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November 2000

**What is important to learn through the PBA, or any other, bonsai symposium? Why is it important for you to attend?** *by PBA President Chuck Croft, NVBS*

Our presenters provide us with fresh, alternative, artistic views for a piece of material, or a species of tree or shrub. They present new or alternative techniques for working with material . . . and we have the opportunity to learn horticultural information about unfamiliar bonsai material; or about material we've not considered but which might be useful under our growing conditions.

All of this information is important to each bonsai artist and member of PBA, from the rank beginners to the most experienced of our members. There is no bonsai hobbyist or artist who cannot learn something valuable from another artist, particularly one as accomplished as the key speaker at our Year 2000 Fall Symposium, A Taste of Korean Bonsai. The symposium gave all attendees an excellent opportunity to be exposed to this information and more.

Mr Sae Won Kim and his assistant, Mr Lee did an admirable job during their presentations, demonstrations, and workshops. Most of the conference attendees particularly liked the tree critiques of Mr Kim and Mr Lee. During the critiques, Mr Kim and Mr Lee not only commented on the trees presented, but they also *with the permission of the owners* worked on the trees. I heard repeatedly that this was the best approach to conducting a seminar tree critique we've had for quite a long time. Those of us who brought trees for the critique took home trees that were distinctly improved and more enjoyable to observe.

Our Educational Vice President, Shari Sharafi, did an excellent job of arranging and presenting the symposium, his first, which was not without unique challenges.

Mr Lee did an excellent job of presenting his comments and explaining what he was doing during his demonstrations and workshops; and Mr Kim and Jack Sustic both conducted excellent workshops.

Throughout the symposium, I kept hearing comments from attendees complementing Mr Lee on his artistry and understanding of a wide variety of materials.

**This symposium was well worth the time and effort to attend, and we all owe a debt of gratitude to Shari Sharafi, Jack Sustic, Jerry Antel and others who worked to make the symposium happen.**

Thank you for a great weekend.

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**PBA**  
**Clippings**  
NEWSLETTER OF THE POTOMAC BONSAI ASSOCIATION

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J. F. Koetsch, 6709 Caneel Ct., Springfield, VA 22152.  
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**PBA Officers:**

President	Chuck Croft, NVBS ccroft@mindspring.com
President Elect	Arlene Polinsky, NVBS
Educ. Vice-President	Shari Sharafi, BBS sharisharafi@hotmail.com
Secretary and Membership	Judy Wise, NVBS (202) 554-3045
Treasurer	Jerry Antel, Jr., BBS (301) 320-5251
Newsletter Editor	Jules Koetsch

**PBA Clippings staff:**

<b>Editor</b>	<b>Jules Koetsch</b> (703) 569-9378 jkoetsch@earthlink.net
Assoc./Type Editor, and Art Director	Betty Yeapanis, NVBS <b>after 11 a.m.</b> (703) 591-0864 bittenhand@erols.com
Advertising Editor	Jerry Antel, Jr., BBS (301) 320-5251
Calendar Coordinator	Shari Sharafi, BBS
Original Art	Frank Thomas, LBS
Staff Photographer	Chris Yeapanis, NVBS

**Editorial** by Jules Koetsch

The 26<sup>th</sup> PBA Symposium was noteworthy in the fact that the number of attendees did not require crowd control. In fact, at the rate that attendance has been declining over the last several years, we're approaching a time when no "tickets" will have been sold for the show; and the performance as planned need not go on. Worse than that, only one ticket might be sold and the show would have to go on.

Each year the PBA board (your representatives) tries to come up with a program for the PBA Symposium they hope will appeal to more than the approximately 20% of the total PBA membership (40 or so members) who seem to have made up the past few years' annual attendances. In fact, after paying \$1,000 to FONA (Friends of the National Arboretum) this year as sort of a rental fee for the use of the Arboretum, PBA wound up slightly in the red. It's definitely time to take a hard look at why the PBA Symposium has not attracted more attendees. The PBA Symposium program should be designed to have enough appeal that a majority of PBA members will attend. The PBA Symposium is not intended to be a super money maker for PBA. It is intended to help the attendee learn more about the many aspects of bonsai, leading to better enjoyment and fulfillment in pursuit of the hobby.

I've been conjecturing what might make a winning symposium program from all the various facets that could come into play. Here are some of my thoughts on the matter. Unfortunately, every person probably will prioritize them differently.

The question that always has to be addressed is: "What if the cost were decreased, would more people attend?" In a conversation with Jerry Antel, PBA's treasurer, he suggested that the cost could be decreased if the box-lunch on Saturday and/or the coffee/soda breaks were dropped. On the other hand, what would happen if the price of admission were to be increased over what it has been: \$75 for full registration, etc. Then prominent speakers could be brought in from both Asia and Europe. For example, you could have 3 speakers covering different aspects of bonsai. There is nothing like sitting and being bored or trying to make conversation with a speaker while he or she is wiring the demo tree. Mr.

Kim, this year's symposium headliner, had an assistant who did the wiring off-stage enabling Mr Kim to cover other topics. With more than one speaker, the person doing a demo tree could be off-stage doing the detailed wiring while another speaker holds forth.

Then there is the main draw - the symposium program itself. Often a theme is selected - like this year's - Korean bonsai. Often the key speaker is expected to design and style a bonsai using a plant species in accordance with the theme. However, the plant species may not be to the prospective attendee's liking and he or she opts out of attending. In that respect, it wouldn't hurt to poll the PBA members to find out what plant materials they would be most interested in learning more on how to use it for bonsai. What species are the majority of the members growing as bonsai? What species aren't they growing, but would like to learn how to make them into bonsai?

