

PBA NEWSLETTER

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TREE OF THE MONTH

Hackberry

by Joyce Pelletier

In the early descriptions of the trees of Colonial America by visitors from Europe, there were references again and again to the "unknown tree." Colonists often borrowed the colorful names given to trees by Indians, but even they did not seem to have a special name for this hard-to-identify tree. In most instances the tree proved to be "Hackberry," of the genus Celtis. It is member of the Elm family (Ulmaceae), but it does not look like other family members. The fruit is a fleshy, thick-skinned drupe, unlike the winged samara of elm trees. (Incidentally, birds and wildlife love the fruit of the hackberry, which is supposed to taste rather like dates.) The leaf, which is lopsided at the base, looks more like that of a nettle than that of an elm. The flowers are inconspicuous. Autumn foliage is yellow. "Hackberry" is thought to be a corruption of the Scottish "Hagberry," which name is applied in Great Britain the Bird Cherry (Prunus avium). In some species, the Celtis is only a shrub, but others may reach 100'. Branches are spreading, pendulous at first, eventually forming a rounded crown. It resembles the shape of the elm somewhat, but its texture is much more coarse, both in summer and winter.

Commercially, the Hackberry is used for cheap furniture, fence posts, and boxes. The wood takes a high polish.

The growth rate of Hackberry is fairly fast. It prefers rich soils, and likes to grow along streams or in flatlands where water collects. However, it will tolerate heavy, sandy, or rocky soils; withstands acid or alkaline conditions; tolerates wind, full sun, and the pollution of cities. It withstands heavy pruning, and can be kept at a desired size easily. Hackberry is easily transplanted bare-root as a small tree or balled and burlapped in larger sizes.

Celtis occidentalis (common Hackberry, Nettletree, or Hoop Ash) is most common in eastern North America. It is hardy through Zone 2 (Arnold Arboretum), and may grow to 100'. Leaves are alternate, simple, ovate, 2 to 5" long, serrate except at the base, bright green and lustrous above, paler below, and slightly hairy on the veins, lopsided at the base. The stem is somewhat zigzag, light olive brown. The trunk and older limbs have narrow, corky, projecting ridges which are sometimes reduced to wart-like projections. It is subject to numerous insects and diseases, which affect the aesthetic appearance of the tree more than they are life-threatening. Among these are leaf spots, witches' broom, powdery mildew, hackberry nipple-gall, and several mites. The witches' broom (broom-like clusters of abnormal dwarfing branches), while undesirable in the landscape, could prove a boon to the bonsai person. By air-layering below the witches' broom, one could have an almost immediate bonsai.

Celtis laevigata (Sugarberry, Sugar Hackberry, Southern Hackberry or Mississippi Hackberry) is less hardy, and is native from southern Indiana to Texas and Florida. It is resistant to witches' broom.

Celtis raticulata, a smaller tree, is found in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain regions.

Several other Celtis species exist around the world, but are less common than the first two mentioned. They all look much alike and are hard to distinguish. They do differ greatly in winter hardiness.

Propagation of Hackberry is easiest from fall-sown seeds or from cuttings taken in the fall.

In The Beginner's Guide to American Bonsai (Kodansha, 1978), Jerry Stowell recommends Hackberry as suitable bonsai material. He offers advice on winter care (they are susceptible to twig damage from cold) and he provides the following time schedule for maintenance of C. occidentalis as bonsai:

Transplant: In spring, as buds appear.

Prune: Trim after the new shoots lengthen to three to five nodes during the growing season; leave one or two nodes.

Wire: Spring to summer, after shoots harden. Use wire wrapped in paper.

In Bonsai for Americans, (Doubleday, 1964), George F. Hull includes a photo of a very handsome, thick-trunked Chinese Hackberry (Celtis orientalis).

President's Message

Being intimately involved in PBA's activities at the D.C. Flower Show and Garden Show this year, I have a few words to say about it.

