



The Midwest Bonsai Connection

A Newsletter Published by The Midwest Bonsai Society

July 2001

President's Message

This month I want to focus on an issue of special relevance at this time of the year, namely, the need for volunteers in connection with the 24th Annual Mid-America Exhibit. We need help in setting up the exhibit on August 15 and 16; in manning the sales and information tables, supervising workshops and providing security on August 17, 18 and 19; and in dismantling the exhibit on August 20. All of this requires a fair amount of work, but none of these tasks is particularly tedious or backbreaking. Each year, however, most of the work is done by the same group of people, and I'm hopeful that more of our membership will become involved with this year's exhibit. In particular, Liz Ostman could use a hand with the hospitality room, Rich Helminiak would like a few more hands in set-up and tear-down, and Lorraine May would welcome some assistance in registering and checking out the trees. We have one of the largest memberships of any bonsai society I'm aware of, and I encourage all of you to consider volunteering your time for one or more of the many jobs which go into making this

exhibit one of the premier events of its kind in the nation. So when Susan Cargill issues her call for volunteers in our meeting on Monday, July 9, please answer the call.

But the importance of volunteering goes beyond the exhibit in August. The board has established an aggressive set of priorities in our effort to move the Society from a local club into a strong regional institution. In the June meeting, I announced the board's decision to create a fundraising committee as the first step in our ambitious campaign to endow a curator for the Chicago Botanical Garden's permanent bonsai collection. When the initial planning has been completed, we will again be calling on many of you to help us carry out our fundraising events. We are in the process of expanding the newsletter to an 8-page format, for which Larry Larimer is to be commended, and I'm sure that he could use some help with it -- as well as the archival project and website development which he is also chairing. Finally, we need a new librarian, and I hope that someone will step forward in the July meeting to take over those duties.

A consistently strong turnout of volunteers also means that we can expand the scope of our activities with more confidence. We can begin to think about education programs which reach out to the area's high schools and universities. We can give further thought to having a mid-year exhibit for flowering trees. We can think about hosting special events and symposiums. In short, it's within our grasp to make Chicago the center for bonsai in the United States, if we are prepared to take the steps which bring that kind of recognition. To do that, we need the active support of the Society's membership and a strong core of volunteers -- not members cheering lustily from the sidelines.

These are exciting and challenging times for the Society. In the coming months, as we call on our membership for volunteers for various projects, please give as freely as you can of your time and talent.

Steve Snoke

Calendar of Events

July 2 - 7:30 p.m.
**Midwest Bonsai
Society Meeting**
Jack Douthitt

July 5
**Classes at
Yasukunai
Start**

July 15 in the a.m..
**Beginner's
Workshop**
Chicago Botanic Garden

August 16, 17, 18, 19
**Mid-west Mid-
America
Bonsai Show**

Promote Bonsai

As members of the Midwest Bonsai Society we should all be promoters of the art of Bonsai. This means all of us; the first year novice, the second or third year beginner and the Bonsai creator who has been around for 25 years.

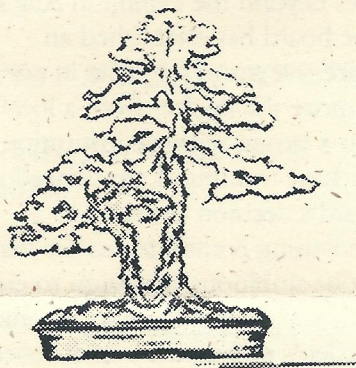
What is the point? Promoting Bonsai is to your advantage. As there are more people supporting Bonsai, there is more material available for all of us at a better price, there are more tools available, more pots available and finally more information.

How do we promote Bonsai? First, do more trees ourselves. (Self-serving.) Second, be active in Bonsai. Third, answer all questions as best you can, no matter how inane the question might sound. Fourth, encourage our beginners and novices in working on their trees and starting new trees.



YASUKUNAI

BONSAI GARDEN



SUMMER CLASS SCHEDULE - JULY 2001

SUMMER CLASSES WILL START DURING THE WEEK BEGINNING THURSDAY, JULY 5, AND WILL MEET FOR THE NEXT SIX WEEKS.

