

POTOMAC
BONSAI
ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

ISSN 0160-9521



*Techniques for keeping
indoor bonsai healthy*

PRUNING CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

John Yoshio Naka

To grow an indoor bonsai takes skill and care beyond selecting a suitable plant. The reasons why the more traditional bonsai plants die after being kept indoors for any length of time is that lacking are such natural elements as necessary light, air circulation, humidity and, of course, rain and dew.

However, once a suitable plant has been selected that will thrive under most indoor conditions, satisfactory results can be achieved, especially with pruning and

trimming. If not properly pruned, the tree will lose compactness, which is very important for a bonsai. Keeping it too bushy will cause it to lose its leaves and some of the small center branches. If the tree becomes too weakened, it will be more susceptible to diseases and insects. More care and caution are needed to maintain an indoor bonsai in a healthy condition.

The following are guidelines on pruning and trimming to shape a bonsai and keep it healthy indoors.

See page 3

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Washington, D.C. 20002

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- 79 GARDENING GUIDE (*the basic Handbook*)
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- 23 MULCHES
- 28 PRUNING
- 24 PROPAGATION
- 77 NATURAL GARDENING HANDBOOK
- 89 GARDENING WITHOUT PESTS
- 34 BIOLOGICAL CONTROL OF PLANT PESTS
- 73 WEED CONTROL

SPECIALTY PLANTS AND GARDENS

- 85 CONTAINER GARDENING (*outdoors*)
- 61 GARDENING IN THE SHADE
- 38 GARDENING WITH WILD FLOWERS
- 91 ROCK GARDENS
- 84 SMALL GARDENS FOR SMALL SPACES
- 48 ROSES
- 36 TRAINED AND SCULPTURED PLANTS
- 86 GROUND COVERS AND VINES
- 74 ANNUALS
- 87 PERENNIALS AND THEIR USES
- 56 SUMMER FLOWERS FOR CONTINUING BLOOM
- 31 BULBS
- 59 FERNS

BONSAI, JAPANESE GARDENS

- 13 DWARFED POTTED TREES: THE BONSAI OF JAPAN
- 51 BONSAI: SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
- 81 BONSAI FOR INDOORS
- 37 JAPANESE GARDENS AND MINIATURE LANDSCAPES

TREES AND SHRUBS

- 22 BROAD-LEAVED EVERGREENS
- 60 CONIFERS (*the tall*)
- 47 DWARF CONIFERS
- 25 100 FINEST TREES AND SHRUBS
- 44 FLOWERING SHRUBS
- 41 FLOWERING TREES

- 83 NURSERY SOURCE GUIDE
- 67 FRUIT TREES AND SHRUBS
- 66 RHODODENDRONS AND THEIR RELATIVES
- 65 TREE AND SHRUB FORMS—THEIR LANDSCAPE USE

HERBS, VEGETABLES, ARTS, CRAFTS

- 27 HANDBOOK ON HERBS
- 68 HERBS AND THEIR ORNAMENTAL USES
- 57 JAPANESE HERBS AND THEIR USES
- 69 THE HOME VEGETABLE GARDEN
- 80 DESIGNING WITH FLOWERS
- 76 DRIED FLOWER DESIGNS
- 46 DYE PLANTS AND DYEING
- 72 NATURAL PLANT DYEING
- 58 MINIATURE GARDENS (*sink and trough gardens*)
- 78 TERRARIUMS

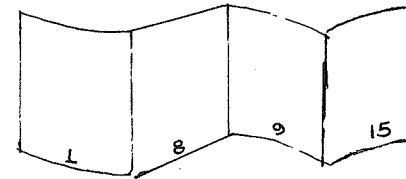
INDOOR GARDENING

- 70 HOUSE PLANT PRIMER
- 90 HOUSE PLANTS
- 62 GARDENING UNDER ARTIFICIAL LIGHT
- 42 GREENHOUSE HANDBOOK FOR THE AMATEUR
- 53 AFRICAN-VIOLETS AND THEIR RELATIVES
- 81 BONSAI FOR INDOORS
- 54 ORCHIDS
- 43 SUCCULENTS

A BUNDLE OF OTHERS

- 64 AMERICAN GARDENS—A TRAVELER'S GUIDE
- 75 BREEDING PLANTS FOR HOME AND GARDEN
- 49 CREATIVE IDEAS IN GARDEN DESIGN
- 45 GARDEN STRUCTURES
- 82 THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE HOME GARDENER
- 88 COMMUNITY GARDENING
- 55 ORIGINS OF AMERICAN HORTICULTURE (*America's Garden Heritage*)

Editor's Comment's : This month's lead article, "Pruning Can Make The Difference", is arranged so that you can remove pages 1, 8, 9 and 15, tape them together and hang them in a prominent place so that you can constantly refresh your memory.



