

**PBA**

# Clippings

NEWSLETTER OF THE POTOMAC BONSAI ASSOCIATION



Volume 32, Number 3  
March 2002

*A Golden Oldie from the PBA Newsletter, April 1978 - To put it in historical perspective, Richard Meszler was PBA prez, and Janet Lanman was trying to organize a Tree Babysitter's File. JYN was spending weekends with us, and we were a valued part of the downtown Flower Show.*

## SPRING SONG, OR *THE BONSAIST'S LAMENT*

*Have you ever stopped to wonder  
That it happens every year.  
You wait and wait for spring to come,  
And it never will you fear.*

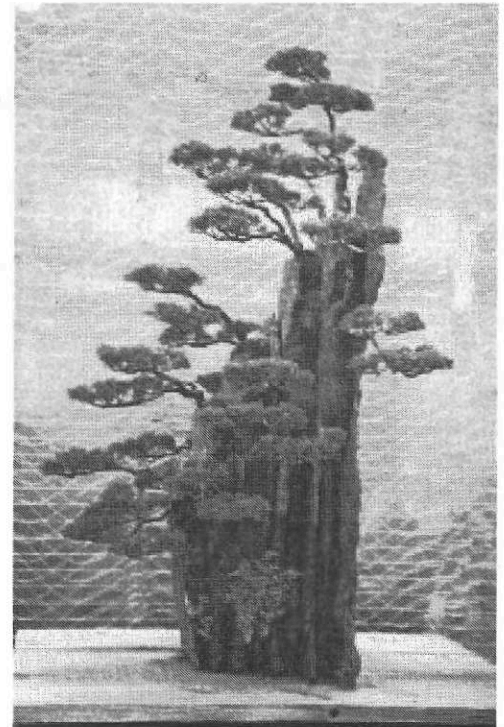
*It starts on toward late winter  
When the ground is still hard frozen.  
It seems you just can't wait to work  
On the hobby you have chosen.*

*You know you don't dare touch your trees,  
But self-restraint is hard!  
The urge so strong you cannot bear  
To venture in the yard.*

*The winter wind is now less chill  
But still the time's not right.  
You mix your soil and choose the pots,  
Make sure your tools are right.*

*Then suddenly it's on you  
And you greet the same old fate.  
Yesterday was still too soon,  
Today's it's near too late.*

~ Mary Houlton (Bloomer), PBA



*Photo by BYeapanis*

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**PBA**  
**Clippings**  
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**Editorial** by Jules Koetsch

As I write, it is almost the end of January, and up to now *old man winter* hasn't been too cruel - temperatures not getting below the lower 20s but not much rain and only one snowfall to date. For those who have not been monitoring and watering their bonsai under winter storage outdoors, you might find some have not survived the winter. Since heat or a rise in daily temperatures is what causes plants to break the winter hibernation, those in winter storage outdoors will probably bud out early this year. Bill Daley mentioned that he has already seen some activity on some of his maples. Since the spring show is in early April, this may be fortuitous for the members who are looking forward to having their bonsai in the show. Possibly all of the deciduous bonsai will have leafed out by then.

Whether or not one is planning on putting something in the spring show, March is the month when one is knee deep in repotting, wiring and pruning many of the species of bonsai. There are always those methodical people who have prepared their soil mixes by now. I'm always a *last minute Johnny*. If you haven't mixed your soil by now, there are two soil mixes in this issue of *Clippings*. The ingredients are locally available. One is for plants which like a pH around 6.5 (relatively non-acidic); and one is for plants like azaleas and pines and the like that prefer a pH of about 5.5. The mixes, graciously provided by Bill Orsinger, are from those which Warren Hill was researching when he was Curator of the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection. Your soil mix should have been sieved before mixing the ingredients. Items like Canadian peat moss and pine bark mulch should be dried out before they are screened. The soil is sieved using 3 sieves with mesh openings of about 1/4 inch, 1/8 inch and 1/32 inch, respectively. That which does not get through the 1/4-inch screen and that which goes through the 1/32 inch are not used in the soil mix. One can mix various proportions of the soil that was trapped by the 1/8 inch screen with that trapped by the 1/32 inch screen. One might consider a mix with 50% of each. Don't use the soil particles over 1/4 in size for drainage layer covering the pot as

shown in Japanese bonsai books' illustrations. Such a drainage layer is considered a "no-no" by a majority of the bonsai growers in this country. It will inhibit drainage by trapping the water in the soil above (a perched water table) and also take away room for root growth.

Those who are inquisitive and those who are using a potting mix that has not been clearly defined as to particle size and content can use the Harvey Everett solid-liquid-gas test cited in this issue. The ratios of solid, liquid and gas that are usually considered appropriate are:  $\pm 50\%$  solids,  $\pm 30\%$  liquid and  $\pm 20\%$  gas. Remember the old cautions: Put the repotted bonsai out of direct sunlight for 2 weeks and do not fertilize until 1 month has passed after repotting

Some 4 years ago, Jim Barrett mentioned at a lecture/demonstration that he added "Wood Ace" to his bonsai soil mix. *Wood Ace* is a slow-release pelletized fertilizer designed specifically for trees measuring about 1/8 to 3/16 of an inch. I thought I'd best get the skinny from the man himself on how he used *Wood Ace*, and he very kindly obliged. I caught him early on a January, California morning and he was about to load his kiln to fire pots for entry in the forthcoming Second American Bonsai Pot Competition. This competition is sponsored by the National Bonsai Foundation and the announcement of the winners will be made on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May. Jim won first prize in last year's pot competition in the non-traditional category. The other category is for pots with traditional designs. A photo of Jim's pot appeared in the May 2001 issue of *Clippings*. Jim mentioned that he has been finding it hard to get *Wood Ace* where he lives, but my trusty hardware store, Fischers, has it in stock.

Jim very kindly explained that when and only when he repots, does he mix  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of *Wood Ace* to 5 gallons of his potting soil mix. Then he goes to his regular feeding schedule using rape seed pellets. I've tried a slightly different approach. For those plants which are not going to be repotted during a year, I've poked holes in the soil around the rim of the container spaced at 2- to 3- inch intervals. I fill these holes with *Wood Ace*. I've relied principally on the *Wood Ace* as a fertilizer.

After all, it slowly releases its nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium just like fertilizer balls do. I did use a liquid fertilizer in the spring and once in the fall. The plants survived with no apparent problems. It beats making fertilizer balls.

As for other innoculents in the soil mix, the standard recommendation is to use some gypsum to alleviate any build-up of unwanted salts. This year I'm going to add some kelp meal to the potting mix. The *Espoma Kelp Meal* package only states an NPK of 1% nitrogen, 0% phosphorous, and 2% potassium which is on the low side. However, if it works the same way as some seaweed that Pete Jones introduced me to a number of years ago, it's supposed to be chock-full of micro nutrients. Then there's mycorrhizae - the beneficial fungus that can process atmospheric nitrogen as a nutrient to the plant. Packets are available at local nurseries and the powder can be added to the potting mix.

