

PBA NEWSLETTER

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TREE OF THE MONTH

by Cliff Pohberg

Blue Moss Cypress

There is a fascinating and lovely cultivar of Sawara Cypress which is found in this country in many nurseries. It is called the Blue Moss Cypress or Boulevard Cypress. Easy to grow, to propagate and to train, it also has lovely bark and foliage. Surface roots also develop quickly, and it is, in general, excellent for bonsai. Nevertheless, it is little used for bonsai, and is spurned by many teachers.

The reason for this cold shoulder is found in two different facts. One is what we might call the "anti-little-old-lady-in-tennis-shoes-syndrom-syndrom" I have heard some bonsai enthusiasts--and, surprisingly, some teachers--mention that the Blue Moss Cypress is "only for little old ladies..." etc. Their actual words.

The other answer is that with somewhat improper care it has the devilish habit of "browning out," where huge interior masses of its foliage suddenly die all at once. This browning out is so severe that sometimes whole important branches die. Many people have become most disappointed in the Blue Moss Cypress because of this habit, even though it is completely curable.

The cure lies in the correct soil and in watering habits. This cypress likes a very moist soil but not wet feet. Also, it is a very fast grower. When the growth is vigorous, it is a brilliant silvery blue and some people may consider that perhaps it is too sad to prune such beautiful color. Thus in the hot later summer, often general drought conditions and much new growth, transpiring quickly, result in a dry soil which quickly translates into dead foliage. Simply using correct pinching technique and watering more frequently corrects this condition, however.

Granted its spectacular color is such that people more interested in the plant than its form, and thus who were merely dabbling in the art, might discover it first; but to ignore a material because someone else enjoys it is a little like refusing the gift of a Mercedes Benz automobile because it once appeared on "The Beverly Hillbillies." It also proves that many have the ability to perceive good material, and that bonsai is not limited to the more educated bonsaist. So more power to the little old ladies in tennis shoes; without them our art would be more limited, and, I suspect, less gentle, too.

The color of the rugged bark often has rich red-orange undertones, making the plant even more spectacular (and also making our job of selecting a pot color more difficult.)

While flexible and pliant, the wood nevertheless takes on a new shape quickly. With the speed of the tree's filling out and general growth, it makes good bonsai in a short time. Of course, as a result, you will have to watch the more carefully for wire damage.

The tree also responds very well (when the soil is healthy) to fertilizer. Many have remarked that it needs partial shade to achieve maximum blue color, but enough fertilizer will achieve the same result even in full sun, though the plant does prefer a little shade.

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Another reason for playing with the Blue Moss Cypress is the very fact that it is tricky to learn to water correctly. Good watering procedure is not easy to learn--the Japanese say, quite rightly, that it takes three or four years--and a cheap piece of Blue Moss Cypress definitely will test your talent. One cheap piece is all you ever will need, however, since it also is very easy to propagate. One of the easiest of conifers to root, the blue moss is a good plant to use to learn how to take cuttings, too.

Aphids and juniper tip blight, phomopsis juniperovra, will be your biggest problems with this plant. Aphids are easy to catch by inspection, but, like many fungi, the tip blight often is hard to figure out unless you have seen it before.

Even more susceptible than the junipers to this blight, the tip bud growth on less vigorous branches starts dying first, working backwards along a branch. It can kill the whole tree, if care is not taken. Care in this case is a treatment, and preferably two, of Benomyl, to which the fungus, in turn, is very susceptible.

Try Blue Moss Cypress for many upright styles, groves, and perhaps literati. Its need for cool moist root conditions probably precludes the rock style plantings, but in the styles to which it lends itself, it will make a striking picture, and reward you--once you have mastered its cultural quirks--with a reliable, thriving and easy-to-work-with bonsai.

Club News

OUR NEW HOME

PBA has a new home. We've just moved into our own storage room on the lower floor of the Administration Building of the Arboretum, and thanks to Chuck Bird, we have complete security for the first time. Chuck donated a steel door for the room, which is 12 by 16 feet, and had his carpenters from his company, Bird Associates, Inc., install it. We have our own lock and keys, and all our materials will be stored there. As you know, we had to share our old facilities with several other groups, and the arrangement wasn't satisfactory at all. Thanks again, Chuck.

BALTIMORE

The March meeting of the Baltimore Bonsai Club was dedicated to "dog" trees and to the redefining of good bonsai. The meeting was a complete success, as many members overcame their shyness and brought trees in for evaluation and new styling ideas. The highlight of the gathering was Cliff's redefining of his famous cascade. The B.B.C. actually saw Cliff cut branches off his own tree!

