

PBA Clippings

NEWSLETTER OF THE POTOMAC BONSAI ASSOCIATION



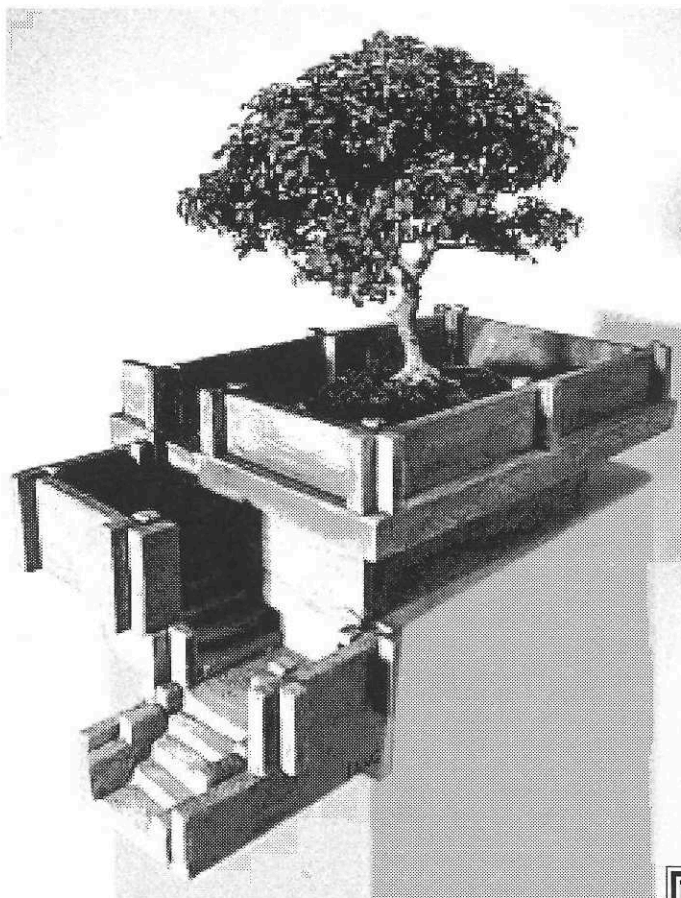
Volume 31, Number 8
August 2001

BONSAI inSites

Ron Lang is anxiously awaiting photos of trees from adventurous PBAers, artistic pioneers wishing to participate in the **Bonsai inSite** exhibition. This is quite a boon for PBA to be the first bonsai group to participate in such a co-venture. (see June issue of *Clippings*) The ceramic artists need to select the trees to create their pieces *co-operatively with the living material*.

Ron will post the trees on a website as soon as he has images.

You can email: russlang@charm.net or call Ron (410.889.6027) if you have any questions.



This is a piece by Ron Lang (BBC) made of stoneware clay, 15" high, 18" long and 10" deep. It's titled "Newton's Garden" and the tree is a Kingsville Boxwood from Baltimore club member, Tom Fink.

In This Issue	Page
Editorial	2
Draft Minutes - PBA Board Meeting	3
PBA Calendar	4
Not Seeing the Trees for the Forest	5
Dan Barton on Bonsai Photography	8
Poetry Corner	9
BONSAI MOT	9
Azalea Logic	10
Penjing Garden Gate	12
More on Busing to NB&PMusem	13
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 Supv.	Judy Wise, NVBS
Advertising Editor	Jerry Antel, Jr., BBS (301) 320-5251
Calendar Coordinator	Arschel Morell, BBC ajmorellsr@hotmail.com
Original Art	Frank Thomas, LBS
Staff Photographer	Chris Yeapanis, NVBS

Editorial by Jules Koetsch

We're hearing more about bonsai forest plantings these days, i.e., the 25th Anniversary celebration of the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum, and the yet to be held International Scholarly Symposium on Bonsai and Penjing in October. I recommend you do at least one forest planting. However one may be all you wish to do. When doing something more than once I'm always reminded of the Japanese saying: *There are 2 kinds of fools in the world - those who have not climbed Mt. Fuji and those who have climbed it more than once.* To paraphrase that statement you may say that there are 2 fools in bonsai - those who have not made a forest planting and those who have made more than one.

First of all, you have to find suitable trees. A good source is those that sprout up under the maple tree on your or a neighbor's property. Then you can age them for a few years so that you have the different trunk thicknesses you need, and also prune and wire them during that time. Then you have to find something to plant them in or on. Cliff Pottberg many years ago suggested that you get yourself a rectangular piece of 1/2-inch plywood that is large enough so that you won't run out of space. You can maneuver the trees wherever you wish to your heart 's content. I did this once - put little wood blocks in the corners of the sheet of plywood and drilled large holes in the plywood for drainage. With a muck retaining wall one has the *poor man's* tray - good for a few years.

The above approach usually sidesteps the sometimes unfortunate result that if you have a large tray before you start your forest. Otherwise you may find yourself trying to pack the trees into a space and the end result is that the composition looks cramped and has no pizzazz. Remember what they say about leavings open spaces to the right or left and in front of the forest.

As soon as you've finished the forest, you'll hit that *wall* - how in heck do I move it? If you'd put rocks on it, best to remove them and replace them once the forest is where you want it.

That plywood doesn't last forever with the frequent watering of the forest. It'll last for the first year or two. If you don't have a *proper* container, you had best find one. An economical choice is to go to your local stone works and get a slab. If they do not have a natural one, take a large piece of slate and with a sledge hammer gently tap away the edges to give a natural look.

It may be one forest bonsai, but as Bill Merritt once remarked to me, "Damn you and your forest plantings - you have to prune all those trees." This sometimes gets interesting when you have to work among the trees.

Hence, do not be a fool, make your own forest planting.



Draft Minutes of the Board of Potomac Bonsai Association

Sunday, July 1, 2001

Attending: Chuck Croft, President; Elizabeth Ley (USNA); Jim Sullivan (Bowie); Jerry Antel; Jim Hughes, and P.C. Kumar (Brookside); Godfrey Trammel (Kiyomizu); Chris Cochrane (Viewing Stones); Jules Koetsch, Margaret Lewis, Arlene Polinsky, Chris & Betty Yeapanis and Judith Wise (No. Virginia).

