



Founded January 1964

# JOURNAL



March 2014

[www.torontobonsai.org](http://www.torontobonsai.org)

# Schedule of events

Meetings are held at the **TBG** (Toronto Botanical Gardens), at 777 Lawrence Avenue East, Toronto, in the studio rooms upstairs. The first meeting is free for non-members.

## Bonsai 101: 6:30 – 7:20

Bonsai 101 is held in Studio #2 upstairs, at the TBG. Beginners should read [Information for Beginners](#), written by Bob Wilcox, posted on the [TBS web site](#).

### March 10: John Biel - question and answer session

John Biel, one of our senior members, has kindly agreed to hold a question and answer session this month. This is perfect timing, because by the end of April the bonsai season will get into full swing and with it questions about repotting, wiring, pruning, fertilizing, the correct type of soil to use, and so on. With his many years of experience in Toronto bonsai, John will be able to answer all your questions - and soothe your nerves.

### April: spring preparation

Wiring, repotting, pruning, root development, soil mixtures, fertilizer, pot sizes, schedules for working on different species of trees.

### May: air layering

Otmar Sauer will demonstrate on a crab apple.

### June: critique

Year-end Bonsai 101 wrap up with John Biel.

## General meetings: 7:30 – 10:00

### March 10: John Walton - bonsai tool maintenance

John will give a talk on keeping your bonsai tools in top shape for the coming season; a discussion of tree pests, diseases, and other threats to bonsai will follow.

**Workshop:** brush cherry (*Syzygium australe*) bonsai. Style, wire, and repot these rainforest trees, with the help of experienced members. See Kem Shaw at the members' desk before the meeting to register: \$40 fee, bring your own tools; wire, pots, bonsai soil will be provided.



## Nursery crawl, tree collection: to be announced

## TBS spring show: Saturday, May 24 - Sunday May 25

Bring in your bonsai, bonsai stands, shitakusa, suiseki, and scrolls for display. Volunteers needed, please contact any member of the executive team (see last page for contact details).

**On the cover: John Biel's crab apple (*Malus spp.*) bonsai, with snow-covered shining fruit.**

# President's message: just show up

by Carlos Bras

Last meeting was our annual silent auction and even though the temperatures were bitterly cold, the bidding was hot! We were able to raise over \$1300 for the club. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to our fund raiser with items to auction, helped with the set up, brought in drinks or snacks, and helped with the clean up. It was a successful event and the funds raised will go towards the spring and fall TBS shows and the rest of the club programs. I would also like to thank Lee Valley Tools, Kim's Nature and Valley View Gardens who were very generous with their donated articles for auction. Please pay these vendors a visit soon - I am sure you won't be disappointed in what they offer.

Next meeting is March 10th, and we will have John Walton talk to us about tool maintenance to start. If we have time after that, we will also discuss common pests, diseases, and other threats to our trees.

After the break, there will be a workshop, using Australian brush cherry (*Syzygium australe*) for bonsai material. This is a tropical rainforest tree, used frequently in Asia and Australia for bonsai. Participants will have an opportunity to style, wire, and repot the trees, with the help of experienced members. To participate in the workshop, you must sign up with Kem Shaw at the members' desk before the meeting. Bring your own tools and \$40 to register. Wire, soil, and pots are included.

Looking ahead into the spring months, we will continue to have workshops and demos at the meetings, and also have some weekend workshops where in the participants can have a full day of bonsai fun. We will be having a nursery crawls on a weekend or two, locations and dates to be determined later, and I am hoping to get the club out to a collecting trip in April. Collecting trees from the wild produces excellent bonsai material, and is a lot of fun, but we need to get permission from land owners in advance.

Our annual spring show will be on May 24th and 25th at the TBG (Toronto Botanical Garden). Spring can be a bit of a roller coaster ride on the bonsai train, so show up prepared for the ride.

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## Looking for local bonsai material?

by Kem Shaw

A few weeks before our annual silent auction, I approached Valleyview Gardens and asked if they would donate items for our auction. The manager, Larry Varlese, was most receptive, and not only did they donate a large bonsai pot and a very nice rosemary tree, they also extended a 10% discount on purchases to all club members, with their TBS membership card. And they have also purchased advertising space on our [TBS web site](#).

