



JOURNAL



Aesthetics

June 2009

www.torontobonsai.org

Schedule of Events

Meetings are held in the *Toronto Botanical Gardens* in the Auditorium (west side of building) unless otherwise noted.

Beginners Sessions

Continuing in June, the club will be offering the final session on the fundamentals of bonsai. This will take place from 6:30 to 7:30, upstairs at the Toronto Botanical Gardens. All new members (and old members who want to refresh their knowledge!) are invited to attend. Here is the final (and most challengin) topic:

June 8 – Art of Bonsai: styles, proportions, elements of design

TBS June

June 7 TBS Founder Mamoru Nishi Dedication: Members of the Toronto Bonsai Society are invited to a dedication ceremony honouring the work of Mr. Mamoru Nishi, the first president and one of the founders of our organization back in 1964. A wisteria trellis and bench have been put in place at the JCCC to serve as a tribute to Mamoru Nishi's legacy. The dedication ceremony will take place Saturday June 6, 2009 at the Japanese Canadian Culture Centre, 6 Garamond Court, Toronto, at 11am. Please call JCCC reception at 416-441-2345 to confirm your attendance.

June 8 Meeting: Art of Bonsai. There will be a presentation and discussion of bonsai aesthetics and design considerations. Bring in your bonsai trees for critique. There will be a raffle and free tickets for anyone who brings in a tree. We will be working on recently purchased trees from nursery stock. If you do not have one, go out to a nursery and get one! And there will be the election of the executive.

June 17: Garden Party at Mike Roussel's. Not yet finalized, so check first!

July, August: Backyard Garden Parties! This is a great way to finish the year and get some free help with your bonsai. It's also a great way to meet people in the club, outside the time constraints of the general meetings. Please contact Otmar to register.

July 26: Garden Party at Dierk Neugebauer's. Not yet finalized, so stay tuned!

On the Cover: Paul Chong's Eastern white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, photographed by Reiner Goebel, May, 2008, at the TBS Spring Show.

See its arms and head?

Notice any **differences** to its spring appearance?



Correction: Sorry about that, Bob! The air-layered Serissa bonsai on the cover of the May TBS Journal is owned by Bob Patterson. The TBS Journal regrets this omission. We also wish to thank Bob for his steady support in the submission of excellent bonsai pictures for the TBS Journal.

President's Message: Learning about your trees

Over the past year, I have learned more about my trees by inviting comments from other people than from any other source. Not books or workshops or personal study, but just by the input, reactions, questions and comments I've had from a great many people over the past year.

Who were they and what did I learn?

Everyone who comes sees different things in all the trees that are here. (I have a lot of trees - my wife thinks too many, but I know I have just the right amount.)*

Obviously, there are a number of bonsai people who visit my yard. They all have questions that I would expect, and are generally very complimentary. I do find that much younger and much older folks are far more able to be critical than many of us in "middle age". Two people who have visited several times, both in their 20's, have no trouble telling me which branches they disliked, or which planting angle was wrong. Sometimes they would open their critique with statements like "I don't know much, but I think ..." or "it's your tree, but I would change..." Of course, they aren't far from their text-messaging or twittering when they say such things, so I can relax knowing that they really weren't paying attention.

I had a photographer in my yard. He was looking for a metaphor for human growth and development. And creepy trees. I'm not sure if he found what he was looking for here, but he took some close up photos, and spent time discussing the feeling of looking up into the tree. We don't do that enough, really. We stand back and enjoy the overall distant image, but when you spend time looking closely up into your trees, you will understand their structure and their growth history, and you will be able to better plan their future. This is especially true with mature bonsai where maintenance means planning replacement branches.

Visiting friends with some fine arts knowledge, or who have traveled extensively, see the sculpture in this art form. They gravitate to the same types of trees that most of us bonsai folks do. Trees with presence, emotion or dramatic interest.