The meeting opened at 11:05 a.m. USDA/FONA Rep Elizabeth Ley presented a detailed description of the workings of USDA and FONA and relationships with NBF and PBA. She outlined the \$ sources and the workings of conferences, shows, and other presentations with the limitations of each organization. She stressed that USNA/FONA were very concerned about the relationships of the various organizations that operate and use the facilities. She also mentioned that 2002 was the 75th anniversary of USNA.

Minutes: The minutes of the June 3, 2001 meeting were discussed and approved.

Treasurer's Report: Checking \$93.09; Savings \$6,031.80 and CD \$6,000.00 for a total of \$12,124.79. Jerry Antel reported on the Behnke auction. \$3,990 was taken in and expenses were \$2,868.27 for a net of \$1,121.73.

Educational Vice-President: Shari Sharifi has resigned this office, Jim Hughes accepted the position for the unexpired term. The Board noted and appreciated the work of Shari.

Fall Symposium: Chuck Croft noted that this year's symposium is being run by the arboretum and PBA's only role is the vendor facilities. The brochure advertising the symposium does not include PBA. He noted only 150 attendees will be allowed, and encouraged those who want to attend to get their registrations in.

Brochures: Updated brochures are needed for distribution. Betty Yeapanis presented a cost breakdown for a brochure. It was unanimously approved to print updated brochures with club contact inserts, costing up to \$500. Potomac Viewing Stone Group: The viewing stone group, having petitioned to become a member club of PBA, was accepted as a PBA member club.

WBF Convention: Chuck Croft noted that PBA and Washington has been chosen as the host for the convention in 2005. It is not too early to explore hotels and make reservations.


Educational Display: There was a brief review of the PBA educational display that was set up prior to the meeting with Alan Giese (the creator of the display) present. He will repair and revise the display. New Plans of how to assemble the display need to be made and permanently attached to the storage box. Certain items have been lost or are out of date. The photo album area will be removed and photos of activities at the spring show, fall symposium, workshops for auction. The Brookside club noted that they had "before" and "after" photos, but suggested that a request for photos run in the next *Clippings*. The map and list of club names and location will be removed and a new holder for brochures will be installed. The containers of soil mix will be eliminated with two bins for deciduous and conifer soils.

New Business:

Next meeting - Sunday, July 29th beginning at 11 a.m. The main topic will be educational opportunities for PBA - retreats, grow plot, etc. A brainstorming session will be lead by Jim Hughes.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:35 pm.

Don't forget the two books you need to order: Just reach out to Chris Yeapanis and ask him how much money you want to send him for National Bonsai Foundation.

Last month, the indentured servant promised to share Fred Ballard's thoughts on tokonoma display. Well, space wouldn't allow it in the time available so you'll just have to hold your breathe. ~~~ 

Calendar of Events *compiled by Arschel Morell (BBC)*

Send your club's input to Arschel by e- ajmorellsr@hotmail.com or snail mail to:
9 Six Notches Court, Baltimore, MD 21228

JULY (just in case we get this out early)

29 11 am PBA Board Meeting - Sole Subject: Educational Opportunities and Outreach - All members welcome - Y'all Come! Brain-storming Session led by Jim Hughes

AUGUST

Lancaster Bonsai Society

8 7 pm Conestoga House Library demo of planting sedum on rock to increase visual appeal of bonsai. Contact Mark Emerson, mmemerson@onemain.com

Northern Virginia Bonsai Society

11 Trip to Gardens Unlimited - See their new place. Speakers Bob and Todd
Potomac Viewing Stone Group

19 1-4 PVSG meeting will feature Kemin Hu as our guest speaker. Kemin Hu is the renowned author of a book on Chinese viewing stones, **The Spirit of Gongshi: Chinese Scholar's Rocks**. She will bring stones to sell. The location is still being arranged, so if you are not a member of PVSG, contact Chris Yeapanis by phone after 11 a.m. at 703.591.0864 or at ibonsai@erols.com; or Glenn Reusch at Ghreusch@aol.com or phone 540.672.5699.

The following clubs will not be meeting during the month of August:

Baltimore, Bowie, Brookside, Kiyomizu, Washington

No report regarding meetings from:

Chesapeake or Rappahanock Bonsai Society

SEPTEMBER

Northern Virginia Bonsai Society

8 time? NVBS Annual Picnic

Arschel's p.c. is indisposed so Betty has done the best she can in the time allotted to cover August and September. If your function is not properly mentioned, it may be my fault.

<http://www.bonsai-pba.org>

Non-PBA Functions

AUGUST

Asian Accent: Botanical Art on Silk Admin Bldg Lobby, USNA

August 1-September 30, 9:00 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.

Opening Reception

12 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Come view a visual kaleidoscope of color! This unique juried exhibition of framed artwork and banners by members of SPIN, Silk Painters International, interprets botanical motifs on lustrous silk using brilliant dyes. Silk painting, watercolor on silk, is an exquisite art form of Asian origin on display for the first time at the Arboretum. Silk painters call their artistic experiences sensuous: when they paint on silk they become one with the process, discovering unlimited creative potential. During the opening reception, SPIN artists will demonstrate and encourage visitors to try various silk painting techniques. Exhibit and opening reception free.

What is Silk Painting?

11 2:00 p.m.- 3:00 p.m.

Admin Bldg Classroom

18 & 19 10:00 a.m.- 4: p.m.

Join Instructor Diane Tuckman, co-author of three books on silk painting, for an unforgettable creative experience. Learn everything from how to prepare the silk for painting to pen techniques during this intensive 2-day class. Participants will take home a completed, framed work and enough materials to continue additional projects at home. Fee \$125.00 (includes all materials). Registration required.

September

Introduction to Chinese Brush Painting

22 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Administration Building Classroom

Gayle Lee will introduce you to the teachings of Yi Chang, master landscape painter and grandson of a Chinese royal court painter, through the art of Chinese brush painting. Learn about the materials used by Chinese artists, handling of the brush, grinding of ink, use of seals, and the nature of rice paper through demonstration, discussion, and hands-on application. Materials will be made available for participants to make "the ink sing and the brush dance!"

