

VANCOUVER ISLAND BONSAI CLUB

October Newsletter

October 17, 2011

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Our Next Two Meetings:

Monday Oct. 17, 7:30 pm
Monday Nov , 7:30 pm

Garth Homer Society Auditorium
813 Darwin Avenue
Victoria, BC

2011 VIBC Officers

President	Bob Taylor
Past-Pres	Randy Kowalchuk
Treasurer	Judy Horsland
MallShow Coordinator	Vacant

Monday October 17, 2011 ...

Show & Tell - Fall Colours

Topic: Winterizing your trees including fertilizer, cleanup, and storage. If you participated in the shohin mugo pine workshop earlier this year, we will be potting up these trees at the meeting. Bonsai mix will be available free of charge and pots will be available for sale.

Raffle Table - We will hold the usual raffle, please bring your donations.

Coming In November - Show & Tell : Fall Colours.

Topic: Winterizing your trees including fertilizers, cleanup, and storage..

Sooke Potholes

There is an open house at Bob's at the Sooke Potholes every Sunday afternoon. Go to the 2nd parking lot and ask attendant.

Bring the kids, snacks, come swimming, and talk bonsai. Look for the white mailbox.

Upcoming Activities

Saturday Oct. 22, 2011 - The Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society presents the 12th annual Japanese Cultural Fair from 10 am to 4 pm at the Esquimalt Recreation Center.

Club Name Tags

You have an opportunity to purchase a personalized name tag for \$6.00. The name has the club logo and name engraved on a green background with white lettering. We are taking orders, so if you are interested please sign up at the next couple of meetings. You can also contact Sharon MacDonald at ssmac@telus.net to place your order.



The Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society presents the 12th annual
Japanese Cultural Fair

10 am - 4 pm
Saturday, October 22
Esquimalt Recreation Centre
527 Fraser street
Free Admission

Enjoy traditional and non-traditional Japanese food, arts and crafts, Japanese tea, and live entertainment including: delicious sushi, manju, Japanese tea ceremony, Ikebana flower arranging demonstrations, Bonsai display, martial arts demo, children's activity area, Taiko drumming, Koto music, Japanese calligraphy, traditional dance performances, and much more.

www.vncs.ca

日本文化祭り



A Little Magic With Shohin Bonsai Shohin Bonsai Tools

Reprinted from an article written by John Romano

Tools Do Not Make The Bonsai Artist

This I know too well. Despite my quality of tools, I've worked with bonsai artists who have used old, second hand tools or I've watched a visiting artist who was given a limited supply of tools and their work was still wondrous and meticulously achieved. No matter how good a set of tools you have, it is no substitute for experience in creativity.

However, we all know from work around our homes that having the right tool usually makes a job go much easier than when we have to adapt an unsuitable tool that was not made for the specific task we are attempting to accomplish.

There are some useful tools and tips that can be used for shohin bonsai creation and care which can make accomplishing our tasks a bit easier. Many tools are so specific that they are rarely pulled out of our tool boxes and then there are those that seem connected to our hand, are used often and feel comfortable as to become second nature. In fact, most of the tools we use for shohin bonsai work are the same that are used for large trees. There are some that make the job a bit easier and are specifically scaled down to the size of the trees. Some alternative tools that are more readily available can be used in the place of the more expensive Japanese tools and can do the same job as the more expensive ones and sometimes a better job.

Scissors And Cutters

With small trees, smaller scissors are more useful for trimming than larger ones. There are many types of scissors that are made for bonsai all in different sizes. The first thing I would recommend is if possible you try out a specific style of scissors before purchasing one. Some of the scissors have smaller finger holes so you want to try to make sure they are

comfortable. With small trees the smaller scissor can help reach into the inside of the tree when trimming with minimal disturbance to the foliage you are passing through. This is important with small deciduous trees with a lot of ramification. You don't want to damage the outer foliage or buds when you are trimming inside.

Some things to consider are scissors that have a thin profile at the cutting a section. The thinner the better for the specific work you are doing. Also there are scissors with a short cutting section and some with a long thin section.

Again, depending on the kind of work you do and the comfort level of the specific scissor, these can all be quite useful. You can see in the first photo that I have three of my smaller scissors displayed with different lengths and finger holes. The smallest one is a good bud shear that I use for decandling Japanese black pines and defoliating deciduous trees in the summer.

Concave and knob cutters also come in smaller sizes and are also quite useful for shohin bonsai over the larger sized ones. These can also be seen in the photo. Notice there is a small bud type concave trimmer that is also made available.

Shohin bonsai scissors, concave pruners, knob cutter and tool eraser.



JOHN ROMANO PHOTOS

Shohin Bonsai Tools cont.

Cuttings And Carving Tools

A variety of knives, saws and jin type carving tools for shohin bonsai can be seen in the photo. I have discovered that you can use some useful craft tools for this which are relatively inexpensive. The Exacto knife that has interchangeable cutting heads has a set of carving tools that are just like the expensive Japanese set you see in the box in the photo. The Exacto tools are almost exactly the same at a fraction of the price. Also, you can buy a small saw head that fits in the larger Exacto #2 handle which I find to be exceedingly useful when cutting branches on the inside of the tree. There is even a mini saw head that fits in the smaller Exacto #1 handle.

On visits to Japan I have also found some nice small folding saws. Small knives are useful for finish carving around a large cut to smooth out the perimeter of the cut which is especially important on maples. In the photo are examples of smaller Japanese knives. However, you can purchase small carving knives at local woodworking stores that work as well. The Flexcut brand offers a good selection of good quality knives. What I found most useful, however, is the Exacto knife as a trimming tool. The replaceable blades are razor sharp and come in a few different sizes.

