



Founded January 1964

JOURNAL



December 2016

www.torontobonsai.org

Schedule of events

Meetings are held at the **TBG** ([Toronto Botanical Garden](#)), located at **777 Lawrence Avenue East** (at Leslie St.), Toronto, in the studio rooms upstairs. The first meeting is free for non-members.

Bonsai 101: 7:00-7:30

Bonsai 101 is held in Studio #2 upstairs at the TBG. Beginners should read '[INTRODUCTION TO BONSAI](#)' (click on link), posted on the [TBS web site](#) prior to attending. This class was created for beginners to bonsai; experienced members are welcome but asked not to disrupt the proceedings.

Dec 12: cancelled due to holiday party

General meetings: 7:45 - 10:00 upstairs studios 1, 2, 3

Dec 12: slide show, led by Kevin Yates
Christmas social, with cookies & treats brought in by members

Jan 9: tropical bonsai - design & grow

Feb 13: silent auction & social

Mar 13: bonsai soil mixes, fertilizers; Japanese maple demo.

Apr 10: Angelo Dumitru - slide show of collected trees

Spring show: Saturday, May 15 – Sunday, May 16

TBG Floral hall 8 am: bring in your bonsai, bonsai stands, shitakusa, suiseki, and scrolls for display. Volunteers are needed for set up, take down. Open to public 11 am - 5 pm.

Social/Critique: Saturday evening.

Sales area: also be in the floral hall. Trees, bonsai soil, tools, wire, books, and other materials are available for purchase. If you are selling items, you must volunteer to help, and fill out some [forms](#) (click on link).

Outside our club:

On the cover: Kem Shaw's larch (*Larix laricina*) bonsai, best of show tree from the TBS fall show. Photo by Mike Pochwat.

Presidents message

by Carlos Bras

The holiday season is upon us and we are all busy rushing around from mall to shopping centre looking for the right gift for our family and friends. To get a break from all the pushing, shoving and waiting in long lines (that's just trying to find a parking spot) make sure not to miss our next TBS meeting! We will have our annual holiday social, where we are all encouraged to bring in something to share with our fellow bonsai members. Of course we will be serving coffee, tea and hopefully some egg nog. Find your favourite recipe, or head down to your local bakery and bring something in! While bringing in goodies is not mandatory, participation in eating them is, so remember to wear comfortable pants with elastic waistbands.

Aside from all the eating, we have our usual program to entertain you and keep you excited about bonsai. There will be a slide show critique of the fall show. Kevin Yates has agreed to continue where we left off from the Fall Social. This will be a great opportunity to get to know the history of the trees, the future and possible improvement.

In closing, I would like to thank all you who attended our November meeting in which we broke up into small groups to review members' trees. There were lively discussions and Otmar and Kem did wonderful job keeping the trees moving from table to table. We have already received feedback and will be making to some changes to improve this event.

Happy holidays and a prosperous New Year to all!

A Brief History And Comments On The Best Of Show Larch

by John Biel

The larch (*Larix laricina*) bonsai you see at right was collected about 30 years ago when Reiner Goebel and I, went looking for suitable bonsai material somewhere north of Toronto. The bonsai is now owned by our colleague, Kem Shaw.

As it turned out we did find an area that looked promising. I came across the larch in question, pointed it out to Reiner and offered the find to him. He accepted. Upon digging it up it became obvious that the tree had a poor, one sided root system. Nevertheless, other qualities of the tree prevailed, such as branch placements, trunk movement and taper, and so it was wrapped and brought back to Reiner's backyard.

Reiner took great care of this potential bonsai, especially in developing the root system. The tree was potted up in a deep container, and because the one-sided root ball caused the tree to slant, he used a 2x4 to bring the tree into more of a vertical position. Because collecting occurred in late March, the roots of the tree were kept moist and warm for 3 to 4 weeks inside as it was still too cold to leave the tree outside. The tree was, however, over wintered outside in the same year it was collected.

Eventually it became possible to start training the tree towards becoming a bonsai while at the same time further strengthening the root system. It goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway: that all the years of patience and tender care resulted relatively quickly in creating a displayable bonsai.

During the time this larch bonsai was in Reiner's backyard, thieves entered at two different times and stole some of his bonsai. The second time this happened, he and I were at a convention in the States and Norman Haddrick was looking after watering. When we arrived home Norm told us that another theft had been attempted. This time the thieves tried to take off with the larch but in the process of leaving, the thieves had to cope not only with a heavy bonsai but also with a steep retaining wall that separated the backyard from parkland. As a result, the larch was dropped in the yard and the apex was partially broken. Norman tried to reattach the apex but it was in vain; the apex died. As discouraging as these two events were, Reiner persevered in bonsai and restyled the larch.

So after three decades plus, Reiner decided to gradually reduce his bonsai collection and this year he closed shop, as it were, by selling off his remaining bonsai, pots, tools and other bonsai paraphernalia. Happily, though, he still is a member of the TBS and we look forward to seeing him often.

