

The Vancouver Island Bonsai Society

NEWSLETTER

July 2015



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2014 VIBS Officers

President: Mark Paterson
Vice President: Vacant
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, June 15th, 2015

7:00 pm at Couvelier Pavilion, HCP

Please note new meeting location!

Scheduled: Welcome to our new meeting place! There will be a few short words of welcome followed by a tour of the Gardens, finishing up in the Bonsai Garden before returning to the Couvelier Pavilion.

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.

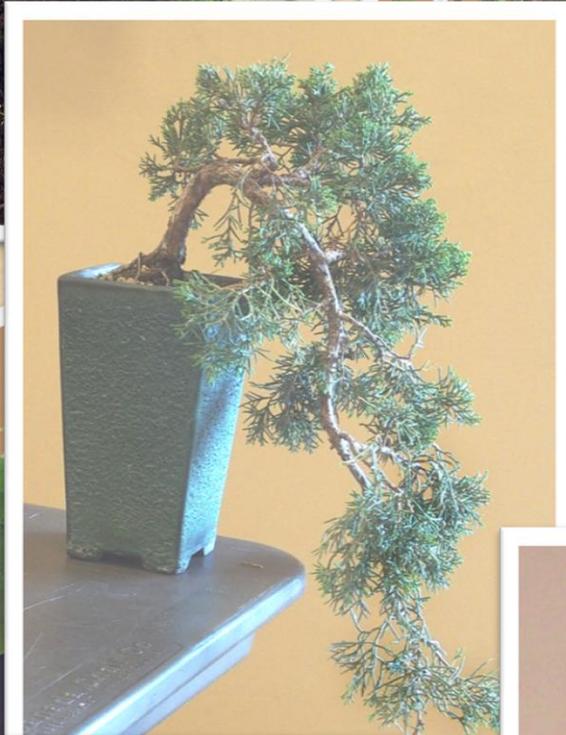
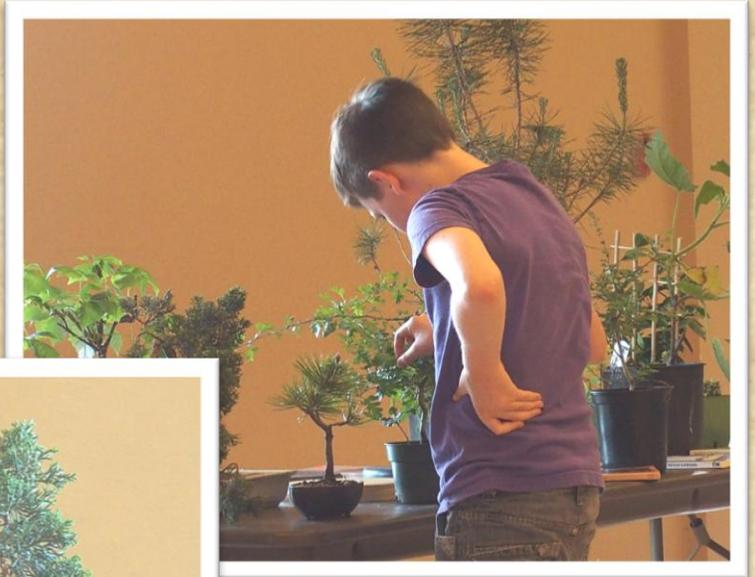


Mudmen

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Last Meeting:



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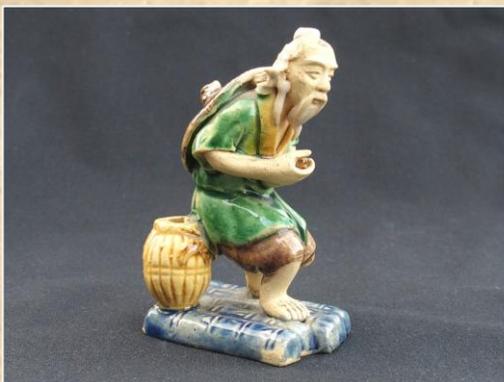
Open House at Maurice's

On June 28th Maurice, once again, hosted a gathering of club members in his quite astonishing garden. It was a delightful afternoon in a beautiful setting. The challenge was absorbing as much of the non-stop bonsai wisdom and plant lore as possible. Thank you Maurice - a special treat, as always!