Valleyview is a year round, good quality garden centre with a large amount of tropicals, an extensive selection of trees, shrubs, vines, annual and perennial flowers from spring to fall, along with an array of garden tools, fertilizers, pest control materials, and knowledgeable staff. They usually have a section for pre-bonsai tropicals out on display, and I was told by Larry that they are looking to bring in a larger and more varied selection in the future.



**Donations from Valleyview Gardens at the silent auction**



**Rosemary tree from Valleyview Gardens**

It is nice to find a good quality garden centre locally, and I would have absolutely no reservation in recommending that our club members visit Valleyview, not only because of their recent donations and member discounts, but also because I personally have spent many hours in their large outdoor space looking for pre-bonsai, and some of my nicer boxwoods originated there over the past 20 years.

I will keep in touch with Valleyview, and update members during the coming season.

[Valleyview Gardens](#) (click on link) is located at 3012 Kennedy Road (north of Finch Ave. East, on the west side), Scarborough, Ontario, M1V 4Y2, phone # (416) 291-1270.

# Bonsai from nursery stock – reduction building

by Norman Haddrick (reprinted from *The TBS Journal*, April, 2008)

Everyone is not able to make the sometimes arduous, but always satisfying, journeys into the wild country in search of naturally shaped, dwarfed tree specimens for their bonsai collection. The most practical alternative for most bonsai enthusiasts is a visit to a local nursery or garden centre, where a browse through the available stock will likely reveal a suitable tree from which the basic structure of bonsai can be sculpted.

The biggest, single benefit of such a visit is the variety of stock from which to choose, and the selected tree provides the buyer with a few hours of design study and pruning practice, which can result in an attractive "bonsai-in-training".

The first consideration, before choosing a subject tree:

- 1) Is it for outdoor culture with hardiness for the area in which you reside?
- 2) Do you seek a species suitable for indoor culture over the winter?

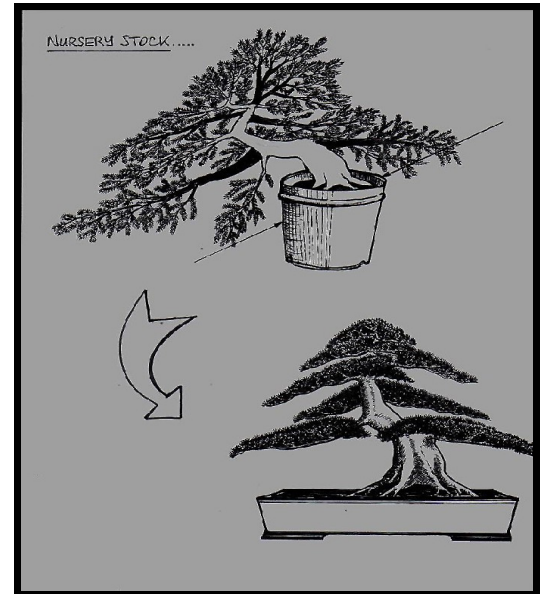
Whatever you decide, select a variety that has short inter-nodes, (the distance between one leaf node and the next), as well as small leaves or short needles, to be proportionate to the size of the bonsai.

Major considerations related to the desirable features of bonsai design are the base of the trunk and the radiating root system. From these, a thick trunk rises, with good taper. These features are an immediate benefit, showing stability and age, and are not always easy to develop when growing in a bonsai pot.

Having decided upon a species, it is wise to seek a variety with an abundance of branches. Preference to those with a heavy branch about one-third of the way up the trunk, and with thinner branches as they reach the top of the tree. The more branches to begin with, the greater the chance of finding branches where you need them in the bonsai design.

Do not be over-ambitious in your first choice. Select a tree less than 18 inches tall. This should give you a beginning bonsai of about 12 inches or so after pruning and proportioning. From the mass of available branches and twigs the bonsai student sculpts the tree, removing the unnecessary limbs to leave the structure of the future bonsai. This initial hard pruning, subsequent re-growth and shaping, is often called "reduction-building".

