

PBA NEWSLETTER

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TREE OF THE MONTH

by Joyce Pelletier

Photinia

The Japanese have long been admired for their lovely, symbolic gardens which are marked by restraint, understatement, even austerity. Traditionally, only native plants are used, and only a few species are permitted in a single garden. The overall list of plant material used in Japanese gardens is not very long. They are usually non-showy and evergreen.

One of these honored plants is *Photinia*, a member of the Rose family (Rosaceae) and a close relative of the Hawthorn (*Crataegus*). There are about 40 species in the genus *Photinia* (pronounced fo-tin'i-a) which originated in Asia - mainly China, but also Japan and Korea. Some are deciduous, but most are large evergreen shrubs (10'-15') or small trees. "*Photinia*" comes from the Greek word for "shining" - an obvious reference to the glossy evergreen leaves that help make the plant so attractive. Another major feature is the lovely red coloration of new leaves and stems and the autumn coloration. Even the leathery evergreen leaves become a beautiful deep maroon, overlaid on the dark green of more sheltered leaves below the outer canopy. It's a "quiet" plant, in the sense that it doesn't shout its presence as, for instance, the "flowering cheery" tree does when in bloom. The *Photinia*, too, has flowers, but less prominent. The small, white, 5-petaled flowers are borne in flat clusters like the Hawthorn, in May. Fall fruits are attractively red pomes, oval or round, about 3/4" long, hanging in clusters.

Photinias like sunny, sheltered locations in well-drained, loamy soils. The evergreen species are very tolerant of lime, whereas the deciduous species are not. *Photinias* will grow well in the shade, but color of young foliage is less vivid, and the size of leaves and internodes triples (as I learned to my dismay while attempting to "bonsai" a *Photinia*). Leaves vary in shape from oblong to lanceolate, and margins vary from entire (smooth) to sharply serrated (having teeth). Propagation is by seeds or cuttings.

Photinia serrulata, one of the better known evergreen species, is a USDA Zone 7 plant, and did very well in the Washington, D.C. area during the severe winter of 1976. New growth withstands frosts very well. A 30 ft. specimen may be seen in the National Arboretum in the "Camellia are." It may also be found in the Dumbarton Oaks garden, and it is growing well in a triangle near the Washington-Hilton off Connecticut Ave.

P. villosa is a popular deciduous species, hardy through Zone 5, which is popularly called the "Christmas berry" due to its bright red fruit which lasts through much of the winter. Although its new leaves are not colorful, its fall foliage color is bright red.

Other species are less hardy, accounting for its popularity in the southern landscape, and the fact that it is less known in the northern states. I found some container-grown specimens at Montgomery Ward, so this indicates to me that *Photinia* shouldn't be difficult to locate.

It certainly is an attractive plant year round. I checked quite a few books on bonsai, but found no mention of *Photinia*. Nevertheless, I believe it to be a suitable material for bonsai, due to its year-round interest, its hardiness, its dwarfing ability, and the flexibility of its branches (at least when young). If any of you readers have tried it, I'd love to hear about it.

President's Message

This space's message last month (which you did not read since it was lost 'twixt pen and publisher) was supposed to have intoned that late fall fertilizing - with a low nitrogen fertilizer - was beneficial to many species including evergreens. Ah well, something for you to store away for next year's use, anyway.

By now, most of the year's work is, or should have been, done. Hopefully your trees are put to bed, your in-ground plants mulched as the ground freezes, and the long twilight of bonsai work - and often interest - begins. But this need not be.

There are many jobs which you can do through the winter. More importantly, there are many jobs which you should be doing, so that your springtime can be less hectic, and you can relax and enjoy your bonsai more.

Now you should begin planning what pots you will need when potting up or re-potting a burgeoning collection (you might also think about what pots to make, out of redwood or concrete or whatever, since the dollar to yen ratio also continues to burgeon). You have to plan color, size and shape, and even with an ever-increasing local selection, some pots may have to be special-ordered. If so, you should do it yesterday.

If you already have at least some of the pots you will need, they should be carefully cleaned if they have been previously used.

