

PBA Clippings

NEWSLETTER OF THE POTOMAC BONSAI ASSOCIATION

Volume 31, Number 1
January 2001



The above photo is from the jacket of Mr. Toshio Kawamoto's book, **Saikei: Living Landscapes in Miniature**. The composition is aptly titled "Mountain Rapids." It consists of 5- to 15-year-old Cryptomeria, 4 to 14 inches tall, with river rocks as the stones. It is in an oval, unglazed, Tokoname-ware tray, 30 x 25 inches. Besides soil and green moss, river sand and white sand are used to give the impression of roiling water in the stream. Learn more from Jules' editorial . . .

In This Issue

Page

Editorial	2
BONsaiMot	4
Poetry Corner	4
Kudos and Thanks	5
Calendar	6
Message from Afar	7
Essay by Kyuzo Murata	8
Preping Trees for Display	11
February Bonsai Tips	12
Monthly Care Tips	14



PBA
Clippings
NEWSLETTER OF THE POTOMAC BONSAI ASSOCIATION

The *PBA Clippings* (ISSN 0160-9521) is published by the Potomac Bonsai Association Inc. (PBA), a nonprofit organization, in the interests of its affiliate member clubs and societies. Copyright 1996 PBA.

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 on the last page of this newsletter.

Non-Member Subscriptions: Individuals residing within the metropolitan areas of our clubs are encouraged to become members of a club to receive the newsletter. Annual subscription for 12 issues of the *PBA Clippings* only is US \$15.00 (US \$35 for international mail) which should be made payable to the Potomac Bonsai Association and sent to Judy Wise, 1259 4th St., SW, Washington, DC 20024.

Advertising Rates: Monthly rates: 1/6 page, \$15.00; 1/3 page, \$30.00; 1/2 page, \$45.00; full-page, \$90.00; 10% discount for 6 consecutive issues prepaid, 20% discount for 12 consecutive issues prepaid. Direct inquiries/payment (make checks payable to Potomac Bonsai Association) to: Jerry Antel, Jr., 6409 Middleburg Lane, Bethesda, MD 20817; (301) 320-5251.

Please send paper ad copy/articles to the editor:
J. F. Koetsch, 6709 Caneel Ct., Springfield, VA 22152.
E-mail or 3 1/2" diskette contributions can be sent in Word, WP, PageMaker, MacWord, or Text documents to bittenhand@erols.com.

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:

Editor	Jules Koetsch (703) 569-9378 jkoetsch@earthlink.net
Assoc./Type Editor, and Art Director	Betty Yeapanis, NVBS after 11 a.m. (703) 591-0864 bittenhand@erols.com
Mail Room Supervisor	Judy Wise, NVBS
Advertising Editor	Jerry Antel, Jr., BBS (301) 320-5251
Calendar Coordinator	Arschel Morell, BBC
Original Art	Frank Thomas, LBS
Staff Photographer	Chris Yeapanis, NVBS

Editorial by Jules Koetsch

This year is going to be a great year for bonsai in the Washington, DC, area as you should have gathered by reading *Chuck's Corral* in last month's issue of *PBA Clippings*.

Satsuki azaleas seem to stand a place apart from bonsai in Japan. There are people who intensely develop Satsuki azaleas as bonsai, and there are others who specialize in other plant species for bonsai. Since the Satsuki azaleas bloom around the month of May, there are spectacular Satsuki azalea bonsai shows during May in Japan. At those shows one finds Satsuki azalea bonsai just covered with blooms. The Satsuki's multi-colored blooms distinguish it from other azaleas with their singularly colored blooms. It will be interesting to get first-hand information from the Japanese delegation on growing the azaleas.

I'm most interested in learning more about two areas that have puzzled me:

(1) The Japanese use kanuma soil to repot their azaleas. The soil comes from an area by the same name in Japan. I once bought a bag of kanuma soil. I found it to be a creamy yellow color and the particles were very soft. In fact the particulate in the bag already contained a large amount of kanuma dust. After sifting out the dust and using the kanuma as a soil mix, the kanuma particles seemed to decompose into a wet mush in the soil. No chance for air spaces. One question that I need an answer to is: Does what I just mentioned also happen to the Japanese when they use kanuma soil?

(2) Another question I need an answer to is how wet must the soil of a potted azalea be kept? I vaguely remember reading somewhere that some azaleas live in wet, boggy areas. Using a moisture meter, I've found that the root masses of my azaleas give a high moisture reading over a number of days. A while back I learned that Jim Sullivan of the Bowie Bonsai

Club had tried Brian Batchelder's proposed method of potting bonsai. So I decided to make a trial run on two azaleas that were far from choice specimens. I removed all the soil from the two azaleas and tightly packed sphagnum moss that had been thoroughly soaked in water, into the root system. Having packed the root balls with sphagnum moss, I then put them in the pots and pressed more wet sphagnum moss into the pots to fill them. When finished, one should be able to turn the pot upside down and the plant should not fall out. Well, Jim Sullivan's repotting with Batchelder's method survived, but, as you might suspect, one of mine is still alive and one bit the dust. Hence I have not committed myself to using Batchelder's technique; but I am repotting my azaleas in the following mix: 3 parts Canadian peat moss, 2 parts horticultural perlite, 1 part rotted pine bark. In a 1-gallon can of the above mix, add 3 tbsp gypsum and 1 tbsp superphosphate.

