

Fort Wayne Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 11 Issue 3

March 17, 2007

March Bonsai Club Meeting

The next meeting will be Saturday, March 17th at 10:30 am in the Kittle Garage at 17725 Lima Road. We will be having a brief meeting followed by a pot making workshop. Hopefully the weather will cooperate and we will have a warm day.

Those of you who didn't attend the meeting at Lawton Park Greenhouse last month missed a wonderful preview of spring! Thank you Dick for the refreshments, I loved the little sausages! You can see pictures at the end of the newsletter.

I would like to thank Cat for her wonderful report in this newsletter on events at area clubs. If only I was retired and could attend several of them. I would like to encourage all of you to read her article and plan to attend one or two of these events. It would improve your bonsai knowledge and be fun too.

The last article in this newsletter was suggested and provided by Barb Kirkwood. It is aimed at helping newcomers understand the different bonsai styles and it is a great reminder for seasoned bonsai veterans.

The article on Dormancy and Indoor Bonsai was suggested by Cathy Blythe. She has met with officials at the Foellinger-Freimann Botanical Conservatory regarding her plans to help the conservatory obtain and set up a permanent bonsai collection. She was pleasantly surprised at the immediate interest in proceeding in this effort. We will watch this plan progress with much interest.

We are totally out of bonsai soil and will need to plan another soil making day, probably at the Bonsai Bob workshop in April. We will discuss this at this meeting. If you have signed up for Bob's workshop and have not sent your money in to Ed be sure to get it in so you don't lose your place in the workshop. The same goes for the Ben Oki workshop in June.

We will have a sign up sheet at this meeting for the field trip to Gee Farms on April 14th to find

prospective material for the workshops and to meet the Western Michigan Bonsai Club. We will be making the trip in 2 or more vans and passengers will be expected to contribute to the drivers gas expense. If you plan to attend this field trip but cannot make this meeting call me so I can put you on the sign up sheet.

We are looking for an alternative site for the club picnic in July. Jerry and I have hosted it for several years but this year we are planning to tear off part of our home and build a new addition. We will also be building on to our barn, putting a new roof on it and siding it with steel siding. It will all involve major construction and it will not be a good site this year for the picnic. If you can host it please call me. Darlene Kittle, Editor Ph: 637-5104
P.S. I agree with Kathy below, I too am weak!

Kathy's Korner

Embedded in an article by Michael Persiano, in *Bonsai: The Journal of the American Bonsai Society* – Winter 2006 (p. 21) were words that hit close to home for me. Or, shall I say they could hit close! Michael wrote, "In our earliest years as bonsai artists, we are compelled to stockpile materials.....we soon realize that bonsai development is not about how many trees we 'grow' in our personal collection. Bonsai is not about the quantity of trees we water and feed. Bonsai is about the quality of the art that we produce.

Weed back your collections: what has not found its way into your artistic eye should be sold or gifted....., and those trees you cherish should be pushed to the forefront of your focus and given what time and energy you have to offer.

By focusing on a finite number of specimens, you will master your selections and experience the true beauty that only the art of bonsai can offer."

Today as I began sorting out and pruning some of my deciduous trees, I could see how this philosophy could save me much time, money, and worry. But, I won't promise you that I will be able to live up to it. I expect my purse will still be open at our next sale and auction. You see.... I have a weakness.

Kathy

2006 Calendar of Local or Nearby Events

March 17, 2007 Pot Workshop at Kittles Home

April 14, 2007 Trip to Gee Farms to shop for trees and meet West Michigan Bonsai Club

April 21, 2007 Bonsai Bob Workshop

May 19, 2007 9:00 am setup Bonsai Show and Club meeting at Foellinger Freimmann Botanical Conservatory

June 2007- Ben Oki workshop

July 21, 2007 Club picnic, location to be announced.

October 20, 2007 9:00 am setup Bonsai Show and Club meeting at Foellinger Freimmann Botanical Conservatory

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 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.

February Minutes

The February meeting was held at the Lawton Greenhouses and called to order at 10:32. There was a reminder that dues should be paid if you haven't already. Darlene indicated the March meeting will be held at her home so we can make some free hand pots. We do not have a place that will fire them, but she is on the lookout for one.

Cheryl Owens sent an email and indicated there will be a workshop with Ben Oki some time in June but the date is not yet established.

April 21 is the workshop with Bonsai Bob. The participant seats are filled, but you can still attend as an observer. The fee for that is just \$10.

Darlene received a letter from Helen McCarthy and Judy Dafforn indicating that Helen is in the hospital but both women are interested in continuing their membership in the club.

Cat has developed a web site for the organization and you can view it at <http://home.earthlink.net/~centaura/bindex.html> It includes information about club activities as well as past newsletters.

Kathy Lee designed a membership application and brochure. She has not yet had them printed.

The Sister City Committee invited Darlene Kittle, Darla Keller and Ed Hake to their annual dinner at the Summit to commemorate the Bonsai Clubs participation in the renewal of the Japanese garden. Darlene was unable to attend but Ed and Darla enjoyed the evening. There is a new bid out on the work to be done that is funded through the parks department. On April 22, Earth Day, the Japanese American Cultural Club will have a cherry tree festival and will plant two cherry trees.

Saturday, April 14, we are joining the West Michigan Bonsai Club in a trip to Gee Farms in Stockbridge Michigan. Gee Farms Nursery is the largest retail nursery in Michigan and has twenty green-houses and ten acres of nursery stock. They carry the usual and the unusual. And they even have hand dipped ice cream. The Farms have a huge selection of dwarf evergreens. The experienced bonsai growers in our group can help you pick out a plant with great bonsai potential. We are forming a couple of car pools. Please let Darlene know if you are interested in this trip. <http://www.geefarms.com/>

This was a short meeting so members could enjoy touring the greenhouses. This is usually a yearly trip and if you missed out this year, be sure to attend next to enjoy the green foliage and colorful flowers in the middle of snow bound months.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Kirkwood

Dormancy and Indoor Bonsai

by Brent Walston

Introduction The most difficult barrier to growing bonsai indoors is the need for a cold dormant period in temperate climate woody plants. The following article discusses the problems associated with dormancy and how one may overcome them.