I feel that there should be more than one speaker at the symposium. While the headliner is doing the detailed wiring on the demo tree, another speaker could be addressing any of a number of subjects that might appeal to PBA members. For starters:

1. A person who has made bonsai containers [e.g., Jim Barrett or Nick Lenz] could possibly talk on how bonsai pots are made in Asia and this country, what to look for in a good container, how to clean a pot properly, something on slabs, etc.
2. Collecting from the wild - where are good collecting sites not too far from here, what's available, how to handle the tasks of collecting different materials, and how to nurture different materials so that they survive the ensuing years.
3. Invite someone to talk about the various styles of penjing and various nurseries and gardens in China. Keith Scott apparently has made one or more trips to China and should have some interesting tales to tell. Then there's the matter of any new innovations, such as using commercially available packets of mycorrhizae fungi and any noteworthy results; ingredients for soil mixes; tools on the market. Also Scott Aker, the Integrated Pest Management at Arboretum, might be willing to specifically address how to control pests on bonsai.

Tree critiques are popular. This last symposium was noteworthy in that Mr. Kim, the headliner, with the help of his assistant and always with the owner's permission, actually pruned and wired trees he critiqued. Perhaps it would be appropriate to have one session on the program where more than one group would meet at the same time, each with its own experienced bonsai person to do the critiquing.


Workshops are meant to be the piece de resistance where one can find good starter material without going to the hassle of visiting nurseries or collecting. There has always been one workshop with the oldest starter material, and it ostensibly was geared for persons experienced in the art of bonsai. Two other workshops have been held in the past with one supposedly for those with some level of bonsai expertise but not to the level of those in the previous grouping. Lastly, there was one supposedly for the novices. The prices for the workshops ranged from the highest for the first group mentioned to the lowest for the last group (based mainly on the quality of the starter material). As one might suspect, human nature being what it is, the first group would more than likely be filled. Obviously if you could pay the price, you were getting the best starter material of the 3 groups. As for the other groups, the response has been mediocre for the medium group, to zero when one gets to the "novice" group.

It's time to get a reading from each PBA member club as to what really would make PBA members want to attend PBA's Fall Symposium next year. Jerry Antel tried a survey in 1999 limited to only 15 PBA members, of whom 4 attended the symposium and 11 did not. Reasons for not attending were grouped as follows: 6 were previously engaged, 4 thought the cost was high, 1 was not interested, and 1 was listed as "other."

Planning for next year's symposium should be underway as soon as possible. One might dream and hope that someday planning for symposia will start 2 years before they're to be held. Then good material for workshops could be located and ready. As for finding topics and guest speakers, one might look at past symposia held by other bonsai organizations.



Or better yet, how about some from PBA members? Questions such as 'should there be more workshops with better material?' may be answered. Also, are more plant critiques in order? I would like to see a little more diversity in the program by having more than one headliner address different subjects or like subjects in different ways. Maybe if more people attended in the future, attendance fees

(A word from Jules' indentured servant: Please people, this is serious. Take some time to address these and other ideas with your bonsai friends and send in positive suggestions. And don't approach the board expecting a "blank check" to make your dream symposium happen. We have already been entertained by that *audacious* prospect from one insulting, self-promoting *boy genius*. -  b.y.)

could be reduced. Also if more PBA members attended, more guest speakers and edifying offerings could be included in the program. Is there an Irving Thalberg [boy genius producer of MGM movie hits] reading this who will save the PBA annual fall symposia from extinction?



WANT TO FEEL GOOD? VOLUNTEER -WANNA BE A HERO? VOLUNTEER WANT TO FEEL GOOD? VOLUNTEER WANNA BE A HERO? VOLUNTEER -WANT TO FEEL GOOD? VOLUNTEER -WANNA FEEL GOOD? BE A GOODVOLUNTEER WANT TO FEEL GOOD?

*bonsai items for sale bonsai items for sale bonsai items for sale*  
Just in case the new service was not obvious enough last month . . .

Bonsai Material, Pines Available: NVBS member Pete Jones has a limited number of Japanese white, and black, pine grafts he is willing to sell to fellow club members. These pines are well-established 3+ years old plants grafted on J. black pine root crowns. Varieties: Pinus Parviflora (Japanese White Pine) Aka-Kawa, Burkes Bonsai, Ei-Ko Nishiki, Ibo-Can, Zuisho; Pinus Thunbergiana (J. Black Pine) Banshoho, Nishiki Tsukasa; Pinus Densiflora (from seed)  
See Pete after the NVBS monthly meetings; **no phone calls** please.

Indoor Bonsai by Paul Lesniewicz, paper back, never been read. - \$12.00  
Miniature Trees and Landscapes by Yuji Yoshimura. Hardcover hand-woven fabric with embossed tree and dust cover. Book in like new condition - \$50.00  
Man Lung Artistic Pot Plants by Wu Yee-sun (donator of Chinese collection to National Arboretum). New hardcover book. This book is not sold in US. It could only be ordered from Hong Kong. I believe it is out of print. \$50.00  
Chris Yeapanis call **after 1 p.m.** at 703.591.0864; or [ibonsai@erols.com](mailto:ibonsai@erols.com)

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## Poetry Corner - Calm yourself

Our first selection does not translate directly into the 5-7-5 syllable pattern of haiku but it fits the time of year. It is from page 148 in Deborah R. Koreshoff's book *BONSAI, Its Art, Science, History and Philosophy*.

