

# PBA NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 7 NUMBER 8

AUGUST 1977

## TREE OF THE MONTH GRAPE MYRTLE

BY Joyce Pellitier

When I visited the National Arboretum a few days ago, my attention was riveted on a magnificent crape myrtle tree in full bloom. Its appearance was striking because of its profusion of dark pink blooms and its silvery tan trunks which looked and felt silky. Evidently it had just completed its annual bark shedding. Immediately I thought, "Oh, how I'd like to have that for a bonsai." But then, I considered, the flower panicles would be too large for a bonsai, since flowers do not dwarf well. However, as a fairly large bonsai why wouldn't it be appropriate? After all, we enjoy wisteria bonsai, with their long panicles, and aren't the flowers on most azaleas terribly oversized for bonsai? Yet, azaleas are some of the most popular materials for bonsai. So, I decided to investigate the possibilities of using the lovely crape myrtle as a bonsai. To my surprise, I found it listed as suitable material in almost every book on bonsai which I checked.

Lagerstroemia (pronounced lay-gur-streem'-ee-uh), commonly called "crape myrtle" (also spelled "crepe") is grown as a bonsai for its extravagant blooms in pink, red, purple or white, and for its elegant form and handsome smooth bark. It is one of the few trees that blooms in summer, and flowering is possible from July through September, depending on the species.

Laterstroemia is a genus of about 30 species of decorative shrubs and trees of the family Lythraceae, all from warm regions of the "Old World." They are definitely semitropical, and need protection in the winter in areas north of D.C. During our recent hard winter, many crape myrtle were badly damaged or died, yet many others are thriving. Flowers grow in showy terminal clusters (panicles), and petals are crinkled or fringed. Leaves are simple, opposite, with smooth margins (edges) and deciduous. Leaves of the Lagerstroemia indica, which is commonly used for bonsai, are 1-2 inches long (2-1/2 - 5 cm), dark green and glossy, and have good autumnal coloration. The ex-foliating bark, and somewhat sinuous shape of the multiple trunks make this an interesting tree even without foliage, so it might truly be considered a tree for all seasons. Crape myrtle can easily be trained into a satisfactory, single trunk tree.

Pruning crape myrtle will keep you busy, because it's a fast grower like willow or wisteria. It will probably also require two repottings in the year -- in spring and in mid-summer. Shorten new vigorous branches in the spring, then allow shoots to grow, because it is on these new shoots that flower buds will form at the terminal ends. The tree may look a bit leggy for a while, but in order to enjoy the flowers, further pruning will have to be postponed until after anthesis (period of full flowering). However, if a really long, unsightly shoot appears and spills the tree shape, cut it off immediately. On early blooming crape myrtle it may even be necessary to do additional pruning in early fall, because there is usually another surge of growth in this area in late August and early September. Do not prune too close to normal frost dates, because the new growth which ordinarily follows pruning would be killed.

Young trunks and branches bend easily for wiring. It is recommended that wire be wrapped to prevent damage to the bark, but the greatest danger in wiring lies in the rapidity with which trunk and branch girth increase with growth. The tree can literally grow around the wire, so check wires more frequently than you do with slower growing trees. Wiring should be done in early summer after the second growth. If it is necessary to rewire later, place wires in a slightly different position.

Lagerstroemia indica originated in China, but since it is so popular in southern states, it may be becoming naturalized and you may be able to collect specimens in the wild or around abandoned homesteads. If you're lucky enough to find one, a huge old tree may be successfully transplanted if the top is cut back very severely. The shortened, disfigured trunk will soon be hidden by flowers and foliage in the summer.

Crape myrtles like lots of sun, and fertilizer, and water, so add baked clay and coarse sand to the soil mixture. Cuttings are easy to root, and air layering is easy, too, and these methods of propagation are favored over seedlings if you want to maintain the colors of the parent plants. With respect to fertilization, Kyuzo Murata, in his book Bonsai: Miniature Potted Trees..., recommends that a liquid fertilizer as well as an organic manure be applied through mid-summer, since crape myrtle is slow to sprout buds and quick to lose leaves.

