



Kongetsu

West Michigan Bonsai Club Newsletter

Vol. 17 No. 2

March 2013

Mollie Hollar, Editor

2013 Schedule of Events

Sat, March 16: bonsai pot lecture by Cat Nelson

Sat, April 20: repotting and show prep for May

Fri, May 10: show set-up

Sat & Sun, May 11 & 12: Michigan show

Sat, May 18: field trip to West Olive Nursery

Fri & Sat, June 14 & 15:

Vance Wood (Mr. Mugo Bonsai) demonstration and workshop

Sat, July 20: silent auction & potluck

Sat & Sun, Aug 17 & 18: group trip to Chicago Show

Sat, Sept 21: Club show prep

Fri, Aug 4: show set-up

Sat & Sun, Oct 5 & 6: Club Show

Sat, Nov 16: planning for 2014

All events are held at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park unless otherwise noted. Saturday meetings/workshops are from 9:00 AM to Noon unless otherwise noted.

Tidbit

According to my book *How to Grow and Cultivate Miniature Living Trees* (1949), "Some people after only a gingerly start will wind up with entire sun porches, window sills and tables filled with trees to the astonishment of all of their
(cont next page same column)

March Meeting

We are privileged this month to have a bonsai pot expert coming to do a presentation for us. She will share with us a Power Point presentation that would include identifying pots, what to look for when buying, and matching trees to pots. In 2012 her *Introduction to Bonsai Pots* was published and is sold by the American Bonsai Society. (<http://absbonsai.org/book-service/booklets>) I'm really looking forward to this presentation. As is true of many bonsaiists who have been involved for more than a year or two (17 for me) I have an overabundance of pots yet can never seem to be able to find just the right one when I'm repotting.

As usual this event will begin at 9:00 AM in the lower floor of Meijer Gardens.

Hawaii Membership?

The larger part of this newsletter is taken up with the new *Journal of Tropical & True Indoor Bonsai™* of the Mid-Pacific Bonsai Foundation on the Big Island of Hawaii. My good friend (and customer) David Fukumoto, owner of the Fuku-Bonsai Cultural Center & Hawaii State Bonsai Repository, has formed the Foundation with other well-known bonsai artists around the country. I am a supporter and, hopefully soon, will become a contributing author.

If our membership approves, I would like our Club to become a member of the Mid-Pacific Bonsai Foundation and assist in bringing improved education about what to us is known as "tropical," or indoor, bonsai. Yearly membership in this organization is minimal, and the information we will gain from the Foundation will be invaluable to us all. We will discuss this at our March meeting.

Dues Are Due

Another reminder that our Club annual dues are due (\$25 for active membership and \$6 for inactive membership). We are also continuing our hardship membership for those members who are in less-than-desired financial circumstances. Active membership means you get the monthly newsletter and any other notices through the season. Also, there will be an extra charge if you decide to attend a workshop. Inactive will provide you with the newsletter.

We must receive your dues by April 1 for you to continue receiving the newsletter. The 2013 membership form appears later in this newsletter with directions for payment.

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Assisting Our Veterans

Most of you are aware that I have been teaching bonsai classes at the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans for the past couple of years, with the help of members Bob Coykendall and Joyce Kuete.

I was absolutely thrilled recently to see in the Grand Rapids Press that the Veterans Home has won a \$25,000 prize from Home Depot, which includes time volunteered by local Home Depot employees. Several of our members had been voting for them on the Home Depot Foundation's Facebook page before the voting ended in February. And it couldn't have been better timed: the Press noted in a March 5 article announcing the win that the roof of the veterans' greenhouse, where we hold classes, had blown off in a mid-February storm! Since then the greenhouse has been unsafe to use, so we have not yet begun our 2013 classes. The prize will allow them to increase the size of the greenhouse and potting shed, and make them wheelchair-accessible. That's really good news since the vet who got us started on the classes is wheelchair-bound.

