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PBA NEWSLETTER

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TREE OF THE MONTH

Pinus Virginiana

by H. William Merritt

A new dimension is added to the pleasure of bonsai when local native plant materials are used. Among the advantages are:

- Plentiful sources of supply in the wild from field trips
- Acclimation to local weather conditions and seasons
- Adjustment to available soils

Pinus virginiana offers all these advantages since it grows abundantly throughout the Potomac area. It is found from sea level to elevations of about 3,000 feet in a climate that is classed as humid - 35 to 45 or 50 inches of rainfall fairly well distributed throughout the year. The scrub pine matures in 50 to 100 years, seldom lives longer than 150 years, but may reach 200 years.

DESCRIPTION AND STYLING: Young trees are roughly pyramidal in form and frequently grow in dense stands. As it matures, branches become long and horizontal or hang in twisted whorls. P. virginiana is distinguished from all other two-needled pines by its purplish young wood with a glaucous, grayish green, covering. The needles are stiff, divergently twisted, sharp pointed and are 1½ to 2 inches long. Confining a scrub pine in a bonsai pot with well-drained soil can shorten the needles to ¾ to 1½ inches in length,

The naturally drooping branches make the Virginia pine well suited for formal and informal upright styles, as well as wind-swept and cascade styles. The branches on young trees are supple and are easily shaped by wiring. However, the bark is thin and can be easily damaged. On mature trees, the bark develops shallow fissures with flat scaly ridges and turns dark brown. It is smoother than the bark of any associated pines. Mature scrub pines develop a flat-topped, open and scraggly crown which can be imitated in bonsai through pinchin and prunin .

SHAPING: As with other pines, new buds should be pinched back in the spring when they start to form candles. To control growth, the largest candles should be removed. Depending on the shape desired, the remaining candles should be removed or pinched back, leaving just a few needle clusters. This process may encourage existing buds along the stem to develop and produce shoots. P. virginiana will not produce adventitious (spontaneous) shoots.

GROWTH: The Virginia pine is intolerant of shade. It has a basic photosynthetic limitation that causes it to die when heavily shaded. However, under full sunlight and long days, internodal length can be increased and cycles of bud formation can be accelerated. This characteristic, coupled with attention to pinching and pruning, can help produce dense clusters of needles.

Virginia pine seedlings are more tolerant of low soil moisture than most pines. They remain alive and grow under quite dry conditions. To stay healthy, especially where soil is virtually sterile, supplementary nutrition should be supplied. Regular fertilizers, which furnish adequate levels of calcium, magnesium, potassium, nitrogen and phosphorous, should be satisfactory.

SOILS: Virginia pine will survive in almost any soil - from heavy clayey land, on virgin soil and on impoverished abandoned farm land. While these pines may grow on poor, light sandy soils, they thrive best in clay, loam or sandy loam. Virginia pine generally tolerates soil acidities ranging from pH 4.6 to 7.9.

For bonsai, in order to keep these pines from becoming leggy the soil should be at least half coarse sand with the balance mostly a well-drained loam. Since it is less tolerant of wet conditions than most other pines, the bonsai soil should contain little, if any, peat or humus.

DISEASES: The scrub pine has few serious enemies, except mankind. At times, insects damage cones severely and thus reduce seed yields. The cone insect that does the most damage is a beetle (*Conophthorus virginianus*) specific to the Virginia pine. The less damaging cone moth (*Laspeyresia toreuta*) attacks Virginia pine, but usually destroys only a few seeds in each cone. Other insects that cause significant damage to Virginia pine are the southern pine beetle (*Dendroctonus frontalis*), the Nantucket tip moth (*Rhyacionia frustrana*), and the pine sawfly (*Neodiprion prattii*). Damage is cyclic - with buildups from infestation which reaches a peak in an area, then declines. Close scrutiny for signs of infestation, pinching off infected parts, and preventive spraying can reduce damage.

