



the **TREE LINE**

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

January 2013

Upcoming Events

January 5 10-2pm **OSK Elite Care Center**,
12353 SW Grant Ave, Tigard

6:30-8:30 **Penjing Discussion Group Mt.**
Tabor Middle School, Room 213,
5899 SE 58th Ave. Portland

January 19 **Mentorship Meeting**
St. Philip Neri 2408 SE 16th Ave

January 22 7-9pm **BSOP Meeting**
St. Philip Neri 2408 SE 16th Ave

Thursday Feb 28 7-9pm BSOP Meeting
St. Philip Neri 2408 SE 16th Ave

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

A midwinter's musing

Here's a question for those of you who have seen your share of club and convention bonsai demos: How often have you wondered what happened to a particular tree after that initial styling? Did it eventually become a great bonsai? Did it die? Was it ever seen or heard from again?

February's program (note we will be meeting on **Thursday, Feb. 28th** instead of Tuesday Feb. 26) will help to answer this question. No, we're not hunting down all the bonsais of demos past. Rather this will be a two- to four-part demo that is scheduled to repeat with the same trees, and the same artists, in October and hopefully again in the spring and fall of 2014 as our artists' schedules permit.

I'm happy to announce that Ryan Neil, one of the top bonsai professionals in the West, as well as our own Scott Elser, one of the top bonsai amateurs in the U.S., will be sharing the stage as they work on some native material, from rough stock through hopefully a second year of training.

Listening to both Ryan and Scott, you'll get the opportunity to learn why they make the styling decisions they make, and then, in October, you'll see how those decisions have panned out over the course of a growing season. By the time fall comes around, scars have begun to callous and heal, branches may have had the chance to thicken, and new buds may have sprouted. A lot can happen in one of these famously long Willamette Valley growing seasons.

January/February bonsai to-do list: Are you taking time during these cold months to work on some trees that can afford the work?

In January, trees you can style or wire include most conifers, including "fall" Japanese black pine work that you didn't get to earlier. Deciduous trees may be worked on, but avoid working on Japanese maples until spring. Avoid working on broadleaf evergreens, such as boxwood, live oak, Satsuki azalea, etc. Hitting your trees with a dormant spray will mean healthier

trees later this year.

In February, it's all about repotting. As the soil thaws, many of your trees will start root activity before you see much evidence on the topside of the tree. If there's root growth (little white tips on some of the roots) that means the tree is on the move and can be repotted, an activity that carries on through March. Keep in mind our spring show. Do you have any trees you'd like to show that need a special pot? For now, though, hold off on repotting your junipers. And know when it's too soon to repot. Usually the existing soil needs to be pretty choked out with roots before it's time to do the deed.

Speaking of repotting, that brings up both the topics of soil and pots. As you've probably heard, the Japanese akadama clay granules that have made up an important part of the "Boon" mix many of us use, are no longer available at an affordable price because of import restrictions. What can we use in their place? As we all experiment to figure out what to do, consider using pure pumice, especially for trees that need a lot of drainage, such as conifers. Fortunately pumice is a lot cheaper than akadama! It may not be as pretty, but pumice is a fine bonsai soil medium in and of itself. And moss can grow on it. BSOP member Dennis Vojtilla suggests a mix that is 25 to 33 percent organic, which is basically a pumice or pumice/lava mix (1/16 inch to 3/16 inch particle size) with a quarter to a third sifted and sized redwood bark chips, fir bark chips, or redwood soil conditioner (essentially, shaved bark) as the organic part. According to Dennis, this organic component holds onto fertilizer very well and the particle size allows plenty of oxygen.

Forget not the Pot Swap: Are you coming to the January meeting? It's our annual "business" meeting but also our first "Pot Luck Pot Swap." So come with your spare pots and be ready to do some swappin'. I invite you to bring not just the little pots you don't care about, but some of the nice ones you've been holding on to waiting for that perfect tree. And don't forget, finger food is welcome.

