



# Brandywine Bonsai Society

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Meeting: May 21, 2011 9:45am

Where: Longwood Gardens Parking Lot

Subject: Visit to a private bonsai collection

## Visit to a Private Collection

BBS members are privileged to visit a premier private bonsai collection. The visit will occur on what would be our regular meeting date, May 21, 2011. This is a rare and very special opportunity. As a result, there are some ground rules.

Only members in good standing may be part of the excursion – no boyfriends, girlfriends, or spouses who are not part of the BBS membership. We will gather at and leave from the Longwood Gardens main visitor parking lot. When you enter, take the first aisle to your left (rear most parking area). Park in the back parking row. To minimize parking at our host's house, we will carpool by asking members with the largest vehicles to take as many people as they can. The car caravan will leave the parking lot *en masse*, and will return the same way. Our departure time is promptly at 9:45 am. If you are not on time, you will be left behind. The event is scheduled for rain or shine.

It is vital that you signify your wish to participate by emailing or calling Nancy Klabunde no later than May 16, 2011. ([Nancy.Klabunde@comcast.net](mailto:Nancy.Klabunde@comcast.net) or 610-692-7599.

We encourage all of you to visit Longwood Gardens after the visit. In particular, stop by the Longwood bonsai exhibition to see the crepe myrtle that Ski mentioned during his lecture at the last BBS meeting. Since that discussion, a second major crepe myrtle has been styled and gone on exhibit.

**A Glimpse Backward** (from "Dorie's Shohin Bonsai Tips, How I started Growing

Bonsai" by Doris W. Froning, published in International Bonsai, 2002/No. 2, p. 32)

While walking the dog one day in 1961 I saw an Eastern white pine that was much smaller than the rest of the pines we had planted around the perimeter of our property. It seemed to be a dwarf variety of *Pinus strobus*. Having read about bonsai (I think it was in *House Beautiful*), I dug it up and pretended I knew something about this ancient art. Once dug and planted I was hooked. Since that day in 1961 I have studied, written and obsessed about bonsai.

The first formal bonsai lessons I took were at Longwood Gardens. In 1967 Yuji Yoshimura taught a six day class, one for beginners and one for intermediates.



Naturally I assumed I knew more than a beginner so I enrolled in the intermediate

class but Mr. Yoshimura was polite and let me stay. We did a tree each of the six days. Prices were cheap. I bought a Kumquat for \$2.50, three pots for \$7.50, and five Zelkova for \$1.00 each. The six days so stimulated me that no tree was safe. I created, dug plants, bought pots and was in heaven.

Around 1967 I became very interested in shohin bonsai and my trees kept getting smaller and smaller. On our first trip to Japan I bought small pots and small stands and any book that had shohin bonsai on the cover. My husband said I had a hand carry on every finger on the flight home!

My first attempts at shohin bonsai were not all that successful since I immediately put everything into a small pot not realizing that in a tablespoon of soil and a small pot, the tree would not grow very fast. I started to put seedlings into a ground bed to thicken the trunks. After a year or two in the ground, the trunks were thickened and I could shape the branches into the style I wanted. The following spring the roots were reduced to fit into a small pot.

As I became more and more interested in little trees, Dorothy Young and John Naka persuaded me to start a newsletter for little trees. In 1975 I began publishing *Mame Bonsai Growers of America*. I used *mame* in the title since the term *shohin* was little known at the time. *MBGA* was rather a pretentious title that initially had twenty-five members and cost \$2.50. (I wrote the letter for twenty years and in 1995 we had over 325 readers and it cost \$5.00.

In the 1970s I started to travel and teach about bonsai and especially about shohin bonsai. I would often tell my audience that I started bonsai when I was 6'2" and before I got into shohin bonsai I was 5'7" (I am actually 4'11). Some have called me *mame mama*.

Some thoughts from forty plus years in bonsai: Keep practicing. No one ever becomes good with one or two trees. Be on the lookout for good material. Buy when you see it. If you hesitate, it will be gone. Take

good care of your plants, water carefully, feed regularly, and watch your plants for insects and diseases. Go to exhibits and look at pictures of really good trees to sharpen your eye.

Enjoy your shohin bonsai. It still gives me great pleasure to watch my plants and to say, "the best is yet to come!"

### **Azalea Work**

The optimum time for the hard work of repotting, pruning, and styling is only going to last a few more weeks. After the azaleas bloom and we carefully remove spent blossoms, the plants usually go back on the bench until fall. The pros are shaping azaleas in such a way as to make maximum impact with flower display, but once it is over, the tree may look fairly uninteresting. It was perhaps a "coat hanger" for flowers only.

Azaleas, with their interesting trunks and branching offer many possibilities as trees for fall display. If summer work is undertaken early enough, new shoots have a chance to harden. Usually, post-flower pruning means leaving two shoots with two leaves on the tip of a branch. For a more tree-like look, use longer shoots and leave four to six leaves. Should there be a third shoot at the tip of a branch, it can be wired in the direction you want to achieve.

Young branches are tender, and their bark is easily peeled off, so handle with care. Wiring with paper covered wire is best; perhaps branches could even be wrapped with raffia first.

Experts disagree: some of us have been taught that we should allow our azaleas to bloom only every other year because flowering exhausts the tree. Of course, overly large blooms are removed in any case. But whatever you read in one source is probably contradicted by an expert in another. Some of us have allowed our trees to flower freely every spring, year after year, with no noticeable diminishing of vigor.