*A pathway - lonely and dark  
But for a single golden leaf,  
Dancing to the song of an autumn wind.*  
- Debra Koreshoff

Dogwood fruit bright red . . .  
Acorns fall in silent woods  
Will icy winds follow?  
- Arschel

A bright autumn moon ...  
In the shadow of each grass  
An insect chirping.  
- Buson

## Calendar of Events *compiled by Shari Sharafi (BBS)*

Send your club's input to Shari by e- [sharisharafi@hotmail.com](mailto:sharisharafi@hotmail.com) or snail mail to 4803 Westway Dr., Bethesda, MD 20816

### November

#### Rappahanock Bonsai Society

**4** 11:00 a.m., Over-wintering Bonsai Demonstration/Lecture, Gardens Unlimited.

#### Brookside Bonsai Society

**16** No program reported.

#### Baltimore Bonsai Club

**19** Return of the 1999 Three-Ring Circus Trees

Election of new Three-Ring Circus Teams. Presentation of new circus material.

No tree of the month: No Display

#### Kiyomizu Bonsai Club

No meeting.

#### Lancaster Bonsai Society

Slide show on Penjing and Suiseki and a raffle.

#### Northern Virginia Bonsai Society

**11** Bob and Todd from Gardens Unlimited will be grafting a tree on to deadwood. If you are not NVBS, call to check location.

### December

#### Baltimore Bonsai Club

Holiday Party, Time and Place to be determined.

#### Brookside Bonsai Society

BBS annual Dinner out. Details in the next Clippings.

#### Kiyomizu Bonsai Club

**3** 3:00 pm Potluck Dinner, Location to be determined.

#### Lancaster Bonsai Society

No program reported.

#### Northern Virginia Bonsai Society

No program reported.

#### Rappahanock Bonsai Society

**2** Planning for 2001. Further details to be announced.

### Non-PBA Events of Interest

#### **Permaculture for Residential Landscape**

**5 November**, 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. National Arboretum, Admin Bldg Classroom. Learn the basics of permaculture, an approach to land use which meets human needs while preserving the health of the environment. It also includes a slide presentation. Fee: \$7:00. Contact Arboretum at 202.245.2726.

**p.s.** You are encouraged to attend other clubs activities. Try it and you may like it.

## Brookside Bonsai Society Auction Report:

On Thursday, 19 October, BBS held its annual fall auction. It was one of the best ever. The auction started at 7:30 p.m. and was over few minutes after 9:00 p.m. All together, we sold 65 items, provided by 12 sellers, purchased by 21 buyers, among the 32 participants. A total of \$1,133 changed hands. The BBS club received \$491. Thanks to all those involved. For the third year running, the accounting worked to the penny. Thanks to all participants. - Shari Sharafi, BBS board member

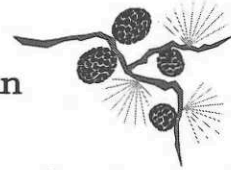
## Gossip -

Unofficial reports say the NVBS efforts at Meadowlark Gardens were appreciated. Club volunteer turn-out was excellent. Demo's went on all day and the event drew good attendance. No report at press time if any membership applications were filled out and turned in.

We expect a report soon from Lancaster club about their great good fortune with a cooperative local site.

## WINTER STORAGE *by Reiner Goebel*

Editor's note: Thought the readers would like to know how Canadian bonsai enthusiasts winter their trees.



Within the next several weeks, we will have to get our trees ready for the coming winter. A good time, therefore, to review what will, if not assure, then at least not prevent them from seeing another summer. It will help to know a little bit about the mechanics of dormancy. It is triggered by the shortening days of late summer and accelerated by the cold night temperatures of early fall. The change in the day-length causes plants to set terminal buds, thus eliminating any further vegetative growth. The drop in the mean temperature causes changes in the plants' chemical make-up. In that way, plants become ever more frost-resistant as fall progresses. The important point to note here is that exposure to cold temperatures in the fall is absolutely necessary to prepare the plant for the coming winter, and that will include exposure to freezing temperatures.

Another important point is that a plant's root system is always less frost-resistant than above-ground growth. Luckily, the ground does not get anywhere near as cold as the air above it and with good snow cover, the roots of normally hardy plants will survive without problems. I kept track of ground temperatures in one of my wintering beds some winters ago, and while the lowest air temperature was -25°C, the ground temperature (about 3' below the surface) went down to only -5°C. All the plants in that bed survived, including a *Stewartia monodelpha*, although it seemed to take an unusually long time to snap out of dormancy in the spring.

There are two different types of dormancy - a biologically programmed one and an environmental one. Biologically programmed dormancy is triggered by the shortening day-length, and can only be slowed by otherwise perfect growing conditions; it cannot be stopped. To break this dormancy, trees native to our area require varying lengths of freezing temperatures, after which they are ready to resume active growth. The length of time the freezing temperatures are required is, alas, a lot shorter than that with which we are commonly blessed, so afterward the plants

can be said to be in a state of environmental, or enforced, dormancy. After the freezing temperature requirement has been fulfilled, they can be brought to grow again by exposing them to favourable growing conditions, as is commonly done with bulbs like tulips, daffodils or hyacinths. This favourable growing environment does not have to include light, incidentally - warmer temperatures are all that is needed to get the juices flowing and the buds swelling. It is evident from the above that the critical time for the survival of our trees is not so much during their biological dormancy, but during their environmental, or enforced, dormancy. I am confident that more trees die in March and April than in December and January.

### PREPARING FOR WINTER

Many measures can be taken to make sure plants get through the winter without damage. Here are most of them:

1. Stop using fertilizers rich in nitrogen toward the beginning of August to avoid new growth which will not have enough time to harden off.
2. Do not prune your trees between the middle of August and the time they enter dormancy, because late pruning can also result in new growth.
3. Do not water quite as generously in the fall, because a reduction in the moisture will beneficially influence hardening of new shoots. Be careful with this one, though - I would rather suffer some winter damage on new shoots than lose the tree because of under-watering.
4. Do not protect your trees against normal cold or freezes in the fall. Exposure to such conditions is very necessary for the tree to get up its own defense mechanism. (A different set of rules applies, of course, to plants that are not winter-hardy at all, such as *Ficus benjamina*.)