Photos: Greg Nowakowski

A gift of Mudmen – Mudmen are the often exquisitely detailed figures that one often encounters in some of the shops in Chinatown and that some bonsai-ists like to incorporate into PenJing-style landscapes. Kathryn Bush contacted the club and, on behalf of her late mother **Ruth Botten**, donated a collection of figurines to the club. Watch for them on the raffle table. Thank you Kathryn!



Photos: John M except where noted

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Growing media

One of our members wrote to say: ... "It would be helpful to go over the mix for the potting medium and also where to purchase the ingredients. E.g. loam, what kind of sand, use of poultry grit? etc".

We have a number of newer members who might well also be wondering about bonsai soil so here is a brief description of what we use.

Bonsai "soil" tends to be a granular mineral medium conducive to very good drainage. There is often a "1 part" component of SeaSoil, composted fir or pine bark mulch never cedar (too toxic) or other organic elements. I use dried sphagnum moss (not peat moss!) sold in a compressed brick for use mainly by the orchid hobbyists and I shave it off the brick with a sharp butcher knife on a piece of plywood I use as a cutting board, in amounts equal to about ½ part. Consider the parts to be cups, quarts, litres —whatever volume measure suits the occasion.

The granular components should be between 2mm and, say, 6mm or 1/8th to 1/4" in size. The drainage-clogging fine "dust" should be screened out using soil sifting sieves sold for the purpose (you can make your own using "hardware cloth" screening nailed to a home-built frame).

I strongly advise against using the "bonsai soil" marketed under the Growell brand - it contains fine sand and Turface (neither of which are recommended in bonsai growing media).

For a number of years the recommended VIBS growing media was 3 parts screened horticultural pumice (for its excellent water holding ability), 2 parts screened red lava (for its soil-aerating quality), and 1 part composted fir/pine bark for the organic component that many deciduous trees seem to appreciate. Because good composted fir bark is all but impossible to come by — it's become stringy with huge amounts of very fine bark dust — we use SeaSoil, a fish farm waste product mixed with fir bark. Our friends in Campbell River seem to have access to a high quality composted fir bark that isn't available here, as far as I know.

Another club recipe had #2 chicken grit added for granular bulk - it neither has water holding capacity nor aerating qualities but many of us still include it for enhanced drainage & bulk.

Traditionally, the Japanese "red loam" or Akadama, was used wholly, or in part. It was an especially good soil for Japanese maples and tree roots were able to penetrate the individual

Please note - vigorous discussions on what constitutes the best mix of ingredients for various bonsai soils is a perennial phenomenon in bonsai gatherings worldwide. These are just a few notes from my sources & experience.

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grains (making more of the room in the pot available for roots). Japan Bonsai was the only dependable supplier and that business is now essentially closed.

Other Japanese soils like Kiryu (river sand) and kanuma (an acidic pumice loved by azaleas) are now difficult to obtain so people continue to experiment with mixtures.

Another favorite mixture is Boon Mix, named after bonsai master Boon Manakitivipart, who used a mix popular in Japan. It is 1 part lava rock, 1 part pumice, 1 part Akadama, ½ cup of horticultural charcoal (per 5 gallon mix), ½ cup of decomposed granite (per 5 gallon mix). With Akadama hard to come by, the remaining ingredients would be good for conifers (I would add 1 part SeaSoil or chopped sphagnum).

Where to find these ingredients: **Red lava** - from landscape suppliers, **Horticultural pumice** - from GardenWorks on Blenkinsop (only source I know), **#2 chicken grit** (decomposed granite) - Borden Mercantile, Integrity (on Keating X-Road) or Buckerfields, **Compressed sphagnum** - GardenWorks on Blenkinsop, **horticultural charcoal** - ask around!, **SeaSoil** - garden centers.