I ran across the article in the handbook "Bonsai for Indoors" while researching indoor bonsai. The steps presented in the article are so fundamental in the development and maintenance of both indoor and outdoor bonsai that every successful bonsai enthusiast should commit them to memory. In my case, my mind isn't that nimble anymore and I need to have the techniques hanging over my workbench as handy reminders.

Both John Yoshio Naka, the author of the article, and Mr. Frederick McGourty, the editor of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden Record Plants & Gardens, very kindly and generously gave permission to reprint the feature article.

John Yoshio Naka is world-rekowned as a leading bonsai master and gifted teacher. The mark of a gifted teacher is the ease with which he presents the subject. This point is clearly demonstrated in his article "Pruning Can Make the Difference", - the subject matter is clear, concise and comprehensive.

John Naka's ability to easily communicate the principles and methods for growing and styling bonsai are all too obvious in his excellent book "Bonsai Techniques". This book is a "must" for every aspiring bonsaist. Whenever I revisit the pages of "Bonsai Techniques", I find subjects covered which I had forgotten about only to later rediscover them in other articles. John's latest book, "Bonsai Techniques for Satsuki" which he coauthored with Richard K. Ota and Kenko Rokkaku, has been ordered by me and I'm looking forward to its arrival.

John Yoshio Naka will be the headliner of the International Bonsai Convention scheduled for Atlanta, Georgia, from 9 through 12 July 1981. See the flyer in last month's PBA Newsletter. If you can see your way clear, by all means go to see and hear John and the other bonsai experts perform.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden Record Plants & Gardens is an outstanding series of garden and horticultural handbooks. They are comprehensive and up-to-date in subject coverage and best of all, very inexpensive. Page 2 facing this page is a listing of the available handbooks, their prices and how they may be ordered. My handbooks come in on a regular, first-printing basis since this is part of becoming a member of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Membership includes a number of other benefits such as occasional plant and "seed" dividends and popular courses at reduced rates. Every Spring, the courses include one-full-day beginner, intermediate or advanced bonsai classes and workshops available at reduced rates for beginners.

Mr. Frederick McGourty, the editor of Brooklyn Botanic Garden Record Plants & Gardens, and his staff do an outstanding job of selecting topics for coverage and publishing the information at such inexpensive prices.

Price of each Handbook \$1.95 plus 60¢ postage and handling for the first Handbook and 10¢ for each additional Handbook. Order by name and number. Make checks payable to Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11225. For latest brochure send us a postcard.

CARE of BONSAI TOOLS

by John Patrick

INTRODUCTION - Routine care and maintenance is essential if you want the best performance from your bonsai tools. During normal use of your tools, tree sap, pitch and dirt accumulate on the blades; the cutting edges get nicked; and rust forms from the accumulation of moisture in the sap and dirt. As the cutting edges become dull, greater pressure is required to make a cut. The cuts are not clean, and tearing and crushing occurs, damaging your trees. Severe damage to your cutters can also occur. The combined increase in cutting pressure, dulled edges and accumulated dirt causes the blades to separate. The wedging pressure is high enough to break the tip of your branch and root cutters. Therefore, good tool care should be practiced.

TOOL CARE RECOMMENDATIONS - A few simple rules, if followed, will increase the life of your tools, expand the time between sharpening and make your hobby more enjoyable. They are:

1. Examine your tools before and after using and look for bent tips on scissors, nicked cutting edges, dirt accumulations and rust. If any of these conditions exist, correct them before using the tool.
2. Don't use your branch or root cutters when cutting roots in a dirt ball. Sand and small stones will nick or break the cutting edge. Clean the dirt off the roots or use a pruning shears. The pruning shears will take the punishment and are a lot easier to restore.
3. Don't drop your tools. You will either bend or break the cutting tip. This is the most common cause of tool tip failure.
4. Don't overload your tool. Use a larger cutter or make your cut in small easy steps.
5. Protect the tips and cutting edges of your tools when not in use in storing them separately in a pocketed cloth roll or compartmented tool kit.