People with little of this knowledge seem to me to always prefer the trees which establish a sense of place or environment. The windswept tree, or the landscape, or the cliff hanging ones.

I had 4 young kids visit a couple weeks ago – they were fascinated by everything – the fact that you can bend branches with wire and that cutting things changed how they grew. It is interesting to reflect on how you control growth through the eyes of someone who is just thinking about it for the first time. They spent a lot of time looking for patterns – branches that moved the same, trees with the same basic style, curious little details – and faces; they spent a lot of time looking for faces in the bark or branches or deadwood.

Another friend had recently spent 6 months with a group of people on a roving meditation retreat, from BC down to Mexico. His questions made me think about why we do bonsai and what it gives us. He asked about the contemplation and reflection, meditation and escapism and personal expression. How the repetitive detail work can create a peaceful state of mind, and whether everyone in bonsai did it for reasons such as this. And what is the feeling of coming back to the same piece year after year to continue to put labour and love into it? These are all things we know of in bonsai – but I had a great deal of trouble finding the words to truly explain and express it. We don't spend enough time in our meetings and our books with the intrinsic and esoteric aspects of bonsai.

But, after a full year of visits, and a new summer season underway, I still think my 4 year old friend who just wanted to draw my "Squiggly Trees" was the most fun, and the best inspiration.

The point I'm trying to make is, share your trees, and share your enjoyment of this artistic hobby. I know it can be hard to open yourself to criticism, or show something that you don't think is very good, but all of our trees started out as much less than they are now. Everyone who interacts with them will help you learn a little more.

Many great thanks go out to the executive who have brought the past two years of programs to us all – particular thanks from me to Mike Roussel, incoming president, as he stepped in and stepped up on short notice on several occasions when I was unable to make it to the meeting. He has taken on a great many projects over the past year, and the club is much better for them. The next couple of years will be a great time for the club.

(*BTW - What is the right amount of trees? The right amount is the number where, when you buy something new and you put it prominently in your yard, your wife says "that tree is looking really good this year, you should put it in the show". The right number is when she's lost track. That is freedom!)

Have great summer, see you in our backyards and back here in September.

Mike McCallion

A Constructive Critique Workshop

The Toronto Bonsai Society, like many clubs in large cities, is very active. At least several times a year our monthly meetings include a workshop. A less experienced member is teamed up with a more advanced member and together they discuss and style a domestic or imported tree. The rest of the club mills about, going from work station to work station, watching the progress. We've been following this format for many years and at this point there are a lot of trees out there which have had some initial design input but no follow up. I think a **constructive critique workshop** would be a good idea.

A group of more experienced members would analyze and then suggest possible design improvements. Other factors could be discussed: the health of the tree and how the owner might improve it; techniques for implementing design suggestions, etc. This could be beneficial not only to the owners of the critique trees, but to others, including the group of "experienced" members. Photos could be taken and the trees could be included in the following year's program for a progress report. Has the owner used suggestions and has the tree improved as a result?

After all, doesn't the challenge of bonsai lie in the fact that trees should be continuously improving? Even though someone may have every bonsai book and video on the market today, if they lived on an island, isolated from any outside design input, I don't believe their trees would be as advanced as they could be without a little, concrete, constructive criticism.

I remember sitting in my bonsai teacher's workshop in rural Japan late one afternoon. We spent most of the day in one of his growing fields not too far from his home, root pruning and transplanting white pines which had been in the ground for 25 years or so. This operation is performed with the frequency of youngish trees in pots - every two to four years. After pruning we replanted them in a more fertile part of the field. We used a sharp shovel, root hook and plastic-handled spring loaded pruners. Every day in Japan I saw, felt and tasted many wondrous things. But this job was disappointing. Not one of the trees we worked on in the field had any merit for anything even remotely resembling bonsai, or so it seemed. I asked him why he would want to waste time and space on these worthless trees. It wasn't very long until I ate my words and got my daily fill of awe, Japanese style. All he said was, "You will see at home."

