

Fort Wayne Bonsai Club Newsletter

Volume 10 Issue 10

October, 2006

October Bonsai Show & Meeting

The October meeting of the Fort Wayne Bonsai club will be held at about 10:15 am on Saturday, October 21, 2006 just after we finish setting up our fall show. **If you are bringing any new trees to the show that we may not have a label for please email me a list of those trees.** If you are not bringing trees to the show we would appreciate you coming to help set up and to participate in the meeting.

Six members made the trip to Jack Wikle's home last Sunday. We will have a discussion at the meeting of the trip but I think I can safely say that everyone who attended had a wonderful time, learned a lot and bought some new pre-bonsai trees that they will spend the winter styling. Jack was very willing to answer our questions about styling, care and soil. In fact you will find an article in this newsletter by Jack regarding his 2 different types of soil mixes. I was most impressed with his very fine soil mix made from surface and chicken grit that he uses for his beautiful tiny Mame' trees. Thank you Jack, for a very educational field trip.

Jerry and I had a wonderful time on our trip to South Dakota, Wyoming (including Yellowstone) and Montana. It was very scenic, we saw bears, lots of antelope and elk, mountain sheep, lots of rainbow trout, mountains and mud pots. We also saw hundreds of little natural bonsai trees in Yellowstone that I'm sure were hundreds of years old. I drooled over them but, alas, it was illegal to dig them up! We did have car trouble with brakes twice but all in all it was a good trip. It was rather tearful in Montana when we had to say goodbye to our son, daughter in law and 2 grandkids and let them go on to Alaska while we turned around and returned to Indiana. We also got to visit with Andy Smith of Golden Arrow Bonsai in South Dakota and bring back a beautiful several hundred year old Rocky Mountain Juniper for Michael Himes. We also brought back 2 educational bonsai videos that Andy has produced that are now in our library. A review by Kathy Lee of the wiring video is in this newsletter, the other video is on the subject of collecting trees in the Rockies.

Japanese Garden Update

Linda Heavrin and I are meeting with the Sister City Committee on Wednesday afternoon to present the garden plan from Bonsai Bob and the proposal Linda has for fixing the pond. I will report on our results at the meeting at the show on Saturday.

Kathy's Corner: Bonsai Club Library Book List Contact Kathy Lee @ 637-6242 to check out books.
Video Review - Jerry and Darlene went west to visit Darlene's son last month. They brought back two DVDs for the club library. I've had a chance to watch one of them and think it worthy of your time and attention. The program is presented by Andrew Smith of Golden Arrow Bonsai in South Dakota. He shows wiring techniques for 3 different ponderosa pines.

All 3 of the plants look like miserable specimens for bonsai before he begins with them. But, when he has finished, you have to admit that you would like to dash right out and buy some miserable specimen for yourself to work on!

With the first tree, Andrew shows quite specifically how to accomplish each step. He was a bit slow getting started on it, but once he got going, it was easy to follow and see what he was doing. Andrew does a good job of explaining "why" he is making particular decisions. I find that to be helpful. The

“why” might be applied to other trees that I have in my collection of “bonsai wanna bees”. Although he is working on ponderosa pine, he gives good information about wiring. Do this, don’t do that, kind of stuff. This is an excellent primer for the novice to intermediate bonsai artist.

As he progresses into tree 2 and tree 3, Andrew builds on what he has already explained. Each tree is a different “problem” so you can see what he does to overcome the problem. Seriously! It made me want to go out and buy a collected ponderosa pine and work magic on it. Since that is unrealistic, I will have to do my best to apply the concepts and techniques to trees that I do have.

Watching this DVD right after visiting Jack Wikle and listening to his discussions or reading his writings, I feel less intimidated. Even the masters and experts make mistakes and have trees die while in their care. The idea is to “try”. Do your best. Learn from your mistakes. Observe and make adjustments. In nature things die or survive. Our job is to “not kill it”! Give the plant what it needs to grow and mature into a specimen that you enjoy and might be a replica of a plant in nature.

Kathy

2006 Calendar of Local or Nearby Events

October 21st 2006- Fall Bonsai show at the Foellinger-Freimann Botanical Conservatory

November 18th 2006- Meeting, location & Program to be announced.

December 16th 2006- Christmas luncheon, location to be determined.

June 2007- Ben Oki workshop.

Secretary’s Report- July 15, 2006

The July meeting of The Fort Wayne Bonsai Club was our traditional picnic and auction, held again this year at Jerry and Darlene Kittle’s home.