If you're interested in more details on the crape myrtle, George F. Hull's book, Bonsai for Americans, contains quite a bit of information, as does Lynn R. Perry's book, Bonsai: Trees and Shrubs -- A Guide to the Methods of Kyuzo Murata.

Now is an ideal time to buy crape myrtle plants, if you feel like experimenting, because the nurseries have lots of them at this season and you'll be able to select the color you prefer since they are now in bloom.

---Joyce Pelletier

## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE COME AND GET YOUR MONEYS WORTH

Come and get your money's worth!

The fall is not very far off and plans for the third annual PBA Bonsai Symposium are well underway. This is one of the benefits of the larger resources of PBA.


We have again arranged a full program to give everyone an opportunity to meet with and learn from several bonsai authorities. The program will be spread over one and a half days (October 15-16). There will also be a sales area and plenty of opportunity for informal exchange of ideas and methods.

Socializing and partaking of good food and drink have also been included in the activities. PBA will host a cocktail party prior to the banquet on Saturday night (October 15). Part of the entertainment will be an auction which will include the bonsai owned by PBA that had been styled by visiting bonsai teachers. We will also see a superb film "The Spirit of Bonsai," which ought to set the tone for the Symposium.

Now is the time to be sure the calendar is clear for those days. In the interim, we can each prepare to learn the maximum by establishing what we want to learn and preparing appropriate questions before the Symposium. I suggest we each study our bonsai and try to identify any problems, weaknesses, areas for improvement, etc., and come to the Symposium looking for information to satisfy these needs. Someone will be able to help you, but you must ask. This will be an excellent opportunity to learn and improve your skills in the art if you will only participate.

I hope to see you there!

Richard M. Meszler, Ph.D.  
President



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# CHICAGO CONVENTION A SUCCESS: FIVE DAYS OF NON-STOP BONSAI

Why did I go to BCI-77 in Chicago? I enjoyed BCI-76 in Washington so much, Chicago had to be good! Although I had preconvention misgivings, Chicago did not let me down.

Midwest Bonsai had several innovations. They conducted all the workshops on the first day. Ralph Benson of BGB attended Leon Snyder's workshop on Micro Environments. The techniques and material Dr. Snyder uses are very creative. The workshops were run in two three-hour sessions.

There were 13 lecture/demonstrations. We saw a lot of John Naka. He not only styled a Juniper Foemina with a bold jin for the raffle and an impossible looking weeping cedar into a semi-cascade, he also translated and explained for the four sessions by two visiting Japanese masters.

The Japanese masters, Nakamura and Mori, lectured and then demonstrated. The lectures were tedious and somewhat disjointed because of the need for translation. Japanese Bonsai philosophy is very difficult to articulate into English. In spite of it, Naka-san did very well. The Japanese are in no hurry to create a Bonsai. Neither master completed a Bonsai in the total of four demonstrations. For example, they left a trunk stub beyond the new apex until the new apex is well developed. They also merely whacked down a black pine and thinned out needless branches in order to encourage inner growth for restyling in future years. They seem to have a logical approach.

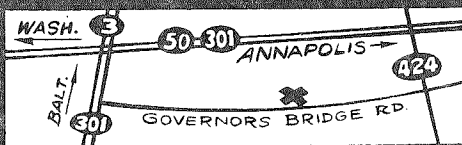
The remaining lecture/demonstrations -- a seven-tree Cedrus Atlantica grove by Tosh Suboromaru, a Satusuki informal upright by Khan Komai, Leon Snyder's fascinating Micro Environments, and the first-rate slide and lecture demonstration of a series of year round fruiting and flowering Bonsai by Chase Rosade -- were all outstanding.

Their Invitational Bonsai Exhibit of 50 trees was well done. I appreciated the pastel green photographic background provided for each tree. The zigzag gallery style placement of trees on elevated tables was an effective exhibit arrangement.

