



Founded January, 1964

JOURNAL



April 2012

www.torontobonsai.org

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. The first meeting is free for non-members.

Beginner sessions: 6:30 – 7:20

The beginner sessions are held in Studio #2 upstairs, at the TBG. Beginners should read the articles in the **BEGINNERS** section, under **ARCHIVES**, at the [TBS web site](#).

June: Re-potting workshop, with John Biel.

General meetings: 7:30 – 10:00

April 16: **Workshop 1:** Apple workshop. The club was able to source some Toriango or Seibold's crabapple (*Malus sieboldii*) trees. Some club members have already paid for and picked up their trees – please remember to bring them. **Cost:** \$60. There are some trees still available for purchase – cash only.

Workshop 2: Soil and Re-potting workshop. Bring in your own trees to re-pot. **Cost:** Soil and soil components will be available to club members for a reasonable cost in limited quantities. Please bring your own soil receptacle.

May 7: **Marco Invernizzi Visit.** Marco will lead a demonstration during our general meeting. There will also be an opportunity to participate in a Bring Your Own Material workshop, during Marco's visit. **Cost:** \$100/member. Contact Otmar Sauer (416-755-6366).

June 11: **Juniper Slab planting workshop.**

Events:

May 5: **Connon's Nursery Crawl.** This is an outstanding opportunity to purchase material from a producer that is normally not open to the public, and also to see the incredible scale of their operation. Connon's has several million plants in their inventory, so needless to say this is not your average nursery crawl! Many rare and unusual cultivar including an absolutely stunning selection of dwarf conifers. The majority of their stock is grafted, but much of it is aesthetically suitable for bonsai. Many of the species we are only accustomed to seeing in Japanese bonsai magazines (red pine, black pine, white pine) are available in all shapes and sizes at Connon's. There are also many varieties that are rarely seen at nurseries around here (atlas cedar, ponderosa pine, bald cypress, European/Japanese larch, the list goes on!). Sign-up will begin during the April 16th general meeting and continue on via email (webmaster@torontobonsai.org). We are limited to 15 participants, so sign up early! **Cost:** based on the material you select. Please see [TBS website](#) for further details.

On the cover: Paul Chong's bonsai Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*). The wood of eastern white cedar is long lasting, making the species an ideal subject for driftwood style bonsai. Picture taken May 2008.

Events (con't):

May 19, 20: Toronto Bonsai Society, Spring Show. This years spring show will be held at the Japaneses Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC) in the Shokokai Court, located at 6 Garamond Court, Toronto, Ontario. Show hours will be from noon – 5pm (Saturday) 10am – 5pm (Sunday), on both Saturday and Sunday. Bring in your bonsai, shitakusa, suiseki, and scrolls for display. Volunteers needed, please contact a member of the Executive team.

June, July and August: Backyard workshops and garden visits. Contact Jeeto Butalia to have the club over!

Outside the club:

April 14, 15: Toronto Bonsai Society at the [McMichael Canadian Art Collection](#), Kleinburg, Ontario.

June 9, 10: [3rd US National Bonsai Exhibiton](#): Rochester, New York.

June 21-24: [Rocky Mountain Bonsai ABS/BCI Convention 2012](#): Denver, Colorado.

President's Message: Beginning Of A Great Era

By Keith Oliver

I am extremely happy to be writing to you in our first journal of the season! It has been a fairly long time coming, but it is here. Unfortunately, our club's season is beginning to wind down now, but on the bright side, now our bonsai work is ramping up... and early at that! It's April and our trees, for most of us, are weeks ahead of where they should be in terms of budding and opening. As a result, we are all scrambling to get our re-potting done, and if need be some wiring and pruning as well. I hope you are all caught up! Believe it or not, your Executive has been extremely busy as well. As a volunteer organization, the Executive has to juggle work, personal lives, and the bonsai club. The order in which each of those is placed, is for me at least, in constant flux. And, it can be difficult to find the time to get everything done, that needs to be done. We have an enthusiastic group of individuals who give their time to help ensure that our club is hopefully providing a fair mix of physical and intellectual bonsai stimulation. I for one, much appreciate all of their help!

