



Pittsburgh Bonsai Society

...to disseminate knowledge, encourage others and create interest in the art of bonsai

May 2013 Newsletter



May 15, 2013 • Wed. • 7:00pm • Phipps Garden Center Shadyside

THIS MONTH



Plants, Pots and Preparation!

You've spent considerable time and effort in creating your bonsai. It's time to exhibit your living art in our Spring Show. Back to basic display principles, from Plant Prep to Proper Pot Picking! You will expand your Presentation Perspectives, and yes, there's a raffle!

OUR ANNUAL SPRING BONSAI SHOW

Setup: Friday, May 31~12 noon-8pm Bring Your Trees

Show: Saturday, June 1~10 am to 5 pm. Sunday, June 2~10 am to 4 pm

Phipps Garden Center Shadyside



"I Bought a Tree... Now What?"

OK, you bought a great tree at The Spring Show, or dug up a potential show tree at Bob Grealish's Big Dig. Now you're considering a lot of styling options. Bring it to the June meeting for advice, tips, gentle criticism and work on it there, with support from fellow obsessives!

June 19, 2013 • Wednesday • 7:00pm • Phipps Garden Center • Shadyside

NEXT MONTH



Please check our evolving website: <http://pittsburghbonsai.org>
Also us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/PittsburghBonsai



The Pittsburgh Bonsai Society Newsletter

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Published periodically (10 issues a year) by PBS for members and other bonsai enthusiasts. It's our sixth decade of advancing the art of bonsai in the Tri-State area.

Deadlines:
Generally two months prior to issue date.

Submissions:
Please submit Photos or Artwork in JPG format and Copy in Microsoft Word.

A Note From Dave:

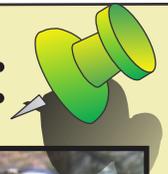
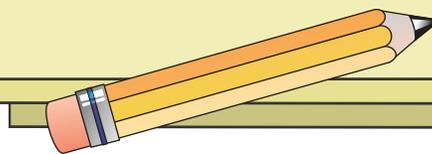


Photo By Cindie Bonomi

This year newer members have many opportunities to acquire trees for their collections. With monthly workshops, the dig at Bob Grealish's farm, the vendors at the upcoming spring show and our auction in August, old and new members alike can pick up some great bonsai. When you add a few trees to a small collection, they are noticeable. When you bring home a few to a larger collection, they kind of blend in with the crowd, which is a good thing if your significant other keeps a wary eye on the growing number. When my wife asks if a particular bonsai is new, my reply of "That's been there awhile." is true in the respect that "awhile" is a relative term. To me "awhile" could be anywhere from a few hours to a few years.

May's meeting focuses on refining your trees for display. Bring in any bonsai that need help with styling, pot selection, or wiring. Trees that show a few years of careful attention could proudly be displayed in the spring show. With limited space, we can't show every tree, but bring them to the meeting and we can see if they are ready. We are looking for volunteers for the show, so please sign up at the meeting, or call me at 412-795-0800 and let me know when you are available.

Dave Metzgar



For your Bonsai supplies support
the store that exists for the society



Bonsai In The Burgh

724-348-4771
Pots, wire, tools, soil, plants

Elm Forest On A Slab • 'Our March Meeting'

~by Dave Steidl

We had a large turnout for Dave Metzger's presentation of elm forest bonsai planted on a slab. He showed several of his own creations using Privet, a tree commonly used in hedges. This species has good budding along the trunk, small leaves and works well for a forest bonsai. Other species for forest bonsai include Chinese elm, Shimpaku juniper, Hinoki cypress, Trident maple, Japanese beech and many others.

One challenge with forest plantings on a slab is to create a way to have good drainage without washing the soil off the slab. Dave made a snake-like rim around the slab's edge using sticky clay and sphagnum moss mixed together. Holes drilled through the slab with a masonry drill are threaded with wire to hold the trees in place and also act a drainage holes. An anchored mesh to attach the individual trees can also be used.

Forest plantings can allude to a deep mountain location as well as forests meandering along streams or lake shores. There should be a certain randomness to each tree's placement much like seeds scatter in the wind. While working on your composition, you can slowly rotate the slab and try to modify tree positions when three or more line up in a straight line.

The trees in a forest also vary in age and therefore in size. A tree's size can also be used to create perspective on the slab, the illusion that some trees are farther away and look smaller. Forest plantings are a great way to quickly develop an impressive bonsai using mostly smaller

younger trees. A "grove planting" is similar to the forest, but in a grove the trees represent siblings of about the same age and the use of size for perspective is not part of the composition.

Start assembling your forest with three trees: a main tree (the largest) for focusing attention, a secondary (second largest) and a third (smaller tree) usually placed nearer to the main one. From there you can add trees two at a time creating your forest of 5, 7, 9 etc. trees. Larger forests can be any number because no one is counting at that point.