I have no formal notes to report, but here are comments. Jerry did another bang-up job on those smok’n bones. The datil pepper sauce simply sent them over the top. For those of you not into the pepper thing, the datil pepper is a local favorite in St. Augustine, Florida. It has bite, but not up there with cayenne or some of the island concoctions. On one trip I brought back one small jar from Jamaica (or was it Barbados?) that was mustard based with red pepper bits. The lady refused to sell her hottest mix to a Yank. That stuff was so hot you could only stand three or four DROPS on a hot dog. I had it for two years.

Well, what can I say about this event other than FOOD? Gee, I guess I’ll have to try something other than lemon bars next year. I brought half of them back home again, but they didn’t stay long in our ‘fridge.

Oh, yeah; there was the auction. It’s good to see new hobbyists join in the bidding. I picked up one dwarf hosta to add to my lake Tippy collection.

Yesterday (Sep. 10) we went to the Cinema Center Sunday matinee and saw Al Gore’s movie *Inconvenient Truth*. Anyone who sees the hard scientific evidence will have absolutely no doubt that this global warming is real, is a threat to our planet, and is caused by human activities. It ends on a sweet sour note. On the one hand he shows how things can be done to at least delay the terrifying results (as Greenland and Antarctica melt, huge areas of the globe are simply covered in twenty feet of water, including the site of the World Trade Center, India, Beijing, Holland, Florida, etc.). On the bleak side, he admits having limited political success at conveying

the urgency of the problem. Even with his many, many public presentations, he gloomily reports mostly consumer apathy. The U.S. and Australia are the only major countries not to sign the Kyoto Agreement.

We are preparing for our long trip to Tucson, AZ. We did a trial run to Indianapolis with our pup, Sugar, and stayed at LaQuinta, pet friendly. We warned the manager on duty that it was her first visit. We left her to go to dinner with a friend. Upon return we could hear slight wimpers, but the manager said he heard "not a peep". My score was lower! There is no rest area at mile marker 51; instead construction. At I-465 exit the traffic was backed up for at least a mile, so we inched our way across 82nd and 86th Street, just in time for two high schools to let out.

I HATE CONGESTION! But, we hate ice and snow too. So, barring an outright emotional breakdown, we're still on for 1,950 miles drive west. We have rented a house for all of October in Green Valley for only \$800. So, I'll miss the Fall Bonsai Show and road trip to Jack Wikel's. If we buy a place, that will pretty much do away with my bonsai hobby, except those that can survive northern Indiana winters on their own buried in the woods up at Lake Tippy. It is already colder than I like here and we haven't even hit the first day of FALL!

I somehow managed to kill my Cheryl Owens workshop tree, the cascading juniper. Juniper might be generally carefree, but once they start showing dead, look out. It was probably my fault. It had never been repotted. When dumped out there were few light colored roots, even though it didn't look terribly pot bound.

Well, I'll close with a thumbnail sketch of things to do in October:

- Ø Reduce watering.*
- Ø Remove girdling wires.*
- Ø Prune and shape deciduous trees after leaves fall.*
- Ø Remove old pine needles.*
- Ø High potassium fertilizer. (Schultz has a 10-60-10 that ought to work.)*
- Ø Repot evergreens, but avoid fertilizing. (But gosh, maybe just a wee bit of SuperThrive?)*
- Ø Secure an unfrozen supply of mulch, if that is how you over winter your trees.
- Ø Turn down the thermostat, walk don't drive, consolidate trips, take keys away from teens, turn off the television, microwave instead of bake, stop ChemLawn, florescent bulbs for your table lamps, buy a hand push mower, cold showers. MAKE AL GORE PROUD!

* From the book *The Bonsai Year Book* by Paul Goff in association with Harry Tomlinson.

We took a major load to Tox-Away Day. Many pesticides have not been used in years as my gardening has diminished. Even substances like rotenone and Bordeaux mix (contains copper as active ingredient) can be very harmful if disposed of improperly. It drives me to distraction to see people dump stuff in sewers and old "beaters" (cars for Indiana winter driving that are already junk) dripping oil and fluids onto our streets. When it rains, this creates a rainbow of colors as it makes it's way to the storm sewers and then to our streams and lakes.

Have a nice autumn. Think of yucca, agave, creosote bush, palo verde, mesquite, rocks, sand and javalinas.

HAPPY TRAILS TO YOU, until we meet again.....

Sincerely, Rod Schueler, secretary

Thoughts on Bonsai Soil Updated

by Jack Wikle

Like the blind men exploring an elephant, our bonsai world still gropes in making soil mix decisions. Confusing? You bet! But it's interesting too.

- "Turface is a very useful product. You are missing an opportunity if it isn't part of your soil mix."
- "No! Turface holds too many salts. Don't use it."
- "Many trees grow just fine in straight Turface with nothing added."
- "I don't use Turface. It turns to mush."
- "I've used a lot of Turface and never seen it disintegrate."
- "Pay the price for akadama soil imported from Japan because it is unquestionably superior to anything produced in this country."
- "Most trees don't grow in bark so don't use bark in your mix."
- "I use a lot of bark --- at least 50 or 60 percent and sometimes more --- in my mixes and I am very happy with the health of my bonsai."