SCHEDULE AND FEES

LEVEL	DAY	TIME	DATES	COST
BEGINNER	TUESDAYS	6:30 - 9:30 P.M.	7/10-8/14	\$130 *
BEGINNER	WEDNESDAYS	1:00 - 4:00 P.M.	7/11-8/15	\$130 ☆
BEGINNER	THURSDAYS	6:30 - 9:30 P.M.	7/05-8/09	\$130 *
BEGINNER	SUNDAYS	1:00 - 4:00 P.M.	7/08-8/12	\$130 *
BEG/NOVICE	SATURDAYS	1:00 - 4:00 P.M.	7/07-8/11	\$150 ☆
NOV/INTERM	WEDNESDAYS	6:30 - 9:30 P.M.	7/11-8/15	\$150 ☆
INTERMEDIATE	SATURDAYS	9:00-NOON	7/07-8/11	\$165 ☆
ADVANCED	SUNDAYS	9:00-NOON	7/08-8/12	\$175 ☆

☆ IVAN WATTERS * ALEX PEREZ

EACH CLASS IS LIMITED TO 12 STUDENTS. FOR INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER, CALL 847-966-5142. TUITION IS PAYABLE AT TIME OF REGISTRATION. WE WILL BEGIN A WAIT LIST ONLY AFTER A CLASS IS FILLED WITH PAID REGISTRATIONS.

SOME USEFUL DEFINITIONS:

BEGINNER: ONE WHO HAS NEVER TAKEN A CLASS (WORKSHOPS AND DEMONSTRATIONS DON'T COUNT).

NOVICE: ONE WHO HAS COMPLETED THE BEGINNER CLASS BUT WANTS MORE COACHING IN FUNDAMENTALS.

INTERMEDIATE: WANTS MORE COACHING IN HORTICULTURAL AND ARTISTIC TECHNIQUES BEYOND THE BASICS.

ADVANCED: WANTS COACHING IN STYLING AND REFINEMENT.

Appraising Your Tree for a Show

This is the first of two articles about appraising your tree for the show in August. The subject will be the same but there will be a slightly different spin on the two judging approaches.

These were the standards used in the 16th annual Midwest Bonsai Show at D. Hill Nursery. This show took place in 1974 about seven years after the establishment of the Midwest Bonsai Society as we know it.

ROOTS -Exposed large roots on the soil surface give the appearance of age. They should look natural and evenly balanced. Exposed hair roots on the surface indicate poor grooming and should be removed. 0-15 (I increased the importance of this. -ED)

TRUNK -Girth should be proportionate to height. Should taper from base to apex. Bark should look mature. 0-25 (I decreased the importance. -ED)

BRANCHES -Position important. Back branches for depth. No "bar" branching. One-third to two-thirds of the trunk line visible. 0-15

FOLIAGE -In scale for size of Bonsai. Healthy color. Free of insects and disease. 0-15

STYLE -Does it suit the species? 0-10 (I expect to hear some debate on this. ED)

CONTAINER -Is it in harmony with the tree in size, shape, color, depth, and texture? Is the tree positioned correctly in the pot? 0-15

SOIL SURFACE -Does it appear natural? If ground cover is present, is it healthy and in harmony in size and texture? 0-10 (I increased the importance on this one. -ED)

From The Editor

The Six Ring Circus with Jim Fairchild as the Ringmaster went over very well and a good time was had by all. The amazing part was the preponderance of informal upright styles with the use of carpet juniper (procumbens).

I must start preparing my trees for the show. I won't enter too much. I have been taking classes at Yasukunai and all of my trees are in transition of one kind or another. I will do the best I can because I really feel, as a member of the Midwest Bonsai Society, I have an obligation to show the best I can. But next year I will do better!

In anticipation, I have already defoliated the deciduous trees and I have gone out and captured some moss. The very fine blue stuff. I had already spotted it and grubbed it up this weekend and started getting it in shape.

The beginners' workshop only had four people attending. I think this was because it rained the two weekends that the garden put out flyers. I didn't get any calls until after the first sunny day which was Memorial Day. In spite of the low turn-out I had some willing help from Pudge Shinneman and Steve Pugh.

There will be another workshop on July 15.

The "Nakamura Collection" is being worked on but really will not be ready for viewing until next year. Bringing those old, established trees to the United States from their home in Japan and the stress of putting them through the problems of bare-rooting, gassing, inspection, and repotting is monumental.

Leonard has a special on soil. Ten - ten pound bags for \$80. Leonard's mix is 60% inorganic and 40% organic. It is sterilized and has a pH of 6.

Ivan's classes are starting at Yasukunai. If you haven't taken any classes it is a good idea. Just remember the amount of money you have spent on stock and tools and the cost of classes doesn't appear so much. You will find the class schedules elsewhere in this newsletter.