As last year, the show was a tremendous artistic success. Figures are not yet in on its financial record, but already there is talk between the Professional Grounds Management Society, the sponsoring organization, and the Armory for a third Flower Show next year.

PBA was successful too. We made money; we made friends; we won first place in our category of display and a special award for outstanding use of unusual plant material, and were the only exhibit in the Show this year to win two such awards. Many stopped to tell us we had the best exhibit in the show. We now also have a finished permanent display set of tables and exhibition to use in the future wherever.

The most important area of our success, though, was one of spirit. PBS displayed and sense of self-awareness which can only be admired. Consider: even more than last year, well over 100 people helped out in one area or another of design, construction, set-up, guardianship, tear-down and hauling, many doing several jobs. It seemed that everyone participated as their time and talents allowed. (For example, Sylvia Williams, a registered landscape architect from the Annapolis Club, designed the lovely outside garden we had, even though she was in the very midst of last minute preparations for her wedding to Mike Jerace, who earlier had, with Bruce Ballantyne, cut all the lumber to build 2 new display booths for us. Which cutting, by the way, was one of the longer jobs of all, done last year in even greater quantity, solo, by Steve Morse. Or, for another example, Linda Mayben, who, among many other jobs, also designed the lovely shadow silhouettes seen through the shoji.) Many came back time and again for more work as it was necessary (e.g. Jack Wells, who, it seems, was asking every night "would you like me back?" and being gratefully accepted regularly. Or, Arschel Morell, who, after spending several evenings in helping to set up, went without any sleep the last night in finishing the job.)

Other signs of this maturity included the help and trees which each club offered. Of all the trees in the exhibit, all but 5 were new and different from last year. Every club was represented. Every club put in manpower in approximately equal proportions. Best of all, it was fun. At least I hope it was for everyone. It was for me. Seeing the generous and unselfish work everyone provided was one of the more beautiful experiences to be had.

One other important note: Mr. Joe Blank of Balnk's Fabric Store in Baltimore has gone out of his way to help both PBA and the Baltimore Club in the past with advice, suggestions and discounts. This year, upon hearing that the display burlap used to back out booths had disappeared, Mr. Blank refused payment and replaced all 50 plus yards without charge. Obviously, we cannot thank him enough.

Here, then, is the list of people to whom PBA owes so much. Many people did so much more than any duty required, and it is difficult to list them separately. They know who they are and, I hope, know how much they are appreciated.

Bruce and Vicki Ballantyne
Ralph Benson
Chuck and Ginnie Bird
Joseph Blank*
Dave and Barbara Bogash
Tim Brewer*
Dave and Anne Brown
Dorothy Brown
Ray Buck
Mr. & Mrs. Ed Castillo
Pauline Christiansen
Mr. & Mrs. Howard Clark
Mary & David Clawson
John & Bonnie Colgen
Jim Cubie
Vergil J. Diana
Jack & Jackie Dorsett
Rev. Vincent Duminuco
Louis & Dorothy Euler
Harvey Everett
Ray & Helen Ferrell
Josephine Finneyfrock
Dave & Floy Flipse
Mary Fox
Bill & Frances Fraser
Dave Garvin
P.T. Gilbert
Inge Gross
Ray & Janet Heath
Molly Hersh
Carol Hickman
Mary Holmes
Mr. & Mrs. Warren Howard
John Hreha
George & Fern Jacobi
Michael Jeracw*
Alan Johnson
Lucy Jones
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Jones
Elaine Kendell
Milton Kidd
Michael Kimball
Julius F. Koetsch
Harold & Glade Krivoy