The above article written and illustrated by John Patrick was written and first appeared in New Orleans Bonsai, a publication of the Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society. Since then it has been reprinted in Golden Statements published by the Golden State Bonsai Federation and Florida Bonsai published by Bonsai Societies of Florida Incorporated, which is a tribute to the excellence of the article. With Spring upon us, it behooves everyone to have the bonsai tools in tip-top condition. Mr. Patrick's article is explicit enough to enable you to be a do-it-yourselfer.
Thanks John Patrick for the most beneficial article.

MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR TOOL RESTORATION - Pruning and cutting tools can be restored to good working condition by cleaning, sharpening and oiling. The materials required are listed below and are easy to obtain.

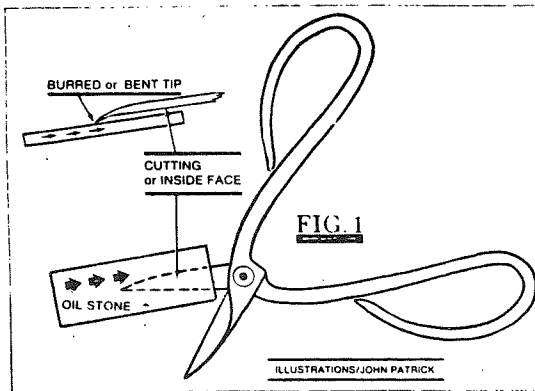
Scotchbrite
Emery paper - grit #320 or 400
Emery paper - grit #240
Lubricating oil - light weight #10 non-detergent motor oil
Oil stone - natural Arkansas stone - Washita grade preferred
Paper towels

CLEANING OF TOOLS - Cleaning of tools after use is relatively simple if you have carried out a routine care program. The first step is to wipe the tools clean of all dirt and grit. Next, the tree sap that remains can be removed by wiping the cutting blades with a damp paper towel. Pitch from conifers may have to be removed with turpentine. When stubborn stains or light rusting exists, rub the blades with a damp Scotchbright pad. To remove severe rusting, use #320 or #400 grit emery paper. Rub all rust, dirt and sap off with the cutting tool in a closed position first. Do this to protect your fingers from the cutting edges and tips.

You will probably find it easier to work if you support the tool on a solid surface. When all the exterior rust and sap is removed, open the blades and clean the inside faces. To remove rust from the inside face of scissor type tools, lay the emery paper on a flat surface and rub the inside of the blade while holding it flat on the emery paper. When all of the tool surfaces are bright, wipe off all the cleaning dust and grit. Oil the tool all over with machine oil. Make sure to oil the pivot joint, using a generous amount of oil. Exercise the joint to drive out any accumulated dirt and old lubricant. This is important on riveted type joints. It will prevent rusting and reduce wear. Wipe off the excess oil with a paper towel. Now your tools are ready for sharpening or storage.

SHARPENING TOOLS - There are two types of bonsai tools, each requiring a different approach to sharpening: those with a scissors cutting action, e.g., trimming scissors and pruning shears, and those with a mandible (biting) action, e.g., branch, knuckle and root cutters.

DEBURRING SCISSORS TYPES - To sharpen scissors, first check the blade tips and edges for burrs on the inside face. They should be removed before sharpening. To remove the burrs, put a small amount of honing oil on the stone. I use a light machine oil mixed with an equal amount of kerosene for honing. The lubricant is used to carry away the metal particles removed during the stoning process. Now open the scissors and lay the stone flat on the inside of the blade (fig. 1). Push the stone over the blade, making sure the stone remains flat, until the burr is removed. Turn the scissors over and stone the opposite inside face, if necessary. Excessive or unnecessary stoning will eventually deform the cutting faces.

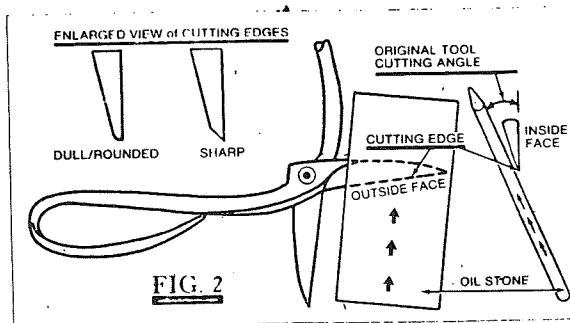


Depending upon the size and shape of the oil stone and your adeptness in handling the stone and tool to be deburred or sharpened, you may prefer to reverse the process of moving the stone over the fixed tool to fixing the stone and moving the tool over the stone. With a little practice on your part, you can determine which is best for you.