In the yard outside his workshop at home he looked at a white pine that had been dug up and potted the year before. I could tell that the tree came from the same field and had no potential for bonsai. It had three branches, all on the right side, all near the top. It was awful; challenging to say the least. He picked up the tree and motioned me to my seat in the workroom. He wired the three branches, the secondary branches, twigs and buds on the useless tree in no time. Then he bent the top branch back and around to the left of the trunk, spreading out foliage so its new volume filled more air than before. Next, he took the middle branch and raised it in such a way as to disguise the poorly tapered trunk. Again he splayed out the branches, secondary branches, twigs and buds, this time creating a beautifully domed apex. I was amazed, speechless. I saw it but couldn't believe it. What was obvious to him was obviously outside the reach of my imagination. He then bent the last branch forward, down a little and then back. It was as if he had inserted the last piece of a jig saw puzzle. It fit perfectly, as though it was meant to be, because it was always there but needed someone to "put it together." He adjusted the wired branches so they flowed the same as the others and the trunk and was done. I had just witnessed a truly wondrous thing: the spontaneous, miraculous, instantaneous metamorphosis of an humble chrysalis to the creation of an elegant, refined and powerful heirloom. Okay, okay: it wasn't that great, but you should have been there. What he did to that tree was magical.

A really beautiful tree is made up of many skillfully designed and thought out aspects and elements. You may not have the ability, skill or experience to see or do what is required to judge a tree or take it to the next higher level. Stay open and humble. If someone tells you what they think about a tree and you don't agree, that's fine. If someone offers suggestions which you agree with but do not feel you have the skill or guts to actually do the necessary improvements, that's fine too. There are no Bonsai Police to do follow-up investigations. If you feel you would like to offer suggestions which may improve another's tree, first ask if he or she would mind discussing it, and ask for permission to touch the tree to enhance your explanation. Be gentle and tactfully say things like "If this were my tree I would. . ." or "I like this but how about that...."

Whenever I attend a bonsai convention or symposium, I try to attend at least one critique. I think they are the very best way of learning how to improve the design of a tree. I always enjoy watching and learning how the person leading the critique analyzes the trees in a display, often opening my eyes to details or aspects I didn't or couldn't see.

Try this: when looking at bonsai (pictures, too) make a mental note, actually saying to yourself "which aspects of the tree do I appreciate or like and which do I not like?" In doing this mental exercise over and over with hundreds of trees, you may discover that at a subconscious level you are designing trees with some of those aspects of design you like.

Every tree has its own maximum or best design potential. Sometimes two or three possibilities may be acceptable as the path to a tree's best design potential. The point is, that path may lie just out of reach of your experience or imagination. If you ask for a **constructive critique**, who knows, your eyes may open to new possibilities.

SO I LEARNED SEVERAL THINGS:

- ***Poor trees may become great ones***
- ***Don't criticize unless you understand the limits and possibilities of a tree***
- ***Be open to the fact that someone else may see something you don't see***
- ***That person may be a neophyte, who in the quest to better comprehend the complexities inherent in conceptualizing four dimensional art (the fourth dimension being life itself) by probing design, may stumble upon an improvement you missed***
- ***Familiarity blurs vision***
- ***Some trees, whether good or bad, may not be improvable***
- ***The solution to a problem tree may come from one person or a composite of ideas from several persons***

by Arthur Skolnik

Review: May Beginner Session #3: Seasonal Care

Another beginner session has come and gone along with the month of May. And everyone who attended received some more great information, tips, and handouts. The focus of this past session was on caring for your trees through differing seasons. The stress was placed on caring for your bonsai through the summer and winter months.

The first topic under summer care was fertilizing. For instance, how and when it is best to fertilize you're your bonsai and the correct NPK ratios that should be applied to each species. Fertilizing was followed by the topic of watering, which we all know, is an ever recurring and maybe time consuming task for some of us. We were shown how to ensure you are watering enough without over-watering, and which species enjoy a good misting. The final topic of summer care was pests and diseases. Some great tips, as well as a handout, were offered for dealing with most of the more common ailments.

