

Bonsai Wire

Marin Bonsai Club

Monthly Meeting
3rd Tuesday, 7:30PM
Marin Art & Garden Center
30 Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Ross, CA

June 2011

Message from the President...

June is going to be a great month for the club for continuing education on structure development in bonsai. At our regular workshop members can bring their own trees to work on and develop with excellent, practical assistance from very experienced members. John Doig, our wiring specialist "par excellence" will be running both the regular workshop (June 7) and the general meeting (June 21) and it will be a great opportunity to bring along those trees where you can practice/refine your techniques rather than just watch someone else do it. I can guarantee that everybody who attends will leave with much better practices and less fear of wiring. And as for crossed wires, they simply don't figure in John's work – he always can wire to perfection and there is no wiring problem he can't resolve. This is a great opportunity not to be missed and will accommodate newer members along with more experienced members.

June is also a critical month in Marin Bonsai Club's calendar for getting ready for our exhibit at the 2011 Marin County Fair (June 30- July 4). We always show our trees for almost a week so that many of the 114,000 visitors can take advantage of their beauty. This is a great opportunity for us all to show our special trees and at the June 7 workshop Jay will review trees that members want to display and go through how to prepare them. Please plan to sign up as docents – the more you do, the better the chance of getting free entry and parking tickets!

Check out the Fair's website and coverage of the Bonsai exhibit at:
http://www.marinfair.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=193&Itemid=317

- Alison Seaman

Fair Time

It is that time again – the Marin County Fair which will be held June 30 through July 4. As always, there will be three shifts beginning at 11:00 am and ending at 9:30 pm. We would like each member to volunteer as a docent for at least one shift. The crowds are inquisitive and appreciative of our bonsai exhibit.

There will be signup sheets for docenting at the June workshop and meeting. If you are unable to attend either event, please contact Jeanette Arnold at (415)883-2651 or arnoldje@comcast.net to select a date and time for docenting.

If you are planning to show your trees, please bring them to the next workshop to prepare them for the Fair, if necessary. Jay, Chris, and John will be able to assist in the final presentation. All trees to be displayed should be delivered to the Auditorium building on Wednesday, June 29, no later than 11:00 am.

- Jeanette Arnold

June Workshop and Meeting

One of the most important fundamental techniques used in creating bonsai is wiring. It could also be the least understood and often disliked aspect of the practice. As Marco Invernizzi once said "that is just sad!" To Marco and those to whom wiring is second nature it is a pleasurable and even calming activity, and it is certainly essential to directing the growth of your bonsai.

Of course there are many proponents of the 'clip and grow' technique who correctly point out that this also is a valid and often successful way to style bonsai, but even using this method there are times when a bit of wire well placed is just the thing needed to pull the tree together and get a branch into the right place.

But what kind of wire? What size wire? How much wire? When to wire? How to make the wiring most effective? All of these are questions that need to be asked and answered every time we sit down to wire a tree. The only way to get good at it, enjoy wiring and feel comfortable making those decisions time after time is to practice, practice, practice and then practice some more.

For this reason, we are designating June 'Wiring Month' at Marin Bonsai Club and plan to provide expert instruction and extra hands to help all our members improve their wiring skills.

Bring your trees to the first Tuesday workshop and have our senior members help you determine if the time is right to wire your tree and get you started with a strategy and plan for directing your trees' growth. Trees in all stages of development are welcome. You don't have to wire during this workshop if you don't want to. This will also be the last workshop before the Marin County Fair so bring trees you think are ready for show for primping.

Master wirer, John Doig will give a formal presentation at our meeting on the third Tuesday and talk about wiring fundamentals and discuss how to avoid common mistakes. Bring your own trees, wire if you have it and lots of questions.

Between the two workshops, your skills are sure to improve significantly and the beauty of your trees as well. Even if you think you know what you are doing with a length of wire and a branch come and enjoy the company and camaraderie, pass along your knowledge to newer members and maybe even pick up a couple of new tips.

Be sure to note workshop and meeting locations listed in the 'Club Events' section of this newsletter as our location at MAGC changes for different events.

