

VOL. 21 NO. 6 JUNE 1991

POTOMAC
BONSAI
ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

ISSN 0160-9521



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

This Newsletter will be put in the bulk mailing section at Merrifield Post Office, Northern Virginia, on 17 July, 1991.

This Newsletter should list events for August and September. During the summer months a number of PBA clubs or societies forego monthly meetings either entirely or make arrangements for workshops and get-togethers. At the time of writing this Newsletter, the following list of events covers all that were known to the editor at that time. Readers interested in other club/societies activities can telephone the following numbers:

Baltimore - (301) 823-0863
 Brookside - (301) 365-7621
 Chesapeake - Steve Choi at (301) 266-7366
 or (202) 261-8131
 Kiyomizu - (301) 423-8230
 Mei-Hwa Penjing - (301) 390-6687
 Washington - (202) 583-2676

3 through 11 August

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. VISITING EXHIBIT
by Mei-Hwa Penjing Society, Silver Spring, Maryland.

10 August Saturday

NORTHERN VIRGINIA (703) 765-7223. Green Spring Horticulture Center at 10:00 a.m. BONSAI MAINTENANCE BY Lynn Perry Alstadt. Also: Selection of trees for August 31 through September 8 Northern Virginia Visiting Exhibit at the

PBA NEWSLETTER Published by the Potomac Bonsai Association, Inc. (PBA), a non-profit organization, in the interests of its affiliate member clubs and societies.

SUBSCRIPTIONS PBA Member Clubs/Societies: Annual subscription is included in the membership dues paid to the PBA Club or Society of your choice. Telephone numbers of points of contact for information about any member club or society and its annual dues, are listed under the "Calendar of Events" section of this Newsletter.

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ADVERTISEMENTS and/or ARTICLES Please send to the editor.
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PRESIDENT: Russ Kinerson; FIRST VICE PRESIDENT: Chris Yeapanis; EDUCATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT: Steve Choi; SECRETARY: Julie Walker; TREASURER: Jerry Antel, Jr.; PUBLIC RELATIONS: Tony Meyer (301) 654-1854; MEMBERSHIP: Cy Mill.

**POTOMAC BONSAI ASSOCIATION, INC.
 % U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM
 3501 NEW YORK AVE. NE
 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002**

**NON-PROFIT ORG.
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**TIME
 CRITICAL
 INFO**

Julie & Jane Koetsch
 6709 Caneel Court,
 Springfield, VA 22152

U.S. National Arboretum.

11 August Sunday

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. PUBLIC BONSAI DEMONSTRATION in the Yuji Yoshimura Bonsai Center at 1:30 p.m. FREE! Each attendee gets one free ticket for the raffle of the demonstration tree.

25 August Sunday

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. PUBLIC BONSAI DEMONSTRATION in the Yuji Yoshimura Bonsai Center at 1:30 p.m. FREE! Each attendee gets one free ticket for the raffle of the demonstration tree.

31 August through 8 September

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. VISITING BONSAI EXHIBIT by the Northern Virginia Bonsai Society.

8 September Sunday

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. PUBLIC BONSAI DEMONSTRATION in the Yuji Yoshimura Bonsai Center at 1:30 p.m. FREE! Each attendee gets one free ticket for the raffle of the demonstration tree.

11 September Wednesday

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. BONSAI REFINEMENT WORKSHOP. Bring your own bonsai, tools, and equipment. Attendees must have taken beginners' classes or worked with bonsai for two years. Limited to ten persons. Charge: \$10.00 for FONA members, \$12.00 for others. Make the check payable to Friends of the National arboretum and send to the Education Department, U.S. National Arboretum, 3501 New York Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002. Workshop is held under the auspices of FONA and the National Arboretum. Instructors: Dan Chiplus and Bob Drechsler.

14 September Saturday

NORTHERN VIRGINIA (703) 765-7223. Green Spring Horticulture Center at 10:00 a.m. SUCSESSES & FAILURES - what did and didn't work with trees from previous Northern Virginia and PBA workshops.

Potomac Bonsai Association



**Fall Symposium '91
US National Arboretum
Sept. 28-29**

Marion Gyllenswan ● Larry Jackel ● Roy Nagatoshi ● Steve Pilacik

**Registration Info: PBA Symposium
T Holden/4337 Stream Bed Way/Alexandria VA 22306**

22 September Sunday

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM (202) 475-4815. PUBLIC BONSAI DEMONSTRATION in the Yuji Yoshimura Bonsai Center at 1:30 p.m. FREE! Each attendee gets one free ticket for the raffle of the demonstration tree.