There is much going on behind the scenes for the Toronto Bonsai Society. We have been doing our utmost to ensure there are programs for the general meetings, as well as the 'intro' meetings. We have also been looking in to bringing Professional Bonsai Artists in to lead workshops and provide interesting demonstrations and the like for our meetings. And, have been able to book a couple of Artists, one of which will be visiting us in May! We have also been working to provide a high quality show that is being hosted by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection on April 14th and 15th (see the [TBS website](#) for more info). There has been much discussion over the years about the home of the Toronto Bonsai Society, which is currently the Toronto Botanical Gardens. We have been holding our meetings and shows there for a number of years, and have been able to enjoy doing so up until recently. The Toronto Botanical Gardens, has over the past few years, consistently adjust their rates upwardly. And, this is the year to take action, otherwise we run the risk of not being able to take advantage of some wonderful opportunities.

I suppose it's fairly common for businesses to raise their prices from time to time, and the TBG has done so in order to keep itself alive. The cost of holding our meetings and our shows has risen to such a point that the TBS cannot continue to call the TBG home. I have been in negotiations with the [Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre](#), and have secured a more than fair price to renting space for our meetings and shows. This year, our Spring Show will be held at the Japaneses Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC) on Saturday May 19th and Sunday May 20th, in the Shokokai Court. We can consider this a test run for future shows, and if all goes well we can look forward to moving there in September of this year. Without going into too much detail, the price offered to us will cut our operating costs in half! That is a huge win for the club! Not only will we be able to exist for a much longer time, and have a fairly new building in which to meet and showcase our wonderful art, but, we will also be able to go back to our roots. For those who are unaware, our club grew out of the Japanese Garden Club, which began in the fifties. We split from them officially in 1964, and for quite some time, our club met at what was then known as the the Japanese Cultural Centre (today it's called the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre). Please forgive my rather short and detail lacking history lesson, I fear I have rambled on long enough.

I believe this is going to be the beginning of a great era in the history of the Toronto Bonsai Society, and I hope you are all as excited as I am!

Cheers,
Keith Oliver

Collecting an Apple Tree

by Bob Wilcox

Reprinted from the April 2001 issue of the Journal

Preparation

In preparation for the TBS collecting trip in April, here are a few notes on the process we will go through and the tools necessary for a successful trip. Anyone who decides to take part should contact Dick Morton, who will provide a map to our meeting place.

We will go to a field in the Kawartha lakes region, about 1 1/2 hours outside of Toronto. The field is large and has many apple trees of all sizes. We will meet mid-morning and walk through the field, select a tree, dig it up and take it home. Half-way through the process we will take a break and have lunch - everyone should bring their **lunch** and something to **drink**.

Equipment

The **vehicle** you arrive in should have space to carry something that may be about 36 inches high. If you think you may need some help digging and carrying, bring a **friend**.

The field may be wet, and sitting or kneeling on the ground will be required, so **waterproof pants** would be helpful. Gardening **knee-pads** and **gloves** also make the work more comfortable, and a **hat** that protects against sun and wind is advised. Something to carry tools in is handy, like a small pack that is worn around your waist.

When walking around looking at trees, you will find a few that you think could make good bonsai. As you find trees you are considering digging, tag them with a strip of a brightly **coloured plastic** bag that has your name on it. Place another strip of plastic nearby on something very visible. This will make it easy to relocate the tree you found. It is surprising how easily the selected tree can fade into the landscape if you do not clearly identify it. When you have tagged a few, choose your favourite and dig it up. Remove all the tags.

How to decide which one is the best is the hard part of the process. Since the roots are usually obscured by sod and debris, at first glance all you can see is the mid-trunk and branches. The things to look for are old bark and a trunk shape and thickness that is attractive to you. If the tree looks promising, the next step is to examine the surface roots. A good tool for digging around the roots is a very strong **root hook**, or the claw end of a small **wrecking bar**.



Illustration 1: A small wrecking bar or root hook are indispensable when working to examine the roots

Care should be taken not to scrape the bark off the roots. If you decide to collect the tree, you want the surface roots to be in perfect condition so you do not have an ugly scar that may take a long time to heal. If exposing the roots shows that the base of the tree has serious flaws the tree may not be good enough to collect. The worst flaw at the base of the tree is reverse taper the tree gets narrower at the roots rather than wider. The best thing you can find is a very wide base with strong surface roots around the entire base of the tree.

Any tree you selected will most likely be too tall for bonsai and will have to be reduced in height. As you walk around looking at trees, you will have to decide how difficult it will be to reduce the height of the tree. One way to reduce the height is to find a tree with a low branch that can be used as the new top of the tree. Another way is to reduce the height by cutting off the top of the tree and allowing a bud to develop and become the new top.