COLLECTING: Virginia pines can be collected either in the spring (best in late March or early April) or in the fall (October). Though this pine normally has shallow roots, the poor soil conditions in which it is found results in long woody roots with few hair roots. Special care is needed to retrieve enough roots with soil intact to enable the tree to survive. The roots and as much soil as possible should be wrapped and protected until the tree can be transplanted. It should be placed in a tub, or in the ground, with its customary soil, but with new bonsai soil worked carefully around the roots. The tree should be cared for in this condition for at least a year to insure that the rootage is healthy enough to start bonsai training. If the tree survives, it can provide considerable pleasure for many years. If it doesn't, there are plenty more *Pinus Virginiana* with which to try again.

(Editors' note: As this issue of the PBA Newsletter is devoted to the recent Symposium on pines, we thought it appropriate to reprint Bill's article which appeared in the December 1978 Newsletter. As the article implies, Virginia pine is eminently collectable and so easy to find.)

Tree-of-the-Month Reprints

The Tree-of-the-Month has been one of the most popular and successful features of the PBA Newsletter. With this in mind and with a passion to have everything on one place and readily available, the PBA Board has had reprinted in book form the first year's Tree-of-the-Month articles. This softcover book is now available. Some of you may have already purchased it at the Symposium where the cost was \$1.25. Unfortunately the cost of envelopes and postage have forced us to raise the price to \$1.75 by mail. It can be obtained by contacting Vicki Ballantyne, 538 West Street, Severna Park, Maryland 21146. Checks should be made payable to Potomac Bonsai Association.

If the sale of these books go as well as we think they will, subsequent Tree-of-the-Month articles will be reprinted at a later date. It's a good, handy reference for any bonsai library.

SYMPOSIUM REFLECTIONS

In a word, I felt the 1980 PBA Symposium was impressive. Oh, there were a few flaws mostly contributed by the motel, but the programs were well worth attending for beginners and advanced bonsaiologists alike. We were able to focus on techniques without worrying about species differences since there was a single theme, pines. This was carried over to the bonsai display, which contained several lovely trees. Unfortunately, the display room was rather small and so one could not step back to appreciate the bonsai. The sales area also suffered from cramped quarters. I think we ought to consider a new location for next year.

Dr. Hacskaylo's discussion of mycorrhiza was eagerly awaited by those who missed it last year. However, it was not just a repeat of the previous lecture. The focus was more on containerized trees and ectomycorrhiza, since pines form ectomycorrhiza associations. The need for good culture conditions (soil, water, oxygen and nutrients) for the health of both trees and fungi became very clear. The excellent photographs and living specimens greatly added to the discussion. I believe Dr. Hacskaylo also learned something: bonsai are a good model, illustrating the critical need for a viable mycorrhiza association to keep trees healthy and vigorous. So, use those root prunings from your vigorous bonsai to ensure inoculation of a friendly fungus.

William Valavanis gave a very well organized and illustrated presentation on varieties of pines, particularly those that have unique characteristics for bonsai. His discussion of the propagation of these pines was a good lead in to the talk by Dr. David Andrews on grafting techniques. Both lectures provided something for everybody. They certainly sparked my interest in trying some grafting, just to see if I can do it. I recognize the danger that I might get hooked, but that's how I started bonsai.

Although I was part of the Three-Ring Circus, I felt it was a weak point in the programming. There simply was not enough discussion of what was going on. It gets kind of dull sitting in the back of the room trying to see what the demonstrators are cutting and wiring, let alone trying to figure out why. The addition of a moderator did not help appreciably. No one of us wanted to dominate by speaking too much, so there wasn't enough explanation. However, the concept of multiple demonstrations is a good one. Perhaps it would have worked better to have the room cleared of chairs and start out with each demonstrator describing what they see in the piece of material, then letting the audience walk around and question each one individually. The demonstrators' assistants, who were very valuable, could help field the questions.