Winter care centred on the three main types of trees kept by bonsai artists, namely: local trees; temperate/tender trees; and indoor/tropical trees. We received great information regarding which trees can be left outside and which need to have special precautions taken in order to ensure they survive our harsh winters.

June's Beginner Session will be an introductory discussion on bonsai aesthetics for anyone wishing to learn about or brush up on the art of bonsai. And for those really interested, a more advanced presentation of bonsai aesthetics will take place in the general meeting. So if you don't want to be lost during the general meeting, don't miss the discussion at the beginner session.

See you there!

By Keith Oliver

SPRING COLLECTION IN PETERPATCH

O THE FIELD SO WET

NEW FRIENDS COLLECTED TOO

It's Rainin' Malus: The May 2009 TBS Collecting Trip

The May 9th collecting trip in Peterborough, generously organized by Mike Roussel, was a great success despite the less-than-ideal weather. Rain was in the forecast when I left Waterloo at 6:00 A.M. that morning, but that wasn't enough to keep me in bed – I was totally prepared for wet weather (or so I *thought*...).

About 20 brave TBS members showed up for the dig. There was more than enough plunder to go around, and the apples were very conducive to collecting. They could be extracted from the ground with a nice amount of feeder roots with little effort. The weather was warm and sunny, even though rain had been forecast. Another mis-cast, we thought...

The large field (approximately 50 acres) was dotted with stunted trees. There were many cedars, although only a select few had the characteristics needed to make a great bonsai. Even more numerous were the wild apples, most of them kept below knee height by the grazing livestock. Many of these apples sported heavy basal burls, attesting to their age.



Carlos and Gim: ready for action!

There were also some elms hidden away in the swampy back corner of the field. After an hour or so of scouting and tagging, most people had their shovels out.

It was at about this time that it started to rain. **Hard.** It did not help that much of the field was swampy to begin with, and I found myself almost knee-deep in mud on more than one occasion. I was mildly amused to see that the trench Mike Roussel had dug around his gorgeous cedar had soon become a moat. Fortunately, he was well prepared in his fishing waders.

I too believed that I was well prepared when I left the house that morning, but I soon found out that this was certainly *not* the case. Sure my rubber rain boots served me well, but my feet were about the only thing that stayed dry. My rain coat *claims* to have 3000 mm of waterproofness (*sic*), but I was still soaked to the skin. I guess it was raining *really* hard. Of course, my pants were soaked as well and I forgot to bring a change of clothes. The result: I ended up driving home in my underwear. Shame.



Margrit on hands 'n knees



Not enough waterproofness!

Many people ended up taking home an apple (or two, or three, or more). For those of you who have invited wild apples into your yard for the first time, you might consider quarantining them for awhile.

Collected apples are notorious for harbouring the entire spectrum of pests: insects, bacterial blights, and a variety of fungi, some of which infect junipers and other species as an intermediate host. As soon as I got my newly collected tree home and in a training pot, I gave it a prophylactic spray with a general purpose fungicide/insecticide. Nevertheless, fungal sporangia still popped up on some leaves a couple of weeks later, prompting another treatment.

If you are looking for more detailed information on growing wild apple for bonsai, Nick Lenz's treatise *Bonsai from the Wild* ([Stone Lantern Publishing](#)) has a very comprehensive chapter on the subject. Check it out from the TBS library or, even better, get your own copy. It is without a doubt the most practical reference for bonsai growers in the northeast. Many members of the club also have years of experience with these trees. This is the best resource you could ask for, so don't be afraid to use it!