May your roots always be strong,

Al Polito

BSOP New Board of Directors

The officers scheduled to be installed at the January 2013 meeting are:

- **President: Chas Martin**
- **First Vice-President for Programs: Al Polito**
- **Second Vice-President for Membership: Margie Kinoshita**
- **Treasurer: Robert Wofford**
- **Secretary: Karen VunKannon**
- **Eileen Knox will serve as Past-President advisor to the Board**

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!

January Mentorship News

The December rains have finally stopped (at least for now) and we have experienced some freezing temperatures. Our trees are dormant, and in winter storage and we should be planning out Spring replanting, pruning and development for the next growing season. Ordinarily that would mean that our January Mentorship class would be dedicated to Soil Mixing, but these are not ordinary times.

If you have been looking for components for mixing what we in BSOP refer to as BOON soil, (a three part mix of equal amounts of pumice, volcanic rock and AKADAMA) you are probably aware that AKADAMA soil is not available at this time. It is reported that the US Department of Agriculture has inspected recent shipments of AKADAMA from Japan and found the material contained "foreign" plant materials which necessitated the AKADAMA be destroyed or returned to its point of origin. Due to the plant material contamination and the debate about the importation of "foreign soil" the Department of Agriculture has apparently determined that for the foreseeable future, AKADAMA will be restricted from entering the United States. The issue or question of "foreign soils" has been in play for some time, hence the restriction on plant imports, overseas quarantine, and bare rooting. The US agriculture industry has been concerned about this issue for many years and appear to be quite vocal on the matter. If you know anything about federal agency rule making, you understand that this could be a long process.

Steve Wilcox and I have spent the last several months exploring the supply of AKADAMA material which might already be in the supply line. What we found is that the available supply is very limited, and the costs are prohibitive. We have also been looking for alternative material or substitutes to use in place of the AKADAMA.

So, our January Mentorship class will be addressing soil as a general topic. We will share the information we have obtained on alternative materials, substitutes for AKADAMA, commercial and professional premixes that are available, experience that we personally have developed and we will attempt to have some samples available for you to look at as well as sourcing information and perhaps some costs. So whether you are just getting started in Bonsai or are an old hand with a large collection of well developed trees, this class will have information important to you. See you there, at St. Phillip Neri Church, Saturday January 19, 2013 from 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Keith Wingfield

Library Highlights

Several books in our library collection stand out among the others because of their beauty, sound advice and comprehensive nature. One of these is The Living Art of Bonsai, by Professor Amy Liang. It was the first bonsai book on my bookshelf at home, and I confess to spending hours pondering the first 88 pages of glorious photographs. After that, I made a big mistake: I put it on my living room bookshelf because it is so beautiful, when I should have taken it out to my bonsai workshop and referred to it over and over again. This is not just a coffee table book; it contains valuable information on every topic about bonsai, except for collecting from the wild. This is not a book to skim or to read through once or twice; each chapter merits study and reflection.

Professor Liang's sound, practical advice is written with clarity and precision. She gives the reader a set of principles as a base from which to make decisions, and explains the rationale for each principle so that a novice can understand it. In hindsight, I know now that the chapter, "How to Choose Tree Materials" should have traveled in my pocket every time I went strolling through a nursery in search of material. In the how-to chapters, there are excellent sketches and photos illustrating the topics of growing stock plants, training trees as bonsai, pot selection, transplanting, grafting, and creating deadwood. The technical aspects of plant physiology, fertilizers, and pesticides are presented concisely, providing needed information without being overwhelming to the bonsai novice. In the chapter on styles, each one is illustrated with a beautiful Chinese brush painting. There is also a wonderful chapter covering nearly two thousand years of bonsai history. For those who are interested in penjing, Professor Liang provides a comprehensive explanation both of the history and of the various stylistic schools in China.

