



the **TREE LINE**

the official monthly publication of the **BONSAI SOCIETY of PORTLAND**

April 2013

Upcoming Events

April 18 6:30-8:30pm **Penjing Discussion Group** Mt. Tabor Middle School, Room 213, 5800 SE 58th Ave. Portland

April 18-20 **2013 Intl Bonsai Convention** Yangzhou, China

April 20 2-5pm **Mentorship Meeting** St. Philip Neri 2408 SE 16th Ave

April 23 7-9pm **BSOP Meeting** St. Philip Neri 2408 SE 16th Ave

April 28 7:15am **Pacific Rim Work Party** Delta Park Elmer's

May 4 10-2pm **OSK Elite Care Center**, 12353 SW Grant Ave, Tigard

May 18 2-5pm **Mentorship Meeting** St. Philip Neri 2408 SE 16th Ave

April 23 7-9pm **BSOP Meeting, How to acquire good stock.**

March of the Flowers is underway!

When I moved to Portland from California in 2007, one of the things that sealed the deal for me was what I call "The March of the Flowers." Leading the march, which sometimes starts in February, are the plum trees, followed by weeping cherries, ornamental cherries, rhododendron, dogwood, hawthorn, and crab apple. Or something like that. It kind of reminds me of the Rose Parade on New Years Day in Pasadena: one float after another rolling down Colorado Ave., each one more showy than the one before. I hope you're taking the time to enjoy the trees on our streets and in your bonsai collection with the same wonder and applause. Right now I'm applauding the sprouting of new leaves on my vine maple bonsais.

I'm not sure how that ties into our April meeting specifically, but here's what's up. One of the critical skills every bonsai artist needs to learn--one that will forever affect the quality of his or her collection--is how to acquire good stock to work with. Whether you are picking through your local garden center, an established bonsai nursery, or the side of a mountain, there will always be some material that's better than others. When you start with really good material, you have two advantages: More beautiful and compelling bonsai, and less struggle to bring out the tree's qualities. Sometimes it takes a practiced eye to figure out which tree to grab and which ones to pass over. For our April meeting, we will have a seminar by local BSOP talent with examples of what makes good material and why. I regret that I won't be there, but you'll be in very good hands.

And speaking of good hands, or in this case, talented fingers, we will have a special shohin bonsai display in the back of the hall in April rather than our now-customary Inspiration Table, courtesy of Oregon Shohin Kai. Check out the diminutive trees and if you're fascinated with what you see, check out one of OSK's meetings.

April 20-21 will be our annual show at the Japanese Garden. I can't wait to see all the awesome trees I've never seen before, and perhaps some that have evolved since last time we saw them. Looking for a way to get involved with the club? I hear there are openings for volunteers...

Enjoy the flowers,

AI

Study Opportunity with Peter Adams

Internationally acclaimed bonsai artist Peter Adams returns to the Portland area this year. This is an opportunity to work with a bonsai pioneer with over 60 years of experience in successfully growing, designing and developing bonsai trees from all sources of material. This year Peter's program will concentrate on applying advanced design techniques and advanced stages of tree development to achieve specific design objectives. Materials with interesting bonsai design potential that may be initially difficult to fathom could be one focus. If you have seen some of Peter's design articles in *Bonsai Focus* magazine, then you have a pretty good idea of the scope of this class. This is an advanced level class, and is not oriented toward beginners.

The class will include a black and white outline design sketch of the student's tree and discussion of advanced care and development techniques related to achieving the design objectives. The fee for the class is \$95.00. Hours are approximately 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.,.

Classes will be held on Saturday, May 4, 2013 at Wee Tree Farm in Philomath, Oregon with Diane Lund. If you are interested in attending the Wee Tree class, contact Peter Adams at akadams274@aol.com to sign up. The second class will be on Sunday, May 5, 2013 at the home of Keith Wingfield at 4204 Birdhaven Loop in Newberg, Oregon. You may contact Keith at 503-538-6118 or at keithwingfield@aol.com or contact Peter at akadam274@aol.com to sign up for the Sunday class.

Keith Wingfield

Bonsai Fertilizer

Portland Rose Society 5-4-4 organic fertilizer with mycorrhizae is proving to be very effective for bonsai. It comes in 20 lb bags for \$16. Some people fill tea bags with the fertilizer and treat them like "poo balls". That way they can be fastened down with wire or easily removed to fine tune the process. If you would like to buy some, there are two options. First, the fertilizer will be for sale at Oaks Park (near the entry) on Monday, April 15, from 6:30 to 7:30 pm and again from 9:00 to 9:30 pm (before and after the Rose Society Meeting in the dance pavilion). If you can't make the Monday sale, you can order some from Bill Hettick at bhet-tickco@comcast.net or 503-936-5629.