Another problem many of us have: if, like me (and, apparently, most Japanese), you have a difficult time sticking to a rigorous liquid fertilizer time-table, then you might consider solid slow-release nutrients for your bonsai. Fertilizing is so important, any means of making it easier is fair game. Even, say the Japanese, to the point of leaving some ridiculous looking pingpong ball shapes on the top of your soil. I've used Osmocote in the soil of my bonsai for the last several years, and it is surely the most labor-saving of all the fertilizers. It also gives pretty good control, but not, I've decided, good enough. I still use Osmocote exclusively on my plants-in-training, but with better bonsai I've gone to pingpong balls of combination cottonseed, bone and blood meals, and the system really works! I'm tempted to scream something about good old Yankee ingenuity, but for the fact it's been used elsewhere for several hundred years. Anyway, to the point: if you use this combination paste fertilizer, winter is a good time to mix up a batch of it. Recipes are to be found in the books by Messrs. Naka, Yoshimura, and others, and if you haven't got these books, shame on you.

Now is also a good time to prepare various sizes of soil particle mixes for next year. If you buy and mix all the soils you'll need at once, it will be cheaper, and they will last indefinitely if they stay dry.

Here are still other jobs you may want to consider. For example, preparing paper- or raffia-wrapped wire for your sensitive barked bonsai. Honestly, rubber insulated wire just doesn't do the job nearly as safely; furthermore the wrapping technique is quickly mastered and large amounts of wire can quickly be done. If you wind up wrapping more than you need, you can keep it or use it on trees that don't really need wrapped wire.

You can take hardwood cuttings now, too, if you do any of your own plant propagation. They require little work and achieve larger material quickly.

Now lets say you still have room for more work, or are bored from having done any of the above tasks: sit down and doodle bonsai. There is no better way to learn design and to learn how to render adult tree shape than to sit down and design and render adult tree shape. Paper is still one of the true bargains in our market place, and much cheaper than plant material. But remember to doodle frequently and seriously. Like all art studies we must work at our tasks. Nonetheless, drawing trees can be much fun and highly productive of more bonsai talent.

Finally, suppose you discover one cold evening, you have completed all of the above list. The best and most productive bonsai task of all awaits you: reading. Buy, or borrow from the newly remodeled PBA library, bonsai books. ABS and BCI have large lending libraries, too. If some questions are left unanswered or others raised in your reading, take them to your meeting, or send them to the NEWSLETTER. We'll all benefit. Perhaps the most enjoyable part of the bonsai books available are the bonsai pictures they are loaded with: each an object lesson in the art. There are even books available which are nothing but pictures of fine bonsai, e.g. the annual book of the Ueno Park bonsai show.

If you are, like me, a dyed in the wool procrastinator, sometime in the middle of a frenzied April, you'll think "I wish I'd done some of this work in the winter. Didn't I read an article on that somewhere?" Naturally such a scenario wouldn't really occur, would it? But then, if you think it might (and after all, what true bonsai nut doesn't sometimes subscribe to the theory: 'never do today what you can put off till tomorrow?'), save this article. Then, next spring, when you are thinking of mass arboricide, you can reread it, and at least strengthen your resolve for next winter's work.

--- Cliff Pottberg

CLUB CALENDAR

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|--------------------------------|---|
| <u>January 10</u>
Thursday | <u>Bonsai in Nature slides.</u> 7:30 p.m. Library, West Street. Viewing of slides made by Sylvia Williams of bonsai in nature. ANNAPOLIS |
| <u>January 13</u>
Saturday | <u>Soil and soil mixes.</u> 10 a.m. Gulf Branch Nature Center. Program on soils by Bill Merritt. NORTHERN VIRGINIA BONSAI SOCIETY |
| <u>January 19</u>
Friday | <u>Program by Jerry Stowell.</u> 7:30 p.m. Brookside Nature Center. Jerry will discuss plant physiology and creating bonsai from seedlings. <u>All PBA members welcome!</u> BROOKSIDE |
| <u>January 20</u>
Saturday | <u>Identification of bonsai-type material - Dr. Peter Mazzeo.</u> 2 p.m. National Arboretum. WASHINGTON |
| <u>January 21</u>
Sunday | <u>Indoor bonsai - open meeting.</u> 3 p.m. Cylburn Park. Bring your favorite indoor trees to discuss and share. BALTIMORE |
| <u>February 8</u>
Thursday | <u>Grafting techniques.</u> 7:30 p.m. Library, West Street. Brian Campbell will demonstrate grafting techniques. ANNAPOLIS |
| <u>February 10</u>
Saturday | <u>Grafting of maples.</u> 10 a.m. Gulf Branch Nature Center. Grafting workshop lead by Brian Campbell. Materials furnished. NORTHERN VIRGINIA BONSAI SOCIETY |
| <u>February 16</u>
Friday | <u>Grafting workshop.</u> 7:30 p.m. Brookside Gardens, Head House. Grafting workshop conducted by Brian Campbell. Materials furnished. BROOKSIDE. |

