



# YAMA KI NEWSLETTER

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

March

2006

SEAN SMITH LECTURE/DEMONSTRATION /WORKSHOP  
CUTTING & CARVING STONE, PLUS....  
BARTLETT ARBORETUM - MARCH 11, 2006 AT 12 NOON

Before the general meeting, the Board of Directors will meet at 10:00 am. Interested members are welcome and can add their thoughts and opinions, but, of course, can not vote.

*Mike Pollock* contributed this report about *Sean* and the meeting: “*Sean Smith*, declared one of the best daiza carvers outside of Japan by *Arishige Matsuura*, Chairman, of the Japanese Suiseki Association, will be back to YAMA KI for an exciting and unique event.

We’ll be renting a stone saw to accompany *Sean’s* demo on cutting stones to release the potential in rocks that would otherwise have little value. *Sean* will demonstrate how to select a line to cut, the technique for using a small stone saw, and the finish work to refine it. Although an uncut stone is the ideal suiseki, many fine stones have been altered either by cutting or minor grinding of their bottom surfaces. It can be an almost magical moment when the bottom drops away and a suiseki is born. Don’t miss this meeting. *Sean* will try to allow us to cut any stones we bring. There are size limitations because of the saw blade we’ll be using. Stones with cuts of around six inches will probably be the maximum size we can cut that day.”

*Sean* lives in Maryville, Pennsylvania, where he owns and operates Custom Oriental Woodcraft. Exploiting his interest in bonsai and carpentry, *Sean* started his business making bonsai display stands and carving daiza . Visit his web site (<http://www.bonsai-suiseki.com>), for details on his impressive credentials as a bonsai master. You will also see samples of all of his products, e.g., stands, turntables, suiseki, shoji screens, etc. - all individually assembled one at a time. You can see his work at our meetings each month - Sean made the Yama Ki tokonoma last year.

The photos at the right were copied from his website as samples of his handcrafted traditional bonsai stands and suiseki mounted on daiza (custom carved shallow wooden base, unique for its suiseki), each with its own traditional custom wooden box.



## FEBRUARY’S MEETING WITH MARTY SCHMALENBERG

*Marty* began the meeting remarking about his enjoyment driving along the Merritt Parkway to the meeting viewing and admiring the natural trees in their skeletal winter appearance. He then presented slides he has taken of trees in their natural state in front of buildings, in the woods, etc. that he admired for their trunk formation and graceful branching. He is constantly looking at the ramification of these trees and mentally pruning and cutting them. He feels that bonsai styling should follow natural growth.

He brought some of his bonsai and discussed their history and the reasoning used to determine their present styling. Interestingly, *Marty* does not grow bonsai in the ground - he uses big deep clay pots and wooden boxes.



Members were delighted with his styling insights on the “problem” trees they brought to the meeting. Most members asked that he proceed with the change of front, cutting and pruning. A few reserved judgement, noted his suggestions and waited to do the actual modifications at home. Throughout the session,. *Marty* emphasized that secondary branches should be naked until their tips - which should end in a graceful filigree. He also stated that moss should be used only when “showing”.



### FEBRUARY'S TOKONOMA



Last meeting's tokonoma was again provided by *Mike Pollock*. The stone is named “white Dragon Gorge” and is a Furuya-ishi (a stone from the Furuya area of Japan). The stone is estimated to be a suiseki for over two hundred years; he is the fifth owner! *Mike* indicated that the daiza is probably a replacement and is about 150 years old. The name and previous owners' signatures appear on the kiri baku (Kiri wood box) lid. *Mike* added that Furuya stones are created in geologic formations called Karsts. The stones found in the Ligurian Alps of Italy are also Karst stones.



### JOSHUA ROTH NEW TALENT COMPETITION

The Joshua Roth New Talent Bonsai Competition is an annual competition to recognize and promote new bonsai talent in North America. First prize is a round trip airline ticket to Japan. The first stage of the competition is a judging of photographs of previously designed trees. The second stage will be the actual production of a bonsai during the "ABS Learning Seminars 2006", which will be held in Saratoga Springs, NY at the Holiday Inn Hotel on June 15-18, 2006 . Any person who lives in North America is eligible. He or she must have been involved with the art of bonsai for less than ten (10) years. The first stage (photo. submissions, write-ups, etc) deadline is Friday April 21<sup>st</sup>. Go to <http://www.absbonsai.org/>, the website of the American Bonsai Society for detailed information. The YAMA KI Board has agreed to encourage Yama Ki members to enter the competition with a grant to help cover the costs .