The tree will help the bonsai student by suggesting ideas for the best structure. This, from a combination of knowledge, basic bonsai styling "rules", viewing trees in nature, plus the artist's imagination, will produce acceptable results.



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## When lemonade turns sour - the gory details

by Dierk Neugebauer, Jan., 2014

### Death by Freezing

During the ice storm of December 2013, I was without electricity for 5 days. At first, the experience was somewhat exciting, what with a fire in the downstairs fireplace going all day and night, and then camping out by the fire in order to stay warm. The novelty, however, soon wore off as there seemed no prospect of the return of power in the foreseeable future, and since the forecast promised to take us down into the minus double digits overnight.

For the first really cold night I tried to protect my tropical trees in the greenhouse by hooking up my camp/tent heater to propane. This system kept the greenhouse from freezing, but resulted in propane fumes that were worrisome. An explosion would not help matters, and carbon monoxide was of some concern even though the greenhouse was closed off from the rest of the house. Needless to say, this arrangement was promptly abandoned.

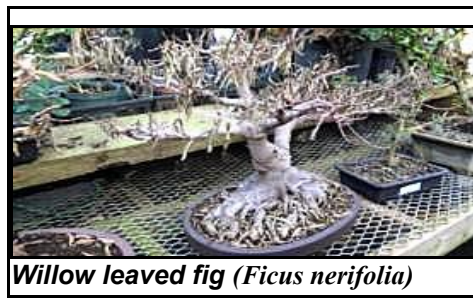
The next strategy involved the acquisition of a gas fired generator. This unit was strong enough to heat both the house and the greenhouse, as well as some other minor things. All went well, but I soon realized that running this device would be rather costly: its 20 liter gas tank would need to be filled once every 8 hours, making the cost of about \$100 a day! But it would be worth it.



## Unfortunately ...



**Small leaf figs (*Ficus benjamina*)**



**Willow leaved fig (*Ficus nerifolia*)**



**Year old small leaf figs**

At some point in the middle of the night the generator ran out of gas, and no one was awake enough to notice this and re-fill the tank. Consequently, when morning came, the greenhouse thermometer showed a temperature of -2C, and the plants did not look too happy; in fact, some were definitely in trouble; ...but there seemed hope.

As days passed, it became clear that the damage was far worse than it at first had seemed to be. It seems that tropical trees do not do well in negative temperature values! The likelihood is that areas of the greenhouse got significantly colder than what the thermometer indicated, since there were no fans to stir the air, and proximity to glass would create cooler areas than elsewhere in the structure.

## Survival of the Fittest

It was surprising which plants did survive; the hardiest of the bonsai lot were the grewias; the ones near the windows were in trouble, but did recover. Others seemed just fine!



**Grewias**

The same cannot be said of the small leaf figs, the (willow leaf) nerifolia figs, the (banyon tree) retusas or the strangler figs; their fate was mostly sealed, and this misfortune soon became clear, as leaves stayed on trees, and bark shriveled, indicating that everything behind the bark had died.

What was most surprising in this disaster is the survival of a few other plants, not more than rooted cuttings, really. They must have been in slightly more sheltered places in the greenhouse and came through unscathed: one willow leaf fig with 4 small leaves; one strangler fig with a mere quarter inch trunk; half a dozen tiny small leaf figs that had spent the summer in a flower bed in the garden.

## New Beginnings

Daily inspections of the greenhouse confirmed that my large, prized ficus trees were history. If by some chance they did come back, they would never be the same, ... not for many years, if ever.

After 2 or 3 weeks some signs of life did begin to emerge on the larger plants, but so far, mostly near the bottom of the trunks. ...The likely scenario is that all buds had died on the branches, and even higher up on the trunk, but I am still hopeful that more new growth will appear.

What to do!