KIYOMIZU

The Kiyomizu Bonsai Club will meet at 2 p.m. Sunday, May 27, at the Clearwater Nature Center near Clinton, Md., to see a slide show on Japanese bonsai. This will be followed by slides of Chuck Bird's piñon gathering trip in west Texas.

MY, OH MY, OMIYA

Should business or pleasure take you to Japan, you should spend a day at Omiya--or, more properly, Omiya Koen (Omiya Park)--the national bonsai village. Westerners, limited by English, can travel on Japanese National Railways with little difficulty. JNR posters all its station platforms in Romaji (Roman lettering) as well as the native kanji. On each platform, the next station in each direction is identified by arrows. The biggest difficulty will be a trial and error process to find the next platform in any station where you must change trains.

Omiya is about 30 minutes from Ueno station in Tokyo on JNR, and Omiya Koen another 5 minutes on Tobu Railways.

So prepare yourself to go to Omiya Koen. Check it out with your hotel desk clerk. If possible, get a railway map or time table which lists the station stops from your starting point to Omiya. Count the number of stations to each change point. For example, if you originate at Shibuya, it is:

Shibuya to Ikebukuro--7 stops to where you change trains

Ikebukuro to Akebane--3 stops to where you change trains

Akebane to Omiya--9 stops to where you change lines

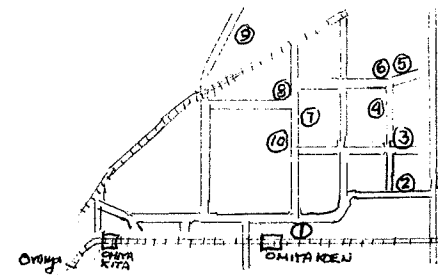
The train to Omiya Koen is by Tobu Railways on the Noda line

The trip is easier when you originate at Ueno. You then have a straight run to Omiya in 16 stops. Note that these are stops on local trains. Express trains may be available, which by-pass some stations, so check your routing with your desk clerk or host when using express trains.

Next you need to buy a train ticket at the dispenser. It may be about 200 yen to Omiya. You need not worry about the exact fare, as any difference may be made up at fare adjustment windows after reaching Omiya.

By counting the number of station stops, you will know when you arrive at the next to last station, and you will see that your destination station is marked as the next station by an arrow pointing in that direction. At Omiya, take the Nobu line to Omiya Koen. It is a private railway leaving from the Omiya station on platforms 1 and 2. You will need to purchase a ticket at the booth near the platform.

All the bonsai nurseries are within a half-mile from the station (see the map). Visit all of them, especially numbers 1, 2, 6 and 7.



- | | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 1. Fuyo-en | 6. Mansei-en, Bun-en |
| 2. Kyuka-en | 7. Toju-en |
| 3. Seiko-en | 8. Ryuhon-en |
| 4. Kanraku-en | 9. Ikko-en |
| 5. Mansei-en | 10. Sensho-en |

After browsing through the nurseries, stop in a restaurant near the station for lunch. Order from the dummy dishes on display. You won't find a McDonald's here. The return trains run about every half hour. Reverse the process to Tokyo.

Harvey Everett

Snips and Slips

HARDINESS ZONES

In botanical descriptions of trees, the hardiness zone of that plant is usually given. Hardiness ratings refer to the temperature range at which a plant grows best. However, this rating can only be used as a guide, because many other factors besides temperature affect a plants ability to survive. Large bodies of water, adequate moisture, wind protection, and well drained soil all affect hardiness. It is assumed, of course, that the plant is also in good health. Plants which are marginal in one zone may survive quite well in a more northern zone, if placed in a sheltered location.

A number of hardiness maps exist, all differing from each other. The most commonly used are the hardiness ratings of the Arnold Arboretum in Boston, Mass., and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A comparison of the two is given below:

<u>U.S.D.A.</u>	<u>ARNOLD ARBORETUM</u>
Zone 1 below -50°F	Zone 1 -50°F and below
Zone 2 -50 to -40	
Zone 3 -40 to -30	
Zone 4 -30 to -20	
Zone 5 -20 to -10	Zone 4 -20 to -10
Zone 6 -10 to 0	Zone 5 -10 to -5
Zone 7 0 to +10	
	Zone 6 - 5 to +5
	Zone 7 +5 to +10

Each U.S.D.A. zone is split into an a and b area, with the warmer temperature occurring in the b area.

Joyce Pelletier

COLD FRAME SEQUEL

In the February Newsletter, I described a cold frame made with two old wooden doors in a corner where two exterior townhouse walls meet. The hole was dug only about half as deep as would have been necessary for an unsheltered cold frame, as the two brick walls could be counted on to leak some heat. The inside of the wooden sides and top were lined with styrofoam insulation.