Snips and Slips

A HOT IDEA

Now that the heaviest of the holiday entertaining is over, don't put that warmer tray (Saltern calls theirs Hotray) too far away. In the November '78 Newsletter we learned Richard Meszler has excellent results with collected pines by letting the tops go dormant, then putting them in a heated greenhouse to let the roots continue to grow.

If you're like me, the first warm late-winter day will find you out tramping the woods and fields, shovel and collecting bag in hand. If I can get said shovel in the ground (and I usually can by hook or crook), I'll have a tree collected far too early. I plan to do this on purpose this year, however. I have plans for collecting some small(ish) hornbeams, and this is where the Hotray comes in. Once collected, these trees will go into a cold back room ON THE HOTRAY. With the setting on LOW, the Hotray should provide the necessary heat for root growth acceleration for my trees. If anyone has tried this before, or tries it this year, I would love to hear the results of your experiment.

--- Mary Houlton

TAKING THE OUCH OUT OF BARK

If you're like me, when you purchase a box of Band-aids you always have a great deal too many of the smallest size (especially since they don't stay on anyway and you never use them). I cut the tab ends off them, leaving only the gauze pad, and stick these pads between the wire and the branch when I'm doing heavy wiring - especially where the wire ends, but generally at any place where I think there may be trouble. This provides a cushion between branch and wire and I have never had wire damage anywhere I have used this pad. Beautiful it ain't, but work well it does. If the tree's to go in a show, simply remove the pad just before show-time and replace it afterwards from your large stockpile. A few days without "padding" won't hurt the tree, especially if it's been wired for any length of time.

--- Mary Houlton

*May the hopes and dreams for the
New Year be fulfilled for all of PBA,
their friends, their loved ones, their
world —*

COMMENTS

Many thanks to the several writers who have contributed articles to the Tree-of-the-Month column recently. Considerable work and time goes into each one, and it is appreciated by readers far and wide, and especially by me. It's good to hear about the experience of more than one "bonsaiist."

I didn't fully realize until just recently, to what distant places this Newsletter travels. Notes from Indiana, California, and - would you believe - even Australia, astonished me, and really pleased me. Lately, we've been concentrating on trees that grow in the Washington, D.C. area, particularly native trees, but we all know that by expending a bit more effort, we can manage to grow bonsai even if climatic conditions aren't quite right. So, if you want information on certain trees, let me know. Better yet, if any of you want to write or tell about your bonsai-growing experiences, we'll be delighted to have more guest columnists.

Thanks to the many people who called or wrote about the past article on Abelia (ed. note: see also below). It appears that quite a few people have created bonsai out of Abelia, and found it very suitable. There was even one sample of Abelia included in the bonsai display at the PBA Symposium last September - a small, charming, informal upright in full bloom.

Did you notice the many Japanese sources cited by Jules Koetsch in his article on Hinoki Cypress last November? Since few Japanese articles are translated into English, I asked who did the translating. I couldn't have been more surprised when he told me that he'd done it himself! He simply bought dictionaries and grammars and taught himself how to do it! I was so impressed that I asked him to write a short article telling how he did it. We can all learn something from this.

--- Joyce Pelletier
Tree-of-the-Month editor.

This letter, kindly forwarded by the Shaners, was sent to the editors of the BCI Magazine from Mrs. Pam Vermont of Johannesburg, South Africa. It is in response to an article on Abelia, originally published in the PBA Newsletter as a Tree of the Month by Joyce Pelletier in February 1978 and reprinted in the BCI Magazine. We do get 'round the world, gang!