Dan Robinson put on a good show. He brought to us a perspective of trees that we in the East do not see unless we visit the Western states. Much of our image of bonsai style is and in my opinion ought to be based on our store of images of the full sized trees in nature. Dan has studied the venerable, high mountain, weather worn trees of the Northwest. Certainly, his use of a chain saw and electric drill to reproduce these forms gave us a new perspective in styling bonsai. I can just see the wave of chainsaw purchases and PBA members running around mutilating trees with their new styling tools. I did not attend the workshop, but I understand everyone had an opportunity to give Dan's methods a try. In truth, Dan's approach to bonsai added a new perspective to mine. I'll probably be right in there with all the other McCulloch beavers.

A large part of a gathering of this sort is to meet with old and new friends. The Saturday evening festivities assured us of that opportunity. The banquet was as banquets usually are, having some high points and average food and service. There was good music by Bill Merritt & Milt Kidd. The seedling maples in small bonsai pots made by Chuck Bird were a nice touch. However, the partying really took place with drinks before and after the dinner. Some of us were a bit bleary-eyed the next day.

If you missed this one, you really missed a good one. Fortunately, you will have another chance next year. I regret many of our Canadian friends did not make it, due to air travel difficulties. They were missed.

In all, the Symposium was a good job and the organizers deserve a big WELL DONE and THANK YOU. See you all next year at Number 7.

--- Richard Meszler

THE REPORT

The word from Symposium chairman Bruce Ballanatyne is that PBA topped all records this year with a total registration of 164. This figure includes eight guest speakers and eight bazaar vendors, but it is still indisputable proof that the PBA Symposium is becoming recognized as a valuable bonsai event by our own members and by bonsai enthusiast friends elsewhere. In 1978 our Symposium became international when five Canadians joined us, and this year we added yet another geather to our cap when Myra Scott came all the way from Australia just for our Symposium.

Though competition from the Pope and a three-day weekend affected our numbers somewhat last year, Bruce has come up with some interesting comparative figures:

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>Increase</u>
Registration			
Total	164	107	41%
Sat. only	28	22	27%
Banquet	102	63	62%
Out-of-staters	58	29	100%

Northern Virginia Bonsai Society had the highest percentage of members to registered this year with a 70% participation.

Although statistics are interesting and nice to have, what they point to is the fact that the PBA Symposium is offering something of real value to the bonsai community and we can be proud of it. Many thanks to Bruce and his staff for their fine job.

blue's not always my favorite color

It's not a new experience,
The post-Symposium blues.
It seems to worsen every year
And it's not what I would choose.

Anticipation runs so high,
The program looks just great,
There're people there I care about,
It was all I could do to wait.

We came because of bonsai
But that's really just the start.
We share this love intensely
And take it very much to heart.

There's never time enough
When we've got so much to share.
The socializing's half the fun
With special people there.

Too soon the thing is over,
Far too soon you say goodbye.
I'm torn between elation
And the urge to sit and cry.

It's bitter-sweet to feel this way -
The price you pay for caring.
The memories are joyful but
Blues also are for sharing.

--- Mary Holmes

Legend of the Lost Canadians

If one tended to be paranoid he could come up with a general conspiracy to reduce the number of registrants at the PBA Symposium. Last year we competed with the Pope, and this year the Canadian air traffic controllers in Toronto combined with US AIR to do a number on us. The real loss, though, was not in terms of reduction of numbers at the Symposium, but in the impossibility of most of our Canadian friends to join us. They were at the airport and some of them through customs and at the loading gate when it was announced that the flight was cancelled. Thirteen people didn't make it. Two members of the Toronto Bonsai Society were able to join us because they left five hours earlier than the others were scheduled to leave. We're glad they made it.