I learned a lot from this collecting trip and I will certainly be better prepared for the next one. Wetness aside, I had a great time. I made off with a very decent tree and thoroughly enjoyed the thrill of the hunt. We are a crazy lot, us bonsai folk. Crawling through the mud in the pouring rain to dig up half-dead trees only to take the 2.5 hr drive home without pants is not the average person's idea of a good time, but hey – it was well worth it!

written by Aaron Khalid, photos by Mike Roussel



Jeff, filled with glee!

TBS Elections: Your Club Wants You!

The Toronto Bonsai Society is a volunteer organization, and it can only be as strong as the members who put time and effort into it. There are many opportunities to help and participate – from participating in workshops, helping out at our shows and meetings, or getting involved with planning at the executive level. And no matter what your level of experience is, there is always someone else who is newer to bonsai than you, and they certainly will appreciate your help.

This June marks the end of our 2 year executive cycle. All members are invited to become members of the executive, and there are a number of roles available. Many of the positions are elected positions, and any member can run for the positions. (In truth, it has been a long time since an election was needed, as there is always space!) The positions required are: **Workshop Coordinator, Show/Event Coordinator, Membership Secretary, a seller for the Show's vending area, and Recording Secretary.** These positions only require a couple of hours per month, although some, like the Show Coordinator, will have the hours loaded on the event timing.

So please start to think about whether you have some time to contribute, and if there are things you would like to help our club achieve. Any offers for help should be made immediately to the executive, whose contact information is on the back of the journal.

New To The Club: Please welcome with me our new members Jorge Pereira, Rui de Oliveira, Neville Evans, Scott Hennings.

Coming Right Up...

June 6, 7 Kitchener/Waterloo Club Event: Eldon Leis would like you to know about his Open House. The Open House is on Saturday June 6, 10 am to 6 pm AND Sunday June 7, 12:30 to 5:30 pm. Eldon's at 184 Herbert St., Waterloo, ON., N2J 1T5 Tel: (519) 743-3763. Here is the [google-maps link](#).

The Joshua Roth New Talent Competition The Toronto Bonsai Society encourages any “novice” member to enter and participate in this fun competition, conducted by the American Bonsai Society, and sponsored by Joshua Roth brand of bonsai tools. Visit the website or speak to Mike McCallion for further details and help with entering. The Toronto Bonsai Society will contribute \$200.00 towards the general costs incurred by a member who is selected to participate in this event.
<http://www.absbonsai.org/newtalent.html>

German Myrtle Bonsai Club (You have to speak German for this one) Bonsaiausstellung? Hallo Bonsai- und Myrtenfreunde, erste Impressionen von der großen Frühjahrsausstellung im Bonsai-Zentrum-Münsterland auf: www.myrtus-communis.de (weitere Bilder folgen). Viel Spaß, Jens Rathcke

Our pot order from Japan has arrived! Talk to David Johnson about picking up your orders!

June Editorial: Thanks A Lot!

I just want to say thanks to everyone who helped out with the TBS Journal this year: Keith Oliver, Aaron Khalid, Norman Haddrick, David Johnson, Mike Roussel, Mike McCallion, Bob Patterson, Gene Hanson, Grace and Rudi Wicht, David Young, Arthur Skolnik. And thanks to everyone who gave me so much feedback about everything!

Thanks to everyone who helped set up and take down at the TBS Spring Show, selling tickets, and running the sales section. Thanks especially to Judi Lytle, who publicized the event, and Les Mandeville, who blew us away with his hors d'oeuvre at the Spring Show Social.

Thanks to all the members who spontaneously helped out at workshops this year: moving tables, giving instruction, and taking part.

Thanks to Mike Roussel, who, on top of getting married and running beginner sessions and workshops, also organized a collection trip this spring for the club. Do you ever run out of energy, Mike?

