



The Bonsai Creation

March - Size DOESN'T Matter!

So, did that headline get your attention? I hope so. One of the things that really doesn't get the attention it deserves is the varying sizes of bonsai there are.

Like many of us, my first real exposure to bonsai was Pat Morita showing Ralph Macchio how to trim a fine specimen Shimpaku juniper in *The Karate Kid*. (Since getting involved in bonsai myself, I now know how unrealistic that film was - there's NO WAY I would EVER hand those pruners to some teenage juvenile delinquent!!) I knew from reading about bonsai that other species could be used for bonsai, but in my mind bonsai, while trees in miniature, were always 1 1/2' to 3' tall.

Over the years, as I have actually begun studying bonsai, I have learned that it isn't necessarily the biggest trees that are the most fascinating bonsai. In fact, it is sometimes easier to develop, style, and keep alive a larger tree than the smallest of the specimen bonsai.

Shohin and mame bonsai can be a challenge even to the experienced bonsai enthusiast. While having the largest pine or maple may feed the ego, some of us can be content with tiny little trees. (OK, if the truth be known, it has NOTHING to do with ego - I can kill ten \$30 trees for the same investment as one \$300 tree and spend 10 times the effort doing it! But at least I FEEL better when I convince myself I really don't NEED big trees!)

Shohin bonsai are those that are 10" or

less (24 cm) in height. Mame bonsai are even smaller - from 3" to 6" (7.5 - 15 cm) tall.

As small as these little wonders are, they are not the smallest members of the bonsai family. Shito bonsai are less than 3" tall from the soil line!! These tiny trees can use a single leaf to represent an entire branch. I have included in this issue some examples of each of these three sizes of bonsai for your consideration.

Also in this issue, Mark Fields shares his recent experience meeting bonsai master Matt Ouwinga. Mark has included some pictures of Matt and his trees. In addition, Matt explains his approach to bonsai soil and fertilizers.

Paul Weishaar discusses repotting your bonsai. This is a great intro to the March workshop on repotting Carl Wooldridge will conduct on the 7th, so look through it before the meeting if you get a chance.

See you on the 7th!

Michael Turley, Newsletter Editor

New Club Members
The Indianapolis Bonsai Club is proud to welcome our newest members for March:

Neil Dellinger
Terry Meldrum

Welcome to IBC!

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From The Office of the President -

CAN SPRING BE FAR BEHIND?

I'm sitting here bathed in sunlight, and I am forced to squint my eyes against the brightness of the sun's reflection on the snow surrounding my home. But wait . . . I just saw a robin (which a bird watcher tells me is not good, as the ground is still frozen which means no insects). But this prompts me to check my trees in the cold frame, and I see the buds on the trident maples and Korean hornbeams are swelling. Some have actually popped and very small green leaves are emerging. Can this mean Spring is on the horizon?

You bet it does. With this in mind, some members are getting pumped for the upcoming season by going to Brussel's Bonsai, March 3 Preview Sale in Olive Branch, MS. Check their website (www.brusselsbonsai.com) if you too have an interest in going. With Spring just around the corner, let's review the near term IBC schedule.

March 7 Meeting

This meeting offers something for the novice and experienced bonsai enthusiast as follows. Experienced members are encouraged to attend this meeting and lend assistance to the novice members

- Repotting the October 2006 Bonsai 101 nursery stock trees into bonsai pots.
- Assisting other members who need help in repotting an existing bonsai.

If you received a tree from **Carl Wooldridge** last October, please bring your tree to this meeting for instruction on how to transition their nursery tree into a bonsai pot. Carl will introduce this session with a brief discussion on bonsai pots, followed by the more experienced membership assisting the novice members.

You will need to bring the following:

- Bonsai pot

- Shears
- Bonsai wire
- Chopstick
- Pliers
- Bonsai soil
- Trash bag to protect your work surface.

Mark Fields will bring bonsai soil for \$10/a bag and **Rich Stepien** will have bonsai pots and wire for sale. These members invest their own money to offer these items so try to support their endeavors when you need an item.

Sign-up sheets will be available at the March meeting for the **April 4 Juniper workshop** which costs \$25 and includes the tree. A minimum \$10 deposit is required to sign up. IBC uses club dollars to purchase these trees so be sure to sign-up as extra trees won't be purchased.