There will be a second round of voting in May, so I encourage all of you – and everyone you know! – to vote once a day for this most worthy cause. The Veterans' Home will be competing against 10 other winners for a \$250,000 prize. As the time gets closer, I will include more information here as to where to do the voting. Even if they win second or third place they would get a sizable prize, but let's help them to that first place win!

friends and guests. . . Once you get over the shock that you can actually raise a miniature tree . . . it's almost inevitable that you'll want an entire 'forest' of your own! Because, to possess one is to desire still another . . . and another. . . when you take a trip into the mountains of backwoods country – you'll find yourself looking everywhere for small trees in crevices, hillsides, mountain tops, rocks, in fact, everywhere . . . trees that you will be able to cultivate into worthy miniatures." Writing about me?

Need Soil?

You will notice that our April event will be our annual repotting work-shop, where the Club will provide soil components for you to put your trees into bonsai pots. For many years we have used a mix of aggregate and aged pine bark, a mix that Brussel's Bonsai and others use. I will bring buckets of each ingredient and you will be able to mix the two to your needs. The Club will also provide wire and screening.

If there is any other ingredient you would like to add to your soil, you will need to bring it yourself.

Also, if you will need more soil to repot trees at home, let me know ahead of time so I can bring more specifically for you. Soil is \$2.00 a pound whether you get plain aggregate, plain pine bark, or a mix of the two. I can provide you with any amount you need.

If you might need anything else for your bonsai, check my website (www.basicallybonsai.com) and let me know that ahead of time too. I can bring any needed items to meetings so you can save shipping expenses.

2013 Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phones: Home _____ Work: _____

E-mail: _____

(Check one:)

Active membership (\$25.00) Inactive membership (\$6.00)

Hardship membership

(Check one:)

I prefer that my newsletter be e-mailed to me.

I prefer a snail-mail copy of my newsletter.

Please make check out to:

WMBC

and mail to:

Jane Harrelson

1151 Parnell Ave SE

Ada MI 49301

Or bring to any meeting or workshop.



**JOURNAL OF TROPICAL
& TRUE INDOOR BONSAI™**
MID-PACIFIC BONSAI FOUNDATION
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PREMIER ISSUE #1. January 2013

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**PAST, PRESENT
& FUTURE OF
FUKU-BONSAI
AND THE MID-
PACIFIC BONSAI
FOUNDATION**

Aloha and welcome to the first issue! In the last 50 years, "bonsai" has dramatically evolved from being an exotic Japanese magical shaping of temperate climate outdoor trees. Bonsai has grown into an art, craft, and hobby that now reflects Japanese, Chinese, international, American, and Hawaiian trees, styling, and concepts. Bonsai Clubs International and the American Bonsai Society have been the leaders in the United States and their magazines documented and reflected this evolution. Fuku-Bonsai has been and will continue to be a steady participant in these two fine organizations.

With the publishing of the JOURNAL OF TROPICAL & TRUE INDOOR BONSAI™, we encourage the growth of a new form of "Popular American Bonsai" for those not able to grow traditional temperate climate outdoor bonsai. Our goal is to greatly increase success so anyone, anywhere who can grow houseplants will be successful either growing year-around indoors, or outdoors whenever night temperatures exceed 50°F.

We will do this by providing applicable information and specific plants that we write about with an emphasis on workshop packages that will address beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. Teaching aids and quantity discounts will be available. We will be the only vertically integrated source of educational materials and workshop plants that can be shipped to all parts of the United States to individuals, bonsai instructors, or organizations.

Fuku-Bonsai was an early Tropical Bonsai leader known for developing banyan bonsai with aerial roots and tropical tree styling. It also pioneered growing proven durable houseplants in the bonsai manner. Our trademarked "True Indoor Bonsai™" is the most successful gift bonsai for anyone, anywhere who can grow houseplants. Fuku-Bonsai is the highest quality source of True Indoor Bonsai prepared bonsai stock and semi-trained bonsai and True Indoor Bonsai information.