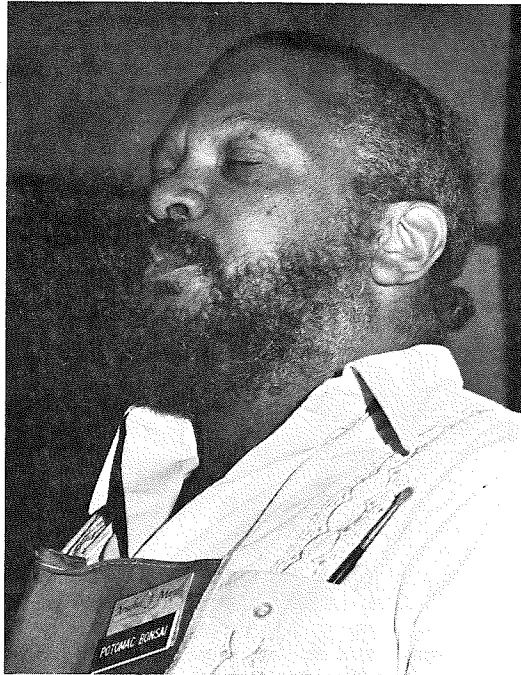
We missed sharing a bonsai adventure with all who were left behind. One of their number, Norman Haddrick, was scheduled to participate in the Three-ring Circus. Keith Scott ably and delightfully filled in for him at the last minute. It is difficult to say anything that will not seem to take away from one or the other of these men, but we missed seeing Norman and at the same time welcomed and enjoyed Keith. A note from Norman expressed his feelings...

"For me, it was particularly disappointing, because of my lost opportunity to work on the program and also because Tricia had never been to Washington and was really looking forward to the trip.

"I would ask that you convey to all my friends and PBA members my sincere regrets at missing the Symposium, which we have come to look forward to each Fall. I trust it went on to be a huge success."

Gisela Reichert summed it up more briefly - "Who's sicker about this, you or us?" If there's an answer to that, I don't know what it is. Better luck to all of us next year.

THE SYMPOSIUM: THE WAY WE WERE (high jinx, shenanigans, and serious bonsai)

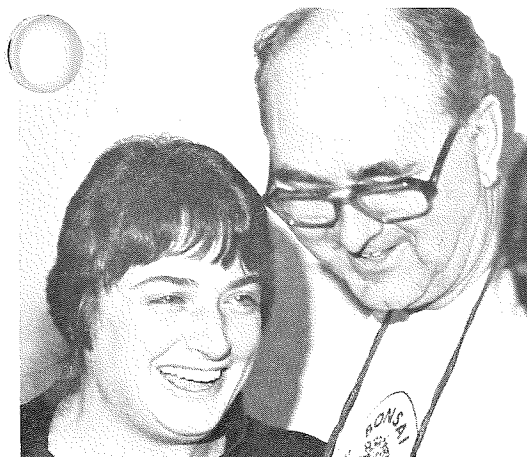


Caught in an uncharacteristically angelic moment, PBA president Arschel Morell opens the PBA Symposium.

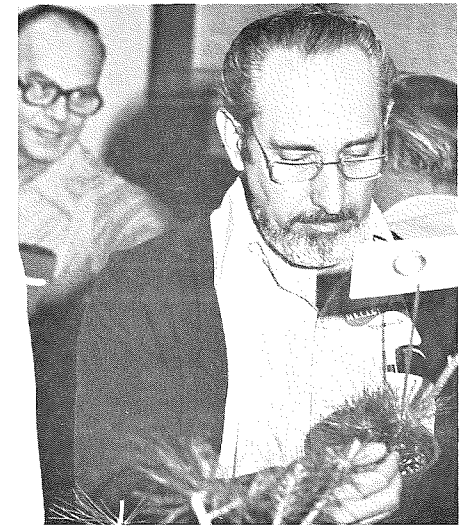
Symposium chairman Bruce Ballantyne shows he too can hustle raffle tickets, as Lynn Porter and her assistant, PBAer Fred Mies, study the tree Lynn will style.



The Unsinkable Molly Hersh. Festooned with raffle tickets Molly proves herself again the best raffle ticket salesperson PBA ever saw.