The creation of a saikei planting by Mr. Fujikawa should be an event that no reader should miss. Mr. Fujikawa is a former apprentice and leading student of the renowned creator of saikei, Mr. Toshio Kawamoto. As Chuck Croft explained in his article, Mr. Fujiwara who resides in Oregon, will assemble a saikei based on Mr. Kawamoto's design. What is saikei for those who are unfamiliar with the meaning? Saikei is a *landscape on a tray*. A bonsai differs from a saikei in that for a bonsai only one or more trees reside in the container - nothing else is considered a bonsai except for the bonsai styles of root-over- or root-on-rock. The following is from Deborah R. Korreshoff's excellent book **BONSAI, It's Art, Science, History and Philosophy**; Boolarong Publications, Brisbane Australia; 1988. "The art form of saikei has a fairly short history. After World War II many of the bonsai collections and nurseries were destroyed and there wasn't much in the way of good,

mature trees available to be shaped as bonsai; and the few that were available were fairly costly. Young seedlings were available but they would take many years to develop into attractive trees and very few people had the patience to wait.

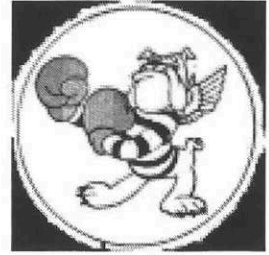
Mr. Toshio Kawamoto, a well-known bonsai artist, realized that if bonsai was going to continue as a practical art form in Japan, then the general public had to begin to train trees and prepare them to become the future masterpieces. With this in view, Mr. Kawamoto created the saikei art form where young plants and collected rocks could be put together in an attractive arrangement using bonsai techniques. Instantaneously the result is pleasing and as time goes on the trees will improve in maturity and style. The idea was that eventually the best tree may be removed from the setting and planted as a single bonsai while a smaller tree may be added to the saikei setting if necessary.

Thus, in the original view, saikei was seen as a pleasurable stepping stone to bonsai. Nowadays, however, saikei has almost become like an extra bonsai style and most settings are made as permanent arrangements and appreciated for their own sake. As with group settings, one may use bonsai that are unbalanced on their own - perhaps due to the lack of important branches - but which have a well-developed trunk. It is an art form that can be attractive for the beginner and the experienced grower alike."

It would be worthwhile if you can to read the various sections of the Koreshoff book pertaining to saikei before attending the presentation on saikei. Also you should have as part of your bonsai library Mr. Kawamoto's book **Saikei: LIVING LANDSCAPES IN MINIATURE**, Kodansha International Ltd, Tokyo and New York; 1967. Besides some very beautiful pictures and descriptions on how to make different saikei masterpieces, the book has 88 pages containing excellent

information on all the aspects of creating a bonsai. The information is presented in concise tables and charts. It is a book that is a must in everyone's library. Mr. Kawamoto was born in 1917, the son of Japan's greatest bonsai expert of that time. Following his father's death in 1960, he succeeded his father as director of Meijuen, at that time the most distinguished bonsai nursery in Japan. I was so impressed with the pictures of saikei in his book that in 1978 I put together one to emulate his Mountain Rapids arrangement. The Cryptomeria have, as prophesied, grown in both height and girth. I'm managing to keep the trees

from getting too tall; and I do not intend to take any tree out to make a single bonsai. For those interested, the Koreshoff book does describe how one might cut out a single tree from a saikei, group or forest planting to make a "stand alone" bonsai. Hence, during the winter months, sit down with the above mentioned bonsai books and bone up on how to do a saikei. Then come to the presentation and consolidate your knowledge. Or if you can't wait that long, come to the presentation to see if you've done anything wrong.



BONSAIMOT

There's an old oriental saying:

If you want to be happy for 2 hours, get drunk.

If you want to be happy for 3 days, get married.

If you want to be happy for one week, kill your pig and eat it.

If you want to be happy for the rest of your life, do bonsai !

Poetry Corner - Calm yourself

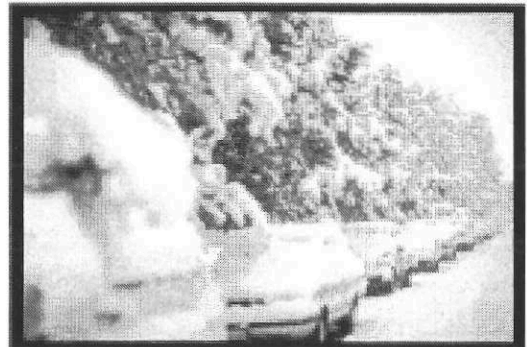
The following haiku translations appeared in *An Introduction to Haiku* by Harold G. Henderson; Doubleday & Company, Inc., New York; 1958. The first is by the master himself, and the second is by one of his pupils.

The Way of Zen

Well then, let's go -
to the place where we tumble down
looking at snow !
- Basho

Winter

Mountains and plains,
all are captured by the snow -
nothing remains
- Joso



What?! Didja' think Zen is only in meadows and woodlands? You gotta get your Zen where you can find it.



Kudos and Thanks for Year 2000 from the Editor

Having survived another year as editor of *Clippings*, it's time to thank my illustrious partners in this venture. Also the following will give the reader an idea of what goes into getting the *PBA Clippings* into a subscriber's hands.

One is Betty Yeapanis, who has the Herculean task of transposing an entire typewritten edition with photos and illustrations onto disc. She plays the tedious game of fitting text to pages, always mindful of the layout of *Clippings*. Because of its book-like format (instead of individual sheets stapled together), we must work in 4-page segments. To make one page, there is the requirement to fill all four pages with material. If only 1, 2, or 3 pages can be filled, there will be conversely 3, 2 or 1 pages left blank. One way out at times is to change the size of the type; but that can be carried only so far. Hence, Betty has to hunt around for fillers for the empty pages and spaces where an article does not end at the bottom of a page. She hits on me for material from time to time. I then have go to my file of other clubs' newsletters to help her out.

