

The Vancouver Island Bonsai Society

NEWSLETTER

February 2013



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2012 – 13 VIBS Officers

President: Bob Taylor
Treasurer: Larry Phillips
Secretary: Tibby Solloway
Newsletter & Website: John Mitchell

Next Society meeting: Monday, February 18th, 2013

Show & Tell: Winter silhouettes (continued) & Shohin bonsai



In looking over several members' trees lately, it is apparent that there are some lovely trees in silhouette that would be most welcome at Show & Tell – some silhouettes are invaluable aids to pruning & shaping the tree.

Shohin-size bonsai (about 8" to 10" from top rim of pot to top of tree) seem to be increasing in popularity worldwide at a phenomenal rate. These small trees tend to be economical, easily transportable and amenable to small spaces. We will feature a Shohin artist at our 2014 convention and expect to sell out. On Monday evening, please bring your favourite shohin to sho-off.

Below: a lovely little shohin spruce (George H.)



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A “Thank you!” to Bob Taylor for his Service & Leadership

Presently on his second multi-year term as president of our club, and after countless hundreds (more likely thousands) of hours of promoting, planning and representing our club locally and internationally, Bob Taylor is stepping down to allow someone else to take on the position so that he can attend to some critical Society business.

Bob will now be devoting his energy to committee chairman of the 2014 Pacific Northwest Bonsai Clubs Association (PNBCA) Convention that we will be hosting (again) at the Harbour Towers Hotel in Victoria. This will be our fourth convention since 1999 and, if our past successes are any measure, a significant event in the North American bonsai scene. We are looking to Bob to provide crucial leadership necessary to stage an event of this size (no pressure Bob!)

The Convention will be held the first weekend in October 3rd to 5th, 2014. There will be a call for volunteers as the preparations go forward – please see members of the Executive.



Speaking of Conventions! The **2013 PNBCA Convention “Combining Two Worlds”** is being held in Spokane, WA on the weekend of September 19th to 22nd, 2013.

Workshop presenters include:

the Penjing master **Robert Steven** from Indonesia - collected Hawthorn (Friday a.m.) & Bring

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Your Own Tree (Sat a.m.)

Ryan Neil – apprenticed with master Masahiko Kimura - collected Ponderosa Pine (Friday all day)

Michael Hagedorn – apprenticed with master Shinji Suzuki - (a number of topics through the weekend, including Japanese maple, Dwarf wisteria, etc)

David DeGroot – the internationally respected curator of the Weyerhaeuser Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection and a gifted designer and author. He studied in Japan with Yasuo Mitsuya and has been very active in bonsai since 1972. Workshops on Corkbark Japanese Black Pine (large & small) and Shimpaku juniper.

These conventions present marvelous learning (and socializing) experiences and are well-worth attending, if you are able to. Registration is required and workshops often sell out. Don't delay!

Check the website: <http://www.inlandbonsai.com/convention/workshops.html> as well, check out the websites of the presenters mentioned above – tremendous resources full of ideas & information.

Repotting

For trees that require it, repotting is an important early springtime activity. Deciduous trees are best repotted when the buds have swollen to a pre-break stage. Feeder root loss when repotted later in the season can cause unintentional damage to branches that have been deprived of the energy source. Conifers can be repotted to the elongated candle stage (before the needles on the new candle have become distinct).

If time permits on meeting night, we will try to demonstrate repotting techniques.

Reminder: The VIBS Annual General Meeting will be held at the regular February meeting and will include nominations for and election of the Executive.

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HCP Bonsai Garden update: Roger Charles, the Executive Director at HCP, has contributed a significant supply of rough cedar for the purpose of constructing stands and benches. This is a most generous donation and much appreciated. Thank you Roger!

The Bonsai Garden at HCP is a specialty garden of the HCP and has been constructed over the past year by the efforts of volunteers from HCP and VIBS. We have every expectation that this garden is going to be a significant and “must visit” bonsai resource. The initial selection of bonsai is on loan from George H. but we expect that bonsai from other sources will be loaned or donated in the near future.

