



Pittsburgh Bonsai Society

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

May • June 2006 Newsletter

Next Meeting: New Day, Same Time!

Azalea I Workshop

You asked for it and we responded! These are hardy, Zone 5 plants, many single-trunk specimens, for a modest (\$10) member's materials fee. Come get your hands dirty; learn the care, maintenance and styling techniques of this popular bonsai.

DO NOT FORGET YOUR TOOLS!

Tuesday, Tuesday, Tuesday, May 9th at Phipps Garden Center, Shadyside, 7:00 pm



Annual Spring Show

This year we're holding the 25th Annual Show at Bidwell Training Center's Drew Mathieson Horticultural & Agricultural Technology Center in the Manchester section of Pittsburgh's North Side. The enclosed insert contains instructions to the Center.

Get your show trees ready now!

Saturday June 10th • Sunday June 11th. Daily hours 10:00 am • 4:00 pm. Free and open to the public!

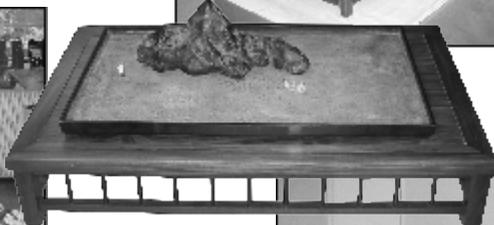
Kingsley Everts

Kingsley and his wife Jane brought a quiet dignity to the Bonsai Society, along with pleasant smiles and good horticultural knowledge. Although he didn't seem to have the usual pines, junipers and deciduous trees that most of us had, he had a fine ensemble of plants giving his collection a grace that was Kingsley. His display area was somewhat unique also in that it was on a tiered, almost bleacher like stand. This made it very easy for him to water his plants with a drip system that he had purchased. He even offered to help engineer and supply systems for any members who wanted to purchase them.

He also had a greenhouse connected to his garage which allowed him to grow and maintain tropical plants that most of us would have problems identifying. We had several chances to see them, as King and Jane threw their beautifully restored house and grounds open to the Bonsai Society for our annual picnic. He was always well prepared for the affair with a canvas covered area large enough to eat in comfort outside, even in the event of rain. While we were there, we could take in a tour of the great job of restoration he did on the inside of his house also. Even down to the beautiful RED free standing bathtub that Jane bargained for when Kingsley told her he wanted to buy his little, dream sports car. Yes, they enjoyed life as much as we enjoyed them. He / they will be missed.

Jim Behrenberg

Our 2005 Spring Show



Photos by Cindie Bonomi

May Sips and Tidbits from Keith

..."Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May And summer's lease hath all too short a date:"

Sonnet 18 LL. 3, 4

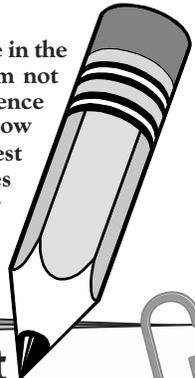
For those of you who wish to fertilize your container plants: Prepare. Recall that fertilizer is not food. The only food plants use comes from the sun and goes through the photosynthetic process to produce growth.

The need for fertilizer occurs when so called "soil-less" mixes are used. As long as a plant is in the ground, it needs no fertilizer; however, in the case of bonsai culture, the soil being contained, the water and oxygen need to pass through the root system. Common commercial fertilizers only supply minerals and trace chemicals that leech out through watering.

My suggestion is to use a balanced fertilizer, say 15-15-15, or 20-20-20. Use a brand name or use a non brand name, whichever is cheaper. The numbers may change slightly from product to product but they are all basically the same. Also, try not to be taken in by advertisements showing huge pumpkins or gigantic strawberries. One fertilizer will work just as well as another. Also whether the fertilizer is "organic" or not is of no real concern except to the Sierra Club.

Keep in mind that all fertilizers are extremely inefficient. Using tablets, pills, globules, or chunks of fertilizer stuff will work no better and no worse than liquid. The tree doesn't care. The point is use fertilizer regularly but don't make a fetish of it. The tree will survive without fertilizer until it weakens so much that bugs and chlorosis will weaken it until you, dear reader, get tired of its weakness and "forget" to water. Then, your creativity as well as your rational faculties supply you with reasons why the tree died.

I can't go into the chemical changes that take place in the fertilizer-watering cycle. The reason is simple: I'm not qualified. In addition, look in any standard reference book and you'll find most authorities don't know either. The answer is to keep your plants in the best location, well watered, bugs assassinated and hopes held high. The trees will thrive in spite of our chemical fumbling.