Hence we at *PBA Clippings* are always happy to have readers submit anything relevant to any subject that might even be of the slightest interest to the readers. Lately the field of interest we can draw on has broadened to include viewing stones, the art of the Japanese garden, and poetry. Readers are encouraged to contribute anything that they may think will be interest to the reader. The *Clippings* staff is always happy to receive something to publish. It need not be sent e-mail. It can be handwritten. Do not worry about spelling, punctuation or grammar. [Alright, Betty is now having apoplexy.] Betty is an expert at making an article seem like it was written by a member of the US Presidential staff. Betty also adds a woman's touch to the pages with catchy sayings and little bits of computer-derived artwork. Makes the pages look real fancy-shmancy.

Jerry Antel, the Advertising Editor, has scouted about to try and corral advertisers for *Clippings*. Over the years there never has been an overwhelming response to advertise in *Clippings*. It is understandable when one can go to the nationally distributed magazines like *Bonsai Today* and find many advertisers. He's always interested in picking up a new advertiser. Anyone who might have an inkling

of a potential advertiser should let Jerry know. He'll do the rest. As PBA treasurer Jerry also takes care of reimbursing the printer for each monthly delivery.

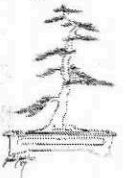
Shari Sharafi has been the Calendar Coordinator for the past year. He is the one who collected the information on the PBA member clubs' activities, as well as other events of interest such as events at the U.S. National Arboretum. Readers are encouraged to submit information on any forthcoming events that would be of interest to us. Arschel Morell has volunteered to take over from Shari so that Shari can devote time to the next symposium. Please keep Arschel apprised of forthcoming events of possible PBA interest in time to get into *Clippings* so that the readers can take advantage of them.

Frank Thomas of Lancaster BS is listed under *PBA Clippings* Staff as the one who has submitted from time to time handsome sketches to help decorate spaces on the pages of *Clippings*.

Chris Yeapanis is *Clipping's* staff photographer, and you have seen his digital camera work in past issues, as well as many photos from Rich Bozek, Barbara Gregory, and Dixie Cook.

Lastly, there is Judith Wise to whom the printer delivers the issues of *Clippings* for address-labeling. Judy keeps an up-to-date mailing list and prints the sorted mailing labels. She applies the labels on each of over 300 copies (saving PBA \$48 per month) and gets them into their respective mailbags. As often as not, she also makes the trip to Merrifield Post Office. You may not know why the issues are delivered by the printer to Judy's house. PBA gets a reduced bulk-mailing rate because it is incorporated as a non-profit organization (but only in Maryland and D.C.). To avoid paying tax on the printer fee, PBA must take delivery in Maryland or D.C., so Judy volunteered to accept the copies from the printer (saving PBA \$30 per month).

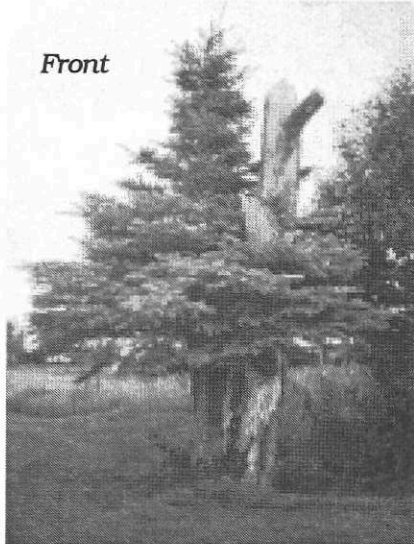
Once again I heartily thank all of the above for their parts in helping *PBA Clippings* get to you!



PETER BAUER and SANDRA KAY by Jules Koetsch

Last year Peter Bauer and Sandra Kay (one-time member of Brookside Bonsai Society) sent me a card and four photographs from their home in Nova Scotia.

It's beautiful country up there, and it is worth a trip just to see the countryside. If anyone is interested, there's an open invitation. Their address is RR. 1 Box 804, 11901 Ross Ferry Road, Bras d'Or, Nova Scotia, BOC 1B0, Canada. Phone (1-902)674-2896 Fax (1-902)674-2919 or e-mail: cbgrania@auracom.com. I'm sorry this didn't appear in *Clippings* last winter. It got shuffled away with other Christmas cards and came to light while going through them for this year's mailings.



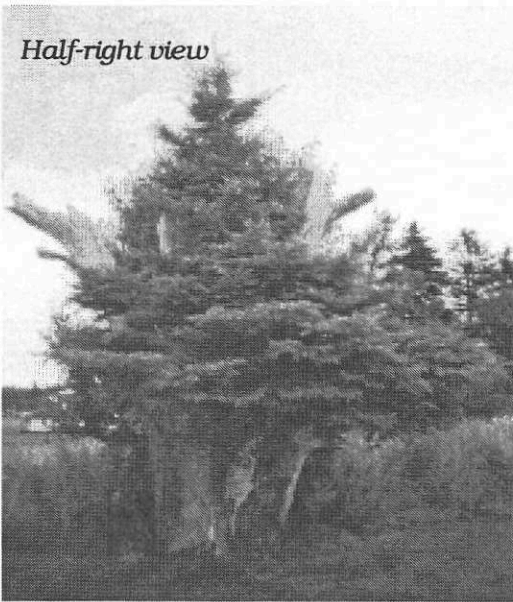
Front

"This is one lone tree, a white spruce (I believe), left growing in the side yard of a Holiday Inn in the suburbs of Charlottetown, the capital of the province of Prince Edward Island. It is less than a couple of hundred miles from our home in Cape Breton. We stayed there a few times and couldn't resist the wonderful "by-nature-styled" archetype for a bonsai. Aside from the rather pleasing shape, it is amazing how the live trunk has grown from the inside of the dead twin trunks' shari region."