Fees: \$15 (FONA \$12) **Registration required.**

NOT SEEING THE TREES FOR THE FOREST *by Jules*

The April 29th program at the *National Bonsai and Penjing Museum 's 25th Anniversary Asian Arts Festival* included the following special demonstration: *How to make a Forest-Style Bonsai*. One of my passions is forest plantings, so I made certain that I was on hand to hear and see what bonsai master Susumu Nakamura would do. Mr. Susumu Nakamura hails from Yokohama, Japan, where he is President of the Shonan School of Bonsai and is a member of the Nippon Bonsai Society.

Mr. Nakamura prefaced his demonstration with a chalk talk on basic *Do's and Don'ts* to follow when one sets out to create a woods in miniature. I've annotated the 5 *Don'ts* and 4 *Do's* with some of the advice given in past articles in *PBA Newsletters* and *PBA Clippings*.

FIVE TABOOS

1. *Don't plant container full of trees (leave an open space)*. Where you leave the open space is up to you. Depending on the number of trees you're planting, you should make one open space between 2 groups of trees. If the planting is long enough and you have enough trees, two open spaces between 3 groups of trees is sufficient. One Japanese master suggests that an open space should be large enough to pass your hand through it. Vaughn Banting suggests that the space should be placed so that your eye movement traverses the composition from left to right and then enters the empty space.

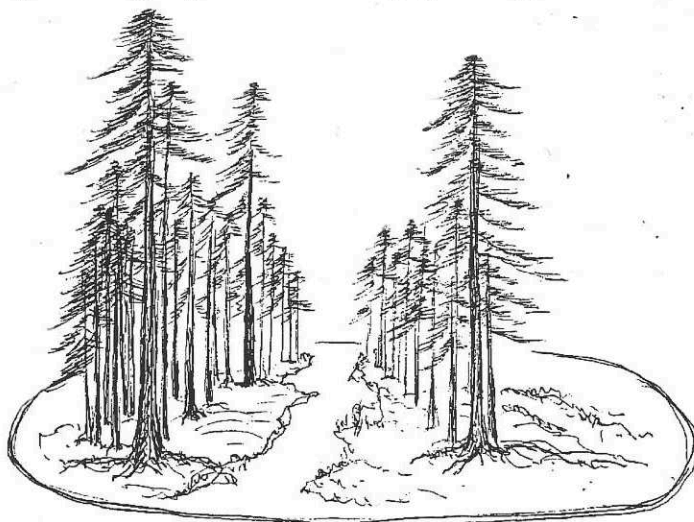
A strategic placement of the smallest tree to one side of the very rear of that empty space is the last step you should do in arranging the trees. It serves to stop your eye movement, and you're left to fantasize as to what lies beyond - as your eye again continues across the front of the forest.

The largest or master tree is always the first tree placed when starting to assemble the forest. That is the most important step in arranging your trees. John Naka says that the last, but second most important, step is the placement of the smallest tree.

2. *Don't plant more than 3 trees in one line*. The usual admonition is that when you look at the completed forest from the front or side, no tree trunk should be hidden from view by being behind another tree trunk.

3. *Don't plant trees with the same thickness*

and height together. A good forest planting has the element of perspective in its design. Normally the trees with thicker trunks are placed in the front so that one gets the impression of depth, just like in a painting, by successively placing thinner



trees toward the rear. Also the overall outline of the tree branches, when viewed from the front, is the ever-present triangle with the top of the tallest tree forming the apex of the triangle.

4. *Don't plant too many trees in one container*. One might limit the number of trees so that an open space can be present on the left or right side of the composition - always that interesting use of negative space.

5. *Don't plant trees the same distance apart*. In his video tapes on forest plantings, Warren Hill talks about looking down on the trees to see that they

"triangulate." Mr. Ko Takeyama puts it somewhat differently - place the trees in groups of three. Basically what one tries to do is to arrange the trees so that when viewed from above, nowhere in the composition are the distances equal between trees in groupings of 3. For those who remember high school geometry, the triangle thus formed by 3 trees is a scalene triangle (unequal length sides). Thankfully, that's a lot easier to do than trying to make the spacing uniform.

DO'S

1. *Plan ahead! Better to know before planting.* In retrospect, I'm not sure of whether this refers to one getting all the necessary accoutrements in place to do the forest planting, i.e., tools, wire, soil, plants, etc. After all, that chore is obvious. I feel that Mr. Nakamura is referring to doing some visualization and sketching and thus having a better idea of how the plants are going to be grouped together. I have fun drawing different length pencil lines on a sheet of paper to see how grouping the plants would work. There may be an infinite number of ways one might group trees together; but I usually wind up with almost the same approach every time. Warren Hill, in his forest planting videos, suggests that one can start just randomly putting the trees together and forming a design as you go. [Those videos are available from the PBA library of video tapes. Contact Arschel Morell to borrow them.] I prefer to a little advance planning.

2. *Prepare trees with various sizes.* Select trees of different trunk diameters. The desired overall triangular outline of the composition when viewed from the front is a last step wherein minor pruning is done to the tree heights. Otherwise, any necessary pruning and wiring should have been done before starting the forest planting.

3. *Taller trees front, shorter trees in back.* The perspective resulting from such a

placement of trees gives the impression of depth to the forest.

4. *When finished, don't place in area of strong winds, but plenty of sunshine until roots can grow.* I have a little trouble with the above statement in that I was always under the impression that after repotting, one places the plant in the shade for two weeks.

The demo got underway with Mr. Nakamura's assistant placing tie-down wires on the man-made slab while Mr. N selected his number one tree. Tie-downs consisted of lengths of wire glued in place on the slab using a quick drying epoxy on which some baking soda was sprinkled to give the mix some body. The large slab was made by Joe Day and shipped from Mobile, Alabama.

The number one tree was the tallest and had the thickest trunk among the many individually potted trident maples at Mr. Nakamura's disposal. All the trident maples had straight trunks so there was no problem as to where the fronts of the trees had to be. Also, wiring of the trunks was not a factor.

The slab was long enough so that 3 groups of trees separated by empty spaces could be planted. Each group was started by first placing the tallest tree for that group. The roots of the trees were reduced by removing those tightly wrapped around the outsidside of the root ball. Also some root ball reduction is necessary where trees are to be placed close to each other. Since the movement of the slab was from right to left, the tallest tree grouping was placed on the left.

