



the **TREE LINE**

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

Sept 2012

Upcoming Events

September 14,15,16, 2012 **PNBCA Convention**
Hosted by BSOP at Hilton Hotel, Vancouver, WA

September 22 **Mentorship Meeting**
St. Philip Neri 2408 SE 16th Ave, Portland

September 24 7-9pm **BSOP Special Meeting**
St. Philip Neri 2408 SE 16th Ave, Portland

October 6 **Oregon Shohin Kai**
Elite Care Center, 12353 SW Grant Ave, Tigard



Crataegus Bonsai

Old Chojubai quince summer flowering! 16"/41 cm high

Summer Reflection

I hope you're enjoying the late summer we're having as much as I am--about a month late, I figure. I can't say for certain, but I suspect our first freeze will be latent too. Keep an eye out for the signs; fall rain followed by high pressure and clearing in the Pacific to the west. Cold air settles in and then we get it. Getting back to summer however, I was pleased to see a good turn out for our special July meeting featuring potter Ron Lang. His power point presentation sparked a lively discussion involving Ryan Neil and Michael Hagedorn at times which added an extra dynamic to the meeting. It seemed more like a high level study group session than a meeting presentation. I truly hope to have more interactive presentations like this in the future. I don't know about you, but I left the meeting much the richer about the anatomy of the bonsai pot ;-)

The workshop that followed the next day was a different story; I had nine people signed up for the 1/2 day workshop and six signed up as silent observers for a total of fifteen. Only five people actually showed up (including myself) What a disappointment! And a missed opportunity to get Ryan Neil's and Ron Lang's input about not only what pot would be best for your tree but also some pointers about design, planted angle changes, etc. And the price! Just \$30! \$5 to observe!

There was some discussion at the last board meeting about keeping our local professionals busy by supporting them and I can tell you that Ryan was visibly disappointed by the poor turn out. I guess the upside is that there was more time for the few that did show up. I have three more programs left in my term as 1st VP of programs and I am reluctant to schedule anything more than an evening program if this keeps up. C'mon guys! Put your money where your mouth is and let's show some support for our visiting artists!

If you're still reading this, thank you for bearing with me because I really think it's important to say something about that. On to September's program, which will be a Whack 'n Chat to keep it simple and allow everyone an evening to do seasonal work and decompress from the stressful convention. Bring in those overgrown deciduous trees and cut back that too-long growth, now is time to start wiring junipers and some pines, like lodgepole if you have them. Bring in those trees that need de-wiring if you haven't got to them yet. It's an opportunity to pick the brains of the more experienced members about what to do with that problem tree or simply ask questions about fall fertilizing and getting ready for winter here in the Willamette Valley.

For October, I've got Dan Robinson from Seattle to share with us a program that we are still designing. For those that don't know who Dan is, he is one of the pioneers of American bonsai and has a collection of some of the best native trees I've ever seen at his nursery, Elandan Garden, in Bremerton, Washington. He has a book out titled "Gnarly Branches" that he will be bringing for sale that he will personally autograph for you. Dan is known for his collecting prowess and was the first to pick up a chainsaw for carving on a bonsai. Called the 'Picasso' of bonsai, turn up and see why this is so--I can guarantee you won't be disappointed.

And looking forward to November, I've got Walter Pall from Munich, Germany to conduct one of his legendary 'tree discussions'. Every member will be allowed to bring in a tree for discussion and Walter will pick out the best he feels worth talking about for the program prior to the meeting. I think it will be interesting just to see which trees he picks to talk about. There will also be a workshop the day before the meeting or the day following, I will get more details about that for next month's newsletter. So, there you have it, the program schedule that will round out my term as 1st VP of programs. For those of you that don't already know, Al Polito has graciously accepted to step up as our program director for the next two years; let's pitch in and help him in his office to do a great job and make our meetings worth attending!

Have a great time at the convention, I'll see you in the Marketplace (I'm selling trees and Rose Society fertilizer) and I hope to see you at September meeting!