- Candace Key

Summer Picnic

There will be a Marin Bonsai Club picnic in July. It will be in Marin, at a member's home and we will have a date for you soon. Details and signup sheets at the June workshop and meeting and at the Marin County Fair exhibit. Stay tuned . . .

May presentation by Satsuki Azalea expert Rick Garcia

We had a full house for the presentation by Rick Garcia and Bob and Polly Gould in May. Rick is a graduate of the El Dorado Bonsai School for Satsuki Bonsai and studies regularly in Japan with bonsai master Suisho Nakayama. Like Darren and Lori Wong who gave us an azalea presentation last year, Rick imports beautiful Satsuki azalea plants from Japan and is working on extremely promising material, many of which he brought for a show and tell.



Rick Garcia discussing styling Satsuki azalea bonsai – BASA show June 2010

Using his trees to illustrate different stages of development, age and health Rick imparted many good tips and lessons on helping these stunning, but sometimes temperamental bonsai thrive. Rick and Bob took questions from the audience about some of the confusing things we hear and read about developing Satsuki azaleas - focusing on what is best for our parts of California rather than Japan.

Here are just a few of their recommendations:

There are three ways you can develop azaleas as bonsai: 1) for branch development and ramification as if the flowers are much less important, 2) for the flowers only, so branch development is not so critical but color placement on the tree is, 3) a combination of the first two.

Generally, Satsuki azaleas, which were developed in Japan, fall into two growing groups. Those developed in the northern part of Japan thrive in cooler climates and will require different exposure in your garden and have different watering requirements than those developed in southern Japan. It is important to find out which variety your Satsuki is so you can give it the optimal growing conditions.



Beautiful azalea bonsai at BASA show June 2010

- When a tree is weak, get it into a pot and leave it alone until it shows signs of good health.
- Don't allow trees to flower every year as this decreases their vitality for branch growth and development. HOWEVER, do keep the buds on until they are ready to break as this pulls energy to the tips of the branches, stimulating back budding along the branch.

- For the health of your trees, let them bloom only once every 3 years.
- The surface roots of a Satsuki are the most important for its growth. Make sure they are well covered with soil, and don't let them dry out.
- Of course, do not water azaleas too much. Consider you are watering for only the top 1-2 inches of the soil as this is where the feeder roots are.
- Satsuki azaleas grow best in a warm terracotta pot. Rick illustrated the hollow sound of a warm pot which is more porous and provides the best conditions for growth. (Unfortunately, it seems these pots come only from Japan at a higher cost than the terracotta pots we typically see in nurseries here.)
- Formal bonsai pots are not the best for growing and developing Satsuki because positioning for show can leave delicate roots exposed and vulnerable to damage. Trees should be repotted into show pots only before they are to be shown.

Rick recommends organic fertilizers at low strength to keep growth consistent and avoid aggressive growth spurts. Chemical fertilizers tend to produce brittle branches which are difficult to wire without breaking. 6-4-2 for the spring and 5-5-5 for the fall growing periods.

There were so many more words of wisdom and we didn't get to all the questions members had during the meeting, so I think it is safe to say we will see Rick and Bob back to share more of their knowledge next year.

But you don't have to wait until then to see more azaleas. At the Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai spring show June 11 and 12 at the Garden Center at Lake Merritt you can see gorgeous Satsuki azaleas in full flowering splendor. Rick will be doing a demonstration on Saturday afternoon, Johnny Uchida on Sunday, and there will be club members there to show off their prizes and offer advice to any who come with questions. Also good sales and raffles at the event which is FREE. It is one of the best and definitely the most colorful show of the year.

- Candace Key



by Craig Thompson
 Photos by Bruce Winter and Craig Thompson

Bruce Winter had been interested in the Far East ever since he was a teenager. Bonsai came into his life in the early '80s when he wandered into a small clubhouse at a park in Santa Rosa and met Kay Urbanski, Mas Imazumi, Ron Kelly and Ian Price, who were talking about starting a bonsai club. Shortly afterward, John Naka gave a public bonsai demo at the Vets' Hall and he was a goner. Bruce soon joined the Redwood Empire Bonsai Society and each year it got better and better. Bruce says he will always be grateful for the teachings of Mas Imazumi; "deep gasho", he says. Later on, he joined the Marin Bonsai Club and he and Ron Kelly would ride together to meetings. Until moving to Hawai'i, Bruce had no idea how fortunate he was to be part of such vital bonsai clubs. Now, thirty years later, he is still creating beautiful bonsai on the Big Island of Hawai'i.