PBA's own John Hinds became president-elect and Josephine Finneybrock became corresponding secretary-elect. About 250 (9 PBA) attended the convention in Chicago against 400 in Washington last year.

The Midwest group said that this convention was the best ever, but we of PBA know better. Nevertheless, it had many good features.

---Harvey Everett



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The National Arboretum will be the location on Saturday, August 20, 2:00 p.m., for the Washington Bonsai Club's workshop on different ways to style a bonsai. Everyone is invited. Bring material you're having trouble with and we'll show you how to use weights, metal picks, rubber bands, and other things, as well as the proper way to use copper wire. Cliff Pottberg, Joyce Pelletier, Arschel Morell, and Vicki Ballantyne will be there to help. Please come. ---Tory Pottberg

## PBA ARBORETUM COMMITTEE REPORT

Members of the PBA Arboretum Committee met at the Arboretum on 15 June 1977 with Mr. Robert Dreschler, Curator of the U.S. National Bonsai Collection. The purpose of this meeting was to identify and discuss ways in which PBA might assist the Arboretum, particularly with respect to the bonsai collection.

Two major needs were identified.

### 1. Facilities

Funds are needed to expand the bonsai facilities. The most urgent need is for an enlarged working area (one in which the public might be permitted to observe maintenance activities). In addition, an American bonsai collection can never be started until sufficient funds are available for a suitable pavilion, separate from the Japanese collection. While many bonsai trees have already been offered by Americans, none can be accepted until there are suitable facilities to house and maintain them.

While it is felt that appropriations can be obtained for the day-to-day operations of these facilities, sizable contributions for construction are necessary to show national interest in the project. This area is one where PBA's activities could best support programs initiated by the national associations.

### 2. Volunteer Guides

There is an immediate and continuing requirement for trained volunteers, knowledgeable in bonsai to conduct guided tours of the National Bonsai Collection, and to assist in the Arboretum information booth. Prospective guides must initially undertake training at the Arboretum by participating in three conducted tours under a qualified guide. They must later be available to conduct at least four tours, on their own, during the year. These are not scheduled "duty" assignments--rather, volunteers are called on two to three weeks in advance to help when specific groups or special events require volunteer assistance. Standby guides are also needed for walk-in tour groups, and to assist in the information booth with such items as the sale of bonsai books, slides, or the showing of films in the auditorium.

Other areas discussed with which PBA could provide assistance included:

1. Display Stands: The Arboretum needs suitable tables for the display of trees and viewing stones. Funds can be donated for their purchase. If a stand is to be donated, the dimensions, style and quality should be reviewed with Mr. Dreschler to insure the appropriateness.

2. Spare Containers: The Arboretum has no standby containers for repotting any of the trees. Should one of the containers be damaged, replacement with a suitable style and size could be difficult and time consuming. Funds for purchasing several standby containers would be welcome.

3. Hospitality: PBA feels that it is in a position to offer supplemental hospitality (such as assistance in sightseeing, transportation, etc.) to Japanese visitors to the Arboretum, and that there might be a need for this function. Mr. Dreschler concurred that there might be such a need and suggested that PBA offer its services to Dr. Creech, Director of the Arboretum, since he is the prime contact for all visitors to the Arboretum. Mr. Dreschler further stated that it might even be possible to arrange lectures or workshops with visiting foreign bonsaiists, if arranged well in advance through Dr. Creech.

As a result of this meeting, the PBA Board of Directors took the following action:

1. Voted to pass on information about the Arboretum's need for facility funds and bonsai equipment to the attendees at the Bonsai Clubs International convention soon to meet in Chicago.

2. Voted to donate \$200.00 to the Friends of the Arboretum Fund for the specific purpose of buying bonsai equipment.

3. Directed the Arboretum Committee to make a special effort to recruit volunteer guides for the Arboretum from among PBA members. (Arrangements were subsequently made with Mrs. Judson French, Chairman, Volunteer Guide Service, to provide special training for such volunteers --see article elsewhere in this issue.)