When the sun gets too hot...

July 16, 2015 by Michael Hagedorn (Crateagus Bonsai)

There are various ways of helping our bonsai cope with sun and not literally cooking them on our benches in the summertime. They are in pots, but it doesn't mean we want to fry a special root dish, in a soil sauce...

Because bonsai are in pots, they are very unlike trees in the ground. We want to reduce any similarities to a dog in a car on a hot day.

There are two situations... A cooler climate with rare spikes in temperature to 100 F / 38 C or higher that might last a few days, and then there are the hot summer areas that are always that high:

Sudden, rare spikes in cooler climates: Simply relocate your trees temporarily. Don't bring them inside, but on the ground is a good start, under benches maybe, in light shade. Try to avoid full shade. Place them close together, but still retaining ease of watering. Plants near other plants cool one another with transpiration. Placing bonsai on grass is going to be a lot cooler than on a sidewalk.

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Hot weather areas: These areas need site modification. Shadecloth over your growing area is a great option, reducing the ambient and radiant heat. Try 30% shadecloth for general use. Plant more vegetation around your benches, and reduce gravel or concrete areas. Put up fogger/misters that use very little water for cooling down during the heat of the day. Another, less attractive but very effective option is protecting individual pots with either towels or aluminum foil. Yet another is the same as cold weather protection, sinking your pots in bark or gravel. Gravel holds heat, though, so bark or something similar is better protection and is less likely to damage pots. Simply turning your trees so that the lowest branches shield the pot in the late afternoon can be significant. Be aware that entire site modification is much more effective than shielding individual pots.

In general terms (very general!), conifers will be more resistant to the effects of heat. Most conifer bonsai are happy up to 90 F. Most deciduous will do fine up to 80 F. If you're consistently much higher than that, then you need site modification.

The advantages to any sort of heat reduction are:

- Moisture needs of the bonsai greatly decrease
- Foliage remains in better condition
- Less damage to roots
- Bonsai show less stress



Most importantly, do not ignore hot spells! Wing into action... They can seriously put your tree back, as badly as if they'd been hosting a very successful pest or disease.

Especially those who live in areas that are currently seeing water restrictions, reducing your water needs might be really significant if you've a lot of plants to take care of. Protecting bonsai from intense sun can make a huge difference to health and the ability of the tree to avoid other stresses. Trees can generally handle one stress, but multiple stresses get dicey. Bonsai already have one...they're in a pot!

Advice from Maurice — in this prolonged hot & dry spell, be careful not to overwater. Trees may enter dormancy and be unable to use excess water resulting in root rot & dead trees if drainage isn't perfect. Just keep soil moist.

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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!



Greg N. brought back some lovely petrified wood from the Arizona desert and he is now making some of his collection available for sale to interested club members. Many of these pieces would be suitable for suiseki, gong shi or just incorporating into PenJing-style landscapes. Contact Greg at: gregn9946@gmail.com



Brentwood Bay Nurseries continues their "winding down" sale 40% on all plants.

If anyone is aware of garden center or nursery sales please let me know and I will try to find space to advertise them here.

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Coming Events:

July 25 - Bonsai 201 Workshop at Mark Paterson's. Shaping 7 gallon Juniper. Class limited to 3 participants. At a bonsai nursery, one could expect to see trees of this quality offered at \$250. For this event Mark is offering the tree and his guidance in shaping it for \$100.