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Now about the Best of Show bonsai. I think this is the first time that the person who selected the Best of Show, was asked to explain his/her reason(s). So, here it goes.

The larch Kem entered in our Fall Show was formerly Reiner's, as described above. When Kem obtained the larch, it had gotten quite bulky and had not been repotted for some time. It was clear to me that Kem's bonsai could perhaps serve two purposes for our members: Presentation and Execution.

Under Presentation I saw not only neatness but also attention to detail. Elements are: the colour and shape of the pot and its soft corners, its correct size, especially its depth, its cleanliness/neatness. How it harmonizes well with the bonsai. I like it.

Under Execution I focused on the bonsai: the positioning of the bonsai in the pot is perfect which, given the movement of the trunk, placement of the branches both live and jinned, along with the positioning of the apex provides, in my opinion, perfect balance. Foliage is healthy and evenly green – no brown tips or early yellowing. Wiring is obviously done of secondary branches, but so well it's barely visible. The tie-down wires are neat and the swirl holes – were the two wires are twisted – are neat. The jins are perfectly white, perhaps too white now but they will get a so called weathered white next year. I'm a bit ambivalent about the soil surface. In one way, using black lava as a dominant soil will probably come as a shock to many viewers. (I admit, though, that the mix of black with grey, green and white is an eye catcher!) I could argue that the spot mossing around the base of the bonsai draws attention to the bonsai!

Lastly, a personal view on mossing. I prefer to moss the whole surface of the soil, with at least 2 or 3 different mosses, in "green" colours and textures. I believe mossing the whole surface gives a natural appearance. Just my opinion. :)

History and development: best of show larch

Kem:

After acquiring the larch in 2015, I stripped the bark off the long lower branch, and shortened it, creating a jin (deadwood branch).

I changed the angle of the trunk by raising the left side as much as the roots would allow, and reworked all the branches to make them parallel to the ground.



The result was a taller tree, with the foliage starting halfway up the tree. The low deadwood branch visually makes the foliage mass appear lower.

Club critique at November meeting

Photos by Otmar Sauer

We had a very good turn out, and a lot of potentially good bonsai at the club meeting this past November – thanks to Kem and Otmar for facilitating, and Kevin Yates, Angelo Dumitru, Mike Roussel, Gim Retsinas, and John Walton for leading.



A few short notes on the aging of rocks for bonsai

by Nubbin*

To age rocks one needs to collect a number of mosses and lichens that will create a sense of age and naturalness when applied to rock forms.

One should collect various mosses such as Silvery bryum (*Bryum argentium*), which as its name suggests, has a silvery look when young but grows little club-like spores when mature. These mosses should be dried and put through a sieve so that they are of a sandy consistency.

Lichens can also be collected, usually from the north side of trees and perhaps concrete posts and steps. The sort of lichens one finds on limestone rocks can be scraped off, dried a little and mixed in with the moss samples.

All this can be mixed up in a pot with a whole egg, and to this add some water, to make a mixture that can be brushed on. Also to this mixture a little fish fertilizer can be added. Fall or early spring is a good time to do this, as a cool and a somewhat damp environment is helpful to the mixture's growth.

This formula can also be used on limestone rocks for the garden that are often too white and in a very short while will appear aged and appropriate.

*Nubbin—an imperfect ear of corn



This is Paul Chong

by Sylvia LeRoy

When Paul arrived in Canada from Hong Kong at 17 years of age, he had education on his agenda. In the 70s he remembers going along with friends to the Japanese Cultural Center for the show and demonstrations of Japanese arts and crafts, Ikebana (flower arranging), **bunka shishu** (embroidery), **origami** (paper folding) and **sumi-e** (ink brush painting). There he viewed small trees in pots up close and personal; Paul was hooked on bonsai. He had cultivated a love of gardening at his home, and became interested in growing orchids. As a member of SOOS (Southern Ontario Orchid Society) Paul attended the monthly meetings at Edwards Gardens. When he arrived one monthly meeting, the TBS (Toronto Bonsai Society) had their show that same weekend also. After viewing the show Paul became a member. It was 1985.

There are many different ways to create bonsai: growing tree seeds, taking cuttings from a mother plant, trees collected from the wild, layering techniques on existing trees, and some from nursery stock and seedlings. All these practices can some day become good bonsai. In the very beginning, Paul started with nursery stock. Whenever Paul would stumble on something that had potential, he would get very excited. What Paul looked for was the tree trunk, which had to be of a certain size and possess good movement. Fixing branches and other things later would be a lot easier than fixing the trunk.

Paul was soon convinced that collecting local trees was the way for him to go. The cedar trees that he first collected 30 years ago, and still possesses, have brought him recognition. Even a short time ago, at the TBS 2016 spring show, one of Paul's cedars was deemed best bonsai. This tree has undergone many changes, which continue to enhance it as a great bonsai, but most importantly Paul has kept it alive. Paul's first rule of bonsai is to keep the tree alive.