SHARPENING SCISSORS TYPES - To sharpen the scissors type tools, open the blades with the outside face up and the cutting edge toward you. Support the scissors firmly

on a bench. Place the oil stone over the outside face of the blade (fig 2), at an angle equal to the original tool cutting angle. Cutting angles may differ, depending upon the type of cutter and its manufacturer. Therefore, it is important to maintain the original cutting angle of each different tool as closely as possible. Push the oilstone, in the direction of the arrows shown in Figure 2, over the cutting edge until all nicks are removed.

Check the cutting edge by examining under a bright light. If the cutting edge is dull (fig. 2a), you will see a highlight reflection of light off the cutting edge. If you gently pull your finger over the edge, it will slip with no drag. The sharp cutter (fig.2b) will not reflect a highlight, and if you lightly pull your finger over the edge, you will feel some drag. Caution:



Don't pull or slide your finger along the cutting edge! If the edge condition is as described for Fig. 2b, your blade should be sharp. Turn the scissors over and proceed to sharpen the other blade. If the blade is dull, continue the stoning process as described. Only three or four strokes of the stone should be necessary. Make sure you hold the stone at the same angle for each stroke. Changing the cutting angle while stroking the stone will continue rounding the edge. When you complete the sharpening of both blades, wipe off all the stoning grit, oil the tool, and wipe off all excess oil with a clean paper towel. Rub the excess oil over all of the tool in the process of wiping it. The fine coating of oil remaining will help protect the tool from rusting.

If your pruning shear (fig. 3) has only one cutting blade, sharpen it as described above. The hook or anvil blade should be cleaned and examined for burrs. Remove the burrs from the inside face as described above in figure 1. If the hook face is not nicked, leave it alone. If it is nicked, stone the anvil face (fig. 3) until the nick is removed. Wipe the shears clean and oil.



Shoen Bonsai

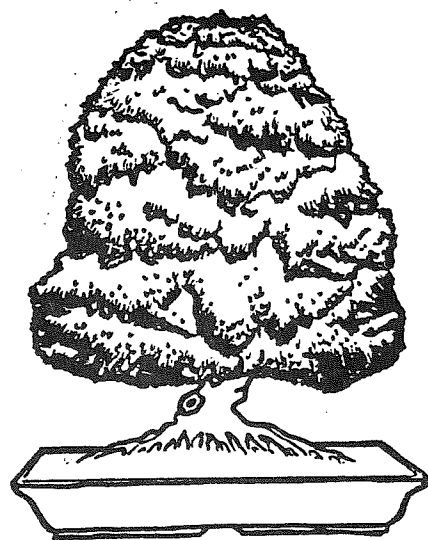
SHOEN BONSAI & JAPANESE GARDEN
601 E. Gude Dr.
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FOR SALE !!

Spring Bonsai Starter Seedlings

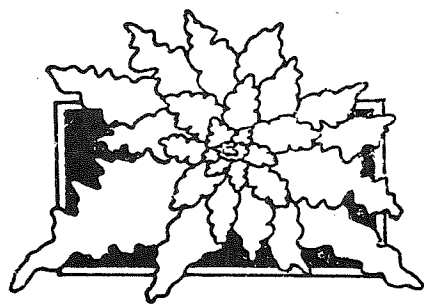
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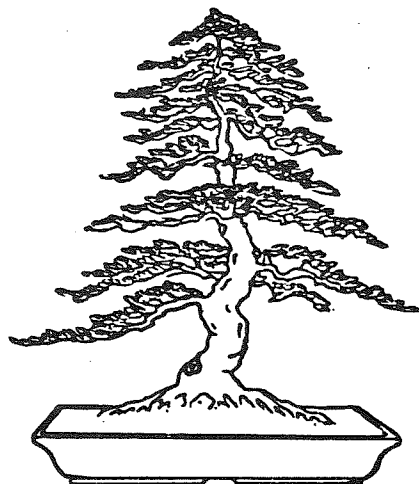


This bonsai has reached a very bushy stage and none of the details such as the trunk, branches or a definite apex can be seen. Eventually the center of the tree will die out.

Prune and trim to expose the trunk and branches. Indicate a definite apex and create a triangular outline of the tree. This will keep the inside branches healthy and compact.