Collected trees were always Bruce's forte. Living in the Glen Ellen area, Bruce hiked many miles in the open spaces of the North Bay, looking for yamadori,



especially Coast Live Oaks. He remembers bringing home more deer ticks than bonsai, but these collecting trips gave him good practice for what he does now in Hawai'i.

In the early '90s, Bruce moved to the town of Volcano, just 10 minutes from Volcanoes National Park. The principle tree in this area is the `ohi`a, *Metrosideros polymorpha*, a flowering evergreen in the myrtle family. The `ohi`a's flower is called the lehua, which is the "flower of the island of Hawai'i" and can be either red or yellow. In the high rain forest of the town of Volcano, the `ohi`a thrives and grows very tall and wide. But in the drier parts of the island, the `ohi`a is one of the few plants that can survive. Here, the `ohi`a has an amazing amount of character and has adapted very well to the harsh environment. After a lava flow, often the first plant you see is an `ohi`a. There is one on the 1991 Kalapana lava flow that is over 8 feet tall and besides a few grasses, is the only living thing there.



Bruce has been studying the `ohi`a since he moved to Volcano and although the tree is a very difficult species to work with, he has learned how to turn them into beautiful bonsai. The `ohi`a of the Hawaiian lava desert would seem to be the perfect bonsai subject. Here the `ohi`a grows very slowly. For about every inch of trunk width at the surface, the tree is about 100 years old. Most of Bruce's collected `ohi`a are between 3 and 6 inches.

This is where Bruce's California yamadori experience has helped him. During the cool months, Bruce hikes into the southern part of the island, looks at the smaller `ohi`as and tags potential prospects for collection. Bruce has become quite picky with what to collect as what may look great in the ground

doesn't necessarily look great once potted and at eye level. Bruce collects these trees by 'ground layering'. This is the same thing as air layering, but at ground level. So he gets down on his belly, right on the rough pahoehoe lava, and does the surgery. He paints the cut with 'Dip N Grow', a rooting hormone. At this point, a heavy foil is laid around the base. This is packed with sphagnum moss and Hydrosorb, which keeps the moss moist. Then this is wrapped in more foil and then Bruce creates a berm made of lava rocks, wood, sand, anything Bruce can find. None of the shiny foil can show or the Nene goose (state bird of Hawai'i) will peck at it.

Every two weeks or so, Bruce visits his potential bonsais and opens the top of the foil and waters the moss. When roots begin to mature he feeds them with a weak fertilizer/humic solution. After 3 to 5 months Bruce saws the trunk off at ground level and holds it up with great satisfaction. He then brings his new bonsai home, plops it in a pot and the 'ohi`a begins its life as a bonsai.

The result of all this work is an incredible collection of yamadori bonsai in all shapes and sizes. In April of 2011, my wife and I visited Bruce and saw his collection. What a thrill it was to see these beautiful bonsai. There are all shapes and sizes. They all have amazing deadwood; the kind of deadwood that can only be created by nature. The

bark is rough and makes the trees look very old (which they are!). Some of the trunks are very wide and others very narrow and twisted...fantastic bunjin. Some have lehua blossoms on them. Like our own California and Sierra junipers, these 'ohi`a tell a story of the struggle to survive in their harsh environment. And isn't this exactly what we are trying to show with our bonsai?

Working with these ancient 'ohi`a trees over the last 20 years, Bruce has gained great respect for their rugged, diverse nature and their tenacity in surviving their harsh environment.