Bonsai Care Sheet

Species: Common name: Japanese Grey Bark Elm
Botanical name: Zelkova Serrata
Japanese name: Keyaki

Varieties: Not many zelkova varieties exist in common cultivation. Variegated forms, small leafed forms and an occasional selection make us the list. However, when using zelkovas in a grove, some growers select plants in fall for color uniformity. Other growers seem to favor the myriad of leaf colors that occur.

Advantages: Hardiness, fast growth, and twiginess make the zelkove suitable for bonsai. Also, it has become more readily available in recent years.

Disadvantages: Sometimes it is hard to maintain its dwarfed appearance since it grows so fast. The zelkova must be pinched weekly during summer and pruned hard in early spring. Long sprouts must be removed during the growing season to promote twiginess.

Suitability as Bonsai (1 is least suitable 10 is most suitable): 5

June Sips and Tidbits from Keith

Just when you had become self-satisfied at getting your bonsai through the winter with nifty new growth in spring; along comes summer with its ruin. Why is it bonsai possesses so many contradictions? Prune or don't; water or not; spray for bugs or let them have a life too?

These few considerations and infinitely more face the enthusiast daily when pursuing bonsai art. As much as I proclaim mastery over all the mundanities of daily bonsai care, I must admit I give in to indifference in July's heat saying aloud and silently, "it is too hot for insects to be abroad; they are lying about, snoozing". As in all things, I'm wrong yet again. The bugs, fungus, and errant viruses frolic and rollick taking advantage of my sloth.

So, smite them, antennae and segmented leg. Spray liquids on them that would stop an elephant, bull or cow, at a full gallumphing gallop. Yes, killing bugs with commercial insecticides is much like killing mice with a hydrogen bomb. And after it is all over the bugs return to torment both tree and owner. Thus, the way I treat bugs is to use the mildest spray I can find, usually, a product used to control the "thousand natural shocks" that roses "are heir to". Since insects are either suckers or chewers, almost any concoction will discourage them or at least make them go elsewhere. Spray every seven to ten days or by label instructions.

To prune new growth always presents problems. Should you not stop new growth, the trunk will increase faster, but, the shape of the tree may be come bizarre after a time. Make a decision!

I have long advocated fertilizing from May to October. I like to do it every week, but again the contradiction. Fertilizer tends to build up in moss, and what it does to weeds: arenaria and oxalis, e.g., borders on criminal. Also the soil mix must be porous to allow the elements to get to the roots. Some worthies say that fertilizer produces rampant soft growth that dies back over the winter. I've not seen that effect if a balanced fertilizer is used.

Remember: look at the tree; learn to detect stress: burned leaves, crusty soil surface, leaf drop, macabre leaf color: maybe the tree seems loose in the pot These, along with hordes of other problems must be seen and reacted to.

When all else fails, put the bonsai in the ground, pot and all AND LEAVE IT ALONE. If nothing works, don't call me. I'm trying to figure out my own plagues.

Growing location: Full sun.

Watering: Thorough, saturated watering. Should watering be lessened, growth will be meager with small, weak growth lacking hardiness.

Propagation: Seed sown in late winter.

Fertilizing: Use a balanced fertilizer during the growing season. Fertilizer, either liquid, pills or other forms, should be applied weekly or more often in weak proportions.

Over-wintering: Since the zelkova produces twiggy growth, winter, dry wind tends to kill tips. Also February sun tend to split zelkova bark. Finally zelkova buds tend to swell early but a late freeze can damage bark as well.

Styling: Japanese bonsai almost require the zelkova to be grown as a broom or grove style. However, in Korea, and China particularly, the growers seem to foster almost any bonsai form except cascade. Even driftwood styles are common and effective.



Pittsburgh Bonsai Society
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2006 Calendar of Events

- 10-11 June 25th Annual Show 10-4 daily: Mathieson Center
19 July Workshop (Tropicals) 7:00pm Phipps Garden Center
12 August Annual Picnic at the Grealish Farm Times TBA
20 Sept. TBA 7:00pm Phipps Garden Center



Other Events

- 17-18 June Columbus, OH: Columbus Bonsai Society Spring Show at Franklin Park Conservatory, 1777 East Broad Street, Columbus Ohio 10:00am-5:00pm
Website: <http://columbusbonsai.org>
- 22-25 June Milwaukee, WI: Mid-America Bonsai Alliance (MABA) Convention
Website: <http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org/convention>
Email: milwaukeebonsai@yahoo.com

PBS: <http://www.pittsburghbonsai.org>