Mr. Nakamura suggested that one should leave enough space around the main tree and not crowd it. I find that's good advice if the main tree can reasonably stand alone. Other wise, I like to place the number 2 tree so that its trunk is close to the number 1 tree.

As is always the case when doing a slab planting, a wall of "muck" must be placed

around the edge of the soil-mass to keep it from washing away. The thing I did appreciate learning is that when using muck, one should wear disposable gloves. Otherwise your hands get messy, especially if you're using a muck containing dark potting soil. The clay lying barely 1/2-inch below my lawn (where the builder carefully graded and removed the pre-existent topsoil) makes an excellent muck. Mixing in some sphagnum moss helps hold it together.

Moss is usually placed on the surface of the muck to prevent undue erosion. Mr. Nakamura said that the secret for placing small sections of moss, is to squeeze out the water before placing the moss on the muck.

Mr. Nakamura also mentioned that one could do a forest planting using mixed species, but too many species can make planting look like a botanical garden. In other words, to make your forest planting look like a forest in miniature, you had best use one species throughout.

So if you can't resist the urge to do a bonsai forest, there are a few things you should keep in mind since forest plantings end up, by their very nature, usually larger than any other bonsai you may have.

1. One must find at least 9 trees of the same species and different sized trunks. One possible plus in selecting trees is that they all need not be perfect candidates for stand-alone bonsai. By judiciously placing the trees, any deficiency in branching on one tree can be offset by using a branch on a neighboring tree to fill the void.

If you're as inept as me, you may find one or two of the trees dying in the first year. With my luck, it once was the number one tree. Hence you might consider getting one or two backup trees to replace any casualties. Then you'll be ahead of the game so that you don't have to grow any replacements from cuttings or try to get

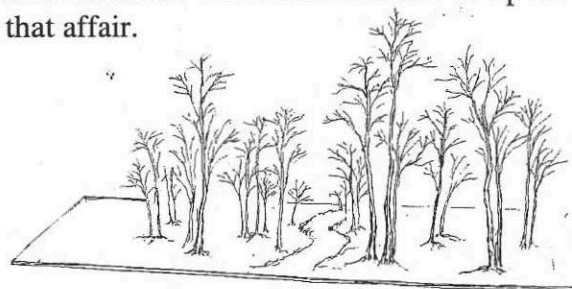
the same variety from the nursery where the original purchase was made. I started one 11-tree forest with Japanese hornbeam and have replaced 5 with European hornbeam. In this instance, the difference in leaf structure isn't noticeable and the difference in the bark is not that objectionable. John Naka once whimsically mentioned that perhaps an easy way to grow a forest would be to sow seeds of a single species on the tray. After they have grown enough, start removing the undesirables.

2. The forest bonsai's container, shall we say, can be either a large tray or a muck-rimmed slab. Containers or trays being larger than the bonsai pots most of us buy will cost accordingly. The best buy moneywise that I've found are the 30-inch-long trays that the Chinese make for under \$200. Japanese trays are running higher in price these days. Hence people tend to go to slabs and, in particular, man-made slabs. A good natural slab can sometimes be found in a local stone establishment.

3. Aside from all of the above, once the forest bonsai is done, you face the herculean task of moving it in and out of winter protection.

If you can't resist the urge to create a forest bonsai, I suggest that you review what's in John Y. Naka's **BONSAI TECHNIQUES** to get a feel on how to design a forest bonsai. Then you can also get the forthcoming book by Mr. Saburo Kato. Felix Laughlin says that the translation of Mr. Kato's book from the Japanese, should be in the printer this month. There will be 3,500 copies in hardback (with 32 color pictures) for sale at \$34.95 each. Plans are to have it ready for sale when Mr. Kato visits in October to attend the *International Scholarly Symposium on Bonsai and Viewing Stones*, October 26 - 28. An opportunity to get an autographed copy.

Also, Mr. Nakamura's forest bonsai will be up for bid at that affair.



PHOTOGRAPHING BONSAI: SOME IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER *by Dan Barton*

It is in consideration of the rank photo-amateur possessing minimum photographic equipment that I make the following suggestions regarding the photographing of bonsai. Having said this, I must assume that you know how your camera works and that you are already familiar with the focus and exposure controls.

Obviously, if you intend using your photographs for reproduction purposes, more attention will have to be paid to technique than if you are making casual photo-records of your trees to log their progress over the years. In any event, you should always strive to place your bonsai in front of a plain background in order that the outline and texture can be clearly seen without any interference from cluttered backgrounds.

Photography is totally dependent on reflected light in its various intensities, and it is vital that you take this into account when setting up your subject. Assuming you are using available daylight to photograph your trees, avoid excessive sunlight. This sort of lighting causes extremes of contrast in the photograph, making exposure very difficult to control. A bright, sunny day with a thin film of cloud filters the light beautifully, providing an even light spread with acceptable contrast. Place your subject so that the light source is approximately at 45° to the front plane of the tree. This will reduce disturbing shadows from immediately behind the tree. By not having too much contrast it is easier to appreciate more detail in the tree. On the other hand, avoid dull overcast days, as this will produce images that are "flat" and structurally boring.

If you find that the foliage of your bonsai is, adequately lit but that the trunk is too much shadow, you can direct light into this area by carefully reflecting it from a well-positioned mirror. Furthermore, if the lighting is too strong on one side of the tree, it is possible to remedy this by asking someone to hold a reflecting board (plain white poster board about two feet square) on the opposite side of the tree to "fill in" some additional light on the shadow side. This will also enable more detail to show.

An effective plain background can be made by suspending an 8'x4' piece of painted plywood against a wall. This background can have its color easily changed by painting with emulsion paint to suit individual trees. Alternatively, you can use a slide projection screen placed behind the tree, although this will not be suitable for very large trees. Avoid letting the tree "break" the edge line of the background, as this will be visually distracting. When taking an exposure reading, I find the most consistent results can be achieved if you place a piece of mid-gray card about twelve inches square in the position of the tree, then take a local exposure reading from this card after which it can be removed. This will give an average tone which is ideal for overall exposures. If you take a reading directly from the subject in front of a white background, the chances are that the background will adversely influence the exposure reading, often causing the subject itself to be underexposed. For consistent results, always use the same piece of card.

