

# PBA NEWSLETTER

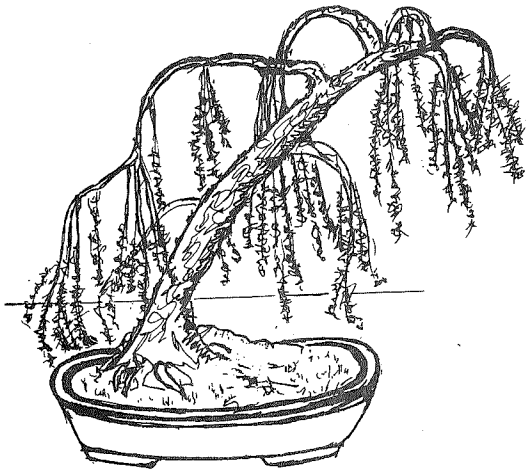
VOLUME 7 NUMBER 5

MAY 1977

## YEW BONSAI IN SEARCH OF A FAMILY

In the spring of 1970 my sister gave me a three-inch cutting from a yew tree. All of my life I had been interested in trees and bushes. My grandmother had taught me when I was a little girl to root rose cuttings by splitting the stem and inserting a live oat seed. Many years later when the rooting compounds came on the market they contained vitamin B-1! When we bought our home on South River I reveled in the many kinds of trees our land could produce from seeds cradled in it long ago. We called it our mini-arboretum, and I even wrote a poem about it.

I planted the yew cutting. The first year it looked droopy, but it lived. The second year it still drooped but appeared quite healthy, so I decided to try growing it as a weeping tree -- my first attempt at bonsai. With all its imperfections I share it with you.



**WEeping YEW BONSAI**  
Drawing by Mrs. Fern Jacobi

In working with the yew I discovered that the bark is rather soft and easily wounded. The growth at one year or less can be trained with only the finest wire. On older wood the wire should be gently and evenly wound, and should only be left on for a short while. However, it is easy to train into soft curves if training is started on two- and three-year-old wood. The young tree seems quite healthy. It lost only a few needles after spending this bitter winter in a deep cold frame with a plexolite cover. The bark is slightly rough and interesting. The roots are being kept above the surface of the ground for several inches by using small rocks to train them.

Since joining the Annapolis bonsai enthusiasts my collection of bonsai has increased from four or five plants to forty or fifty, if you count those in training.

I have searched many books to find the identification of my first effort, and have learned a little about yews. Yews are dioecious, with male and female flowers being produced on different trees. The fruit is a small, bright red, juicy berry much appreciated by the birds. Shoots, leaves, and seeds contain poisonous properties, but the berries are not toxic. The female plant which bears the fruit should be chosen for a bonsai, but there will be no berries unless there is a male plant nearby. Also, if the weather is too hot there will be no fruit.

Yews show great variation in height and habit of growth, and serve the landscape gardener in many different ways. Grown for many years without clipping, they develop into magnificent specimens. Pruned, they are among the finest evergreens for hedges, topiary and bonsai as well. They often grow naturally on limestone soils but also like sandy loam and peat. Where the soil is waterlogged they cannot survive. While many yew trees grow in sun, yew bonsai do better under lath shading or under trees which give filtered shade. In the summer, spray the yew trees daily, and be sure they are never exposed to the western sun. If the tree should become excessively dry let it soak for about an hour in a saucer of water, but be sure then to remove it from the water, since yew trees cannot stand "wet feet." Fertilize your yew bonsai at

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least once a month with organic fertilizers or use an all-purpose fertilizer such as Garden Joy. Continuously during the growing season finger-pick new terminal growth leaving only a few needles. Branches may be pruned in the spring or in September or October. The soil mixture should consist of four parts topsoil and six parts sand. Root pruning may be done in March or April if the same quantity of twigs and branches are removed at that time. After root pruning they should be shaded from the sun for two or three weeks and misted daily. Roots should be pruned every three years.

Deep in the red berries are brown seeds which may be sown in sand as soon as they are ripe. Collect the seeds as soon as possible or the birds will beat you to them. Free the seeds by flushing with water. The disadvantage of using seedlings for bonsai is that it is not possible to tell which plants will bear female flowers. Cuttings may be taken from all kinds of yews and thus female plants may be selected, rooted in sand in July or August in a cold frame and left there all winter. If you wish your bonsai to grow into a tall one-trunked bonsai, try to get the cutting from the tip top of the parent tree.