This is a book that should be harder to find in our library than it is: there should be a waiting list and a history of renewals on its library card. Sometimes I wonder if people look at the cover and the opening photo gallery and think that it's just a book of pretty photos; or perhaps a beginner might look at it and be intimidated by its thickness. Both assumptions would be wrong.

The Living Art of Bonsai is a book that should not sit on its owner's shelf at home looking new. The pages should be a bit dog-eared, the cover smudged and wrinkled, and the binding cracked from being pressed open many times—in short, this is a book that should be purchased to be used repeatedly, both in the workshop and in one's easy chair. My New Year's resolution for 2013 is to wear out my own copy.

Karen VanKannon

Make a Note of It!

The BSOP February program will be on the last day of the month on a **Thursday** not the usual Tuesday. See page 1 for details. This first installment in a series will give a deeper perspective of bonsai development over time not possible in a single presentation.

In Our Own Backyard...President Eileen Knox

If you have not yet met Eileen Knox, look in the back of the room. If you don't know what kind of BSOP President she has been in the past two years, look around at the many members who are busy volunteering to help the club. Listen to the upbeat, cheerful tone of members' voices. Notice the calm that marks the absence of arguments and ill will. These are all the symptoms of a healthy leadership style, Eileen's style of leading from the back of the room. She listens carefully, building consensus, fostering appreciation and respect, and welcoming innovation. Event after event has come off smoothly because Eileen has been in the background, working the phones, recruiting and organizing. On the Board, she is the person who keeps the energies balanced and focused, who calms worries, prevents strife, and gently encourages everyone to move along in the same direction. Her greatest gifts seem to be her ability to listen and to prioritize ideas for the benefit of the membership in a compassionate way. As a result, people come to trust in her good judgment.

She is reluctant to take center stage and didn't volunteer to be BSOP President. Her sense of curiosity led her to accept the nomination when it was offered. Looking back at her presidency, she considers it to have been a blessing, a rich experience in a strong, active club, where the energy flows from the roots toward the foliage and back down again, like a tree. Eileen's previous experience in other professional organizations had led her to conclude that the closer one gets to the center, the more negatives are revealed; but to her delight, she has found BSOP to be a positive, refreshing experience. Still, she is glad to step aside now, because there are so many other areas of interest she wants to pursue.

Reflecting on her presidency, she expresses deep appreciation for the BSOP Board members who have given their talent and time so generously. She feels particularly grateful to Jan Hettick for her being a knowledgeable voice of experience. BSOP is a group whose diversity is its great strength. There is such a variety of personalities and strengths that the club is a bit like a healthy, handsome bonsai—the interplay of positive and negative spaces reveal the beauty of the design and let in air and light. Eileen is pleased with her efforts to acknowledge the spirit of volunteerism in the group by honoring the distinguished volunteers with special name badges. Early in her term she inspired the library reorganization, an ongoing project. She also initiated the Education and Outreach committee and led the search for the new Mentorship chairman. She believes mentoring is the heart of all efforts to keep BSOP strong, vibrant, and growing in the future.

Always attracted to Asian artistic influences and a long-standing member of the Japanese Garden of Portland, she does not recall a single moment when she first became attracted to bonsai. She owned one larch grove for about twenty-five years, but only started lessons a couple of years ago. At first she worked with Masa Furukawa as her work schedule permitted. Then Scott Tice led her to Michael Hagedorn, her current teacher. Her “Aha!” moment came when the juniper she took to Michael went from a bush to a bonsai in one afternoon. Now she has a yard full of trees, especially conifers, which she loves for their wonderful and varied foliage, their scents, and their year-round beauty. She delights in working to produce jin and shari. Her favorite tree of all is still the larch.

Where next? Eileen has recently taken up the pursuit of suiseki, a passion she shares with her archaeologist husband. They both enjoy exploring the wilderness areas of the Northwest.



