



Pittsburgh Bonsai Society

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

October 2014 Newsletter

Bob Grealish on Carving: A Demonstration and Slide Presentation

OCTOBER



Carving is an effective way to transform an average tree to a dramatic style, enhancing the illusion of age and survival. Bob reveals the fascinating



world of jins, shari and shows the hand and power tools to achieve the best results.

Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 7pm at Phipps Garden Center, Shadyside

NOVEMBER

Dan Yobp: Styling in Context

In addition to our week to week attempts to keep our trees alive, Dan shows the way to change your thinking, embracing a long-range styling plan with tips and techniques for quality results. BYOT (Bring Your Own Tree) for questions and recommendations. It's always good to bring your tools.



Also featured: Annual Elections plus Wintercare!

Wednesday, November 19, 2014 • 7pm • Phipps Garden Center • Shadyside

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



The Pittsburgh Bonsai Society Newsletter

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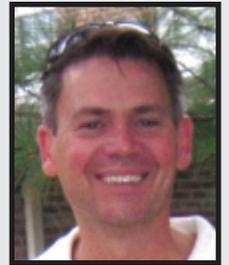
Published periodically (10 issues a year) by PBS for members and other bonsai enthusiasts. It's our sixth decade of advancing the art of bonsai in the Tri-State area.

Deadlines:
Generally one month 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

Anyone who enjoyed or missed Sean Smith at the last meeting should look up his Facebook page. Along with being an expert on suiseki and wood carving, he is also a great bonsai stylist. He did say at the meeting that he didn't want to be known only as the "rock guy".

With last year's harsh winter that took many trees, it might be time to think of alternative ways to protect your bonsai. We can discuss options at the November meeting.

You are always welcome to bring in any bonsai to the meetings, whether it is to show off great fall color or to ask for advice. Mike Stern brought a great crab apple loaded with fruit to the auction, unfortunately not to sell, but because it was in its prime and he wanted to share it with the club.

Dave Metzgar

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Haiku Corner

A caterpillar,
 this deep in fall—
 still not a butterfly.

- Basho

The Three Stylists

~by Dave Metzgar



Among the fun and festivities of the annual picnic, a friendly competition also took place with a few of our newer members. Three people, Brandon

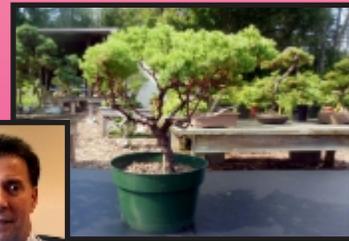
Arroyo, Larry Lamonde and Jonathan Martin were given raw "Procumbens" nana junipers at the July meeting and asked to style them and bring them to the picnic. The original trees all looked about the same at the start, but each artist brought a different result to their own tree. Other members were asked to vote for their favorite by placing a stone in a cup near the tree, and Brandon's tree turned out to be the crowd favorite. It was a fun experiment that we hope to do again.



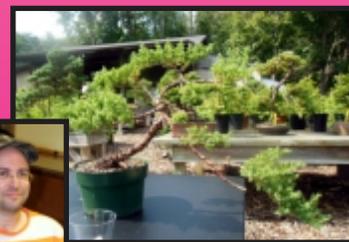
Brandon Arroyo



Larry Lamonde



Jonathan Martin



Sean Smith and Suiseki:

~by Jay Miller



Thirty-five of the faithful roared, "you saved the best for last!", when Sean Smith began his September 17th presentation with the comment that "...now I have visited every bonsai club in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania." That enthusiastic response continued as Sean distilled the formality of Chinese and Japanese stone appreciation into anecdotes and stories that made the point of a personal art.

All Japanese arts are related, and the guidelines for each contain common philosophical threads. But suiseki contain personal stories, truly touchstones for events.

Suiseki are found by rivers and the sea; from mountains to backyards. Good suiseki display can include art and accent plants, as well. Sean showed the difference between a Do Ban, or metal tray, and a Suiban, a ceramic tray. He commented that a scroll depicted a monk's 200-mile journey in 1650AD to Mt. Fuji, where he picked up a special stone that commemorated the event. Photos of tokonoma suiseki displays showed seasonal aspects, which detailed plant patterns supporting that seasonal

theme. Sen No Riki (1522-1591) a famous Tea master, introduced suiseki into the formal tokonoma design. There are three different styles of tokonoma: formal, semi-formal and informal. Each provides the suiseki enthusiast an opportunity to augment or reinforce the story of the stone. The Japanese use kiri bako, or wooden storage boxes for the suiseki, which also details the provenance of the stone, on the lid.

Sean made the point that Pennsylvania is a geologically diverse state, with great potential for suiseki collectors. He told the story of finding a really great stone behind the Wal-Mart in Mechanicsburg, PA. But quality should be uppermost in our minds, since most found stones are "leaverite" (Leave 'er right there!)

