

# Brandywine Bonsai Society

Promoting the art and horticulture of bonsai since 1967

## NO MABS. NO BBS"

Stay at home. Work on your trees  
Saturday, March 21, 2020, 10:00 am

Pre-meeting coffee and tree counseling will not be available. **No refreshments served**

# COVID-19 Edition

### Dues are still Due!

We will still take your money. A registration form is available online at

[http://gobbs.org/index\\_htm\\_files/1-%202020%20BBS%20Dues.pdf](http://gobbs.org/index_htm_files/1-%202020%20BBS%20Dues.pdf)

If you haven't already, plan to get your 2020 dues paid soon – this month is it! The deadline is the end of March at which time the membership roll will be cleaned up. Also, make sure your checks/cash are accompanied by the information sheet so we can maintain accurate records. Please complete the form and return it with a check made out to Brandywine Bonsai Society to:

**Greg Kanaskie**  
**133 North Wawaset Rd.**  
**West Chester, PA 19382**

### Brooklyn Botanical Garden Bus Trip

**This trip is in jeopardy. We will have to see whether Brooklyn Botanical Gardens is open but right now they say they will not reopen until July 1. Social distancing requirements would make a bus trip unlikely.** Rob still is signing people up for the club's June 13 bus trip to the Brooklyn Botanical Garden Bus Trip. The cost to club members is \$5.00 and \$20.00 for non-club members (for any seats available after the member sign-up date). At this point, there are only 12 seats available.

### May Meeting

Right now, our May meeting is looking very unlikely. New Castle County has shut down access to the Brandywine Town Center and apparently would put significant limitations on meeting if it were to re-open.

### New Newsletter Format and Purpose

The look of the newsletter was changed for 2020, though it is not clear that anyone noticed.

More importantly, I have decided to repurpose the newsletter. We are an unincorporated non-profit club whose objective is to provide education on the art and horticulture of bonsai. (And, as far as I am concerned, kusamono, shitakusa, and suiseki.) As a result, I believe that some informational conversations that have been going between club members deserve distribution more widely thru the club. They are below.

### Digging Trees

For the last several weeks, with nothing better to do, I have been digging and potting some trees that I have been growing in the ground for years.

The first tree is a Japanese black pine. I got this tree at a club workshop with Ted Matson many years ago when we all did black pines. We drew numbers for our pick of trees. I ended up with the highest number - ie: the last tree after everyone chose the better ones. We were supposed to be styling the trees. After looking mine over, I said to the artist/instructor, "I think I have to make one major cut and then let the tree grow." He gave me a knowing, doubtful smile. As he inspected the tree, the smile faded. "You are right." I watched the other people style their trees the rest of the session.

The tree has been growing in the ground for 10-15 years. Most years, I drove a shovel into the ground all the way around it to maintain a small root ball, and one year, I actually pulled it out of the ground and turned it 180 degrees for development. It has been candle pruned every year. In the picture, there is a normal 12" (30cm) red ruler for scale, so it

is now a pretty healthy trunk. It is in a big mica pot and the pot will be down-sized every year for a while.



Now that it is in a pot, I realize that I let it get a little too wide and not tall enough, but that is easily remedied. After it has acclimated for a year, there is one major cut to open it up and then a lot of pruning and wiring.

### Discussion of Insecticides and Fungicides

There are good reasons to mix up your insecticide and fungicide treatments. This might be difficult to justify with a small collection. No products treat everything. I mention a number of products.

Fungicide each month, May thru October. (Treat crab apples as soon as flower buds swell, before the first warm rain of spring for Apple cedar Rust.) More generally: Cleary-3336, Daconil, Topsin or Infuse each month, May thru October.

Insecticides each month, May thru October: Bonide Systemic Insecticide, Bayer 3 in 1, malathion, or Merit 75-WP. Lime sulfur when trees are dormant before storing for winter.

If you have a slug issue like I do, then place Ortho Bug-Geta slug bait near your pots to keep them under control. There is nothing like picking up a pot and realizing that there was a slug underneath and now it is squeezed between your hand and the pot.

### To Beech or Not to Beech

American Beech, *fagus grandifolia*, is the climax tree in this area and would seem to be desirable for bonsai. In the woods around my house, there are hundreds of saplings so it would be tempting to dig a few as individual trees or for a forest. There are two serious problems with digging them for bonsai.

1) Many of those saplings are not seedlings. If the beech tree's surface roots are damaged, they will often sprout suckers, so if a sapling is under a large beech, watch out. What you will find is that the sapling is attached to a root that is larger diameter than the tree itself. Serious sawing is required to get the tree out and you will find that you have no feeder roots. The tree is unlikely to survive.

2) If you find one that is a true seedling, be wary, anyway. American beech are *Fagus grandifolia* for a reason – grand foliage. The leaves are too large and the intermodal distance is too large to get a good bonsai unless it is of a truly grand scale. Too large for most of us.

Having said, "Don't think about it," I will admit to thinking about it. During COVID, wandering the woods is still allowed when done in isolation and on my own property. I came across several interesting things.

The first was a small clump of trees. These are pretty obviously from a damaged root, being all together like that, and right at the base of a bigger tree, but maybe there was some local rooting also. Worth a dig?



The next clump was even more interesting. This is a spontaneous raft style group. The largest trunk (2") emanates from the hollow portion that is horizontal. The smaller trunks that appear to come out of the ground are attached to the same system. I am actually working on this for a future dig if I can generate some lower branches.



So why am I looking? Because I have seen the tree below. Why does it look so great? Well, it is very old and trained in Japan, but even more importantly, it is *Fagus crenata*, the Japanese beech. Short internodes and smaller leaves. It works well for bonsai.



Years ago, I planted several Japanese beech in my planting area, hoping to get some quicker growth on them. They did grow, but more slowly than the American beech around them. They are spindly, but have a great growth habit – nice short internodes and smaller leaves. What I am now contemplating is

grafting *crenata* branches onto an interesting *grandifolia* trunk.

I am working on another beech. A friend gave me a copper beech that had “died” in a nursery. There was nothing left that they could sell, but it did pop some branches about a foot from the ground. Copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica purpurea*) is an ornamental cultivar of the European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) which is better than American but not as good as Japanese beech. Longwood gardens is famous for its line of massive copper beeches. This one will end up as a carved, deformed, hollow tree and I doubt that it will be any good in my lifetime.

**Stay apart. Stay happy. Stay healthy.**