28 and 29 September

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM
PBA FALL SYMPOSIUM

For more information either contact your club/society officers or:

Trisha Holden
4337 Stream Bed Way
Alexandria, VA 22306 Tel: (703) 660-9318

BONSAI CLASSES

31 August and 28 September

Wolf Trap Nursery (703) 759-4244. FREE! See advertisement in this Newsletter.

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS!!!

Cy Mill has moved. Please refer all correspondence and telephone calls to the following:

Cy Mill
10300 Bushman Drive #111
Oakton, VA 22124

Tel:(703) 242-2209

NOTICE!

During the PBA Auction held on May 25, 1991, a tree (auction item #96) was auctioned off for \$160. The tree was a Trident Maple in a brown pot. It was about 16 to 20 inches tall. There was a small boxwood in front of the tree. When the successful bidder went to pay for the tree, it had disappeared.

PBA hopes that someone accidentally picked up the tree and took it home.

If anyone knows the whereabouts of this tree, please contact Jerry Antel at (301) 320-5251.

BROOKSIDE CHAPTER PBA

BENEFIT

BONSAI

AUCTION

FOR

NATIONAL BONSAI FOUNDATION

NORTH CHEVY CHASE RECREATION CENTER

7:30 P.M. THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 19TH

12 OUTSTANDING BONSAI

by

JONAS KOLKER

DONATED BY HIS WIFE

(Please see next page)

PLUS Other donated, finished bonsai.
Pre-bonsai material
Accent plants
Tools
Pots
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and Other items related to bonsai culture.

DIRECTIONS: "Chevy Chase Recreation Center" is off of Jones Bridge Road between Wisconsin and Connecticut Avenues. Enter at the brown wooden sign.

From the Beltway: Exit at the Connecticut Ave.-Chevy Chase-Kensington Exit heading to Chevy Chase and the District. At the first traffic light, Jones Bridge Road, turn right. In less than a 1/4-mile enter at the brown wooden sign "Chevy Chase Recreation Center."

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**POST OFFICE AUTHORIZES
SPECIAL CANCELLATION
FOR PBA SYMPOSIUM**

Not only if your're a bonsai nut but also a stamp collecting enthusiast (philatelist) the good news is that arrangements have been made for a pictorial cancellation having a bonsai motif, with the U.S. Postal Service. There will be a U.S. Post Office van on site at the PBA Symposium on 28 September. The postal clerk in the van will cancel stamped envelopes which will be given, one each to the symposium attendees, free of charge. Anyone wishing to obtain more cancelled envelopes need only purchase the additional postage stamps. Likewise those wishing to mail any envelopes with the cancellations need give the postal clerk envelopes that have been addressed.

Jerry Antel, Jr.

**BONSAI CLUBS of FLORIDA
FALL CONVENTION**

The following note was received:

June 1991

Dear Bonsai Club President,

The advertisement for the Bonsai Societies of Florida's fall convention, October 10 - 13, 1991, in Naples, has a "typo" in it. This ad is appearing in the current ABS Journal and BCI magazine.

It should read: Registration: Frank Dieffenwierth, 4535 3rd Avenue NW, Naples FL 33999.

We hope you will be able to notify your members at a meeting before any are inconvenienced by this error.

Most sincerely, Miriam Berninger, 2nd VP BSF
Co-Chr. Convention

**VAGHN BANTING
\$ BALD CYPRESS**

The April '91 Newsletter's Calendar of Events listed for 8 June, a Major Bonsai Demonstration by Vaughn Banting of the Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society to be given at the U.S. National Arboretum. The subject was a lecture/demonstration using Bald Cypress as the plant material. Those who attended were well-rewarded for Vaughn certainly gave a superb lecture/demonstration.

Dan Chiplis, Assistant to the Curator of the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection, introduced Vaughn and noted that this event was one of two major demonstrations scheduled for this year. Vaughn's father was a nurseryman and this gave Vaughn a chance to learn from his father when he had a miniature nursery during his adolescent years. Vaughn majored in horticulture at Louisiana State University and now operates a landscaping business in New Orleans.

Vaughn, in creating bonsai, likes to work with deciduous material such as that native to Louisiana, - i.e. water elms and red maple. Vaughn has two bonsai in the National Collection. He also is a great innovator in styling bald cypress bonsai where he created the "Flat Top Style" which is more in harmony with the way the trees grow in nature.

The lecture/demonstration began with Vaughn commenting that he was happy to be here in the Washington, D.C., area where it wasn't raining. At the time of his visit, New Orleans had been inundated with record rainfall for many days.

The task which Vaughn set for himself was to create a forest planting of Bald cypress. He noted that he has never had the opportunity to create a forest planting of bald cypress for his own collection. Indeed, he had no problem relative to availability of material. Dan Chiplus had grown a seemingly inexhaustible supply of Bald cypress from seeds which came from North Carolina. It was just what one needs to do a forest,- trees of different heights and trunk calibers.

