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PBA NEWSLETTER

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TREE OF THE MONTH

Hawthorn

By

Mary Holmes

It is estimated that there are as many as 1,000 varieties of hawthorn, most of which are native to North America. With that much variety to choose from bonsai enthusiasts should have a field day.

Crateatus monogyna, or English hawthorn, is the original hedgerow of Great Britain and northern France. While some sources state that the combined name means hedge-thorn, other sources call the fruits haws. The thorn part of it is uncomfortably apparent to anyone who has ever tried to penetrate a thicket or even to prune a single tree. Hawthorns have spines on their branches up to several inches long which are actually modified branches. There is one variety of cockspur hawthorn, *C. grus-gallii inermis*, however, which is thorn-less.

The hawthorn is commonly known as May tree due to its habit of blooming around the first of May. Two to three inch clusters of fragrant blooms, each made up of five-petaled flowers about an inch across, cover the branches so profusely that the tree is hidden in them. Most hawthorns bloom white but the European *C. oxyacantha* has several varieties that are double-flowered and may range in color from pink to brilliant scarlet. *C. oxyacantha paulii* or Paul's scarlet hawthorn is a double-flowered variety of bright red. (Double-flowered varieties rarely bear fruit.) Although it is called May tree, some European varieties also flower in late fall-early winter. There is a charming legend that Joseph of Arimethea was in England trying to convert the people to Christianity. He was preaching on Christmas Day and meeting with a singular lack of enthusiasm until he struck his staff in the ground and it immediately sprang into foliage and bloom. This tree was the Glastonbury hawthorn.

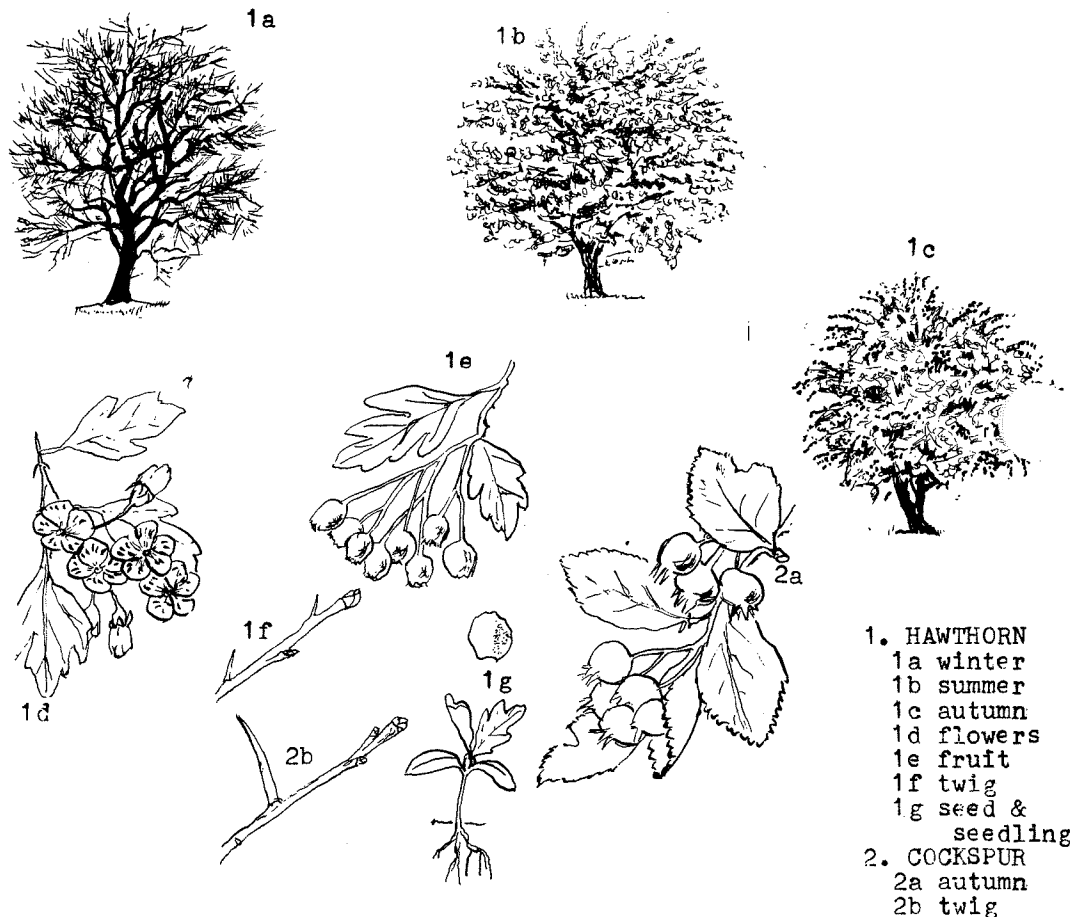
Fruits of *Crateatus* appear mid to late-summer and remain on the tree throughout the winter in most varieties. Fruits themselves are shaped rather like a small crabapple and grow in clusters. Although some sources state that these are attractive to birds (see book review by Jules Koetsch elsewhere in this Newsletter), most other sources maintain that few birds relish the fruit of hawthorn. I tend to agree with the latter, at least for this area, as I have been enjoying the sight of hawthorns with their bare branches and bright red fruits all winter.