Enough time was scheduled so that Sean could talk with individual members, answer questions about their stones and collecting techniques; judging from the comments, many PBS members are going to borrow waders for streams and rivers, or keep their eyes peeled in the mountains or backyards!

Sean Smith and Suiseiki Photos:

~Photography by Josh Housiauxsteward



Suiseki “The Personal Art”

~by Sean L. Smith



~Photography by Sean Smith

Several months ago in Japan, I was viewing a suiseki displayed in a tokonoma; it was your typical formal display with table, accent and a scroll. It was explained to me as a distant mountain, the scroll showed a few birds that migrate this time of year in Japan, and the accent plant was of a plant that grows in the bogs below the mountain. It was wonderful so I thought, it was very elegantly done and I was very grateful for the time and effort that this person prepared this display for me. Then I scratched my head and thought to myself do I really understand what this display really means...then it came to me, why should it, this is not my suiseki. This was created by one man's thoughts and to him it was wonderful and meaningful. Why is it that the Western approach is always to point out the negative and not the positive? I came away feeling bad having only focused on me! I should have asked many questions about the suiseki and the display, and what his approach was about the stone. That way we both could have shared our feelings of the display.

For me suiseki should evoke a feeling, almost like a personal relationship, so to speak, a sensation that gives me pleasure or sadness, something that stirs my heart of a recollection good or bad. Suiseki should have an importance to the enthusiast in some way, a connection that gives an emotional feeling. Even when one purchases a suiseki from a reputable dealer, it should move that person in some way. Quality is of the utmost importance; never say it's good enough. Always look for quality.

Stones of high quality, either purchased or found, have the ability to move a person; they are of high aesthetic and emotional value. For me, a quality stone is one that in a sense is perfect, without blemishes, cracks or chips; it's the quality of the suiseki not the quantity that counts. This recalls the story from Japan that you will only find 3 suiseki in your lifetime. This art is very difficult, not only is finding good, high quality suiseki

hard, but also displaying them.

There is an old story from Japan that tells of a samurai returning from battle stopping at a river to water his horse. As the horse was drinking, the samurai looked into the water, saw a stone that looked like a mountain, he reached for it and picked it up. Looking at it, it reminded him of the mountain valley in which he had just done battle. We all know that war is pain and suffering, bloodshed and loss of comrades; when looking at this stone it invoked just such a place, where he lost his comrades and inflicted pain and death onto others. He took the stone and slipped it into his kimono sleeve, and returned to his village, and shared his experiences with others. How many people would really understand this stone without being at this battle? No one. However to this samurai it moves him emotionally of what happened that day. He would remember everything of that day by viewing this suiseki. Even by sharing this story with others and explaining what happened could they obtain the same feeling from the stone as he would? Although they could try empathize and perhaps develop their own interpretation of the stone.

To help share his feelings, there would perhaps be some kind of written record about the stone in order to help tell its story. This is something we also overlook; keeping a written record about a stone we find and keep. Many times I have gone to auctions of bonsai enthusiasts and so many items that they have collected for many years have a heritage which is unknown. Often the person passes away and no one knows where it item came from or where it was collected. This could be preserved the traditional way with kiri bake (wooden box) where the information about the suiseki is written on the back see of the lid or just on a sheet of paper kept; another way would be to have exhibition catalogs where stones are photographed for some type of

Suiseki “The Personal Art Continued From Page 5”

publication. This would provide a valuable record of the suiseki in years to come. Our suiseki will way outlive us, so we need to preserve this information for generations to come, by doing this we will have a suiseki history in the West.

Too often here in the West, we collect with no feeling or emotion; we look for that Doha or Toyama along the rivers. Why? Because we have seen photographs of them in Japanese books? Sure we do, because this is a Japanese art form; we are copying them just as we do in bonsai, there is nothing wrong with that, we enjoy it and it brings pleasure to us. There is, however, a more important aspect to collecting than simply accumulating a massive quantity of Japanese style rocks.

I shared a story with a good friend the other day, it's nothing special to anyone but me. A few summers ago, I was vacationing with my family in Atlantic City, New Jersey. My daughter was 7 years old at the time, swimming at the pool after a long day at the beach. Show Off Dad was jumping into the pool trying to impress his daughter with big splashes. I slipped jumping into the pool, not knowing that I had torn a ligament in my knee. Despite being in great pain, I continued to play with my daughter, without letting on, so as not to ruin a family memory. The next day I flew to San Juan, Puerto Rico, to do a demonstration, the following day I was collecting stones on the beach and, in immense pain, I came across a magnificent sugata ishi. I carefully bent down and picked it up, wow this is very nice I told myself, but my pain was too much to bear and I had to return to the car to rest. As I looked at the only stone I picked up, I realized that this stone had all the had all the great Japanese guidelines. It was not until I returned home, and had my knee operation that I realized that this stone has a story behind it. However, in the same way as the returning Samurai, it was just my story, special to me, and when I display this stone I remember all the pain, my daughter telling me to “jump higher

Daddy, make a really big splash this time.” Yes, I know this story for some may seem lame, nevertheless to me it means the world and I will never forget that time.