If possible, always use a stable tripod with your camera to reduce "camera shake". This will enable you to use the smallest aperture with extended shutter speeds in low light levels. The small aperture setting will give the maximum depth of field in your focus, resulting in plenty of detail in your subject.

If using an electronic flash, avoid pointing it directly at the subject, as this will cause distracting and unsightly peripheral shadows around the tree. It would be better to direct the flash away from the subject at a white or silver reflector board which will re-direct the diffused light onto the bonsai, providing a much softer light with gentle shadows. Of course, if you do this it will be much more difficult to establish the correct exposure, and some experimentation will be necessary to establish a reliable working technique. As an initial guide, you can increase the exposure by two "stops" above what would normally be correct if you pointed the flash directly at the subject.

Always make sure trees are meticulously groomed and pots thoroughly cleaned, etc., before

photographing them, as there is nothing less forgiving than a photograph to show off a bonsai's faults.

Choice of film is somewhat personal, but I usually use a medium speed film of around 100 to 124 ISO. If you are taking color pictures for reproduction in books or magazines, make sure you use color positive (slide) film and not color negative film which is suitable for making prints.

Always position the camera so that it is approximately equal to the mid-point of the trunk of the bonsai to give the best appreciation of depth and form. If you intend to use your slides for lecture purposes, it is best to stick with the same format. That is, "landscape" (horizontal format) as opposed

to "portrait" (vertical format), and always be as conscious of the composition as possible. It can sometimes be helpful if some device is included in the picture to give an idea of the scale of the tree. Finally, if taking black and white photographs for reproduction in books, etc., it is better to have slightly "flatter" images rather than too much contrast, as this does not reproduce well. Always remember to make a note of the date that the photograph was taken.

Happy snapping!

Reprinted with permission from BC1 Magazine, Vol. XXX, No. 2, March-April 1991, pp. 14-15.

VOLUNTEER VOLUNTEER

Poetry Corner - Calm yourself

THE METEOR

*Just as that firefly,
Glowing on a spray of leaves, dropped off
-----It suddenly shot away!*

— Basho



Have you noticed the fireflies lighting up these summer evenings?

The above is from A NET OF FIREFLIES - Japanese and Haiku Paintings by Harold Stewart; Charles E. Tuttle Company, Rutland, Vermont; 1960.

BONsaiMOT



*If you want to catch the cub, you must go into the tiger den.
(You take a chance when you bend a branch.)*

Above is from Bill Orsinger's notes taken at the March 8, 1998, symposium at the National Arboretum.

Jules maintains a heavy archive for your education. He rooted all the way back to 1981 in the Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society Newsletters to pull this edification for you. I e-mailed Lake Charles Bonsai Society and reached Alan Walker, current Editor of their newsletter, to see if we could update the intro and tell you a bit more about Mr Benko:

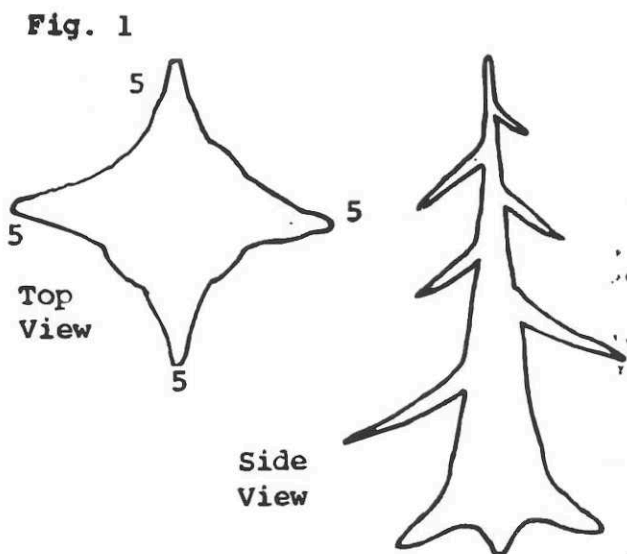
Alan says: "The article is by Ron Benko. Ron was a trumpet player for the late New Orleans Symphony Orchestra. I believe he is currently a music professor at UNO. He was quite active in GNOBS back in the late '70s and early '80s, but I believe he is no longer active in bonsai.

"However, I did see him recently at the ABS Symposium 2001 in New Orleans when he dropped by to see David DeGroot. He and David were both with the Symphony back then (Dave was a percussionist). "Ron found a number of really nice azalea collecting areas in defunct nurseries in the Mobile, AL, area when the Symphony would go on tour. Ron is quite a character and still provides New Orleans area bonsaiists with tips on great finds for urban collecting, such as a 90-year-old boxwood hedge to be removed from an old orphanage's front walkway." [my kinda guy]

Azalea Logic: Roots – Key to Correct Style *by Ron Benko*

1981 GNOBS EDITOR'S NOTE: This month's newsletter features some excellent articles on training and development of azaleas as bonsai. The following article was written by ur own Ron Benko, who is recognized as one of the regional experts on azaleas.

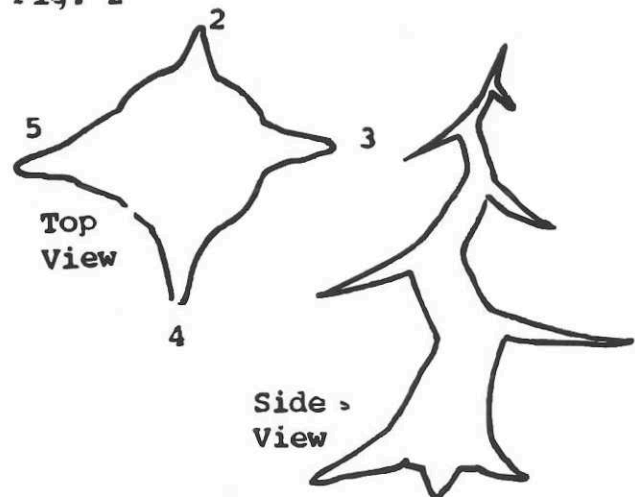
The basis of this article was taken from tips given by Susumu Sudo at BCI '79 (New York). The first consideration in selecting the correct style for an azalea is to examine the roots. Equally distributed roots that are approximately the same length and diameter are good indicators to give consideration to a formal upright style. (NOTE:



Numbers next to roots in top view indicate relative size of roots.