Crateatus is one of the first deciduous trees to break foliage in the spring. Leaves are 2-3 inches long and vary widely in shape with the different varieties, from nearly smooth to deeply lobed. They also vary in fall coloring from orange to deep red. Leaves, however, can be reduced for bonsai. The varieties found most commonly in the Washington area are likely *C. oxyacantha* sp. (English hawthorn) and *C. phaenopyrum* (Washington hawthorn).

Hawthorn itself is a tough little tree. Though some species grow to 50 feet, most rarely reach 35. It ranges from southern Canada almost to the Gulf of Mexico and from coast to coast, only bothering to balk at growing in the Southern California-Arizona desert region. Hawthorn will grow in almost any well-drained soil, either acid or alkaline, and is remarkably resistant to drought, cold and city pollution. Hawthorns have a natural tendency toward dense branching and multiple trunks. Suckers should be removed and the tree pruned in winter or very early spring. The gray-brown bark is rough and the whole tree has a sturdy look about it, rather like a mighty mite.

Unfortunately Crataegus is difficult to transplant unless very young as it has a long tap root and long lateral roots. If you find one you must collect, plan on a season or two of root pruning before the final excavation. Otherwise nursery-grown stock is likely your best bet.

Once established in a pot, however, hawthorn can make a delightful bonsai. Likely its difficulty getting into a pot is the main reason it is not seen more often in bonsai collections. To prove it can be done, though, there is a lovely one (*C. cuneata* Sieb. & Zucc.) in the National Collection. The Japanese name for hawthorn is Sanzashi.



1. HAWTHORN
 1a winter
 1b summer
 1c autumn
 1d flowers
 1e fruit
 1f twig
 1g seed & seedling
 2. COCKSPUR
 2a autumn
 2b twig

BOOK NOOK

"THE TREE KEY, A guide to identification in garden, field and forest", by Herbert Edlin and illustrated by Ian Garrard. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1976 and reprinted in 1978.