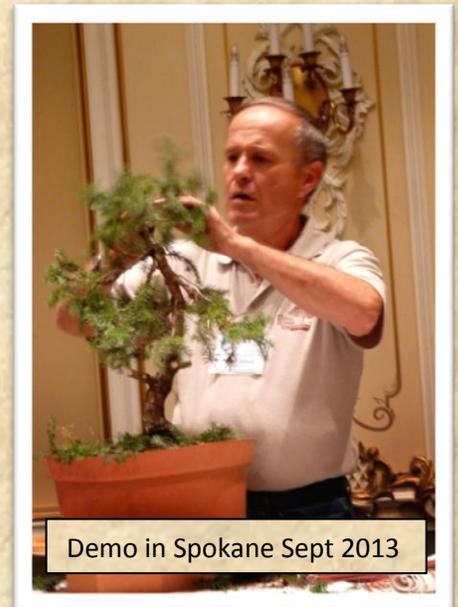
August 15th & 16th Annual Bonsai Show & Sale at Arts & Music in the Gardens at HCP. This is one of the finest garden events of the year and shouldn't be missed. We will be looking for volunteers to help the club with this event

August 17 August bonsai meeting at the Couvelier Pavilion - 7:00 pm. Theme: Suiseki

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.

David served for 25 years as curator of the Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection/Pacific Bonsai Museum in Federal Way, WA. He is an award-winning designer and author, who has been studying and practicing bonsai since 1972. He has studied bonsai in Japan with Yasuo Mitsuya, satsuki juniper with Tatemori Gondo and Hayata Nakayama, and display with Uhaku Sudo. His educational journal articles have been published throughout the US and in eight other countries, and his first book *Basic Bonsai Design* is now in its 7th printing. His new book *Principles of Bonsai Design* will be published this year. David travels widely to lecture, and has presented programs across the U.S. and in Brazil, Canada, China, England, South Africa, and Venezuela. He is active with several bonsai organizations in the Puget Sound area and nationally. In September, a month prior to his Victoria workshop, David will be one of the esteemed bonsai masters judging entries in the Artisans' Cup Bonsai Village event in Portland, OR.



Demo in Spokane Sept 2013

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David's Ponderosa workshop Spokane Sept 2013

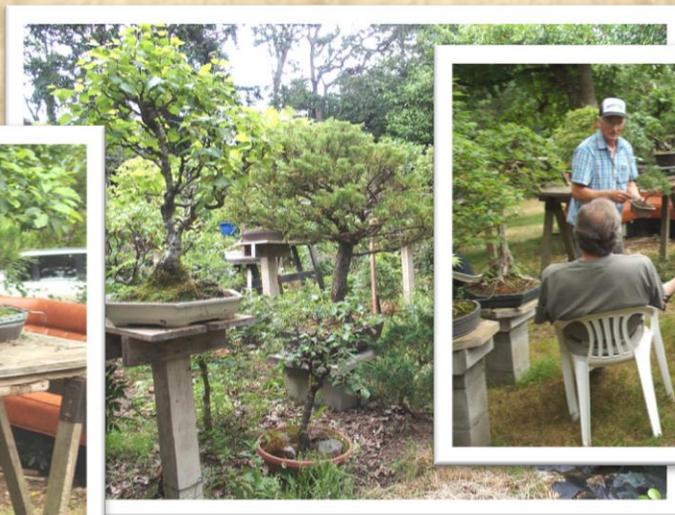
David's workshop at the Hort Centre will be a Bring-Your-Own-Tree event and registration is **\$150 for the 4 hour workshop**. You will likely want to bring a tree of significant caliper and bonsai potential ... no big shaggy monsters that require no end of work just to see the trunk. The trees should be worked on by yourselves prior to the workshop, essentially leaving the "shaping" or "styling" as the workshop activity. We would be

pleased to advise participants on the suitability of their trees at the September meeting.

For anyone who needs a tree for this event, Mark Paterson has acquired some very special Chinese junipers in 7 gallon pots that he will make available for sale for \$100 each, over and above the cost of the workshop. These juniper are significantly superior in branching & trunk size to what you might expect to find at local nurseries.

A Request for scent-free meetings We've become aware that some of our members have a heightened sensitivity to the scent of colognes, after shaves and other scented grooming products. 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.

More Maurice's



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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

