

Mrs. Jack W. Wells
1810 37th St., N.W.
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For corresponding membership: contact M. Hersh, 102 Devon Ct., Silver Spring, MD 20910, - make check payable to Potomac Bonsai Association

President: Arschel Morell (301) 669-1487
Editors: Julius F. Koetsch (703) 569-9378
Mary Holmes (301) 721-1309

Consulting Editor: Julie Y. Haga (301) 972 3431

Tree of the Month Editor: Dave Dambowic (703) 323-8749

Snips and Slips Editor: Mary Holmes (301) 721-1309

Calendar Editor: Jackie Dorsett (301) 263-3995
Associate Editor: Ed Castillo (202) 543-7290
Photography Director: Dave Morse (301) 794-8127
Science Director: Ray Buck (301) 345-4919

Typing Services:

Vicki Ballantyne (301) 647-3224
Josephine Finneyrock (301) 589-5375

Subscription & Circulation: Molly Hersh & Josephine Finneyrock

Send articles (in English) to J. F. Koetsch, 6709 Caramel Ct., Springfield, VA 22152, (703) 569-9378

PBA NEWSLETTER

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TREE OF THE MONTH

THE TRAINING OF JAPANESE BLACK PINE PART III

Adapted by
Dave DeGroot

Branch training: Branches which will not be kept on the finished tree can be left as they are. On branches to be trained, remove needles from the top and bottom, leaving only those which grow out to the side, as horizontal buds. (Fig. 1 A, B) This technique allows the tree to put all its strength into making buds where needles are kept. The following February pluck needles on the leader as usual.

In February one year later, when tree is just under five years old, wire the trunk if necessary, for formal upright. For a Moyogi style, if the first slant of the trunk is to the left, apply wire counter-clockwise (as viewed from above). If the first slant is to the right, apply clock-wise. A sharp turn of wire must be made right at the base of the trunk (Fig. 2). (Plunge wire to bottom of container to anchor it.)

Thirty to sixty days later, train the leader. Assuming the tree is approaching its ultimate height, proceed in this way: Remove most of the main candles as shown in Fig. 3 A, B. By mid-June, new buds will have formed where candle was broken. (Fig. 3 C, D). In September or October, shorten terminal growth and new side branches by one-half, but at least 3 to 4 pairs of needles. (Fig. 3 E, F).

At 5 years old, tree is repotted into an 8" diameter pot.

Allow the branches to approach their ultimate length gradually, lower branches first, topmost branches last.

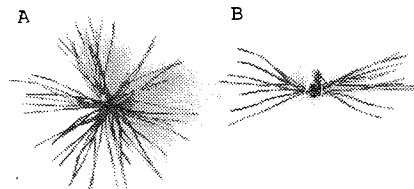
By February of the sixth year, a tree trained as formal upright should look similar to Fig. 4.

When the thickness of the trunk has reached good proportion with the height of the tree (at least 8 years), the lowermost branches may be removed.

Refining the branches: The position and relationship of secondary branches to the primary branch is the same as the position and relationship of primary branches to the trunk. After 3 to 5 years of growth, alternate secondary branches should be eliminated. Overall shape of the branch should be that of a scalene triangle. (Fig. 5 A, B.)

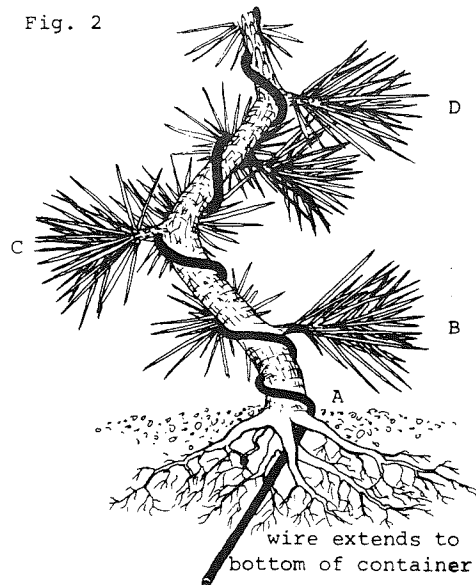
The simplified sketch in Fig. 6 illustrates ideal proportion of secondary, tertiary, etc. branches to primary branch. Growing time is 5 seasons. Notice that branches, too, must be trained from the very beginning with their ultimate length in mind. Good results cannot be achieved without careful planning. (Fig. 6)

Fig. 1



End view - showing branch before and after thinning needles.