Illustration 2: Cut where indicated by dotted lines and create a new trunk line. When selecting a tree to collect, try to focus on the future trunk line and disregard existing branching. If the tree does not have a good existing first branch that can be retained, then all the branches will have to be cut off in order for the first branch to have an opportunity to become the thickest.

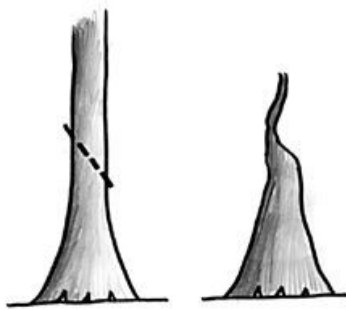


Illustration 3: To create a new apex, make a diagonal cut as shown. Use cut paste so the cambium will not shrink back behind the bark. With luck, buds will appear at the top of the cut as well as further down the trunk. The saw cut should be sloping downwards towards the back of the tree.



Illustration 4: A trench around the tree is important so that the remaining roots are disturbed as little as possible when the tree is removed from the ground.

When you have found the tree you want, it's time to collect. Begin by using **secateurs** to prune the very long branches back to a reasonable length so that the tree will fit in the car.

Since the field is not very rocky, a spade or trenching **shovel** can be used for digging. If you do find rocks around the base of the tree, a wrecking bar can be useful for prying them out. A trench is dug in a circle around the tree, leaving intact a root ball close to the trunk.

This root ball should be a little bigger than the box you intend to put the tree in when you get it home. While digging, you will encounter very large roots that grow outwards from the tree. Be careful not to hit them too hard in case the impact breaks up the root ball. Since they may be too thick for your secateurs, use a **pruning saw** and cut off these roots at the point where they protrude from the root ball. Folding pruning saws are available at most hardware stores. Reducing the root mass is not harmful because you are also reducing the amount of foliage, so the tree will be kept in balance. When the trench is about 18 inches deep, start digging under the tree. You will find tap roots underneath the tree that will have to be sawed off. Again, take care not to disturb the root ball. For this awkward job of digging under the tree, a **garden trowel** or your wrecking bar can be useful to loosen the dirt before it is scooped out.

When the digging is done, lift the tree from the hole and place it into a large plastic **garbage bag**. The bag should be pulled tight around the root ball to keep it intact, and gathered around the base of the trunk to keep out air. **Twine** is wrapped around the trunk to close the top of the bag. Wrap the twine around the top of the plastic bag where it wraps around the trunk, but do not put the twine directly onto the bark of the trunk. Be very careful not to flake off the bark. The twine is wrapped around the plastic bag in all directions to keep the root ball intact. Fill in the hole with debris and place the sod on top. We don't want the farmer's cattle to fall in.



Illustration 5: What your bundle should look like ... if it had a crown.

For carrying the tree out of the field, the best piece of equipment is a backpack frame without the bag on it. There are some frames with a small shelf on the bottom. The tree can be placed on this shelf and strapped onto the frame with twine or with nylon straps having quick release buckles.

Potting

When you arrive home with the tree, you should pot it as soon as possible. Big wooden boxes are not expensive to make. Give them feet, and drainage holes. The **container** should be much bigger and deeper than the size of the final bonsai pot the tree will be placed in. You should have a few choices of container sizes available immediately for this first potting of the tree, since you will probably find a few surprises – large roots that are not in an ideal place. It could be dangerous to remove too many roots at this time if the tree does not have a large system of fine roots near the base of the trunk. These badly located roots can be removed in subsequent years when the tree has developed a system of fine roots close to the trunk. Remove as much soil as possible without destroying small feeder roots that are close to the trunk. If the

soil seems to be of good quality, and you think you may destroy necessary roots, don't try to remove all the soil immediately – take a few years to remove it bit by bit as the tree grows in strength.

If the container is very large, it can be very heavy when filled. To deal with this problem, it is a good idea to use a lightweight product such as fired clay pellets (one of these products is called Turface) as a non-organic component of the potting medium, rather than the heavier crushed granite (available as a product called Sand-it, at Canadian Tire).