Also at the March meeting, sign-up sheets will also be offered for the **Monday, April 16 Marco Invernizzi "Bring Your Own Tree" workshops**. Workshops will be held in the morning, afternoon and evening and a \$10 minimum deposit is required when you sign up. The workshop fee is \$50 and does not include a tree. This will be the 3rd year Marco has visited our club and shared bonsai master techniques, advice and some hands on assistance. You will learn a lot and have lots of fun. Please do not sign up if you're not serious about attending. The \$50 fee only recoups the fee Marco charges so "no shows" hurt the Club treasury.

April 4 Meeting

Mark Fields will give a presentation and demonstration on hard pruning Chinese elms for ramification. Members are welcome to bring a tree for Mark's advice and assistance. Mark will finish the ramification process at the June meeting so you won't want to miss this meeting.

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteer raffle was explained at the February meeting. I would like to thank the following volunteers for their help during January and February:

- **Paul Weishaar** (great Bonsai Soil Presentation at the February meeting)
- **Ed Dax**
- **Mike Dodge**
- **John Eby**
- **Jessica Flick**
- **Jack Mitenbuler**

I'd also like to thank **Rich Stepien** for bringing pots and wire for members to purchase.

Remember, you can't buy a ticket for the 2 crescent pots and 2 stainless steel concave cutters to be given away in December – you can only get a ticket by volunteering your time at meetings and exhibits, making a presentation, exhibiting trees, assisting with club sales, speaking engagements, etc. There is plenty of opportunity for all to participate. As a reminder, board members get 2 tickets per month – Is this a good time to remind everyone we're still looking for a Club Historian and someone to chair the Speaker's Bureau?

Hang in there. Spring's just around the corner. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at the March 7 Meeting.

Donna Shirley

If you have a request for articles, comments or photos please send them through www.indybonsai.org or send an email to IBC's Newsletter Editor at:

webmaster@indybonsai.org

Indianapolis Bonsai Club Calendar of Events

January 3 - **Preview 2007 Schedule of Events**, Historical Tapes of IBC Club - Mark Fields Presenter

February 7 - **Bonsai Soils** - Paul Weishaar, Presenter

March 7 - **Potting / Repotting Trees** - Carl Wooldridge, Presenter. 2006 **Bonsai 101** participants bring back frees for potting. Other members can bring 1 tree for repotting with Club assistance. Club provides soil @ \$10 a bag

April 4 - **Juniper Workshop** from nursery stock, **Rough Pruning on Chinese Elms** for June ramification demo - Mark Fields, Presenter

April 15 - **Marco Invernezzi Demonstration** - Marco returns from Italy for the third year in a row to visit our Club

April 16 - **Marco Invernezzi Workshop - Bring Your Own Tree** - Morning, afternoon, and evening workshops for IBC members will be scheduled

May 2 - **Air-Layering, Thread and Root Grafting Demonstration** - Mark Fields, Presenter

May 5 & 6 - **Indianapolis Museum of Art Exhibit** - IMA Garden Court

June 6 - **Ramifying Chinese Elm Demonstration** - Mark Fields, Presenter

June 23 & 24 - **Garfield Park Exhibit** - Garfield Park Conservatory

July 4 - **NO MEETING – HOLIDAY**

July 14 - **Member Backyard Tour** - Details will be furnished at the June Meeting

August 1 - **Tropical Workshop** - Mike DeVore, Presenter

September 5 - **Membership Critique "Bring Your Own Trees"** - Members can get advice on WRG display trees

September 8 - **Penrod Art Festival and IBC Bonsai Sale**

September 22 - **White River Gardens Exhibit** begins. Day 1 of annual **IBC Bonsai Sale** at WRG Exhibit

September 23 - Day 2 of annual **IBC Bonsai Sale** at WRG Exhibit

October 3 - **Bonsai 101** - Carl Wooldridge, Presenter

November 7 - **Bonsai Display Stands & Accent Plants** - Presented as preparation for **MABA 2008** hosted by IBC

November 11 - **White River Gardens Exhibit** ends

December 5 - **Annual Holiday Party & Raffle** - Held at Chinese Ruby Restaurant

Bonsai by the Month

By Paul Weishaar

Spring is springing. Spring has sprung. However that saying goes...it is spring!

