

The Vancouver Island Bonsai Society

NEWSLETTER

August 2015



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2014 VIBS Officers

President: Mark Paterson
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Past President: Bob Taylor
Treasurer: Larry Phillips
Secretary: Jim Haskins
Door & Raffle: Susan Vidal
Librarian: Kathi Morrison
Newsletter & Website: John Mitchell
Board member "without portfolio" Jim Morrison

Next Society meeting: Monday, August 17th, 2015

7:00 pm at Couvelier Pavilion, HCP

Please note new meeting location!

Scheduled: Brief talk on suiseki; bring your favourite bonsai.

Expert advice: There is a standing invitation to all members to bring in any tree that you would like an opinion or advice on – tap into several hundred years of collective bonsai experience.

Club activities: Please share your thoughts on activities that you would like to see. See the Activities Calendar:

<http://www.victoriabonsai.bc.ca/bonsaiCalendar.htm>

Raffle table: Please consider bringing an item for the raffle table - it is a good fund-raiser for club events and this year promises to be a very good year for special events. This month's Table should be interesting — we'll be holding the raffle at the end of the evening, after the tour of the Gardens.

A Request for scent-free meetings: People sensitive to scents can come down with severe headaches and feel quite unwell after exposure. Out of consideration for our fellow members, we would ask that our meetings be scent-free.



Our first meeting at HCP!

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Last Meeting:

The July meeting was the first we've held in the Couvelier Pavilion and the experience was remarkable! The positive feedback was tremendous and afterward we toured the majority of the gardens and finished back at the Pavilion via the Bonsai Garden for a nicely stocked raffle table. Our thanks to Treasurer Larry Phillips for engineering our move to this venue.



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Mark's Bonsai 201 Workshop

We had a great Bonsai 201 workshop on July 25th! Bonsai 101 usually uses 1 gallon stock and we talk about taper, stock selection and bonsai care while we introduce people to the art of bonsai for an affordable price utilizing interesting stock from various nurseries.



Bonsai 201 was put together for the express purpose of using difficult techniques such as creating jinn and shari, major branch bending, and branch layering to form a canopy.

The board of directors put together this



workshop \$475 day for the price of \$300 - 3 members x \$100. The best part was part of the proceeds went to the bonsai society raising \$135 after costs.

David, Eric and Sandy seemed pleased with the experience staying an hour and a half past the stated 3 hours (4.5 hours!) to move past the trunk shaping and work on foliage refinement. Thanks for coming out and thanks for supporting the society!



P.S. Eric, I think David is right and your jinn branch is too much. And David, have you come to a decision on the lower left branches yet?

Article & photos by Mark Paterson

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In Memoriam - Hal Seybold

This is sad news came from bonsai friends in Campbell River at the end of last week. I have not otherwise confirmed this information, so fully expect to be updated soon, I'm sure.

Hal was a retired teacher in Port Hardy who, with his wife Willis, became suppliers of a unique Vancouver Island limestone to the bonsai & stone collecting communities, contributing significantly, scientifically, to the body of knowledge related to the particular geologic formations that produce these stones.

Hal and Willis made numerous visits to Victoria visiting friends and demonstrating the unique qualities of this astonishing stone as scholars' rock pieces, viewing stones, landscape stones and bonsai "companion" stones.

Hal presented seminars at various events, including the 2009 PNBCA Convention in Victoria.

The 140 pound stone pictured above, he named "In this stone the sprit sings." It is on loan to the Sun Yat Sen Gardens in Vancouver.



Hal & Willis specialized in a particular style of limestone "Scholars' Rock". The Chinese refer to them as **Gong shi** (usually pronounced "gong shur" or "gung shur". From experience gained in their travels, they found that their stones were essentially identical to the treasured "Lingbi" stones of China.

We will feature Hal in another publication soon. We will miss this delightful man and his passion for teaching about these incredible stones. Our deep condolences go out to Willis and the rest of Hal's friends and family.

August Bonsai Tips - August is the month to start backing off the nitrogen fertilizer and hardening them off for the coming Fall. By the end of the month regimens should have moved to 0-10-10 for dluted liquid concentrates to harden the wood and induce budding.

Early hints of fall colour change will begin to show toward the end of the month.

Continue to monitor for the presence of insects.

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390-year-old tree survived atomic bomb (from the Washington Post)

Moses Weisberg was walking his bicycle through the National Arboretum in Northeast Washington when he stopped at a mushroom-shaped tree. The first thing he noticed was the thickness of the trunk, estimated (it) at almost a foot and-a-half in diameter. And then there was the abundance of spindly leaves, a healthy head of hair for a botanical relic 390 years old.



But it was only when he learned the full history of the tree, a Japanese white pine donated in 1976, that he was truly stunned. The tree, a part of the Arboretum's National Bonsai and Penjing Museum, has not only navigated the perils of age to become the collection's oldest, but it also survived the blast of an atomic bomb, Little Boy, dropped over Hiroshima, Japan, during World War II.

"For one, it's amazing to think that something could have survived an atomic blast," said Weisberg, a 26-year-old student at the Georgetown University Law Center. "And then that by some happenstance a Japanese tree from the 1600s ended up here."