Unfortunately, the packaging for both the kelp and the mycorrhizae do not give any instructions on how much to use for anything like potted plants. Ever since Jim Sullivan introduced us to the powdered mycorrhizae with the instructions to keep it in the refrigerator, I've been doing just that. When repotting, I put in an initial layer of soil in the pot and then dust it very lightly with the powdered mycorrhizae.

Then there's the aspect of sharpening one's tools. The implement for sharpening cutting surfaces of alloy steel tools which one first thinks of and which is cited most often in the literature is a sharpening stone. Good stones can be found in different sizes. You can find one small enough to carry in your pocket so that you can re-sharpen the cutting edge of a tool while working on your bonsai. A number of years ago Bill Merritt brought a few, small steel sharpening tools similar to what are used for kitchen knives to a club meeting for sale. It has a diamond impregnated, round shaft that is 3+1/4 inches long by 1/4 inch in diameter which can be stored in a brass handle and comes in a leather pouch with a belt loop. I find it does as good as any stone to keep my tools sharp and is so convenient to

cont'd, p5

*If a man has not discovered something he will die for, he is not fit to live. ~ MLK*





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

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

### MARCH

#### Rappahanock Bonsai Society

**2** 10:00 am Workshop: Japanese maple

#### PBA ANNUAL Board Meeting

**3** 11:00 am, mezzanine, Admin Bldg., USNA, EVERY MEMBER SHOULD ATTEND

#### Northern Virginia Bonsai Society

**9** 9:00 am Open discussion, spring show and phoenix grafts

10:00 am Photographing bonsai, and virtual bonsai design

12:00 noon Beginner workshop

#### Lancaster Bonsai Society

**13** 7:00 pm Presentation by M.Meean with a Saturday workshop to put the info received into practice (Frank Thomas is contact person)

#### Washington Bonsai Club

**16** 2:00 pm Preparation for Spring Show

#### Baltimore Bonsai Club

**17** 1:00 pm Preparation of trees for the Spring Show. All members should submit trees for consideration in the Spring Show-Bring raffle items

3:00 pm Beginners workshop

#### Brookside Bonsai Society

**21** 7:30 pm Presentation by Bill Spencer

#### Chesapeake Bonsai Society

**23** 11:30 am Soil making and repotting party at the home of Brian Koehler

#### Kiyomizu Bonsai Club

**24** Soil mixing at The Clearwater Nature Center

#### Bowie Bonsai Club

**25** 7:00 pm Repotting and understanding drainage. Preparation for the Spring Show  
Potomac Viewing Stone Group

**10** 1-3:30 USNA Auditorium Planning display for PBA Spring Show. Visitors welcomed!

### Non-Association events of interest

#### Native plant sale

**23** 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., Admin Bldg. East terrace, USNA. Co-sponsored by FoNA. Best native plant nurseries of region gather to sell wide selection of native wildflowers, trees, shrubs and vines. A portion of proceeds supports the Arboretum's native plant collection.

### Native Azaleas in the Southern Appalachian Highlands

**24** 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm, Admin Bldg Auditorium  
Sponsored by Potomac Valley Chapter American Rhododendron Society

With stunning slides, Jim Gears Chapter President, leads you along the Appalachian Trail through magnificent stands of orange and yellow flame azaleas and through acres of brilliant hybrids. Share Jim's enthusiasm and take home a young seedling for your garden. Free

The Arts of Pacific Asia Show The weekend beginning Friday, March 21 will be the Asian Art Weekend in New York City held each year at the following **NEW LOCATIONS**

**21 - 24** NY Arts of Pacific Asia Show, The Events Center - off 5th Avenue at 32 W 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NY

**22 - 26** The International Asian Art Fair, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Damrosch Park, 62nd Street, NY, NY

### APRIL

#### Potomac Bonsai Association Spring Show

**5** 12:00-5:00 p.m.

**6 - 7** 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

**PLEASE VOLUNTEER THROUGH YOUR CLUB TO HELP.**

#### Lancaster Bonsai Society

**10** 7:00 pm Spring Symposium featuring food, raffle, and presentation with a Saturday workshop for follow-up work. (Cindy Kamide is contact)

#### Northern Virginia Bonsai Society

**13** 9:00 am Spring Show (set-up)

10:30 am Spring Show opens at Green Spring Gardens

3:30 pm Spring Show closes (tear down)

#### Brookside Bonsai Society

**18** 7:30 pm Presentation by Jim Rieden

#### Washington Bonsai Club

**20** 2:00 pm BYO tree workshop

#### Rappahanock Bonsai Society

**20** 10:a.m. BYO Tree workshop

#### Baltimore Bonsai Club

**21** 1:00 pm "The how's, what's and wherefore's of collecting"

Bring collected trees and raffle items

3:00 Beginners' workshop

#### Kiyomizu Bonsai Club

**27** Visit member's collection (sorry, Kiyomizu members only)

Bowie Bonsai Club

**29** 7:00 Review of the spring show. Applying what we learned

Chesapeake Bonsai Society

No meeting this month, support PBA show

Potomac Viewing Stone Group

No meeting this month

NON-ASSOCIATION EVENTS OF INTERESTVirginia Bonsai Society

**26-27** 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

**28** 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Bonsai Exhibit In the Admin Bldg. Auditorium of the Norfolk Botanical Garden, 6700 Azalea Garden Rd., Norfolk, Va. During the International Azalea Festival.

Camellia Show

**13-14** 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Admin.Bldg.Audit. USNA Experience hundreds of camellia blossoms in full glory during this annual show

of spectacular flowers grown by Camellia Society of the Potomac Valley. Free

Azalea Stroll

**25 & 29** 10:00 a.m.- 11:30 a.m. Free

**25 & 29 5:00** p.m.- 6:30 p.m. Fee \$7.00 (FoNA 6.00)

Experience the magnificence of spring by strolling through the azalea collection with curator Barbara Bullock. Learn the history of our collection and enjoy the beauty of azaleas in full bloom

11th Annual FoNA Garden Sale

**27** 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. USNA NY Ave. parking lot

Thousands of plants, including the Arboretum's "introductions"- plants developed for their outstanding ornamental qualities and disease resistance. Experts will answer questions. Proceeds support the USNA's internship program. Free admission and parking

**Roy Nagatoshi Workshop**

Here is an opportunity to share with other PBA club members the experience and knowledge of a bonsai master. NVBS is sponsoring four workshops by Roy Nagatoshi. They will be held at Green Spring Garden Center, Alexandria, VA. It is off Rt. 236 (Little River Turnpike) just behind the Salvation Army Store. There are openings in each class. The workshops are "provide your own material" and each workshop is \$60.