Time to get to work on your bonsai. Work? Is that a good description of what we want to do? A quick look in Webster's Dictionary (the 1958 edition I took with me when I enrolled at Purdue) produced the following synonyms: labor, travail, toil, drudgery, grind, etc. That's not what I want to do. Maybe I should review some of the definitions and find one I like. Hmmmm, that one is not appropriate, neither is that. Here we go, this applies: an activity in which one sustains a physical or mental effort to overcome obstacles and achieve an objective or result. That works for me. Oh no...I used that word again. Anyway, it is time to do your spring bonsai chores. I wonder what Webster says about chores.....

I am assuming you have completed the tasks we have outlined over the past two months:

- You have studied your bonsai and know what you wish to do
- Soil is sifted and mixed
- Tools are cleaned and sharpened
- All your old pots are clean and you have purchased any new pots
- You have drainage screen and wire

What....some of you have not completed the above items? If this description fits you it is not time to begin spring bonsai chores, it is PANIC TIME.

One of the first tasks is spring pruning. Pruning is best accomplished before you repot the tree as it is still setting solid in the pot. This is the time for heavy pruning as the tree is still concentrating its energy in the roots. When the buds begin to open the energy is transferred to the branches and removal of branches becomes a greater shock to the tree.

Trunks and older branches need to have unwanted buds removed now. This is easy as the buds can be knocked off with no effort. The ease of these buds coming off is why you wire in January or February on deciduous trees.

This is a good time to remove moss from the trunk and exposed roots on your trees. Simply take an old toothbrush, dip it in a mild soap mixture and gently

scrub away.

Remove any old wire. While there is no foliage on the deciduous trees it is an excellent time to inspect for old wire. If you leave the wire on too long it will scar the branch. If the branch pops back to its original position simply rewire it.

Now that all of the above have been accomplished we can consider repotting. How often should you repot? Good question. There is no fixed definition. Some bonsai books say grasp the trunk and gently try to move the tree from side to side. If it moves easily and the tree is healthy you do not have to repot it. I can perform this test but it proves nothing as all my trees are wired into the pot. They do not move. I tried not wiring my trees into the pot one year but after a couple trips along the bench through the bonsai by some resident raccoons and then a windy day I realized what an error this was. As a general guide young bonsai are repotted every year and older, more mature trees every two or three years.

I will not get into the discussion of the actual soil mix as the Soils Program presented in IBC meetings in the past is available on the IBC website, www.indybonsai.org

Your deciduous trees should be repotted first. Watch them closely as when bud swell begins you have about a two week period to successfully repot. I have noticed in my collection the maples and elms bud first. Pruning and repotting of flowering trees should be put off until flowering is completed. Many experts recommend allowing the flowering bonsai to bloom one year and then pruning and repotting the next year along with your deciduous trees.

Conifers can be repotted until the end of May in the Indianapolis climate. Junipers can be repotted as late as mid June. If you repot conifers while they are dormant they are prone to root rot.

Do not repot your tropicals yet. Wait until you see vigorous growth. This usually occurs when the temperatures get around 60 degrees outside. Obviously if you have a greenhouse or are using grow lights you can repot earlier. Remember to protect repotted bonsai from the direct sun and wind for at least two weeks, preferably three. Do not fertilize for 30 days. You can add Superthrive to your water to promote root growth.

Any questions? If so bring your question and/or tree to the next IBC meeting. We have many talented and knowledgeable experts who are willing to share their expertise.

A Visit with Matt Ouwinga

By Mark Fields

On the evening of Friday, February 5, 2007, my wife and I traveled to Normal, Illinois to visit with Neil Dellinger and his family. Back in December, Neil had contacted Matt Ouwinga, a relative newcomer on the bonsai master scene. Neil had contacted him via email and had received some photos of his trees in winter storage in January and we were so impressed that we just had to visit him.



Matt working on trident

Matt became interested in bonsai when he was about 15 years old. After seeing a bonsai tree at a local department store and not being allowed by his mom to buy it because it was too expensive, he was encouraged by his father to begin researching bonsai. His father immediately took him to the local library and he checked out every book they had on bonsai. This was the start of everything and his passion for bonsai has been growing strong ever since.

He took some bonsai classes when he was 18 and when he completed them he was looking for something more. At 19 he found that a garden center with several

hundred bonsai had a production manager position open. He applied and was hired to be the production manager there from age 19 through 21. During that time he taught "Intro to Bonsai" classes and by the time he left to finish up his university work had taught several hundred students



Matt's favorite trident

He really wanted to go to Japan. After some research, he found the William N. Valavanis of International Bonsai had arranged tour at an exceptional price. So, when he was 22 he went to Japan with Bill and several other people to attend Kokufu-ten. It was there he discovered the true beauty of Japanese bonsai and knew he needed to come back.