Outdoor versus Indoor

All trees are outdoor trees. The terms 'indoor bonsai' and 'outdoor bonsai' are meaningless except to describe where you keep your trees. There are no plants that cannot be grown 'indoors' if you can supply them with what they need. In most cases, keeping temperate climate woody plants indoors is very difficult.

The factors involved in keeping plants indoors are light, temperature, humidity, watering, and most importantly, dormancy requirements. We have had intensive discussions about the role of dormancy in bonsai in the Internet Bonsai Club. The last round was just recently with some excellent information and research from Andy Walsh and Anton Nijuis. The archives of the IBC may be found at <http://home.ease.Lsoft.com/Archives/bonsai.html>

What is Dormancy?

Dormancy is a survival strategy that temperate climate species have evolved to stay alive over the winter. These species have a biological clock that tells them to slow activity and prepare soft tissues for an onslaught of freezing temperatures.

Species that have well developed dormancy needs cannot be tricked out of them. If you attempt to give a such as species, for instance Japanese maple, *Acer palmatum*, an eternal summer by bringing it in the house, it will grow continuously for as long as two years. After a maximum period of sustained growth, a temperate climate plant will automatically go dormant no matter what the season or condition. Deciduous plants will lose their leaves, evergreens will curtail all new growth. This is very stressful to the plant and usually fatal. It will be 100% fatal if the plant does not receive the necessary period of cold temperatures required to break the dormancy.

To summarize, temperate climate plants require a cold dormant period. They have internal clocks that tell them when to go dormant. The clocks can be tricked to some degree. After a normal growing season, dormancy can be brought on by decreasing temperatures and shortened daylength, or delayed by maintaining summer temperatures and daylength.

Cold Hardiness

Cold hardiness acquisition is also a necessary part of dormancy in temperate climates. Plants begin entering dormancy by setting buds in mid to late summer. Stem tissues begin increasing levels of sugars and carbohydrates in response to lowering temperatures in the fall. By the time freezing temperatures arrive, they have developed enough natural antifreeze to survive freezes. Different species develop different degrees of cold hardiness according to their natural environment. The degree of cold hardiness they can acquire is genetically determined. Roots do not develop cold hardiness in the same fashion and must be protected to a greater extent than top growth in container plants.

Breaking Dormancy

In order for these species to break dormancy and begin growing again they must acquire the requisite number of hours of cold temperatures. For most of these species it is 1000 hours of temperatures below 40F. Once this requirement has been satisfied the plant may begin growing again immediately. The new growth is triggered by temperature alone. If temperatures rise much above 40F for any extended period of time, say a week or so, the buds will break and the plant will begin growing. This can happen outside in January if there is a freak warm spell, or it can be artificially manipulated if plants are brought indoors. A return to cold weather will of course kill the new growth and buds.

Dormancy in Tropicals

Tropical and subtropical plants that have evolved under milder conditions have modest or no dormancy requirements. They are capable of continuous growth at 70F+ temperatures. In fact most tropical species will grow more slowly or not at all at certain times of the year, but this is not related to dormancy. Andy Walsh refers to this phenomenon as 'quiescence'. Temperate climate plants also exhibit this phenomenon, most notably

during the hot dry part of summer for desert plants. Growth resumes when favorable conditions returns.

Treatment of Subtropicals

Subtropicals such as Chinese elms, *Ulmus parvifolia*, have little if any dormancy requirements. In colder areas they drop their leaves, go dormant and act like deciduous trees. In milder, non freezing environments, they are evergreen and exhibit continuous growth except for occasional 'quiescence'. They require fairly high light levels and that will be the most difficult factor to maintain. A sunny window is usually insufficient and supplemental light, such as a fluorescent lamp six inches above the plant, is strongly recommended. Most subtropical plants that do not have strict dormancy requirements, still seem to perform better if they have a brief cold dormant period that allows them to lose their foliage. Both Chinese elm and Pomegranate, *Punica granatum*, fall into this category.

Determining Which Plants Need Dormancy

When determining whether or not a plant can be grown indoors, the strongest clue will come from its natural environment. If the species is native to a temperate climate area that receives regular freezing winter temperatures, it will be impossible to grow this plant continuously indoors. It can only be an indoor plant if you can also satisfy its dormancy requirement by providing it with the requisite number of hours of temperatures under 40F.

How to Give Plants a Dormant Period

It is not easy, but some people have become adept at growing temperate plants indoors by giving them a dormant period each year. This can be done by keeping plants in the refrigerator, in a cold garage, or outside until the dormancy requirements are met. The plants are then brought back into the house and growth is reinitiated by providing warmer temperatures and increased daylength with grow lights. This is not a procedure for beginners, and if you wish to try it, expect failures until you learn the proper techniques and the eccentricities of each species.

If, for some reason, you cannot keep your temperate plants outside all winter to give them a dormant period, here is how you can do it can do it

in the refrigerator: First (if possible), keep them outside and let them enjoy a few light frosts. Ideally, four to six weeks of decreasing day length and mild cool weather where the temps are around 25 to 35F at night, will adequately prepare them. If this is not possible, just keep them as cool as possible as late as possible in the fall, and then put them in the fridge. The above preparation is not strictly necessary, but it does keep them healthier and minimizes the refrigerator period. Going directly from a growing state (AFTER a full season of growth) into cold storage will not adversely affect any temperate climate plant. They will just go dormant in the fridge, drop their leaves, etc.

Some precaution against drying out in the fridge must be taken, especially in modern frost free refrigerators. You can wrap them loosely with plastic, but do allow some circulation. Take them out weekly and check to see if they need watering. They still must be watered normally when they begin to dry out. Light is not necessary as long as the temperature is low, about 35F or lower. If you have the option, keep the temperature hovering just above freezing, it will minimize fungal problems.

As a minimum, keep them in the fridge for six weeks, longer is fine. After six weeks, they will have the 1000 hours of chill considered necessary for most temperate climate plants. You can then take them out and return them to growing conditions. This may be inside, but please read the articles on growing indoors. This will almost certainly mean good air circulation, grow lights, and added humidity such as a growing chamber or small greenhouse.

In the beginning, it is far more important to learn how to properly water, prune, fertilize, and repot your tropical bonsai than it is try to manipulate the dormant period of temperate climate species.

And finally

Why is there so much apparent conflict in the advice of individuals and books on which plants can be grown indoors? The key goes back to my opening statement: All plants are outdoor plants, but any plant may be grown indoors *if* you give it what it needs. Some people have discovered what a particular temperate species needs, others have not.