"It was with considerable interest that we, the members of the Eastern Bonsai Society, Johannesburg, South Africa, read the article on Abelia in the October 1978 issue of the B.C.I. Magazine. It was stated that the Abelia is seldom, if ever, used as a subject for Bonsai. It so happens, however, that the Abelia Grandiflora was chosen, and proved to be a popular subject, at the September 1977 meeting of our Society. Approximately 70 of our members purchased a seedling; watched one being potted by Derry Ralph (who was the demonstrator at that meeting), then at the workshops the following day, each member attended to their own seedling.

"The seedlings, which had been purchased several weeks earlier by the committee, were approximately 5 years old and stood about 2 feet high. A lot of the seedlings had twin and/or multiple trunks, which lent themselves to many different stylings.

"It was found that with considerable nipping after the 1977 season's flowering, and with a let-up in the nipping before this Spring of 1978, the result has been some beautiful clusters of flowers appearing on most of the branches. The flowers are a pretty pale pink and, as the calyces, which are a deep pink colour themselves, remain on the trees right through to the autumn, the tree is colourful for a long period.

"The leaves of the particular species (Grandiflora) are attractive, too, being a dark, lustrous green, sometimes tinged with bronze. It has been found that by constant nipping, the leaf size is diminutising.

"Altogether, it has proved to be a successful subject for Bonsai here in the Transvaal region of South Africa, and it is highly recommended as a subject. We hope that it will prove popular in future in other parts of the world."

(Editor's note: Remember Johannesburg is South of the equator and therefore their Spring is our Fall)

read Japanese -- learn fast, read slow

Have you been wondering what great store of knowledge lies locked in Japanese bonsai publications' printed words? All you need besides time and a set of walking-fingers is the following book:

1. "THE MODERN READER'S JAPANESE-ENGLISH CHARACTER DICTIONARY"; Second Revised Edition; by Andrew N. Nelson; Charles E. Tuttle Co.: Publishers, Rutland, Vermont & Tokyo, Japan

However, to recognize the conjugated verbs and especially the affirmative from the negative, -i.e. kiru= to cut and kiranai= do not cut, the following is available at a modest price in paperback:

2. "201 JAPANESE VERBS FULLY DESCRIBED IN ALL INFLECTIONS, MOODS, ASPECTS AND FORMALITY LEVELS"; by Roland A. Lange, Ph.D.; Barron's Educational Series, Woodbury, New York

Another inexpensive paperback which will give you an insight into how the Japanese picture-words developed as direct copies of the Chinese ideograms and which explains how some words are compounded from other words or ideograms is:

3. "READ JAPANESE TODAY"; by Len Walsh; Charles E. Tuttle Company, Rutland, Vermont & Tokyo, Japan

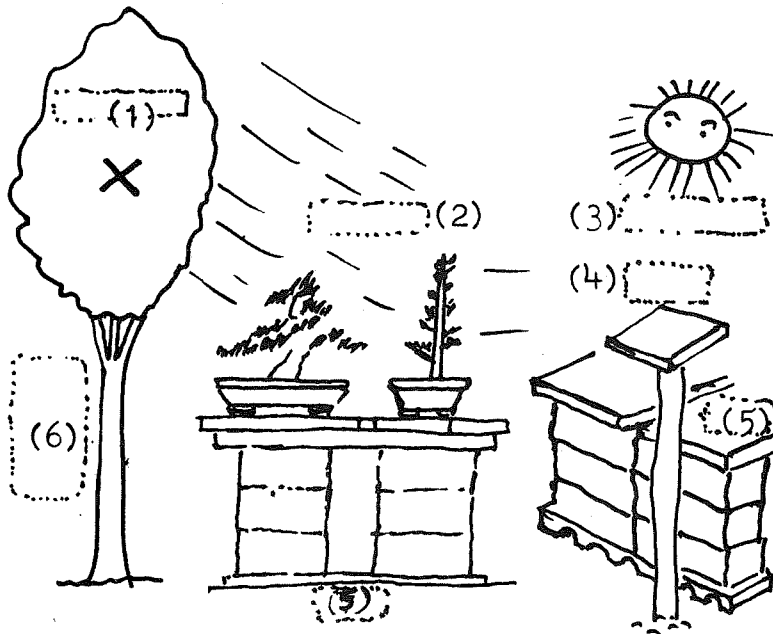
To obtain a feel for Japanese sentence structure, one could benefit from a book such as the following designed for teaching conversational Japanese:

