Schedule of events
Meetings are held at the TBG (Toronto Botanical Gardens), at 777 Lawrence Avenue East, Toronto, in the Garden Hall, (lower auditorium on the west side of building), unless otherwise noted.

Beginner sessions: 6:30 – 7:20
The beginner sessions are held in Studio #2 upstairs, at the TBG. Beginners should visit the BEGINNERS section, under ARCHIVES, at the TBS web site.

April: bonsai repotting, pruning, wiring, root development, with Otmar Sauer.
May: Japanese maple bonsai, with Reiner Goebel.
June: year-end critique and consultation, with John Biel.

General meetings: 7:30 – 10:00
April 11: TBS meeting: black spruce (Picea mariana) forest demo, presented by Mike Roussel. Workshop: bring your own tree (club wire provided). Please bring in any forest or group plantings you have, to be shown on the side tables.
May 9: TBS meeting: Marco Invernizzi critique. Got a tree that needs an expert opinion? Bring it in to the master for advice and adjustments. Got a bonsai you think is pretty good? Marco can help make it better!
May 28, 29: TBS spring show. TBG, 8am: bring in your bonsai, tables, accent plants, viewing stones and bonsai in development to work on during show. Contact Mike or Otmar to volunteer. For sales items, you will need to sign the register ahead of time, and offer volunteer hours at the show – see Cheryl and Linda to sign up.

Backyard workshops/garden parties:
Offer your backyard for a workshop get-together this summer. Contact any member of your TBS executive, listed on the back page, to make arrangements.

Outside the club:

On the cover: Bob Wilcox's Blaauwi juniper forest (Juniperus chinensis 'Blaauwi'), in 2009, put together from nursery stock found in southern Ontario between 1994 and '96. The forest was repotted in 2009 into this larger, deeper pot because the foliage had become much fuller and the previous pot looked too small in relation to the increased density of the foliage.
Can’t see the forest for the leaves

by Mike Roussel

Forest bonsai: who doesn’t love them? Despite the eye-popping attraction of colourful flowering bonsai, forest bonsai are the public’s favourite, and for good reason.

Why? Because they are so familiar, relaxing, and accessible. Where individual bonsai are often seen as disconnected from the natural context in which they would exist, taking a more imaginative effort, these created forests tell a more complete story.

Everyone has seen forests in life, and we all have a primordial affinity to them. Much of our literature talks about the beauty, magic and at times the frightful nature of forests. And though we don’t always collectively act on it, we know that our continued existence on this earth depends on our ability to save our forests, and where necessary, replant them.

But, despite the ease with which we can appreciate bonsai forests, they are not the easiest bonsai to create and maintain.

First, and foremost, forest bonsai is, by definition, a group of bonsai trees, each of which requires distinct training: wiring, watering, fertilizing, and sufficient light to survive. It’s not a matter of grabbing some raw material from the nursery and sticking them together in a landscape pot - this process of forest training usually takes several years.

Then, when the material is ready, the composition can be considered and finalized. Strong planning of a forest is pivotal to the success of the composition, both initially, and in the future. The placement of each tree doubles the complexity of the plan, and poor planning will result in a bonsai that doesn’t look natural, which is a complete failure for a forest.

It can be quite difficult to fix future problems, once the trees’ roots have entwined.

At our April meeting we will be exploring the world of forest plantings: learning about the different types of forests, how one puts one together and maintains it going forward. We will be assembling a spruce forest planting in a custom made pot, which will be raffled off to the membership afterward. This is a great opportunity to learn more about forest plantings, spruce bonsai, and maybe even take home your own forest planting! Please plan to attend.

In preparation for the meeting, why not go for a walk in a forest? Examine how trees grow in groups as opposed to alone in a field.

You may want to ask yourself these questions:

- How are the branching and trunks different for trees in the middle of the forest versus those growing on the forest edge?
- How do the height, taper, and girth of forest trees differ from those growing in the open?
- Apart from the species, is there any difference between deciduous and coniferous forests?
- Do you see any dominant trees in the forest? How do they differ from the rest? How is the growth of the lesser trees around the dominant tree affected?
- What do you observe about how the different species grow in a forest? What grows in the understory? What grows in the canopy?
- Do you see any holes in the forest where large trees have fallen? What effect does this have?
- Examine the effects of perspective as you look through the forest. What do you notice about trees that are closer to you and further from you (assuming that the trees are the same size)?

Now is the time to examine forests and draw inspiration from them, before you can’t see them through the leaves.

March beginner session with Ray Shivrattan

by Otmar Sauer

The presenter of last month's Beginner Session was Ray Shivrattan, who was a member of the club a long time ago. A few years ago, he joined the club again, to restart his hobby.