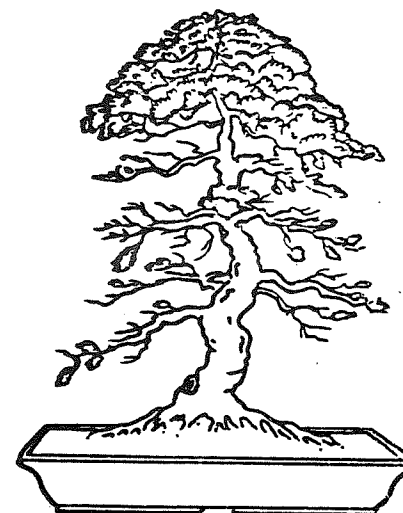
Prune all excess branches so they do not overlap any other branches when viewed from the top. Each branch should be placed in a different direction so it will receive light. This arrangement will also give the bonsai depth.



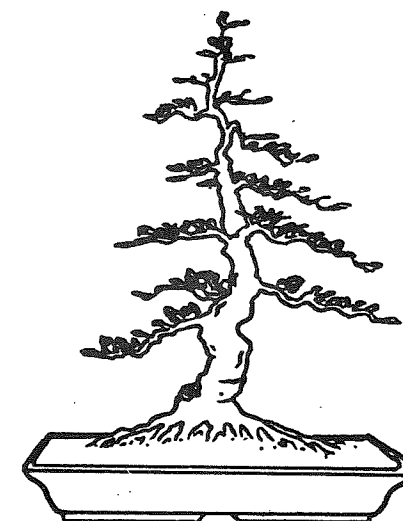
All drawings by J. Y. Naka



If the plant is lopsided due to uneven light, the stronger side must be drastically pruned back to the same structure as the weaker side. The weaker side should be pruned, too, especially all the dead branches. Be sure to rotate the plant evenly after this.



All sides of tree must be rotated to receive either the sunlight or artificial light. If kept in one position too long, the side receiving the light will get bushy and the opposite side will become weak and straggly.



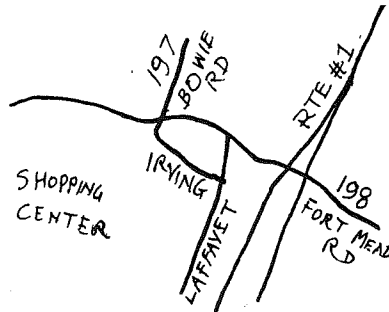
Without regular pruning the tree will become top heavy, causing the interior branches to die back and, due to leggy growth, it will assume a bulky appearance.

PBA Annual Show & Meeting & Dues

It's that time of year again. The April gala event is the PBA ANNUAL SHOW to be held on 25-26 April at the U.S. National Arboretum from 10 AM to 5:00 PM in the Administration Building. At 5:30 PM the PBA Annual meeting will be held to vote on the two PBA by-laws changes and elect the next year's Officers of PBA. To vote - ALL MEMBERS WILL HAVE TO HAVE PAID THEIR ANNUAL DUES. The business part of the PBA Annual Meeting will be followed by refreshments just like last year's. Members can bring a companion of their choice to attend the follow-on refreshment event but not vote.

Whatever you do do, don't forget to pay your dues - since that's what in part supports this Newsletter, - as bad as it may be at times.

Walter Schmidt's Pre-Auction Sale



Walter Schmidt came up with the following very nice and interesting offer:

"Having more items than I could possibly put on auction at the PBA Annual Auction at Behnke's Nursery on 30 May, I will have a Pre-Auction Sale of finished, started and potential bonsai. THIS WILL BE FOR PBA MEMBERS ONLY. It will be on Saturday, April 11th, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the Schmidt premises, 124 Irving St., Laurel, MD, just off the junction of Rtes 198 and 197. FIXED BARGAIN PRICES.

Bonsai Classes & Workshops

Mr. Robert Dreschler, Curator of the National Bonsai Collection, will be conducting classes and workshops at the U.S. National Arboretum as follows:
Bonsai Refinement Workshops (free) Prerequisites required.
Bonsai Class for Beginners (\$20)

Telephone (202) 472-9279 for further information.

Classes are scheduled throughout the month of April 1981.