We have been steadfast in our commitment even while fighting for survival after the loss of over \$30 million due to defective Benlate sprayed in 1989. During this difficult period, the 501(3)(c) Mid-Pacific Bonsai Foundation continued to protect the memorial bonsai in the Hawaii State Bonsai Repository, co-sponsored the Fuku-Bonsai Cultural Center, and assisted in educational activities at the center.

Fuku-Bonsai became a corporation in 1985 and the Mid-Pacific Bonsai Foundation was formed a year later. Both organizations have been committed to promoting, preserving, and educating the art and cultures of bonsai and the building of friendships through bonsai. The Foundation became the public guardian of memorial bonsai when Hawaiian bonsai masters passed away; as

well as significant bonsai created by national and international bonsai masters in Hawaii. The collection includes trees trained by Saburo Kato, John Naka, Haruo Kaneshiro, Pius Notter, Shinji Ogasawara, Tom Yamamoto, Jackson Kansako, and a host of others.

It is now possible for someone to complete one or more Introductory Workshop Packages (Workshop I); and within a few months, be ready to work on Workshop II trees that are already five years in training. Soon after, an aggressive hobbyist can take on the challenge of Workshop III which feature trees that may already be over ten years in training. Once a person demonstrates an ability to grow our plants, the largest, oldest Custom Collection becomes available. Some of these trees are in training for over thirty years! This progressive sequence greatly compresses the learning curve and it is now very possible to participate in intermediate and advanced level bonsai that was totally impossible 50 years ago!

The Journal is an educational vehicle for those who want to go beyond simply owning and growing a houseplant bonsai and address intermediate and advanced challenges.

Bonsai has dramatically evolved from extremely difficult and secretive traditional Japanese temperate climate outdoor bonsai. 50 years ago, Hawaii was trying to grow both temperate climate and tropical trees in the Japanese bonsai manner and learned that most temperate climate trees just won't grow here. We learned the first major rule for bonsai success: *"Grow plants that will thrive for you in your environment or change your environment so the plants will thrive!" Plants must thrive to be trained as bonsai!*

Bonsai grown in Hawaii are tropical plants and some temperate climate trees that will tolerate our tropical climate. By happy coincidence, tropical plants are easier to grow outdoors throughout the United States whenever night temperatures are above 50°F and brought indoors during cooler seasons. Plants require light, water, fertilizer and tender loving care that varies depending upon the situation. It's necessary to "learn the language of plants."

Tropical trees have very different shapes from temperate climate trees. Whereas the typical pine bonsai will have a single apex line with tier branches and a triangular profile, a tropical banyan bonsai would have multiple trunks, arching branches, a rounded crown, heavier buttressing rootage, and even aerial roots. Tropical bonsai styling is more heavily influenced by Chinese penjing concepts and are very different from traditional Japanese temperate climate bonsai.

Fuku-Bonsai's True Indoor Bonsai™ is a major evolution that allows anyone, anywhere who can grow houseplants to be successful in bonsai! Dwarf Schefflera (*Schefflera arboricola*) is the ideal proven durable houseplant that branches well and can be trained into high-quality bonsai. It grows more vigorously and our training techniques create a lot of trunk and branch character within one inch of the soil line and a shallow compact root system within half inch below the soil line. Fuku-Bonsai provides exceptional starter stock and every tree has potential. This addresses the second major rule for bonsai success: *"Start*

with plants with a lot of character to avoid the early difficult challenges to create character!"

Fuku-Bonsai's plants have high potential and the remaining challenge is to learn to grow the trees vigorously so when trained, they will throw out strong new growth and improve their shapes. It is now much easier to successfully grow bonsai and this Journal is intended to focus on tropical bonsai, but especially Fuku-Bonsai's True Indoor Bonsai. Every plant needs specific information and bonsai books spread conflicting confusing information. Very few principles apply to ALL bonsai. If a bonsai book tries to teach pines, azaleas, and elms, the book will be create a lot of conflicting information as all three need to be trained and grown differently.

Fuku-Bonsai's True Indoor Bonsai dwarf schefflera is exceptionally successful because our information sheets specifically apply to the plants that we supply. This is significant as it is generally not possible to obtain specific plants and to obtain direct information from the grower-supplier!