**13 April 9:00 am and 1:00 pm**

**14 April 9:00 am and 1:00 pm.**

Please contact Carole Roelofs at croelofs@erols.com, or 703.257.7142, to reserve a slot(s).

*Your money must be received by 30 March to retain your slot. Send your check made out to NVBS to Judy Wise, 1259 4th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20024.*

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**1/2 Oldz Curiosity Shoppe**

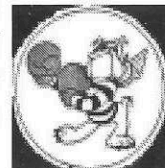
Friend Dave Bogan called to my attention an ad on eBay [poor spelling is the seller's]:

"PBA Clippings form the Potomac Bonsai Assaociation. Have issues. April 1993, Jan 1995, March 1998, August/Sept 1998, Oct 1998, Dec/Jan 1999, feb/march 1999, Nov 1999, Jan 2000Feb 2000, April 2001'. Total of 11 issues. All in excelent condition no mailing labels. Lots of good information about Bonsai's. Shipping 3.95 Good Luck" - the seller is in St Leonard, MD.

Editorial, continued

carry around. It is manufactured by EZE-Lap Diamond Products. If you've purchased their 5-inch long *Hone and Stone* products, it is shown as M on the back of the package - that is if you still have the package. If you're interested, you can call 1-800 843-4815 and get a free catalog which includes sharpening techniques. They also have a web-site, www.ezelap diamond.com.

This spring you follow what's worked for you or you can try some new approaches. If you have any comments or thoughts relative to the above, send it in to *Clippings*. No matter what follow the advice that Dan Chiplis very emphatically told me over the telephone not too long ago: "If you want a bonsai, do the respective chores at the times they are scheduled to be done."



## Call for Mentors! by Jim Hughes, Educational Vice President

The PBA mentoring program matches up less experienced club members with the more experienced members. Advice about horticultural practices, design issues, propagation techniques, and use of pesticides, are typical bonsai-related topics that may be discussed. Less experienced PBA members, especially new members, are encouraged to contact these mentors for their bonsai-related questions.

Anyone interested in being listed as a mentor should send their name, club affiliation, phone number, and e-mail address (if possible) to Jim Hughes at 301.779.2891, [jjhughes@erols.com](mailto:jjhughes@erols.com). Please note if you prefer to be contacted by phone or e-mail.

Don't wait to be called. Contact Jim before the next *Clippings* is created.

Arschel Morell	BBC	410.744.6478	<a href="mailto:ajmorellsr@hotmail.com">ajmorellsr@hotmail.com</a>
Chuck Croft	NVBS	703.978.6841	<a href="mailto:ccroft@mindspring.com">ccroft@mindspring.com</a>
Jules Koetsch	NVBS	703.569.9378	<a href="mailto:jkoetsch@earthlink.net">jkoetsch@earthlink.net</a>
Chris Yeapanis	PVSG/NVBS	703.591.0864 (after 11 am)	<a href="mailto:ibonsai@erols.com">ibonsai@erols.com</a>
Carole Roelofs	NVBS	703.257.7142	<a href="mailto:croelofs@erols.com">croelofs@erols.com</a>
Jim Sullivan	Bowie	301.262.9633	<a href="mailto:sullivja@ors.od.nih.gov">sullivja@ors.od.nih.gov</a>
Jim Hughes	BBS	301.779.2891	<a href="mailto:jjhughes@erols.com">jjhughes@erols.com</a>
Philip Gatov	Kiyomizu/Rappahanock		<a href="mailto:PhilipGatov@msn.com">PhilipGatov@msn.com</a>

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Note to members about mailings of *Clippings*: It seems some of you have not noticed *Clippings* comes to you via bulk mail. If you move and do not mail Judy Wise a change of address notice (address always appears on page 2, column 1), your bulk-mailed *Clippings* will not be forwarded to you. You have thrown it away.

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## BACK TO BASICS WITH BERNI by Berni Gastrich for Yama Ki Newsletter

BIGGER IS BETTER (Where have I heard that before?)

The subject is Bonsai! I'm only kidding, honest. What I really mean is that larger bonsai in larger pots are far easier to maintain and keep alive than smaller ones.

**Water** – On a hot sunny day, mamé bonsai can dry out in hours. They sometimes have to be watered two or three times a day. Since the pot is tiny, it heats up very rapidly, which is bad for the roots, and also dries the soil through heat. The tree, of course, also draws water. A much larger bonsai, in a pot which is in proportion, has a much slower soil temperature change. Furthermore, the evaporation at the surface helps to keep the deeper soil cooler.

**Fertilizer** – The precision of measurement of the amount of fertilizer is much more critical in small bonsai. It is much safer to use extremely diluted fertilizers. In a larger pot, small errors in amount mean very little.

**Insects and Diseases** – If a caterpillar or other bug eats 10 leaves on a mamé bonsai, you may have lost the primary branch. On a large bonsai you may not even notice. The same thing can be said for fungus and other diseases.

**Negatives** – Large bonsai are hard to carry. They are also more expensive, in initial cost, container, and in upkeep. An extreme example is a juniper which I will pot for the first time this spring. The cost of soil will be \$75.00. This tree will be totally outdoor hardy, winter and summer, and will therefore not need to be moved very often. The pot will stand on a lazy-susan so that it can easily be turned with respect to the sun.

Please don't misunderstand. Small bonsai can be Absolutely Beautiful.

Large bonsai are better only in the sense that they are easier to keep alive and healthy.





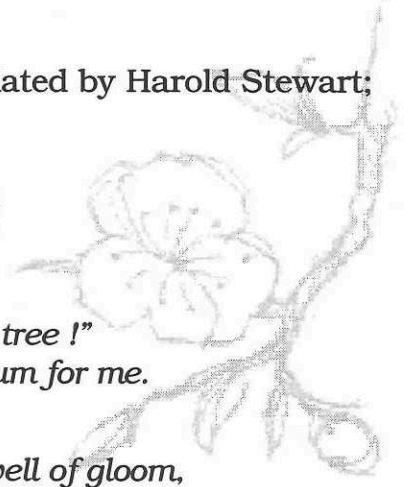
## Poetry Corner - Calm yourself

The following haiku are from **A NET OF FIREFLIES** translated by Harold Stewart; Charles E. Tuttle Company Inc., Rutland, Vermont; 1960.