Greg



Bonsai Mirai

In Our Own Backyard...Scott Elser

“In every block of marble I see a statue as plain as though it stood before me, shaped and perfect in attitude and action. I have only to hew away the rough walls that imprison the lovely apparition to reveal it to the other eyes as mine see it.”¹—Michelangelo

In Scott Elser's mind, Michelangelo's statement is a direct parallel to what we try to do with trees. For example, consider his statue, David: The 15-foot block of Carrera marble had lain abandoned for many years, deteriorating in its exposure to the weather. It was of “mediocre quality, filled with microscopic holes,”² and had previously been partially styled not once, but twice. And yet, Michelangelo managed to take the old marble and create a masterpiece, just as bonsai artists do with old trees. What did David's sculptor bring to the project that made him successful? In a recent discussion, graphic designer Scott Elser gave his answer as he elaborated on the parallels between bonsai creation and Michelangelo's statue: vision, technique, time and sacrifice.

So where do we begin to acquire the vision and techniques needed to produce the best quality bonsai? Scott suggested two first steps: begin by collecting and working on a lot of trees, including multiple specimens of any one species, and study intensively with the finest teacher available as early as possible. The earlier one begins studying with a master teacher, the fewer bad habits one has to unlearn. As techniques and knowledge are acquired, there will be a natural tendency to start to reduce the number of trees in one's collection and raise the quality of those kept, so that more intensive work can be carried out. Later still, the artist will begin to branch out into new species, and the collection will grow again. To reach the highest levels of bonsai creation requires a significant commitment of time, which naturally entails sacrificing other activities.

And how do we acquire the vision to see the ultimate tree hidden inside the rough tree? Scott's answer: work on a lot of trees and be fearless. Don't be afraid to make the hard cuts. The more we risk, the more we learn what trees can and cannot do. We have to work within the physical limitations of the tree, always recognizing and following what the tree can and wants to do. We cannot force the tree to do what is against its inner nature and hope to produce a truly fine bonsai. Technique alone is not sufficient, but has to be matched with perfect timing. We have to know when, as well as what, to prune or leave alone, when to work a tree and when to let it recover. Also, we have to know how each species will react to any given technique. For example, Japanese maples react very differently to defoliation than trident maples; and black pines can be decandled, while white pines cannot.

We have to acquire numerous techniques so that we can realize design goals. Scott recommends studying with someone trained in Japanese methods simply because the Japanese have developed the largest body of technical and horticultural knowledge in the world of bonsai.

Scott's knowledge of bonsai is extensive thanks to years of dedicated work and study. He credits Boon Manakativipart for boosting his understanding beyond skill and into art. Recently, he has begun to experience the same kind of exciting boost in understanding through his study with Ryan Neil. The intensive study and years of hard work have brought Scott prizes year after year at the U.S. National Bonsai Exhibition, including this year's Best in Show award.

However, the awards are not what make his eyes light up when discussing bonsai; instead, it's the discussion of bringing the tree to the moment of accomplishing his design goal, the moment when the tree is ready to exhibit. Scott isn't driven by growing the trees, but by his interest in achieving his design goal for each tree. He pushes a tree to the maximum potential of his own skills in order to bring out its individual beauty, age, and subtle qualities. He truly does think of trees as big blocks of marble waiting to be sculpted to reveal the tree inside. Scott takes calculated risks, pushing himself and the tree to the edge, but is always governed by one primary principle: the health of the tree. He spends a lot of time coming to an understanding of the subtle personality of each tree. For example, his award-winning black pine expresses power, while his mountain hemlock expresses the music of dance.

Scott also gives a lot of consideration to the aesthetics of display. Although he recently won a national award for his Japanese style display, Scott is searching for a uniquely American style. In one exhibit, he presented a limber pine accompanied by a scroll painting of a mountain, a fish, and a fishing fly. The Japanese judge at the exhibit said it was incorrect to pair the fish with the mountain image, but at least one American viewer got the point of Scott's display: "Oh, it's fly fishing in Montana. I get it!" There is a need to evolve a western interpretation of bonsai aesthetics, so that we don't continue to imitate the Japanese. We cannot translate the Japanese cultural view of nature; we have to express our own. Professionals like Ryan Neil are working to evoke an American style using American species. The traditional styles we learned about from the Japanese were developed because of the species available for them to use. It is the native species that will eventually determine how our style develops because bonsai is always about the nature and limitations of the trees themselves. Bonsai has room for a variety of styles and tastes, and our artists will go through periods of style changes and developments, just as painters have always done.

What about the state of American bonsai? America lacks the cadre of professional bonsai artists that the Japanese economy has supported for many years. So Americans are hobbyists, who usually cannot make the commitment of time necessary to bring trees to the pinnacle of their development. American bonsai growers often settle for "good enough" instead of reaching for "best".