Vaughn gave his succinct description of what bonsai is:- bonsai is to make a replica of what is beautiful and harmonious in nature. He suggested that it would be an interesting accomplishment to some if you could dwarf an elephant small enough that you could hold it in your hand. Bonsai lets you do this with trees and you can hold a miniature of a forest giant in the palm of your hand.

As for styling a tree,- use the trunk as a guideline. Style the tree according to the way it grows and naturally styles itself. Bald cypress have a genetic style such that one might think that they all were automatically made from a punch card feeding the tree's growth mechanism. When Bald cypress are young they grow into a conical shape, but when they have aged and reach their maximum heights, the central leader goes out in a lateral direction. The lower branches then die and you then see the "flat top" look characteristic of the mature Bald cypress in the swamp.

The trunks of the California redwood remind Vaughn of Bald cypress and hence one can simulate a redwood with a Bald cypress. In a forest of redwoods as in any forest the solar collectors are on top of the tree where maximum energy can be gathered from the sunlight.

In creating bonsai, Vaughn follows the classical approach as taught by John Naka.

One cannot get a whole forest in a pot such that the

viewer can stand in the middle of the pot to be surrounded by the trees. Hence a bonsai forest is created so that the viewer has the impression of looking at the forest from outside of the forest. Also since the size of the pot or tray limits the number of trees,- one might consider the bonsai forest representative of a grove of trees left standing after a farmer has cleared the land for plowing and planting.

Forest planting is the most complicated style. In creating a forest planting, one must strive to make it look natural with a randomness that is nature's trademark. One must try to escape the Western influence where nature is forced to look styled such as in formal European gardens where plants have been espaliered and trimmed as topiary and where trees and shrubs are all uniformly shaped and sized. The Japanese study nature to learn what caused a certain situation to exist and then they try to copy it.

There are three factors that one uses to create the natural, random appearance:

Different tree heights

Different thicknesses of trunks.

Number of trees

Concerning the number of trees one uses outside of the fact that most of the time many of us can only muster a small number for the job, the generally accepted rule is that below 9 or thirteen trees, one should only use odd numbers. When one uses an even number of trees in the above range of numbers, it is less likely that the grouping of the trees will look as random as with the odd numbers. Four is an especially difficult number to work with for one has difficulty in placing the trees to avoid too uniform a distribution. (The Japanese fanatically avoid groups of four,- you cant buy sake cups in groups of four but in groups of five,- buying four cookies at the bake counter in Japan is often met with sales resistance all because the Japanese word for four is the same as their

word for death. That's probably why they insist on never grouping four trees in a planting. One bonsai club president challenged his club's members to try and devise ways of placing four plants as a bonsai. That's something for the enterprising bonsai enthusiasts to try. The author of this article once placed 4 spruce together on a slab and two promptly died, but it probably wasn't the jinx of "four" but the fact that the plants were retrieved from an abandoned nursery in very neglected condition.

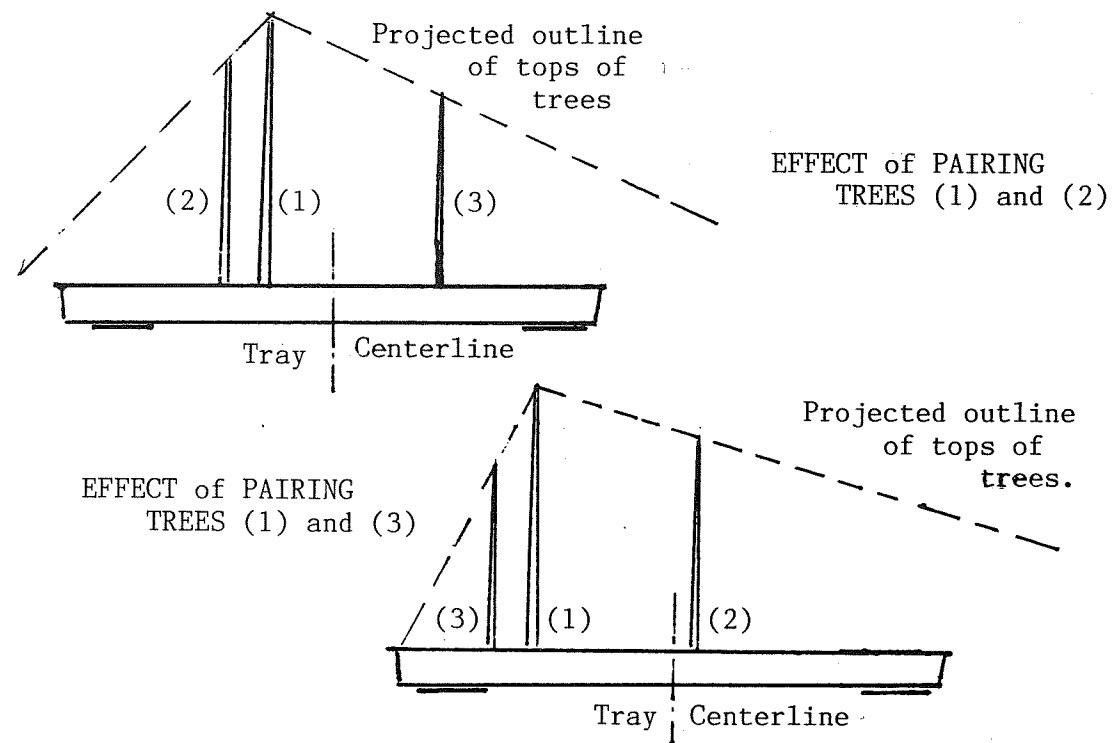
Vaughn felt that plantings with more than 13 trees did not have to follow the even number rule, - when one reaches planting 40 trees in a tray, it doesn't matter whether one adds one tree to make the total the odd number 41. At any rate with those numbers, who's counting? The important point is that you may set out to plant a certain number of trees, but as you near the point where you are planting the last trees, you must back off and view the forest to determine if adding one or more of the remaining trees will be overkill and degrade from the composition.