Library Highlights

The BSOP library has received a donation from Ron and Becky Yasenachak of the wonderful book, **Netsuke, Japanese Life and Legend in Miniature**, by Edwin C. Symmes, Jr. The Oxford Dictionary defines “netsuke” as: “*a carved buttonlike ornament, especially of ivory or wood, formerly worn in Japan to suspend articles from the sash of a kimono.*” The dictionary left out the most important word: *exquisite!*

Netsuke are endlessly varied, often humorous, sometimes deeply moving, and can be either life-like or fantastic. They are carved or painted on wood, ivory, bone, or even roots. The colored photographs in this book magnify these wonderful miniatures to reveal the finest details and nuances of expression. These lilliputian masterpieces are photographed in all kinds of settings, including woodland scenes, formal displays like bonsai, or attached to the cords that allow containers to be carried on a sash or belt. The fabrication of these tiny masterpieces use the materials and techniques of all the visual arts of Japan. Westerners often marvel over oriental art objects. These little gems require even more skill to execute due to their tiny size. In a sense, *netsuke* are the “*mame bonsai*” of the world of sculpture.

Even more delightful is the inclusion by Mr. Symmes of the background story for each photo. The history of each style, the religious or folk tales that explain the symbolism of the character, and the biography of the artist are set out in fascinating captions that accompany the photographs.

The author sums it up best in his Preface: “*The main purpose of this book is to introduce the fascinating world of Japanese culture, history, and folktales that comes to life through these special carvings.*” And what a wonderful world it is. This is a book you won't want to miss.

Karen VanKannon

2013 Pacific Rim Work Party

The BSOP Pacific Rim Work Party is scheduled for **Saturday, April 27, 2013**. Our job is to clean up the grounds and entry path, pulling weeds, trimming landscape plants and the like. Please bring your own favorite gardening tools, such as loppers, pruning shears, buckets, gloves, knee pads, rain gear and/or sun screen. Also please bring your lunch, as there is nowhere close to buy one.

We try to arrive no later than 10:00 AM, and work three or four hours with a break for lunch. Then, when we're done, we meet in the main tent for a critique by Dave DeGroot. Each person is encouraged to bring one tree for Dave's analysis.

If you want to car pool, we meet in the north parking lot at Elmer's Restaurant by Delta Park (Exit 306b) at 7:15 AM. If you drive direct, plan 2 ½ to 3 hours travel time. Please arrive no later than 10:00 AM. For more information, call Jan Hettick, 503-504-7760, or email at jan-hettick@comcast.net. NOTE: There is a limit of how many people can participate, so if you want to go, make sure to contact Jan first.

Jan Hettick

Oregon Shohin Kai

The next meeting of the Oregon Shohin Kai (OSK) is **Saturday, April 6, 2013**, between 10 am and 2 pm. Our speaker will be Scott Elser, who will be helping us develop our conifers. Bring refined and/or raw material, and learn how to take your little conifers to the next level. Apex Bonsai will be in attendance with tools, wire, soil and some small conifers for sale. We will also have a tray of unusual conifer grafts from PorterHowse Nursery, so if you don't have trees, you can certainly get some!

Also on April 6th we will talk about having a Shohin exhibit at the April general BSOP meeting, as we have done for the past few years. If you have some Shohin you are especially proud of, bring them on Saturday for a short planning session.

Get ready for **Saturday, May 4, 2013**, Lee Cheatle will be leading us in creating Shohin Saikei, miniature landscapes:

“Do you want some instant gratification? Well saikei is a good way to get it. Saikei means scenery in a pot. We take small trees that generally do not look well alone, but put into a group with other trees, rocks, moss and gravel can unleash a highly gratifying scene in one sitting. So bring your pots and materials and let's get satisfied and gratified.”

For this project you will need 3, 5, 7, 25... as many trees as you want, ranging from twigs to thumb size and in height from 2-12 inches. Actual number and height are not critical, as big trees can always be trimmed down and you will want some extra trees for flexibility in your design. It would be best if the trees have had some advance work to prepare the roots, but not mandatory. You will need a tray, slab or low-walled pot for planting, some wire of varying thicknesses to tie the trees into the pot, and as Lee suggests - soil, rocks, moss and gravel. Try to find sun-moss, as the feathery kind can take over your trees. Bring some muck if you have it, especially if you plan to use a slab. We'll try to provide some for those who don't have access to clay soil. As with the trees, extra rocks are a good plan. Finally, it would be helpful to bring an idea for a design – maybe someplace you've hiked or had a picnic, or maybe someplace you'd like to go but never will.

In April we will again meet at the Tigard Elite Care facility, with its large, well lit barn. We are, however, considering changing to another location, possibly by the May meeting. If anyone has a suggestion, please let me know. Directions to Elite Care's Tigard facility may be found on the OSK page of the BSOP website, www.portlandbonsai.org or read the an email blast sent a few days ago. Feel free to email or call if you have questions: Jan Hettick, janhettick@comcast.net, 503-504-7760.