Jack Douthitt will be the speaker at our meeting on July 2. Jack has written a book that has just come out. I haven't had a chance to read it yet, but I am sure it is worth buying and adding to your library. When I was Program Chairman, I invited Jack to talk on fine finishing a tree. He did a great job!

You will notice that we are now running an 8 page newsletter. This is a trial for an indefinite period of time which I expect to extend for a few years. The newsletter must contain information of upcoming meetings and events. It must be a forum for the president to tell the membership the direction in which we should be going. These two items along with the page on which the label and stamp are pasted take up at least half of the newsletter.

Jack Wilson tells me we used to have a membership form as part of the newsletter and thinks we should continue this practice. Actually it was Jack who lit the fire under me to do now what I had planned to do later - increase the size of the newsletter. You will find the form in this newsletter.

I think we need articles about the history and background of the Midwest Bonsai Society and Bonsai in the world and Bonsai in the United States. I think we need articles about trees and about the people that grow them and style them. I think we need articles about how trees grow and why they live and why they die.

The newsletters of 20 years ago did the above and we should be doing it now. I intend to do so.

In order to defray the additional cost, I intend to sell advertising space on a very limited basis at a very modest cost to the advertiser. The cost of the additional 4 pages is less than \$65.00 including mailing. I will have to work a little harder but not much and it will be worth the additional work. I did ask for the job!!

Hang on friends and enjoy the ride!

Larry

IF YOU HAVE:

- Info for the newsletter
- or the web page
- or archival material

PLEASE MESSAGE
LARRY LARIMER AT
312-226-2442
FAX: 312-226-5419
e-mail:
splashpix@earthlink.net



This little lady is holding a "Tree in a Pot". This is the first example ever of "Pen-Yang" ever found. It dates to 400 B.C.

BONSAI CIRCUS

Jack Oki and some of us were standing around jawing at the show three years ago when Jack came up with this story about one of our members.

This member had this tree that had a beautiful trunk, big and well tapered. The branches were as close to perfection as one could ever wish.

This tree was a real winner but for one thing. The buttress was a disaster! Almost no roots at all.

Well our member took some branches off of another tree and shaped them to match the trunk of the defective tree. He then used a mix of Elmer's Glue and dust to glue his newly formed roots to his tree.

The result was truly a masterpiece! It was an almost perfect tree.

He entered it in the Midwest Show. Guess what? It got BEST OF SHOW!

One of our vendors (I think Brussel Martin) couldn't wait to buy this beauty. Our hero couldn't wait to sell it and get it out of town.

I asked Jack Oki who the member was. He finally came up with the name of one of our members of long standing. This member is a very serious guy and I am not sure that he was the one. This member has a prominent moustache and I think that Jack got confused on his moustaches but I had always been afraid to ask.

Well yesterday, I mentioned this to the other white moustache. He said, "Oh, yeah, that was me!" The other white moustache is famous for "BONSAI CIRCUS". Nuff said?

Incidentally this member is now enjoying himself by developing tenuki bonsai. If you don't know what that is, you can ask me or Jack Thompson or Rich Helminiak or Shig Ito or even Jack Wilson.

Editor

The Growth of the Bonsai Artist - Part III

...Then he explained that we were to bring in at least one tree to each session but that it must be a different tree each time. He recommended that we bring in two trees but that he required two. If we were to need pots, we were expected to furnish them. We could buy pots and trees there. They furnished wire, soil, tools, experience, and guidance.

Then the instructor worked on a tree that he brought in to demonstrate. WOW! He didn't leave much!

Now I had a chance to look around at my fellow students. There were two of them whom I had seen at the Midwest Bonsai Society meeting. I really didn't think they were beginners, but here they were. They had brought trees, too. The trees didn't look like beginner type trees.

When I got a chance, I asked one of them why he was in the beginner class. He answered that he felt he had so much to learn that he figured that he might as well start at the bottom and work up. He added, "When I asked Ivan which level class I should start at, he told me to take the beginner class". He said, "At first I felt insulted, but now I realize that this is the place for me". Then it was time for the instructor to talk to me about my tree the great long branch that had seemed to grow 3 feet almost overnight. Of course, I knew that he would tell me to cut it off but I was afraid that it would just grow again because there was something wrong with the tree.

He said, "Oh no, we will just let it grow. It will be a sacrifice branch".

"Yeah sure, you're pulling my leg aren't you?"

"No that branch will help the tree trunk to thicken. When it has done its job, we will cut it off".

