



# YAMA KI NEWSLETTER

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

September

2008

## COLIN LEWIS’ 3<sup>RD</sup> CRITIQUING & TEACHING SESSION - 10:00 AM WORKSHOP - 12:45 AM SEPTEMBER 13, 2008 @ THE MUSCOOT FARM

After a brief “business” session, primarily regarding the forthcoming National Bonsai Exhibit and our own exhibit at the NY Botanical Garden, *Colin Lewis* will continue critiquing members’ bonsai at his last session for this year.

These critiques are especially helpful to the owners and, at the same time, are used as springboards for teaching design concepts, styling tips and techniques, and plant maintenance to the entire membership. This third session will enable all of us to see the development during this growing season of the trees that were critiqued in March and again in June. Members are encouraged to bring a tree which was looked at during an earlier session.

Following a quick lunch break *Colin* will guide the third workshop participants. Participants may bring two trees (in addition to tools, wire, etc.), but help on the second tree will be subject to time limitations - the Muscoot Farm closes at 4:00 PM. . Forgot to reserve? Although the workshop is sold out, all members are welcome as silent observers. (Page 5 for travel directions.)



### THE BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN WELCOMES YAMA KI<sup>(1)</sup>

On August 9<sup>th</sup> twenty-five YAMA KI members and guests took the opportunity to tour the bonsai collection at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. *Julian Velsaco*, bonsai curator, met us in the bonsai display area/museum and gave us a history of bonsai at the BBG. Some came early to have time to view the trees on public display and talk with him. The museum recently had been remodeled resulting in fewer trees on display but with more room to admire them.

*Julian* also discussed some of the display techniques used to help the public appreciate the trees. Although the official display was excellent, incorporating a range of genus and styles, the real gems in their collection were to be found in the nursery area which is off limits to the public. That was our next stop.



After winding our way thru a building where we saw *Julian’s* workshop, we arrived at the nursery area which looked like a forest of bonsai – rows and rows of trees of all types, styles and stages of development. A bit overwhelming! They have more than 300 trees in the collection which presents a challenge to maintenance and development. *Julian* is alone in carrying out these tasks due to recent budget cuts. He does have one volunteer helper, but he finds himself at the garden even on weekends to water the trees. It took *Julian* and his helper two weeks to needle-pluck just one ENORMOUS Black pine!



Imagine the angst when you still have roughly 100 more to do. We suggested cutting down the collection but that is complicated by the fact that many of the trees were donated, compounded by *Julian's* ability to see a great future in most of the trees, making him reluctant to give them up. *Julian* gave us an extensive tour, took his personal time to do so, and we deeply appreciate his doing that for us. It was a great visit!!

### TOUR EXTENDED AT MAURERS HOME<sup>(1)</sup>

Then it was off to *Stan* and *Laurie Maurer's* home, just a short drive from the garden. WOW what a place!! They bought the brownstone 40 years ago and remodeled it in a very contemporary style on the inside. This was a rare opportunity to see what can be done to an old house, especially after seeing the “before” pictures. Light and bright with loads of art work everywhere. They gave us a tour including *Stan's* bonsai greenhouse workshop and outdoor growing terrace. Not lots of room, but he plans on moving the outdoor trees to their country home in the near future where he will have more time to work on them. In addition to the tour, we were wined and snacked with *Laurie's* great munchies. Members who could not make the visit missed out! A really big THANKS to *Stan* and *Laurie* for opening their home and entertaining us...it was a special treat. They also gave up a day at their county home to do it. Thanks again!

<sup>(1)</sup>Article and photos courtesy of Norman Geisinger



Stan's provenance on the house:

“The brownstone originally built as a one family house, around 1850-60, is located in the Cobble Hill Historic Landmark district. It was converted into a brothel with 24 rooms and 23 bathrooms during World War II serving the Brooklyn Naval Yard and then afterwards used as a furnished rooming house. We converted the building into a two family dwelling, just before the city wanted to tear it down as an abandoned and condemned building. Our design won an AIA award in 1971 and was widely published in this country and Japan. Laurie's mother, 100 ½ years old, lives on the Garden Floor below our triplex.”



## NY BOTANICAL GARDEN FOR SUBMISSIONS

*Mike Pollock*

August nights are getting cooler, and that means its time to think about YAMA KI'S annual exhibition at the New York Botanical Garden.

Following last year's procedure, we will be selecting the best trees of our members to exhibit this year. The show runs from Friday, October 17th to Sunday, November 2nd. Setup will be on Thursday, October 16th. We are asking for members to submit one or more photos of each tree for evaluation. No major requirements other than that the photo be sharp enough for us to see the bonsai clearly. Our goal is to put on a high-quality display that delights and informs the public about bonsai.