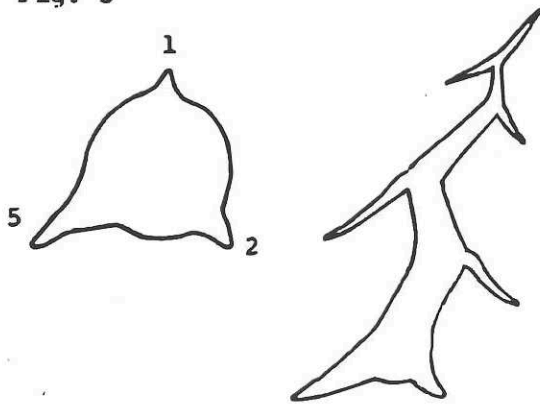
The numbers in the illustrations are from 1 to 5 (weakest to strongest) to indicate root length and diameter. This numbering system applies to both the root and branch structure. (Figure 1).

Fig. 2



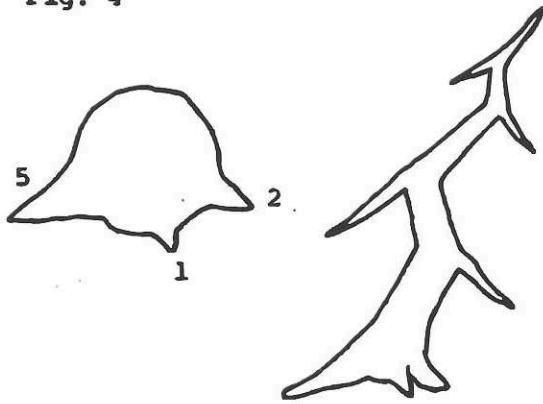
Equally distributed roots, but not of the same length and diameter usually calls for an informal upright style. (Figure 2).

Fig. 3



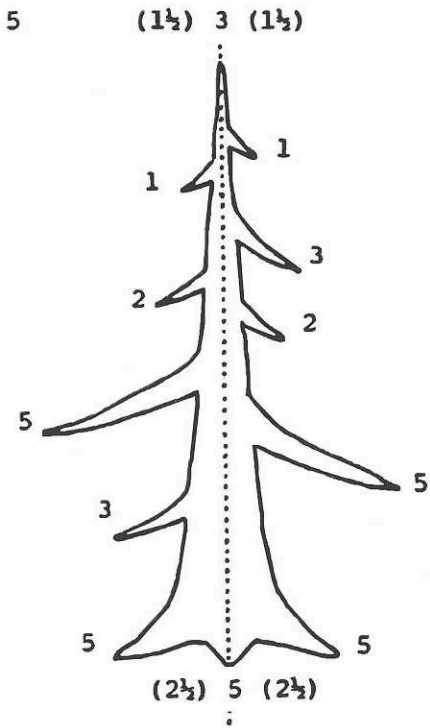
Roots that are unequally distributed but have dominate strength on one side should be given consideration for a slanting style. (See figure 3 & 4).

Fig. 4



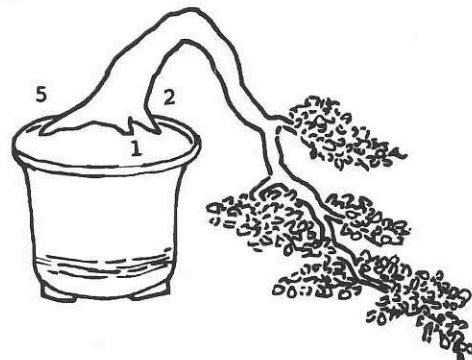
To achieve proper branch balance, it is necessary to equalize strength on both sides of the trunk. (Figure 5).

Fig. 5



The sum total for each half is 20.

Fig. 6



COMMENTARY: This theory of root distribution appears to have great merit, although it changes our traditional method of giving first consideration to the trunk or existing branches. Young azaleas, especially the satsuki varieties, which have flexible trunks are the best prospects. Trunks and branches on older azalea stock are rigid and brittle which forces us to give the existing trunk line primary consideration. Branches are the least concern since they can all be removed from older material and young, flexible branches often of equal diameter will take their place, developing to trainable size within a season or two. No mention of cascade or windswept style was made at this lecture, however, the slanting style rootage would seem to be most appropriate for either so long as the strongest root falls opposite the cascade or the direction of the sweep. (Figure 6).

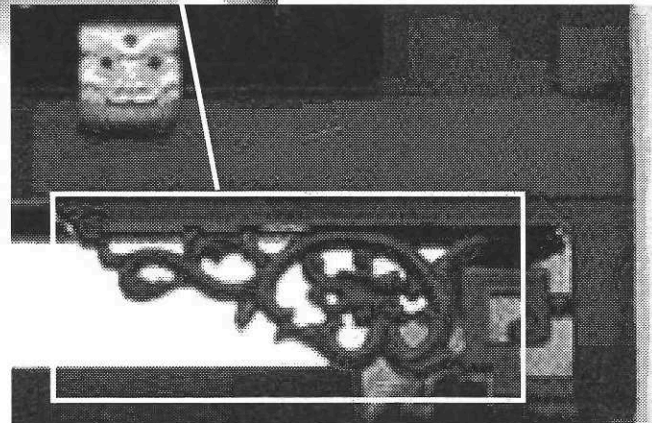
REPOTTING: It was suggested that the best time for repotting satsuki azaleas is before they bloom. Blooming is usually in late April or early May in this area. Consequently, azaleas can be repotted at the same time as most other material. The second best option is to repot right after blooming. If you repot before blooming, it would be advisable to remove all or most of the flower buds so that the strength lost through root removal is not further drained in flower production. The same procedure would hold true if repotting is done after the blooming season since flower production does drain considerable strength from the plant. Azaleas are slow to develop new roots and repotting is not an annual necessity. If you desire a heavy bloom, plan your repotting for the following year.