An old Hawaiian legend tells of 'Ohi`a and Lehua, who were two young lovers. Pele, the volcano goddess, fell in love with the handsome 'Ohi`a and approached him. But he was not swayed by Pele's charms as he was deeply in love with Lehua. In a jealous rage, Pele turned 'Ohi`a into an ugly, twisted old tree. Lehua was very sad over this transformation and out of pity for her the other gods turned her into a flower and placed her on the 'ohi`a tree. From then on, the lehua flower has always blossomed on the 'ohi`a tree and the lovers are never separated. It is said that if you pluck a lehua from an 'ohi`a tree, rain falls. The rain is the tears of Lehua, as she cannot bear to be separated from her true love.



Taskmaster - June 2011

June in the Northern California bay area microclimates, like many Mediterranean counterparts, is a time of warm days, cool nights, and rapid growth, a magic time in the garden. In the bonsai world it can be a magic time too, but the magic depends largely on you, pal, so go get busy.

The pinching of new growth continues. On evergreens, never pinch back as far as old growth, or all growth may be stunted. Pinch only the brighter green new growth at the tips or the lead bud to prevent lengthening beyond desired shape, or in the case of spruce, fir, and cedar the single central growth stem.

Defoliation of maples, liquidambar and hornbeams is still all right but you have to pray for no heat waves, because it's getting late. Never defoliate a beech, they don't grow back well, if at all.

Air layering is still a good thing to do in June, and in the Fall you may have a new tree.

Don't forget to decandle the pines (see last month's notes). They should be well fertilized and vigorous.

Speaking of well fertilized, sprinkle a couple of teaspoons of cottonseed meal/bone meal (70%-30%) around the perimeter of each pot and scratch it in with a chopstick, and at the next watering use some soluble fertilizer like Maxsea or Alaska fish emulsion to kickstart the summer. Solubles wash out with four or five subsequent waterings, and cottonseed/bone meal takes twelve to fifteen days to get started feeding, so it works out very well. Evergreens get fertilized all three growing seasons on the same schedule all the time, but too much food for the deciduous plants forces big leaves and long internodes. Hit them now and let them coast through to August.

Summer means there may be times when dappled shade for a few days or protected pots or big changes in watering may be necessary, so watch the weather, especially warm dry wind that can burn leaves. The temperature goes over ninety commonly in my back yard, and probably yours too. That's big heat. And June means Big Red's coming, it'll burn through the fog when you least expect it.

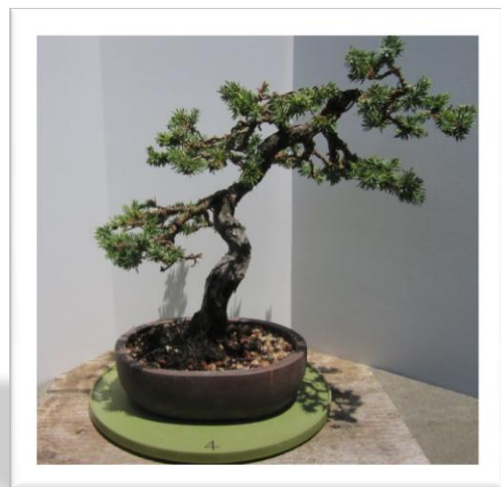
There's no finer growing place than Northern California. The great Luther Burbank said that if a thing can grow anywhere on this planet you can

grow it here, and he should know. So have yourself a little glass of California wine, get some San Francisco sourdough bread, go to the organic-everything farmer's market, strike a Marin-looking pose, sigh a thank God I'm in California sigh, and make your little plants feel that way too.

- The Taskmaster

Bonsai Tips and Tricks

We all know we need to rotate our trees regularly so they get equal exposure to the sun and develop in a balanced way, but many of us are not as diligent as we should be because it can be a pain to do. Putting trees on turntables certainly makes the rotating of trees - small to mid-sized ones - easier. Inexpensive kitchen type turntables can be found at yard sales and Goodwill stores and work very well. To help keep track of when to turn the trees number each quarter of the turntable and have the number in front correspond to the week of the month. Wind can sometimes mess with the system, so use a wood shim to keep the tree in place. Little make up sponges work well too.



Please send in your favorite bonsai tips, or request that someone share theirs. We would love to hear from you.