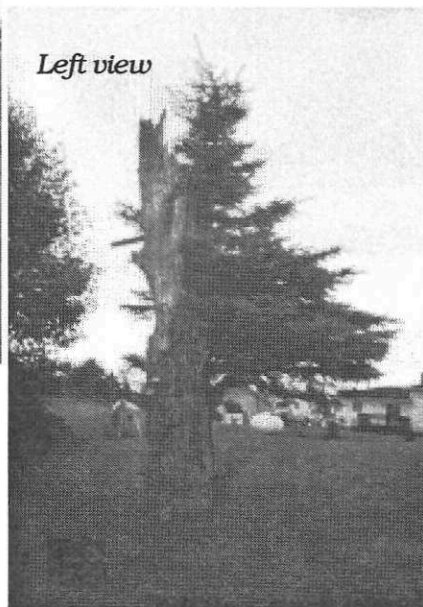
I do not know if all of the 4 photos will copy clearly enough to print all four. However, one of the pictures seems to indicate that live tree on dead trunks is another example of the way the azalea at the Arboretum came about as reported in the last issue of *Clippings*.

Their letter continued to mention the following:

"The newsletter (*Clippings*) keeps us in contact with the happenings on the Washington area bonsai scene. It's almost six years since we moved here with a 'couple of hundred trees' . . . Collecting is fabulous here. Especially the stunted old, old LARCHES, that can be found in the Highlands. Have just shipped some two dozen to Toronto to Arthur Skolnik. If you ever come across somebody knowledgeable and really keen to go collecting for a special larch or two, send them to us . . ."

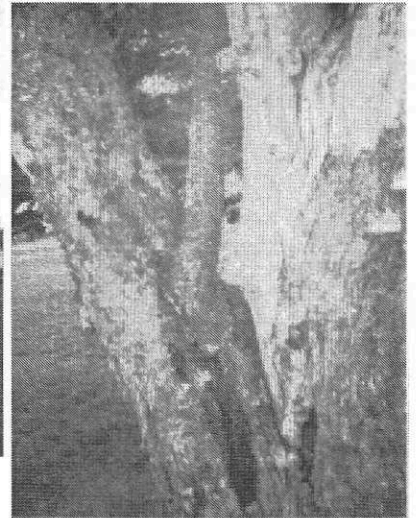


Half-right view



Left view

Secrets given away . . . The back view shows live trunk growing from the inside of the shari region between the big dead trunks.



A Bonsai Master's Thoughts . . .

Kyuzo Murata is among the most respected and loved Japanese masters. His essay, inspired by sentiments rooted in tradition, philosophy, and religion, is, for Westerners, one of the most important texts for the understanding of bonsai. - Gianfranco Giorgi

It was around 1960 when people all over the world started to understand a word, bonsai. Of course, few enthusiasts knew the word until then, for mostly it was called dwarfed plant, potted tree, or miniature tree. In 1970 a huge-scale bonsai show was staged at the Osaka Expo. I believe Expo really played a major role in promoting the word bonsai to all foreign visitors.

Questions often arose at Expo and later. "What is the definition of bonsai? What is the difference between bonsai and Hachiuye, which means potted plant?" The answer is not simple. I usually give the following definition:

Bonsai is a living plant transferred to a pot or tray or a rock or stone so that it can continue to live semi-permanently. It has not only a natural beauty of the particular plant but the appearance reminds people of something other than the plant itself. It could be a scene, a forest or part of a forest, a lone tree in the field, a seascape, a lake, a river or a stream or a pond. It is also possible that a certain appearance reminds a person of the wind blowing through the branches.

In Japan, the meaning of bonsai is to create a natural scene on the tray, using plants as the main materials. When you take a Hachiuye, or potted plant, you can only see "prettiness of the plant or flower. " It does not remind you of anything else. It is possible, however, to change the Hachiuye into bonsai by using what we call bonsai technique. By adapting the techniques of Yoseuye (group planting) and Ne Tsuranari (root connecting), we can make the scene look like a forest or part of a forest. Shaken or slanting style, will remind you of wind blowing; Kengai or

cascade style, will remind you of a cliff.

The next question is "Can we add grasses or materials other than plants?" There are many people who believe the grasses or stones or rocks are an important decoration of bonsai. They help improve the appearance of bonsai. In a way I agree with them. There are certain kinds of grasses or stones that remind one of a grass field, or rocks in rapids or murmuring streams.

At the extreme limit, I believe that even tulips or hyacinths can be used with bonsai. Back in the early 1950s I used to see many banana-tree bonsai about 10 inches high, but I do not see them now. In a way I feel sorry that I don't see them anymore in Japan.

The bonsai spirit

What I have discussed so far is a general conception in the Japanese bonsai world, and / am sure you are all familiar with the idea. Let us now proceed a little further, a little deeper. The art of bonsai was developed in Japan where there were four seasons, clear water, and clean air all over the country, a 1500-year-old history with many ancient but unchanging traditions or customs.

Among all these things the art of bonsai has grown to be what it is today.