This Journal is the joint effort of the Mid-Pacific Bonsai Foundation and Fuku-Bonsai and a part of the overall long-term project "MAKING THE BIG ISLAND AN INTERNATIONAL BONSAI MECCA!" That's an awesome primary objective but it makes sense! We have only been able to make progress and survive because of Hawaii's past bonsai role, our climate, and our community. We have been very fortunate to be the beneficiary of Hawaii's visitor industry and our Big Island community who supported us through our difficult years. The overwhelming majority of our repeat Fuku-Bonsai customers were introduced to us during a Hawaiian vacation and because they love the "Spirit of Hawaii and Aloha!"

We intend to honor this tradition and dedicated the Fuku-Bonsai Cultural Center and this Journal to Hawaii's Greatest World War II Generation. This special generation fought to fight for their country when they were branded "enemy aliens." Their distinguished record on the battlefields of Europe removed all questions of loyalty and they changed Hawaii into a unique multicultural state based upon mutual respect, civility, and being an inclusive ohana. They joined with their former enemies from Japan in promoting bonsai as a bridge to international friendship and peace and created the explosive growth of international bonsai that we enjoy today.

For 50 years, the Fukumotos learned, taught, built and rebuilt the components to support this new form of bonsai. In turning over the educational functions to the Mid-Pacific Bonsai Foundation, we seek to build a private - public partnership that will effectively use the resources created to benefit future generations of bonsai hobbyists as well as the Hawaii visitor industry and the Big Island community.

The culture of bonsai includes learning and practicing the basic criteria. At a time when bonsai is attracting urban individuals with no ties to farming or plants, our task is to introduce or reintroduce the basics. Plants do not grow in dark caves. They need light to provide the energy for growth. They also need water and moisture in proper amounts and in this first issue, we touch on these basics.

**THE
OBJECTIVES
AND
STANDARDS
FOR THE
JOURNAL OF
TROPICAL
& TRUE
INDOOR
BONSAI**

We appreciate the support of bonsai old-timers including Jerry Meislik who has agreed to be a "Journal Contributing Editor" to provide periodic articles and commentary, to help provide balance and to point out areas that need more information to improve the success rates for those starting out. For this first issue, I asked Jerry to help explain the importance of light for indoor bonsai. As you can see from his report, if you create exceptional growing conditions, you can get superior grown even on more difficult high-light requiring trees!

We thank our customers and request your feedback and to share your results in the form of photos and articles. By writing and teaching others, you'll also learn more too! We hope to one day have instructors throughout the United States with effective sharing online sharing of information to assist and inspire everyone to grow happy, healthy, beautiful houseplant bonsai!

Training and styling bonsai is challenging and the most difficult to teach. But if our website is to become the finest bonsai resource, we need to try to explain how bonsai are created, the fine points, and offer to assist. So we began a new portal section that will focus on styling bonsai and include introductory information and the first article that tries to explain the concept of SUMO! We invite you to email us and request that you help publicize and promote the website and Journal as we try to build a True Indoor Bonsai community and resource.

E KOMO MAI . . . come discover the serenity of Nature, the beauty of bonsai, and the spirit of Hawaii!

Several articles are included at the end of this first Journal that will be of interest to us and will be included in future newsletters. Meanwhile, if you are interested in growing Fuku-Bonsai's Dwarf Schefflera (*Schefflera arboricola*), let me know and I'll get some ordered for us to begin.

This is the planting that greeted us each time my husband and I visited David Fukumoto at his Fuku-Bonsai Cultural Center & Hawaii State Bonsai Repository.



The Fuku-Bonsai Cultural Center Entry Tree is a Dwarf Schefflera in training since 1974 and amongst the oldest of all Dwarf Schefflera bonsai. It is trained on a 72" diameter concrete disc turntable in a Rainforest Banyan styling with multiple trunks and extensive aerial roots.

Looks like a great place for a field trip, don't you think? David would be thrilled for us to visit!