Ray has incredible experience with trees – bonsai and non-bonsai - and is currently undertaking projects in land reclamation, using trees that he grows in containers in his nursery. The only protection they get for the winter is reliable snow cover.

The native trees he considers suitable for novice bonsai practitioners are:

Pitch Pine (*Pinus rigida*): available in local nurseries; buds back on basal branches; in the juvenile form, good for cuttings.

Shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*): heavily foliaged shrub, with shreddy bark on older stems; many cultivars available.

American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*): smooth, pale, silvery bark, rich, green leaves; makes a good large bonsai.
Eastern red cedar (Juniperus virginiana): also called eastern juniper, red juniper, or pencil juniper; grows in chalky (alkaline), limestone soil, up to the Canadian shield.

Sweet crabapple (Malus coronaria): also called garland crab; it prefers rich moist soil.

American larch, Tamarack (Larix laricina): Ray prefers small, young larches because of the flexibility of their trunks at this stage.

He made a very interesting suggestion about how to practice your styling technique: go out into the wild and prune trees, collectable or not, and then come back later in the season and inspect your handiwork. Come back again the next year, continuing to prune the trees, and see what kind of results you have achieved over the growing seasons.

His rules are straightforward and simple: he plants trees in large containers, and slightly under-waters them, preparing them for the bonsai container environment that they will later be transplanted into. He also packs the root ball in a very coarse soil mixture, wraps it in a weed barrier, and puts it in the ground, to promote root development.

He prunes them every 3 to 4 weeks. All the trees in his nursery receive the same soil treatment: 70% pine bark and about 30% sand. He tops the trees with a controlled release fertilizer, called SmartCote, available at various nurseries and big box stores.

He further mentioned the five very important environmental influences on potted trees:

- **Light**: it controls the budding out, the growth, etc.
- **Temperature**: modifies the influence of light; the combination of lower temperature and rain can cause root rot
- **Thawing**: kills a potted tree in spring, since this is the time of the year that ees thawing and freezing cycles. Thawing will kill the plants, not freezing.
- **Sun**: scalds trees’ bark in winter; makes them bud out too early in spring; dries them out too quickly in summer.
- **Wind**: dries out trees fast; in winter, trees exposed to strong winds will succumb to wind chill (this is the reason to put your trees in a protected spot for overwintering, and protect them with a wind break).

The following trees are non-native, but perform like natives:

**Siebold’s crabapple** (Malus sieboldii), also called **Toringo crabapple** (Malus toringo): good for up to Zone 2 (- 40 C); has very dense flowers, starting with pink, and fading to white; grows in any soil, but prefers peat (acidic soil) and compost. There is also an extreme dwarf variety, which is called Malus toringo ssp. “Tina”: good for zones 4 – 8 (- 35 C to – 12 C). Another variety is called **Calocarpa crabapple** (Malus sieboldii var. zumi), which also prefers moist soil, peat, and compost.

**Montpelier Maple** (Acer monspigsulanum): this is a tree from southern Europe and North Africa; has small three-lobed leaves; hardy to Zone 5; can withstand dry conditions better than other maples.

**European Hornbeam** (Carpinus betulum): trees are available in nurseries.

**Common or Northern Hackberry, False Elm** (Celtis occidentalis): leaves turn a lemon yellow in fall; according to Ray these trees are planted now in southern Ontario in the London area.

**Dwarf Japanese Garden Juniper** (Juniperus chinensis procumbens nana): cultivated at nurseries, but are mostly available in quantity only; used to be very popular in the club, and they make nice semi-cascades; for potential literati style the trees have to be grown “staked” in the nursery.

**Amur Maple** (Acer ginnala): hardy up to Zone 2 and is widely available in nurseries.

**Austrian Pine** (Pinus nigra): hardy, and available in nurseries and big box stores.

Ray’s presentation was impressive: it was a true report from the trenches, containing really useful information not only for beginners, but also for seasoned bonsai practitioners as well.

Ray agreed to have a sale of plant material at his nursery some time in May. The date will be announced.

In the mean time, stay tuned...

(Thanks, Ray, for presenting at our Beginner Session, hauling all those plants in, and offering to have us out to your nursery! - Editor)
A juniper forest

by Bob Wilcox

I enjoy working with Blaauwi junipers because of the small scale and denseness of the foliage. It has some of the qualities of Shimpaku juniper, but has the advantage of being available at most nurseries in southern Ontario.

Around 1993, when I had been a member of the TBS for two years, I decided to put together groups of junipers. I began purchasing junipers from nurseries in 1993 - 94, with not much of an idea about what the design of the groups would be - I thought I would buy lots of trees and just improvise when I had them in front of me. I had two requirements: the tree had to be single-trunked, and have low branches with foliage close to the trunk. I’d given up on expecting dramatic taper or good-looking exposed roots. As I acquired each tree, I wired most of the branches. Since it took a few years to buy enough trees, the wiring of hundreds of branches was spread out over a long period. I did very little removal of branches, in order to keep my options open for the future design. Thick trunks were easy to find, but thin ones were more difficult. I liked the forests with a variety of thicknesses of trunks, so I looked around for the thin ones.