Fig. 2



- A - First turn of wire is very sharp, so the first bend is as low on the trunk as possible.
- B - Very low branches will later be eliminated.
- C & D - Wire should always cross the trunk on the outside of the curve

Fig. 3A

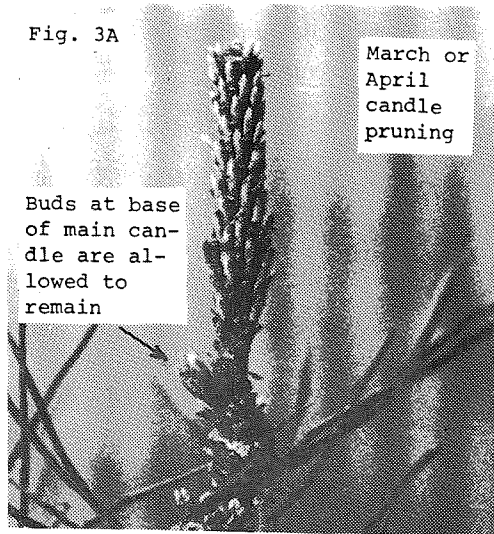


Fig. 3B

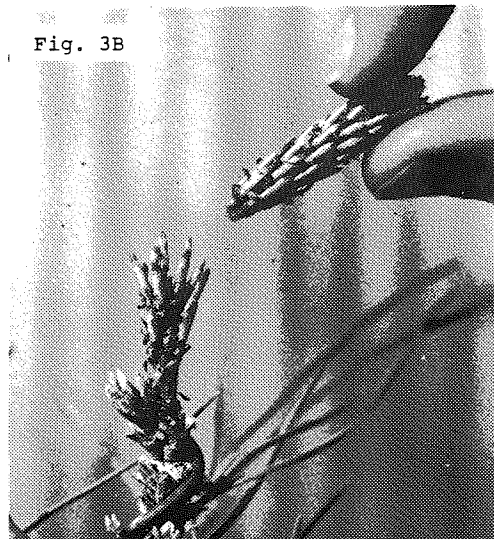


Fig. 3C

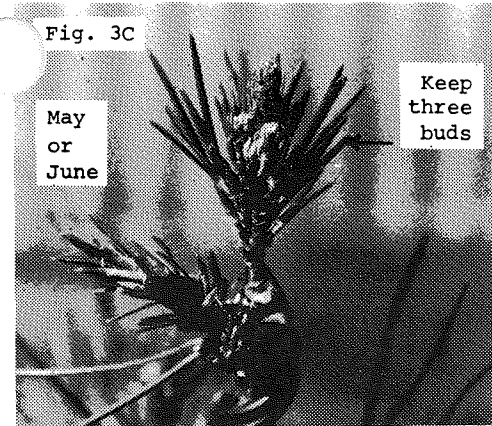


Fig. 3D



Fig. 3E

September - after the needles have emerged, pluck or cut the shoots where indicated.

