

# PBA NEWSLETTER

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## TREE OF THE MONTH



### Secondaries

by Tony Pottberg

OR, HOW TO BE SURE YOUR BONSAI ARE SEEN IN THE PROPER COMPANY

A secondary is used to help the viewer imagine the landscape surrounding the tree after which the bonsai is modeled. It can be either a viewing stone that reminds you of some natural formation or a herbaceous planting. Placed to the side and to the front of the bonsai the secondary becomes the foreground of the landscape. The middle ground as the focal point of most displays is left to the bonsai, although I once saw a mountain viewing stone placed between the bonsai and the scroll which was effective as well as natural. A scroll hung as the background can depict either the overall setting or the far distant landscape or be a poem establishing the season or the mood. First guideline: when setting up a formal display, if your eye is caught first by the secondary, replace it. After all, it is not called a secondary without reason.

Second guideline: in choosing an appropriate secondary for your bonsai be logical, naturally. Take, for example, different types of cascade bonsai. If your cascade is modeled after a spruce growing in the White Mountains of N. H., either a mountain view stone or mountain cranberry would make appropriate secondaries. But modeled after a Hawaiian tree, the cascade might call for a waterfall stone or an orchid. Based on a pine seen growing in the Rockies, the cascade might be accented best by a dwarf columbine or a basin stone representing a mountain lake. To drive home the point: you would not use a waterfall stone with a desert juniper and the mountain cranberry would be ridiculous with a bald cypress.

Keeping to the season is another important guideline. A chrysanthemum stone logically accents a bonsai in fall color and miniature white or blue crocus make more sense enhancing a maple just breaking into bud than one in full summer dress. A wild aster accompanying a crabapple also in flower would be mixing the seasons but that same wild aster (if the aster's flowers were white, see color next), would be fine if the crabapple were covered with fruit.

Color is a fourth guideline. In the Ueno Park Show books there are several flowering quince used as secondaries, and for the life

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of me I can't remember the bonsai they are shown with. How often, having seen a bonsai with profuse flowers or fruit, have you remembered any details like roots or branch structure much less the secondary that accompanied it? Bonsai covered with fruit or flowers need secondaries that are not showy themselves. Viewing stones are ideal, rock being strong in and of itself, (masculine to the feminine character of the flower/fruit if you want to be chauvinistic; ying to yang if you want to be oriental). Clumps of grasses or ferns, mounds of moss or a stand of bamboo have a softening effect on a mass of color. Using plants with brightly colored leaves or flowers for secondaries can work but is tricky since you want to complement your bonsai not distract from it. A bonsai with a great deal of character or ramification of detail can carry off flowering secondaries, but even then stick to pastel colors usually as bright colors are competitive. Also competitive despite their name are the complimentary colors red and green; yellow and purple; blue and orange, do your best to avoid a secondary including one of these colors with a bonsai that includes the complement of that color. This also holds true between containers and between containers and their contents.

Size is the last guideline I want to cover and the most difficult to keep simple. Consider a given bonsai as one mass and its companion as another. The more mass there is to the bonsai, the larger the secondary needs to be to make a whole composition. Referring back to the Ueno Park Show books, I've noticed that many of the secondaries are half as long and one third or more as high as their bonsai. This ratio works when the bonsai are massive and when the secondaries are placed on a different level than the bonsai. But only a few Americans have bonsai as massive and ramified as the Japanese and we seem to suffer a dearth of stands for our bonsai. If your bonsai is big and strong, go up to 1/2 by 1/3. For most bonsai I suggest a secondary 2/5 as long and 1/3 as high unless your bonsai is unmassive like a literati; then take both ratios down but not lower than 1/3 by 1/5. If your bonsai is under six inches then the proportion can go lower so as not to overwhelm the miniature. Remember, the role of a secondary is to accent the bonsai and act as an extension of the landscape not to overshadow it. On the other hand you do not want the secondary to seem incidental, an afterthought that is not an integral part of the composition. Scale is the other aspect of size that needs discussion. A 60-foot maple only 2 feet high as a bonsai would require the woods violet growing at its base to be 1/5 of an inch if you were following strict scale. Not only is this impractical, it would look ridiculous; you want the secondary to be noticed if only a little. The secondary is usually supposed to fill the role of the foreground of the landscape; and as such you will see it as larger proportionately relative to the tree/bonsai than it actually is. Thus you have some leeway as to scale. However, do try to avoid plants whose leaves or flowers are larger than those of the bonsai they accompany. The number of suitable plants is remarkable and most can be dwarfed further using standard bonsai techniques; but if you aren't comfortable with the scale of the plants that are native to the area your tree/bonsai came from, then use a substitution as long as the substitute resembles the one it is replacing. I realize this last contradicts what I said about nature logic, but the guidelines I've listed are not hard and fast rules and are only to help you to make the most useful and appropriate choices.