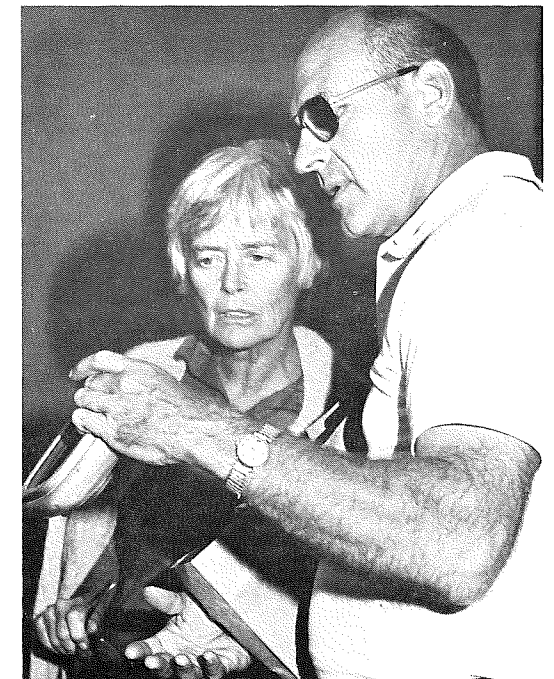


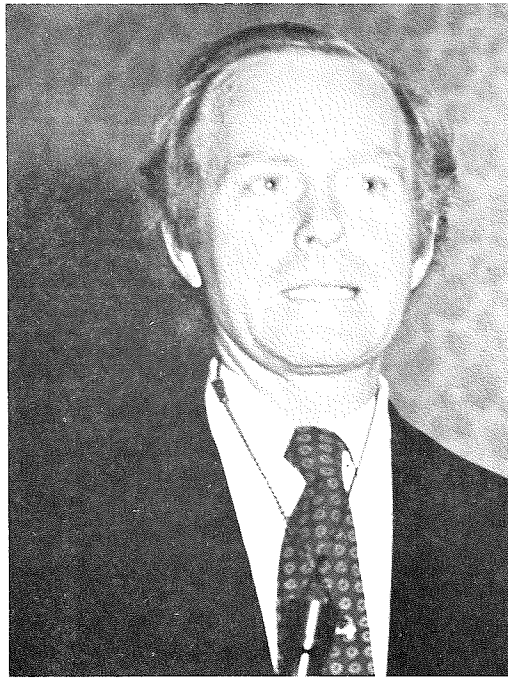
Two clowns from the 3-Ring Circus, Lynn Porter and Keith Scott caught in a merry moment.



PBAer Dave Dambowic contemplates a Nishiki black pine in the bazaar area while John Hreha (background) makes a sale.

The pot looks a little small for any of the National Collection trees, but Collection curator Bob Drechsler and assistant, PBAer Janet Lanman, seem deep in contemplation of it in the bazaar area.





A Man for All Seasons. Dr. David Andrews reveals another side of his considerable talents in a lecture on grafting pines.



"Hey, this is fun!" Richard Meszler seems happy with the results of his tree styled in the Three-ring Circus and assistant Janet Lanman looks like she agrees.



Howard Clark takes time out from his duties as Symposium registrar Vicki Ballantyne is actually holding wire as she assists Keith Scott in the Three-ring Circus.



It looks like the world's longest shoestrings, but Symposium registrar Vicki Ballantyne is actually holding wire as she assists Keith Scott in the Three-ring Circus.

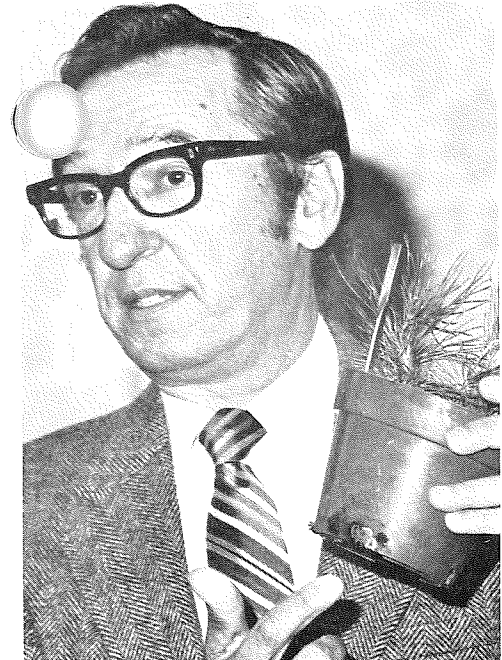


Lynn Porter puts the finishing touches on the Scotch pine she styled in the Three-ring Circus.