At a nursery near Guelph I found a large number of young junipers that were being grown from cuttings to be sold when they became larger. I purchased about twenty of them at $1.50 each, to use as the smaller trees in the back of the group. The trunks of these young trees were very easy to shape with wire since they were very thin. I picked the trees with very low branches, and foliage on the branches near to the trunk. By 1996, I had about 12 straight-trunked trees and 25 not-so-straight ones—each tree in a shallow plastic container, the soil level exposing the trees’ surface roots, and with every branch having been wired for two or three years. In many cases, the wire had been replaced a few times since it had started to cut into the bark. I also had made in a pottery class, a wide, shallow pot suitable for a forest.

The next step was to decide on a design, and put the trees in a bonsai pot. I had been looking at forests in bonsai books and magazines that I could use as inspiration. Goshen, the juniper group by John Naka, is very well known. The group is made up of all straight trees with jinned tops, all trees planted vertical. I had also seen a large group of straight-trunked conifers designed by Masahiko Kimura so that the central trees were vertical and the rest of the trees leaned outwards, becoming more extremely sloping at the outside edge of the group. He later replanted this group so that all the trees are vertical, rethinking his original design. In magazines I saw forests that were made up of two or three sub-groups, forests in combinations of styles: upright, slanting and cascading. A few had pathways and crevasses. Nick Lenz had a forest with a demolished tank in it, and made a grouping with a variety of species. It seems you can do anything you like.

I tried to keep in mind all the things I had read about sight lines and the relationship the trees would have to each other. I thought it would look best if the branches fit around each other, touching sometimes and more separate at other times, at varying heights without obvious bar branches. The trees should all be visible when looked at from the front, and also from the side. The spaces between the trees should be of different widths, varied for visual interest. The principal tree should not be exactly in the centre. The height of trees at the back and sides of the grouping should be shorter. Thicker trees are at the front. Thinner trees are placed in the back to give the group a greater illusion of perspective. Thicker-trunked trees are taller, thinner-trunked trees are shorter. The silhouette of the group should have some of the aspects of a single tree. A lot to keep in mind. I thought of them as guidelines, and realized that I could not do everything perfectly. Every time I repot I have another opportunity to fine-tune the decisions I made.

Since I had lots of trees, I realized I could make a few different combinations. I thought about making a large forest using trees that had twists in their trunks, a smaller forest of upright trees, and a few groupings of two or three trees. I decided to put together the largest forest first. This would use the trees that had trunks that were not straight. I started by pushing the plastic pots together until I thought I had a design figured out. I used seven trees, since that was all that seemed to fit in the shallow pot I had made. Later, when I made a much larger pot, I increased the group to eleven.
TBS landscape bonsai

by Greg Quinn

The main difference between bonsai forests and bonsai landscapes is the same as in the larger world: forests are thick with trees, while landscapes display the ground, grasses, trees, rocks, hills, mountains, and other features on the land itself. In the art of saikei (from Japanese, “planted landscape”), the shape of the ground itself is the most important feature.

The intention of the creator, the bonsai artist, is completely different in each case. The forest bonsai artist is mainly showing the trees, plants, and ground cover of the composition, while the landscape bonsai artist is showing the land forms, which is more about rock outcroppings, landforms, and topography than plantings. In horticulture, this is comparable to the difference between the gardener, who plants and arranges trees, shrubs, flowers, and the landscaper, who places stones, shapes the, patio, garden beds, and property.

Norman accentuated the land with his raised planting, rock outcroppings, and the movement of the trees, and their nebari, pouring down the slant, right. The triangle of the land is echoed, in reverse, by the foliage of the trees, creating a dramatic, dynamic, balance.

Norman Haddrick’s, now David Johnson’s, raft style landscape

Blaauwi juniper (Juniperus chenensis “Blaauwi”). Created by

Norman in 1969 from discarded nursery stock, this planting has

received many accolades, with the recent commendation from

Susumu Nakamura, when he visited the TBS in September, 2007.

David repotted this raft from a traditionally shallow brown container

into the green one you see in the picture.
TBS announcements

Disaster in Japan
When I wrote last month's President's Message, I could never have expected the disaster that was about to unfold in Japan on March 11, 2011. Imagine a magnitude 9 earthquake throwing your trees to the ground, collapsing your benches or having debris fall on them. Imagine a tsunami rushing into your town and wiping your trees off the earth. Imagine the water turned off and you are unable to water your trees. Imagine a nuclear disaster that forces you to leave your trees to fend for themselves, being watered by radioactive fallout.