As a beginner, stick to tropical plants, such as *Ficus* species, that have no dormancy

requirements for indoor growing. Match their natural growing conditions as closely as possible. As you gain experience you may want to try to grow some temperate species indoors by providing them with a yearly dormant period. The Bonsai Traveler

Area Bonsai News from Cat Nelson

Last month I talked about the national bonsai shows and events, this month its time to talk about the smaller regional events. I'll start in Indianapolis, where the Indianapolis Bonsai Club is having some interesting events this year. On April 16 & 17 they are hosting Marco Invernizzi for a conifer demo and bring a tree styling workshop. Marco is an Italian bonsai artist who's spent several years studying bonsai in Japan under Masahiko Kimura. On June 23 & 24 they have an exhibit at Garfield Park, and then another exhibit at the Penrod Art Faire at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. In the fall they have their White River Gardens exhibition and club sale. The exhibit runs from Sept. 22 to Nov. 11, with the tree sale on Sept. 22 & 23. More information on Indy events can be found on their website <http://www.indybonsai.org>.

Going north, Kalamazoo has a few interesting meetings scheduled. On March 31 they'll be going to Lawton Nursery for a morning of shopping. On April 15 Jack Sustic is giving a pine workshop, and a show preparation slide presentation. They will be getting their trees ready for the All-Michigan show. In July, they are having an azalea workshop, and then they're going to Gee Farms on Aug. 12. They are finishing their season with a possible Ron Martin workshop on Sept. 16. E-mail Eric Newton at newts_bonsai@hotmail.com for more information.

West Michigan is meeting us on April 14 for our trip to Gee Farms, which will be a nice opportunity to meet other bonsai enthusiasts and make new friends. They will be repotting the following weekend on April 21. They are busy in March as they are the hosts of the All-Michigan show.

In July they are traveling to Jack Wickle's, and in August are traveling to the Mid-America show in Chicago. On Sept. 16 they're having a pine workshop with Frank Mihalic, and then they have their own club show on Oct. 13 & 14, all at the Meijer Gardens. They end their season with a class on constructing training boxes on Nov. 17. More information can be found at <http://www.wmbonsai.org/>.

Last, but not least, there's the Ann Arbor Bonsai Society. They are having a series of beginners classes in March, ending with a lecture on growing trident maples on March 28 by Bill Heston. They are hosting Marco Invernizzi on May 6th, Suthin Sulosolvist on May 23, and Pauline Muth on June 27th. Pauline is the President of the American Bonsai Society and will be talking about shohin and mame sized trees. In August they are having a penjing workshop with Robert Bishop on the 22nd, and then their club's show on the 25th & 26th. More information can be found at <http://www.annarborbonsaisociety.org>.

Root Work

By Dave Bogan

Reprinted from the Greater Evansville Bonsai Society newsletter with permission.

During a recent repotting session, I started thinking about how confusing working on root systems might be to the beginning Bonsai enthusiast. Truthfully, there are no real direct or easy answers. Honestly, every tree will be treated differently based on; species, age, health, timing and actual root size and condition.

Species: Example, Trident maples if required, will allow you to prune off just about every root. Junipers prefer not to have their roots trimmed hard. Elms allow for general pruning and thinning, pines prefer you be gentle and cut sparingly. Prior to working on any tree, you must know and study the individual species traits prior to cutting. Some species have tough roots while others such as buttonwoods have roots soft & tender like spaghetti.

Age: Young saplings respond and allow more sever root work than one over 20 years of age.

Health: If not healthy, you should never work on a plant's roots. Why would you want to stress a sick or weak tree? In some extreme cases, if it is a last resort or the tree may die, a tree may

require root work. Typically this is done in cases of a bad or deceased root system where you need to remove the damaged areas.

Timing: Typically root work is done as a plant emerges from their dormancy period. For most trees and shrubs, this is in spring. In the case of most tropical species, the root work is done only during its growth period in late spring early summer. Some work can be done in fall IF you protect the roots and never allow them to freeze. I prefer spring when the plant is fresh from its winter sleep and ready to start its seasonal growth period.

Root sizes, quantify & condition: This is the area most get confused. Notwithstanding the above issues, just how many roots do you remove? To answer this, we must first determine why we are repotting in the first place. To simplify it, are you repotting for additional or better growth, it is root bound or in many cases, just because you think it should be repotted?

In the early stages of development, we may repot with greater frequency. We do this hopefully to increase our root system. In this case, pruning of the roots makes the plant react just as it does during top or branch pruning. By pruning a branch or a root, it tells the plant to respond with new growth replacing what was removed. Thus, we help encourage ramification – additional branches or roots. The denser & finer a root system, the better the trees health and vigor. This translates into better and faster growth.

Root Pruning for vigor. In this case, we must attempt to prune most all the roots or at least all the root tips. We start by totally cleaning out the roots of all old soil. This enables us to see all the roots and spread them out. First, we determine root strength and location. We want to balance the root system and have roots in the correct location including surface roots. In other words, we want the same amount of roots on all sides. If one side is denser, we thin it out. If one side has heavier roots, we cut them back and allow thinner roots to stay longer to gain strength. We also focus on the surface root area and attempt to balance it. In balancing for vigor, we at least trim every tip so they are encouraged to ramify and add additional side roots. This type of re-potting may happen every two to three years to promote the newly forming root system.

Root Pruning due to being pot bound. Actually a good sign – if it really occurs. A tree that has become “root bound” is one that has grown actively and is very healthy. Actually, what we think is “root bound” may not be totally true. Generally we feel a tree is root bound when we see roots circling the pot. This is actually a natural tendency of roots.

Roots will always continue to grow out towards the pot edge. Eventually when they can grow no farther, they start circling. As they continue to circle the outer areas will get thinner with multiple roots. Actually, only the outer perimeter and maybe the bottom of the pot area are root bound. Becoming truly root bound where the entire root system is tight throughout the soil is rare and mostly happens only after very prolonged growth or in the occasional nursery grown tree still in its small plastic pot.

When we do find circling roots, it again says we have done well and it's time to do a little root pruning. If the original re-potting was done correctly, you may not need to remove all the soil but I still prefer to change it all so I don't create different areas of soil type or compaction. First, I remove the outer circling roots along with any matted ones on the bottom. This will get you back to a basic root system. Now wash out the remaining soil. Again, inspect the remaining roots, attempt to balance their strength, remove any oversized or damaged roots and once again, check the surface roots for character, location and size.