**REBIRTH**     *Ah for the heart whose winter knew no doubt,  
The white plum blossoms first to venture out !  
~ Mokuin*

**THE GESTURE**     *"Be careful not to break my flowering tree !"  
He warned; and broke a branch of plum for me.  
~ Taigi*

**SPRING DAWN**     *Up comes the bucket from the well of gloom,  
And in it floats - a pink camellia bloom.  
~ Kakei*



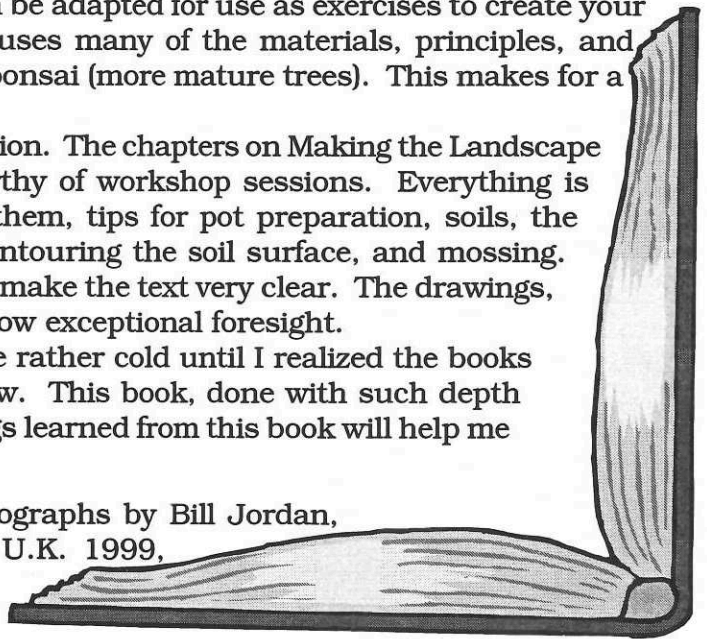
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**BONSAI BOOK NOOK** ~ This month's contribution is from Arschel of Baltimore Club. He responded gently to arm twisting. Don't make us get physical with you. If you can mentally interpret written symbols, tell us about your recent enjoyment or frustration with the written (or taped) word to help your fellow club members increase our understanding of our avocation. It needn't be restricted to bonsai. Travel books and those on the cultures and manners of countries known for long bonsai experience would be appropriate.

In my bonsai collection I have a very large forest planting of Hinoki cypress. This grouping was created in a workshop in Florida with E. Felton Jones some time during the spring of 1985. The trees were planted in a nursery flat and brought back to Baltimore. They survived and prospered in that flat for 5 years until I was able to obtain a suitable container. In fact the trees prospered so much that they lost the original effect that the grouping had possessed. While searching for books to add to my winter study pile, I pulled a book titled **Bonsai Landscapes**, by Peter Adams. I had purchased this book along with others while in the business and had never really read it. This book, features detailed instructions for creating stunning landscapes, as well rejuvenating established plantings (just what I was looking for). Detailed designs are included for landscapes that can be adapted for use as exercises to create your own design. In writing this book, Adams uses many of the materials, principles, and techniques of Saikei, combining them with bonsai (more mature trees). This makes for a unique combination.

The book contains a wealth of useful information. The chapters on Making the Landscape (5) and Creating the Landscape (7) are worthy of workshop sessions. Everything is explained, the plants and how to prepare them, tips for pot preparation, soils, the placing of the stones and accent plants, contouring the soil surface, and mossing. It's all here. The photographs and drawings make the text very clear. The drawings, projecting the evolution of the plantings, show exceptional foresight. Some of Adam's previous books have left me rather cold until I realized the books had an English (as in England) point of view. This book, done with such depth and clarity, is a winner. I hope that the things learned from this book will help me accomplish the remake I am seeking.

**Bonsai Landscapes** by Peter Adams, Photographs by Bill Jordan,  
125 pp. Published by Ward Lock in the U.K. 1999,  
Distributed in the U.S. by Sterling Publishing  
Co., Inc., \$ 27.95



## Shonan School of Bonsai Studies ~ Part 2 by David Johnson

Remember David from last month? Toronto's dedicated regular guy who made time and opportunity come together for his avocation.

In the previous article I wrote about my bonsai studies in Japan with Mr. Nakamura, a director of the Nippon Bonsai Association. I discussed my general impressions, wiring and styling techniques. This piece will cover propagation, repotting and general bonsai maintenance.

**Propagation** Unlike in Canada with its possibilities to collect naturally stunted trees, collecting in Japan is *Very* restricted. Propagation of bonsai by seeds, cuttings, and layering is common. Bonsai nursery professionals are happy to help satisfy bonsai hobbyists' needs, as evident in the vending area at the Koku-fu Exhibition. Nursery stock for sale ranged from seedlings to finished trees and everything in between. What was really incredible was the number of pines, azaleas, and other trees with huge trunks and small burlapped rootballs. On one of my field trips, I went with Mr. Nakamura to a nursery to pick up a number of potted plum, apple, and some other tree stock. He also got a bundle of bare rooted 2-year-old *pinus thunbergii* (Japanese black pine) seedlings to graft *pinus parviflora* (J. white pine). Later we



Mr Susumu Nakamura (farleft) showing guests the Koku-fu exhibition.

went to Mr. Nakamura's eldest brother's farm which has many bonsai growing in pots, as well as numerous field-grown trees. Our task that day was to dig up a row of *corylopsis spicata* (winter hazel), prune, and then replant them in the ground. Digging out these trees was very hard work. I could not keep up with a worker at the farm who was a number of years my senior and whose nickname was "Mr. Bonsai." These trees had large multiple trunks. Once dug, the soil was shaken out. The roots were pruned to 1+½ to 2 inches long with the bottom growing roots removed completely. The branches were pruned heavily to style. They were replanted close together in very fine garden soil which minimized air space problems. This pruning



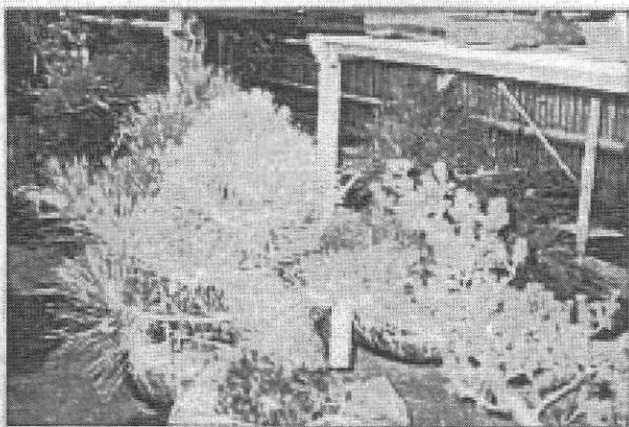
Nakamura-san and Mr 'Bonsai' styling field-grown *corylopsis spicata* (winter hazel)



is done annually while they are being field grown. For those interested, *Bonsai Today* (1999-1 #59) has an article on *corylopsis spicata*.