THE PENJING GARDEN GATE *by Jules*

The entrance to the Penjing Collection at the U.S. National Arboretum is housed behind an outer wall with an undulating top that is edged with gray tiles. Entry to the garden and the penjing display is through a large gate. Then, if the visitor progresses in the proper fashion through the round *moon gate*, around large limestone rocks that were shipped from China to enter the garden and see the collection. The ill-informed visitors rudely turn immediately to the right through the common glass exit door because they see the penjing on benches beyond that door. Perhaps there will be a way to remedy that situation in the future. However, one does not expect the majority of visitors to know the proper protocol for entry to a Chinese garden; and even fewer, if any, know about the relationship between the outer wall and its gate. Just before he left as Assistant Curator of the National Collection, Dan Chiplis was while standing with me before the entry gate and remarked that the undulating wall was what one would expect around a formal Chinese garden. Such a wall is representative of the dragon protecting the garden. Dan added that every dragon wall must have a dragon head and challenged me to find the dragon head. I couldn't find it. When volunteering as a docent, I've told visitors to try to find the dragon head at the end of the wall. In every instance, they were unable to spot it in the gate's lintel.

So if you don't know where to look, the accompanying photographs should help you. There is a triangular shaped scroll work located in each corner just below the lintel or beam and directly over the opening in the gate. The dragon heads are not all that big, so you have to look twice to be sure you're seeing them.

When I telephoned him recently concerning the dragon wall, Dan also told me that each dragon had a pearl in its mouth. He did not remember the story as to why a pearl was in the dragon's mouth. Perhaps a reader will be able to enlighten us. The entry gate in the outside wall of the Chinese Pavilion was



made in China, disassembled, and shipped to the Arboretum. Dan said that the wall had been erected before the gate arrived. When the gate arrived it was discovered that it would not properly fit in the space provided for it in the wall. However, the Chinese craftsmen who came to assemble the gate were up to the task of making the necessary modifications so that the gate and the wall became one.



Photo by Chris J Yeapanis

This courtyard will be amazingly different come next Spring

Didjknow: The gold kanji above the doorway translate to "Garden of a man of letters." They were written by Dr Yee-Sun Wu, a major contributor to the garden named in his honor. He is a retired financier and founder of Wing Lung Bank in Hong Kong, and a major advocate of the Lingnan school of penjing.

As we told you last month, the Friends of the National Arboretum (with some small help from the National Bonsai Foundation) and local transit authorities have launched a weekend and holiday bus service to the Arboretum. Metro buses will run round-trips between Union Station and the Arboretum on weekends and holidays between 8:00am and 5:30pm.

Metro will operate the service for 18 months on a trial basis to monitor ridership. [this means the better use it gets, the longer it'll be around.] The new bus service is a part of the new "Open Doors" Metro campaign. The service will entail a dedicated smaller bus running directly from Union Station to the National Arboretum every 40 minutes. The bus will be number X-6 and read "National Arboretum." Find the bus stop at Union Station outdoors, across from America Restaurant near the Metro entrance. Bus returns to Union Station every 40 minutes. Special transportation needs can be scheduled through FONA office: 202.544.8733.

Dr. Thomas Elias (NVBS), director of the Arboretum, says "We are confident that once riders in the metropolitan region and tourists know that there is easy access to the Arboretum that ridership will grow and Metro can expand the service to seven days a week."

Woodruff M. Price, chair of FONA has been working closely with Metro on the bus service for several years. "We believe this new service is so necessary that FONA has already committed a subsidy of \$19,000 to the Department of Public Works" A first step toward 7-days-a-week bus service, so buses can deliver visitors during the Arboretum's peak visit time. "We think this is also a valuable asset to our neighbors who currently have no efficient transit service to downtown Washington for jobs, shopping, and recreation." Reaching the Arboretum has required visitors to travel by either car or taxi [\$9+ the last time I needed to travel that short distance which took me through 5 taxi districts]; or take the metro subway line to the Stadium Armory station and then transfer to a bus for a 35-minute ride.

Approximately 600,000 people visit the Arboretum annually and Tom Elias thinks that the new bus service will allow many more Washington area residents and the millions of tourists to consider visiting the sprawling 446-acre gardens and grounds.

The mission of the National Arboretum, which is part of the Department of Agriculture, is to conduct research, provide education, and conserve and display trees, shrubs, and other plants to enhance the environment. FONA is an independent non-profit organization established to enhance, through public and private sector resources, support for the US National Arboretum.

MONTHLY CARE TIPS for August *compiled by Jules*

The following tips have been compiled from four Japanese bonsai magazines and Yuji Yoshimura's book.

Fertilizing: One procedure often followed is to not fertilize bonsai during the hot summer months since this can possibly stress the plant by making it expend too much energy in trying to produce new growth. It is interesting to note that for some of the plant material listed below, the Japanese book suggests applying fertilizer during the month of August.

Wherever fertilizing is to be done, it is noted as "apply fertilizer balls" since that is how the Japanese do it. If you do not use fertilizer balls you can consider applying the fertilizer of your choice during that time. One application of fertilizer balls is expected to be good for about 30 days. For example, if you are using a certain strength liquid fertilizer and apply it once per week, you can apply it once every week for a month starting from when the words "apply fertilizer balls" appear. If a gap of more than a month appears between "apply fertilizer balls" in the schedule, consider holding back on applying any fertilizer during that time period.

Location: Plants thrive best when placed where they will receive an adequate amount of sunlight. Some plants thrive on one-half a day of shade in the hot summertime while others like a full day in the sun. Locations are those suggested by the Yoshimura/Halford book.

The gardener's mantra is: "Morning sun, afternoon shade equals being in the shade for the entire day; morning shade, afternoon sun equals being in the sun for the entire day," from Lynn L. Remly's article "Grateful Shade" in the Sunday Journal, June 4, 2000.