As detailed last year by *Colin Lewis*, trees will need to be prepared for display with pots cleaned and moss applied correctly. An email with show preparation guidelines will be emailed to those who have trees selected for the exhibition.

Once again the exhibit will include a shohin display made up of trees belonging to different members.



NYBG 2007 Exhibit

So if you have a display-ready shohin tree (under 10" tall), please make sure to submit it (them) for consideration.

As *Norm* wrote last year "*Colin* and the Garden are looking to create, long term, a top notch bonsai show with trees coming from all over the country. This is a starting point and we have been given space to display our group's top notch trees. There will be some trees from other sources in the exhibit. We will also be allowed to promote YAMA KI and use this opportunity to increase our membership.

One of the key reasons for a show like this is to educate the public about the art of Bonsai and it gives YAMA KI a vehicle to meet its goal of "Sharing with the

community." In this spirit, we are looking for YAMA KI members to serve as docents during the exhibit. As a docent you will be talking with the public about bonsai and checking/watching over the trees. I encourage everyone to be a docent even if you do not have a tree in the show. Of course, it also aids us in attracting new members if they can speak to someone who is into the art. It's also lots of fun. We plan for two shifts per day; a sign up sheet will be provided in the near future.

Being a docent at this show is one of the highlights of my bonsai year.

If you haven't participated before, try it this year. I'm excited about this year's show and look forward to seeing your submissions. Please feel free to email ([mikepollock@me.com](mailto:mikepollock@me.com)) or call me (800-433-9594) with any questions.



NYBG Exhibit 2007

## PREPARING A BONSAI FOR SHOW<sup>(2)</sup>

*Berni Gastrich*

First and most important, look at your tree as if it belonged to someone else and you had never seen it before. You must totally divorce yourself from any emotional attachment that you have to this tree. The viewer at a show will not know that *Yuji Yoshimura* guided you through its creation, or that you collected it at some remote place of which you have wonderful memories. These things can endear the tree to you, and make it very beautiful in your eyes, but they have no impact on the show-goer. Put yourself in the position of a

viewer who is seeing the tree for the first time and knows nothing about its history. From this point of view, is the tree still a show piece? Will it speak for itself to the viewer?

If so, start preparing the tree. The main branches will of course have been wired into position. Now fine-wire every twig so that everything is in an ideal position. Next, remove all leaves or needles that point or hang down from twigs. Also look for things that stick up from the foliage pads. If any leaves or needles are unusually large, remove them.

Now look at the soil surface. Remove weeds, if any, and look at the surface roots. Has moss or soil hidden them? If so, make appropriate changes.

Look at the container. Are the proportions and visual weight of the pot suitable for the tree? If not, make the changes at the next repotting season and show the tree next year. If that part is okay, make sure that the pot is clean and especially that it is free of mineral deposits. These can be removed with fine steel wool. Some people feel that wiping the pot with a cloth which has been soaked in mineral oil enhances its beauty. This is debatable.

Next, consider the actual display. A Bonsai stand, slab of wood, or even a straw mat gives the tree a certain visual importance. These should relate to the character of the Bonsai. Formal, casual, whatever seems appropriate. Would a companion tree in some way enhance the beauty of the primary display tree? For example, the dark green foliage of a healthy Black pine would set off the brilliant color of a maple in autumn foliage. Other possibilities are accent plants or stones. A small sign giving either the Latin or common name of the tree is also appropriate.

*<sup>2)</sup>The above is a "Back to Basics with Berni" article reprinted from YAMA KI'S September 1999's NEWSLETTER*

## **BONSAI RATING GUIDE**

*When bonsai are entered in a show, informal or competitive, six categories comprise the total effect sought. We thought it useful to reprint, from our July 1992 NEWSLETTER, the criteria used to evaluate trees considered for a show.*

TRUNK which should display the attributes of taper (kokejun), shape, design or movement of trunk (moyo), and proper attitude in the container.

ROOTS which should be apparent and spreading from the base (nebari) of the trunk; they should be visible on the surface (tachiagari).

BRANCHES which should be well defined (eda sho) with an obvious #1, 2, and 3 (position of branches is called eda tsuki). The lowest branches should be heavier than those above (ha sho is the quality of leaves/needles); twig ramification should be visible on each branch.

HORTICULTURE & HEALTH attributes should be obvious with the leaves/needles in proportion, no wire marks, appropriate color and textures, and general apparent good health.