Mr Nakamura showed me how to graft *pinus parviflora* scions onto 2-year-old *pinus thunbergii* stock:

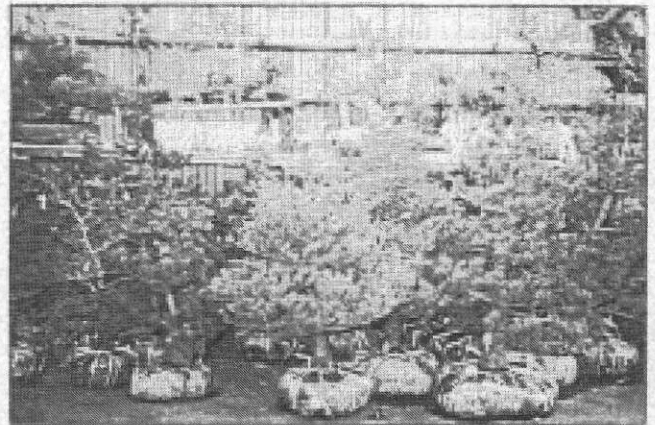
1. Remove last year's growth from the *pinus thunbergii* stock and 25% to 50% of the roots.
2. Cut *pinus parviflora* scion with a long cut on one side, and a short cut on the opposite side. Use quick accurate strokes, and put the cut end into your mouth to keep it humid.
3. Put the stock on the table, and cut in halfway 1/4-inch above the roots.
4. Open the stock and insert the scion off-centre in order to match up the cambium layers.
5. Wrap the graft with plastic grafting tape.
6. Plant the grafts if you are doing a number of them into a well-draining styrofoam box in Akadama (Japanese baked clay) soil or if individually, in small plastic pots.
7. Cover the box with plastic; or put the individual plastic pots in a plastic bag and then put them in shade.
8. After 40 to 50 days, put holes in the plastic.
9. After 7 months, remove the plastic and place grafts in sun.
10. The following year, in the spring, cut the top of the old stock just above the



Black Pines

graft, and also prune the roots to maintain the root/foilage balance. This root pruning is very important. There is a helpful article in *International Bonsai* (Winter 1979) on pine grafting. When I tried doing some of these grafts, Mr. Nakamura pointed out some of my errors which should be avoided. These errors were: cutting off too many of the stock roots when beginning; not placing the stock on the table to make a quick, accurate and firm cut; and too much soil in the pot for the first layer of soil. (In this case, I was planting the grafts in small plastic pots and putting them in a plastic bag as opposed to the method described above for doing mass plantings.)

These grafting techniques could be experimented with using *pinus strobus* (Eastern white pine), *p. sylvestris* (Scot's pine) and *p. banksiana* (jack pine) stock and *p. parviflora* scions.



White Pines ~ ready to be adopted

When Mr. Nakamura discussed the possibility of air-layering a jack pine I have, he said that it could take between 2 to 3 years to produce roots and would need winter protection. He also suggested that I not use too much moss and not have it too wet. If the air layer gets dry, use a syringe to water it. Mr. Nakamura also recommended that I saw some of the wood away in the exposed air-layered area.

[See previously printed 'landscape' view of the Koku-Fu vendor area in March Y2K.]

Repotting Mr. Nakamura had a very large impressive pinus thunbergii in a broken pot, and it had to be repotted for an upcoming display. Even though it was not the ideal time to properly repot the tree, it would be all right since the tree would be going into a large pot with minimal disturbance to the roots. No new soil was placed in the pot as the tree was a bit too high for the new container. After the tree was positioned correctly and wired down, medium- sized Akadama soil was gradually placed in the container around the tree. In Japan, they don't use the conventional chopstick we use but a potting stick twice the size.

The most interesting aspect of repotting this tree was the large amount of time Mr. Nakamura spent compacting the soil. He kept working the potting stick and using his finger tips to lightly push down the soil. As he did this you could notice the soil stiffening up. A soft rubber mallet was also used to tap around the pot. Mr. Nakamura said that compacting the soil is important so the new and old soil densities are similar; otherwise the water will not penetrate the rootball and could run right through the new soil. Mr. Nakamura pointed out that when repotting under normal conditions, he would trim the small roots to about 5 mm long; and that the potting stick shouldn't damage them as long as he is gentle and doesn't jam the stick into the soil. Once the tree was repotted it was thoroughly watered.

One of the many Japanese words I learned was "yosh," something you say when lifting anything heavy, like when you help lift a large two-person tree like the one described above.

I will finish this section on repotting with an observation made by Jerry Stowell, an accomplished bonsai artist from the United States, whom I met at the Koku-fu Exhibition. He told me how he had seen an apprentice at a bonsai nursery picking



*Nakamura-san's repotted p. thunbergii. It's about 34" tall with a 10" trunk base. A definite "yosh" tree.*

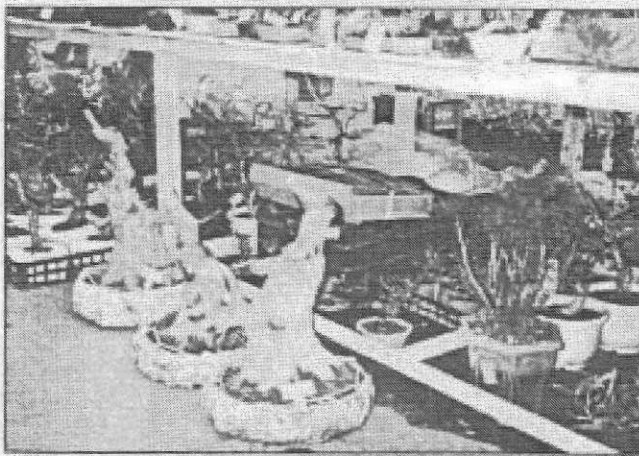
out the soil from a pine with tweezers while keeping the roots damp and partially covered. Mr. Stowell said this was being done to avoid washing away the mycorrhiza from the roots with water.

Bonsai Maintenance There were a number of tips I learned from Mr. Nakamura that can be of help to bonsai growers.

When watering, the angle of the hose nozzle is important. I think this refers to angling the nozzle so that the back area of the tree is not forgotten, and to make sure you get under the tree's foliage to water the roots. Mr. Nakamura said that pinus densiflora (J. red pine) and p.parviflora need less water than the more vigorous p.thunbergii. Mr. Nakamura suggested watering both the roots and the foliage for weak trees, and those that have been pruned or needle-plucked recently. Water the tree if it looks dry. Mr. Nakamura's son, Makoto, seemed to water the trees every day in the morning. Keep in mind that in February temperatures in Yokohama sometimes dipped below freezing in the early morning and rose to a warm 8° to 12°Celsius under a usually beautiful sunny sky during the day. The winters are quite dry in Yokohama.

One interesting observation is that if the trees are always outdoors and are thus subject to winter's freezing and thawing on a daily basis (a situation we try avoid in Toronto). What effect does this have on the trees? Are we being over protective in early spring?