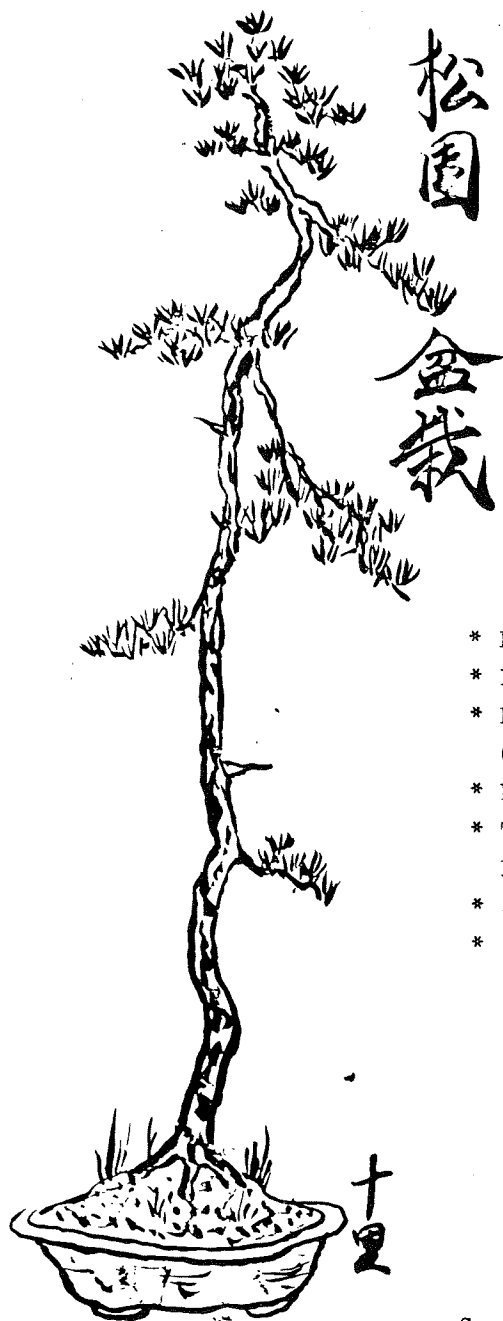
The soft-cover, field guide size edition of this charming book was discovered in a bookstore in Seattle, Washington, which bookstore was well-stocked since that is BIG TREE country. In my opinion it has many of the things a bonsaist looks for in a book of this type. Trees from around the world are described and pictured in the "DESCRIPTION OF TREES" section of 193 of the 280 pages of the book. The pictures are in color and depict the trees in their winter and summer appearances along with their appearances when flowering, - if appropriate. The accompanying picture depicts the layout of the illustrations for Hawthorn which are a poor second to what they are, in color, in the book itself. It has been said that in styling a bonsai, one should attempt to capture the shape of a large tree as it appears in nature. To that end, the pictures are indispensable in providing the viewer with what in my estimation, are among the best illustrations of the differences inherent from tree species to tree species.

In addition to the "DESCRIPTION OF TREES" section, the first part of the book contains seven chapters covering in precise fashion, topics that also should be of import to the bonsaist. These chapters cover the following:

- Chapter 1 ----- How Trees are Named and Known
- Chapter 2 ----- Tree Structure and Life History
- Chapter 3 ----- Identification by Leaves
- Chapter 4 ----- Identification by Twigs, Bark and Timber
- Chapter 5 ----- Identification by Flowers
- Chapter 6 ----- Identification by Fruits, Seeds and Seedlings

Chapter 7 ----- The Tree in its Surroundings
 Chapter 7 is one of my favorites of the above chapters because it treats the subject of how to identify trees the same way professionals such as the author, a former Forest Officer in the service of Great Britain, so ably do. The book is an outstanding memorial to the author who died on Christmas Eve of 1976 prior to the publishing of the book. Through the efforts of his widow and friends and cohorts, the book was published after his death. He had completed much of it, fortunately, but some trees may be missing from the text. I tried to find Japanese black pine, but it was among the absent. This brings one to the point that not all tree books cover everything.

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Usually a person wants one reference book on trees in his or her library. Some of the more available are the older "A Field Guide to Trees and Shrubs", by George A. Petrides with the all too few, wonderful silhouettes of trees by Roger Tory Peterson and the more recent "A Photographic Guide to More than 500 TREES OF NORTH AMERICA and Europe", by Roger Phillips assisted by Sheila Grant, edited by Tom Wellsted, with line drawings by John White. However, if I were forced to select only one that would best meet my needs in bonsai, I would select "THE TREE KEY"!!!

The accompanying illustration shows what the right side of each page in the Description of Trees section contains. Each left or facing page contains the text related to the illustrations. As a sample and in keeping with the current Tree of the Month article, the text on hawthorns is repeated below.

H A W T H O R N S

CRATAEGUS genus

ROSACEAE

All hawthorns have alternate conspicuously toothed, sharply cut or lobed leaves. All bear clusters of snowy white, pink or red blossoms in early summer - hence often called "May trees". Oval, attractive berries or haws are clearly tipped with five sepals remaining from the earlier green calyx; usually scarlet, crimson or orange, but species bear dark blue, black or yellow berries. Pulp within leathery coat is usually yellow, soft, and mealy, unattractive to humans but birds eat it greedily. Seeds within may be solitary, or two or three together; they are dark brown, oval, hard, ridged, stone-like; many pass unharmed through alimentary canals of birds, who carry them long distances in their flight.

In such ways hawthorns quickly colonize bare ground, such as abandoned pastures. Some seeds sprout in spring after ripening, others two or three years later. Each seedling raises a hard seed-coat which splits and allows two fleshy oval seed-leaves within to spread. Typical lobed leaves follow on an unarmed shoot; spines develop later.