4. "JAPANESE IN THIRTY HOURS"; by Eiichi Kiyooka; Tokyo, The Hokuseido Press

While on the subject of book-aids, one can also get a gist of the problem of translating Japanese by reading the following delightful paperback:

5. "AN INTRODUCTION TO HAIKU"; by Harold G. Henderson; Doubleday Anchor Books; Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York

In reading the above haiku translations, one notes and as Bill Merritt attests, translating the Japanese words directly into their English counterparts is something less than one-half of the task of completing the total translation. The second step is to form an English sentence from the words since the Japanese sentence structure differs from the English. There are no relative pronouns, any descriptive clause must precede its noun, and qualifying clauses must precede their nouns. In essence, Japanese sentences seem to have their words arranged so that reading the English words in reverse order would come close to the sentence structure we are accustomed to reading. Also there are no distinctions between singular and plural, no articles, and practically no pronouns in the Japanese language.



The Japanese adopted the Chinese ideograms or Kanji and added the Hiragana to provide grammatical endings to the Kanji characters. This not only reduced the number of Kanji characters that must be memorized but also made the language richer. For emphasizing titles of articles or phonetically spelling foreign names, the Japanese use Katakana. (A Japanese wrote my name in Katakana as ケイツ (Ke e tsu))

The accompanying sketch is one that appeared in the Japanese publication from which I extracted the information appearing in the *Hinoki, Tree of the Month*,

in the PBA Newsletter of November 1978. Study the sketch and attempt to understand as much as you can without the Japanese translation. The sketches which appear in the Japanese bonsai publications usually contain enough information so that one need not attempt to translate the accompanying paragraphs.

The Japanese which appeared on the original sketch where the dotted outlines appear on the above sketch are printed below next to the corresponding location numbers. The reason for not printing the Japanese on the sketch is that I can't print in the small detail mastered in their publications. It is advisable to use a reading glass to clearly decipher some of the complex Kanji in the small print.

The translations obtained by using only book are arranged as follows:

- a. Japanese Kanji with corresponding locating numbers in book 1. The Japanese Hitakana does not have location numbers when they stand alone.
- b. Conversion to Romaji using book 1.
- c. Word for word English meaning for Japanese from book 1. (There are many Japanese words which have more than one English equivalent.)
- d. Rearranging the English words into an English sentence or phrase

(Note: the diagonals or slashes are added to signify corresponding sections for parts a., b., and c. above.)

(1) a. 病虫害の巣
3042 141

b. byōchūgai / no / su

c. insect damage / of / breeding place

d. breeding place of insect damage

(2) a. 風通しよく

5148

- b. kazetoshi / yo ku
- c. ventilation / provide
- d. provide ventilation

- (3) a. 日当たり/よく
2097
- b. hiatarī / yo ku
 - c. sunny place / provide
 - d. provide a sunny place

- (4) a. 懸崖/台
1790 848
- b. kengai / dai
 - c. precipice / pedestal
 - d. pedestal

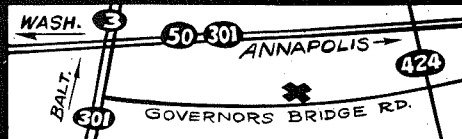
- (5) a. 盆栽/棚
594 2300
- b. bonsai / tana
 - c. bonsai / shelf
 - d. bonsai shelf

- (6) a. 盆栽/棚/
や/懸崖/
台/の/近
くに/庭/
木を/木直
えなす/
c.... bonsai/shelf (see 5 above)
.... and/precipice/(see 4 above)
.... pedestal/of/near-
.... by/in/garden/
.... tree/ do not
.... set out
d. do not set out a garden tree in the vicinity of the pedestal and the bonsai shelf.

The above approach may appear to be sheer insanity to some, - may appeal to crossword buffs, or be lost and forgotten with the rest of the trivia. If anyone has any quicker technique, one short of spending a number of years learning the written Japanese language, please let me know.

Jules Koetsch

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