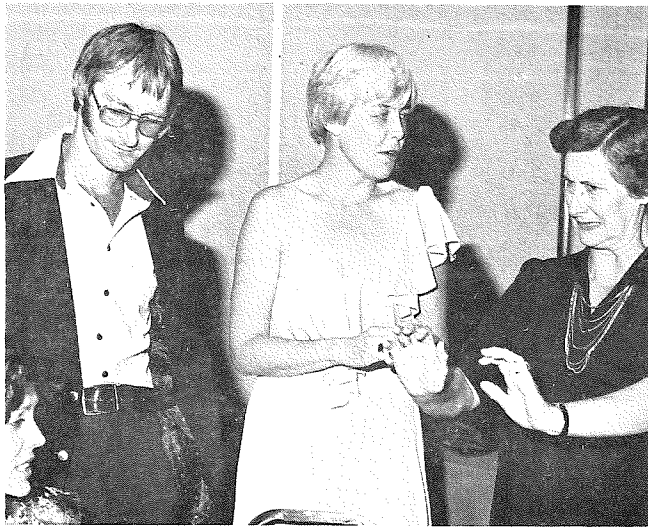


"This is a pine tree." Bill Valavanis brought some of his own bonsai as examples for his lecture on pine identification and propagation.

Dr. Edward Hacskeylo of the USDA shows examples of two different kinds of mycorrhiza on the same tree.

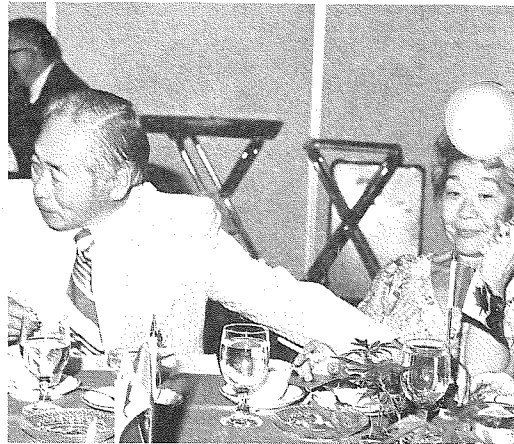


Instant age on a 250 year old pine. Dan Robinson demonstrates his unique technique for carving out a trunk, assisted by BCI past-president and former PBAer John Hinds.

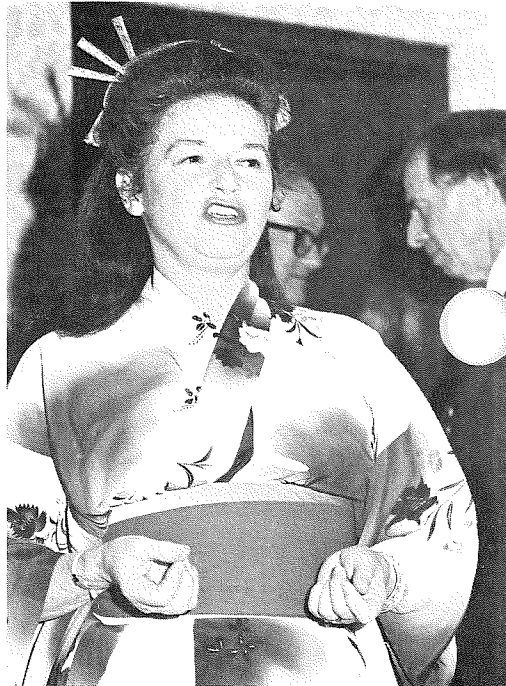


Barbara Bogash, Richard Meszler and Mary Holmes get a taste of Aussie tall tales from Myra Scott (right), who came all the way from Australia for the PBA Symposium.