Wait a minute, why would you care about the bonsai?! You have lost everything: your family, your home, your business, or workplace - your life has been ruined by natural disaster. These are the types of things that have been going on in Japan and we in this club, who owe such a debt to the Japanese, need to help. At our April meeting, a donation box will be made available for members to make a contribution. The proceeds will be donated to the Japanese Canadian Cultural Center, to aid in their Japan relief efforts.

-Mike Roussel

Marco Invernizzi’s appeal
When his friend, Isao Omachi, and family were severely affected by the disaster recently in Japan, losing everything except their lives, Marco and other members of the bonsai community came to his aid. Since the bureaucracy and narrow rules involved with international aid slows down immediate relief, three bank accounts have been set up for direct donations. To offer a direct donation, contact Greg Quinn for the account numbers, or visit Marco's web site: http://www.marcoinvernizzi.com/tsunami/index.html.

Election in June
This is an election year for us, so consider nominating your friends, or entering your own name for a position on the TBS Executive. The vacancies are: Vice-president, Workshop coordinator, Recording Secretary, and Librarian. The candidates for the vacant elected positions are: Otmar Sauer for President; Keith Oliver for Vice-president. The candidates for the other positions, up for renewal, are: Jean Charing for Treasurer, and Greg Quinn for Editor/Publisher of the TBS Journal.

These positions require some monthly time commitment, but need not be performed alone. Please let Greg Quinn, Nomination Committee Chair, know of your candidacy by the end of April. The vote will be held in June.

Finished bonsai stands available for purchase
There is just one finished Sean Smith workshop walnut bonsai stand left, available for purchase from the club for $100.00. Contact Linda or Cheryl to purchase.

Tools and wire for sale, and tool cart
Robert Dubuc, our club tool & wire guy, would like to know what members are looking for before the meeting, so that he doesn't have to haul seven boxes of the stuff to every meeting – let him know by email (on back cover). If anyone in the club has skill building carts for heavy items, such as our club tools and wire, please contact Robert as well.

Books for sale
Our club librarian, Keith Oliver, will be putting up for sale various donated non-bonsai books at the April meeting.

Spring tree collection
We are planning one, if not several, tree collections this spring – stay tuned to this channel for specific dates and locations.

Nursery crawl
In May, Ray Shivrattan has offered to have the club over to his place to purchase raw bonsai material. Stay tuned for more details...

Spring show
Selling at the show will be conditional on helping out with the show or sales area. A sign up sheet will be made available at the next two meetings on the membership desk to the members who wish to sell their wares at the show.

Fall larch workshops with David Easterbrook
We are happy to announce that David Easterbrook, curator of the bonsai collection at Le Jardin Botanique (Montreal Botanical Garden), is coming to Toronto in October, 2011, to hold a series of workshops with larches he collected north of the St. Lawrence River, close to the border of Labrador. These workshops will last a full day (8 hours), with a lunch break, and will be held at the TBG. There will be eight trees for each workshop.

Sunday, October 16: Natural root-connected style larch clumps, ranging from 7-20 trees per clump; 18” to 24” high; planted in 20” x 16” plastic trays. Location: TBG, upstairs studio. Price: $160, paid in advance.

Monday, October 17: Single trunk - medium sized larches; 18” to 26” high; trunk, 2” to 3” diameter; age 30 to 60 years. Location: TBG, Garden Hall. Price: $270, paid in advance. The silent observer charge for each of the workshops will be $10.

Please make your payments in full to Linda and Cheryl before the end of April.

On the same Monday evening (October 17), at the general meeting, David will demonstrate bonsai with a single trunk, medium size, larch, which will be raffled off afterward. He is also available Tuesday, for a private full day workshop. His price for this is $500, plus food to be provided. He does not mind if a group of members get together with him to work on their trees, at a member's home, with a maximum of five participants. Please let Otmar Sauer (email address on back cover) know if you are interested in this.

David has promised us pictures of the trees once they have been taken out of the ground, around mid-April, which we will make available on our club web site.
Regular TBS meetings
Meetings take place on the second Monday of every month, except July and August, at the TBG (Toronto Botanical Gardens), located at 777 Lawrence Avenue East, at Leslie Street, in the auditorium on the west side of the building at 7:30 pm. 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. These meetings are preceded at 6:30 pm. by the Beginner sessions, held upstairs.

A small fee is charged for workshops, and a tree, wire and instructor 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 $2 per month with a minimum charge of $2. Please return all materials the next month, and before summer.

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.

Tools & supplies
Tools and supplies are sold by the club at most meetings. It is a good idea to contact the executive member in advance of the meeting for specific tools and supplies.

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The Journal was founded in January, 1964, is published monthly, and exists to further the study, practice, promulgation, and fellowship of bonsai.

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www.torontobonsai.org

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