One of his tridents

When he was there he met Yoshi Nakamizu, the bonsai tour guide, and organizer of the International School of

Bonsai under Mr. Kunio Kobayashi. He knew he needed to come back to study and live in Japan to learn about true Japanese bonsai culture.

Back home he finished up school and was hired for his first teaching job at a local high school. When he was 24, after his first year of teaching, he decided to study bonsai in Japan for his entire summer break. During that time he lived and worked as an apprentice under Senpai (head apprentice) Peter Warren from the U.K. at Shunkean, the world famous bonsai museum owned by Mr. Kobayashi.



a black pine

In just under three months he returned home with his certificate from the International School of Bonsai.

Since his return, he has continued to teach high school and promote his love of Japanese bonsai across the United States. During the summer of 2006 he visited 6 bonsai clubs and has another full summer tour schedule lined up for 2007. He continues to travel to bonsai clubs all over the United States free of charge, only asking to have his travel expenses covered.

His true passion is trident maples and Japanese maples. He also enjoys working with Japanese black pines, shimpaku junipers and Chi Chi ginkgos.

We picked a sunny but extremely cold day to visit with the temperature in the single digits. When we arrived we were greeted by Matt and his friend, and former student, Jim Baley. Jim, who resides just east of Chicago, specializes in pines and has over 700 trees in his collection.

Matt stores all of his trees in an unattached garage. It is insulated and he uses 2 small space heaters during the coldest part of the winter. They were both on when we were there, but the temperature in the garage was only in the mid 30's and the trees were frozen solid.



In his garage, big chunky tridents

Neil and I were especially impressed with the number of big, chunky trident maple stumps, which Matt has planted temporarily in plastic cement mixing tubs. He said that they were all going to be repotted into bonsai pots in the spring. We were somewhat surprised by the fact that he uses only Turface MVP as his "soil". Absolutely no organics are used. Jim stated that he uses straight Turface MVP as well, but sometimes adds a little milled sphagnum peat.



In his garage, trees in bonsai pots

I was curious as to how he watered and fertilized during the growing season. He said that he waters everything once or twice a day depending on the weather and the heat in the summer. In the winter he just opens the garage door and throws some snow on the pots. As for fertilizing, for everything but the stumps, he fertilizes weekly and alternates using Dyna-Gro 7-9-5 and fish emulsion. He also uses BioGold pellets every 3 to 4

weeks. He said that he removes the remnants of the previous month's pellets prior to placing the new pellets on the surface. This is done from when they start growing in April through whenever he places them in winter storage. As for the stumps, he uses Miracle Grow every week and Osmocote monthly. He said uses nothing special to prepare them for the winter, saying, "as long as the trees are healthy going into fall, you have nothing to worry about."

I asked him about repotting. Asked whether he uses any type of root stimulator when repotting, he said "I never do. Healthy, well grown trees never need this." I asked him, after repotting, when does he start fertilizing? He stated, "Pretty much right away. My fertilizer mix for established trees is pretty mild, never had a problem fertilizing right away." How often does he repot his established trees? He said, "Depends on the size, species, and development of the tree. Some every year, some every 3 to 4 years. Clay soil conditioner does not break down quickly, even 5 to 6 year old soil is hardly broken down."

I will continue next month when we discuss how he develops such nice nebari on his trees and how he develops and maintains the extremely small leaves and unbelievable ramification on his trident maples.



Japanese Black Pine - 7 cm. (2.75 inches)



Japanese Quince - 5 cm. (2 inches)

The Smallest of the Bonsai



Ulmus species



Cotoneaster

Some Examples of Shohin Bonsai



Shito bonsai - 5 cm (2 inches)



Shito bonsai - 7 cm (2.75 inches)



Mame bonsai on display



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Club Information

Visitors are always WELCOME!!!

Where: Garfield Park Conservatory
2450 Shelby Street
Indianapolis, Indiana

When: First Wednesday of each
Month

Time: 7:00 pm

Club Dues: Dues are \$25 per calendar year to receive the newsletter by email, or \$30 to receive it by US Mail. Cost includes up to two members of the same household. After July 1st, dues are \$15 for the remainder of the year.

Club Officers

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Indianapolis Bonsai Club

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