Michael Kurylo
Helen Lauenstein
Ron & Andrea Lovejoy
Robert Lynek
Diane Macomber
Linda Mayben
Louise McCullough
Richard Meszler
Fred Mies
Dorothy Miller
Luvenia Miller
Sue Montrose
Arschel Morell
Steve Morse
Jim Newton
Lynette Nielson
John Patterson
Joyce Pelletier
Judy Piazza
Fissy Pottberg*
Tory Pottberg
Amy Powers
Earline Powers
Chris Ramina
Michael Ramina
Pepsi Ramina
Felix Ready
Edith Reider
Gina Sennello
Jerry Shifrin
Bob Sitnick
Walter Schmidt
John Simpson
Joan & Wally Stephens
Godfrey & Pat Trammell
Mr. & Mrs. Al Trout*
Eulalia Walker
Julie Walker
Ken Warsh
Mary Weaver
Jack & Mary Alice Wells
Sylvia Williams
Thelma Zimmerman

* not members of PBA, but good friends

I hope no one was left off the list. If I did that to anyone, it was truly unintentional, and I do sincerely apologize.

--- Cliff Pottberg

(Editor's note: There was one very important name left off the list - that of Cliff Pottberg himself. While this may be attributed to some well-intentioned, but not necessarily appropriate modesty, without Cliff's vision and ambition for the Flower Show PBA would have been the poorer for lack of it. Take a bow, Cliff. It's well deserved.)

Snips and Slips

ALL BALLED UP

It's collecting time again, and a piece of advice from Cliff Pottberg concerns post-collecting watering. After slaving to dig out and transport a collected prize, don't lose it to careless watering procedures. Since, except for sand pits, most of our soil is good old Maryland (or Virginia) clay, it follows that root-balls taken with the tree will also be that soil we know and love(?) so well. Unless you remove the soil from around the roots (called bare-rooting), it will make up the bulk of the soil in the pot when the tree is potted. Therefore, adjust your watering for the soil in the root ball, not the soil medium with which you surround it. (I.e., water for clay, not for well-drained bonsai soil.) For those of you who have ever purchased trees from the Pages in New Mexico, you know that if you follow their instructions to the letter (don't disturb the root ball, water once then let dry out thoroughly before watering again) your tree will not only survive, but thrive. My casually observant and very unscientific observations have brought me to the conclusion that Maryland/Virginia clay is very much like New Mexican adobe. If your tree's in clay soil when you collect it and you do (or must) leave the root ball on, water it accordingly until it is well established and the roots have had a chance to grow into the bonsai soil medium before adjusting your watering schedule.

--- Mary Holmes

SLIPPED SNIPS

When removing wire from a tree, put a piece of newspaper over the soil. This will prevent losing those nasty little pieces of wire onto the soil or moss and make clean-up easier. The newspaper will protect the soil and the light background will help you find all the pieces.

--- Dave Garvin



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... think **BIG**

pba dues are due

PBA Annual Show

Well!! — So now we know - hard work and loving dedication make for a successful and beautiful bonsai exhibit, as evidenced by our recent showing at the Flower and Garden Show - and - this is what's needed for our upcoming PBA Annual Show at the National Arboretum, 28-29 April - more of the same back-breaking togetherness, starting NOW. So - for a starter, such as selecting areas in the auditorium for individual club's exhibit, again arranging for setting up/tearing down, monitors, etc., etc. there will be a meeting at my house (10s Devon Court, Silver Spring, Maryland, 301-589-3725) on April 10 at 8:00 p.m. It is hoped that all representatives responsible for his/her exhibit will be able to attend. Please advise by April 2nd, or earlier, the member(s) who will attend. Thanx.

--- Molly Hersh
Vice President, PBA

PBA Annual Meeting

The PBA Annual Meeting will be held this year in connection with the PBA Annual Show. The meeting will take place at the Arboretum at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday April 28, downstairs in the Administration Building. A "Punch" and Cheese party is planned to liven things up and provide refreshment for those who have spent long hours working at the Show.

Please plan to attend. PBA business and the election of officers is important to you. Show your interest in PBA by attending the meeting, and at the same time enjoy a party with other bonsai enthusiasts.