The real problem I see concerning repotting is many do it way too often. Many firmly believe a tree must be repotted at least every other year. This may be true during the first 4 – 6 years but again I think it's too often. Typically a tree will respond and grow stronger during the second year after repotting. After this, the tree will respond and their growth will be greatly influenced by external conditions. During and after the second year, fertilizer will tell the growth story. Why interrupt all this great growth in the second or even third year? If the tree is in good soil, the roots were trimmed and properly prepared, don't repot until it's absolutely necessary.

In the rare case of a truly root bound tree, you will know it quickly. The tree will generally not absorb water quickly, even when watered properly, it will dry out quickly and you will notice a lack of vigor. You may also start noticing areas of the tree having better growth while other areas seem to be dying back. In this case, you have probably gone one year to long in repotting. Learn to listen and see what your trees are telling you before repotting. Don't repot simply because it makes you feel better.

Soil

We're all aware how important soil is for growth and maintaining Bonsai. Many have their own mix or special ingredients. I don't want to debate all the possibilities. I simply want to state a few simple facts about soil. First, we know the soil must be “open” this means you must have spaces within the soil for pockets of air. The size of these pockets will depend on the size of soil used.

Common garden soil or commercial potting soil has very small ingredients. Small ingredients equal compaction & small air spaces. Generally speaking, you need soil which has a majority particle size of around 1/4" for Bonsai in their first 8 or so years. The larger particle size will encourage faster and coarser growth. As a tree matures, the soil particle size should reduce which in turn will slow growth and cause it to become finer. Generally, I use two types of soil – both premixed and available in bulk. First is a mix containing primarily 1/4" haydite and some bark particles. The other mix is 1/8" sharp stone and bark. Larger size early on then smaller as the tree progresses. I will admit, I do occasionally add to these mixes. Both of these mixes are basically sterile and except the bark, contain no organic additives. Generally, when I repot a tree, I remove all the old soil. So, if I simply repot with the commercial mix, I will not have any organic matter or any soil born bacteria. So, I always add a small amount of "worm castings" which has some mycorrhiza spore added. Rich in everything of mother nature intended to be in soil. I know in time, all soil will contain bacteria and nutrients brought in by water and air but I simply like to have it in the beginning. All types of plant growth utilize some type of bacteria or mycorrhiza in a symbiotic relationship to obtain nutrients.

On some hard pruned trees or especially with junipers, I add some long fiber sphagnum moss. This moss helps prevent root rot diseases and helps maintain moisture.

The only exceptions to the above is when I create a small "mame" sized tree. Since the pots are so small, I use small grit soil (1/16") plus sphagnum and a small amount of worm castings. This mix seems to help retain moisture longer. Plus, in a mame, we are not attempting to grow them fast. We simply want to maintain growth with a small degree of increased branch ramification.

You must decide on the proper soil for your trees, location and watering habits. If in doubt, always go with the heavier or larger grit soils.

On a final note, some prefer Akadama – hard clay particles. Yes, it has a lot of good qualities but never allow a tree to stay in it over 2 years. Akadama breaks down and will become a mush after 2 years of normal watering. Personally, I rarely use it.

Chopsticks & Soil

During the re-potting process, we must ensure that the new soil is worked in and around all the roots. Confusing, we talk about wanting air pockets in our soil & then we say don't leave any in the soil. Yes, small air pockets of 1/4" or less. Without going into a lot of detail, roots absorb moisture and nutrients not as a liquid but rather in a

gaseous form. Thus we need small areas where this can take place. Larger pockets tend to dry out the surrounding roots and hold moisture too long. So, we must strive to work our soil in around the roots. Typically, most use chopsticks to do this but, I've heard of some using knitting needles. I prefer a piece of flat bamboo. I make mine from a 3/8 – 1/2" wide sliver of bamboo. Simply taper one end to a blunt point.

The real issue here is how you use this tool to work the soil in and around roots. I've seen people stab it into the soil or use force to push it in. Hey, we want to "gently" work the soil in. We've cut and abused the roots enough without jabbing, smashing and cutting them with a stick.

Slowly and easily, work the stick into the soil. Move it back and forth with a little down pressure and it will find its way through the roots. Now, once it's inserted, slowly wiggle it around. This is where a flat piece of bamboo seems to work better. While you move the stick back and forth, I like to hold a finger or two on top of the soil next to the stick. By pushing slightly, it seems to help work the soil down.

Do this all around the pot. As the soil firms up, you will feel it on the stick and you will no longer see soil working its way downward next to the stick.

Another trick to help settle the soil is, using the side of your fist, rap on the sides of the pot. The vibrations will help work the soil down.

Once you are satisfied the soil is worked in properly, you can water the tree. Many prefer this initial watering be via a soaking tub. When possible, I like to let mine soak for 30 minutes. Once finished, you can add some top dressing and maybe a little moss.

Soil Top Dressings

Above, I talked of using coarse soil when potting our Bonsai. Well, this coarse soil usually doesn't look the greatest so; we typically use a top dressing to make things appear more like normal soil. A top dressing is just that, a thin layer applied to the top surface. This dressing can be made from a lot of different materials. The easiest material is again regular bonsai soil that has been sifted. I sift my soil through a 1/8" screen and use the material, which passes through the screen. This will be a mixture of fine gravel and bark, which easily can be worked in and around the soil surface & surface roots. It is also fine enough that moss will grow and thrive on its surface. The only drawback is during the first watering. A lot of the new surface soil is made up of small pieces of bark, which will tend to float away. Don't worry, some will leave but enough will remain behind under and around the small stones.

Refreshments: Cathy Blythe

Bonsai Styles

The Complete Practical Encyclopedia of
Bonsai by Ken Norman



Formal Upright – CHOKKAN

The name of this style is self-explanatory, being upright, straight and very rigid and formal in appearance, a shape that occurs frequently in nature when a tree is growing in ideal conditions. This means that there are no severe or adverse weather conditions and a constant source of suitable nutrients, as well as a good sustainable supply of water. In this bonsai style, the trunk of the tree should ideally have a very even taper from soil level right up to the apex. This straightness and taper create a very elegant and statuesque design which is not apparent in any other style of bonsai. Although these trees can have a symmetrical appearance, this is not so in every case, as a certain amount of asymmetry will give a much more pleasing and natural look.