### WINTER STORAGE

Winter storage can take many forms. Here, again, are most of them:

1. Dig the trees, still in their pots, into the ground, with the garden soil just covering the



top level of the soil in the pot. To keep the pot and the moss clean, wrap the pot in pantyhose prior to digging in. The best spot for digging in your trees is one that gets the least amount of sun and wind. Both can be kept out or reduced significantly by artificial methods, such as surrounding the storage area with a snow fence or burlap.

2. Window wells are good wintering spots. Ideally, they would have north or east exposure. If they face south or west, shading should be provided by artificial means. Make sure, however, that the shading does not prevent snow from falling on your wintering area. Among all the survival aids, snow is by far the best. It provides protection from sun and wind, insulates against cold air temperatures, and increases the humidity around the plant. Besides, it's free. The only disadvantage I can think of is that a heavy load of wet snow can result in broken branches - so watch it.

3. Coldframes are the window wells of the sophisticated. Three to four feet deep, with a layer of pebbles for drainage at the bottom and a cover on top, they are an almost sure-fire way of wintering bonsai. While they take a lot of work to establish, they make child's play out of putting your trees away for the winter - no peat moss to wet, no pots to be pantyhosed, no digging on a cold and rainy November weekend.

4. Bonsai can also be overwintered in garages or tool sheds. While the problem of drying winds is effectively eliminated by this method, total lack of air movement is not desirable, either, because it encourages fungus growth. A small fan, not blowing directly on your trees, will overcome this. A more serious problem with this method of overwintering is that the trees will often start to grow when outside conditions are still less than ideal. The air in the garage or shed will warm up quickly once the sun gets strong again in late February, thus eliminating the environmental condition

that is keeping the trees dormant, namely cold temperatures. Since temperatures in the garage or shed will definitely go as low as -10°C or -15°C, root balls should be insulated, which can be accomplished by putting the trees in boxes filled with moist peat moss.

5. A cold-room in the basement is an ideal way to winter trees that are only marginally hardy in this area, such as some Japanese maples, elms and azaleas. In a cold-room, root balls do not have to be insulated against the cold - it never gets cold enough - although care has to be taken that roots don't dry out. In a cold room, plants also tend to start growth even earlier than they would in a garage or tool shed. The problem with a resumption of growth too early is that the plants need lots of light once the buds open and leaves start to uncurl. At this time of year, however, daytime temperatures are usually such that they would kill off the tender young growth. It is for this reason that the soundest advice is to keep your trees dormant for as long as possible, but not indefinitely. In a way, though, seeing the buds on my maples beginning to swell and take on colour in late February is just the tonic I need to get me through March and April. So, I employ a combination of cold-room and garage to winter several maples and other trees. Once the cold-room becomes too warm, I transfer the trees to a bench set up behind the garage door, which faces south. In that way, I can provide lots of light on mild days or keep out the cold by opening or closing the garage door. I find that the temperature in my garage, provided that the kids don't leave the doors open, will stay above freezing as long as outside temperatures don't fall much below -10°C. In March, and even April, such temperatures are not exactly rarities in our parts, and I usually have to make several transfers back to the cold-room on those occasions when there could be a chance of freezing temperatures occurring in the garage.

*Volunteer Y'all - When was the last time you called one of your club officers and said "Do you need some help with a special club project? I can help. I can make a phone call. I can write that letter you just can't seem to get to. I can call 3 nurseries to price workshop material. I can organize the club telephone tree."*

## Collecting Naka Drawings by Chris Cochran (PVSG)

John Naka recently expressed approval of a suggestion to have copies of his drawings collected on behalf of the Bonsai and Penjing Museum. By collecting these in one place, any number of options present themselves including possible publication of material that would be a rich resource for bonsai design. At the very least, a single location for these images at the Museum would establish a great collection for researchers.

To accomplish the task, board director Jack Billet has volunteered to collect data by mail. Jack has asked for contributors to make photocopies of their original drawings sized to fit on a standard size sheet of typing paper (8 ½" x 11"), so that they can be maintained in a relatively generous size but not so large as to be unwieldy.

If published, Jack proposes that the original owner of the drawing, the date and the place be identified. Identifying the bonsai material by species, if not cultivar, would also help categorize the drawings. For "place," please note both the bonsai event and the city, town et al. Please add a note that either confirms or denies permission for the Museum to publish (either in print or in Internet form) a copy of the drawing which you provide.

Thus, an accompanying data sheet might read:

ORIGINAL OWNER: John Doe

DATE DRAWN: 5/1/1984

PLACE: Golden State Convention workshop, Fresno, CA, USA

SPECIES et al.: dwarf black spruce-- picea abies (pumila nigra).

PERMISSION TO PUBLISH in print or internet format: Yes

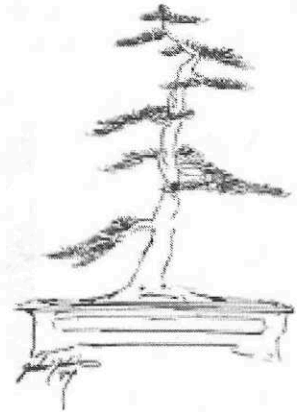
OWNER'S PERMISSION & DATE: (John Doe signature), 00/00/2000

Mail copies of original Naka drawings on an 8½" x 11" sheet of paper to:

Mr. Jack Billet, 505 DuPont Road, Wilmington, DE 19807

For those who cannot manage to make a photocopy but have scanning facilities, an alternative format is to scan your drawing in GRAYSCALE and forward it to Chris Cochran at [sashai@erols.com](mailto:sashai@erols.com).