Prior to actually putting the forest together, one should try to envision how the trees will be placed. To that end one can make a perspective sketch of the trees as stick figures to note the relative placement of the trees of different heights. Vaughn thanked the Arboretum for the use of a four-inch thick block of styrofoam into which he was able to push round pieces of wood to portray the juxtaposition of the trees. The round pieces of wood had been cut so that the largest diameter piece of wood corresponded to the tallest tree, and from there on the decreasing heights of the round sticks went sequentially with their decreasing diameters. A very effective way to visually present the layout of the trees in the projected composition.

The usual procedure to begin the arrangement and planting of the trees is to arrange them by height (which should also equate to trunk caliber), ----- with the tallest as number (1). Next one concerns oneself with the placement of the three tallest trees, - numbers (1), (2) and (3). Note that this is a combination of three trees. The approach that

has been found by the Japanese to give the most interesting appearance of the forest is to always consider the trees in combinations of three and make scalene triangles in placing them in the arrangement. The Japanese use the following kanji, which is pronounced hin or shina, to describe the above principle.

In starting the arrangement, one has the option of grouping together the tallest tree with either (2) or (3) with the other tree off to the other side of the centerline



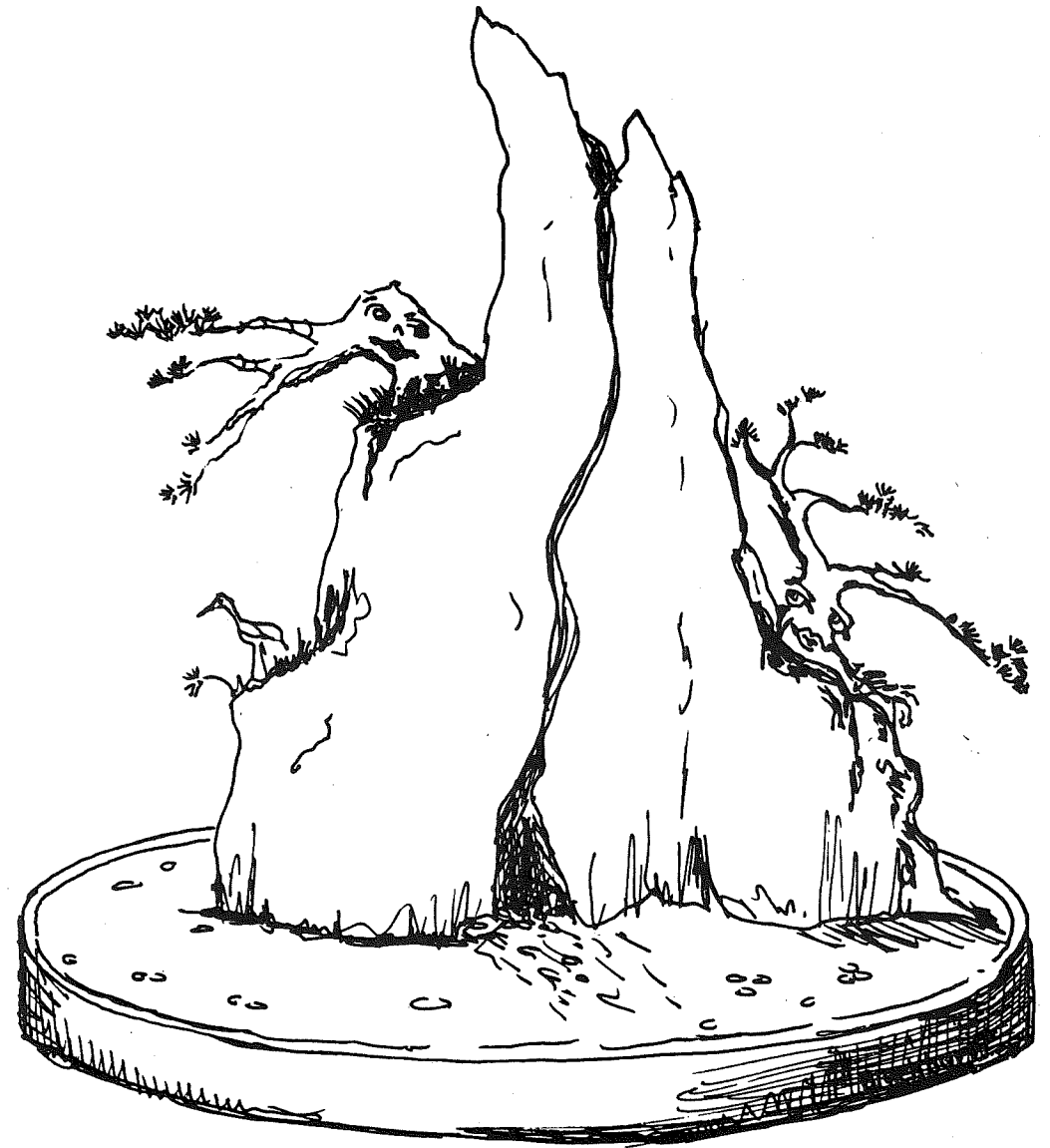
of the tray. In the classical approach, the paired trees are positioned to the one side of the tray centerline and the single tree is placed to the other side of the tray centerline. IN ANY CASE IN A FOREST PLANTING THE CENTER OF THE TRAY IS ALWAYS LEFT VOID OF TREES.

The sketches on the preceding page illustrate a point that Vaughn brought out. He preferred combining or pairing the two tallest trees together, trees (1) and (2) with the number (3) tree off to one side rather than trees (1) and (3) with the number (2) tree standing alone. He felt that the former arrangement, the upper figure on the previous page, gave a more balanced feeling. The projected outline is more easily balanced over the tray. In the lower sketch, for the same height trees and the same tray length, a balanced arrangement is difficult to achieve unless the trees are moved more to one side of the tray.