When Mr. Nakamura worked on trees he had just brought into his nursery, he often dipped his scissors in ethanol "for disinfection" to protect against the transmission of disease. Mr. Nakamura uses streptomycin to cure balls that sometimes form on Chinese quince roots. Mr. Nakamura prefers using organic fertilizers because they provide a better environment for the trees. When I asked him why the *pinus densiflora* group planting I was wiring seemed especially brittle, he said it could be a due to a lack



*The vendors' area at Koku-fu 1999 was sponsored by the Nippon Bonsai Association in Tokyo. The acer buergerianums (trident maples) are about 6" wide and 12" tall, and sold for ¥45,000 to ¥50,000 (K\$560 to \$625 Canadian, \$450 to \$500 US).*

of fertilizer. One of my projects included needle-plucking a *p.parviflora* literati. I didn't really appreciate discussion in the bonsai literature about the various levels of strength in a tree until I finished needle-plucking that tree. You could feel the thicker needles and the weaker ones, as well as see the different sizes and number of terminal buds. The experience was well worth getting heavily tarred fingers. Mr. Nakamura told me he had

experimented with *pinus parviflora* hoping to reduce needle size. He accomplished this by removing more needles to reduce the sap flow. This was done while he prepared the tree for display with its first- and second-year needles. Mr. Nakamura wrote an article for Japanese bonsai publication outlining his success.

When doing heavy pruning on established but overgrown trees (if only we could be confronted with such problems), Mr. Nakamura said to start from the bottom and design a new structure. Heavy pruning can be done on a healthy tree and at the vigorous apex area. If less pruning is necessary, you could start from the top. Cut back to the smallest internode.

Mr. Nakamura recommended that collected trees should be grown for 3 years before styling in order to strengthen the trees and encourage new growth which increases design options.

Wiring aftercare was overlooked in my previous article [*Clippings* had advance notice so we did fit this in]. The cascade *pinus parviflora* which was wired after the heavy bar was applied to a large 1+½-inch branch was misted and kept inside the unheated classroom (at night) and gradually brought out to partial and then full sun over a period of 4 weeks. The other two *p.parviflora* were treated in a similar fashion. After wiring the *p.densiflora* group, I had expected similar treatment; but I was surprised when Mr. Nakamura said it could go back into the sun. I don't know if it was because of the species of tree, or the less severe wiring involved, or both.

I hope these tips will be of some value. A third and final article is being prepared on practical aspects of the Koku-fu Exhibition, and the root-connected and root-over-rock plantings I did at Mr. Nakamura's Shonan School of Bonsai.

*We hope Clippings readers look forward to David's future articles.*



## HARVEY EVERETT SOIL, WATER, GAS TEST

What seems to be an acceptable percentages for an acceptable soil mix is about 50% solids and liquids and gases each ranging between 15% and 30%. Examples as to how the percentages vary for different mixes are given below. Note that the sieve groups are: 4 - 8 equals that which passed through a 1/4" screen opening but not a 1/8" opening; 8 - 16 are those particles which made it through the 1/4" opening but not the 1/8" opening; and 16 to 20 are for those particles that made it though the 1/ 16" screen but not the 1/20" opening. Over 20 refers to what passed through all the sieves.

SOIL MEDIA	SIEVE GROUP				PERCENT		
	4-8	8-16	16-20	Over 20	Solid	Liquid	Gas
Milled peat moss	35	30	12	23	32	68	0
Leaf compost sifted	30	70	-	-	36	29	35
Wood chip compost sifted	35	65	-	-	45	34	21
Vermiculite - as is	53	18	29	0	35	57	8
Vermiculite - sifted	75	25	-	0	35	46	19
Perlite - as is	1	41	58	0	38	46	16
Perlite - sifted	3	97	-	-	40	35	25
White sand	0	0	53	47	57	42	1
Soil mixes:							
1/3 Chicken grit, terry litter, peat moss	45	43	12	-	55	32	13
Roy Nagatoshi's mix as received pH 6.0					45	27	28
2 parts Roy's mix, one part Canadian peat pH 4.5					45	35	21
Mix #3 (see article, <i>Anyone's Potting Mix</i> ) pH 6.0					45	40	15

Except for the last 3 entries in the table above, the others were taken from the table in the May 1998 issue of Clippings. The last three entries were the editor's attempts at checking out Mix #3 and Roy Nagatoshi's mix. Roy's mix has soil particles that are a mixture of what would pass through a screen with 1/4" openings and not through a 1/16" opening. The finer mix in Mix #3 excluded any particles that did not pass through a screen with 1/8" openings. A glance at the entry for white sand in the table confirms what happens with Mix #3:- more liquid is retained than for the mixes with larger sized particles. Furthermore, the amount of space for gas is reduced below a desirable value. The editor prefers to stay with soils that have the approximate ratios of 50% solids, 25% liquid and 25% gas. I did not have any medium-size granite chips so the Mix #3 with 3 parts fine granite chips to 1 part coarse or medium-size granite chips. The pH's for each of the last three entries in the table were measured.

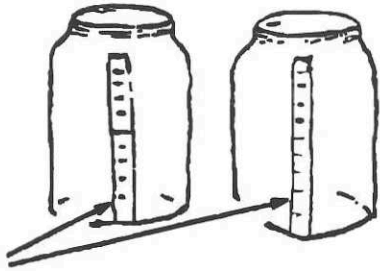
Note that one must make certain that the water used in the soil test has a pH of 7.0. The tap water seemed to have a lower pH, so distilled water, pH of 7.0, was used. Roy's mix with 2 parts the mix as shipped, and 1 part Canadian peat moss was a check on how to lower the pH so that it would make azaleas, pines and the like happier. A pH of 4.5 was a little too low. Using less peat moss, perhaps one half the amount would, have brought the pH up to around pH 5.5 which is where it should be.

Have fun testing your soil mixes.

## Soil Survey by Harvey Everett

By coincidence most of our bonsai media have about 50% solids. The variation is in the distribution of liquids and gases. In the opinion of this author, bonsai solids should be selected so that the liquids and soil gases each range 15% and 30% depending on specific plant needs.

This proposed approach for choosing soil ingredients from the measurement of solid, liquid, and gas percentages is a more positive way to select a soil medium than conventional approaches especially when the soil material does not have quality control or we established properties.



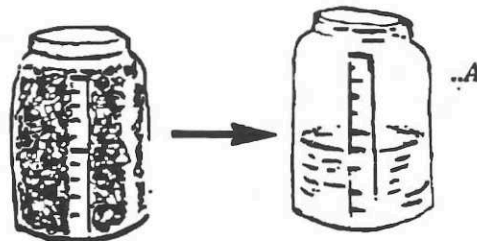
1) Tape identical scales from 0.0, 0.1, 0.2 ... 1.0 on identical glass jars of about one pint capacity.