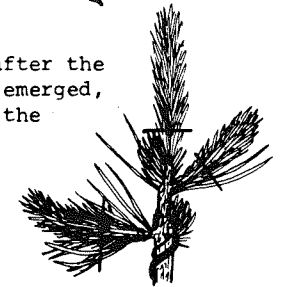
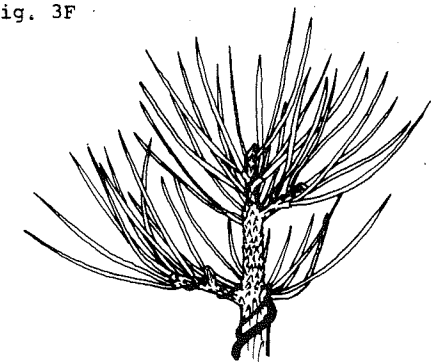


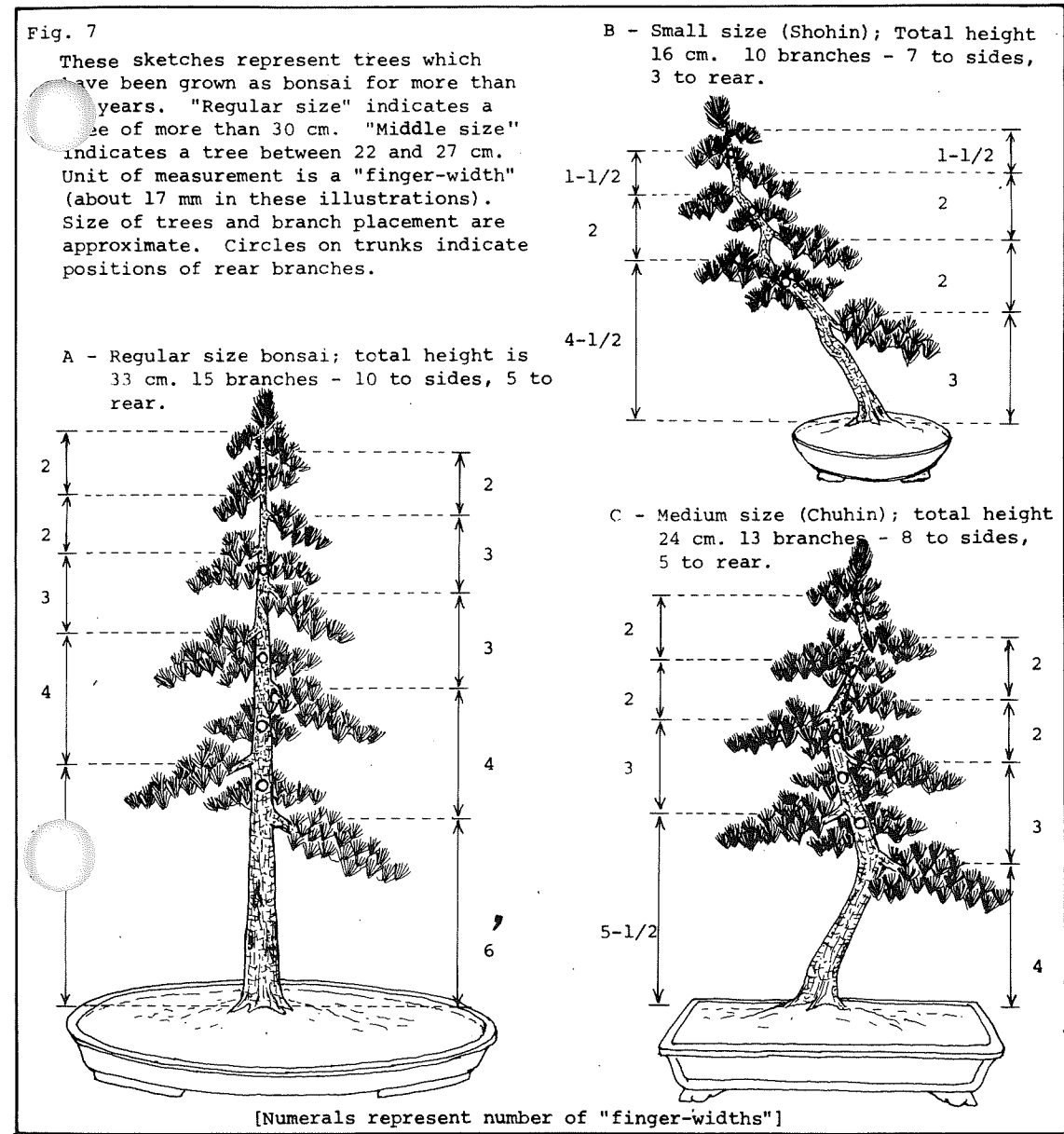
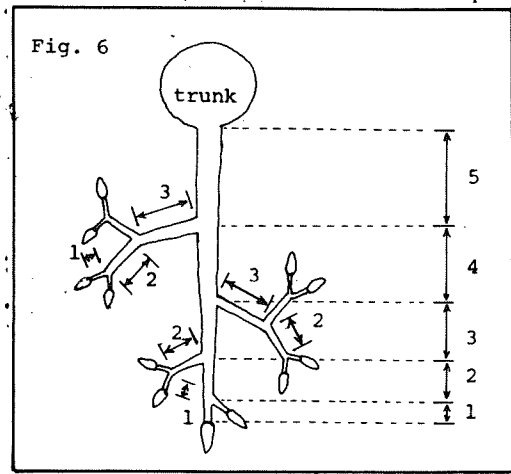