### THE FEDERATED GARDEN CLUBS OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

The YAMA KI BONSAI SOCIETY is now an affiliate member of the Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut and, as such, will be listed in their directory. As a member of YAMA KI you are entitled to attend events they sponsor which are listed on their website: <http://www.ctgardenclubs.org/>. If you have questions contact *Norm Geisinger*.

BACK TO BASICS WITH BERNI  
*Berni Gastrich*

SPRING IS ALMOST HERE

Right now is a very excellent time to do major pruning. Trees are still dormant and there will be very little bleeding when you make cuts. Since dormancy will end very soon, there will be active healing in the very near future. If your tree has already broken dormancy do not make major cuts since the bleeding will be profuse. Minor trimming is okay.

For mature bonsai, feeding with low nitrogen fertilizer is fine as soon as they break dormancy. If you go heavy on the nitrogen now, you will get a rush of growth, with long internodes. For pre-bonsai, where growth and thickness are the objective, more nitrogen is fine.

As you know, the ideal time for repotting is when the buds begin to swell. These swollen buds indicate that the root tips are also about to initiate growth. If you root prune at this point, the healing and new growth in the roots will start very quickly. My crabapples and some maples are already at this stage. Once you have root pruned, do not let these trees experience extreme cold again. This is the season when carrying trees in and out each day may be unavoidable. If you are lazy about this, you're taking a significant risk.

I will again bring small packets of mycorrhizza to the next meeting. They will be available at approximately my cost.

JACK E. BILLET OBITUARY



Jack Billet passed away February 8, 2006, at the age of 71. *Jack* was born in York, PA and raised in southern New Jersey. He was an internationally recognized bonsai artist and teacher as well as a well-known painter and illustrator.

*Jack* resided in Wilmington, Delaware and is well known within the United States Bonsai community. He had performed lecture/demonstrations and workshops in over 71 U.S. cities and at more than 15 national and regional conventions. His bonsai have been exhibited at most major U.S. conventions and many have appeared in bonsai publications. *Jack* had been active as a Director of the American Bonsai Society, President of the Brandywine Bonsai Society, and Chairman of the *ABS Journal*. At the time of his death he was an active Director of the National Bonsai Foundation.

MIDATLANTIC BONSAI SOCIETY'S 2006 SPRING FESTIVAL  
April 21 - 23, 2006

*Maro Invernizzi*, another headliner at this year's MABS Spring Festival, is one of Europe's creative, young bonsai artists. He studied in Japan for three years with *Mr. Masahiko Kimura* and in Italy with *Mr. Salvatore Liporaci*. He is a published bonsai author. *Mr. Invernizzi* will present a lecture/demonstration on Saturday morning using a *Picea orientalis* tree and one on Sunday using *Sargentii juniperus*. He will critique the Exhibit material and will be one of the judges deciding the "Best in Show" of the Exhibit trees. On Sunday afternoon he will conduct a workshop using San Jose juniper material. As with each of the artists, he will work on his trees in a workroom where you have the opportunity to watch him work close-at-hand.

*Francois Jeker* a headliner from France, featured in last month's newsletter, will present his personal award for the most artistic use of driftwood. This is only the second time the award will be given.

YAMA KI, as well as all the other bonsai clubs comprising MABS, select three member trees for display in the Exhibit Room. If you are interested in submitting your tree for exhibition, please contact *Gail Therrier*: (914) 244-1320 or [galtbon@aol.com](mailto:galtbon@aol.com)

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COMING EVENTS

- March 11      *Sean Smith* on cutting and carving stone
- April 21-23    MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies Spring Festival
- April 29      *Marco Invernizzi* lecture, demo, critiquing
- May 13        *Graham Potter*

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