JIU-SAN BONSAI

THE COMPLETE BONSAI SHOP

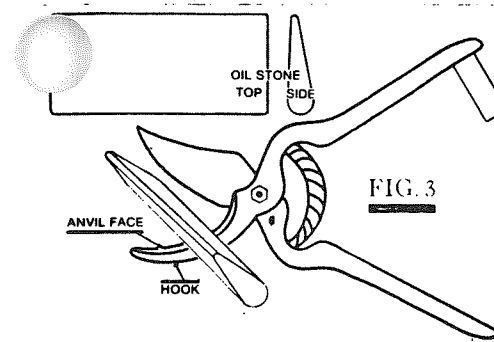
One of the East's largest selections of bonsai containers, tools, books—including those printed in Japan (BONSAI MASTERPIECES). Rare plants, indoor-outdoor bonsai & saikei, flower stones, pre-bonsai, soils, figurines, wire, stands.

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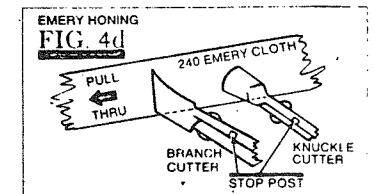
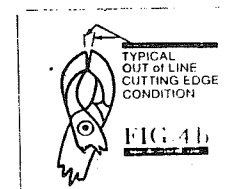
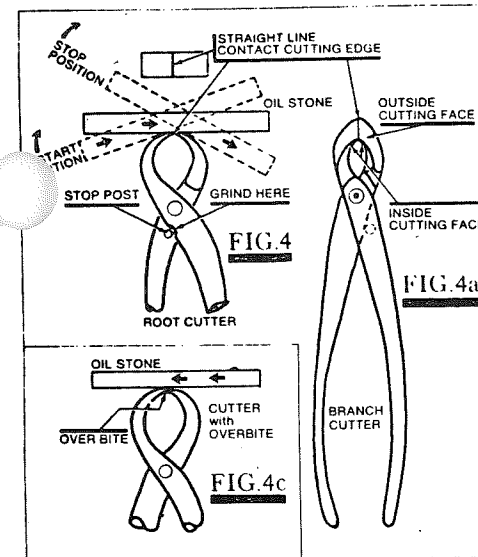
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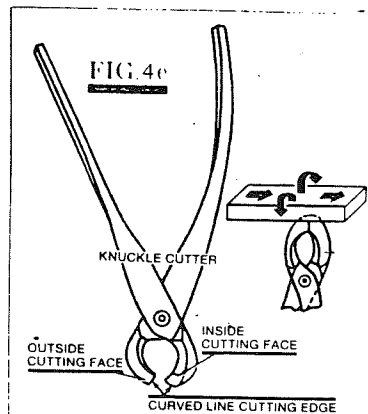


SHARPENING THE MANDIBLE TYPES - The mandible type cutters have a biting action similar to your teeth. The cutting edges when closed should be in a straight line (figs. 4, 4a) or curved line contact as fig 4e. If they are not in line contact, when you cut a branch or root, the cut will be incomplete or stringy. The first thing to do is clean the cutter as described under cleaning of tools. Then check for out of line contact (fig. 4b) by holding the cutter up to the light in a closed position. If any light shows through the cutting edges are out of line contact.

This technique can also be used to check for nicks in the cutting edge. Sharpening generally will not correct out of line and nicked conditions. To line up the cutting edges and remove small nicks, place a six inch strip of #240 grit emery cloth about one and one-half times the width of the cutting edge (fig. 4d) between the cutting edges. With a very light pressure on the cutter jaws, pull the emery cloth through to hone the cutting edges. Do this several times then turn the emery cloth over so it is facing the opposite cutting edge and pull it through several times. Repeat this process until the nicks are removed and the cutting edges are in line.



If only one cutting edge is nicked and the line contact is good, only the nicked edge has to be emery cloth honed. Any time this process is performed, the tool will have to be sharpened. In addition, after this process has been performed, the cutting edges may not close completely, because of the stop post on the handle of the cutter (see figures 4 and 4d). If this condition occurs, grind a small spot (fig. 4) off the cutter handle until you get cutting edge contact. Do not exceed a paper thickness clearance (three thousandths of an inch) between the stop post and the handle. Too much clearance will allow excessive pressure on the cutting blade which may cause cutting edge failure.