Hawthorn spines, always single, are really modified shoots; they spring from leaf axils. Bark, smooth and greenish brown on branches and young trunks, becomes grey-brown with age, breaks up into small, thin, squarish flaking plates. Trunks of mature trees often fluted with ribs that become buttresses at their bases. Wood within is hard, heavy, strong, with rusty-brown heartwood, creamy-white sapwood. Used mainly for fence stakes or fuel.

Typical hawthorn flower has five sepals, five petals, many stamens, and a central pistil bearing one to three stigmas. Double flowers, with stamens modified into petals, are common in garden varieties; being sterile, these are propagated by grafting. Only untrimmed trees flower. Winter buds are scaly, very small.

Hawthorns make ideal hedges or living fences. Two common

species, used for hedging in Europe, have been introduced and become naturalized in North America. Both have deeply-cut leaves and crimson berries. Midland hawthorn, Crataegus laevigata, has two or three seeds in each berry. Common English hawthorn, C. monogyna, has only one. Most striking American species is aptly-named cockspur hawthorn, C. crus-galli, which bears sharp curved spines often 7.5 cm (3 in.) long. It has an oval leaf with tapered base, widest and most clearly toothed above its middle. Scarlet fruits, about 1.5 cm (1/2 in.) long, ripens in clusters in autumn, when leaves turn bright orange.

Usual hawthorn leaf colors: bright emerald in spring, dull green in summer, golden in autumn: Twig colours: green but crimson on sunlit sides.

Jules Koetsch

MAME ANYONE ? ? ?

If you are interested in mame here's a big bargain for a mame price. If you do not know about it, join the Mame Bonsai Growers of America by sending a check for the tremendous sum of \$2.00 to them addressed as Box 391 RD 3, Kennett Square, PA 19348. The two bucks buys you four or more, if there is enough material, very informative newsletters.

JAPANESE MAPLES

Thanks to the January 1980 Mame Bonsai Growers of America newsletter, maple fanciers interested in rare maples as shown in J. D. Vertrees book "Japanese Maples", can write for his catalog by requesting it from: Maplewood Nursery, 311 Maplewood Lane, Roseburg, Oregon 97470. Prices start as low as \$12.50. In the next FBA Newsletter, Mr. Vertrees book will be reviewed.

YELLOW DEFECTS FEST

Now white flies can be trapped without the use of pesticides!

The U.S. Department of Agriculture experimented with placing boards painted with Rustoleum #659 yellow and smeared with motor-oil near plants infested with white flies. The bugs came out and got stuck. Frequent tapping of plants speeded up the flight of flies to the trap. *

I have had problems with white flies on my indoor bonsai - on pomegranate, azaleas, citrus, and chrysanthemums. At the first sign of a new invasion I plan to think "YELLOW".

* "House Plants and Forch Gardens", November 1979 issue.

Janet C. Lanman

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It looks more and more like the lion's roar is succumbing to the lamb's bleat. Collecting time is in full swing and I've even repotted my first tree (it's a larch from Canada and this must seem like the tropics to the poor thing). It's the busiest time of the year for working on bonsai and it only lasts a few short weeks.

As you're potting and pruning away, while away some time in thinking about bonsai activities going on after the season is over. Cull out your collection of things you don't want and either set them aside or tag them to bring to the PBA auction the first weekend in June. Closer than that, though, you should be thinking about the PBA Annual Show and the annual meeting the last weekend in April (April 26-27).

The Show, as in the past several years, will be done by the individual clubs, each setting up its own exhibit. This is probably the busiest time of the year for the Arboretum as many thousands of people visit to enjoy the spring weather, the woods, and the azaleas. We can expect that many of these visitors will also see the PBA Show.

On a more serious note is the PBA annual meeting which will take place on Saturday evening April 26 at 5:30 in the classroom of the Administration Building. There is a great deal to discuss and decide and officers must be elected for next year. The annual meeting is the best place to air your views on what is/isn't, should/shouldn't happen in PBA. Come and be heard.

Following the annual meeting is a party. Those who attended last year remember that we had scads of good food and "beverage" and a lot of fun. Share in the seriousness then share in the fun at the annual meeting.