Will Scott change his life now that he has won at a national level? Not really. He isn't interested in taking on the lifestyle of a professional in bonsai. He continues to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves. He has an interest in bringing native American species to the point of being exhibition ready, because he feels they are underrepresented in shows.

So Scott will continue to pursue his favorite moment in bonsai: when the styling is finished, when the tree has reached that peak moment when its personality is revealed, when it sings its own song to the viewer.

1. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1079389/>
2. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/aug/29/arts.research>

Karen VunKannon



Scott Elser with one of his trees and below his collection.

GO GET 'EM, MIDGES!

As the afternoon waned on a cool day near the spring equinox, we stood beneath our 70-foot tall, 60-foot wide English Oak (*Quercus robur*). Cautiously, carefully opening the clam-shell plastic container, we watched more than 1,000 adult *Aphidoletes aphidimyza* ascend like a winged dancing troupe into the dense foliage of this enormous 35-year old tree to do battle duty they were made for. We encouraged them by saying, "Go get 'em, midges!"

These itty bitty gnatty insects are truly warriors out to eat, maim, and eventually annihilate those gazillion aphids that make life around certain trees a sticky mess, dripping on your vehicles, equipment, sidewalks, plants, gravel, and adhering to the bottom of your shoes.

Aphids possess many other obnoxious characteristics which is a study in itself, but *Aphidoletes* midges, inexpensive, easy to release, safe for all beneficials (lady birds, honeybees, beneficial wasps, green or brown lace wings, and many others) gave us complete aphid control within 3 days -- no more drip, no more sticky, and it has remained so since that release time. This is our second year of success. We noticed other parts of our large yard benefited also.

Evergreen Growers believes we will probably have enough increased midge population overwintering at the tree base to handle next year -- *Aphidoletes* know when to emerge. And all for \$28 for 1,000 of these voracious aphid destroyers! What a deal.

Ask us about our experience with this natural, ecologically safe method of pest control. You can also ask Barry Baertlein about natural controls he is using at Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas.

For *Aphidoletes*, Other Control Insects, and Further Information Contact:

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Oregon Shohin Kai

In August, the Oregon Shohin Kai study group took a field trip to Ryan Neil's International Bonsai Mirai nursery. Seeing Ryan's spectacular collection of approximately 900 trees was a truly wonderful experience. He collects trees from all over the U.S., and we viewed many world-class bonsai trees in various stages of development. We were also lucky enough to get to meet his father, who was visiting. Ryan was a gracious host who spent a lot of time answering our endless questions. Everyone was amazed at how much he has accomplished with his bonsai garden in the short time he has been back in the U.S. The bonsai community of the Pacific Northwest is truly privileged to have him in our midst. If you need inspiration, be sure to visit Bonsai Mirai. The only word to describe it is "awesome."

Karen VunKannon

MENTORSHIP NEWS -- SEPTEMBER 2012

Welcome to the Fall season. Night time temperatures where I live have been regularly dropping into the mid 40's and there are some slight changes appearing in the color of the trees. We have had an almost perfect summer (even if it was somewhat slow in arriving), and now it is time to start thinking about fall care of our Bonsai trees and pre-planning winter protection.

Fall planning generally entails some late season pruning for the parts that have become overgrown, cleaning out any weeds and undesirable sucker growth and changing our feeding program (NPK) to reduce nitrogen (slows down new foliar growth) and increasing phosphate and potash to help strengthen roots and branches and provide energy for the winter months ahead.

Our **September Mentorship Meeting** will be held at St. Phillip Neri Church on Saturday, September 22, 2012 from 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.. This will be a **Wack and Chat** session where you may bring your own trees for assistance with pruning concerns, future planning question, care and treatment and of course fall fertilizing. Now is the time to start considering and planning the next step in the development of your trees and setting the program for next years development. Fertilization handouts will be available and individual assistance will be provided with your individual trees or questions. I look forward to seeing you there.

Timely Tip : Fall weather in the Northwest is almost like having a second spring. This means that those troublesome pests that like to feast on your trees can strike again. Keep an eye out for infestations and be ready to treat. I always do a preventive spraying of my trees at this time of year just to make sure. This insures that there are no surprises later in the fall and sets the stage for dormant spraying in a couple of months. We will be having a fall program on winter care and spraying but for now, a good spray for pests and mites is early insurance.