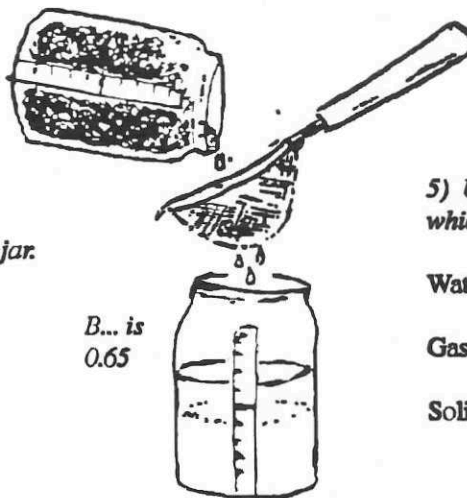
2) Fill both jars to the 1.0 mark - one with absolutely dry soil to be tested and the other with water.



3) Fill soil jar with water from the jar to the 1.0 mark on the soil jar.



4) Keep adding water to soil jar to maintain water level at 1.0 mark until soil absorbs no more. Measure water level in jar. e.g. A is 0.4.



Carefully top soil jar and pour free water back into jar.

B... is  
0.65

5) Use kitchen strainer to catch soil which might fall from jar.

### Calculations

Water absorbed =  $1.0 - 0.65$   
 $= 1.0 - B = 0.35$  or 35%  
 Gas space =  $B - A = 0.65 - 0.4$   
 $= 0.25$  or 25%  
 Solid =  $1.0 - (0.35 + 0.25)$   
 $= 0.4$  or 40%

## MONTHLY CARE TIPS FOR MARCH *compiled by Jules*

The following tips have been compiled in part from 4 Japanese bonsai magazines and Y. Yoshimura's book. The time table 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 an essential part of keeping the bonsai healthy and alive.

Unfortunately March is the month when the trees are brought out from winter storage (after temperatures do not go below freezing during any part of the day). Hence, refer to the instructions on watering in winter storage [February Care Tips]. Once the plants are in the open, the Japanese try to guard against frost on the new buds and leaves of deciduous plants.

**Watering:** You have to judge this for yourself. The watering instructions given below are from Japanese texts and should serve only as an indicator of how much water a specific plant species may like. For example, weeping willow and wisteria like a lot of water. Your soil mix, the plant's location outdoors, and weather patterns determine your plants' water needs. I'm a firm advocate of using a soil moisture gauge to check the way your bonsai are accepting water. Gauges can be found priced below \$10. When the meter reads one-half of full scale or less, it's time to water the plant. If you do not want to invest about \$9 for a meter, use a chopstick and poke it in the soil. If there is moisture on the wood, the soil is wet enough. It's analogous to testing a cake to see if the dough is done.

**Location:** Plants thrive best where they will receive an adequate amount of sunlight. *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, 4 June 2000.

**Fertilizing:** The Japanese use fertilizer balls to feed their plants. A fertilizer ball is customarily assumed to retain its potency for about 1 month. Where are to be applied, if one does not use them, begin your own fertilizing regimen.

### CONIFERS

**BLACK PINE:** Water once per day. Remove any wire digging into bark and wire/rewire where needed. Remove any unwanted needles. Grafting can be done mid-month. Apply fertilizer balls during last week. Keep in full sun all day and preferably where there is air movement. pH 4.5 - 6.0

**CRYPTOMERIA:** Water once per day including leaves. Keep in a polyhouse or coldframe for as long as the temperature may go below 32°F. Remove unwanted branches and needles. Apply fertilizer balls during last week. Place where it gets half day of shade. pH 5.5 - 7.0

**HEMLOCK:** Water as needed. Wire tree. (Avoid placing more than 2 wires side by side.) Apply fertilizer balls mid-month. Remove unwanted branches unless repotting. Repot every 3 to 4 years. Place where it gets half day shade. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**HINOKI:** Water as needed. At beginning of month, thin out foliage, remove unwanted branches, and apply fertilizer balls. Wire mid-month. Make certain no existing wire is biting into bark. Repotting can be done any time. Repot every 3 years. Place where it gets half day of shade. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**LARCH:** Water as needed. Apply fertilizer balls at beginning of month. Wiring can be done last part of month. Place where it gets half day shade. pH 5.0 - 6.5

**NEEDLE JUNIPER:** Water once per day including the leaves. Keep in full sun all day. pH 6.0 - 7.0

**SAWARA CYPRESS:** Water as needed. Wire mid-month. (Wire that has remained on the tree for 3 years should be removed before rewiring.) Repot after dealing with rewiring. Repot every 3 years. Fertilize mid-month unless the tree has been repotted. Place where it gets half day shade. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**SHIMPAKU (Sargent juniper):** Water once per day and sprinkle foliage at same time. Wire/rewiring can be done any time during this month. Apply fertilizer balls during last week. Keep in full sun all day. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**SPRUCE:** Water once per day. Keep the spruce in a coldframe or polyhouse until temperatures stabilize above 32°F. Wiring and repotting can be done after removal from winter protection. Repot every 3 to 5 years. Apply fertilizer balls last week of month unless the plant has been repotted. Keep in full sun all day. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**WHITE PINE:** Water once per day until it is



taken out of winter storage. Then start watering twice daily. Prune unwanted branches. Wiring and repotting can be done when plant is out of winter protection. Repotting need only be done every 3 years unless plant is rootbound. Apply fertilizer balls during 1<sup>st</sup> week unless plant has been repotted. During last week, begin watering twice daily. Keep in full sun all day and preferably where there is wind or air movement. pH 4.5 - 6.0

**YEW:** Water as needed. At beginning of month, pinch off excess growth of branchlets and prune others. Wire at end of month and remove wire that has been on for 3 years. Place where it gets half day shade. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**DECIDUOUS** (Non-fruiting/non-flowering) Keep all of the following bonsai in a polyhouse or coldframe until temperatures stabilize above 32°F.