I do not think that bonsai could have developed and survived in tropical or frozen zones or in the deserts. Bonsai's association with the change of seasons, mountains, valleys, rivers, waters, lakes, storms, gentle wind, rains, snow, frost, and many other natural phenomena is far more important than one can imagine. Japan is one of the few fortunate countries that have all of these.

Bonsai should not be a mere sketch of a scene, or a three-dimensional exhibit from a photograph of a scene.

It is perfectly all right to use nature as the subject, but the goal should be a sketch which has been refined and trimmed in your mind before you start creating. Only then you can call it an art.

For instance, in Japan, we have the traditional Noh play or classic Japanese dance, which is the product of three-dimensional music and story. In your country you have ballet. If ballet can be defined as a fusion or union of human sensibility and art, then bonsai can be defined as a union of nature and art.

The Noh play or ballet expresses its movement in a relatively short period of time; on the other hand, you can hardly notice the slow growth of bonsai. The object of bonsai is to simulate nature. Nature expresses eternity in very, very slow movement and bonsai demonstrates this concept of the slow process of nature. When your concept of bonsai comes this far, then you cannot avoid going into the world of Wabi or Sabi. It is an almost impossible task to try to explain the meaning of these terms because they are concepts of feeling which were created and actually only felt by Japanese people over many, many generations; they were unknown to Westerners until recently.

Wabi is a state of mind, or a place, or environment in tea ceremony, or in Haiku. It is a feeling of great simplicity, quiet yet dignified. Sabi is a feeling of simplicity and quietness which comes from something that is old and used over and over again. For an instant, picture yourself standing at a corner of Ryoanji's stone garden in Kyoto in the evening, in late autumn in a misty rain. You are viewing the garden; the next moment you close your eyes and are deep in thought. Actually there is nothing in your mind. It is empty, and yet your mind or heart is fulfilled with certain contentment. That feeling is Wabi.

I firmly believe the final goal of creating bonsai is to create this feeling of Wabi, or Sabi in bonsai. This is the ultimate goal of the art of bonsai. I do not have the knowledge to explain the essence of Wabi, or Sabi, but I cannot help but think that the essence of philosophy is to seek truth, virtue, and beauty, and it so happens that these are the essence of bonsai.

The feeling of Wabi, or Sabi, is something almost stoic which eventually leads us to Zen Buddhism. These are not easy-going feelings; they are very disciplined, quiet but severe. The feelings are common among people who are very religious and people who create bonsai. I think this feeling is love, love for trees, love for human beings.

No single technique

Now, let us go back to reality. Bonsai is a strange art wherein one can produce a feeling of the reality of nature by manipulation, over a long period of time, of trees, stones, rocks, trays or pots. And every bonsai is original. No two are alike. You can never finish or complete the creation of bonsai. It goes on and on forever.

In the art of bonsai, there is no particular school for teaching technique as you have in flower arrangement. This is because we must protect the life of a tree permanently. Limiting the bonsai technique to a certain style is to ignore the physiology of the tree. If you try to enforce your own particular design on the tree without considering its nature, the tree may eventually die. Plant physiology is limited. You need to understand this limitation as you create your bonsai.

Apart from trees in the field or forest, trees in bonsai trays or pots are, I believe, the longest living plants which you help to grow and sustain with love, and which share your joys and sorrows. They say the life span of an average cherry tree in nature is about 120 years, but it is not rare

to see much older cherry trees as bonsai. It becomes a sort of religion when you start loving a bonsai which has a much longer life span than your own.

All of you who are actually engaged in the art of bonsai have at one time or another studied under fine bonsai teachers and have mastered the techniques of Chokkan or upright style, Moyogi or octopus style, Shakan or slanting style, and Kengai or cascade style, but when it comes to Nebari - arranging root systems or branches - you realize that it does not always work as it is taught.

I have been working with bonsai for the past 60 years, and I still come across problems almost every day - about fertilizing, about soil for planting, about watering, about stones or rocks, about wiring. There is no way to make a fast decision. One sometimes takes several years to arrive at a solution. So, recently I have come to my own conclusion that the most challenging technique in the art of bonsai is to transform a most unnatural-looking tree into a most natural-looking tree.

For instance, there was a famous zelkova which was owned by the late Prime Minister Shigura Yoshida, who happened to be Chairman of Nippon Bonsai Association at the time. This bonsai was created by Mr Ogata. He had severed the main trunk of the zelkova and created a totally new look. When I first saw it at the annual Kokufukai Exhibition, I laughed, and so did the directors of national museums who attended the exhibition. Several years later it was again exhibited

at the Tokyo Olympics and people liked it this time. Some years later it was displayed at another Kokufukai Exhibition, and this time it was recognized as one of the finest bonsai in Japan. It really is a strange looking tree. You would never find such an unnatural-looking tree anywhere in the world, yet it looks exactly like a huge zelkova tree standing alone and strong in the field.

Let me deviate to another example. In a Japanese Kubuki play, a male actor plays the role of a female. We call him Oyama. The audience knows that she is he, but he really acts and looks like a woman. This is an art. The same thing can be said about the art of bonsai.

In Japan and China, we have what we call the art of handwriting, or calligraphy. There are three basic ways of writing Kanji, just as in the West there are two basic ways of writing alphabets, capital letters and small letters. I think we can apply the same variation to bonsai. When you try to sketch natural scenery, you may use either capital letters or small letters because the basic goal is the same, but your method of approaching this goal is different.

Fortunately, there is a replica of the Ryoanji Temple Stone Garden at Brooklyn Botanic Garden. For those who have not seen the garden, visit it if you have a chance. Just stand there and watch; if you are tired, close your eyes. I am sure this experience will help you to understand more about bonsai.