Informal Upright _ MOYOGI

This style is probably the most commonly seen style both in the natural environment and in bonsai. In the wild, an informal upright tree will have a trunk that bends and curves, and has changes of direction due to competition from other trees or buildings situated close by. These changes could be linked to the prevailing weather conditions surrounding the tree through the seasons. This is probably one of the easiest of bonsai styles to create, which makes it ideal for beginners. Many trees grow naturally with slightly bending or informal trunks, and you will find that working with these natural curves can create a pleasant bonsai design. Remember that any branches should appear to grow from the outside of a trunk curve in order to give a natural look to the finished tree.

Stay tuned. Next month we will have 2 new styles!

See you at the meeting!





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prospective material for the workshops and to meet the Western Michigan Bonsai Club. We will be making the trip in 2 or more vans and passengers will be expected to contribute to the drivers gas expense. If you plan to attend this field trip but cannot make this meeting call me so I can put you on the sign up sheet.

We are looking for an alternative site for the club picnic in July. Jerry and I have hosted it for several years but this year we are planning to tear off part of our home and build a new addition. We will also be building on to our barn, putting a new roof on it and siding it with steel siding. It will all involve major construction and it will not be a good site this year for the picnic. If you can host it please call me. Darlene Kittle, Editor Ph: 637-5104
P.S. I agree with Kathy below, I too am weak!

Kathy's Korner

Embedded in an article by Michael Persiano, in *Bonsai: The Journal of the American Bonsai Society* – Winter 2006 (p. 21) were words that hit close to home for me. Or, shall I say they could hit close! Michael wrote, "In our earliest years as bonsai artists, we are compelled to stockpile materials.....we soon realize that bonsai development is not about how many trees we 'grow' in our personal collection. Bonsai is not about the quantity of trees we water and feed. Bonsai is about the quality of the art that we produce.

Weed back your collections: what has not found its way into your artistic eye should be sold or gifted....., and those trees you cherish should be pushed to the forefront of your focus and given what time and energy you have to offer.

By focusing on a finite number of specimens, you will master your selections and experience the true beauty that only the art of bonsai can offer."

Today as I began sorting out and pruning some of my deciduous trees, I could see how this philosophy could save me much time, money, and worry. But, I won't promise you that I will be able to live up to it. I expect my purse will still be open at our next sale and auction. You see.... I have a weakness.

Kathy

2006 Calendar of Local or Nearby Events

March 17, 2007 Pot Workshop at Kittles Home

April 14, 2007 Trip to Gee Farms to shop for trees and meet West Michigan Bonsai Club

April 21, 2007 Bonsai Bob Workshop

May 19, 2007 9:00 am setup Bonsai Show and Club meeting at Foellinger Freimann Botanical Conservatory

June 2007- Ben Oki workshop

July 21, 2007 Club picnic, location to be announced.

October 20, 2007 9:00 am setup Bonsai Show and Club meeting at Foellinger Freimann Botanical Conservatory

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 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.

February Minutes

The February meeting was held at the Lawton Greenhouses and called to order at 10:32. There was a reminder that dues should be paid if you haven't already. Darlene indicated the March meeting will be held at her home so we can make some free hand pots. We do not have a place that will fire them, but she is on the lookout for one.

Cheryl Owens sent an email and indicated there will be a workshop with Ben Oki some time in June but the date is not yet established.

April 21 is the workshop with Bonsai Bob. The participant seats are filled, but you can still attend as an observer. The fee for that is just \$10.

Darlene received a letter from Helen McCarthy and Judy Dafforn indicating that Helen is in the hospital but both women are interested in continuing their membership in the club.

Cat has developed a web site for the organization and you can view it at <http://home.earthlink.net/~centaura/bindex.html> It includes information about club activities as well as past newsletters.

Kathy Lee designed a membership application and brochure. She has not yet had them printed.

The Sister City Committee invited Darlene Kittle, Darla Keller and Ed Hake to their annual dinner at the Summit to commemorate the Bonsai Clubs participation in the renewal of the Japanese garden. Darlene was unable to attend but Ed and Darla enjoyed the evening. There is a new bid out on the work to be done that is funded through the parks department. On April 22, Earth Day, the Japanese American Cultural Club will have a cherry tree festival and will plant two cherry trees.

Saturday, April 14, we are joining the West Michigan Bonsai Club in a trip to Gee Farms in Stockbridge Michigan. Gee Farms Nursery is the largest retail nursery in Michigan and has twenty green-houses and ten acres of nursery stock. They carry the usual and the unusual. And they even have hand dipped ice cream. The Farms have a huge selection of dwarf evergreens. The experienced bonsai growers in our group can help you pick out a plant with great bonsai potential. We are forming a couple of car pools. Please let Darlene know if you are interested in this trip. <http://www.geefarms.com/>

This was a short meeting so members could enjoy touring the greenhouses. This is usually a yearly trip and if you missed out this year, be sure to attend next to enjoy the green foliage and colorful flowers in the middle of snow bound months.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Kirkwood

Dormancy and Indoor Bonsai

by Brent Walston

Introduction The most difficult barrier to growing bonsai indoors is the need for a cold dormant period in temperate climate woody plants. The following article discusses the problems associated with dormancy and how one may overcome them.

Outdoor versus Indoor

All trees are outdoor trees. The terms 'indoor bonsai' and 'outdoor bonsai' are meaningless except to describe where you keep your trees. There are no plants that cannot be grown 'indoors' if you can supply them with what they need. In most cases, keeping temperate climate woody plants indoors is very difficult.

The factors involved in keeping plants indoors are light, temperature, humidity, watering, and most importantly, dormancy requirements. We have had intensive discussions about the role of dormancy in bonsai in the Internet Bonsai Club. The last round was just recently with some excellent information and research from Andy Walsh and Anton Nijuis. The archives of the IBC may be found at <http://home.ease.Lsoft.com/Archives/bonsai.html>

What is Dormancy?

Dormancy is a survival strategy that temperate climate species have evolved to stay alive over the winter. These species have a biological clock that tells them to slow activity and prepare soft tissues for an onslaught of freezing temperatures.