Nippon Bonsai Association to Visit

The last official visit of the Nippon Bonsai Association to the U.S. National Bonsai Collection will take place in mid-April and PBA will give a reception at the National Arboretum for them. About 30 members of the Association, largely those who donated trees to the National Collection, will attend, and it is a great honor for PBA, both as a club and for individual members, to receive and welcome them.

The reception will be held in the lobby of the Administration Building from 5:30-7:00 p.m. on Thursday April 19. A small exhibit of American bonsai by PBA members will be on display, and the National Collection pavilion will be open for the occasion. Among the guests invited will also be officials of the Department of Agriculture, the Japanese Embassy, the Japanese-American Society, the Japan Foundation, Bonsai Clubs International, and the American Bonsai Society.

PBA is asking its members to contribute hors d'oeuvres and finger-food for the occasion. The effort will be coordinated through the local clubs and, because of the need for planning, we ask that you contact your club's representative by April 10.

ANNAPOLIS	Vicki Ballantyne	647-3224
BALTIMORE	Dave Bogash	922-9310
BROOKSIDE	Mary Holmes	345-3606
KIYOMIZU	Godfrey Trammell	645-3519
NORTHERN VIRGINIA BONSAI SOCIETY	Jules Koetsch	569-9378
WASHINGTON	Linda Mayben	552-3921

This is an important event for PBA and a unique opportunity for all bonsai enthusiasts. We urge every member to attend.

--- Mary Holmes

CLUB CALENDAR

NOTE CHANGE OF DATE

- March 31
Saturday Collecting trip. 10 a.m. Home of Lynette Nielson, Corica St., Centreville, Maryland. ANNAPOLIS
- April 10
Tuesday Workshop. 7:30 p.m. St. Margaret's Church. Members bring their own trees and tools. More experienced members will be there to help out. ANNAPOLIS
- April 14
Saturday Styling & grooming of azaleas. 10 a.m. Gulf Branch Nature Center. Styling and grooming of azaleas and deciduous trees, with Ruth Lamanna. Members bring their own trees. NORTHERN VIRGINIA BONSAI SOCIETY
- April 19
Thursday Reception for the Nippon Bonsai Association. 5:30 p.m. National Arboretum. See article for further details. PBA

NOTE CHANGE OF DATE & PLACE

- April 21
Saturday Annual meeting, workshop, and selection of trees for PBA Show. 10 a.m. Sampson House, Wheaton Regional Park. Bring trees for selection for the PBA Annual Show and trees to be worked on. Short annual meeting and election of directors will precede. BROOKSIDE
- April 21
Saturday Potting workshop. 2 p.m. National Arboretum. Joyce Pelletier will lead workshop. Members bring materials, pots, soil & tools. WASHINGTON
- April 22
Sunday Repotting workshop. 2 p.m. Clearwater Nature Center. Members bring own materials, soil will be provided. KIYOMIZU
- April 28
Saturday PBA Annual meeting. 5 p.m. Downstairs in the National Arboretum Administration Building. Annual meeting, election of officers, party. PBA
- April 28-29
Sat.-Sun. PBA Annual Show. PBA
- May 12
Saturday Workshop at home of Dave Brown. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Bring own trees and tools. Brown-bag or plan to go out for lunch. Cliff Pottberg will conduct. ANNAPOLIS
- May 12
Saturday Grooming and styling workshop. 10 a.m. Home of John Simpson in Lake Barcroft. Bring own materials. Rain-date May 19 NORTHERN VIRGINIA BONSAI SOCIETY
- May 12
Saturday Cylburn Market Day. All day. Cylburn Park. Bonsai show and demonstrations. BALTIMORE
- May 18
Friday Preparation for "every member show." 7:30 p.m. Head House, Brookside Gardens. Displaying bonsai, styling advice and wiring workshop. Every member bring a tree. BROOKSIDE
- May 20
Sunday BCI slide show & "name" workshop. 3 p.m. Cylburn Park. BALTIMORE
- May 27
Sunday To be announced. 2 p.m. Clearwater Nature Center. KIYOMIZU