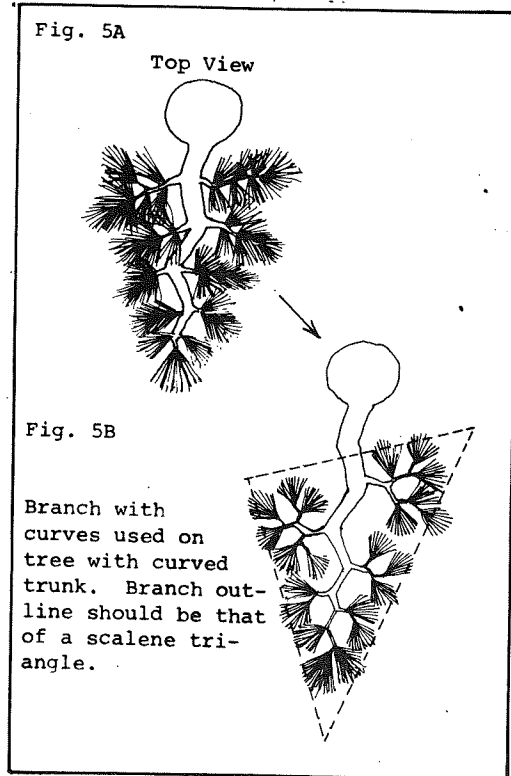
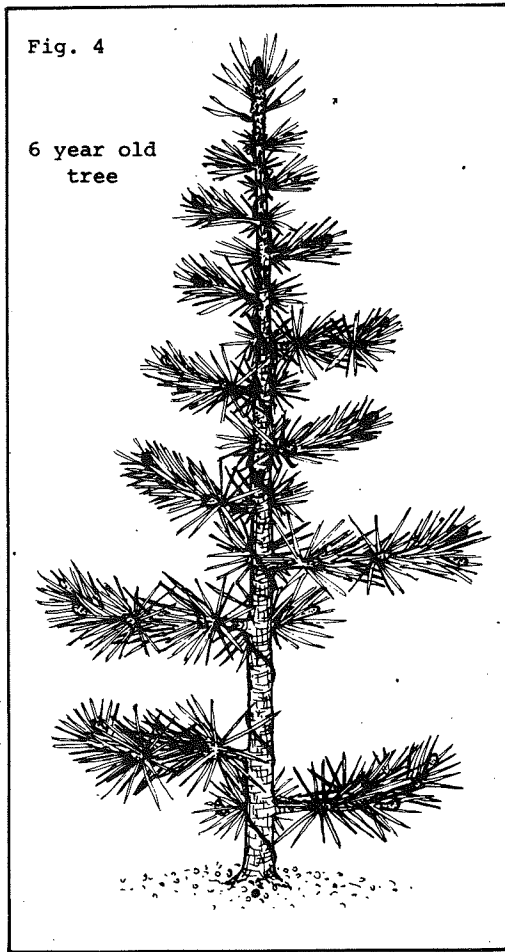
Fig. 3F



October - close up view after trimming.