- Your Bonsai Tips and Tricks Editors



BAY AREA BONSAI EVENTS

June 4-5, 2011

San Mateo, CA

Sei Boku Bonsai Kai: *28th Annual Show* at the San Mateo Garden Center, 605 Parkside Way, next to Beresford Park. Hours are 10AM-4PM, with demonstrations from 1-3PM both days. Saturday demonstration will be by Steve Jang, and Sunday by John Thompson (JT). Door prizes, vendor sales, and member plant sales will be featured. There will also be 'Dr. Bonsai' to answer questions regarding bonsai care. Admission is free. For more information contact khaley57@gmail.com

June 5, 2011

Seaside, CA

Monterey Bonsai Club 48th Annual Exhibition at the Monterey Buddhist Temple in Seaside at 1150 Noche Buena. Show hours are 11AM-4PM. Demonstration at 1:30PM by Katsumi Kinoshita. Sales area will include bonsai, pots and plants. For more information, email Joe Byrd

Jun 11-12, 2011

Oakland, CA

Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai: *Annual Satsuki Azalea Show* at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue. Hours are Saturday, 10AM-5PM, and Sunday, 10AM-4PM. Demonstrations at 1:30PM, featuring Rick Garcia on Saturday, and Johnny Uchida on Sunday. Sales area and benefit drawings. Free admission to the show. For more information contact Ron Reid, 925-831-2500.

June 11, 2011

Grass Valley, CA

Nevada County Bonsai Club: *Third Annual Spring Show and Sale* at the Grass Valley Veteran's Memorial Auditorium, 255 South Auburn Street. Show hours are 11AM-4PM, and will feature a bonsai display and demonstrations throughout the day. There will also be raffles of bonsai and accessories, and sales of bonsai, pots, tools, and other bonsai related items. Refreshments, ample free parking and free Admission. For more information call Leo Martinez at 530-273-2628.

August 16, 2011

Ross, CA

Marin Bonsai Club: *Annual Auction*: Marin Art and Garden Center, Livermore Room, 50 Sir Frances Drake Blvd. Viewing at 7PM and auction starts at 7:30PM. Specimen bonsai, pre- bonsai and everything in between, along with pots and other bonsai related items will be auctioned. For more information please contact Craig Thompson, 415-472-6685 or craigethompson@hotmail.com

August 27-28, 2011

Santa Rosa, CA

Redwood Empire Bonsai Society (REBS): *28th Annual Show* at the Veteran's building, 1351 Maple Avenue. Hours are Saturday from 10AM-5PM and Sunday from 10AM-4PM. There will be 200 trees on display, a large vendor area, a members sales room, a demonstration by Kathy Shaner at 1:30PM each day and a benefit drawing and silent auction. Admission and parking are free. Contact Bob Shimon at shimon@mcn.org or 707-884-4126 for additional information.

September 18, 2011

San Mateo, CA

San Mateo Bonsai Club: *48th Annual Bonsai Show* at the San Mateo Gardeners Association Hall, 503 E. 5th Avenue. Hours are 10AM-5PM. Demonstration at 2PM. Bonsai sale. Free admission. For more information contact Sam Tachibana, 650-548-9470.

MARIN BONSAI CLUB EVENTS

June 7, 2011: Workshop Marin Society of Artists, 7pm

Bring in your trees for our monthly workshop. \$10 for members, \$20 for non members.

June 21, 2011: Monthly Meeting Marin Society of Artists, 7:30pm

John Doig will be giving a lecture/workshop on wiring. This is always fun and informative as John really knows his wiring. And you can't do bonsai without wiring!!!

June 30-July 4, 2011: Bonsai Show Marin Civic Center

Our annual exhibition at the Marin County Fair. Hours are 11am to 11pm daily.

July 2011: No meeting or workshop



2010 Marin Bonsai Club Officers:

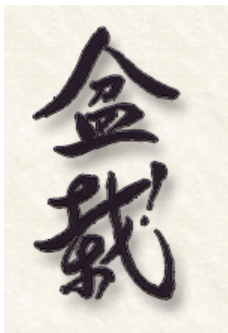
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