It worked. Everything came out in good condition in March, proving that it's not necessary to dig down below the standard frost line if you build your cold frame in a sheltered spot next to a building.

Ed Castillo

GLUE

A hot glue can be very useful in helping with bonsai creations. The glue sets as soon as it is cool--about 20 seconds--reducing the waiting time until the next step. I use a hot glue gun to mount wires on rocks for rock plantings. It is easier than epoxy, since drying is no problem, and the wires are in the pot and ready for use almost instantly.

The glue, like soft vinyl plastic, is flexible. Wires are not apt to break off with repeated bending. The hot glue gun also can be used to mount rocks for plantings on trays. Pebbles to shim the rocks into the best orientation also can be held in place with hot glue. Not only is the method faster than epoxy, but the glue can be melted with the gun to change the positions of the wire and rocks or to remove them completely for a different composition.

One word of caution: the tip of the gun and the hot glue itself are hot enough to cause burns. Care is necessary to avoid injury, but with close attention a hot glue gun can speed the achievement of creative urges.

Bill Merritt

BEGINNER'S NOTE:

May is a good month for air-layering. This is a good method of propagating a plant with a mature look, thick trunk and developed branches. A simple technique of propagation, air-layering can be successful if a few basic steps are followed.

Suggested materials: a sharp knife, moist sphagnum moss, polyethylene plastic film, a pebble, rooting hormone and two plastic ties.


What to do: (1) Make a one-inch cut upward, one-third of the way into the trunk or branch. (2) Dust the cut with a rooting hormone. (3) Wedge the pebble into the cut. (4) Wrap plastic below the cut and secure it with one of the plastic ties. (5) Cover the trunk or branch--all the way around at the point of the cut and slightly above and below it--about three times the thickness of the trunk or branch. (6) Now pull the plastic up around the sphagnum moss and secure it at the top with the other plastic tie.

A few tips: Let the sphagnum moss soak in water overnight or boil it and let it cool. Then squeeze out excess water.

Rootone-10 is recommended for woody plants, where Rootone-F is better for plants with soft stems.

Last but not least: Place a piece of aluminum foil around the plastic to reflect light from the sun, as excessive heat and light will inhibit root growth.

Linda Mayben



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CLUB CALENDAR

May 12 Slide program and workshop conducted by Nick Lenz of Massachusetts. Home of Sylvia (Williams) Jerace, 1641 Pleasant Plains Rd. just down the street from St. Maragret's Church (note change of 1 c from that announced last month). Nick will bring some of his own trees of show, present a short slide program and conduct a workshop. Cost will be \$10 for ABC members, \$15 for non-members, limit of 10 persons on a forst-come, forst-served basis. Further information, cal Vivki Ballantyne, 647-3224. ANNAPOLIS

May 12 Grooming and styling workshop. 10 a.m. Home of John Simpson in Lake Barcroft. Bring own tools, etc. Rain-date May 19. NORTHERN VIRGINIA BONSAI SOCIETY

May 12 Cylburn Market Day. All day. Cylburn Park. Bonsai show and demonstrations. BALTIMORE

May 18 Styling and wiring worksop led by John Hreha. 7:30 p.m. Head House, Brookside Botanical Gardens. Everyone bting a tree and John will discuss what to do to get it in shape for our Every Member Show. BROOKSIDE

May 19 Styling workshop with Cliff Pottberg. 2 p.m. National Arboretum. WASHINGTON

May 27 Program to be announced via telephone. 2 p.m. Clearwater Nature Center. KIYOMIZU

June 2 Annual PBA Auction. 10 a.m. Behnke's Nursery, Baltimore Avenue (U.S. Route 1), Beltsville, Maryland. Trees to be auctioned should arrive by 9 a.m. for registration. As in past years, we will have a "flea market" table for items under \$5. If you cannot stal for the entire auction PLEASE label your trees (species, approximate age, time in training, etc.) It will help the auctioneer and bring a better price for your tree. For information call Mary Holmes 345-3606. PBA

June 9 Workshop. 10 a.m. Home of Steve Morse, 23 Kuthne Drive, Annapolis. Bring your budding bonsai, tolls, brown-bag lunch. ANNAPOLIS

June 15 "Styling trees together" workshop/ demonstration with Cliff Pottberg. 7:30 p.m. Head House, Brookside Gardens Botanical Gardens. Members to bring trees. Cliff will bring some of his own trees and critique those of members. BROOKSIDE

pba dues are due

Newsletter News

You will have already noticed a change of format for the PBA Newsletter. Due to the rising cost of printing, the PBA Board has decided to change the Newsletter format and take advantage of the lower cost of having two pages reduced onto one.

--- Mary Holmes

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