4. Directed the Arboretum Committee to draft a letter to Dr. Creech offering PBA services with respect to hospitality.

--- Joyce E. Pelletier,  
Chairman, PBA Arboretum Committee

## VENEZUELA BONSAI CLUB AWARDS PBA A DIPLOMA

PBA was presented this certificate by the Venezuelan Bonsai Club at the IBC-77 banquet on Saturday, July 9. The translation: "Venezuelan Bonsai Club grants the following Diploma to the Potomac Bonsai Association in recognition of their outstanding labor in the spread of the art of the cultivation of bonsai." The Venezuelan delegation asked John Hinds to accept the certificate for PBA.



Otorga el siguiente

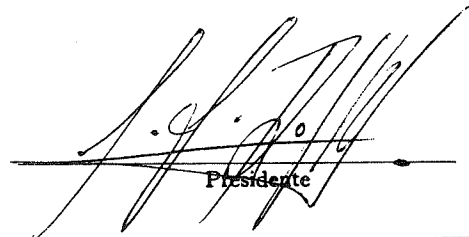
# Diploma

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En reconocimiento a su destacada labor en la divulgación  
del Arte del Cultivo de Bonsai.

Caracas, JULY 1976



Presidente

## NATIONAL ARBORETUM GUIDE TRAINING COURSE SET

Mrs. Judy French has agreed to meet on Saturday, August 13, 1977, from 10:00 to 12:00 a.m. to begin training PBA members who would like to volunteer for the Tour-Guide program at the U.S. National Arboretum. At this time further training dates will be set up for either weekday, weekend, or evening sessions. The need for guides, and details of guide training, are described in another article in this issue, "PBA-Arboretum Committee Meets." Besides the prestige of being a guide at this national institution and the satisfaction of providing a needed and well-appreciated service, there are many rewards for participating in this activity. Guides receive extensive training--to the extent they care to participate--in identification of woody plants, familiarity with their growth habits, history, etc., etc. If you don't know what the full-sized trees are like, how can you expect to duplicate them successfully as bonsai? There are other benefits, too, but I'm going to let you come to the meeting and find out what they are. You'll have fun, too! If you're not able to attend this first meeting, call me to find out about future arrangements.

---Joyce Pelletier, 262-8578

(or Arschel Morell, 301-669-1487 (Balto area))

# SERIOUS BONSAI STUDENTS WILL WANT THESE NEW BOOKS

Serious bonsai students will be interested in two recently published books.

The first is the "National Bonsai Collection Guidebook". This handy, pocket-size, 72-page volume contains pictures of each of the 53 bonsai and six viewing stones in the collection. The Masters, John Y Nakagawa and Yuji Yoshimura provided commentaries on the collection. Dr. John L. Creech, U.S. National Arboretum Director, provided a Welcome, and Collection Curator, Mr. Robert F. Drechsler, did the Introduction. At \$2.50 a copy it is a must for every serious bonsai student in PBA. It is available at the Arboretum Information Center or from the publisher, Symmes Systems, P.O. Box 8101, Atlanta, GA 30306.

The second recent bonsai book is Mr. Yoshimura's "Commemorative Album -- The Muriel R. Leeds Collection." This is a pictorial and text history during a ten-year period of the Leeds Collection. As far as is known, this is the first work in English which allows the reader to study a major bonsai collection during its maturation process. The photography, done by Mr. Yoshimura, is excellent.

The volume also contains excellent commentary on the cultivation of the 50 species in the collection.

This book is obtainable from the Yoshimura School of Bonsai, PO Box 265, Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510, or from the Symmes Systems. The paperback is \$15. A signed, hardcover, limited edition is \$20. ---John W. Hinds

## BONSAI GARDENING CALENDAR

August is normally a slow time in this area with respect to bonsai maintenance, but there are still a number of tasks to be performed. Weeds and insects are flourishing, so take appropriate steps. Heavy, daily watering in this very hot weather may have caused some of the soil to wash out of the pots, so replace it. Also in association with the heavy watering, white alkali deposits may have built up on the pots. Try removing the deposits with a solution of vinegar and water. Also, check drainage holes to see that they have not become blocked.