The significance of pairing the largest tree very close or tight against the number (2) or (3) tree is to create a focal point which will draw the eye of the viewer to that point. From there the eye should sweep around the composition to the other side where the lone tree of the trio is placed. This creation of a focal point is true in bonsai as in any painting, - for the lone bonsai the focal point for the viewer to view the tree should be its roots. If the tree lacks the heavy roots that the Japanese desire in a good bonsai, one might consider placing a light patch of moss at the base of the tree to initially draw the viewer's eye to that point.

Once the three largest trees have been positioned, the remaining trees are positioned to give depth and perspective to the composition. Hence the small trees are for the most part relegated to the rear of the planting. However, since randomness is in order and working with groups of three trees, one should consider not going straight down the line so to speak, and, for example, make the next grouping (4), (5) and (6) but (4), (5) and (7) or (8) thus making the grouping not appear too regulated when compared to the others..

Two cardinal rules in forest planting are that no two or more trees should line up directly behind one another when viewed from directly in front of the center of the planting and similarly no two or more should be in line behind one another when viewed from midpoint on the side of



"I was hoping we'd share the same cliff."
"Oh well, I'm sure our roots will meet one day!"

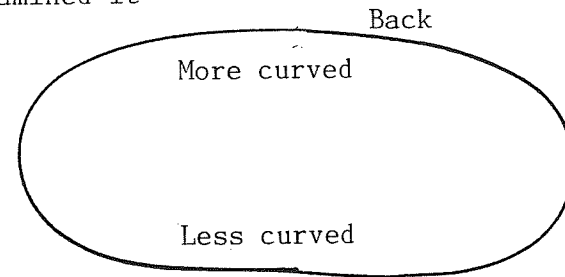
the planting.

One can plant the trees in the central portion of the planting so that their trunks are upright. Those around the edge can be slanted outward slightly. In deciduous plantings more so than in those using plant material that has a natural tendency to grow vertically, the trees at the edges of the woods or a grove tend to grow at a more dramatic slant in an attempt to get more sunlight.