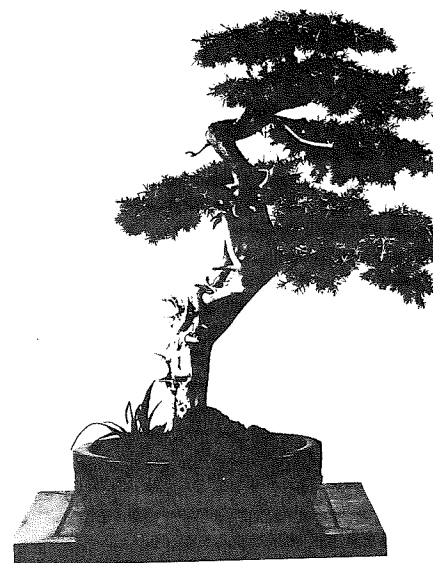
To sharpen the mandible type tool, place the cutter in a closed position on a bench with the outside face up. Place the oil stone on the outside face of the cutter and slide the stone over the cutting face and all along the curved cutting edge (fig. 4e). Repeat the stoning motion until both edges are sharp. Don't worry about the cutting angles of the tool. It's established by the inside cutting faces, q.v. figures 4a and 4c. If one cutting edge is still flat from the emery cloth honing process, open the cutter and continue to sharpen that edge only. This should be done with care in order to maintain a line cutting edge contact and prevent the condition shown in figure 4b. Both cutting edges the mandible type cutter must be sharp. If one edge is dull, it will act as an anvil and will not give a clean cut. Generally, root, knuckle and branch cutters have an overbite (fig. 4c). The overbite is normal for mandible type cutters, and proper sharpening will maintain the overbite.

With the cutters in a closed position, sharpen the exposed edge in the direction against the overbite. The under cutter will not sharpen. Open the cutter and stone the under cutting edge, taking care to maintain the line cutting contact.

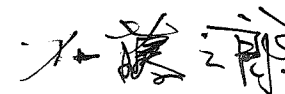
GENERAL COMMENTS - A word of caution. Don't try to sharpen your bonsai tools with an electric bench-grinder. The tools are too light in weight to dissipate the heat generated during grinding. The excessive heat will take the hardness out of the blade rendering it useless. If your tool is so bad that it requires bench grinding, take it to an experienced tool sharpener, who has special grinders and the expertise to do the job properly.

When you have finished sharpening your tools, clean your oil stone with a little oil to help wipe away the particles of metal. Add a few drops of clean oil to the surface of the stone and store it covered. These few simple steps will help retain the sharpness of grit, keep the surface flat, and prevent glazing.

WANTED!



No. 10. NEEDLE JUNIPER (Tosho)
Juniperus rigida Height: 21-1/2" (1-1/2")
 Container: Red, unglazed, round, 12-1/2" x 3-1/4"
 This bonsai expresses the very distinct characteristics of the old needle junipers. Often trees in rocky mountainous areas form an unusual trunk as seen here. The companion plant at the base of the trunk creates a dynamic balance to the bonsai. Thirty years in training from a collected tree.
 Donor: Mr. Michio Nagai



THE WHEREABOUTS OR RETURN of Needle Juniper, No. 10 of the National Bonsai Collection. The Tuesday, March 17 th, edition of The Washington Post reported: "For the second time in five years, a gnarled 105-year-old bonsai tree, part of Japan's \$4-million bicentennial gift to the United States of 53 bonsai, has been stolen from from the National Arboretum. ".....So, despite elaborate but admittedly erratic security measures after it was first stolen in 1976, the needle juniper vanished once more from the halls of the arboretum sometime Thursday night or early Friday morning.

"The needle juniper, which normally grows to a height of 30 to 40 feet, was stolen five years ago by a suburban plant lover who thought it was only worth \$20. It was recovered when the young man with a green but sticky thumb was convinced by his girlfriend that it was exceedingly valuable. He left it anonymously on the steps of the arboretum, but was later arrested anyway and eventually pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge.

"The missing juniper was first discovered in Japan about 30 years ago, clinging to some crag in a very exposed and windswept location. Already naturally stunted by nature, it was then transplanted, its age estimated at 70 years and trained to mimic in miniature its larger relatives...."

A telephone call to Bob Dreschler, the Curator of the National Bonsai Collection, today, Wednesday March 18th, verified the article above and that no clues or leads had as yet been uncovered. The worst that could have happened is that a repeat of the previous theft occurred and some Knucklehead who doesn't know the first thing about caring for the tree will wind up killing it. The second worst thing is that it was pirated to be put in someone's private collection. For the plant's sake, I hope that whoever lifted it and has it, takes good care of it, but I wish the person who took it and the person who has it all the lousiest luck and ill-health imaginable.