--- Mary Holmes

ODE TO A MUDLARK

I know it's quite the thing
To sing of birdies in the sky,
Of sunny days and nice warm waves
And things that make you high.

Make no mistake that I don't feel
These things as you do too.
I'll pause and drink them in
While I've other things to do.

But these roots go down to China
And this mud is just like glue.
I'm covered with it head to foot
And likely poison ivy too.

I'll save my lazy dreams
Until this job is done.
Then I will have both tree and dreams.
My God, how I have won!


--- Mary Holmes

Club Calendar

- April 9, Wednesday, 7:30 p.m.--St. Margarets Church, Grooming workshop in preparation for selecting trees for the annual PBA show. Please bring trees of different styles, kinds, and heights, possible accessory plantings, so that club members can decide in advance which trees to use in our two PBA booths. ANNAPOLIS
- April 12, Saturday, 10 a.m.--Workshop with Bob Sitnick. Bring tools, plants for repotting and styling. Assistance will be provided. Gulf Branch Nature Center. If any questions, contact 821-3142. NOVA
- April 19, Saturday, 2 p.m.--Grooming workshop. Preparation for selecting trees for the annual PBA show. National Arboretum. WASHINGTON
- April 20, Sunday, 3 p.m.--Accent and grass planting workshop, plus a business meeting. The tree-of-the-month will be Hornbeam. Cylburn Park Mansion. BALTIMORE
- May 1-3, Thursday - Saturday--A John Naka Weekend. Please contact Vicki Ballantyne 647-3224, or your club president about your club's activities.

May 10, Saturday, 9a.m. to 5 p.m. Annual Market Day. Horticultural and other goodies for sale and display. Also the Baltimore Club usually has a show of members trees. Cylburn Park Mansion. Baltimore

May 18, Sunday, 3 p.m.-- Three ring Circus. Cascade style. The Tree-of-the-Month will be Azaleas. Baltimore



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THE INCREDIBLE POTENTIAL OF SMILAX

by Adolph Gustav Dammerer Busch

As collecting season approaches, and for many other reasons, you should consider Smilax. There are many facets of this genus of many species which would make it perfect for bonsai. And Smilax is so widely occurring that I doubt you have been on a collecting trip without running into it.

The word is derived from an ancient Greek term for an ever-green Oak, to which it is not, in fact, related. Surprisingly, it is a member of the Lily family, and is found in and around the edges of many, many gardens.

Leaves are small, sometimes very small: in *S. herbacea*, the Jacob's Ladder, they can be as small as 1/2 inch; in many a lovely lustrous green - some can be pilose or hirtellous, sometimes even glabrous. And they can be a most exciting shape: panduriform through sub-orbicular or even reniform!

Often an evergreen vine habit of growth, several are stout woody stemmed: *S. rotundifolia*, for example, which also has small in-scale subterete thorns (as many do) called prickles, and small bluish black berries with a lovely glaucous bloom on them. *S. Walteri*, the red-berried bamboo, has a brilliant red berry as its name implies, which persists brightly through the winter. The flowers are dioecious necessitating a male plant also and occur in umbels on axillary peduncles, several a lovely bronze color. The stigmas are thick and the ovules orthotropous. In many, the perianth is even longer than the anthers!

And Smilax is easy to take care of. It is one of the plants which is not at all choosy as to soils and even likes swampy places (which many of our bonsai potting soils resemble), and most are very hardy. In fact, once established, it is actually hard to get rid of.

So think about Smilax. It will make itself apparent even without your looking for it. I believe that, as bonsai, it will make itself felt; and, indeed, it is surely a plant to which one can become very attached.

[Ed. note: the author, A.G.D. Busch, thought that an article on Smilax might be especially appropriate for a Newsletter coming out on or about the beginning of April.]

BONSAI CLASSES
FOR BEGINNERS

A beginners course is being planned for the month of April. The classes will meet on Saturday afternoons. These classes will be filled on a first come first serve basis, so register as soon as possible if you are interested. The cost for these classes will be pro-rated on the number of people that register for them. Those interested in the class please contact: Fred Mies (Brookside) 301-299-6194 or Bob Sitnick (NOVA) 703-821-3142. If anyone is interested in advanced classes please call either party and let your interest be known.