Very likely, the moss at the base of the bonsai has dried up and should be replaced. Moss isn't vital, but it makes the bonsai look nicer, and it helps conserve moisture in the soil beneath.

Remember to rotate bonsai frequently, so they won't grow on one side only and become lopsided.

Even though most trees are semi-dormant in periods of excessive heat, a little growth may still occur, especially in late August, so check to see if you need to do a minimum of pruning. Summer is the time to repot tropical, and very fast growers like the willow, wisteria, and crape myrtle probably need to be repotted again.

With all these chores taken care of, just sit back and enjoy your bonsai. ---Joyce Pelletier, Budding Horticulturist

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# THIRD ANNUAL PBA BONSAI SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER

October 15-16 has been set as the date for the third annual PBA Symposium. The program has been expanded to one and a half days this year and promises to be the best yet. Featured will be Cliff Pottberg, Chase Rosade, Jim Everman, Keith Scott, George Baker, Dr. David Andrews, and Marion Gyllenswan. Activities will be at the University of Maryland Adult Education Center where our first symposium was held. The programs will have both general sessions and specialized groups for a weekend of bonsai adventure. Saturday night will include a banquet and will be the PBA annual banquet.

A bazaar will be held with several commercial bonsaiists participating so that attendees will have a chance to stock up on good bonsai material while they're stocking up on good bonsai knowledge.

Registration fee is \$18 for PBAers and \$20 for non-PBAers until October 1, and \$25 for everyone after October 1. Banquet cost is \$11 and will include a cocktail hour. This cost is not included in the registration fee.

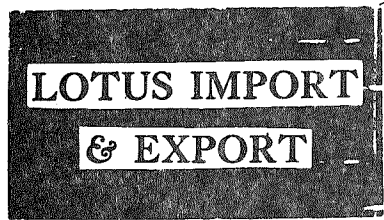
Put the date on your calendar and plan to be there. Further details and application in next month's Newsletter. ---Mary Houlton

## METRO HORTICULTURE HAPPENING

PBA is participating in "Metro Horticultural Happening" at Tyson's Corner Shopping Center on August 4, 5, and 6, 1977. This is a display of educational and commercial exhibits dealing with all aspects of horticulture. There will also be many demonstrations, including the making of bonsai. PBA will have a booth, and is looking for volunteers who enjoy talking with the public and answering questions about bonsai. This is an excellent opportunity to interest other people in our wonderful hobby. Interested persons who can tend the booth anytime between 10:00 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. on those dates, please call: Mary Fox at (703) 524-6636, or Jules Koetsch at 920-7570 (day), 569-9378 (evening).

---Joyce Pelletier

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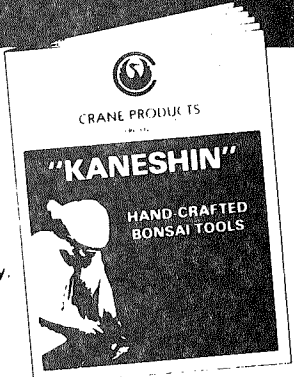
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THE MORE INNOCUOUS A DESIGN CHANGE APPEARS, THE FURTHER ITS INFLUENCE WILL EXTEND.