Another story is about my late father in the early 90's. As we walked in the forest together, I came across a little stone that followed the Japanese guidelines for a good suiseki. I picked it up and showed my father the stone; he said it's just a black stone. I laughed and slid it into my pocket, returned home and placed it outside with many other stones, it blended in like all the rest, “nothing special.”

Seven years later, my father passed away from cancer. That day I looked at the stone and cried for hours, holding it in my hand. To others, it may look like just another stone, to me it brings back memories of my father and that day we were together. I moves me every time I see it or touch it, for me this is what suiseki should do, invoke an emotion, a personal feeling. However, displaying it and conveying that feeling could be almost impossible, as the stone's power and history only relates to me? As time passes and I give this suiseki to my daughter and tell her the story, perhaps she will take it and cherish it as I do.

Display is a deeply personal art and I feel should not be criticized in a negative way. We have to keep in mind the personal feelings of that display, we should ask questions to help get a better understanding of the suiseki and the intentions of the person displaying it. Some displays are obvious scenes in nature, others slightly more abstract. Even the obvious scenes can have a hidden, unique and personal depth to them which can only be appreciated through an open minded approach to the art. Rather than take a detached attitude to your suiseki, I urge you to attach a personal importance to it and look to record it when important. Strive for quality over quantity, and above all else, do it with an open mind. And enjoy what someone else is giving.

~Sean L. Smith

A Note Concerning Elections:

Nominations will be accepted during New Business at the October 15, 2014 Meeting, for the following positions: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Recording Secretary and Corresponding Secretary. That slate will be presented for a vote at the Annual Meeting on November 19, 2014.



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Bob Dietz



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annaclaus55@hotmail.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bonsai Workgroup:

The work group meets every other Thursday at Bob Grealish's farm 6-10pm. For the next date, call Bob at 412 977-0077.

Spotlight Trees:

Remember to bring your spotlight trees to a meeting for "show & tell". It's a great way for new members to learn about new (to them) species; their TLC requirements and the story of your tree.

Bonsai Barn:

Whether you want to buy, sell or trade any bonsai-related material, take advantage of the "Bonsai Barn" on our website: pittsburghbonsai.org You can also list regional/national bonsai events that your fellow PBS members might find interesting.

Coming Events:

2015 Calendar Note:

Artisans Cup of Portland, "American Bonsai Reforged and Refined", Portland OR September 26th-28th 2015, Portland Art Museum, 8:00am-5:00pm; 1219 SW Park Avenue, Portland. The Artisans Cup of Portland Bonsai Exhibition is the showcase of America's new movement to raise aesthetic appreciation and craftsmanship in the art of bonsai. The show's venue in the renowned Portland Art Museum catapults bonsai into the world of fine art. Event Website: <http://www.artisanscupofportland.com>

If you have a topic or subject that you would like to see in coming months, please contact Dave Metzgar or Bob Dietz for your idea's consideration. This means NEW members too. PBS wants to help you grow in your knowledge and techniques as your bonsai grow.

Newsletter Information:

It's easy to make an announcement or contribute to the PBS Newsletter. If it is text only, call or email Jay Miller at: 412 481-4540 suisekifan@yahoo.com If it is a sketch or photo, email Cindie Bonomi at: cindiebonomi@yahoo.com

November 2014 Issue Deadline:

Submissions for the October 2014 Newsletter are due no later than October 16, 2014.

Compiled by Jay Miller
suisekifan@yahoo.com





Pittsburgh Bonsai Society
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Pittsburgh Bonsai Society • 2014-2015 Calendar of Events

Oct 15.....Wed 7pm..... Bob Grealish on Carving: Demonstration
& Slide presentation

Nov 19..... Wed 7pm..... Dan Yobp: Styling in Context

Dec 09.....TUE 6:30 pm..... Annual Holiday Party

2015 NO MEETINGS JANUARY & FEBRUARY

Mar 25.....4thWed 7pm TBA

Apr 15.....Wed 7pm..... TBA

May 29-31.....Fri-Sun Spring Show/Weekend



All events, unless otherwise noted, will be held at the Phipps Garden Center, starting at 7:00pm Phipps Garden Center, 1059 Shady Avenue, 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.

Severe Weather & Emergency Information: PBS Meetings and Special Events at Phipps Garden Center will take place as scheduled except in the event of severe weather or emergency. Unsure? Call their Emergency Phone Number: 412 441-4442 for updates.