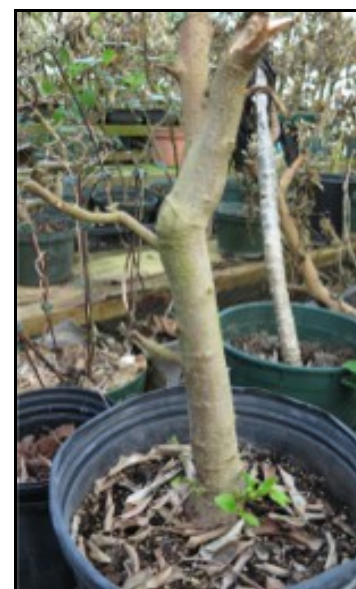
Throwing in the towel was not what I had in mind, and so I began to cruise the internet and local stores for sources of seeds and plants.



**Seeds on the go...**



**Newly purchased plants...**



I expect that all of these will be on their way to becoming future bonsai trees very soon.



*Buds growing...*



*Leaves forming...*

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## Announcements

See Carlos Bras, our club president, accepting his BCI Award Of Excellence in BCI magazine:

<http://www.bonsai-bci.com/magazine/BSAM-2014-Q1-fb/book.swf#p=64>

### TBS library

We are having a problem with missing items at our club library, some of them quite costly. While the club always encourages members to use the library, abuse of borrowing privileges will result in the cancellation of the same.

When borrowing or returning materials, members must first consult the librarian, who will be doing all the signing in and out, and verify that they have returned all items, and are qualified members. Fines will be applied on late books, including replacement costs, at \$2 per month per late book, and must be paid before any other borrowing takes place. Members that have joined on the same day will not be allowed any books at the first meeting. The librarian also has the authority to refuse loans to any member based on these rules.

We will be increasing late fees in the future...

### Bonsai course at the JCCC (Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre)

Our past president, Mike Roussel, is teaching a comprehensive **Introduction to Bonsai** course at the **JCCC** this year starting in the first week of April. The course will be very comprehensive so it would be a good opportunity for TBS members to learn a lot in a relatively short period of time.

Sign up at: <http://www.jccc.on.ca/en/programs/cultural/bonsai.php>

### Seasonal bonsai guide: [things to do in March](#) (from the TBS web site)

It's time to check your tools, supplies of pots, and wire and soil, and replenish these as necessary. If you have collected or purchased any tree seeds get them started now. Here's a link to help with starting seeds:

<http://www.treehelp.com/how-to-grow-a-tree-or-shrub-from-seed/>

### Identification of bonsai on TBS web site

Our web master, Dan Monroe, would like members to visit the [TBS web site](#), and claim their bonsai. Please click on 'Gallery', and proceed through the pictures of our trees. When you come to yours, take note of the picture number by setting your cursor on it, and copying down the identifying information in the bottom left of the screen, and the location of the photo. Then contact Dan by email (listed on back cover) with your information.

**April publishing deadline: Friday, March 28**

# Obituary

## Harry Tomlinson: 1943 – 2014

It is with great sorrow that we have to announce the death of Harry Tomlinson, early on Sunday morning, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014.

You will all remember well the dedicated bonsai artist and owner of Greenwood Gardens and join us in our sorrow at losing Harry after a sad period during which he suffered from Alzheimer's disease. His death followed a period of rapid deterioration in his health over the last few weeks.

Many will remember him for his bonsai skills, his great sense of humour and his excellent books.

Please send any letters of condolence to Greenwood Bonsai Studio where we will be holding an open book of condolence alongside the trees that he created.

The funeral will be a quiet family affair but a memorial service will be held at a later date.

With great sorrow,

**Petra, Corin and Paul**



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## Links to other local bonsai 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>

Buffalo bonsai society: <http://www.buffalobonsaisociety.com/>

Ottawa bonsai society: <http://www.ottawabonsai.org>

Societe de bonsai et de penjing de Montreal: <http://bonsaimontreal.com/#&panel1-5>

Valavanis bonsai blog: <http://valavanisbonsaiblog.com/>

Bonsai society of upstate New York: <http://www.bonsaisocietyofupstateny.org/>

## 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.

## TBS Executive

### President

Carlos Bras  
[carlos@offthebench.ca](mailto:carlos@offthebench.ca)

### Vice-President

-looking for volunteers

### Web-Master

Daniel Monroe  
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### Membership Secretary

#### Tools & 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.

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

[www.torontobonsai.org](http://www.torontobonsai.org)

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