[Some bonsai books present not only new aspects on the subject, but also much of the information appears in handy, quick reference tables. This book by Gianfranco Giorgi, edited by Victoria Jahn, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, is unique in what it offers, and is a worthy, affordable addition to your bonsai library. (Crown carries it for less than \$14 paperback.) - Jules]

Quote from Simon & Schuster: "Brimming with fascinating and practical details and illustrated with 150 beautiful color photographs, **Guide to Bonsai** provides everything the plant enthusiast needs to know about this unique and intriguing art."

It may seem very early to start giving pointers on prepping trees for display. But if you've read the article (February Bonsai Tips) in this issue, you'll realize that this article applies even more so when you're getting your plants out of winter storage.

It is even more important this year if you're going to try to have something creditable for entry into your club spring show, and the big one in April at the Arboretum.

This article we are reprinting from the Yama Ki Newsletter of October. They reprinted from the September 2000 New Orleans Bonsai Newsletter. [Check with your club OIC as to rules (on wiring, etc) for PBA 31st Anniversary Spring Show.]

PREPARATION OF TREES FOR DISPLAY

by Wayne Greenleaf And Kirk Vaughn

. . . We would like to give you some reminders on how to prepare your bonsai for this or any other show:

The first consideration, obviously, should be the tree itself. The tree must be healthy. The leaves/needles should be green, with no evidence of pests, disease or pest damage. Perform any work on the tree several weeks before the planned showing. Remove any twigs that are growing outside the profile of the canopy. If you find any large tertiary or secondary branches that should be removed, consider waiting till the next exhibit to show the tree, unless the removal will not leave a noticeable gap in the design. Remove any dead leaves, twigs, and needles. Some minor trimming of deciduous and tropical trees can be performed. This grooming is done to refine the silhouette.

There is some disagreement as to whether a tree should be shown with wiring in place. Club members have displayed trees with wiring in the past. The presence of wire can serve to educate the public on the methods used to bend the branches in the design of the tree. A purist may disagree with such a practice, but if the wiring is neat, it is permissible and commonly seen. The emphasis here is on neat wiring that is not cutting into the tree.

The next step is to clean the trunk. Jins and sharies should be treated. This will remove undesirable mosses, mildew, and

algae. Brush the wood to clean it. Then, renew the lime sulphur. If you are too close to show time for the lime sulphur to become grey instead of bright white, add a drop or two of India ink to the mix.

There are special considerations for pines, particularly black pines. Carefully pick off any moss growing on the base of the trunk. You do not want to remove the bark plates that indicate the age of the tree. For most deciduous trees, the bark can be scrubbed with an old toothbrush (or, buy a new one! We certainly spend a whole lot more on other bonsai tools). If there are stains, use a little soapy water with the brush. Junipers can (some would say "should") have the bark polished to reveal the reddish underbark. This is accomplished by scrubbing it with a wire brush. Be careful that you do not expose the green cambium layer which lies below the bark.

Next, attention should be given to the container. Pots can be lightly cleaned with a soft brush and a very diluted soap and water solution, or lightly scrubbed with a Scotch Brite pad. The idea here is to remove dirt. If there are white mineral deposits, scrub with a mild vinegar solution. A glazed pot can be rubbed with a clean soft cloth to remove any water spots. After an unglazed pot is rinsed and dried, it can be wiped with mineral or baby oil to enhance its appearance. The pot should be immaculate.

Finally, the composition should be freshly "landscaped." Weeds should be removed, along with any other debris. Place fresh bonsai soil to within 1/4" of the rim of the pot. Or, replace the moss on the sod surface.

The total composition can be enhanced by the use of stands. Our exhibit is usually outdoors, so we generally don't use bonsai display stands. However, a few points should be remembered when stands are used in an exhibit. Usually, the tree is placed in the center of the stand. Before placing a pot on a stand, make sure the bottom of the pot is free of dirt and gravel, both of which might scratch the stand. Never slide a pot on a stand. Be careful of exposed wire used to hold the drain-hole screens in place. Obviously, avoid water spots, and remove any that are present. A tree on a stand with thin legs can impart the feeling that the tree is floating. A low or massive stand in turn gives the impression of stability. Beautiful wooden stands, which are often works of art themselves, are not the only option here. An impressive presentation can incorporate alternative stands made from reed or straw mats, slabs of slate or stone, finished tree stumps, redwood slabs, etc. By keeping the foregoing in mind, a tree will have its maximum visual impact on viewers. Considering the amount of work that goes into getting a tree to the point that one is willing to show it to the public and other bonsai enthusiasts, these extra steps are painless and will reflect positively on the artist's attention to detail.

Club Secretaries: Kindly inform the PBA Secretary, Judy Wise (contact info, pg 2) of your newly elected officer slates with addresses/phone/e- adresses ASAP.

FEBRUARY BONSAI TIPS

by Alan Walker

The February 2000 issue of the Lake Charles Bonsai Society in Louisiana had the following article. Now, you can start planning what you'll be doing in February. Note that the article (and the paragraph about repotting early) applies to the Lake Charles neighborhood so you will have to time your repotting efforts to this part of the country. For deciduous trees, the ideal time to repot is just before the buds break and leaves start to form.

The soil mixes are of interest, and you may be curious enough to try some of the mixes on a trial basis on one or more of your plants. Don't go whole hog and switch completely until you are sure the mixes are better than your present ones.