Species that have well developed dormancy needs cannot be tricked out of them. If you attempt to give a such as species, for instance Japanese maple, *Acer palmatum*, an eternal summer by bringing it in the house, it will grow continuously for as long as two years. After a maximum period of sustained growth, a temperate climate plant will automatically go dormant no matter what the season or condition. Deciduous plants will lose their leaves, evergreens will curtail all new growth. This is very stressful to the plant and usually fatal. It will be 100% fatal if the plant does not receive the necessary period of cold temperatures required to break the dormancy.

To summarize, temperate climate plants require a cold dormant period. They have internal clocks that tell them when to go dormant. The clocks can be tricked to some degree. After a normal growing season, dormancy can be brought on by decreasing temperatures and shortened daylength, or delayed by maintaining summer temperatures and daylength.

Cold Hardiness

Cold hardiness acquisition is also a necessary part of dormancy in temperate climates. Plants begin entering dormancy by setting buds in mid to late summer. Stem tissues begin increasing levels of sugars and carbohydrates in response to lowering temperatures in the fall. By the time freezing temperatures arrive, they have developed enough natural antifreeze to survive freezes. Different species develop different degrees of cold hardiness according to their natural environment. The degree of cold hardiness they can acquire is genetically determined. Roots do not develop cold hardiness in the same fashion and must be protected to a greater extent than top growth in container plants.

Breaking Dormancy

In order for these species to break dormancy and begin growing again they must acquire the requisite number of hours of cold temperatures. For most of these species it is 1000 hours of temperatures below 40F. Once this requirement has been satisfied the plant may begin growing again immediately. The new growth is triggered by temperature alone. If temperatures rise much above 40F for any extended period of time, say a week or so, the buds will break and the plant will begin growing. This can happen outside in January if there is a freak warm spell, or it can be artificially manipulated if plants are brought indoors. A return to cold weather will of course kill the new growth and buds.

Dormancy in Tropicals

Tropical and subtropical plants that have evolved under milder conditions have modest or no dormancy requirements. They are capable of continuous growth at 70F+ temperatures. In fact most tropical species will grow more slowly or not at all at certain times of the year, but this is not related to dormancy. Andy Walsh refers to this phenomenon as 'quiescence'. Temperate climate plants also exhibit this phenomenon, most notably

during the hot dry part of summer for desert plants. Growth resumes when favorable conditions returns.

Treatment of Subtropicals

Subtropicals such as Chinese elms, *Ulmus parvifolia*, have little if any dormancy requirements. In colder areas they drop their leaves, go dormant and act like deciduous trees. In milder, non freezing environments, they are evergreen and exhibit continuous growth except for occasional 'quiescence'. They require fairly high light levels and that will be the most difficult factor to maintain. A sunny window is usually insufficient and supplemental light, such as a fluorescent lamp six inches above the plant, is strongly recommended. Most subtropical plants that do not have strict dormancy requirements, still seem to perform better if they have a brief cold dormant period that allows them to lose their foliage. Both Chinese elm and Pomegranate, *Punica granatum*, fall into this category.

Determining Which Plants Need Dormancy

When determining whether or not a plant can be grown indoors, the strongest clue will come from its natural environment. If the species is native to a temperate climate area that receives regular freezing winter temperatures, it will be impossible to grow this plant continuously indoors. It can only be an indoor plant if you can also satisfy its dormancy requirement by providing it with the requisite number of hours of temperatures under 40F.

How to Give Plants a Dormant Period

It is not easy, but some people have become adept at growing temperate plants indoors by giving them a dormant period each year. This can be done by keeping plants in the refrigerator, in a cold garage, or outside until the dormancy requirements are met. The plants are then brought back into the house and growth is reinitiated by providing warmer temperatures and increased daylength with grow lights. This is not a procedure for beginners, and if you wish to try it, expect failures until you learn the proper techniques and the eccentricities of each species.

If, for some reason, you cannot keep your temperate plants outside all winter to give them a dormant period, here is how you can do it can do it

in the refrigerator: First (if possible), keep them outside and let them enjoy a few light frosts. Ideally, four to six weeks of decreasing day length and mild cool weather where the temps are around 25 to 35F at night, will adequately prepare them. If this is not possible, just keep them as cool as possible as late as possible in the fall, and then put them in the fridge. The above preparation is not strictly necessary, but it does keep them healthier and minimizes the refrigerator period. Going directly from a growing state (AFTER a full season of growth) into cold storage will not adversely affect any temperate climate plant. They will just go dormant in the fridge, drop their leaves, etc.

Some precaution against drying out in the fridge must be taken, especially in modern frost free refrigerators. You can wrap them loosely with plastic, but do allow some circulation. Take them out weekly and check to see if they need watering. They still must be watered normally when they begin to dry out. Light is not necessary as long as the temperature is low, about 35F or lower. If you have the option, keep the temperature hovering just above freezing, it will minimize fungal problems.

As a minimum, keep them in the fridge for six weeks, longer is fine. After six weeks, they will have the 1000 hours of chill considered necessary for most temperate climate plants. You can then take them out and return them to growing conditions. This may be inside, but please read the articles on growing indoors. This will almost certainly mean good air circulation, grow lights, and added humidity such as a growing chamber or small greenhouse.

In the beginning, it is far more important to learn how to properly water, prune, fertilize, and repot your tropical bonsai than it is try to manipulate the dormant period of temperate climate species.

And finally

Why is there so much apparent conflict in the advice of individuals and books on which plants can be grown indoors? The key goes back to my opening statement: All plants are outdoor plants, but any plant may be grown indoors *if* you give it what it needs. Some people have discovered what a particular temperate species needs, others have not.

As a beginner, stick to tropical plants, such as *Ficus* species, that have no dormancy

requirements for indoor growing. Match their natural growing conditions as closely as possible. As you gain experience you may want to try to grow some temperate species indoors by providing them with a yearly dormant period. The Bonsai Traveler

Area Bonsai News from Cat Nelson

Last month I talked about the national bonsai shows and events, this month its time to talk about the smaller regional events. I'll start in Indianapolis, where the Indianapolis Bonsai Club is having some interesting events this year. On April 16 & 17 they are hosting Marco Invernizzi for a conifer demo and bring a tree styling workshop. Marco is an Italian bonsai artist who's spent several years studying bonsai in Japan under Masahiko Kimura. On June 23 & 24 they have an exhibit at Garfield Park, and then another exhibit at the Penrod Art Faire at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. In the fall they have their White River Gardens exhibition and club sale. The exhibit runs from Sept. 22 to Nov. 11, with the tree sale on Sept. 22 & 23. More information on Indy events can be found on their website <http://www.indybonsai.org>.