## Club News

If you are interested in learning more about any part of Japanese culture, plan to go to the Japan-America Society's bazaar, on June 9. Japanese cooking and a bazaar area filled with many booths selling various kinds of Japanese artifacts will be featured. There will also be sumi-e, Japanese music, and dancing displayed. In addition the Washington Bonsai Club will have a display of bonsai!

- The bazaar will be open from 10 to 5 and is held at the Mt. Vernon College in N.W. Washington at 2100 Foxhall Rd. The event is always packed with things to do, buy and see, and the public is, of course, invited.

For further information, you may call the Bazaar chairperson, Kay Vakerics, at 703-620-9163

To all PBA affiliate clubs' Chiefs and Indians: from the compliments I received, and those received by the other PBA members in attendance, our annual show at the National Arboretum was, again, a beautiful success story!

Linda Mayben will chair the show next year, as our new First Vice President. She will need, at least, the same support given me and our other Show Chairpersons - how nice it is to see new faces appear each year - please let's not let her down. Thank You so very much.

---Molly Hersh

Terry Pogue, Brookside Club member and local horticultural celebrity (she has a horticultural show on WGTS-FM and also a 2-minute horticultural spot on WDON-AM) has just finished doing a series of spots on WDON, 1540 AM on basic bonsai. She announced that transcripts of the programs are available for everyone from the station. If you are interested, call 301-946-0900. Thanks for spreading the work, Terry!

## BBC WORKSHOP

May 6 dawned bright and sunny and BBC'ers trooped to the home of Al Kash for an outdoor workshop. Many good trees were in evidence and much redefining, pruning, and redesigning was accomplished. Many thanks to Al for sharing his home and his bonsai with us.

PBA ANNUAL MEETING: APRIL 23, 1979

by Jules Koetsch

On 28 April 1979 at 5:15 P.M. following the 5:00 P.M. closing of the PBA annual show at the National Arboretum, the PBA annual meeting was held. After the business part of the meeting, everyone enjoyed the excellent selection of wines, cheeses, cold cuts, pizza, and cake desserts which were brought by Vicki and Bruce Ballantyne. For those who missed it, similar goodies will be provided at next year's PBA annual meeting.

The principal event was the election of the PBA officers for 1979-1980 which resulted in a unanimous vote for the slate:

Mary Holmes	President
Linda Lee Mayben	First Vice President
Arschel Morell	Educational Vice President
Vicki Ballantyne	Treasurer
Jules Koetsch	Secretary

Vicki Ballantyne, treasurer, announced that the PBA treasury has a current cash balance of \$2004.00 which does not include the still to be received check from PBA's participation in the Flower Show at the Armory. After discussion, it was voted to reduce the PBA treasury surplus by PBA presenting \$100.00 to each of the six member clubs.

The above discussion triggered some comments relative to the forthcoming BCI-ABS National convention in New York City. It was noted that both organizations have large sums in their treasuries with no evident intentions to put the money to good purposes. Unfortunately no effort had been made to reduce the high cost of the convention. Any suggestions for putting the money to good uses are invited, - submit them to the PBA.