Editor's note: Once again the PBA staff express their sincere gratitude to New Orleans Bonsai, their editor Dave DeGroot for the article and permission to use it and to Jimmy Littleton for providing the excellent illustrations.

This is the last article in the three-part series, the first two of which appeared in August and October PBA Newsletters. The contents of the series should be compared to those appearing in the March and May Newsletters, since there are variations in the techniques. All the above articles provide insights into some of the more recent Japanese bonsai techniques along with well-tried ones.



If all the preceding instructions are carefully carried out, the black pine can be developed into a beautiful final shape. Following are examples of three different size bonsai more than 10 years old, whose shapes are complete. Study these examples carefully to see how you can plan your black pine bonsai. (Fig. 7 A, B, C)

BOOK NOOK

'Northwest Trees'

NORTHWEST TREES, text by Stephen F. Arno and art by Ramond P. Hammerly; The Mountaineers, 719 Pike Street, Seattle, Washington 98101.

You may be wondering why, here on the East Coast of the U.S.A., a bonsaiist might want to consider trees of the Northwest. If you've been exposed to a John Naka demonstration, and more recently to Dan Robinson as a stylist, and if you yourself have seen the tall, old trees of the West Coast, particularly the Northwest, you recognize what they strive to capture in bonsai. To anyone who is a tree enthusiast, a trip to the Northwest is a mind-blowing experience. You return home with memories of grand monarchs of the forests - seemingly timeless sentinels, scarred but undaunted - having survived many of nature's fiercest onslaughts.

The book Northwest Trees is one that not only helps you remember these trees in words and pictures, it brings you more intimate knowledge of why the different Northwest trees grow the way they do, as well as each tree's association with man and beast.

An interesting feature of the book is that inside the book's front cover is a map, in pen and ink, covering the Northwest from the Columbia River north to British Columbia, and from the Pacific Ocean as far east as the Columbia River Basin. The likely locations of the Northwest trees are marked on the map by their characteristic, long-range silhouettes. Such silhouettes are fundamental in the design of a bonsai so that it mirrors the tree it is to represent.

Not only is the text of the book filled with many fascinating aspects of each tree's history and characteristics, but the pen and ink drawings aptly portray the trees in their natural settings. Drawings, in contrast to photographs, seem to more clearly illustrate a tree's shape and branching. The accompanying drawing of a mountain hemlock is one of more than 35 excellent portrayals of tree shapes which could provide the inspiration for many a bonsai.

The principal trees covered in the book are: Western white pine, sugar pine, whitebark pine, ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine and shore pine, Western larch, Alpine larch, Sitka spruce, Engelmann spruce, Douglas fir, Western hemlock, mountain hemlock, Pacific silver fir, grand fir, subalpine fir, Noble fir, incense cedar, Western red cedar, Alaska cedar, Rocky Mountain juniper and Western juniper, Pacific yew, willows, black cottonwood, quaking aspen, alders, paper birch and water birch, golden chinquapin, Oregon white oak, wild fruit trees, bigleaf maple, vine maple and Douglas maple, Cascara buckthorn, Pacific dogwood, Pacific madrone, and Oregon ash.

In 1979, in Seattle, a paperback edition of Northwest Trees sold for \$5.95. The more elegant, larger sized hardback sells for about \$30.



Mountain Hemlock

Seasons Greetings

National AMERICAN Bonsai Collection

October 28 was another landmark date for bonsai. This was the day on which the first American bonsai was presented to the U. S. National Arboretum. The occasion was to mark the 75th anniversary of the U. S. Forest Service and the bonsai was a "birthday tree" from the Forest Service to the American people.