ABS 82 chairman Bart Bridges, Ginny Brown from Virginia Beach and Chase Rosade are caught enjoying something good during the banquet.



The two who made it. The Matsuis from Toronto "carry" the Canadian flag for those who didn't make it.



Norma Merritt leads the Coal Miners Dance at the banquet while Bart Bridges and Luther Young discuss more serious things in the background.

SNIPS and SLIPS

NO FISH STORY

A couple of years ago, through Snips and Slips, I gave away a ten-gallon aquarium to Marry Alice Wells of the Northern Virginia Club. I had used it to house a buttonwood which died through my own stupidity rather than any failing of its "shelter." Mary Alice has put the aquarium to a different use. She roots cuttings in it. With about two inches of perlite in the bottom, she roots Kingsville boxwood cuttings and reports almost 100% success. The lid allows some air circulation, but retains moisture needed by the foliage. Ah, the good old American "injinuity."

POTTERING AROUND

Dave Brown of the Annapolis Club came up with this one. In order to remove bark while jinning a branch, Dave uses a clay-shaping tool. It's an odd-shaped loop attached to a wooden handle and is used for scraping clay while making ceramics. Dave says they're available in most any hobby shop for about 75¢. This tool will easily remove bark from a branch without damaging the wood underneath.

HOW COME?

How come it's always too early in the spring or too late in the fall when that overwhelming urge to work on your trees strikes the hardest? How come the tree you just passed up on a collecting trip as unworthy is discovered by someone else who saw it from a different angle and you'd give your eye teeth to relive the last five minutes? How come the weekend you've been looking forward to as devoting entirely to bonsai is the same weekend your second cousin twice removed blows into town from East Podunk with five kids and a Great Dane? How come the one tree you've been promising yourself you've got to work on is always the one that gets away from you until it's too late? How come I'm crazy enough to be in Bonsai, anyway?

--- Mary Holmes

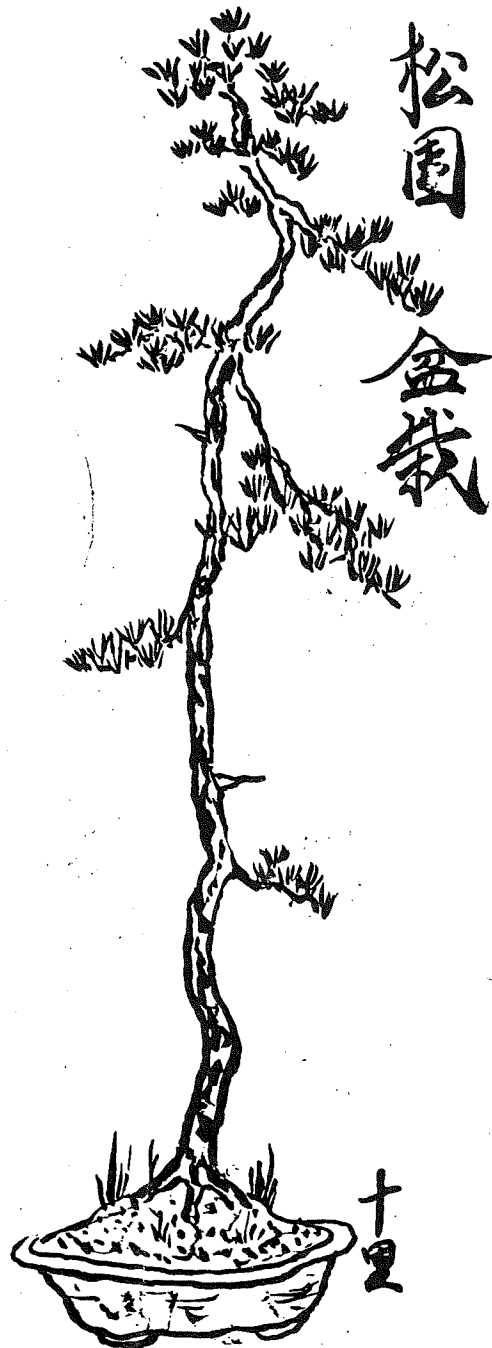
GET WELL SOON

Dorothy Warren of the Brookside Club recently underwent major surgery and is recuperating well at home. We wish her luck and a speedy recovery.