Collected cedars are Paul's primary interest. These trees are already styled by nature; jin and shari are created by nature, and can be further developed by the bonsai artist. However, Paul advocates styling a tree only when it is healthy. Develop your horticultural skills to keep your trees healthy. Once the tree is in the pot, it is dependent on you, the bonsai artist, for all its needs.



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Paul has also been an active club member, helping with workshops as a facilitator in the past. He recommends a different approach to workshops. Paul believes that the workshop process would be enhanced by taking more time to contemplate the trees perhaps over a week or two. The facilitators would benefit from contemplating the style possibilities and the students would have more time to learn. Often the process is rushed for the facilitators and the learners, due to time constraints, and learning is curtailed for convenience. Good material is also hard to source, so making the most of a learning situation would be an intelligent move.

In 1997 Paul entered a few trees in the BCI (Bonsai Clubs International) conference, organized by the TBS in Toronto. Luckily, John Naka chose Paul's aforementioned cedar to critique for the show, and through John Naka's suggestion the cedar evolved to a higher level. John Naka became a very important mentor figure for Paul, and caused him to push his creative bonsai abilities. Paul will always remember that conference; it was very important for his bonsai art development.

Some of his trees died, for no apparent reason, Paul confessed. The winter of 2013-14, which was the year of the ice storm, was tough on his collection, and also the year Paul's father passed away. He cannot account for the huge loss he suffered that winter and he deeply misses some of his more developed trees, that succumbed to something unknown. It was not their monetary value that was important, but the relationship Paul had with those trees and the time he had spent with them.

Paul leaves this parting advice: collect trees from nature, or purchase established trees, to make better bonsai. Nature especially gives the tree a sizable trunk and a suggestion of a style, which can be enhanced and worked. Every tree has its own individual character, which should be considered first before designing it for bonsai.

Collecting trees has become more difficult, and any who embark on that course need to be careful to ask permission from the land owner first. For bonsai enthusiasts: remember...patience, patience, patience. Bonsai takes time, energy, and dedication: reduce, redesign, refine and do it again, and again, and again...

Paul has used books and publications for styling inspiration and encourages all to use the internet for instruction. He suggests these websites:

<http://lakeshorebonsai.com/>

<https://bonsaitonight.com/> <https://crataegus.com/>

Bonsai artists the world over give generously to each other through these and many other great sites.

Announcements

Workshops

We hold workshops during our monthly Monday night meetings, on weekends, and in backyards on Saturdays during the summer. To register, contact **Kem Shaw** (see back cover), or check in at the membership desk at 7 p.m.

Membership

If you have not renewed your membership, you are on the **Naughty List**. Please visit the membership table to have your status changed. Here is a reminder of our fee structure: Individual Membership \$50.00; Family Membership \$65.00; Senior/Student Membership \$35.00; Senior Couple Membership \$45.00.

TBS elections

Our club elections are upcoming in June. In keeping with process, we will be organizing a nomination committee for candidates.

Library

The TBS library will be open this meeting – books, instructional DVDs available for loan.

Coffee

We are actively looking for a volunteers to make our club coffee at each general meeting – not everyone can make a good cup of Java. Talk to Carlos (email address on back cover).

Bonsai tools?

You need bonsai tools; we sell bonsai tools, among other paraphernalia. Contact **Gim Retsinas** (see back cover) to order.

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Bjorn Bjorholm

See how Bjorn deals with a “pigeon breast” in his online mugo pine demo:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCMQTTtkojY>

TBS website

Angelo has loaded the pictures from our recent fall show: <http://torontobonsai.org/galleries/tbs-shows/2016-fall/>

Wanted: vice-president

We are actively looking for a vice-president, to help Carlos, learn the ropes, and take over the presidency in June, 2017. Please contact Carlos (on back cover).

Forms

The membership form, introduction to bonsai, bonsai record form, and the sales sheet form are located under 'Documents' (at the top right of the screen) on the **TBS website**: <http://torontobonsai.org/documents/>

TBS on Facebook

The TBS is on [Facebook](#). (Click on link and like us today.)

Bonsai Penjing Canada

[Bonsai Penjing Canada](#) promotes our club, and other Canadian clubs.

Publishing deadline

The publishing deadline for the January Journal is December 30. Please forward all photos, articles, notifications and materials to gquinn@hotmail.com before then.

Links to 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>

Bonsai Society of Upstate New York: <http://www.bonsaisocietyofupstateny.org/>

Landscape Ontario: <http://landscapeontario.com/bonsai>

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 studio rooms upstairs at 7:45 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 7:00 p.m. by the the Bonsai 101 beginner sessions.

A small fee is charged for workshops; a tree, wire and an 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 during the next meeting, and before the summer break.

Tools & supplies

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

TBS executive

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Carlos Bras
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Vice-President

- vacant

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Visit the Toronto Bonsai Society's web site, at:
www.torontobonsai.org

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