Before planting in the tray, Vaughn turned the tray upside down on the table and examined it

to determine if the tray was a precise oval or ellipse or if one side was slightly less curved than the other. This side is then made the front since the other side will permit more depth for the trees in the back.

The previous point is indeed well taken when one is doing a slab planting. Hopefully the most interesting edge of the slab is also the less curved one.



Top view of tray with one side more curved than the other.

For those in the audience who were new to bonsai, Vaughn talked a little about soil. He pointed out that the soil mix should be porous and dry. Porous so that water does not perch in the pot causing root rot. Garden soil or the like is not recommended since it is not porous enough. When in the garden, the depth of the soil is not restricted by the bottom of the pot to cause water to perch in the pot and not drain so that here are gaseous pockets in the soil.* The soil is used in the dry state so that it will readily work its way in and around the roots so that no voids exist.

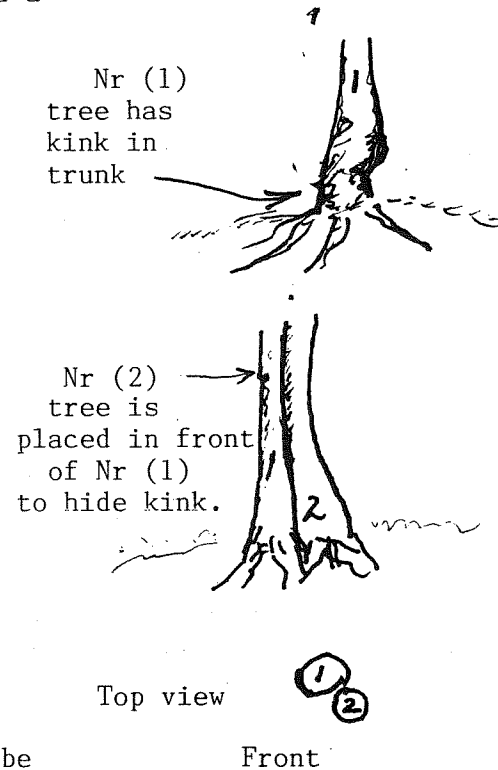
Vaughn opted not to use any tie-down wires since it becomes rather involved when planting a large number of trees in a single tray.

* In the garden the depth of the soil is not limited and the capillary effect will pull the water out of the surface soil so that it does not pool there.

A layer of the potting soil mix was spread over the bottom of the tray and the numbers (1) and (2) trees were groomed for side by side placement. Vaughn pointed out that the number (1) tree had a flaw in that the trunk at its base had a slight crook in it. Hence he used the number (2) tree to hide the flaw by placing it in front of Nr (1). Roots usually have to be trimmed from (1) and (2) trees to permit their being placed almost chock-a-block together. At this time of year one must remove the new growth to compensate for the root loss.

In trimming roots, one must make a compromise between cutting hair roots or heavy roots. The hair roots are the ones that provide nourishment to the plant and the heavy roots to which the hair roots are attached are merely "conduits" for the nourishment. Hence one must be careful as to how much of the hair roots can be safely removed.

It is recommended that one should always wire together the two trees (in this case numbers (1) and (2)) so that they retain their tight spacing. Otherwise, they will drift apart when the soil is worked around them, - then nothing can be done to bring them together again short of removing the soil and starting all over again. The wire is placed as close to the bases of the trees as possible and a portion of the wire should be hooked around part of the root system otherwise it will tend to ride up on the trunks.



One root system can be placed slightly on top of the other root system.

After the trees are placed in the pot and stabilized in place with as little soil as possible, remove all branches on both trees on the sides that face each other, i.e. those that cross.

A second look at the tree that was picked as Nr (3) indicated that its trunk's diameter to height proportions mirror imaged those of Nr (2). Hence Nr (3) was discarded in favor of replacing it with Nr (4). Ah! the luxury of having the number and variety to choose from that Dan Chiplitis provided for this demonstration. Now the new Nr (3) tree differed more dramatically from Nr (2).