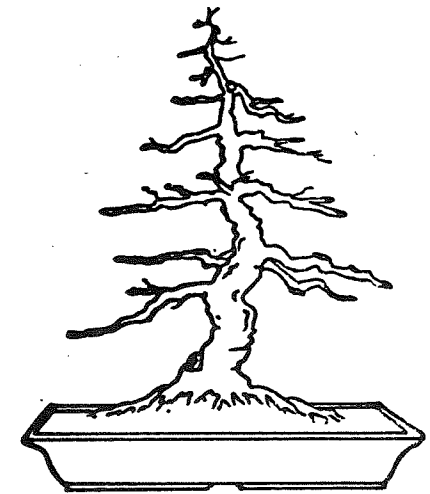
*Picture and caption from the National Bonsai Collection Guidebook, Symmes Systems, 1977.

CLUB CALENDAR

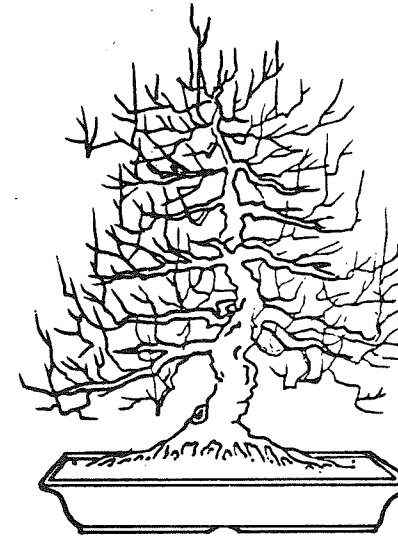
- April 4 Collecting trip, see March issue of Newsletter. ANNAPOLIS
Saturday (301) 263-3995 and BROOKSIDE (301) 299-6194.
- April 5 Repotting session 2:00 PM Clearwater Nature Center
Sunday ANNAPOLIS (301) 423-8230.
- April 11 Styling demonstration and repotting workshop. Gulf Branch
Saturday Nature Center 10:00 AM. Bring trees and tools plus soil
and pots. NORTHERN VIRGINIA BONSAI SOCIETY (703) 521-0674.
- April 12 Annual meeting and movie. Cylburn Mansion 2:00 PM general workshop
Sunday 3:00 PM general meeting. BALTIMORE BONSAI CLUB (301) 922-9310
- April 16 Tree critique and selection of bonsai for PBA Spring Show.
Thursday National Audubon Society, Main Building, 7:30 PM. Bring trees for
Brookside entry in PBA Spring Show on 25-26 April at the National
Arboretum. Let's see some new trees this year!! All members are
encouraged to bring at least one tree - if not a finished bonsai,
for the show, then a bonsai-in-training for styling advice and
wholesome criticism. BROOKSIDE (301) 299-6194.
- April 18 Styling workshop. National Arboretum 2:00 PM. Members are urged to
Saturday bring trees collected in previous years. There will also be trees for
purchase. WASHINGTON (202) 583-2676
- April 21 Styling and refinement workshop. St. Margaret's Church 7:30 PM.
Tuesday Please bring trees in all stages of training to work on. Both the
beginning plans of training, and the last stages of grooming for
display will be shown and discussed. Many trees are needed for the
exchange of ideas. ANNAPOLIS (301) 263-3995
- April 24 ,April 25 PBA Annual Show and Annual Meeting at the U.S.
Saturday ,Sunday National Arboretum - see article elsewhere in this issue.
- May 9 Reffe (suction) sneak preview - see article elsewhere on Walter
Saturday Schmidt. There will be a picnic-workshop at Walter Schmidt's home.
All members will participate in the construction of a large juniper
forest planting! This will be an especially good learning process for
new members - be sure to attend. Besides, the Schmidt Collection of
Bonsai is well worth the trip. BROOKSIDE (301) 299-194

If you plan to attend a meeting other than your parent club's meeting, it is recommended to telephone the number listed above to confirm the arrangements. Because of any of a number of reasons the schedule above can be changed. To be further on the safe side you can telephone as early as possible to let the club know that you expect to attend and then request that you be advised of any schedule changes.

The heavy top should be cut back drastically by removing the long and large branches, and leaving only the small and short ones. Prune back to original apex. Treat any large scars with sealing compound. The lowest branch should be the longest and the largest in diameter. Trim the small branches and cut back any dead ones.



Leave all fresh growth alone until the tree establishes strength.



Then shape it by trimming and wiring. If there is plenty of growth growing sideways, then any growth pointing downwards or upwards should be removed. If not they should all be wired and trained to go sideways to form a flat plane.