Pruning

The tree should be **drastically pruned immediately**, removing everything not necessary to the design. This is not the time to spend a year thinking about what the tree should be. This first drastic pruning will produce far more buds than any pruning done in the years following. It is important to take advantage of this opportunity by removing all unnecessary branches so that the tree can produce buds in locations useful for the future design. Any branches that are not ideally placed should be removed by cutting them off with a **knob cutter**. If an unnecessary branch stub is left after pruning, it is probable that the new bud will emerge from the tip of the stub. If this stub is not a part of the final design, when you remove it you also remove the new bud. It is better to cut off that stub, which will force that bud to emerge from the main trunk.

After the tree is established, the new branches will be pruned to length. Branch pruning done in the early summer will not have a very strong result with regard to back budding, and frequently only a single bud will be produced on the end of the pruned branch. Pruning should be done in the late fall, so there is more chance of multiple buds being produced for the following spring.

Wiring

The new branches should be wired into position in the summer of the first year, before they stiffen into a position that is not good for your design idea. The shape of the branch can be changed later but the angle that it has as it emerges from the main trunk should be controlled as soon as possible.

Pests

Apple should be sprayed with a fungicide before being overwintered, and again in the spring before the leaves emerge. They should be sprayed during the growing season if fungus persists. The most common pest I have found is woolly aphids. Since they are easy to see I usually remove them manually with a cotton swab. Aphids that gather around new leaves can be sprayed forcefully with dishwashing detergent diluted in water. If this doesn't kill them, they usually disappear when the leaves get older and harden.

Collected apple sometimes does not bloom. Even having a great deal of patience may not pay off if you want to see flowers. Good luck.



Illustration 6: This type of backpack is really useful for the long haul.

Ambushed by Poison Ivy

by David Johnson

Reprinted from the TBS website

The Toronto Bonsai Society has invited club members to participate in a collecting workshop of apple trees in a farmer's field in the Kawartha Lakes region. The notice of the trip in **The Journal** mentions that the collection will occur before the cattle start to graze and the poison ivy starts to grow.

Such a trip could provide newer members with an excellent opportunity to see how other members collect trees sculpted by Mother Nature and her herd of cows, and experience the trials of actually doing it.

One of those trials can be not knowing what is growing below ground besides the tree you plan to collect. My own experience may better prepare members to avoid underground poison ivy.

One spring several years ago I tried to ground layer a couple of beech trees at the edge of another farm field. I can't remember if I knew there was poison ivy in the area but in early spring it was definitely not growing above ground.

I dug up the earth around the trees and then cut off about 2 inches of bark around the trunks. Then I scraped off the cambium layer and applied rooting hormone and Super Thrive-soaked sphagnum moss. The whole works was backfilled with soil and then rocks were placed on top to keep the animals from tearing everything apart.

I think it was the next day that I noticed a rash on my hands and suspected poison ivy. Later that summer I went back to check on my ground layers on the beech trees. I found the area covered with poison ivy and that animals had dug up the rocks, soil and moss, ruining the project.

I have subsequently checked my Peterson **Field Guide to Trees and Shrubs** by George A. Petrides. The author advises,

DANGER: DO NOT TOUCH THIS PLANT...All parts of the plant contain a heavy nonvolatile oil that causes inflammation of the skin, with blisters and swelling, in susceptible persons.

Mr. Petrides finishes by pointing out that over 60 species of birds eat the poison ivy fruit which pass undamaged through their digestive systems promoting a wider distribution of the plant...how nice.

I discovered that as the roots of the beech trees became active so did the roots of the poison ivy.

Collecting apple trees in the Kawarthas should not pose much of a problem as long as the proper precautions are taken. Wear rubber gloves, old clothes and boots that can be removed and bagged and then cleaned at home. Use plenty of water and yellow laundry soap to wash up. Keep an eye on what grows up with your collected tree because you don't want poison ivy to ambush you at home or in the field.

And if you try ground layering, use more soil and bigger rocks than I did.

TBS announcements

Books, magazines for sale

Our club librarian, Margrit, has various donated books and magazines for sale.

Links to other clubs:

Bonsai Society at the RBG: <http://www.BonsaiSocietyatRBG.com>

Matsuyama Bonsai Society: <http://www.informdurham.com/record/OSH1103>

Misseto Bonsai Club: <http://www.missetobonsai.org/>

Kitchener-Waterloo Bonsai Society: <http://www.kwbonsai.com/Welcome.html>

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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Visit the Toronto Bonsai Society's web site, at:

www.torontobonsai.org

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