



Brandywine Bonsai Society

September 20, 2008 - 10:00

Bob Mahler Styles a Conifer

Where: Brandywine Town Center

Pre-meeting tree counseling: Dennis Donald

Cookie Person: John Jennings

The September Meeting

Guest artist Bob Mahler started his career in bonsai at the age of 15. He has been associated with some of the most important practitioners of bonsai in the world: He studied in Japan with renowned master Susumo Sudo for four years, and was mentored by Chase Rosade.

Bob was curator of the bonsai collection at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden for eleven years. Some club members may remember meeting him there when we had a day trip to see the collection some years ago.

Now he has established his own home and studio in East Greenville, Lehigh County, PA. You can learn more about him at his website, www.sexybonsai.com.

Bob will be discussing conifers and styling either a *Pinus densiflora* (red pine), or a *Cedrus*. Thanks go to Charlotte Smith for locating and purchasing the trees for BBS. The demo tree will be raffled at the end of the program.

Need for a Change

Nancy's broken leg (May 1) necessitated some adjustments in preparing for club meetings. A major change was that Charlotte Smith (again, thanks!) took the coffee/cookie service home with her and has been making coffee, setting up for refreshments and cleaning up for the past several months.

This is a job that Charlotte does not wish to continue. Nancy feels that she has carried it out for enough years, and that it now is time for another member to step forward, and take over for at least a year.

If you would be willing to take over this BBS social service, please contact Nancy at Nancy.Klabunde@comcast.net, or (610) 692-

7599. Should no one have come forward by the time of the October meeting, the refreshment service at the September meeting will be our last.

Help for Members New to Bonsai

We have new members who need not only information and hands-on help, but who need basic tools and supplies.

To experienced members: We often have used pots and plants and literature, but we seldom have used tools. If you have concave or knob cutters that you are willing to pass along, please make them available to the Silent Auction. Do you buy wire in large rolls and have some about to be depleted; that might be just right for a new person to get started on a tree or two. Please bring them all for Silent Auction.

To New Members: Please be checking on the goods offered at almost every meeting. You may find much that will help you, and you won't find better prices! Any of the members present will be glad to advise you. An experienced member is present to give help before almost every meeting. We started this Pre-meeting Counseling Program with new members in mind. It's for you; please take advantage of it. Dennis Donald will be providing help before this month's meeting, but there are even greater needs.

Showing Your Trees

With the Longwood show upon us in a couple of months, we are probably looking at our trees to see which will be ready for the event. As happens every year, we have trees that peak a couple of weeks before the show date, or just after. Don't let that glory only be shown from your bonsai bench. Please bring

your trees to the coming meetings and do a Show and Tell for the club.

BBS Pictures Available

Irene Thomas has a wonderful website loaded with great pictures from BBS meetings that she is willing to share. The link to the site is <http://gallery.me.com/ireneaclan> Here is a small sampling of the pictures.



There are three sets of BBS pictures on her site plus many more other sets of pictures. Please enjoy them.

Opinions and Comments: Fred Knobloch and Steve Ittel

Fred wrote: "I have to take issue with a couple things that have appeared in our recent news letters. The Morales comment that bougainvillea are vines grown mainly for their flowers; hence there is no style."

"Both junipers and azaleas are shrubs, but they are never styled as shrubs - always as trees. If you're not going to style bougainvillea as a bonsai, then you simply have a potted plant, not a bonsai. Bougainvilleas grow rapidly and are a lot easier to style than azaleas - at least in my yard."

Ittel Reply: I would have to agree with Fred. There are a few things that cannot be styled – grasses or bamboo – but most plants can be and Bougainvillea is no exception. Tona Huiner has a beautifully-styled bougainvillea that is even better when it is in blossom. Crepe Myrtle can be wonderful bonsai, but if blossoms are desired, they have to be left to run wild starting mid summer, because the blossoms are on the new growth. There are few reasons that flowering bonsai cannot be styled, whether they be from trees, shrubs, or vines.

Fred's Comment: "Jim Barrett's comment when dealing with an overgrown plant. He said if you can't identify the front, start working on it anyway."

"Most stylists will take the time to part the branches with both hands to see the inner structure in order to decide what to cut. There may be several possible fronts, but if you don't examine the inner structure of the trunk, I don't see how it's possible to start randomly cutting branches in the hope you won't cut off something you'll need later."

Ittel Reply: This time, I will take exception to Fred's comment. Of course, one wants to part the branches and take a look inside. And also uncover roots so you know more about the nebari. I don't think that Jim was saying cut away with abandon with no thought of design and hope that something emerges.

It is possible and usually helpful to start cutting on a tree to remove the ends of long wisps and to thin out dense areas to open up the tree so that it is easier to look inside. One is generally going to give a tree a "haircut" as part of the styling process. By trimming first, one discovers whether the tree has a full set of hair or whether a "comb-over" is hiding a thin spot that will require remedial action.

One would certainly not make any significant cuts without having made some decisions about the style of the tree. Even then, I have seen artists make early significant cuts that forever determine the style of a tree. It may make for high drama at a demonstration, but even for a branch that cannot be used, whacking it at the trunk eliminates the possibility of later jin or shari. Unless one is blessed with an innate eye for the line of the final tree before beginning the cutting process, nibbling back a layer at a time is a safer way to go. I look forward to the demonstration where the artist does one final major cut and "the tree" emerges with that last cut. Now that would be drama worth waiting for!