Thank you for your contributions to this effort. Here's a sample of the drawings Jack is collecting, Jules' tree. Just another example of the bonuses you get when you take classes, workshops, and attend symposia.



*Y2K+1 Spring Show and Fall Symposium are going to be pretty darn special. Clear your calendars.*



## Keeping Busy During the Winter Months *by George Griffith*

Winter care is mainly of a protective nature for most bonsai enthusiasts, to ensure that when spring comes, our bonsai will have survived the long cold months. Winter is sometimes very cruel and it is disappointing when a precious bonsai does not survive. We all know it is very important to protect our trees against the rigors of winter. Most of us, by now, will have our trees safely tucked away in cold frames, buried in the ground, or wherever. Now that we have our trees safely protected, many of us will be wondering what to do in our spare time. This is not the time for bonsai enthusiasts to be dormant. Be active! There are many interesting things to do during the cold, snowy winter months. Keep Busy! I thought growing bonsai from seed would prove to be interesting and challenging. To start seeds, some basic simple equipment is needed. Most of the necessary materials are available from your nursery or hardware store and can be fitted into a relatively small, out-of-the-way space. If you are starting seeds under fluorescent lights lower the lights or raise the container holding the seeds so that the lights are only a few inches from the seedlings. Fluorescent lights should remain on from fourteen to sixteen hours a day. If your seedlings start to become leggy, slow down the rate of growth by reducing the number of hours of light to about twelve or perhaps ten. There are numerous media suitable for starting seeds. These include a mixture of peat moss and perlite; a combination of sifted sphagnum moss and sand; sterilized soil, and so on. Any of these may be used, and you should have little difficulty in starting your seeds. Most seeds will germinate in darkness and do so faster if the container is loosely covered with a piece of thin plastic, but remove the plastic as soon as the seeds show signs of germinating. Another reason for covering your seedlings is to keep unwanted pigeons from eating them! I left a plastic flat of black pine seedlings out on my balcony one day in the summer, and when I returned at night those dam pigeons had eaten fifteen dollars worth! I also secured some Texas Ebony seeds and now, five years later, have four mame-sized trees, styled with cooper wire and

selective pruning. The leaves on the Texas Ebony (*Pithecelobium flexicaule*) are interesting in that they are closed at night as if praying. The tree has spines, which appear in earliest seedling growth. For styling, the spines may be removed without harm to the tree. The tap-root grows long quickly and to encourage fine hair roots, it should be cut off. Growing bonsai from seed has proven to be most enjoyable and interesting. Indoor light gardens solve many problems (no pigeons to worry about). Not only will a light garden replace the very best window it will do more! Light gardens provide direct vertical rays of light instead of the angled rays plants receive in a window. The result is healthy, well-shaped, symmetrical plants, and it eliminates the daily chore of turning. Further, your light garden provides consistent balance of light intensity. With a flick of a switch, you create an ideal light environment day after day, with the consistency unequalled by any form of natural light. Of prime importance for successful light gardening with indoor bonsai is to have sufficient humidity, plus air circulation around your trees. This is solved by the use of a humidifier, the use of fans, and by placing the trees on top of pebbles in a tray of water, making sure that the water does not reach the bottom of the pots to prevent the soil from taking up excessive moisture. The design of the light garden can be as varied and decorative as ingenuity allows. Commercial Fluorescent units are available at most nurseries. My own light garden is home-made and is adequate for my needs. It consists of two 48-inch tubes mounted on two wooden supports, which are secured to a wooden table. To keep the water from running on the floor, plastic plant trays are placed under the plants. A timer is desirable for indoor light gardens. My humidifier and lights come on at the same time and stay on for about fourteen hours. This way the plants get the necessary light for photosynthesis, which is important for the manufacture of food, and humidity for best growing conditions. There will never be a dull winter day in a room that explodes with the radiant colours of healthy vigorous plants. Few hobbies cost so little and give so much

satisfaction and enjoyment. An indoor gardening system guarantees pleasure and success with plants during the winter months. During this period of inactivity, there are many jobs which you can do. Now is the time to do some of those things you should have done earlier, but did not.

With your trees stored away for the winter, you may want to keep busy and re-read your bonsai books. They will refresh your memory and probably recall many interesting things that you have overlooked or forgotten.

Make notes of important things you may wish to remember. There is a great deal we can learn by reading what other bonsai enthusiasts have done. Perhaps you will discover why you lost a favorite tree.

**The winter months should be used to obtain bonsai education.** There are many ways of doing this. **The best method is to watch the experts at demonstrations or take part in workshops.** A great deal can be learned in this way. **Plan to attend a convention or symposium to gain additional knowledge from bonsai masters.** [This Mr Griffiths really knows his stuff.] You can have a great time and learn a great deal as these experts perform their magic on trees.

In your spare time, **write a bonsai article** for the journal [honestly, Mr Griffith wrote this, not Jules]. There will never be a dull winter day when you share your knowledge with your bonsai friends.

Don't be a procrastinator! Think bonsai! Keep busy during the winter months!!!

[What a wise man! Aren't we lucky Jules found this article to share with us.  ]

## **An Invitation to Grow Through Exhibiting** - The Washington

Home and Garden Show *by Pete Jones (NVBS)*

The Northern Virginia Bonsai Society has again been invited to participate in the DC Home and Gardening Show scheduled for 29 March-1 April 2001. This show will give us [ALL PBA CLUBS] the opportunity to display what PBA members have accomplished, and to teach the general public about bonsai. It will also give us a chance to pick up new members.