Jan Hettick

How to Renew Library Materials

If you have library materials checked out and will not be at the meeting when they are due to be returned, you can renew them. Simply call or e mail Barbara Devitt (bbd.jcgroup@yahoo.com or 503-764-8242) BEFORE THE DUE DATE and tell her you want to renew your items. That's all it takes. Just say "renew" and you are good to go!

April Mentorship News

Spring has sprung, the trees have awakened and repotting is in full swing (and for some of us it is a 24 hour race against the clock) and our trees are about to again demand our undivided attention. Oh for those short, slow, "I still have time to plan" days of winter. Also, by now, your trees which did not get repotted yet or have been repotted for at least 4 weeks should be getting their first fertilizing with a balanced liquid fertilizer (something like 10-10-10) applied at half the manufactures recommended strength.

Our March program on Pest, Diseases and Bugs was well attended and Lyle provided an excellent presentation on how to identify, treat and address the most common threats to our trees. This is the season, with the early flush of spring growth when our trees are most at risk of invasion or infection or infestation. Armed with the knowledge that Lyle was able to provide and the recommendations he was able to suggest, spring care and development should be a breeze.

Our next 2 sessions (April and May) will be Whack and Chat sessions aimed at helping participants with their questions on development, design, care, wiring, pruning and shaping for their own specific tree. We hope that having to back to back sessions will allow for more focused efforts on one or two trees at a time and allow participants to get a little more help with more of their trees. The April Whack and Chat will be on Saturday April 20, 2013 at St. Phillip Neri Church from 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m... The May Whack and Chat will be on Saturday, May 18, 2013 at St. Phillip Neri Church from 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. . . .

And for those of you who want to plan out a little further on your calendar, we will present our annual fertilizer making program (POO BALLS as they are affectionately know) with Scott Tice on Saturday, June 15, 2013 from 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. . . . This opportunity will require a small fee to cover the costs of materials for the class. The location will be announced at a later date.

The June class will be our last meeting before the summer break, and we will resume the Mentorship program in September, 2013 with a highly requested program on making your own **TURN TABLE**. The opportunity will require a small fee for materials for the class. Stay tuned to the *Tree Line* for further details.

I hope you will be able to join us for one of our sessions which addresses your area of interest or concern.

Until next month, may your trees grow strong.

Best Regards,
Keith Wingfield



Blue Atlas cedar from Jim Gremel

Natural Progressions

In a well-structured bonsai, we see the progression of size from thick to thin – strong trunks leading to thick limbs, to thinner branches, to needles and leaves. Beneath the surface is a similar ramification from strong nebari transitioning to progressively finer roots. In both of these examples, the structure channels nourishment from one area of the organism to another. The critical activity for a tree’s health is the sustained passage of nutrients from season to season without interruption.

Our own organization has a similar structure and purpose. We draw knowledge into our group from external sources – visiting experts, local masters, books and videos. We absorb these educational nutrients, process them and redistribute them throughout our membership and into our community to promote understanding and appreciation.

Our mission is larger than knowing how to grow and maintain our own bonsai. It is our responsibility to assure that a willing and able group of fellow bonsai artists will be qualified to maintain our trees as they pass from one owner to the next.

We are not individual artists caring for individual trees. We are a community of experts with a variety of skills. Our collective role is to assure a knowledgeable cadre of artists who will continue to educate a larger community. We have been doing this for 48 years. As we approach our 50th anniversary, it may be a good time to review our options within the larger community as we pursue our mission.

After a fascinating discussion yesterday with Stephen Bloom, CEO of Portland Japanese Garden, I am inspired to explore new opportunities for increasing our visibility and effectiveness. At our next meeting, I will share the results of our recent survey and offer several new ideas on the natural progression of our organization. In the meantime, I encourage all of you to share your ideas. Our group includes many creative and wise members who can contribute to our ongoing success.

Chas Martin



Before and after pictures of shimpaku styled by Peter Tea. Get the whole story at peterteabonsai.com.

Sight of the Blind Mind: Part II

When I was in graduate school learning ceramics, a friend of mine asked our sculpture teacher when he was demonstrating assembling a work with clay slabs, sticks, and coils, ‘When you’re making those decisions, what are you thinking?’ The teacher paused and replied simply, ‘I’m not thinking at all.’ And he looked at us and carefully warned us of creating and analyzing at the same time, ‘You’ll fail at that. It’s the worst trap of all, thinking while making.’

