



Pittsburgh Bonsai Society

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



Dec. 2004 • Jan. 2005
Newsletter



Bonsai Holiday Dinner

The Pittsburgh Bonsai Society cordially invites its members and families to the annual Holiday Dinner. It will be held at the Phipps Garden Center on Wednesday, December 15, 2004 at 6:30 in the evening. The Society will provide hams and you are asked to bring a dish to complement the ham (potatoes, vegetables, salad, rolls & butter) or a dessert.

Also planned to entertain everyone is a White Elephant Exchange. Bring an item from your home that you no longer love, WRAP or disguise it and you will exchange your keepsake for someone's treasure.



There will be door prizes and anyone wishing to donate a door prize is appreciated.

PLEASE CALL Claudia Shields, Chairman 412 793-8047 for reservations and your food selection by Dec. 10, 2004 (You can leave a message with the number attending and what food you are bringing.)



Wooly Bears, Acorns and Winter Facts

I had a conversation recently with Jack Hughes, retired weatherman, about natural forecasters. Woolly caterpillars, black and brown, are viewed by some members of the public as reliable weather indicators. However, Jack said that the black and rusty bands have a lot to do with the caterpillar's age-not its forecasting ability. Similarly, the abundance of acorns has a lot to do with last spring's frost and wet weather. (So pluck the wooly bears and acorns out of your bonsai pots!)

Jack mentioned that Pittsburgh winter temperature averages 40 for the daytime high and 20 for the morning low. Temperatures can be plus or minus 20 degrees from these average amounts. Below zero weather is infrequent and usually lasts just a day or two. We also see a few mild periods when temperatures climb into the fifties and sixties. Snowfall averages 40 inches. The past two winters have seen above average snowfall. Perhaps we are due for a mild winter.



PLANT CARE



December is Early Winter in the bonsai calendar. If you decide to water your trees, do it early in the day. Later in the day, when temperatures drop, water turns into ice crystals and rapid expansion is powerful enough to crack or explode your bonsai pot, and the same can happen to the tree's vascular tissue.

Remove large clumps of moss, which can hold high moisture levels and harbor insects and disease.

If you are walking off the holiday pounds in the woods, keep looking for suitable rocks.

January is Mid-Winter, but it is a time of preparation. Reading books and magazines are great motivators. You can start seeds, check your supplies, especially your stock of bonsai soil and wire. Water your protected bonsai as needed. Start your list of individual tasks for each tree. Sharpen your tools now. You'll be busy in a little while.

Membership - 2005

A new membership year for the Society (our 48th!!) begins January 1st. The membership renewal form is included in this newsletter. Please complete it and send it with your renewal check to Membership Chair Tom Weigold as soon as possible.

We will be preparing a new directory during the First Quarter. Remember current members reservations are honored first for road trips, private garden tours and special events.

Western Pennsylvania School for the Blind

Five children from the school have been selected to participate in the bonsai classes. These five have a combination of the highest mental and physical capabilities and live on campus. Some children commute and would not be able to participate in the evening classes. The school has students from age three to twenty-one and all are blind, have another physical impairment and have varying degrees of mental retardation.

I have no idea of what to expect from my students!

On November 1st I took several trees representing different styles of bonsai. Some had the small figures of people underneath to give the children an idea of scale. They touched the roots, moss, trunks and branches. They were upset about the leaves falling off when they touched them but I explained that this is the season for the leaves to fall, anyway. Some trees were wired so I explained about why we do that.

Afterwards, I was given a tour of the entire school. It's a wonderful facility that dates back to the turn of the century (1900) with a modern addition that includes a swimming pool, music room, and kitchen used by the students to learn cooking. On the night I was there they had just finished cooking a pound cake. The aroma filled the hallways! Sadly, I also saw a number of children who were physically deformed (as well as blind) and probably not capable of doing very many things at all. It was this image that found its way into my prayers that night.

On November 8th I will return with the trees that were donated by the Pittsburgh Bonsai Society members. The students will snip and cut and we will attempt wiring. There are two teachers from the school who will assist. I will keep you posted on our developments.

Submitted by Donna Ramsey
November 2, 2004



Programs, Etc.

The October 20th meeting featured a Members' Trees Workshop, following the business meeting. We worked at group tables and had plenty of time to walk around and view other trees. Some of the species included red pine, hawthorn, hornbeam, a variety of junipers, 'shimpaku', 'meyeri', spruce, fukien tea, Kingsville boxwood, Japanese maple and others.

It was an opportunity to consider new styling possibilities and future wiring directions. Discussions of pots and repotting in the spring were overheard. A semi-cascade evolved into a full cascade. Asking questions of more experienced members generated new perspectives.

More member workshops will be scheduled.

Calendar of Events

Wed. Dec. 15, 2004..... Bonsai Holiday Dinner

Wed. Jan. 19, 2005..... TBA

Wed. Feb. 16, 2005..... TBA

Wed. Mar. 16, 2005..... TBA

Apr. 15-17, 2005..... East Hanover, New Jersey

22nd Annual Mid-Atlantic

Bonsai Symposium

<http://midatlanticbonsai.freeseervers.com/fescurr.htm>

Wed. Apr. 20, 2005..... TBA

May 28-31, 2005..... Washington D.C.

Fifth World Bonsai Convention

Washington Hilton

<http://www.bonsai-wbff.org/wbc5/main.htm>

All Pittsburgh Bonsai Society events, unless otherwise noted, will be held at Phipps Garden Center, 1059 Shady Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15232, in Mellon Park, starting at

7:00pm.



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