ABS Comes to Washington

The University of Maryland, College Park has been chosen as the site for the 1982 American Bonsai Society Symposium. Bart Bridges of Virginia Beach was selected as Symposium chairman and several PBAers have already met with him to get things rolling. While it's early time yet to put it on any calendar (at least until a firm date has been set), keep it mine and be thinking about what you would like to do to help out.

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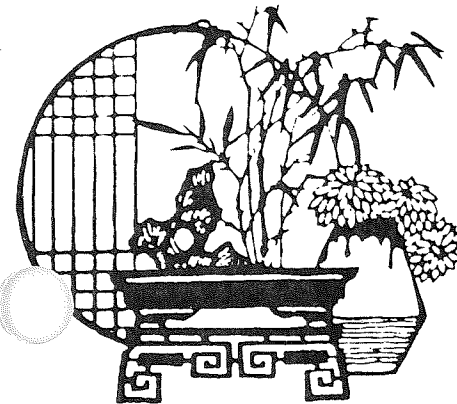
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(MARYLAND ONLY DUE TO INSURANCE)

Japanese Bonsai Master now living in U.S.

Tim Boyle of Portland, Oregon advised us that a former student of Mr. Kawamoto is now residing in the United States. Masahiro Kurukawa studies bonsai and Saikei with Kawamoto for seven years and subsequently taught at the Kawamoto Bonsai-Saikei Institute. Kawamoto has declared him a Master in bonsai and saikei. He came to the States for a visit liked it, and was able to get his visa extended for three years with permission to earn some money. He hopes to be able to stay permanently.

Masahiro Furukawa has done some demonstrations at various bonsai functions in the Portland area and is in the process of setting up a bonsai studio where he can and hold workshops. He is staying with his friend Hoichi Kurisu, Route 3 Box 138, Sherwood, Oregon 97140.

Welcome, Mr. Furukawa, and good luck.



CHINA 1981

Bonsai & Garden Visit
March 11 to April 1

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Club Calendar

November 8
Saturday

"Plant Some Rocks" session. 10:00 am Guld Branch Nature Center. Anyone who has seen Bill Merritt's "Lonely Mountain" knows what can be done with some moss and one or more rocks. Bring 3 or more rocks with character, tray (round or rectangular, pottery or plastic), and moss. Some moss and sand will be supplied. You can style a mountain range or islands in the sea, or a waterfall or whatever comes to mind. Remember, unlike bonsai, the rocks live forever and the moss is always replacable. Bill Merritt will be mentor. For more information call 521-0674, 536-4052 or 569-9378. NORTHERN VIRGINIA BONSAI SOCIETY

November 15
Saturday

Record Keeping Through Photography. 2:00 pm National Arboretum. Howard Clark will give a lecture on photographing bonsai and keeping a progress record through that medium. WASHINGTON

November 18
Tuesday


Spruces From Containers and Collecting Trips. 7:30 pm St. Margaret's Church. Janet Lanman from the Brookside Club will give a brief talk on spruces - collected and container. She'll also bring some from her fine collection. Members may bring trees (all kinds) and she'll give advice on styling.

November 20
Thursday

Three-ring Circus. 7:30 pm Audubon Society Gate House. Come watch and critique three "experts" style three trees. Resultant masterpieces will be prize of this month's raffle. Trees of the Month: Juniper. BROOKSIDE GARDENS BONSAI CLUB.

TO BE ANNOUNCED:

Baltimore Bonsai Club
Kiyomizu Bonsai Club



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THIS IS WHAT IT WAS

ALL
ABOUT



...this year

(Virginia pine collected and trained by Richard Meszler and exhibited at the PBA Symposium)

See you at the Symposium next year