When we look at the cost\* and the exposure to the general public, I don't think we can find a better deal. We need each PBA club to participate so that we can show bonsai is most active in the metropolitan area.

Each PBA club should have bonsai on display during this show. What better way to advertise your club and the activities your club sponsors than to share your enthusiasm.

[\*It's free y'all - other groups and businesses are paying big time for this "showing off" opportunity. And the Show Organizers appreciated our booth so much last time, they asked us to plan for a larger booth in 2001. Please remember the pleasant experience helping out. Remember what a great job Ed Suarez did for us organizing and working through the process, and keeping us in line. Remember the fun we had buzzing around when our booth wasn't busy, to touch base with our fave bonsai vendors; and finding little gardening helps we wouldn't have known about had we not helped out with our well-designed booth. *Workers get in free.* This year the show has expanded to a whole second floor so the organizers can cover home design innovations also. Can't wait to volunteer! Who do we call?

WOW! Last minute news - Each PBA club member wanting to help should call your club's vice president and tell them. Ed Suarez (suarez1@mnsinc.com) has heroically volunteered to repeat his performance and will need contact people in each club to help coordinate this expanded effort.]

Helping and Serving Build Cameraderie.

## WINTERIZING BONSAI for BEGINNERS *by Shari Sharafi*

*Editor's note: Thought the readers would want to find out how a PBA member winters his bonsai so here's an article which will allow you to compare the way they do it in the cold north, Canada, and our climate.*

Finally the summer is over, kids are back in school, and a winter season is soon upon us. We can put our trees away and relax a bit to plan for the next year. Sometimes I feel unfortunate to be involved with such a never-ending affair. Of course we are talking about bonsai. You wire a tree and soon thereafter you may have to remove the wires and rewire. It seems like the work on a bonsai is never finished. I wonder how painters or musicians would feel about their painting and scores if they had to maintain their work every day. They would probably go mad just thinking about it.

However to guarantee the survival of your during this "bonsai holiday" season, we have to do a few minor chores to assure the their safety and survival. This article is meant for the absolute beginner; and I can assure you that there are many other techniques to put trees away for the winter. The following few hints are only meant for the beginner with minimum number of available resources. The more experienced members are encouraged to write and supplement this subject.

Just about all trees, whether so called tropical or nontropical, need some winter rest. For some trees this is as dramatic as losing all their leaves and going into a complete dormancy period (these trees are called deciduous). For some others, it may be to shed some of their older needles (called needle evergreen) or leaves (called broadleaf evergreen), while maintaining their more recent ones in order to reduce their energy demand and slow down their metabolism. Even tropical trees we keep indoors in winter (to protect them from a cold climate) are expected to lose some leaves and to slow their growth.

Trees, unlike humans, never learned to become mobile and active. In almost all cases, they need this winter rest period to complete their growth cycle; and *I guess* so they can

wake up perky for the coming spring (non-botanist analysis of this complex process). In general, the upper branches of the trees have learned to deal with the cold and wind, but the tree roots need extra protection. In nature the tree roots are in the ground and rarely get damaged from the cold climate, since the ground provides a uniform temperature medium for the roots to reside in.

To make the matter simple, you should deal with trees (and all your plants) in one of two ways, whether they will need to come indoors to get protection from frost and winter, or stay outdoors to get the cold shock treatment which is necessary for their growth.

If you are buying a tree and you are not sure of its characteristics, the most important question for you to ask is whether that tree is a tropical tree or a nontropical tree. Unfortunately there are trees which I will touch on briefly that are sort of in between and require a bit of each care.

A few examples of your tropical plants would be bougainvillea, buttonwood, and almost all ficus trees. These plants are from the hot climates which almost never experience frost, let alone a hint of snow. Therefore these trees will need to come indoors as early as the first part of September to avoid any accidental damage to them and should remain indoors as late as mid May. In general they don't like temperatures below 60°F and often in September and May the night temperatures can drop below 50°F. So why risk it. With these trees, as with all trees once outdoors, they become infested with living things, some desirable and some undesirable. I have a few tropical trees and before I bring them indoors, I like to give mine a chemical bath to discourage the undesirables from entering the house. I have found the best product to be Schultz houseplants and gardens spray, which by the way is made with botanical Pyrethrins from the chrysanthemum, and is extremely safe. I also dip the entire pot in a watered down solution of Bonide fruit tree spray to discourage root bugs. I normally do this over the weekend and leave each tree in the solution for about a half hour, and then let them stay out for one more night to get rid of any remaining off gas. I also have had good success with controlling diseases with a monthly application of Shultz. For this I put



newspapers around the tree and then I spray the trees. I always do this in the morning before leaving the house; and by the time I come back, there is no smell. I simply discard the remaining newspaper. Also two essential requirements for indoor plants (as well as people) are air circulation and humidity. Air circulation is great for avoiding funguses; and humidity is good for many bugs that prefer dry environment to thrive, such as the red spider mites. I have found that the humidity in the Washington metropolitan area is sufficient and I don't really worry about that too much, unless you like and keep your house very hot (82°F), but I do run a small oscillating fan all day to keep the plant area airy.

All other trees (non-tropicals) that are found outdoors all year around will need to stay outdoors during the winter months. There are some bonsai enthusiasts who grow a few varieties of the outdoor trees indoors all year around at almost a constant temperature environment. But for the rest of us, our outdoor trees will have to stay outdoors so they can feel the cold. In fact there are some that believe the colder the better, as in the case for fruit trees which tend to do better in spring after a real cold winter. The trick to overwintering trees is to give them a shady spot with almost no sun and good ventilation, and let them rest undisturbed for the entire duration. There are a number of ways for overwintering trees, and my favorite is to pack them all side-by-side against a fence where they are protected from the sun and predominant winter winds. To start the process, I remove all the weeds, moss, stones, and other debris ahead of time. At this time, it would help to re-top the soil in the pot if there are exposed roots or the soil line has dropped.