**BEECH:** Water once per day. It is natural for beech trees to keep old, brown leaves through fall and winter. One can remove them now. Good time to start seeds or select tree for converting to bonsai. Repot any time after removal from winter protection. Repot every 3 years unless plant is rootbound. Place where it gets half day shade. pH 5.0 - 7.0

**CHINESE ELM:** Water as needed. Repot every 2 years. Good time to select tree and make a bonsai. Keep in full sun all day. pH 6.0 - 7.5

**GINGKO:** Water as needed. After removing from winter protection, repot if necessary. Keep in full sun all day. pH 6.0 - 7.0

**HORNBEAM:** Water once per day. In mid-month begin watering 2 times daily. Repot any time. Repotting can be done yearly. Time to plant seeds or obtain a plant for bonsai. Place where it gets half day shade. pH 6.0 - 8.0

**JAPANESE MAPLE:** Water once per day. Unnecessary branches and sprouts should be removed no later than first week to prevent tree bleeding to death when sap rises. Then repot. Repotting can be done yearly. Time to plant seeds or obtain a plant for bonsai. In mid-month begin watering 2 times per day. Place where it gets half day shade. pH 6.0 - 8.0

**TRIDENT MAPLE:** Water once daily. New leaf buds may appear so keep the maple where frost won't hit it. Unnecessary branches and sprouts should be removed at very beginning of month. Repotting can be done up to 20<sup>th</sup>. Repotting can be done yearly. Remove wire during last week. Time to plant seeds or obtain a plant for bonsai. Place where it gets half day shade. pH 6.0 - 8.0

**WEeping WILLOW:** Water once per day. Repot every 2 years. Place where it gets half day shade. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**WINGED EUONYMOUS:** Water as needed. Wiring can be done. Keep in full sun all day. pH 5.5 - 7.0

**Flowering/Fruiting Plants** Keep all of the following bonsai in a polyhouse or coldframe until temperatures stabilize above 32°F.

**CHERRY:** Water every 1 or 2 days depending on plant's intake during the first 20 days. After that, water daily for the remainder of month. Cherry blossoms appear - enjoy them. Time to collect a tree for bonsai. Repot during the last 10 days of month after blossoms fade. Repot every 2 years. Place where it gets half day of shade. pH 6.0 - 8.0

**CRAB APPLE:** Water every other day until the bonsai is out of winter storage, and once daily thereafter. Flower buds appear during first part of month and the tree is in bloom during the last part - enjoy the apple blossoms. Repot the tree if needed after blossoms have faded. Repot every 3 to 4 years. Keep in full sun all day. pH 5.0 - 6.5

**GARDENIA:** Water as needed. Time to buy plant or start seedlings.

**HOLLY:** At the beginning of month, start watering once daily. Grafting can be done during mid-month. When needed - repotting can be done during last week of month. Place where it gets half day of shade. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**PYRACANTHA:** At the beginning of month start watering once daily. Repot after the 10<sup>th</sup> when it is needed. Wire after the 10<sup>th</sup>. Keep in full sun all day. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**QUINCE:** Water once every 2 days until the last week in month, then begin watering once daily. Repotting can be done during the last week. Repot every 2 years: Keep in full sun all day. pH 5.0 - 6.5

**SATSUKI (azalea):** Water once every 2 days until the 10th - then water once daily. Place where it gets half day of shade. pH 5.0 - 6.0

**UME (Japanese flowering plum or apricot):** Water once every 2 days until the 10th - then water once daily. Remove spent flowers. After flowering is complete, prune to leave 2 sprouts on branchlets. Repot after the mid-month. Repot every 2 years. Protect against frost. Keep in full sun all day. pH 6.0 - 7.5

**WISTERIA:** Water often. Repot as soon as possible; and repot yearly. Place where it gets half day of shade. pH 6.0 - 8.0



## Potomac Bonsai Association Membership Application

Welcome! PBA is composed of the clubs listed here. Join one and be eligible to attend any club's meeting, in addition to receiving *PBA Clippings* monthly. We conduct a Spring Show and a Fall Symposium, as well as other events. Residents of these communities are expected to join a club to receive all membership benefits, including *PBA Clippings*.

**To become a member, call the contact person of the club convenient to your needs for current rates and where to send this application and dues. (Please make check payable to the club joined.)**

**Individuals residing beyond commuting distance of a club are invited to subscribe to *PBA Clippings*.** For a subscription only (no entitlement to participation in club events), complete application and mail with a check payable to PBA for \$15.00 (US\$35 for an international subscription) to: Judy Wise, 1259 4th St, SW, Washington, DC, 20024. For more information, please call Judy at (202) 554-3045.

Meeting times and locations are subject to change. **Call first!**  
Events are listed monthly in the Calendar section of *PBA Clippings*.

- Individual Club membership (Includes *PBA Clippings*)  
 Family Club Membership (Includes one copy of *PBA Clippings*)  
 *PBA Clippings* Subscription Only, US \$15 (does not include club activities)  
 *PBA Clippings*, International Subscription, US \$35
- 
- Baltimore Bonsai Club     Kiyomizu Bonsai Society     Chesapeake Bonsai Society  
 Bowie Bonsai Club     Lancaster Bonsai Society     Northern Virginia Bonsai Society  
 Brookside Bonsai Club     Washington Bonsai Club     Rappahanock Bonsai Society  
 Potomac Viewing Stone Group

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ +4 \_\_\_\_\_ Nation \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Home: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ or Office: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting location and club contact number for additional information is as listed. Check for Beginners' Hour, and other special functions. All are welcomed to visit any club's meeting. **Also visit [www.bonsai-pba.org](http://www.bonsai-pba.org).**

### Baltimore Bonsai Club

Cyburn Arboretum, Baltimore, MD  
3rd Sunday, 1 PM

Arschel Morell, 410.744.6478 - ajmorellsr@hotmail.com

### Bowie Bonsai Club

Woodlawn Baptist Church, 500 Church Rd, Bowie, MD  
Last Monday, 7 PM

Jim Sullivan, 301.262.9633 - sullivanja@ors.od.nih.gov

Terry Adkins, 202.667.1016

### Brookside Bonsai Society

North Chevy Chase Rec Center, Bethesda, MD  
3rd Thursday, 7:30 PM

Jim Hughes, 301.779.2891 - JHughes@erols.com

### Chesapeake Bonsai Society

Call for meeting time and location  
Sharon Katz, 410.263.3307

### Kiyomizu Bonsai Club

Clearwater Nature Ctr, 11000 Thrift Road, Clinton, MD  
4th Sunday, 2 PM

Essie Wilson, 301.839.2471 - wilson@howrey.com

### Lancaster Bonsai Society

Conestoga House, 1608 Marietta Pike, Lancaster, PA  
2nd Wednesday, 7 PM

Marlene Fetherbay, 717.898.0806

Mark Emerson, mmemerson@onemain.com

### Northern Virginia Bonsai Society

Fairlington Community Center,  
3308 Stafford Street, Arlington, VA  
2nd Saturday, 9 AM

Carole Roelofs, croelofs@erols.com

Judy Wise, 202.554.3045

### Rappahanock Bonsai Society

Call for meeting time and location  
Todd Stewart, 804.448.4499

### Washington Bonsai Club

U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, D.C.

3rd Saturday, 2 PM (no July or August meetings)

Ross Campbell, 301.587.6898 - rossmo@gateway.net

### Potomac Viewing Stone Group

Meets irregularly about 6 times per year

Glenn Reusch, Ghreusch@aol.com - 540.672.5699

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c/o U.S. National Arboretum  
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