Keith Wingfield



Parking options for the PNBCA 2012 Convention–Vancouver, WA

Hotel Options

1. Overnight secure guest self-parking at the hotel for \$9 per night per vehicle.
2. 75 free unsecured parking spaces in a fenced but un-gated lot about a block south of the hotel.

Other Options

There is an unsecured city parking garage on 6th Street a block from the hotel.

The all-day rate is \$8.50 weekdays and \$2.50 weekends. Hours are:

6AM to 10 PM – Sunday thru Thursday 6AM to Midnight – Friday & Saturday

If you wish to park at the City garage, you can get a voucher from the

Hilton Registration Desk.

Margie



PNBCA CONVENTION
SEPT 14-16, 2012 HILTON HOTEL,
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COMMON INSECTS AND DISEASES THAT ATTACK YOUR BONSAI

Learn how to:

- diagnose insects and disease
- Life cycle of insects

When and what to treat with to protect your investments

Saturday: Sept 15th 1:30 to 3:00 P.M. - \$10.00 - Slots still available

Instructor: Lyle J. Feilmeier – ISA Board Certified Arborist



2012 PNBCA Convention – Build your Own Turntable Workshop is held 9-15-2012, Saturday between 3:30 – 5 P.M. Cost is \$25.00.

Slots still available!

This hands on workshop will supply you with all the parts and tools to walk away with a turntable that has a 12" diameter multi-positional (and lockable) platform mounted to a lazy-susan base with built in carry handle. We've done all the hard work so you can sit back and assemble at your leisure. This is no throw away design, it's made from quality components including solid 3/4" thick plywood. When you get home you can fully customize it to your liking, including paint if that's your thing. Many people have been using the same turntable for years. We build these every so often in our BSOP Mentorship program and it's always a well received workshop.



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!

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.

PORTLAND NURSERY BONSAI EXHIBIT

June 23rd was Portland Nursery's First Annual Bonsai Exhibit. George Bowman, Manager, extended an invitation to our club members to participate by giving informal demonstrations, answering customers' questions and bringing in our own trees to show. Dennis Vojtilla, Peter Pelofske, Jan Hettick, and Chris Julhes started out the morning session and Dennis Vojtilla, Scott Elser, and Bill Brouhard finished up. Diane Lund and I were also there for the day.

We met new friends, people in the community who had brought in their trees for the contests, raffle and exhibit and people who just stopped in to do some shopping. It is amazing to me that there are so many wonderful bonsaists out there, doing terrific work with little trees and we have yet to meet them. There was so much enthusiasm from those who are already involved in bonsai and those who want to be involved. We had some old friends drop by to say "Hi".

I think the 2012 Portland Nursery Bonsai Exhibit was a huge success. I was a little worried when the rain was pouring down on the festivities, but George said, "Fifteen minutes after the rain stops, the people will come." He was right. I can't wait to see what will happen if we have a full day of sunshine. I want to thank George and his staff for making our work there so enjoyable. They were amazing and responded to our every wish. Thanks a bunch. And, a big thank you to all of you who helped make this the success that it was.

Joanne Raiton





Portland Nursery' Bonsai Exhibit photos



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Portland Nursery Bonsai Exhibit

Library Highlights

Legend has it that the great bonsai artist and teacher John Naka was designing shohin while still in the womb, and that “When his mother suggested that it was time for pot training, John immediately sent off to Tokname for a catalogue...”

For those of us too young or too new to bonsai to have known John Naka, he seems a bit larger than life. So I was intrigued by a book that Scott Elser recently donated to our BSOP library: Even Monkeys Fall Out of Trees. It is a compilation by Nina S. Ragle of Japanese proverbs that were often quoted by John Naka, and also includes some of his sketches of the proverbs. These short sayings are colorful, thoughtful, and sometimes funny, such as the classic, *If you spit in the sky it will land in your face*. Many of the proverbs reflect the Zen Buddhist culture of Japan that underlies the art of bonsai, so reading them is an enjoyable way to center your mind before approaching your trees.

Ms. Nagle accompanies each proverb with an explanation of its meaning and often adds anecdotes relating the proverb to Mr. Naka's life and teaching style. The book also has a wonderful and concise biography of Mr. Naka that serves as the introduction.

This book is a delightful quick read, even for those of us who, like Mr. Naka, have a *cat's Tongue* (p.136). So, don't be a *frog in a well*.

Karen VunKannon

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-and-

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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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