



Brandywine Bonsai Society

(EMAIL: BrandywineBonsai@comcast.net)

Meeting: February 17, 2007 10:00

Where: Brandywine Town Center

Subject: Rob King on Ilex

Cookie Person: Pat Morris Pre-meeting tree advice: Charlotte Smith

Dues are due!

February Meeting – Rob King will provide a lecture on Ilex as bonsai material and will be doing a demo. This tends to be a seldom-used material in our club, so come get some pointers.

Dues are due!

Come to the Fair

Before we are well into pruning and repotting, survey the offering of pots, books, tools, and other materials that members bring for Silent Auction. If you want to clear the decks to prepare for lots of work, take this chance to offer goods that may be of great use to other members.

If you made a New Year's resolution to have fewer trees, clean out your collection now to the profit of other BBS members.

Dues are due!

Dip in a Toe

The recently distributed flyer about the MABS Spring Festival does not describe one attendance option: Saturday, limited to vendors and the exhibit. For \$10.00, you can see an exhibit of fine trees, and can spend a long time browsing among the offerings of 18 top-notch vendors who offer just about anything you could wish related to bonsai. Just a hop and skip from the Ramada Inn there are several restaurants, or, you could have lunch in the hotel restaurant.

If you've never taken the plunge and attended a Festival, take this opportunity to get a taste of the event. BBS is very fortunate to have such a gathering of artists and vendors relatively near year after year. Find a buddy and share the experience.

Dues are due!

Before the Trees Leaf Out

Maples, for some of us, are pushing out now, so despite the cold, this is the time to size up the pruning that you need to do. (Consider the coming meeting.) Fortuitously, an article titled "The Best Way to Prune Japanese Maples" has appeared in the April 2007 (No. 114) issue of Fine Gardening. Though the article refers to landscape trees, the most common being *Acer palmatum* and *Acer*

dissectum, much information, and especially the illustrations, can very well pertain to bonsai.

Most of us know that unless we are protecting them, our maples can suffer sun scald. The author of the article, Cass Turnbull, also makes the point that "When planted in the sun, as opposed to a partly shaded understory, these trees become fully foliated rather than open and airy." Several pre-bonsai maples that I (NGK) have in a very sunny growing bed (*Acer ginala*, *Acer Deshojo*, *Acer Sango Kaku*, *Acer ShigiShigeru*, and *Acer griseum* among them) certainly demonstrate the tendency to be fully foliated, even to the point of being weedy.

Of course, the advice given in an article like this has to be used with a much reduced tree size in mind. Still: "Japanese maples less than 15 years old are prone to put on new growth that looks like a buggy whip: unattractively skinny with no side branches." (I think I've been facing this situation with an *Acer Kiyohime* that I've been developing for a few years now – NGK.) "This problem is exacerbated by pruning, often done by the impatient tree owner, hoping to create an open look sooner than nature intended. Shortening or removing the buggy whips only stimulates more of the same." Advice from the author: "... leave the tree alone as long as possible. You will be surprised to find that, as the whips age, they fatten up, develop lateral branches..." We bonsaists, ever impatient, might accomplish some of this fattening and lateral growth development by removing buds at the tips of branches in spring and sending growth back down the whip. This presupposes that the whip is where we want it!

We're usually urged to prune before trees bud out, and the branch structure is most visible. The author says, also: "In summer, however, you can judge the right amount of thinning needed to see the tree's bones. Summer pruning also stimulates less plant growth than winter pruning, so you can get away with a little more, and the tree will stay

thinned out longer.” The author advises against summer pruning at temperatures above 80°F.

Avoid stressing, or stimulating unsightly growth by never removing more than 1/5th of the crown of a Japanese maple. The following advice may be hard for a bonsaist, who is quickly trying to impose good shape, to accept: “You should also not prune a branch that is more than half the diameter of the parent stem.” All of us have dealt with unsightly, heavy growth in the upper third of our trees. For best results, what can we do but start young/ start early? Otherwise, practice disguise and be patient.

“The trick to making Japanese maples look great is to separate the branches into overlapping layers that don’t touch each other. Most single-stemmed plants have a series of scaffold branches that radiate in a roughly spiral fashion up the trunk. If a lateral branch from any of these scaffolds grows downward, crossing into the layer below, it should be removed or cut back to a side branch facing up and out. This is how the tree becomes layered, like a series of fans.”

The article from which so much is quoted here is greatly appealing because of the growing trend toward a natural look in bonsai as opposed to the very formulaic look that many of us cut our learning teeth on. In addition to the text, there are two illustrations: one is of an *Acer palmatum* and the other of an *Acer dissectum*. Both show the places to remove offending growth. Both are very easy to relate to in bonsai terms: they could have been produced by maple aficionado Peter Adams.

Dues are due!

The January Meeting

Thanks to the members who brought in trees and made presentations with for the Jack Billet winter silhouette meeting. It is a great opportunity to look at the basic structure of a tree and see where next round of improvements might occur. The tree-by-tree explanation of the trees – some with stands, and companions (plus pots and stones) - was a real education.

Dues are due!

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Please remember that annual dues were due in January. For those of you who have procrastinated, this is your reminder and another form is attached. For those of you who have already paid, thank you for your promptness and please excuse the reminder and form.

Dues are due!

Jack Billet Bench Dedication at the NBF

The Board of Directors at the National Bonsai Foundation has extended the offer of lunch to BBS members and friends who will attend dedication on May 4. Lunch is slated from 12:00 to 1:30 PM, and the dedication from 1:30 to 2:00 PM. On that day, it also will be possible to visit the National collection, the Potomac show, and the vendors, so it promises to be a full and rewarding time. If you plan to attend, please

contact Dennis Donald as soon as possible (bonsaiguy@comcast.net), and copy Nancy Klabunde (Nancy.Klabunde@comcast.net). Dennis, our liaison with the Board of Directors, needs to let them know numbers quickly.

Dues are due!

And now the special treat all of you have been waiting for - Haikus expressing the unexpected warmth of this winter. Of course, they are a little late considering the present frigid temperatures.

Spring on New Year's Day!
We feel unexpected bliss,
tinged with foreboding. *Charlotte Smith*

Weak innocent buds
Succumb to seductive heat.
Sly winter lurks near. *Nancy Klabunde*

Balmy winter days,
Sleepy koi awake to feast,
Still must fast - cruel joke! *Dennis Donald*

Spring has sprung. Fall fell
Winter is here and it is...
Hotter than should be? *Steve Ittel*

Winter jasmine's stars,
you're shining before your time;
will you sleep come spring? *Charlotte Smith*

Resolutions kept,
two days, - not so hard to do.
Should I mow the grass? *Dennis Donald*

Bonsai in storage
Down for a long winter's rest
Confused buds popping *Steve Ittel*

Tis time for white snow
Green house gases do their work
Big mosquitoes loom *Steve Ittel*

Haiku Hannah, inspired by Fred Knobloch's story, at the January meeting, wrote the following. For those of you not there or who don't remember, Fred excavated a tree for the Winter Silhouette program, and discovered that an animal had found it so natural or companionable, that it left a "gift." Unfortunately, Fred discovered the "gift" while still fresh.

Buried bonsai sleep
They dream of glorious spring.
Awake to poop pile. *Haiku Hannah*

Rabbits leave their gifts
'Round garden-buried bonsai.
Nature's surprise come Spring. *Haiku Hannah*

Dues are due!