The Japanese yew, Taxus cuspidata, is more hardy than the English yew, Taxus baccata. In England some of the oldest Taxus baccata are estimated at more than a thousand years in age. Taxus baccata Davastoni has horizontal branches and pendent branchlets. So my yew may belong to this family or to Taxus cuspidata umbraculifera, the umbrella yew. Lynn R. Perry in Bonsai: Trees and Shrubs recommends Taxus media, a cross between the English T. baccata and the Japanese T. cuspidata, for bonsai.

She also notes: "The tree varieties of yew, when made into Bonsai and allowed to age a little, form beautiful specimens. The trunks naturally become gnarled and aged; and the dark green, glossy foliage is very attractive. When yews are used as shrubs in the garden, the fruits often go unnoticed, but they are truly gem-like and fully visible on a Bonsai." --- Fern H. Jacobi

## PBA ANNUAL SHOW — MAY 7 AND 8

The PBA annual show will be held at the National Arboretum on May 7-8. This year each individual club will present its own exhibit separate from the other clubs and the result should be interesting and exciting. The show will be open to the public from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday.

Tory Pottberg will have her training exhibit again this year as a lead-in to the show. In addition, demonstrations will be given twice a day both days by PBA members. Apart from the individual club exhibits, there will be a PBA name exhibit with trees from all of the clubs. Walter Schmidt has also promised us that he will do one of his beautiful saikeis again this year.

PBA needs monitors both for the individual clubs and for PBA exhibits. If you can donate an hour of your time when you come to see the show or help in any other way, contact your local club president or call Jo Finneyfrock at (301) 589-3725. ---Mary Houlton

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# PRESIDENTS COLUMN: COLLECTING IS THE THING

Collecting's the thing...that makes it possible for each of us to have fine old trees in our collection. The only inexpensive (and truthful) way to get a century-old tree is to have planted a seed a century ago. Good old mother nature is planting seeds all the time and even pruning the trees for us. The trick is to find these trees and get permission to dig them up. This is where we can benefit from the association of a large number of bonsai enthusiasts.

Of the 250 or so members in PBA there ought to be some who can help, in some way, to find collecting sites. Land zoned for construction, sand quarries, old farms, pastures, etc., all have the potential of giving each of us that bonsai masterpiece we are seeking. If you have any ideas for collecting sites, talk to your EVP and discuss it at club meetings. If you do not know who owns the property, or where to get permission to collect on it, someone else in PBA may be able to help. Collectively we have a large number of contacts that may be able to aid us in opening new collecting sites.

In asking for permission, explain fully what you want to do, give an approximate date, approximate number of people, and be sure to release the owners from all liability for your safety. Of course, it is essential that we protect the owner's property. Only collect what you can use. In some cases it might be a courtesy to report to the owners, after collecting, to thank them and to let them know what success you had.

There is an art to collecting that puts to the test your eye for style and your ability to see the potential of a tree for bonsai. Much can be learned in the field, and what better way to learn bonsai than by looking for specimens styled by the original bonsai master: Nature. ---Richard Meszler

## PROPOSED PBA BY-LAW CHANGES

The PBA Board of Directors at their meeting of 22 March voted to propose changes to the Voting and Election dates now provided in Article II of the By-Laws. The present dates cause awkward scheduling for mailing the ballots with the Newsletters and for reporting to the annual meeting.

The following changes will be voted on at the Annual Meeting of 21 May 1977. The underlined dates are proposed, present dates are in ( ---- ).


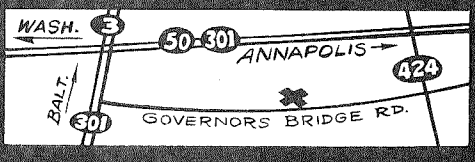
Article II, Section 3, concerning final date to submit additional nominees - 22 March, now (1 April).

Article II, Section 6, concerning mailing of ballots 5 April, now (15 April).

Article II, Section 6, concerning posted date for mailing of votes, 30 April, now (15 May).