I always give the pots a final "seasonal soil drench." I now have a small rectangular concrete-mixing tub, about 6 inches deep, bought for few dollars from a local hardware store. This allows me to drench trees very quickly. I fill the tub with tepid water. Sometimes I add a few drops of Superthrive concentrate, add a few capfuls of Bonide fruit tree spray on the trees. I settle each tree gently into the bath and let it stay in with its soil submerged for a few minutes. I then give them a good spray of Ultra-Fine SunSpray. I

do all this around the last weekend of November which coincides with Thanksgiving. I then rake the area I have selected for the winter storage. The area is along a tall wooden privacy fence, which blocks all the south sun. Fortunately the area I use has a nice slope giving it good drainage. If your area is flat, you can use a few pressure-treated 2'x4's to raise the bottoms of your pots, or a rock, bricks, etc., to be sure the drainage holes are not plugged and sealed by sitting too flat on the earth. Then I place the larger trees along the edge of the fence, side-by-side, with one to three inches between them, so I don't accidentally damage them banging them against each other. Then I place the smaller trees in the front row. I limit the number of rows to only two. The end product turns out about two feet deep by about fifty feet long. For each of the first few years, I bought about ten large bags of shredded hardwood mulch to cover the pots and soil of up to a few inches above the soil line. Then I constructed a mulch hill outward and created an air-tight apron around the outside using the leftover plastic bags. I cut the leftover plastic bags to create a large flat sheets and placed them on the sides of the mulch pile. I also put few rocks and stones on their edges to prevent the wind from uplifting the plastic. This gives a nice tight protection against the north wind that would penetrate the mulch hill. The use of mulch had one benefit which was that in the spring I transferred the mulch to my garden, and I didn't have to buy new mulch.

A few years ago, I was conversing with a bonsai friend from Baltimore Bonsai Society. He liked my technique, and he described his own very similar to mine. He said that he simply (in my mind) turns over his benches sideways to create the wind protection, places his trees that were on the benches on the ground and uses leaves from trees to cover the pots. He explained that he preferred leaves to mulch, in particular leaves from the maple trees. I have followed his advice, and converted to using leaves from a couple of large silver maples. This also lets me recycle the leaves, while saving on the mulch. I always felt uncomfortable putting fresh mulch over the trees, although I don't believe it ever caused any problem.

I have had good success with these methods. I

rarely lose a tree; and if it happens, it is mostly due to some other reason.

I remember talking to another fellow bonsai enthusiast in Northern Virginia. He uses horse stable leftovers instead of mulch or leaves. In his technique, he obtains the material (mostly horse manure, saw dust, and straw) in spring using heavy-duty construction trash bags. He then places the trash bags under his tree benches all summer long with their tops open. This causes them to receive quite a bit of water from rain and watering of his trees. The water and the sun both help the material to decompose very quickly. By winter the material is ready to be used to cover his trees. The following spring he again uses the material to mulch his garden and yard.

So if you don't have a cold house, then not to worry, and maybe this technique can work for you. If you do have a cold house, you actually have to worry a lot, maybe too much heat, or too cold, dehydration, animals getting in and doing their own damage, or in the case of one of our Brookside members, the ice coming down and crashing over the roof and destroying the cold house, along with "winter pruning" some of your prize trees.

Another method I have seen work well with one or two trees, is to take the trees out of their pots and bury them for the winter. I personally feel uncomfortable with disturbing the root ball in late fall. But - one of our local

bonsai enthusiasts with a very impressive bonsai collection prefers to do all his repotting in the fall. In the spring he is busy teaching, with no time for repotting. For novices like me, I prefer (if deciding to bury the plant) to dig a hole, fill it with gravel, and set the entire unpotted bonsai in the ground, and then mound the soil up around the pot up to the top edge of the pot, and add a final covering of mulch or leaves up to the first branch.

I personally prefer the "above ground" overwintering since it lets me forget about them for a while. I never need to water the trees, since the material over them absorbs quite a bit of water, becomes heavy, and creates a blanket over their bases. In fact, in a good cold winter, this protective layer freezes very quickly and provides an excellent insulation over the pots. With a bit of luck it stays frozen all winter.

I always put my quince trees on the outside edges where they are accessible and can be easily removed in mid-February. They need an early start in order to have them in full bloom by mid-March when official spring starts. Often I have trouble getting them out because of the ice formed over the protective cover. In fact, this cold is okay with the trees. The problem is not constant cold, but often the thawing and freezing back and forth.

Good luck with your method. Let us know if you do things differently.

## **BACK TO BASICS WITH BERNI** *by Berni Gastrich*

**DORMANCY** - Deciduous plants, other than annuals, prepare for dormancy by sending their energy reserves in the form of sugars and starches, down into their roots for winter storage. In the world of perennials, we have many examples of this in extreme form. Potatoes, onions, carrots, etc., are examples. The same process also happens in plants that do not have such tuberous roots. When the leaves of trees lose their green color in autumn, it is because these nutrients have left the leaves and moved down into the root system. In spring a reverse flow takes place, sending the nutrients up into the twigs where the buds swell and form new leaves. An example of this is the upward flow of sap in maples allowing the tapping for making maple syrup. The above is not true in evergreens, especially needle evergreens. These trees maintain their energy reserves right up in the leaves. This is why the radical pruning which can be done on deciduous trees is deadly to needle evergreens. If you remove all the needles, you have removed all the energy, and the tree will die. Why should we care about this? The above concepts are a foundation for the understanding of energy control in bonsai. Such procedures as needle pulling in autumn/winter, or defoliating in summer are based on this. We will discuss such procedures in future "Basics."