Beware of complacency. Arctic fronts can zoom in without warning (and contrary to predictions of the Weather Channel, etc.) and severely damage or kill those trees you've been letting enjoy the balmy weather. Elms typically sport with new leaves in late January in our neighborhood. Other trees have swelling buds. As delightful as it is to see this right now, it is really an indication that the trees may be less robust this year due to the brief dormancy period. These trees are at their greatest vulnerability for frost and freeze damage. A quick freeze after spring bud break will damage strong trees and kill weak trees. Forewarned is forearmed.

Typically February is the last month in which we can shape deciduous trees while they are still dormant. It is much easier to prune and wire trees in dormancy because the foliage is not there to hide individual branches and twigs. Be careful not to rub off any important buds as you work. If you are partial to lush foliage, you might find yourself less sentimental about cutting unnecessary branches while they are naked.

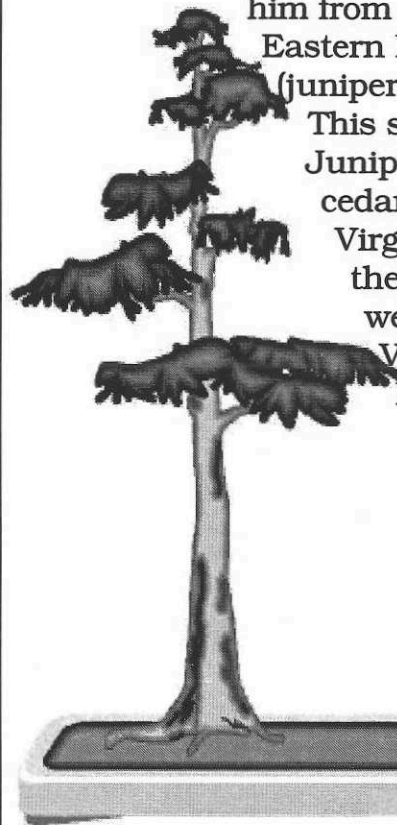
Look over your trees for any training wire which needs to be removed. As buds start swelling, so do the branches and twigs. Spring growth is often remarkably fast, particularly on relatively young material, and a branch can become scarred very quickly. Check any wired material for potential scarring at least once a week. It's time to have your soil ingredients together for repotting. Our recent wet weather emphasizes the need to keep soil mixes light and quick draining. Make sure your soils are dry and sifted. Go easy on organic content for most trees. You can add nutrients in controlled amounts later by fertilizing. Vaughn Banting makes the following recommendations for soil mixes. "For deciduous material and most broadleaf evergreens use a completely dry mix composed of roughly one part leaf mold, peat moss or other decomposed organic material to three parts coarse soil, fine aquarium gravel or a baked clay particle such as 'hadite' along with two parts garden loam or unimproved potting soil. All soil mixes need to be very dry, so that they can be worked in between the exposed roots and rootball of your tree. Dry soil worked in well with a chop stick or a pencil will eliminate dangerous air pockets. For azaleas follow the above mix but increase the peat moss to four or five parts. Use only peat for the organic part of the mix as the slight acid reaction it provides is just what azaleas require. If you plan to pot junipers, pines, cedrus, or other needle evergreens, use a mix of roughly one part organic material that has a minimal acid reaction, such as 'black cow manure or leaf mold to five or six parts coarse sand or fine gravel with two or three parts garden soil." These are not the only successful soil recipes, but they will ensure a well-drained soil. You will want to start a little earlier on repotting this year due to the early budding of our deciduous trees. It is better to have repotting done early enough

to allow the roots to start regenerating before foliage appears. Decide which trees you will be working with first and plan ahead which pots you will use for each. Repot your early budding trees before late leafers such as cypress. Broadleaf evergreens can be done later, and evergreen-conifers can be done last. February is a good month to use dormant oil spray prior to leafing out. Don't spray oilicide if the predicted low is less than 45°. Keep the spray off evergreen material as long as the danger of frost exists. February is still prime time for collecting. Primed as they are for their annual growth cycle, trees can withstand more trauma now than any other time of the year. After bud break your risk goes up. If you have access to any area which may be collected, please call any club officer, so we can schedule a dig.

Here's a tidbit from Dave Bogan, Greater Evansville Bonsai Society. Remember him from December issue:

Eastern Red Cedar
(juniperous Virginia)

This species of Juniper (no it s not a cedar) was called Virginia because the first specimens were from the Virginia colony. Both the bark and wood of this tree led the French of Canada to call it baton rouge , meaning red stick. Finding the same



tree in Louisiana prompted them to name the state capital - Baton Rouge.

14 MONTHLY CARE TIPS FOR JANUARY

 compiled by Jules

The following tips have been compiled in part from 4 Japanese bonsai magazines and Yuji Yoshimura's book. The timetable for various tasks agrees with the Japanese books' instructions for a climate similar to the Washington, DC, locale. The watering schedules are those cited under specific plant species in the Japanese books. However, where no schedule was given, the words "Water as needed" appear to remind the reader that watering is a very essential part of keeping the bonsai healthy and alive.

Watering: The following timely advice is from *Back to Basics with Berni* by Berni Gastrich which appeared in the December 2000 issue of the Yama Ki Newsletter.

"On a morning when the soil in the pot is frozen, the sun is strong, and there is a wind, an evergreen tree can be desiccated in hours. This is deadly. Even deciduous trees lose water to the sun and wind on such days. The primary objective of winter bonsai protection is to prevent dessication. Your wind-protective shelter should not act as a greenhouse. However, if it does, the long periods of warm temperatures will not allow for full dormancy and your tree will die within the next year.