Arschel Morell, in his report relative to improving the PBA-National Arboretum relationship, has indicated that two(2) stone lanterns, made in Japan, are items which the National Arboretum would accept for enhancing the National Bonsai Collection since the lanterns are part of the overall design. The other suggested way for PBA to assist the National Bonsai Collection and the Arboretum are for members to become guides. In addition, Bob Drechsle has agreed, on a trial basis, to let the member clubs visit the National Collection when there are no crowds and possibly watch the bonsai being worked on.

The possibility of PBA members manning a booth at next year's Flower Show, where items will be sold, will be investigated by the PBA Board.

A motion for PBA to donate \$25.00 to the Dance Exchange which presented the interpretive dance "The Spirit of Bonsai" at the PBA show at the Arboretum was passed unanimously.

Mary Holmes reported that the meeting of EVP's during February 1979 resulted in a number of interesting suggestions. One suggestion being pursued is for member clubs to have a session wherein the best of the members' bonsai are brought in for critique and photography. The photographs will be repeated annually to provide a running record of the development of each bonsai.

Another suggestion is to have a parcel of land whereon PBA can plant and develop trees which can be made available for bonsai demonstrations by visiting experts. If anyone has a piece of land they are willing to offer for this purpose, please let PBA know.

Another meeting of the clubs' EVP's is planned for May 1979.

### Snips and Slips

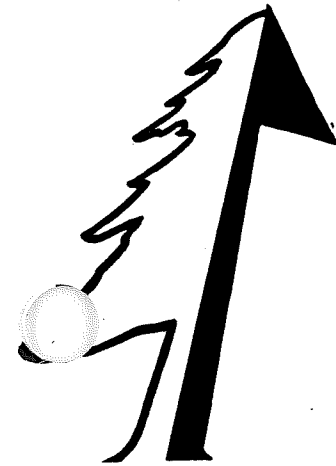
#### GOING AWAY? PLAY IT SAFE

Tell your plant sitter to water according to a schedule, rain or shine. This will prevent any disasters resulting from bonsai not getting enough water based on the plant sitter's judgement that it "rained" when the rainfall wasn't sufficient for the plant's needs.

P. S. Caution the plant sitter that drooping foliage is not a sign of overwatering. Water according to your schedule no matter what. Your soil mix should be porous enough to prevent root rot.

---Vicki Ballantyne & Jules Koetsch

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# CALENDAR

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 2 Saturday Annual PBA Auction. 10 a.m. Behnke's Nursery, Baltimore Avenue (U. S. Route 1), Beltsville, Md. 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 stay 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 345-3696. FBA

June 3 Sunday Outdoor workshop, Croton Hill Farms, Exit 24, Belfast Rd. (west) 1.7 miles. Bring your own lunch. Beverages will be supplied by BBC. BALTIMORE

June 9 Saturday Workshop. 10 a.m. Home of Steve Morse, 23 Kuthne Drive, Annapolis. Bring your own plant material, tools, lunch. Also annual elections. ANNAPOLIS

June 9 Saturday Japan-America Day. 10-5. The annual bazaar of the Japan America Society of Washington at Mt. Vernon College. Open to the public. (see article for details).

June 9 Saturday 10 a.m. Gulfbranch Nature Center. Summer care and ground covers. Bring one or more of your bonsai. NOVA

June 15 Friday "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

June 16 Saturday Recognizing Plant Diseases with D. C. Extension agent Mark Greenleaf. Bring problem plants. Plant Raffle. There will also be a raffle of interesting bonsai materials. WASHINGTON

June 17 Sunday "Rock Planting and Bonsai", BCI slide show. 3 p.m. Cylburn Park Mansion. A lecture/demo on rock planting will be the second half of the program. Also annual membership meeting with elections. BALTIMORE

June 24 Sunday Kiyomizu. To be announced. Meeting subject not known at the time newsletter went to press.

July 4 Wednesday ABS and BCI Convention in New York. July 4-9. Check your brochure.

July 10 Tuesday Tree of the Year. 7:30 at St. Margarets Church. ANNAPOLIS

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