And the club would like to thank all the altruistic individuals whose contribute regularly with dedication to the general well-being of the club: those guys (Gim Retsinas, John Hoffman, and Keith Oliver) who are always hauling books and bonsai soil and tools in and out of the meetings; the guy (Bob Cole) who is always making coffee and refreshments; the lady who greets our new members (Karen Brankley); the guy who manages the membership (Otmar Sauer); the guy (Dierk Neugebauer) who tutors me and manages the TBS website; the lady (Jean Charing) who looks after the \$\$\$, and who reimburses me so fast it makes my head spin! And especially the dynamic duo Mike McCallion and Mike Roussel, who were the main engines of the club this year, and made things happen.

If I missed anyone please speak up and ask to be recognized for your contribution!

For next year, please let the executive know what activities you would like the club to pursue. Have a great summer!

by Greg Quinn



Bonsai, Pre-Bonsai & Plant Sale

Sunday, June 7, 1-5 pm
Dierk Neugebauer, 7 Rouge River Circle, Markham, 905-294-5786

Larch, Juniper, Spruce, Pine, Redwood, Cedar
Amur Maple, Ginko, Buckthorn
Ficus, Grewia, Hibiscus, Acacia

**Groups, Forests, Clumps,
Rafts, Singles**

Many trees COLLECTED

**Numerous \$5 specials
of young, raw material:
pagoda dogwood, russian olive,
hackberry**

**Screened Granite, Bonsai Soil, Diatomite
Slow Release & Organic Fertilizers
Plastic Bonsai Pots**

REGULAR TBS MEETINGS

Meetings take place on the second Monday of every month, except July and August, at the Toronto Botanical Gardens, located at 777 Lawrence Avenue East, at Leslie Street, in the auditorium (west side of the building) at 7:00 p.m. The general meetings frequently include: **DEMONSTRATIONS** of bonsai techniques, **CRITIQUES** of bonsai trees, and **WORKSHOPS**, in which each participant styles a tree with the help of an experienced member.

A small fee is charged for workshops, and a tree and wire are provided. To participate in workshops, it is necessary to register in advance of the meeting so that materials can be provided.

Members are encouraged to bring in bonsai to show and work on during the meetings. Wire is provided at no charge. Non-members may attend a meeting at no charge to see if the club is of interest to them.

Library Hours and Policy

The library is open to members at the beginning of our regular meetings. Members may borrow books free of charge for one month. Late returns cost \$1 per month with a minimum charge of \$2.

Membership Desk

The membership desk will be open at all meetings. The opening time may be extended for the first fall meeting to assist with renewals. You may also register for workshops there.

TBS EXECUTIVE:

<p>President:</p> <p>Mike McCallion mwm@aplixcanada.com</p> <p>Vice-president:</p> <p>Mike Roussel mike.roussel@sympatico.ca</p> <p>Web-Master:</p> <p>Dierk Neugerbauer dierkn@sympatico.ca</p> <p>Treasurer:</p> <p>Jean Charing jeanc@rom.on.ca</p> <p>Publisher/Editor:</p> <p>Greg Quinn gquinn@hotmail.com</p>	<p>Recording Secretary:</p> <p>Jeff Shortt jshortt@interlog.com</p> <p>Membership Secretary:</p> <p>Otmar Sauer otmar.sauer@sympatico.ca</p> <p>New Member Host:</p> <p>Karen Brankley kayeb29@hotmail.com</p> <p>Librarian:</p> <p>John Hoffman hoffman.john@sympatico.ca</p> <p>Past-President:</p> <p>David Johnson davidjohnson@rogers.com</p>	<p>Members At Large:</p> <p>Bob Cole bcole@metroland.com</p> <p>Jim Retsinas gretsinas@sympatico.ca</p> <div style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 10px;"><p><i>The JOURNAL was founded in January, 1964, is published monthly, except July & August, and exists to further the study, practice, promulgation, and fellowship of bonsai.</i></p><p>Visit the Toronto Bonsai Society's website at: www.torontobonsai.org</p><p>Toronto Bonsai Society P.O. Box 155 Don Mills, Ontario M3C 2S2</p></div>
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