Other Useful Tools

In the third photo I've included a variety of tools that I often use. For repotting, I rarely use chopsticks. I find that the bent tweezers work better for raking out the soil and teasing out the roots when transplanting. Because of the bent nature of the end, it 'tells' you when to stop and not push down too far into the root ball. You can also use it partially open so it acts like a two prong mini root rake. I also use the yellow handled metal pick for cleaning out roots as well. The smaller red handled one I purchased in Japan but you can get these from a dentist friend or in a hobby shop. The small pick is good for working with mame bonsai. Finally you can see a small wood handled bent tool that is used for removing trees from pots when repotting. I basically ground down this longer tool to make a shorter version.

For wire cutting there are smaller wire cutters available. In the photo, you can see the mini Masakuni wire cutter that I use all the time, a useful and powerful little tool. A bonsai friend of mine showed me the darker handled fine wire cutters made by Xuron that are useful for cutting the smaller sizes of wire (#20, #22) off your trees. Finally a pair of stainless steel wire cutters I was given by a surgeon that are also very small. You can also see a couple of smaller pliers that are also available. These are often quite useful for applying and turning wire around at the end of a wired branch. In the photo there are a couple of small stiff metal brushes for cleaning bark, jin on a tree, and my favourite tool found in an obscure bonsai shop in Japan, a mini bending clamp. This is great for making major bends on a smaller tree where a larger clamp is too clumsy and won't fit. There may be adaptable clamps used in hobby making but I haven't explored those options thus far.

Cleanliness Is Godliness!

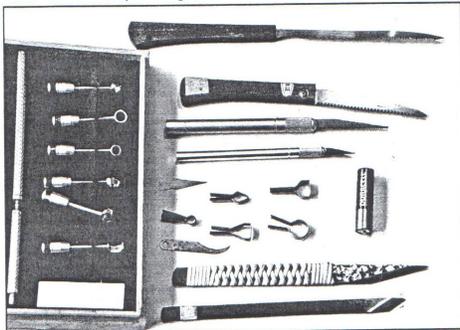
Finally, I want to make a pitch for keeping all your tools consistently clean and sharp. I have made it a ritual after the end of every work session to use a tool eraser to clean off my tools. I will then oil the surface to finish them up before putting them away. Using a tool eraser not only keeps your tools clean but sharp as well. By taking off debris, pitch, etc. it returns the tool to its sharpened condition and it will perform better as well as prevent rust/corrosion from developing. There are domestically made tool erasers so no need to get the Japanese ones but I have to say that the medium grade Japanese one works the best for me. I have seen this brand at Woodcraft stores and also you can purchase them at www.japanwoodworker.com.

The topic of sharpening tools will not be discussed in this article except to say that sharpening should be

a regular task. Don't try it on expensive tools if you are not adept at it. Leave tool sharpening to a pro. You can learn to do some finish tool sharpening with a hand stone and I would recommend that.

Good luck with your shohin bonsai. Your tools won't make you a better artist but knowledge of their use hopefully will.

A selection of tools used for shohin bonsai shaping including: folding saws, carving knives, Xacto tools and carving tools with an assortment of sharp cutting blades.



Tools used for shohin bonsai training including: wire cutters, wire pliers, jin pliers, tweezers, repotting sythe, picks, hard wire brushes and jack. A tape measure is also handy.



PNBCA 2011 Convention Workshops

Three members of the Vancouver Island Bonsai Society travelled to Seattle for the annual convention of the PNBCA. President Bob is seen here consulting with workshop leader Boon Manakitivipart on a *Coastal Redwood*, known also as Sequoia. With advice from guest artist Ryan Neil, George is seen pruning a *Shimpaku Juniper* while Tibby, with help Michael Hagedorn, trims her *Sharps Pygmy Maple*. With all the import papers in order, these three trees are now residents of Vancouver Island.

While there was plenty of action from a variety of professional guest artists during the convention, my picture of Michael Hagedorn shows him with his demonstration tree - a stately Mountain Hemlock from this island which was subsequently sold at the raffle for well over \$1000.

Next year the convention will be hosted by the Portland Bonsai Society between September 14th and 16th. Featured guest artists will be Marco Invernizzi from Italy, Peter Warren from the UK, Californian Ted Matson and Portlander Scott Elser. Some of the species and techniques to be workshopped will be Shimpaku, Rocky Mountain Juniper, Black Pine, Carving, Jin & Shari, Pests & Diseases, etc. We will soon have some copies of the detailed brochure for members to peruse while considering their vacation plans for 2012.

Looking further ahead, the convention of 2013 will take place in Spokane and, just three years from now, in 2014, we will be the hosting club.



As one enters the beautifully designed bonsai collection at the North Carolina Arboretum, the following words are displayed:

The Truth About Bonsai

There is an image of bonsai as a mystical,
Magical practise belonging to an ancient
Culture, requiring apprenticeship to
A master and knowledge of foreign terms.

Bonsai is actually engaging, challenging
Intimate form of horticulture that functions
As a form of creative expression.

Based on a one-to-one relationship
Between person and plant, it requires
Practice, persistence and patience.

Bonsai gardeners lovingly tend to their
Subjects, and the plants respond with health
And beauty. The art of bonsai is a study in
Vitality produced by the thoughtful and
Careful management of perpetual growth.

VIBC Library

We have been doing a review of the library and our collection of books and DVD's. Do you know that our return policy for items borrowed is 1 month? Apparently some of you have been enjoying the books for much longer, ... 4, 5, 6 months! So please have a look around your house for those VIBC library books and return them at our next meeting in October.

If there are still overdue books after the October meeting then look forward to seeing your name in the November newsletter. Thank-you for your cooperation.

Sharon - Librarian





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