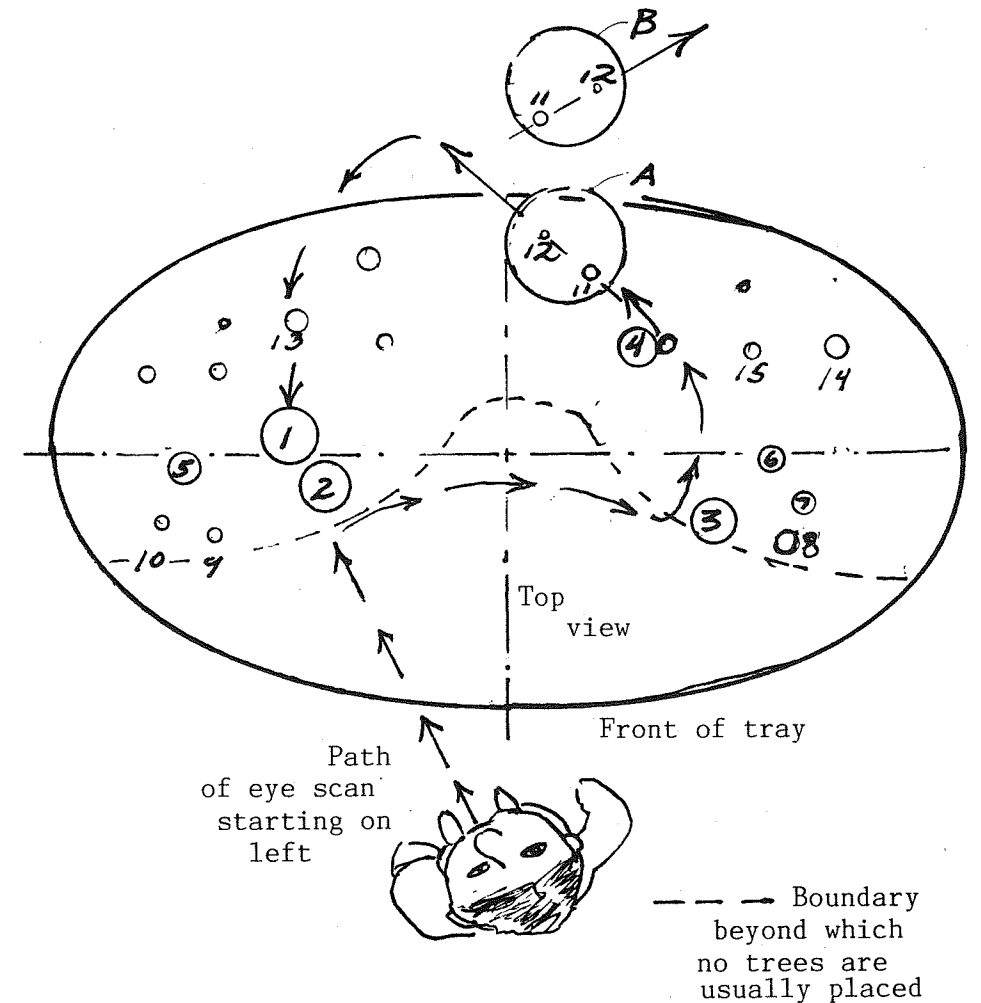
The Nr (3) tree is placed so that it lines up slightly in front of the Nr (2) tree or between the Nr (1) and Nr (2) tree when viewed from the side of the tray.

Vaughn next selected as Nr (4) tree one which had two trunks from a common point with one shorter than the other. These make excellent additions to forest plantings.

The diagram on the next page shows how the trees were placed in the tray. Nr (5) tree was grouped with Nr (1) tree and Nr (2) tree to create the effect of a large mass which is then reinforced by the two smaller trees Nrs (9) and (10). The last two smaller trees do add a natural appearance to that segment of the forest.

The diagram shows a dashed line which is the usually accepted boundary in front of which no trees are placed. Note how dead center of the tray is a no-no area for any tree.

The placement of the eleventh and twelfth tree which in this case are the trees that one sees at the back of the tray are critical in their positioning to the overall eye-movement of the viewer. Following the arrows representing the way one's eyes scan the planting, - the eyes first are drawn to the large mass of the Nr (1) and Nr (2) trees to the left. Tight spacing between Nr (1) and Nr (2) help



LAYOUT of TREES in FOREST PLANTING

draw the viewer to look there first. Next the eyes will move to the next largest mass with the Nr (3) in it on the right. The Nr (4) tree will then draw one's attention. Now that the eyes are scanning to the left, one must decide whether the viewer should continue scanning counterclockwise to arrive back at the starting point or stop and exit with only one's mind to envision what lies beyond. Vaughn suggested that the preferred approach would be to bring the viewer back into the composition

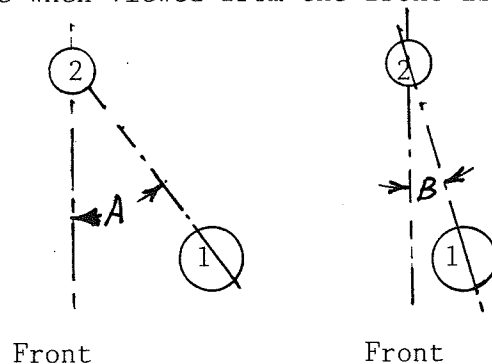
so that the viewer arrives back at the starting point. To accomplish that, one must place the Larger tree Nr (11) relative to the smaller tree Nr (12) as shown in the circle A and not as shown in circle B which pulls the viewers scan out of the composition.