A Bonsai by any standards, the first tree in the American Bonsai Collection is a Ponderosa pine. A naturally dwarfed tree which measures 14 inches in diameter and stands 56 inches tall is estimated to be about 150 years old. After contacting a number of people and doing some extensive searching for the right tree, this specimen was selected as representing the great American forests and the struggle to survive and grow we experienced as a nation. The tree was collected four years ago by Dan Robinson in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in eastern Washington. It is somehow appropriate that it be collected there as Gifford Pinchot is considered the father of the Forestry Service. In his presentation message R. Max Peterson, Chief of the Forestry Service, remarked that Gifford Pinchot (who, by all accounts was a crusty fellow) would have appreciated the irony and would have, if he could, also arranged the eruption of Mt. St. Helens, in whose shadow this tree was collected, as a fitting celebration for the anniversary of the Forestry Service.

The Ponderosa pine, which under normal circumstances can grow in excess of 200 feet, is an important forest tree. As a representative of its species it echoes this importance, but it also is representative of the ancient monarchs, twisted and gnarled, which survive at or above the timberline. It is a fitting tree for such a gift.

The tree has a permanent display area located on the patio area behind the Administration Building at the Arboretum. It will be kept there for most of the year except for deep winter when it will be housed with the Japanese bonsai in the bonsai pavilion. Be sure to see this newest addition and first member and welcome this American to the National Bonsai Collection.




The Ponderosa Pine as it appeared in August when photographed by John Hinds (above) in Washington (State) and, after refinement, in its new home at the National Arboretum (left). (Photo left courtesy USDA)

Dedication of the first
bonsai in the American
Collection. Left to right:
R. Hamel, USDA,
originator of the idea of the
"bonsai birthday tree," R.
Max Peterson, Chief, U.S.
Forestry Service, Dan Robinson,
Dr. Frank Santamour, Director
Pro-tem, U.S. National
Arboretum in front of the
newest member of the Bonsai
Collection. (Photo courtesy
USDA)



Chesapeake Appreciation Day

This first weekend in November turned out to be one of those (what we wish were) typical fall weekends - a nip in the air, bright and sunny, and altogether glorious. 25,000 people gathered at Sandy Point State Park, under the shadow of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, to celebrate Chesapeake Appreciation Day. (Actually it was two days.) As part of the exhibits of Chesapeake handicraft was an exhibit by the Baltimore and Annapolis clubs of about 15 bonsai. We were located in the Education tent. Together with such things as stunt flying, precision parachuting, oyster shucking contests, demonstrations of dressage, skipjack races, and some of the best seafood this side of heaven, we represented a part of the culture and lore of the Chesapeake Bay region.



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SNIPS and SLIPS

A HEALING THOUGHT

Arschel Morell came up with this idea to help speed up pruning cuts on bonsai. He adds a small amount of Superthrive to the sealing compound on a tree wound. This, he claims, seems to help the wound to heal over faster, lessening the danger of infection from such cuts.

HEALING INK

An idea which came from one of the registrants at the PBA Symposium provides more "instant aging" for branches and trunks which are jinned. Mix up a watery "solution" of Chinese ink and apply to the jinned area. This will give the branch a more grayed and weathered look and the ink will not harm the tree.

BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE

Another suggestion concerning jinned branches comes from Dan Robinson. Dan says not to leave bark on a branch that is to be jinned. The bark will prevent the branch from drying out properly and will promote rot by retaining moisture under the bark and around the branch.

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND

Howard Clark in his fine lecture at the PBA Symposium made us aware of the importance of photographing our bonsai. Trying very hard to take this good advise to heart, I photographed several of what I think are my more promising bonsai, just for the record. Imagine my surprise when I got my prints back and studied them to discover that I could recognize the faults in my trees much more readily in a photograph than I could studying the live tree itself. Perhaps a photograph is more impersonal and I could view it more objectively than I could the living bonsai. All psychology aside, though, I plan to photograph the rest of my "potential masterpieces" and plot my next styling moves with the same objective in mind of styling them on paper before I ever pick up the pruning shears.