CONTAINER or the planting base which should be in proportion including size, shape, and color. The elements of ground cover fit into this category: appropriate, healthy, and in scale for the tree displayed.

OVERALL EFFECT which is the total general impression of the bonsai and its display. A tree may not score as well on some of the above categories as another, but may leave the viewer with an impression of satisfaction and attractiveness that may not be precisely defined or categorized. This can compensate for a lower score in one or more of the other elements. It is, after all, the total affect or impression that remains the most important element in the viewing of bonsai.

## **CHRYSANTHEMUM AS BONSAI**

*Rhoda Kleiman*

One of the oldest forms of bonsai – the chrysanthemum is not commonly used in the United States. Although the cherry blossom is Japan's national flower, the chrysanthemum is probably more widely grown and beloved. Think of the value placed on chrysanthemum stones as an indication of the many ways this plant is honored.

As to bonsai, as nearly as we've been able to trace the history of 'mums, they were introduced to Japan from China between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, most likely by Buddhist monks. From the 9<sup>th</sup> century on this plant and/or its flower have been prominent in most of the arts from literature to bonsai in Japan. Textile representations are very common and it is part of the imperial crest since the late 1800s. Chrysanthemums traveled to Europe and the western hemisphere several times, with the Northern Hemisphere home turf. *Linnaeus* labeled the plant in the 18<sup>th</sup> century from the Greek "chryso" = gold and "anthos" = flower. Plants mature quickly (about a year's time) and can readily be used for root-over-rock, cascade, or informal upright styles. Propagation is by seed, cutting, or division. Be alert for fungus and insects, especially aphids. Pinching and fertilizing are vital for developing your chrysanthemum bonsai. Quickly remove thin, weak stems and do not permit too many buds to flower.



It is interesting to note that although their primary purpose is ornamental, the pyrethrum cultivar is the source of an insecticide. Chrysanthemums are found in both annual and the hardy, bushy perennial varieties. It is the latter which can be trained for bonsai. Cultivated 'mums are hardy or half-hardy. Cultivars with smallish blooms seem to do better as bonsai than the large "football mums."

You can search the web for some useful sites for specific varieties to purchase and for some books that will detail your development of chrysanthemums.

Should you find yourself at the National Bonsai Exhibition in Rochester, NY this October, be sure to seek out *Bill Valavanis*' "Montauk Daisy" which he has continued to develop from a plant that had been *Yuji Yoshimura*'s. It will put to rest the notion that you must let a bonsai mum die back each winter.

### **THE FIRST NATIONAL BONSAI EXHIBITION'S YUJI YOSHIMURA AWARD**

It's not too late to add your contribution to the \$2,000 YUJI YOSHIMURA AWARD to be awarded at the National Bonsai Exhibition during October 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> in Rochester, NY. Many YAMA KI members have indicated their respect and appreciation of his influence on both their own bonsai design concepts as well as his influence in the introduction and advancement of American bonsai. Send your check, payable to the Yama Ki Bonsai Society at 165 West End Avenue -12D, New York, NY.

Have you noticed the revised YAMA KI logo, designed by *Lavanya Muller*, on the banner?

### **MUSCOOT FARM DIRECTIONS**

#### **Traveling North:**

Take 1684 to exit 6 (Katonah); turn left onto Route 35. Continue west to Route 100, turn left (south). Muscoot is 1-1/2 miles on right.

From Saw Milt River-Parkway, head north to 1-684 and continue as above.

From Taconic State Parkway: Head north to Route 100, Millwood. Follow signs to Route 100. Turn right (north) and proceed north on Route 100 for seven miles. Muscoot will be on the left.

#### **Traveling South:**

Take 1-684 to exit 6 (Katonah); turn right onto Route 35. Continue west to Route 100, turn left (south). Muscoot is 1-1/2 miles on right.

From Taconic State Parkway: Head south to exit Route 202/35. Proceed 3-1/2 miles to Yorktown. Turn left (east) and follow Route 35 to Route 100, turn right (south). Muscoot Farm is 1-1/2 miles on the right.

<http://www.westchestergov.com/parks/directions/Individual/MuscootFarm.htm>

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COMING EVENTS

Sept. 13, 10:00 am	<i>Colin Lewis</i> teaching lecture & critique Afternoon workshop
Oct. 11-12	2008 National Bonsai Exhibit (Rochester, NY)
Oct. 18 - Nov 2	YAMA KI & New York Botanical Garden Bonsai Exhibit
Nov. 8	TBA

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

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