The forest bonsai—more than any other single-tree bonsai—creates a sense of place. Somewhere remembered in your travels. An experience from your youth. A place of peace, solitude and inspiration for those that stop, observe and later imagine.



~Photo by Dave Steidl



Some Larch Thoughts

~by Dave Ruffaner, Karamatsu-en Nursery



Larches are that somewhat unusual species that is both a conifer (cone bearer) and deciduous (loses its leaves). I became interested in the species when I found a grove of them growing on an old strip mine. They had been planted to "reforest" the spoil piles of overburden. They are very cold tolerant and grow far north into Canada. Being

apical dominant, if left to grow naturally, they grow straight and cone shaped like a Christmas tree. However, when young they can be wired and bent into any desired style. There are three main species of Larch: American, European and Japanese. I find the Japanese larch (kara-matsu) to be better to work with and with slightly smaller needles they look more in scale than the European and American varieties. They are easy to prune and style and are best wired after the needles drop in late fall or before new needles open in the spring. I feel larches do better in a slightly larger pot which helps keep the roots cooler especially in hot summer weather. Give them a try.

Here Are Some Photos From Our April 'LARCH' Meeting



~Photography by Cindie Bonomi

More Photos On Page 6

Bob Grealish's Big Spring Dig!



The early April Saturday started out clear and cool as the treasure hunters headed out to Bob Grealish's farm to dig for green gold. Well, most of the trees were brown with hints of green, which makes it the perfect time to dig them out of the ground to place in pots. Bob's 'members only' dig attracted over 20 members who had the rare chance to collect great specimens at even greater prices. Among the many varieties were elms, trident maples, hornbeams, Scots pines, black pines, and quinces, ranging in size from 12 inches to over 3 feet tall. New members collected their first trees, and seasoned members including me were able to take home some well-groomed trees that had been growing in the ground for over twenty years. With the dig falling on Cindie Bonomi's birthday, she was able to take a few presents home courtesy of her husband Dan.

~By Dave Metzgar

With Bob's instructions on how to dig, transport and care for them, hopefully they will all take to their new homes and become future show trees. Many of them were only a few years away from being great trees. Bob's techniques for growing trees in the ground prove that it is well worth it to have your own area where you can grow and train trees to get the thick trunks for great bonsai.

Thanks Bob.



STEVE



BILL AND DAVE



GREAT DAY FOR A DIG!



WENDY



TREES!



Great Cake Inga and Steve!



CAKE



OSCAR



JAY



Mike's Corner



Tips and Suggestions from Mike Stern

Spring, Pruning

Unlike March of 2012, winter refuses to give up its grip and give way to spring. I always look forward to spring with the opportunity to trim and style trees that I have been growing in my garden. I have trees that were grown from seed or cuttings that are 30 years old. Each winter or early spring I root prune them while they are in the ground so that when I am

ready to dig them up they can go immediately into a bonsai pot. Also during the previous growing season, I select a few trees that I begin to train while they are in the ground. For instance, in the spring of 2012, selected trees were trimmed back significantly. The new flexible branches that result during the growing season are trained to grow horizontally rather than vertically. I use chicken wire or wire fence to lean on the branches to force horizontal growth.

When spring arrives, I lift the trees out of the ground take a garden hose and use a sprayer and wash off all of the garden soil. (I wash off all of the soil only with deciduous trees.) I am able to wash off all of the soil because each year the trees are root pruned and have feeder roots very close to the base. As a result of washing off all of the soil, it is easier to selectively root prune. I also do not have to slowly work the garden soil out of the tree roots in the years to come. The tree is then placed in a bonsai pot or training pot and allowed to recover.

For some of the trees, I will wire and style them before all of the soil is washed off. This year I will be working on spruces, junipers, boxwoods, Cyprus, sweet gums, and elms.

In addition to the joy of creating new bonsai, a number of my potted trees will require root pruning. When the tree gets excessive root growth it looks less vibrant and robust than normal. Root pruning is essential to maintaining the health of the tree and also keeping them vigorous in their

growth. This also is the opportunity to selectively create a more appealing base for the tree. Root pruning is not one of my favorite tasks.

I am always looking to do non-preferred tasks more efficiently and less frequently. I would prefer to repot and root prune as infrequently as necessary. Therefore a strategy that I have been using over the years is to leave the tree wired into the pot and root prune the outside edge of the soil.

I take a serrated knife and cut into the soil. Imagine that you had a cake and you decided you were going to come in an inch or so from the outside edge. Then cut a 360° circle around the edge of the cake. This is the same principle used in this process. Sometimes the knife is not sufficient to cut through the roots and I need to use pruners with heavier roots.

When I am done with the outside soil has been removed and the roots extending to the outside of the pot are cut and removed. The most significant root growth for trees is at the bottom inside edge of the pot as the roots tend to circle inside the pot.