Although not yet formalized, there will be an adjudication process that determines which donations are reserved for the permanent collection, and which will be put up for sale to fund the operation of the garden and future construction.

Volunteers are welcome – and much needed - please contact Larry Phillips at our regular meetings.

Admission to the Bonsai Garden will be free to members of The HCP (join now!) or by payment of the regular daily admission charge of \$11.00 at the main entrance of HCP (\$8.25 for seniors & students). The membership or daily admission gives access to all of the specialty gardens on the site. See: <http://hcp.ca/> This magical parkland is truly one of Victoria’s greatest secrets!

February Bonsai Care

February is much the same as January for bonsai care. Typically this is the coldest month of the year. However, toward the end of the month maples and elms are very likely to break their dormancy. If this warm winter continues, this is a certainty. In such a situation there is no option but to begin repotting trees which are scheduled for new soil or new pots this year.

I have seen significant bud swelling on my hornbeams and several Trident maples are beginning to leaf out!

If you have field-grown stock to be lifted this year this is the time to undercut the root ball. Prepare for next month, which will begin the most active repotting period of the year.

Repotting: Go through your collection and tag trees to be repotted. Mix up more basic potting medium than you plan to use this season. Whatever components make up your mix, keep a

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quantity of these unmixed on hand to tailor the medium to individual trees as you work. Some plants require more sand (like pines), and some require more moisture retention (like azaleas), and the basic mix can be altered to suit at the moment of repotting. Always let your plants to be repotted dry out for a few days before repotting – you may have to put them into shelter in this rainy clime!

Loosen the root ball from the walls of the pot with a dull knife blade. Soften the root ball mass with your fingers; gently comb out the roots, shaking the old soil loose. Clean out the area directly below the trunk, trim off old, heavy, or dead roots and cut them back approximately one-third.

Conifers, pines, all evergreens usually need repotting every two to four years. Deciduous trees need it more often, sometimes annually; it is impossible to be exact. Each tree is different, and you must learn to look for telltale signs. Ask our 'experts' at any club meeting!

Root balls that swell & push up out of the pot, or that shed water when watered, are often signs that repotting is necessary. When you are repotting you are given an opportunity to study the condition of the roots, bugs, root rot, and other things that need correction.

The proper time to repot varies, of course, with the species and the individual tree. The best rule is to wait for the buds to swell but before they sprout into leaves. Repot fast growers first, slower (conifers) later. Use sharp scissors when cutting off the roots since dull scissors can crush the roots causing root rot.

Cut roots off where they start to hang downward, making the root ball thickness appropriate for the pot to be used. Cut the roots directly below the trunk at right angles, then spray the root ball with a heavy Super Thrive solution and place in a plastic bag or in a basin of 40 to 50 drops of Super Thrive per gallon of water. Clean the pot well; replace the screen if necessary and put long fine wires through the holes to tie the root ball to the pot.

Place a mound of potting medium at the spot where the cleaned root ball will be placed. Push, with a twist, the root ball into the mounded medium. Spread the roots out straight in a radial pattern. Shake dry soil mix in, using a chopstick or skewer. Watch out for air pockets! Tap on the pot to settle the soil.

Trim the tree, hopefully, the same amount as the root ball was trimmed. Place in the shade out of the wind for three or four days, then bring gradually into morning sun, but still out of the wind. Spray the foliage during this period. Check for drying, but do not water the root ball

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unless it gets dry on top. Newly trimmed roots will not require as much water, and over watering can cause root rot.

Take this opportunity to prepare your soil mix, wires, and a good comfortable spot. When it comes time to work on your trees your surroundings will be orderly and peaceful.

Lime Sulphur and Dormant Oil...

Probably the very best insurance you can buy to protect your bonsai from an invasion of insects and mildew next summer is a winter-time spraying program using sulphur combined with dormant oil.