CONIFERS

BLACK PINE: Water 3 times per day. Note that the Japanese usually plant a black pine in a soil mix, usually sand, which does not hold water for long. Gage your watering based on your soil mix's ability to hold water, and weather **HEMLOCK:** Water whenever the top of the soil appears dry. Thin out branches during the middle of the month. Apply fertilizer balls once during the last 10 days. Place where it gets half-day of shade. pH 5.0 to 6.0

HINOKI: Water whenever the top of the soil appears dry. Wiring can be done in the middle of the month. Make certain no existing wire is biting into bark. Repotting can be done any time during the month. Repotting is done every 3 years. Pinch off the edges of the foliage to reduce the lengths of the new growth when it gets too leggy. Apply fertilizer balls once during the last 10 days. Place where it gets half-day of shade. pH 5.0 to 6.0

LARCH: Water whenever the top of the soil appears dry. Repotting can be done during the last 10 days. Repot every 3 years. Apply fertilizer balls once during the last 10 days. Place where it gets half-day of shade. pH 5.0 to 6.5

NEEDLE JUNIPER: Water three times per day,

including the leaves. Wiring can be done any time after the old wire (which might be digging into the bark) has been removed. Pluck new growth to reduce its length so that it does not become too leggy. Apply fertilizer balls once during the last 10 days. Place in full sun all day. pH 6.0 to 7.0

SAWARA CYPRESS: Water whenever the top of the soil appears dry. Pluck new growth to keep it from getting too leggy. Wiring can be done during the month. Repotting can be done during the last 10 days. Repot every 3 years. Apply fertilizer balls once during the last 10 days. Place where it gets half-day of shade. pH 5.0 to 6.0

SHIMPAKU (Sargent juniper): Water twice per day and at the same time water the foliage. Wiring can be done after the 20th. Place in full sun all day. pH 5.0 to 6.0

SPRUCE: Water 3 times per day. Wire during the last 10 days of the month. Apply fertilizer balls once during the last 10 days. Place in full sun all day. pH 5.0 to 6.0

WHITE PINE: Water 3 times per day. During the last 10 days remove the old needles by cutting each of the 5-needle groupings with a scissor so that about 1/8" remains above the branch. The new

growth on the end of the branch is left untouched. Also during that time frame, remove unnecessary branches and withered needles. Wiring can be done during the last 10 days, and fertilizer balls can be applied once. Place in full sun all day. pH 4.5 to 6.0
YEW: Water as needed. Pluck the ends of new growth to maintain the desired contour of the tree. During the middle of the month apply fertilizer balls once. During the last 10 days of the month, remove wire; and during that timeframe one can repot. Place where it gets half-day of shade. pH 5.0 to 6.0

DECIDUOUS

(Non-fruiting/non-flowering)

BEECH: Water 3 times per day. Wire anytime during the month. Reduce branches to the desired lengths and prune any unwanted growth. Remove wire. Pluck leaves to maintain the desired contour for the branches. Apply fertilizer balls during the last 10 days. Keep in full sun all day. pH 6.0 to 7.5

CHINESE ELM: Water as needed. Chase back new growth by reducing the lengths of branchlets to 4 leaves and remove any unwanted branches. Apply fertilizer balls once during the last 10 days. Place where it gets half-day of shade. pH 6.0 to 7.5

GINGKO: Water often. Remove unwanted lengths of branches during the last 10 days. Also apply fertilizer balls during that time frame. Keep in full sun all day. pH 6.0 to 7.0

HORNBEAM: Water 3 times per day. Prune unwanted branches and chase back new growth. Apply fertilizer balls during the last 10 days of the month. Remove wire during the last 10 days. Keep in full sun all day. pH 6.0 to 8.0

JAPANESE MAPLE: Water 3 times per day. Prune to establish the desired contour of the tree and remove unwanted growth (branches). Apply fertilizer balls once during the middle of the month. Wiring can be done and old wiring should be checked to insure against wire marks. Place where it gets half-day of shade. pH 6.0 to 8.0

TRIDENT MAPLE: Water 3 times per day. Remove unwanted branches, sprouts and leaves.

Wiring should be checked to insure against wire marks. Apply fertilizer balls once during the last 10 days. Place where it gets half-day of shade. pH 6.0 to 8.0

WEeping WILLOW: Water once per day. Keep the pot in a dish of water during the month. Apply fertilizer balls once some time during the last 10 days. Remove unwanted lengths of branches and those not desired. Place where it gets half-day of shade. pH 5.0 to 6.0

WINGED EUONYMOUS: Water as needed. Prune unwanted branches and push back new growth. Remove any wire that is digging into the bark during the middle of the month. Apply fertilizer balls once during the last 10 days. Keep in full sun all day. pH 5.5 to 7.0

Flowering/Fruiting Plants

CHERRY: Water 2 times per day. Remove wire after the middle of the month. Give plant ½ day of shade. pH 6.0 to 8.0

CRAB APPLE: Water 3 times per day. Keep in full sun all day. pH 5.0 to 6.5

GARDENIA: Water often. Apply fertilizer balls once during the last 10 days of the month. Remove wire during the middle of the month. Give plant ½ day of shade. pH 5.0 to 6.0

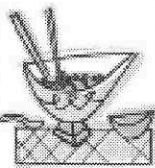
PYRACANTHA: Water 3 times per day up to the 20th of the month; then go to 2 times per day. Remove wire. Keep in full sun all day. pH 5.0 to 6.0

QUINCE: Water 3 times per day. Keep in full sun all day. pH 6.0 to 7.5

SATSUKI (azalea): Water 3 times per day. Give plant ½ day of shade. pH 4.5 to 5.0

UME (Japanese flowering plum or apricot): Water 3 times per day. Remove wire during the last 10 days of the month. Keep in full sun all day. pH 6.0 to 7.5

WISTERIA: Water often. Trim back branches so that 2 leaf pairs remain. Apply fertilizer balls once during the middle of the month. Give plant ½ day of shade. pH 6.0 to 8.0



A different kind of care tip -- good manners: When I illustrated our soup story, Roger Benson had no knowledge, or awareness of the illustration being chosen. He shared with me "this one shows the chopsticks upright in the food, which in addition to pointing them at another person, is most disrespectful and impolite, an interesting aspect of Japanese cuisine, or should I say table manners. When not in use, chopsticks should be laid down in front of the diner, left to right, resting on the chopstick rest. Latter is presumably shown in your picture to left of soup bowl." Who can tell us more about these useful, simple tools?