Viburnum



Ann Spencer Larch



She continues her career as a respected piano teacher, as excited now about teaching as when she began years ago. And then there is her lovely, tranquil garden...



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.

January Oregon Shohin Kai

We had a great meeting of the Oregon Shohin Kai (OSK) on January 5, 2012. The program, “Bravely Stepping into the New Year”, was led by Alan Taft. Members brought some of their best trees, and we took turns talking about them. After covering the trees with a towel, Alan asked three questions: 1) What is the tree’s worst feature; 2) What is the tree’s best feature; and 3) Why isn’t it compost? The purpose of this exercise was to teach us to truly look at our trees, make decisions and understand why we were making them. Questions 1 and 2 were fairly easy. Question 3 was a bit harder, but “Because I like it” was common (and acceptable). Alan gave us suggestions for further refinement of the trees in the future. A few folks brought newly purchased “bushes” that by the end of the meeting were showing signs of a future as Shohin.

The February meeting of the Oregon Shohin Kai (OSK) will be on the first Saturday, **February 2, 2013**. The February program will concentrate on repotting. **Greg Brenden** will be our guide for the day. Here are Greg’s comments on what to expect and what to bring:

“February is the start of our re-potting season; check your benches for likely candidates. Deciduous trees are the earliest to wake up, such as elms, maples and hornbeams. Bring a few plants and appropriate pots and we will try to get at least one done properly. Bring in some plastic mesh to cover the drain holes of your pot and a roll of aluminum wire to secure the screen and tie the tree in to the pot – 1.5mm to 2mm works well. I’m asking that you pre-sift all your soil prior to coming to the meeting as this is dusty, messy work and we don’t want to jeopardize our good graces with Elite Care. You’ll also need some chopsticks or bamboo skewers to wiggle the new soil in around the roots. Bring some very sharp scissors for pruning the roots and we’ll be all set! One more thing – bring a tub to work in if you have it, and/or a bucket to take away your old soil.

“Jan asked me to comment about soil. My favorite mix is 50% pumice and 50% Akadama, but now that Akadama is not available, I’ll give 100% pumice a try. I get the pumice at Pro-Gro Mixes and Materials, 26045 SW Grahams Ferry Road, Sherwood OR 97140. Phone 503 682-3500. Ask for the 'kitty litter' pumice as this is just about ideal for Shohin size bonsai. You will have to take your own container; a plastic 5 gallon bucket is ideal. I usually take two 30-gallon plastic garbage cans and fill them up when I go. The best time to go for pumice is late summer when it is very dry and light. If you go now while it is wet, your newly potted tree will need to be rinsed VERY thoroughly. Pro-Gro also has an excellent bagged soil mix; their 'professional blend' is \$6.95. It's a huge 2 cubic foot bag and a super deal, similar to Black Gold but better draining. I use it for all my accent plants and some of my Shohin trees. I don't sift the bagged soil mix; just use it right out of the bag. See you February 2nd!”

Another soil option... I just received word from Steve Wilcox of Apex Bonsai that he has a small amount of Boon-type soil available (includes Akadama). He can also get the Driftwood soil (red and black cinder and sifted compost) from Wee Tree Farm in Philomath. He asks that people preorder so he can get it in time. Steve’s email is slwilcox1@frontier.com.

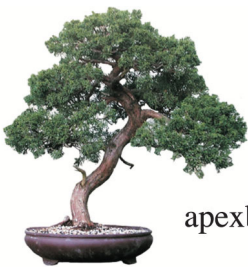
OSK meets between 10 am and 2 pm on the first Saturday of each month. Location details can be found on the website, or watch for an email the week before the meeting. Feel free to email or call if you have questions: Jan Hettick, janhettick@comcast.net, 503-504-7760

Jan

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The fourteenth Noelanders Trophy international exhibition and contest occurs on Saturday and Sunday January 19 -20, 2013. Above are some trees from the 2012 exhibition.

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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!

Board of Directors

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