Then he showed me how to tie a small branch to the "sacrifice branch" and told me it would be the new top branch or apex. Then he had me cut off as many branches as possible near the top and remove a lot of leaves from the top branches that were left. He explained that, by doing this, more light would reach the lower branches. This way they would be more vigorous and that the trunk would grow bigger near the bottom. I would have better taper this way.

Then he showed me two places where I needed roots at the base of the tree. He had me puncture through the bark where I wanted roots and then pile dirt over the places and then he had me cover the dirt with wet sphagnum moss.

He warned, "Keep the sphagnum wet and keep that side of the tree turned to the North and in a few weeks you will have new roots under the dirt." "Once the new roots have started, you can feed heavily with wood-ace or high-nitrogen fertilizer to fatten the roots."

Then he told me, if I had to encourage roots all around the tree, I should turn it a quarter turn every week. Then he went on to say I should be doing that all the time.

Since this was a full class, I couldn't work on my other 3 trees but since there are 6 classes, I will have time.

The nice thing about the class is, I can watch and listen to the instructor while he works on other peoples' trees so I learn from everybody else's trees.

On to next week's class!

To be continued...

Program Chairman Column

Welcome to summer!!

The June meeting was fascinating. Six almost identical trees and six very different results. My thanks to the seven artists: Jack Thompson with his "very informal upright", Brian Dodds with his informal upright, Brian Hale with an informal upright, Roger Thompson with his very nice full cascade, Roy Strauss aided by Tom Longfellow and their cascade, and Liz Ostman and Fran Hiller producing an informal upright.

If you missed the results, all six trees should be on view at the July meeting. I hope that this exercise was helpful to everyone in seeing what can be done with inexpensive trees and the variety of possibilities. Thanks again, artists!

For our July meeting we will have a guest speaker from Milwaukee, Jack Douthitt. Jack has just written and published a book about bonsai as an art. Most books on bonsai focus on techniques and practice -- the techniques of wiring, of styling and shaping, the techniques of repotting, and the practice of caring for trees over time through the problems of insects and disease and changes in weather conditions.

Jack's book is the first I am aware of to look at the aesthetics of bonsai. It asks such questions as, "Why is viewing bonsai so pleasing?" and "What makes a well balanced bonsai?"

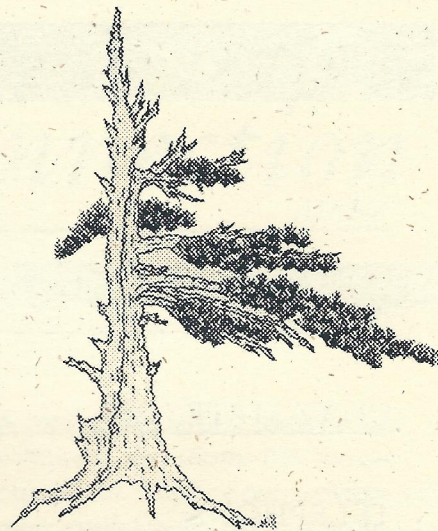
This book will give us a new perspective in our search for interesting, pleasing, beautiful trees. I often know that a tree is exciting and/or beautiful, but I cannot always explain why I feel that way and I do not always know how to make my trees achieve that goal. This book helps me to understand.

Jack will have some slides to help illustrate his ideas. He is thoughtful and thorough. I am sure that we will all be much wiser after the July 2 meeting.

Jack will have copies of his book for sale for \$49.95.

See you July 2.

James Fairchild



This wonderful drawing of a windswept appeared in the winter 1983 of the ABS Magazine. This was credited to Warren Hill.

John Naka's grandfather told him a little poem that tells how to be an expert in the art of bonsai.

"One must plant a lot.
One must grow a lot.
One must prune a lot.
One must pinch a lot.
One must see a lot.
One must hear a lot.
One must kill a lot."

JOHN NAKA ON PRUNING

Although John Naka is a window to Japan, and sees through a window in that direction, he has another window which delights me. He has what might be called a window to the soul. His most famous expression of this window is his advice on pruning a bonsai:

"You must make space for the birds and the butterflies."

"Space is important because it is where the imagination goes. You can see the peak of a mountain through the space of a bonsai's branches. You can see the ocean through that space---or a pagoda---or geisha girls."

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TELEPHONE: _____

e-mail: _____

Membership is \$30.00.

Please make check payable to MIDWEST BONSAI SOCIETY

Mail to: The Midwest Bonsai Society, P.O. Box 1373
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