Going north, Kalamazoo has a few interesting meetings scheduled. On March 31 they'll be going to Lawton Nursery for a morning of shopping. On April 15 Jack Sustic is giving a pine workshop, and a show preparation slide presentation. They will be getting their trees ready for the All-Michigan show. In July, they are having an azalea workshop, and then they're going to Gee Farms on Aug. 12. They are finishing their season with a possible Ron Martin workshop on Sept. 16. E-mail Eric Newton at newts_bonsai@hotmail.com for more information.

West Michigan is meeting us on April 14 for our trip to Gee Farms, which will be a nice opportunity to meet other bonsai enthusiasts and make new friends. They will be repotting the following weekend on April 21. They are busy in March as they are the hosts of the All-Michigan show.

In July they are traveling to Jack Wickle's, and in August are traveling to the Mid-America show in Chicago. On Sept. 16 they're having a pine workshop with Frank Mihalic, and then they have their own club show on Oct. 13 & 14, all at the Meijer Gardens. They end their season with a class on constructing training boxes on Nov. 17. More information can be found at <http://www.wmbonsai.org/>.

Last, but not least, there's the Ann Arbor Bonsai Society. They are having a series of beginners classes in March, ending with a lecture on growing trident maples on March 28 by Bill Heston. They are hosting Marco Invernizzi on May 6th, Suthin Sulosolvist on May 23, and Pauline Muth on June 27th. Pauline is the President of the American Bonsai Society and will be talking about shohin and mame sized trees. In August they are having a penjing workshop with Robert Bishop on the 22nd, and then their club's show on the 25th & 26th. More information can be found at <http://www.annarborbonsaisociety.org>.

Root Work

By Dave Bogan

Reprinted from the Greater Evansville Bonsai Society newsletter with permission.

During a recent repotting session, I started thinking about how confusing working on root systems might be to the beginning Bonsai enthusiast. Truthfully, there are no real direct or easy answers. Honestly, every tree will be treated differently based on; species, age, health, timing and actual root size and condition.

Species: Example, Trident maples if required, will allow you to prune off just about every root. Junipers prefer not to have their roots trimmed hard. Elms allow for general pruning and thinning, pines prefer you be gentle and cut sparingly. Prior to working on any tree, you must know and study the individual species traits prior to cutting. Some species have tough roots while others such as buttonwoods have roots soft & tender like spaghetti.

Age: Young saplings respond and allow more sever root work than one over 20 years of age.

Health: If not healthy, you should never work on a plant's roots. Why would you want to stress a sick or weak tree? In some extreme cases, if it is a last resort or the tree may die, a tree may

require root work. Typically this is done in cases of a bad or deceased root system where you need to remove the damaged areas.

Timing: Typically root work is done as a plant emerges from their dormancy period. For most trees and shrubs, this is in spring. In the case of most tropical species, the root work is done only during its growth period in late spring early summer. Some work can be done in fall IF you protect the roots and never allow them to freeze. I prefer spring when the plant is fresh from its winter sleep and ready to start its seasonal growth period.

Root sizes, quantify & condition: This is the area most get confused. Notwithstanding the above issues, just how many roots do you remove? To answer this, we must first determine why we are repotting in the first place. To simplify it, are you repotting for additional or better growth, it is root bound or in many cases, just because you think it should be repotted?

In the early stages of development, we may repot with greater frequency. We do this hopefully to increase our root system. In this case, pruning of the roots makes the plant react just as it does during top or branch pruning. By pruning a branch or a root, it tells the plant to respond with new growth replacing what was removed. Thus, we help encourage ramification – additional branches or roots. The denser & finer a root system, the better the trees health and vigor. This translates into better and faster growth.

Root Pruning for vigor. In this case, we must attempt to prune most all the roots or at least all the root tips. We start by totally cleaning out the roots of all old soil. This enables us to see all the roots and spread them out. First, we determine root strength and location. We want to balance the root system and have roots in the correct location including surface roots. In other words, we want the same amount of roots on all sides. If one side is denser, we thin it out. If one side has heavier roots, we cut them back and allow thinner roots to stay longer to gain strength. We also focus on the surface root area and attempt to balance it. In balancing for vigor, we at least trim every tip so they are encouraged to ramify and add additional side roots. This type of re-potting may happen every two to three years to promote the newly forming root system.

Root Pruning due to being pot bound. Actually a good sign – if it really occurs. A tree that has become “root bound” is one that has grown actively and is very healthy. Actually, what we think is “root bound” may not be totally true. Generally we feel a tree is root bound when we see roots circling the pot. This is actually a natural tendency of roots.

Roots will always continue to grow out towards the pot edge. Eventually when they can grow no farther, they start circling. As they continue to circle the outer areas will get thinner with multiple roots. Actually, only the outer perimeter and maybe the bottom of the pot area are root bound. Becoming truly root bound where the entire root system is tight throughout the soil is rare and mostly happens only after very prolonged growth or in the occasional nursery grown tree still in its small plastic pot.

When we do find circling roots, it again says we have done well and it's time to do a little root pruning. If the original re-potting was done correctly, you may not need to remove all the soil but I still prefer to change it all so I don't create different areas of soil type or compaction. First, I remove the outer circling roots along with any matted ones on the bottom. This will get you back to a basic root system. Now wash out the remaining soil. Again, inspect the remaining roots, attempt to balance their strength, remove any oversized or damaged roots and once again, check the surface roots for character, location and size.

The real problem I see concerning repotting is many do it way too often. Many firmly believe a tree must be repotted at least every other year. This may be true during the first 4 – 6 years but again I think it's too often. Typically a tree will respond and grow stronger during the second year after repotting. After this, the tree will respond and their growth will be greatly influenced by external conditions. During and after the second year, fertilizer will tell the growth story. Why interrupt all this great growth in the second or even third year? If the tree is in good soil, the roots were trimmed and properly prepared, don't repot until it's absolutely necessary.