Certainly, in listening to all the contradictory advice offered both by visiting artists and experienced local bonsai growers, it would be easy to conclude that it really doesn't make much difference what one uses. My personal view is that this is not true.

I still believe some combinations are clearly superior to others. And, even though people get by with a surprising variety of mixes, further examination will reveal that the most successful are all using mixes that drain quickly admitting a lot of air almost immediately after watering. In short, the good soil mix holds water and lets air in at the same time.

Some readers know that I've been in the habit of joking a lot about having "secret soil mixes." The thinking was that listeners would be more likely to pay attention and take my ideas seriously. Now, I find myself in the curious position of the college professor in the old joke who used the same test questions for twenty years --- always changing the answers to keep his students off balance.

Like most people who grow plants in containers, I've kept tinkering, experimenting, with my soil mixes always hoping for improvement but realizing at the same time that finding a panacea is very unlikely. The result of this has been some change in what I do personally, mostly a gradual shift toward mixes that admit more and more air immediately after watering.

"New" Secret Recipes:

The experimenting continues but, to bring readers up-to-date, it seems timely to offer here a couple of new "secret mixes" I am excited about today. If you try either of these in comparison with your present favorite mix, I would appreciate hearing what happens.

1-1-4 Standard Mix

- 1 part (volume) chicken grit (starter size)

- 1 part sphagnum peat rubbed through a 4 mesh (4 openings per inch) screen to break up lumps and eliminate overly large stuff, then shaken quickly over window screen to get rid of some of the dust)
- 4 parts Turface MVP smaller than 8 mesh and larger than 16 mesh *
- 1-2-3 Crunchy Mix
- 1 part Grower size chicken grit
- 2 parts Seedling Orchid Bark (Sequoia brand, 1/8 - 1/4 inch, is good)
- 3 parts Turface MVP larger than 8 mesh*

* I screen Turface MVP over an 8 mesh screen (8 openings per inch) to divide it into two sizes (that retained on the 8 mesh screen and that passing through 8 mesh screen). The material that passes the 8 mesh screen is then shaken quickly over window screen (16 mesh) to get rid of some of the dust.

Over Wintering Bonsai

by Brent Walston <http://www.evergreengardenworks.com>

Introduction

Bonsai need protection from killing cold temperatures in winter. The degree of protection depends upon the severity of the winter in your area the species that you grow. This protection can be simple as bringing them inside the house a few times during the coldest nights of the winter to a complex scheme to store your entire bonsai collection for the whole winter.

Do I Need Winter Protection?

If you grow only temperate climate plants (those that freeze in the winter in their native habitats) and you live in USDA Zones 8 and above you will rarely need freeze protection. I have a rule of thumb that has worked very well for me in determining the degree of protection:

No winter protection is needed for temperate climate woody plants until the temperature falls below 15F (-10C).

Below this point some kind of freeze protection is needed. I live in USDA Zone 8 and each year I prepare all of my container plant areas for freeze protection by programming the irrigation system to come on if I expect the low temperature to approach 15F. When water freezes it actually releases a good deal of heat. Of course the ice doesn't heat up, but what does happen is that the temperature of the ice *does not fall* until all this heat is released and radiated into the surroundings. In addition to this, the ice forming on the plant can also insulate it somewhat, protecting it from falling air temperatures. This form of frost protection is widespread in the orchards and vineyards of our area.

Tropical bonsai, in general, need protection from freezing. This means bringing them in the house in the winter or keeping them in a greenhouse (See the article [Growing Bonsai Indoors](#)). Subtropical species which are tender but can tolerate some freezing must be protected from temperatures which will kill their small branches or roots. This varies by species and you must do some research to find out just how low a temperature they can tolerate. In general, these species have shallow or no dormancy requirements and can be brought into the house if a suitable environment can be established.

Other simple, temporary freeze protection measures include placing a tarp or plastic film over the plants for the night and removing it during the day, or moving the plants to an unheated, but protected area. These are methods for *minimal* freeze protection.

If you live in Zones colder than 8 and experience low winter temperatures below 15F, then you need more protection.

Zone Numbers for Species to Determine Freeze Protection Levels

The numbers given in the USDA Zone system are for mature top growth. This is fine for landscape purposes, but it doesn't really work for container plants including bonsai. Roots do not undergo the cold hardiness acquisition the the top of the plant experiences. In general they are much more tender and susceptible to freezing temperatures. This is not much of a problem when the roots have the great insulating capacity of the earth, but in container plants the roots experience the same freezing temperatures as the top of the plant. This is the reason I use the 15F degree rule of thumb for all temperate plants in containers. Some species can indeed survive root temperatures lower than this, but it makes a good guideline for the majority of temperate species.