The placement of remaining trees such as Nrs (13), (14) and (15) is such that the trunks prevent a straight-through look.

Note - one must be careful when chopsticking the soil in place because some plants might drift which should be avoided.

One trick that can be used to make two plants appear closer together than they are when viewed from the front is to place them as shown in the adjacent sketch.

On the left the two tree trunks (1) and (2) as viewed from above appear to be far apart by virtue of the large angle A. By decreasing the angle to B, tree (1) will give the allusion of being closer to tree (2) when viewed from the front.



Top Views.

As for the after care, the composition should be thoroughly watered and given sufficient water thereafter. The composition can begin to be moved out and exposed to sunlight once the tips of the foliage start to show that they are recovering.

Outside of the normal care any bonsai should get, the only thing to know is that repotting is done once the plants have remained in the tray long enough for their roots to have become one mass. Otherwise it be highly impractical to try to repot if the trees start to separate upon removal from the tray. Before repotting, remove not only roots from around the edge of the planting but also from the bottom.

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Otherwise the planting will be rising in the tray until it outgrows the tray. When the root mass has become real dense, one can cut into the root mass and take out pie shaped wedges.

The above sums up what the author's notes contained and apologies are in order for any mistakes or omissions. Vaughn Banting very graciously acceded to letting the author report on his excellent lecture demonstration.

Vaughn's depth of knowledge was very apparent when he fielded all questions. The author is certain that all who attended were well-rewarded. As the luck of the draw had it, Vaughn's presentation was planned well ahead of the day when the homecoming parade of the Desert Storm veterans in the District was set. However, the attendance was very good considering the factors.

Thanks to the National Bonsai Foundation and the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection staff under Bob Drechsler, Curator, and Dan Chiplis, Assistant to the Curator, we bonsai nuts can benefit from these free lecture demonstrations. Bob Drechsler has scheduled two major bonsai demonstrations this year under the Arboretum's "Bonsai Activities Program." The next "Major Bonsai Lecture and Demonstration" will be on November 10, 1991 and it will feature Yuji Yoshimura addressing the subject of "Stones and their relationship to bonsai." Yuji is one of the most recognized bonsai masters in this country and his lecture should indeed be interesting since Japanese, like the American Indians, have considered that spirits inhabit the stones, - the backbone of the earth.

Vaughn Banting made some interesting remarks relative to the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection. In his travels around the U.S.A. he has come in contact with a number of bonsai collections which are or were open to the public. However, they only survive as long as their curators survive. The National Bonsai and Penjing Collection circumvents that aspect and by so doing gives a safe haven for bonsai of distinction. Because the National Collection is forever, Vaughn has plugged it wherever he has lectured to keep up support for the National Bonsai Foundation. It behooves us to do our part.

Jules Koetsch

THE CHINA BONSAI COMPANY

"The Historical Roots of Bonsai are in China"

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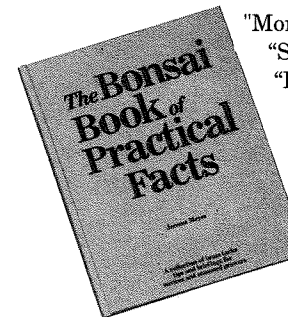
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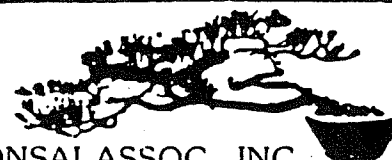
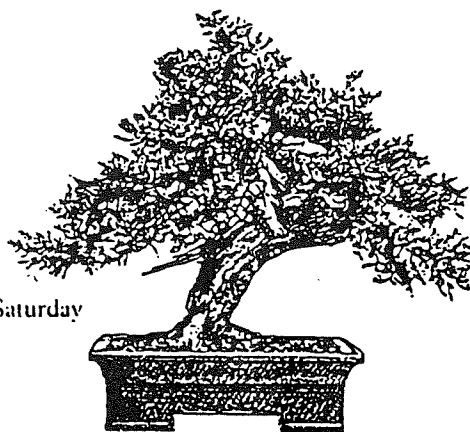
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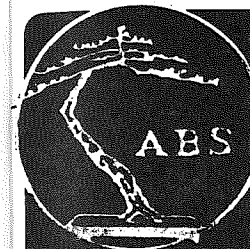
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