"Don't forget watering ! Most of the trees your writer has lost during winter have died of dessication, not from wind or sun, but from insufficient watering. Evergreen trees are not totally dormant at temperatures above about 25°. They use quite a bit of water.

"Even dormant deciduous trees use some water. **A soil moisture gauge is very helpful to indicate which trees need water.** If you are using a modern bonsai mix (no humus, peat moss, or topsoil) over-watering is not really a danger, even in winter. **Just don't water when the soil is frozen.** The water cannot penetrate and could do harm."

I'm a firm advocate of using a soil moisture gauge to check the way your bonsai are accepting water. They aren't that expensive and can be found priced below \$10. When the meter reads one-half of full scale, it's time to water the plant.

CONIFERS

Black Pine: Water once per day. pH 4.5 - 6.0

Cryptomeria: Water once per day, including the leaves. Best to winter plant so that temperature remains above freezing. pH 5.5 - 7.0

Hemlock: Water as needed. pH 5.0 - 6.0

Hinoki: Water as needed. pH 5.0 - 6.0

Larch: Water as needed. pH 5.0 - 6.5

Needle Juniper: Water once per day, including the leaves. pH 6.0 - 7.0

Sawara Cypress: Water as needed. pH 5.0 - 6.0

Shimpaku (Sargent juniper): Water once per day. Weather permitting or if the plant is in a coldframe, you can consider rewiring and repotting any time after the 20th of January. Remove the old wire before rewiring. Repotting need only be done every 3 years. pH 5.0 - 6.0

Spruce: Water once per day. Keep the spruce in a cold frame or polyhouse. pH 5.0 - 6.0

White pine: Water once per day. Unwanted branches can be pruned. Wiring can be done, but once the tree has been wired, it should be placed in a greenhouse. pH 4.5 - 6.0

Yew: Water as needed. pH 5.0 - 6.0

DECIDUOUS *Plants should be given protection from the winter in a coldframe, polyhouse or greenhouse.*

Non- fruiting/non-flowering:

Beech: Water once per day. Wiring can be done. pH 5.0 - 7.0

Chinese elm: Water as needed. Wiring can be done. pH 6.0 - 7.5

Ginkgo: Water as needed. pH 6.0 - 7.0

Hornbeam: Water once per day. Wiring can be done. Unnecessary branches and sprouts can be removed. pH 6.0 - 8.0

Japanese maple: Water once per day. Wiring can be done. Unnecessary branches and sprouts can be removed. pH 6.0 - 8.0

Trident maple: Water once per day. Wiring can be done. Unnecessary branches and sprouts can be removed. pH 6.0 - 8.0

Weeping willow: Water once every 2 to 3 days. Provide special winter protection - see footnote. pH 6.0 - 8.0

Winged Euonymus: Water as needed. Provide special winter protection - see footnote. pH 5.5 - 7.0

Flowering/Fruiting Plants:

Cherry: Water once every 2 to 3 days. Provide special winter protection - see footnote. pH 6.0 - 8.0

Crab apple: Water once every 2 days. Provide special winter protection - see footnote. pH 5.0 - 6.5

Gardenia: Water as needed. Provide special winter protection - see footnote. pH 5.0 - 6.0

Holly: Water once every 2 days. Provide special winter protection - see footnote.

Fertilize in the middle of the month with a fertilizer high in phosphate. pH 5.0 - 6.0

Pyracantha: Water once every 2 days. Provide special winter protection - see footnote. Fertilize at the end of the month with a reduced strength fertilizer with a high amount of phosphate. pH 5.0 - 6.0


Quince: Water once every 2 days. Provide special winter protection - see footnote. Appreciate the blossoms. pH 6.0 - 7.5

Satsuki (azalea): Water once every 2 days. Provide special winter protection - see footnote. pH 4.5 - 5.0

Ume (Japanese flowering plum or apricot): Water once every 2 days. Provide special winter protection - see footnote. Appreciate the blossoms. pH 6.0 - 7.5

Wisteria: Water once as needed. Provide special winter protection - see footnote. pH 6.0 - 8.0

Footnote: Special winter protection -

The Japanese text recommends for this area that the plants so designated above should be placed where the temperature doesn't go below freezing (32° F) - such as in a coldframe or greenhouse. The trees designated as needing winter protection will not survive if they are exposed to freezing temperatures. The plants should be placed where the temperature ranges between 32°F and 50°F. A garage or cool spot in the basement could suffice as a location during the winter. 

This month we don't have Scott Aker's Pest Management Tips, but Jules referred a question to his Washington Post column. We hope that it will appear in the paper soon and give PBA some mention where horticulturally minded folks cast their eyes:

Hi Scott: I enjoy reading your weekly "Digging In" in *The Washington Post* and am wondering if you have ever mentioned anything in past articles concerning the use of anti-desiccant such as *Wilt Proof*? Am especially interested in whether it would be a good idea to spray bonsai which hold their leaves throughout the winter such as evergreens and azaleas? Also, is it a good idea to spray those plants when repotting?

Jules Koetsch, Editor, Potomac Bonsai Association monthly *PBA Clippings*

Jules--thanks for your question. I've forwarded it to the Post since they may want to run it. They make the decision about which questions I should answer.

Anti-desiccants really enjoyed a heyday about 15 years ago--lots of the experts have since cautioned against using them, and they have sort of fallen from favor. In all reality, paying close attention to watering and keeping humidity high will do more to preserve the leaves than applying an anti-desiccant. The stomata may also be plugged by such materials; gas exchange is then compromised. Weird things like oedema (rupturing of epidermal cells caused by sudden changes in water relations) may result as well.