This can be done on a mild winter day of which we have many here on Vancouver Island. Kits containing the two products are available at stores carrying garden supplies for about \$12. – frequently with the trade name “Laters” or “Wilson’s”. Measure out a mixture of 2 parts of lime sulphur to 1 part of oil then spray on the trunk and branches of your bonsai. Constantly agitate the solution in the sprayer. Small quantities can be mixed in

Try to avoid wetting the soil. The treatment should be repeated a couple of times before leaf buds ‘break’. Instructions caution not to treat beech, Japanese maples, fir, hemlock, other conifers and certain other species, so read the label carefully.

Note: **Do not spray during freezing weather.**

Recipe for "Fertilizer Cakes"

With not much happening with bonsai in the dead of winter, it would be very practical to start preparing some slow release fertilizer to be ready for Spring. Some growers prefer to make their own fertilizer in cake form.

Here’s a recipe adapted from BCI magazine, Jan/Feb 1987

Dry ingredients:

4 parts canola meal (typical N-P-K analysis N= 6% - P= 3% - K = 4%)

2 parts blood meal (%. It is one of the highest non-synthetic sources of nitrogen)N = 13.25%, P = 1.0%, K = 0.6%

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1 part bone meal (typically 2 or 3%N – 22 – 0)

and a little powdered **Sevin** (an insecticide) and an animal repellent such as Plantskydd (available at most garden centres)

Liquid ingredients: Some form of liquid fertilizer with trace elements or use plain water.

Step 1--Mix all of the dry ingredients and set aside what you don't need at the moment. About 2/3 of a standard sized bucket of dry ingredients produces enough fertilizer for about 100 medium to large bonsai. Store leftover dry fertilizer in an airtight container for later use.

Step 2--Put the equivalent of a single application (for all of your trees) into a bucket, mix liquid with the dry mixture, and stir until you have something with about the consistency of oatmeal cookie batter.

Step 3--Use a melon baller to scoop the balls directly onto the bonsai soil surface, or any other work surface. You need to apply a bit of pressure against the side of the bucket to get them to stick together. Or use rubber gloves and make 1" balls, flatten them a little bit so they will not roll away, and place them on top of the soil. Apply about once a month during growing season.

John Naka's Bonsai Techniques I & II "For Sale"

A former member has contacted us through our website to say that both of these books, in "perfect" condition, are for sale. These two volumes were considered 'essential' learning tools but are now out of print (therefore classics) and somewhat hard to find. There are now many excellent "techniques" books available but these two volumes are still highly respected and very nicely illustrated. She is asking \$50 each, which seems reasonable (and less than most on-line sources).

Contact Jane at [250 208 8250](tel:2502088250) or maplesteadfarm@shaw.ca

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The Annual Mall Show ...

Mark informs us that construction continues at Hillside Mall, our usual show venue, and there is no possibility this year, and perhaps next, to re-establish our presence there.

Mark has checked out several other locations and finds that they have invariably been booked well ahead.

There has been a suggestion from a member of the Bonsai Garden Committee that we take advantage of our annual presence (this year at the new Bonsai Garden location) at the HCP Arts & Music in the Gardens event to both demonstrate our craft and hold our sale. Further developments will be announced.

Another reminder: Yearly memberships are now overdue. Please support your Society by renewing your membership.



Arctostaphylos x media – a natural hybrid between A. Columbiana & A. uva-ursi

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Membership Renewal / Application Form

I wish to renew my membership _____ or I wish to apply for membership _____ (new member)

Attached is \$25.00 for single membership _____ or attached is \$30.00 for family membership _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, Province _____ Postal Code _____

Phone (Home) _____ Phone (Other) _____

Please provide your e-mail address for information about various activities and notification of the posting of the Newsletter to the website: _____

If you are mailing this form, please mail to:

Vancouver Island Bonsai Society
Membership Coordinator
PO Box 8674
Victoria, BC
V8W 3S2