Continued on page 13

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These trees have thick trunks and are not yet
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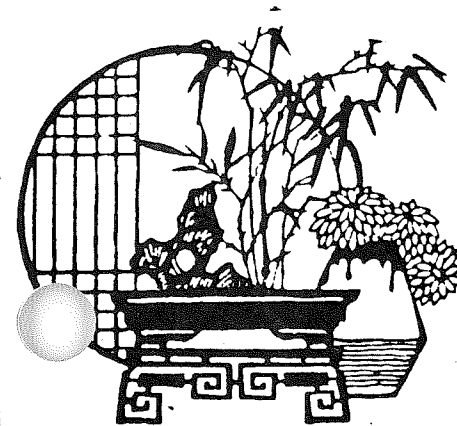


Snips & Slips

A SPIT IN TIME

One of our members who attended the BCI Convention in Hawaii recounts this tale for the edification of all of us (or maybe she's gifted with a chemistry unique). Being given a cutting off one of the ficus used as a demonstration tree in Hawaii, and having nothing to do with the thing at the time, she pulled out a Kleenex and wet it with some spit to provide some moisture to the cutting. She then put it in her purse and completely forgot about it until she arrived home several days later and was cleaning out her purse. Imagine her astonishment to find the cuttings, and also to find that in the interim these cuttings had actually started to root. The cuttings are still doing well and are living proof of something - I'm not sure what. Maybe that she has discovered in herself a new rooting medium, or maybe just that plants have a tremendous will to live and grow that this tale bears witness to.

--- Mary Holmes



CHINA 1981

Bonsai & Garden Visit
March 11 to April 1

You can be part of the first bonsai tour
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Special bonsai exhibits and visits. Six cities
in China, two days in Hong Kong
Complete land costs \$2,000 includes three meals daily throughout the tour.

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U.S. Agent:

China Travel Center
415 Lexington Ave., Suite 1214
New York, New York 10017
(212) 599-2363

Club Calendar

December 13 Insecticides - fungicides - pest control. 10 a.m. Gulf Branch
Saturday Nature Center. Talk by Cliff Pottberg and/or county agent.
We will try to have on hand for sale some of these items and discuss their use, particularly with respect to the problems in our area. Also, a rerun of the movie of "Colloecting with Dan Robinson in the Shadow of Mt. Hood." NORTHERN VIRGINIA BONSAI SOCIETY

December 14 Cover-dish Christmas Party. A cover-dish party will be held
Sunday at the home of Christine Mitchell. Call Arschel Morell for additional information (301) 669-1487. BALTIMORE

December 18 Brookside Christmas Party. 7:30 pm Main Building, Audubon
Thursday Society, 8940 Jones Mill Rd. Refreshments. Slide show of Japanese gardens. A door prize of a juniper styled by John Hreha will be given away. Also, if you wish you may participate in a bonsai grab-bag. Bring a modest gift (?) for the swap. This is a good opportunity to unload that useless pot or unsightly cutting you are tired of. Of course, you may end up with something even worse! Seasons greetings! BROOKSIDE GARDENS BONSAI CLUB

No Meeting in December for:
Annapolis
Washington

No Report from:
Kiyomizu

For Information Call:
Chuck Bird 292-3167

Naka's Saksuki Book

Last spring many of you expressed an interest in purchasing John Naka's new book on Satsuki azalea at a group rate of \$11 each. It has been decided by the Board that rather than ordering the books and then collectin from everyone, that we ask you to pay for the books prior to their purchase. Please complete the order form below and return to Vicki Ballantyne before March 1. Books when they are received will be distribu ed to you through your individual club.

Vicki Ballantyne, Treasurer
538 West Street
Severna Park, Maryland 21146

I am enclosing a check in the amount of \$ _____ (made payable to Potomac Bonsai Association) for the purchase of _____ Satsuski azalea book(s) by Joh Naka.

(Name) _____

(Address) _____

(Phone) _____

(Club affiliation) _____