Well, that sounded like weird stuff to us. Why would we want to turn off the negotiating mind, telling us what’s right and what’s not? Only years later his advice makes a lot of sense. I’ve spent the last twenty five years meandering through various arts like painting, sculpting, making pots, and now creating bonsai—and in all of these visual endeavors, thinking was only useful after the work was done and the hands fell to my sides. Then I could begin to assess.

◆ A drumbeat, a poem, a dance, or a tree are not problems to solve. They are feelings expressed.

Artistic creation is an act of feeling. Putting a feeling into some other form. Probably the most challenging of arts use words, like poetry. Because, with words, we naturally get rather literal and think of ‘flower petals’ or ‘mongoose’ or ‘watch out!’ (for the mongoose) or whatever words the poet is using. The poet jostles words together to form not the thought but the feeling that cannot be really reached with a straightforward, ‘These words mean what I say.’ Poetry is not problem solving, not mathematics. And yet we often make that same literal mistake with bonsai.

◆ The tight skin of a drum speaks not of skin.

In bonsai we have hurdles that waylay us in expression. It is especially difficult because bonsai is a ‘traditional art’—two words which nearly contradict each other. We are taught that to make a tree a bonsai it must have a certain arrangement of branches in relation to the trunk, that without the proper order it is not a good bonsai. We are taught that a radial root system is preferred. That the trunk should taper upwards. Etc. These are our tools, the craft of bonsai. And yes, they’re all valid. And yet interestingly, the older the tree, such as truly antique collected conifers, the less these rules apply and the more open we need to be to exception, acceptance, expression and feeling. The guidelines of bonsai are useful. They also trip us up and can misguide us, especially with older trees. They keep us thinking, organizing with our minds, critical. The older the stock, the more we have to approach the work as a poet who jostles words around. Only we’re jostling branches. Deadwood. Inclination of trunk.

◆ What was built by the body is a challenge to the mind.

Another mistake I think we tend to make with trees is working too fast on them. Not that the manipulation is too fast, but that the ‘Forward ho!’ intention is too abrupt. Sit with your tree. Sometimes for a year or more. Feel out the possibilities. What is the trunk resonating in you? Where should the branches go? Lay out all the directions as if from a compass in your body (not your mind) and one direction will eventually keep rising above the rest. When you begin working this way, like my sculptor teacher, you too may not be able to put into words why you chose that way over another, because you weren’t really thinking about it. You felt your way there. And you might find, as the drummer and poet, that the body has a keen understanding that is inaccessible to our mental apparatus.

◆ A successful, evocative bonsai does not solve anything. It deepens the mystery.

A big part of being creative in the visual arts is to open the eyes without engaging the mind, too. It is easier sometimes to close the eyes. Sadly, we cannot easily do this, although I often think blind people would make wonderful bonsai.

The wry contradiction is that bonsai is about vision, yet when we look with our eyes we begin, unfortunately, to think. As bonsai artists, you are charged with the sleight of hand of opening the eyes without that voice behind them, directing, criticizing, analyzing.

Just open them.

Michael Hagedorn

Pacific Northwest Bonsai Convention 2013

We have the convention information up on our website here www.inlandbonsai.com, and we have set it up so that people can register on line, so no need to print and mail registration forms. There is still a version of the registration form that can be printed and mailed for those who prefer to do that.

As you know we have an exciting lineup of guest artists, including Robert Steven, Ryan Neil, Michael Hagedorn and David DeGroot.

Our workshops feature excellent material, and a couple of them are already filled after the early registrations at last fall's convention. People who want to take a workshop should register soon while space is still available.

Also this year we are planning a world class exhibit, and as an incentive for registrants to submit their best trees to the exhibit we are offering cash awards in various categories. The awards so far include:

First Runner Up:

300 from Inland Empire Bonsai Society
Gift Certificate from Telperion Farms

Second Runner Up:

\$200 from Inland Empire Bonsai Society
Gift Certificate from Telperion Farms

Wee Tree Farm Best Deciduous Tree in Show Award:

\$200 from Wee Tree Farms

Telperion Farms Best Pine in Show Award:

\$200 from Telperion Farms

Other Awards:

Sculpture from Legendary Art

More awards are being added, so check the website for updates.

Roger Snipes, Convention Chair

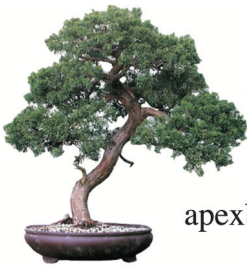
Recycle Wire

Please bring your used copper wire to the monthly meetings. Roger Case will have a five gallon bucket available to collect used copper wire to turn in for cash for the club. Take advantage of the fact that he has volunteered to do this for the club to generate income for BSOP.

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The Bonsai Society of Portland meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month except in summer, when other group outings are arranged.

St. Phillip Neri Parish

2408 SE 16th Avenue, Portland OR

Northeast corner of SE Division and 16th Avenue

Visitors are always welcome!

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