The bonsai tree's history is being honored this week, as Thursday marks the 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing. But visitors can see the tree as part of the museum's permanent collection throughout the year.

The tree, donated by a bonsai master named Masaru Yamaki, was part of a 53-specimen gift to the United States for its 1976 bicentennial. Little was known about the tree until March 8, 2001, when — with no advance notice — two brothers visiting from Japan showed up at the museum to check on their grandfather's tree.

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"I find it amazing that Masaru Yamaki could give a priceless bonsai (away) and not say a word about it," said Felix Laughlin, president of the nonprofit National Bonsai Foundation. "I get emotional just talking about it."

Shigeru Yamaki and his brother, Akira, filled in the blanks for museum officials, though they had never seen the tree before their visit and had only heard about it through family stories. News footage taken at the Yamaki Nursery after the blast shows the pine sitting unscathed in the background.

Ensuring the continued survival of such an important piece of the collection is no easy task. It falls to Jack Sustic, who has been the curator of the Bonsai and Penjing Museum since 2002. Bonsai, Sustic said, refers not to the type of tree but rather the manner in which it is cared for. It is the blending of nature and art, he said.

The care includes seeing that it is watered daily, inspected for insects, rotated for the sun twice a week and repotted on occasion.

In the winter, the tree is moved to the museum's climate-controlled Chinese Pavilion. Currently, it sits in the museum courtyard.

"One of the things that makes it so special is, if you imagine, somebody has attended to that tree every day since 1625," Sustic said. "I always like to say bonsai is like a verb. It's not a noun; it's doing."

He joked that tending to a centuries-old tree every day can be enough pressure to keep him up at night. Unlike other museum pieces, there is no recourse when a plant dies.

"I have a packed suitcase at home," he said. "There's a few trees in here that it's just kind of a 'Where's Waldo?' if something happens."

The tranquility of the arboretum is far from the furor of Hiroshima decades ago.

On Aug. 6, 1945, a 9,700-pound bomb exploded over the city at 8:15 a.m. A walled nursery belonging to the Yamakis was less than two miles from the site of the bomb blast, but the ancient tree, Sustic said, was just far enough away to survive.

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"Location, location, location," Sustic said. "It was up against a wall. It must have been the wall that shielded it from the blast."

All the family members inside the home survived the blast as well. It blew out all the windows, leaving everyone inside cut from flying glass, but no one suffered permanent injury, according to the museum.

The white pine has long outlived its life expectancy and has spent about a tenth of its life in Washington.

"I'm reluctant to look because I don't want it to say 200 years," Sustic said of the tree's maximum life expectancy.

In 2016, museum officials said, the bonsai will have a new home in the Japanese Pavilion, which is being renovated in honor of its upcoming 40th anniversary.

The tree will bear the same placard that triggers the amazement of passersby every day:

"In training since 1625"

By Faiz Siddiqui August 2/15

We would like to extend our deep appreciation to everyone who volunteered at Arts & Music in the Gardens this past weekend! Your efforts were much appreciated. The Bonsai Garden was shown off to great effect and the bonsai sale couldn't have happened without you!

Bob Taylor has a selection of bonsai tools and wire for club members wishing to purchase these supplies. Bob's prices are as reasonable as you will find anywhere locally, I believe. See Bob at the meetings!



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Bonsai Garden update – Arts & Music in the Gardens 2015

Once again, the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific in Victoria was THE place to be for the Arts & Music in the Gardens event as a highlight of the midsummer season. Some photos:



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Coming Events:

August 17 August bonsai meeting at the Couvelier Pavilion - 7:00 pm. Theme: a discussion of Viewing Stones including Suiseki and Scholars' Rocks. Show & Tell: Bring your favourite bonsai.

August 25 Rock collecting trip to a river or beach on Vancouver Island. Details TBA

Coming Saturday, October 17th: Internationally renowned bonsai artist **David DeGroot** will be presenting a workshop at HCP. Space for participants will be extremely limited and we are offering places in the workshop to club members first. Within a week, or so, we will be extending the offer to other clubs on the Island and on the mainland, if there are any spaces left.

August Meeting Theme – Viewing Stones

As a natural complement to miniature trees, many of our members collect and exhibit stones which have been shaped by time and the elements into objects of unusual and extraordinary beauty.

Many of the stones we use come from right here on Vancouver Island, known for its beautifully shaped limestone pieces, as described in the memoriam to Hal Seybold, above..

Collectively they are called “viewing stones”. **Suiseki** is the Japanese term for such stones and literally translated *Sui* means “water” and *seki* means “stone” The Chinese refer to them as **Gongshi** (usually pronounced "gong shur" or "gung shur") or Scholar's Rocks.

Beautiful bonsai presented with a small viewing stone as a companion piece is a practice in creating a work of art that can bring visual and tactile pleasure.

The Chinese penjing style often includes stones in the same tray as the trees. Viewing stones may also be shown alone on trays of sand (suiban), on a wooden slab or on a carefully carved base the Japanese call a diaza.



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Vancouver Island Bonsai Society

Membership Renewal / Application Form 2015

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

Attached is \$30.00 for single membership _____ or attached is \$35.00 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, B.C.
V8W 3S2



In the Takata Garden at HCP