Why Can't I Just Bring Them in the House?

Temperate climate woody plants *must* go through a period of cold dormancy to survive. This is not just a good idea, it is a matter of necessity. If you do not give them this cold dormant period they *will* die. For a more in depth discussion of this problem, and for giving temperate plants a dormant period in the refrigerator, see [Dormancy and Indoor Bonsai](#).

Serious Freeze Protection in Cold Areas

In areas colder than Zone 8, you must prepare your plants for winter protection. This begins in the fall by allowing your plants to experience the full brunt of the early freezes to trigger their cold hardiness mechanisms (see the article [Freeze Damage in Woody Plants](#)). Let them stay outside and unprotected until the low temperatures start to fall below about 20F. At this point, begin your cold protection plan.

In areas of heavy snowfall, nature will do most of the work for you. Make sure that your plants are well watered before the freezes and snows hit. Before the earth freezes, heel your plants into the ground and cover the tops of the pots and lower stems with a mulch such as pine, cedar or fir bark. After the first snowfall, cover your plants with snow and make sure that they stay covered with snow all winter. It's as easy as that.

If you don't get a lot of snowfall, or you can't depend on a regular snowfall, then other measures must be taken. One method is to build a cold frame to house your plants in the winter. There are many plans for cold frames and all of them will work as long as *they keep the temperature from falling below 15F*. I strongly recommend that you place a minimum-maximum thermometer in the cold frame to monitor the temperature. Cold frames do have one serious disadvantage, they can heat up if the sun can shine through a transparent housing. For this reason it is best to place it out of direct sunlight or construct the covering with translucent, not transparent materials. You do not want the temperature to rise above 40F for any appreciable period of time. This you can monitor with your min-max thermometer. In very cold areas, heating cables can be installed in the floor of the cold frame.

Another method of freeze protection is to house your plants in an unheated garage, basement or other structure for the winter. Again, it should be monitored to make sure that the temperature does not fall below 15F. Small space heaters can be installed with a good low reading thermostat to heat the enclosure when the temperature starts to fall below 20F. High temperatures should not rise above 40F for more than a few days at a time.

A more bizarre, but perfectly acceptable method of over wintering is to keep your plants in the [refrigerator](#) during their dormant period. This works well if you only have a few plants and you need to give them the required dormant period and plan to return them to an indoor environment in late winter. The constant 35 to 40F temperature of most refrigerators is ideal for winter storage.

What About the Need for Light? Dormant deciduous trees have no leaves and do not need light until they begin growing again. Dormant evergreens do not need light as long as the temperature does not rise above 40F for very long. Evergreens stored in the dark at temperatures around or below freezing (32F) will survive the winter nicely.

Do I Need to Water? Many areas will have warm spells during the winter that will warm the earth and your bonsai above freezing. This is a good opportunity to uncover them and check for dryness. If they need water, give them a good soaking and replace the mulch and coverings. Always check to make sure that the bonsai itself is getting water. Mulch has a way of shedding water and it may not get through to your plants.

When Should I Bring Them Out? After dormancy requirements have been satisfied and the temperature is allowed to rise above 40F for more than a few days, temperate climate plants will begin to grow. This will occur in the total dark. Therefore, you should plan to have your plants introduced to sunlight when temperatures reach this level. In some areas, spring weather can fluctuate wildly and you must be prepared to protect plants from sudden freezes.

And finally Bonsai is a wonderful and diverse art. They can be grown indoors and outdoors, stored for the winter, or manipulated to give them dormant periods. There is no reason to let your natural environment limit your possibilities. But you must pay attention to the needs of the individual species and the limitations of your space.

The club has the following items for sale:

Wire assortments: club members \$40.00, subscribers \$42.00, non-members \$45.00

Micromax micro-nutrients: \$5.00 for members, subscribers \$6.00, non-members \$7.00

Bonsai soil, shopping bag of 2 scoops: \$5.00 for members, subscribers \$6.00, non-members \$7.00

New Fertilizer blocks. ½ lb bag \$2.50 for members, Subscribers \$3.00, non-members \$3.50 1 lb bag \$5.00 for members, Subscribers \$5.50, non-members \$6.00

We also have bonsai slabs for forest plantings. Prices range from \$25.00 to \$50.00. Call Darlene or Ed regarding purchase.

All these products are great buys and priced much lower than retail if they are even available in this area. Call or email Darlene or Ed if you want products brought to this meeting.

See you at the show!!

Membership Roster and Subscribers The Membership roster will be printed again in the December issue.