## GIVE THE AUCTION BUYER A CHANCE — DON'T POT AND SELL

The PBA auction is a fine opportunity for bonsai members to find some good bargains. It is also a good way for the members to make some money by selling their seedlings or cuttings or materials they are no longer interested in. But, trees should not be sold that have just been repotted the week before. That happened to me: with a tree I bought and the root structure was so bad that the little tree fell right out of its pot. I could easily see that it had no established roots to hold it in the pot. Since I am a member of the ABC I treated it with superthrive, propped it up with rocks, and it hasn't died yet. But what if a non-bonsaist had bought this tree expecting it to live. Please repot trees you plan to sell far enough in advance so that they are established in their pots. ---Vicki Ballantyne

## MARION BORCHERS SCORES WITH INDOOR BONSAI WORKSHOP

Twenty-seven PBA members representing all six clubs met at the National Arboretum on July 16 to hear an enlightening talk on the care and peculiarities of tropical plants, and how they may be used for indoor bonsai. A lively question and answer session followed the one-hour discussion, which was followed by a workshop. Mrs. Borchers, a degreed botanist and owner of a bonsai nursery in Florida, was well-informed and charming, as well as skilled in styling. She was assisted in the workshop by Clifton Pottberg, Arschel Morell, Vicki Ballantyne, and Joyce Pelletier. A great variety of tropical plant material was available for sale at cost, and a good time shopping and "bonsai-ing" was had by all. ---Joyce Pelletier

## BALTIMORE CLUB ELECTS OFFICERS

At its recent business meeting the Baltimore Bonsai elected a new slate of officers. The officers are as follows: Barbara Bogash, President; Joseph Sennello, Vice President; Arschel Morell, Educational Vice President; Leonard Gallant, Treasurer; Gina Sennello, Secretary; and Elaine Kendall, Membership Secretary.

Elected to the Board of Directors: Barbara Bogash, Arschel Morell, Clifton Pottberg, Richard Meszler, Edith Rieder, Bud Kissinger, Leonard Gallant, and Helen Novak and Elaine Kendall are Honorary board members.

The club would like to express its sincere thanks to outgoing President, Flexix Ready, and Treasurer, Kirk Cylus, for their services to the club through the years. A special thanks is extended to Helen Novak, Hospitality Chairman, and Elaine Kindall, Membership Secretary, for their unflagging devotion to duty. ---Arschel Morell

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# CLUB CALENDAR

- ANNAPOLIS - August 12 (Friday), 7:30 p.m., Annapolis Public Library, West Street. (Last meeting date on Friday!) Tory Pottberg will talk on secondary plantings. She will bring various kinds of plant material she has experimented with. Have you ever tried a dandelion!?
- September 8 (Thursday). New permanent meeting day is second Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Annapolis Public Library on West Street. Clifton Pottberg will talk on bonsai philosophy and principles.
- September 17 (Saturday). Beginner's workshop at Dave Brown's, 8174 Gov. Ritchie Highway, Pasadena, Md. (Tel: 647-8225) Bring picnic lunch, tools and wire. Drinks provided. Trees available at cost. Potting to be done at October meeting.
- BALTIMORE - August 21 (Sunday), 3:00 p.m. Cylburn Park. Return of the zelkova which is the charter tree of the month. The new charter tree is the black pine which will be distributed at this meeting.
- BROOKSIDE - August 19 (Friday), 7:30 p.m. Brookside Nature Center, Wheaton Regional Park. Mr. Charles Staines, of the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Pest Control Unit, will give a talk on the identification and control of pests common to bonsai.
- KIYOMIZU - Summer recess - no August meeting.
- September 25 (Sunday), 2:00 p.m. Clearwater Nature Center in Louise Cosca Regional Park near Clinton, Maryland. Mr. Jim Newton will lecture on indoor bonsai.
- NOVABONSOC - August 13 (Saturday), 10:00 a.m. Gulf Branch Nature Center. Lecture and demonstration by Marion Gyllenswan on multiple planting of blauwis juniper. If interested in an afternoon workshop, contact: Jules Koetsch - home, 569-9378, office, 920-7570; or Rene Cardenas - 354-1574.
- WASHINGTON - August 20 (Saturday), 2:00 p.m. Meet at the National Arboretum. A workshop on alternate methods of wiring.
- September 17 (Saturday), 2:00 p.m. Meet at the National Arboretum. Workshop on soil mixing and potting up. Bring your problems and expect to get dirty.

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