Article II, Section 8, concerning notice of election results, 15 May, now (5 June).

You are urged to support these changes. ---H. J. Everett

 <p><b>Bittersweet Hill</b> NURSERIES Rt. 424 &amp; GOVERNORS BRIDGE RD. DAVIDSONVILLE, MD.</p>	 <p>Map showing location of Bittersweet Hill Nurseries near Annapolis, MD. Key roads include WASH. E, BALT. 50, ANNAPOLIS, GOVERNORS BRIDGE RD., and 424.</p>	<p>8 a.m. - 6 p.m. seven days a week Phone (301) 798-0231</p>
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## OUTSTANDING FILM STATED FOR PBA ANNUAL MEETING

The fascinating film "The Spirit of Bonsai" will be shown to PBA members attending the annual meeting on Saturday, May 21.

Produced by the Japanese Bonsai Association the film is a 53-minute tour de force which quickly engrosses the viewer. The theme relates bonsai to nature. The viewer is given a tour of the mountains and valleys of Japan in some of the best color footage to come out of Japan in years.

Slick cinemagraphic technique takes one from wild mountain bonsai to its pampered cousin in a bonsai nursery. The pictures and trees speak for themselves. The music is subtle and never mind the relatively sparse Japanese narration. Every bonsai devotee will be able to understand exactly what is being said without comprehending the words.

There are only two prints of this film in the United States. The National Arboretum staff guards their print carefully. It is shown only under Arboretum staff supervision. Don't miss this chance to see it. ---John Hinds

## SHARE YOUR GRIEF WITH PBA


This winter has been especially hard on bonsai in the Washington-Baltimore area and many of us are now finding out what trees we have lost to the extended freezing weather. It would be very interesting to other bonsaiists to hear how your trees have fared. What trees were or were not damaged? What were they potted in? How were they protected? Send your comments to John Hinds, c/o Science Applications, 2361 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Virginia 22202. Remember, copy must be received by the 15th in order to be published in the following month's Newsletter. ---Mary Houlton

## SPRING AUCTION SET FOR JUNE 11

June 11th has been set as the date for the PBA spring auction which will be held at Behnke's Nursery again this year. Jim Newton will wield his expert gavel, assisted by John Hinds who will take over when Jim's voice gives out. Be thinking about which trees you can bear to part with and start getting them ready. Further details will be in the June Newsletter. ---Mary Houlton

## WHY NOT CAR POOL TO CHICAGO?

Going to BCI '77 in Chicago? Plane fare costs \$168 round trip coach. How about saving money and carpooling it? Those interested in either driving or riding with someone else should call Joyce Pelletier at (301) 262-8578. ---Mary Houlton



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# A WELL TRAVELED MAN RECALLS BONSAI ADVENTURES IN JAPAN

There are many opportunities for bonsai adventures in Japan besides the major events such as the annual NBA show in Ueno Park. For example, there is an everyday showing in Omiya Koen except for the first and third Thursdays of every month. The novice American traveler can easily make this trip by railway from any part of Tokyo in thirty to ninety minutes. His hotel, Japan Travel Agency, or friend can get him a JNR railway map and time table showing Omiya. The railway platforms and trains are labeled in Roman letters. Trains from central Tokyo, as for example Ueno, go directly to Omiya. From other areas it may require one or two changes. In Omiya Station go to Tobu Noda Line (platform 1 or 2) for the train to Omiya Koen for a five minute rail trip. The total fares are probably less than one dollar by rail (over \$20 by taxi).

At least eight nurseries are always open to the public. They are located in a three-by-three block area across the tracks from the railroad station. Omiya Koen maps may be available from travel agencies. My favorite nurseries are Fuyo-en near the railroad station, Masei-en the largest at the opposite end of the village, Kyuka-en with a priceless collection, and Shoto-en with several spectacular bonsai.

But these are not the only opportunities for bonsai viewing. Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples often show bonsai. Of course, there are many private collections and they will be more likely found in suburban areas. In the same suburban areas are shops and nurseries with pots, and hardware stores with bonsai tools at much lower prices than at the Omiya Koen nurseries and in the States.