In the rare case of a truly root bound tree, you will know it quickly. The tree will generally not absorb water quickly, even when watered properly, it will dry out quickly and you will notice a lack of vigor. You may also start noticing areas of the tree having better growth while other areas seem to be dying back. In this case, you have probably gone one year to long in repotting. Learn to listen and see what your trees are telling you before repotting. Don't repot simply because it makes you feel better.

Soil

We're all aware how important soil is for growth and maintaining Bonsai. Many have their own mix or special ingredients. I don't want to debate all the possibilities. I simply want to state a few simple facts about soil. First, we know the soil must be “open” this means you must have spaces within the soil for pockets of air. The size of these pockets will depend on the size of soil used.

Common garden soil or commercial potting soil has very small ingredients. Small ingredients equal compaction & small air spaces. Generally speaking, you need soil which has a majority particle size of around 1/4" for Bonsai in their first 8 or so years. The larger particle size will encourage faster and coarser growth. As a tree matures, the soil particle size should reduce which in turn will slow growth and cause it to become finer. Generally, I use two types of soil – both premixed and available in bulk. First is a mix containing primarily 1/4" haydite and some bark particles. The other mix is 1/8" sharp stone and bark. Larger size early on then smaller as the tree progresses. I will admit, I do occasionally add to these mixes. Both of these mixes are basically sterile and except the bark, contain no organic additives. Generally, when I repot a tree, I remove all the old soil. So, if I simply repot with the commercial mix, I will not have any organic matter or any soil born bacteria. So, I always add a small amount of "worm castings" which has some mycorrhiza spore added. Rich in everything of mother nature intended to be in soil. I know in time, all soil will contain bacteria and nutrients brought in by water and air but I simply like to have it in the beginning. All types of plant growth utilize some type of bacteria or mycorrhiza in a symbiotic relationship to obtain nutrients.

On some hard pruned trees or especially with junipers, I add some long fiber sphagnum moss. This moss helps prevent root rot diseases and helps maintain moisture.

The only exceptions to the above is when I create a small "mame" sized tree. Since the pots are so small, I use small grit soil (1/16") plus sphagnum and a small amount of worm castings. This mix seems to help retain moisture longer. Plus, in a mame, we are not attempting to grow them fast. We simply want to maintain growth with a small degree of increased branch ramification.

You must decide on the proper soil for your trees, location and watering habits. If in doubt, always go with the heavier or larger grit soils.

On a final note, some prefer Akadama – hard clay particles. Yes, it has a lot of good qualities but never allow a tree to stay in it over 2 years. Akadama breaks down and will become a mush after 2 years of normal watering. Personally, I rarely use it.

Chopsticks & Soil

During the re-potting process, we must ensure that the new soil is worked in and around all the roots. Confusing, we talk about wanting air pockets in our soil & then we say don't leave any in the soil. Yes, small air pockets of 1/4" or less. Without going into a lot of detail, roots absorb moisture and nutrients not as a liquid but rather in a

gaseous form. Thus we need small areas where this can take place. Larger pockets tend to dry out the surrounding roots and hold moisture too long. So, we must strive to work our soil in around the roots. Typically, most use chopsticks to do this but, I've heard of some using knitting needles. I prefer a piece of flat bamboo. I make mine from a 3/8 – 1/2" wide sliver of bamboo. Simply taper one end to a blunt point.

The real issue here is how you use this tool to work the soil in and around roots. I've seen people stab it into the soil or use force to push it in. Hey, we want to "gently" work the soil in. We've cut and abused the roots enough without jabbing, smashing and cutting them with a stick.

Slowly and easily, work the stick into the soil. Move it back and forth with a little down pressure and it will find its way through the roots. Now, once it's inserted, slowly wiggle it around. This is where a flat piece of bamboo seems to work better. While you move the stick back and forth, I like to hold a finger or two on top of the soil next to the stick. By pushing slightly, it seems to help work the soil down.

Do this all around the pot. As the soil firms up, you will feel it on the stick and you will no longer see soil working its way downward next to the stick.

Another trick to help settle the soil is, using the side of your fist, rap on the sides of the pot. The vibrations will help work the soil down.

Once you are satisfied the soil is worked in properly, you can water the tree. Many prefer this initial watering be via a soaking tub. When possible, I like to let mine soak for 30 minutes. Once finished, you can add some top dressing and maybe a little moss.

Soil Top Dressings

Above, I talked of using coarse soil when potting our Bonsai. Well, this coarse soil usually doesn't look the greatest so; we typically use a top dressing to make things appear more like normal soil. A top dressing is just that, a thin layer applied to the top surface. This dressing can be made from a lot of different materials. The easiest material is again regular bonsai soil that has been sifted. I sift my soil through a 1/8" screen and use the material, which passes through the screen. This will be a mixture of fine gravel and bark, which easily can be worked in and around the soil surface & surface roots. It is also fine enough that moss will grow and thrive on its surface. The only drawback is during the first watering. A lot of the new surface soil is made up of small pieces of bark, which will tend to float away. Don't worry, some will leave but enough will remain behind under and around the small stones.

Refreshments: Cathy Blythe

Bonsai Styles

The Complete Practical Encyclopedia of
Bonsai by Ken Norman



Formal Upright – CHOKKAN

The name of this style is self-explanatory, being upright, straight and very rigid and formal in appearance, a shape that occurs frequently in nature when a tree is growing in ideal conditions. This means that there are no severe or adverse weather conditions and a constant source of suitable nutrients, as well as a good sustainable supply of water. In this bonsai style, the trunk of the tree should ideally have a very even taper from soil level right up to the apex. This straightness and taper create a very elegant and statuesque design which is not apparent in any other style of bonsai. Although these trees can have a symmetrical appearance, this is not so in every case, as a certain amount of asymmetry will give a much more pleasing and natural look.



Informal Upright _ MOYOGI

This style is probably the most commonly seen style both in the natural environment and in bonsai. In the wild, an informal upright tree will have a trunk that bends and curves, and has changes of direction due to competition from other trees or buildings situated close by. These changes could be linked to the prevailing weather conditions surrounding the tree through the seasons. This is probably one of the easiest of bonsai styles to create, which makes it ideal for beginners. Many trees grow naturally with slightly bending or informal trunks, and you will find that working with these natural curves can create a pleasant bonsai design. Remember that any branches should appear to grow from the outside of a trunk curve in order to give a natural look to the finished tree.

Stay tuned. Next month we will have 2 new styles!

See you at the meeting!