## MONTHLY CARE TIPS for November *prepared by Jules Koetsch*

The following tips have been compiled from 4 Japanese bonsai magazines and Yuji Yoshimura's book. November is the time of year when in this area one starts to put the bonsai in winter storage, bury them in the ground, or cover them with a mulch. If not in a coldframe or poly house, insure that the bonsai won't be exposed to any strong winds either by locating them in a protected spot or putting up a fence of burlap. Watering in winter need not be as frequent as in the other seasons of the year. The watering schedules suggested in the Japanese text and repeated below are not ironclad since the winter environment in which your plants are placed plays an important part in when sequential waterings should take place. Hence, daily checkups are in order to determine if the soils in different species require watering. In winter, watering may be skipped as much as 3 days.

**DANGER:** One tends to relax one's watering routine in winter, neglects to check the plants for more than one to three days and the bonsai die due to lack of water. In the winter most plants can survive with reduced light but never without water! The times to water are dependent on a number of factors: soil mix, location relative to wind and light, plant species, atmospheric humidity, health of the plant, and so forth. Hence the following watering schedules should only be used as a reference to indicate whether each plant species, under ideal growing conditions, is more or less thirsty than others.

### **CONIFERS**

**Black pine:** Watering should be done 3 times per day until the 20th of the month - thereafter water once per month or as needed in the winter. Note that the Japanese plant their black pines in a soil mixture primarily made up of what they term "river sand" so that the pines do not have "wet feet" for too long a period of time. Repot any time up to the 20th of the month if needed (normally done every 3 or 4 years). Remove dead needles. Wire any time during month. pH 4.5 - 6.0

**Cryptomeria:** Water once per day. pH 5.5 - 7.0

**Hemlock:** Water as needed. It is possible to wire until December. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**Hinoki:** Water as needed. Wire any time during the month. Repot any time (normally needed every 3 years). pH 5.0 - 6.0

**Larch:** Water as needed. **The larch can be pruned.** Remove any wire. Rewiring can be done in next March. pH 5.0 - 6.5

**Needle juniper:** Water 2 times per day. pH 6.0 - 7.0

**Sawara cypress:** Water as needed. Wiring can be done during the month. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**Shimpaku (Sargent juniper):** Water 2 times per day. Repot during the first 10 days of the month (need only be done every 3 years). Wiring can be done any time during the month. Remove any old wire before it digs into the bark. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**Spruce:** Water once per day if necessary. Wire/rewire anytime during the month. Repot any time up to the 20th of the month. Repot after the first 5 years in training, and thereafter once every 3 years. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**White pine:** Water 2 times per day. Any time during the month, wire, prune, remove unnecessary branches, and remove dead needles. pH 4.5 - 6.0

**Yew:** Water as needed. Wire during the month. pH 5.0 - 6.0



**DECIDUOUS****Non-fruiting/Non-flowering:**

**Beech:** Water 2 times per day. Leaves turn yellow during the last 10 days of the month. (No need to remove yellow leaves since beech naturally discard the spent leaves in the spring.) After the 20th of the month remove unwanted branches and wire. pH 5.0 - 7.0

**Chinese elm:** Water as needed. Prune unwanted lengths of branches during the first 10 days of the month. pH 6.0 - 7.5

**Ginkgo:** Water as needed. Appreciate the leaves turning yellow. pH 6.0 - 7.0

**Hornbeam:** Water 2 times per day. Leaves turn red. After the 20th of the month remove unwanted growth and rewire. pH 6.0 - 8.0

**Japanese maple:** Water 2 times per day if necessary. Leaves turn red. After the 20th of the month remove unwanted growth and rewire. pH 6.0 - 8.0

**Trident maple:** Water 3 times per day if necessary. Leaves turn red. Wiring/rewiring can be done after the 20th of the month. pH 6.0 - 8.0

**Weeping willow:** Water as needed. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**Winged Euonymous:** Water as needed.

Appreciate the fall color of the red leaves and the fruit. Remove unwanted growth. pH 5.5 - 7.0

**Flowering/Fruiting Plants:**

**Cherry:** Water once per day. pH 6.0 - 8.0

**Crab apple:** Water once per day. Leaves turn yellow color. Appreciate the fruit. pH 5.0 - 6.5

**Gardenia:** Water as needed. Prune unwanted branches and growth. Watch the temperature and winterize plant where temperature remains above 32°F. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**Holly:** Water once per day. After the 10th of the month - lightly prune only the branchlets. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**Pyracantha:** Water once per day. After the 10th of the month - lightly prune only the branchlets. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**Quince:** Water 1 or 2 times per day. pH 6.0 - 7.5

**Satsuki (azalea):** Water once per day. Remove any wire before the 20th of the month. pH 4.5 - 5.0

**Ume (Japanese flowering plum or apricot):** Water once per day. pH 6.0 - 7.5

**Wisteria:** Water as needed. pH 6.0 - 8.0

**HEY!** Sometimes club members want to help, but don't know there are easy jobs they could handle. NVBS has found a cheerful soul to greet new faces at our meeting room door and introduce them to seasoned members. Our greeter is not able to attend every meeting, but when she's available, she's helping, without a huge commitment.

Our president has also made name tags to be picked up upon entering, worn, and replaced in their box for next meeting. This helps folks, old members and new, ease acquaintance. It is not unusual to take many embarrassing months to learn someone's name when you only see them once a month.

What is your club doing to welcome new members and keep up (and in touch) with old members? Tell us what your club is doing to let old members and new know they are valued.