The most exciting bonsai exhibit that I have seen in Japan was at the 400-year-old Dazaifu shrine in Dazaifu City on the island of Kyushu. The exhibit of about 200 exquisite mame was shown by the Fukuoka Bonsai Association in the covered walk around the courtyard. There were delicate, perfectly styled mame barely an inch and a half tall -- all well displayed.

I did not find bonsai on display in Ueno and other public parks. Occasionally department stores will show them. Should you be in Tokyo, give Don Sanborn a call for bonsai information. ---Harvey J. Everett

## FRANK OKAMURA WAS A-OK

Washington area bonsaiists were especially privileged the weekend of March 26-27. On Saturday at the National Arboretum, Mr. Frank Okamura, curator of the bonsai collection at BBG, gave a lecture demonstration and slab planting workshop sponsored by the Brookside Gardens Bonsai Club. The morning session, open to all PBA members, was well attended. 45 people watched raptly while Mr. Okamura styled a Blaauws juniper (*Juniperus chinensis* Blaauws) and planted it on a slab of Maryland granite. When he had finished, the tree was raffled and the lucky winner was Bob Caldwell of BGB. Bob was so proud of his new prize that he wouldn't even let anyone help him carry it to his car.

On Saturday afternoon members of the Brookside Gardens club tried their hands at creating their own slab plantings. A variety of materials was used, from Japanese red maple (*Acer palmatum* Bloodgood) to Parsoni junipers (*Juniperus squamata* Parsoni). Under Mr. Okamura's guidance trees took shape, placement on slabs was discussed and decided, and creditable bonsai emerged.

Mr. Okamura continued his teaching on Sunday in a workshop with members of the Northern Virginia Bonsai Society. ---Mary Houlton



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# CLUB CALENDAR

- ANNAPOLIS** - May 13 (Friday), 7:30 p.m. Annapolis Public Library. Workshop. Bring own trees. Also bring trees for critique.
- June 10 (Friday), 7:30 p.m. Annapolis Public Library. A baby Trident Maple to all attending. Bring in Catlin Elms for description and picture taking.
- BALTIMORE** - May 15(Sunday), 3 p.m. Cylburn Mansion in Cylburn Park Tony Pattberg will talk on accent plants. Tree of the month is the Maple. Members should bring own trees and participate in the forum.
- June 19(Sunday), 3 p.m. Three people will style San Jose junipers. Tree of the month is the juniper. Bring own trees and participate in the forum.
- BROOKSIDE** - May 14(Saturday), 10:00 a.m. (instead of May 20). Workshop at Sampson House in Wheaton Regional Park as well as a problem tree workshop. Bring own tree for workshop. A limited number of trees will also be available. Contact Mary Houlton, 345-3606
- June 17(Friday), 7:30 p.m. Brookside Nature Center in Wheaton Regional Park. Dr. Tanada will lecture on plant physiology. Bring trees for critique.
- KIYOMIZU** - May 21(Sunday) 2 p.m. Workroom of Clearwater Nature Center in Louise Cosca Regional Park. Azalea bonsai demonstration by John Hinds. Members should bring trees for workshop and critique. Please note date change from usual fourth Sunday schedule.
- NOVABONSOC** - May 14(Saturday) 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. On the beautiful grounds, overlooking Lake Barcroft, on the residence of Mr. John Simpson, 3617 Ridgeway Terrace, Falls Church (maps will be provided). Bring trees and materials for workshop and advise on all phases of bonsai. Liquid refreshment will be provided. Bring picnic lunch. In case of rain or for more information telephone (703) 569-9378
- WASHINGTON** - May 3(Saturday) 2 p.m. National Arboretum Administration Building. Styling and planting workshop. Critique trees.
- June 18(Saturday) 2 p.m. Meeting at the National Arboretum Administration for a walking tour of the Gotelli Collection. Joyce Pelletier will conduct the tour and comment on trees in Gotelli Collection suitable for bonsai.

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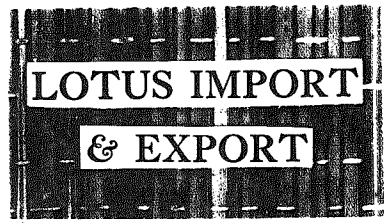
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