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BAKED CLAY BRANDS

Clifton Pottberg

The profusion of brand names of baked clay products used for various purposes leads to a similar sized confusion by most of us. Here is some more information I have discovered (out of necessity) which might be helpful.

Terragreen is the soil additive brand name of the Oil Dri Corporation, is pinkish tan, marketed in fifty pound bags and is mined in Georgia. It is the size of average cat litter, mostly 1/8" to 1/16". It is the product we have been using with best results for several years. In fact, it was the lack of supply of Terragreen at our regular distributor (we buy a ton or two at a time) that necessitated this research.

Oil Dri also markets 2 other brand names: Oil-Dri and Kitti-Dri, which are actually the same product. Mined now in Ripley, Mississippi, they look greyer and are not baked to as high a temperature, and so are not as stable in the soil. They are, however, satisfactory if the bonsai with which they are used is repotted as frequently as once a year. Two other particle sizes of Terragreen, which we use in drainage layers and for larger bonsai, are Jr. Jumbo (1/2" to 1/8") and Jumbo (1/2" and up).

International Minerals Corporation markets the brand names Turface soil conditioner, Turface course and Turface extra course. (Equivalent in size to the 3 sizes of Terragreen) and which are also mined in Ripley, Mississippi and are the same clay as Oil-Dri and Kitti-Dri. The Turface soil conditioner has many more fines (through 16 mesh) than Terragreen, however: up to 1/2 the total volume. Since the price of a bag is competitive with Terragreen, the product will be more expensive for the average bonsai person, since so much must be discarded; though, of course, it is as good or better a product if you do mame bonsai. On the other hand Terragreen has a size product called special top dressing Terragreen consisting only of 1/16" through 1/35" fines for mame enthusiasts.

Continuing to look for a substitute for Terragreen, many other brands were considered and rejected (often just because they weren't bagged in large enough bags to reduce the cost). Finally we remembered Kitty Litter, now called Glamour Kitty which I used when first starting in bonsai. Manufactured by the Waverly Mineral Products Company, Glamour Kitty, Soil-Ad and Hi-Dri 40 are all baked to the same high temperature, have far fewer fines than Turface and are the same clay as Terragreen; in fact the product is mined just down the road from Terragreen in Georgia. It is thus an excellent substitute. The only drawback is that larger granule sizes are not available. For most bonsai, however, it is excellent, and with sieving and no fines (not even humus) to clog up air pores in the mix, it is a good size for the main soil of even the largest bonsai (See The Japanese Art of Miniature Trees and Landscapes by Yoshimura and Halford, Chapter 3 p. 49)

EDITORIAL

First a very sincere apology is due from me for not having gotten the last issues of the PBA Newsletter out on time.

My invitation to every member still holds in that anything of interest which they feel would be of interest to others PBAers will be most gratefully accepted. Articles for Tree of the Month especially related to trees native to this country and locale are most welcome. Please contact me if you feel inspired to write a Tree of the Month article about one of your favorites. It's a great way to learn more about a particular species of trees while researching material in reference books. In fact all of us are learning, what you may have discovered or erred in will be of value to the rest of us. Comments relative to the native trees, - even as to those on which articles have appeared in the Newsletter, will be most helpful in overcoming the vast gap in years of experience that the Japanese bonsaiists have as compared to us. This is evident to me in the Japanese articles that I've been translating. If we all cooperate, I believe that we can put together just as detailed articles together with schedules as those articles contain. Don't get hung up and procrastinate because you can't type or provide sketches or photos. Give me a buzz and we'll take it from there. If writing takes too much time, maybe you can put it on a cassette.

In the interim until I hear from you, I'll try to improve my translating of the Japanese. I thought it would go faster by now but the old mind isn't as nimble as it used to be.

Last but not least, let us know what you would like to find in the PBA Newsletter. (Sorry no human centerfolds.)

IMPERIAL BONSAI OF JAPAN *** An Invitation

The exquisitely beautiful, elegant volume "IMPERIAL BONSAI OF JAPAN 1978" by the Bonsai Association of Japan can be viewed at the following location:

Japan - United States Friendship Commission
1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC.

If you are the neighborhood between _____ and _____, you should take the opportunity to look at the contents of the book. See what is considered outstanding bonsai. If you have any questions or want to check on the availability of the book for viewing, telephone 673-5295.

Francis B. Tenny