When the pruning is completed, fresh soil mixture is added with a small amount organic fertilizer with iron into the space where the roots and soil were removed.

This process eliminates some of the heavy root growth and delays full repotting for a year or two. I have not had any tree die as a result of using this process.

Departing thoughts.

The more the branches are allowed to grow, the faster the root system grows. Top growth and root growth are balanced. Trees experiencing significant top growth require frequent repotting. Trees that are mature which are regularly pruned have commensurately slower root growth and require less frequent potting.

Trees that seem to have slow root growth are Ginkgo's. Trees that I have worked with that have prolific root growth are locusts and boxwoods.

After you have root pruned your trees, keep them in a sheltered environment limiting sun as well as wind. Gradually introduce them into full sunlight as their delicate roots are recovering. Initially avoid chemical fertilizers with newly transplanted or root pruned trees.

More Photos From Our March Meeting



~Photography by Cindie Bonomi

More Photos From Our April Meeting



~Photography by Cindie Bonomi

Haiku Corner

The end of spring
lingers
in the cherry blossoms.

~ Buson

Yea! We Got Shirts!



Now you can proudly show your enthusiasm for Bonsai and the Pittsburgh Bonsai Society with golf shirts from members Anna and Cliff Domasky. Available in white, tan and taupe. \$25 each, including three color embroidery.

You can also supply your own quality shirt; have it embroidered for a modest \$10 charge.

For more details contact Cliff or Anna at: annaclaus55@hotmail.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bonsai Workgroup:

The work group meets every other Thursday at Bob Grealish's farm 6 - 10pm. The next several dates are May 2, 16 & 30; June 13 & 27. If you are interested in sharpening your skills, call Bob at 412 977-0077.

Coming Events:

3-5 May 2013 Potomac Bonsai Association Spring Festival Washington, D.C. at the National Arboretum
www.potomacbonsai.com
or www.usna.usda.gov

6-9 June 2013 Rochester, NY: International Bonsai Colloquium, Holiday Inn-Airport, featuring Kora Dalager, David DeGroot, Dennis Makishima, Ryan Neil, Kathy Shaner, Peter Warren and William N. Valavanis, celebrating his 50th anniversary in the art of bonsai!
<http://www.internationalbonsai.com>

Fri., Sat. & Sun., Aug. 16-18 - Midwest Bonsai Society presents the Mid-America Bonsai Show. The 36th Mid-America Bonsai Exhibit will be held at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Go to: www.midwestbonsai.org/show.htm for more information.

Sat. & Sun., Sept. 12-15 - ABS Learning Seminar. The 2013 American Bonsai Society Learning Seminar in Saratoga Springs, NY. For more information go to their website: <http://www.loveofbonsai.com>

Last Newsletter Notice:

If there is a check mark in the box next to your address label on the back cover, our records indicate that you have not paid your dues for 2013. This is your last newsletter. To avoid missing a newsletter and losing your other membership benefits, send your dues to the Pittsburgh Bonsai Society, c/o Mark Berbach, Treasurer, 1031 Windance Drive, McDonald, PA 15057. Checks should be made payable to the Pittsburgh Bonsai Society. Individual \$30, Family \$40.

June 2013 Issue Deadline:

Submissions for the June 2013 Newsletter are due no later than May 20, 2013.

Compiled by Jay Miller
suisekifan@yahoo.com



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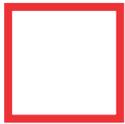
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This is your last
Newsletter if there
is a check mark in
the box to the left.

Pittsburgh Bonsai Society • 2013 Calendar of Events

May 15.....	Wed 7pm.....	Plants, Pots, Preparation!
May 31.....	Fri 12 noon-8pm.....	Set Up
Jun 1.....	Sat 10am-5pm.....	Spring Bonsai Weekend (Activities TBA)
Jun 2.....	Sun 10am-4pm.....	Spring Bonsai Weekend (Activities TBA)
Jun 19.....	Wed 7pm.....	“I Bought a Tree... Now What??”
Jul 17.....	Wed 7pm.....	Tropicals with Jose Cueto
Aug 3.....	Sat 10am.....	Auction
Aug 10.....	Sat 11am.....	Picnic at the Grealish Farm
Sep 18.....	Wed 7pm.....	TBA
Oct 16.....	Wed 7pm.....	TBA
Nov 13.....	Wed 7pm.....	TBA plus Elections
Dec 6.....	Wed 6:30pm.....	Annual Holiday Party



All events, unless otherwise noted, will be held at the Phipps Garden Center, starting at 7:00pm

Phipps Garden Center is located at the edge of Mellon Park in the Shadyside section of Pittsburgh. At the Phipps Garden Center sign on Shady Avenue, just south of the intersection of Fifth and Shady Avenues, turn into the cobblestone driveway. Park in the metered lot. Walk 50 yards farther down the cobblestone lane. The Garden Center is the red brick building on your left.