute a packet of passes. This will give the students free entry to the vendors area. Guess who'll get them to you – please call.

This year there will be three major artists presenting lecture/demonstrations, critiques of Exhibit Trees, and workshops. Each newsletter, until the Festival, includes a brief bio/bonsai background on one of the artists.

### **MICHEL PHANEUF**

*Michel Phaneuf*, of Montreal, Canada, will be one of the three featured artists at the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual MidAtlantic Spring Festival. His background is in sculpture and painting where he studied at the Montreal Fine Arts School and graduated from UQAM University with a degree in graphic concept and design. He has his own marketing company. Bonsai came into his life in 1992 when he trained with *David Easterbrook* and then with many bonsai artists from Europe, Japan, and the USA. The Société de Bonsai et de Penjing de Montréal has had his expertise as a teacher, a member of Board of Directors and as president. *Michel's* travels have taken him to Europe to continue his training and give lectures with French and Italian masters such as François Jeker, Michele Andolfo, Salvatore Liporace, and others. *Michel* was one of the founding members of the Montréal based Karamatsu Study Group in 1998. American Bonsai Societies featured him as a teacher in 2008 at the Texas Learning Seminar. His courses there were “Shape and Movement”, “Creating a Bonsai”, “Initiation to Dead Wood for the First-Timer”, and “Dead Wood Tools and Techniques.” He has given lectures and demonstrations to numerous bonsai organizations in the US. He strives for bonsai design with a lot of expression. At MidAtlantic he will open the Festival on Friday night with a lecture/demonstration, and on Saturday he will present a second one with different material. Saturday evening, if you sign up in a timely way, you may tour the Exhibit as he critiques the 33 trees shown by member clubs. On Sunday afternoon he will conduct a workshop, limited to eight people, styling Shimpaku junipers.

### **JOSHUA ROTH NEW TALENT CONTEST TO BE HELD AT MABS 2010 SPRING FESTIVAL**

The New Talent Bonsai Competition that was featured, for the first time, at the 2002 American Bonsai Society Symposium in Milwaukee, has become an annual event. This year's Competition will take place at the "MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies 2010 Spring Festival." The competition is aimed at discovering and promoting new talent in the art of bonsai and is the first of its kind to be held in North America. The concept of the Competition is very simple. Phase one, judging of previous work, is used to select the contestants for the second phase. In the second phase, each participant will be given eight hours to create the very best bonsai they can produce from specially selected material.

After the entrants have completed their work, four of the FESTIVAL headliners will judge the bonsai that have been created. All full registrants at the FESTIVAL will also have the opportunity to vote for the “people's choice.” The winner will be announced Saturday night at the banquet.

The Grand Prize for the Joshua Roth New Talent Bonsai Competition is an exclusive course of study with an approved bonsai teacher and hotel accommodations if the teacher is not in the winner's home town. The winning artist will also be profiled in the Journal of the American Bonsai Society under the title of “Best New Bonsai Talent of 2010.”

Two members of YAMA KI are previous winners. We encourage all our many members who have the talent to compete this year. Our Society will help in whatever way we can. If you are interested and have been involved with bonsai for less than ten years, go to ABS' website: [www.absbonsai.org/newtalent.html](http://www.absbonsai.org/newtalent.html) for full details, or speak to *Mike Pollock* (a past winner).

OFFICERS

Norm Geisinger..... President  
Mike Pollock..... Vice-President  
Len Douglas..... Treasurer  
Lavanya Muller..... Secretary  
Gail Therrien..... Immediate Past President

DIRECTORS

David Castro, John Cotoggio, Irv Kleiman,  
Charles Muller, John Ruggio, & Nick Sajda

Co-Editors: Rhoda & Irv Kleiman

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COMING EVENTS

Feb. 27 9:30 am Beginners' Class #1  
Feb. 27 12:30 pm Selecting Trees for Bonsai: *John Cotoggio*;  
Wiring Workshop: *Mike Pollock*  
  
Mar. 27 9:30 am Beginners' Class #2  
Mar. 27 12:00 pm *Colin Lewis*, guest artist  
  
Apr. 10 9:30 am Beginners' Class #3  
Apr. 16-18 MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies 2010 Spring  
Festival  
Apr. 26 6:00 pm *Charles Ceronio*, guest artist

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

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