

September 2017 BBS Newsletter

September demonstration bonsai bonanza. At our September 14 meeting we will have some of our long time members doing simultaneous demonstrations. When polled about what sorts of meeting activities members are interested in, ‘observing demonstrations’ is always one of the top requests. Members will be able to stroll around and get up close to the work. ‘How do you know which branches to cut off’ is one of the questions that we frequently hear – especially for folks just starting out in bonsai. So you will be able to have the demonstrator explain why they chose that branch.

August Chicago Show

If you got to the Chicago show this year, you saw some great bonsai. It seemed there were more shohin than I recall from years past. There were lots of venders with material priced at a few dollars to four-figures. The permanent bonsai collection, which was/is on display in the courtyard, was spectacular. The trees were displayed with the donors listed. I recognized many of the names and trees from shows thirty or forty years ago, as these were some of the early members of the Chicago Bonsai Society. I was curious how many of those donors were still alive, or had passed away to that great bonsai show in the sky. Either way, I’m sure they would be proud that their trees were looking their best and were being well cared for. Most species of bonsai will outlive their owners, if well cared for.

Win Some, Lose Some

Earlier this spring I had reported that the deer had browsed a white cedar that I had been working on for several years. The tree only had a handful of branches, and when the deer stopped munching there wasn’t much green left. I thought it was a goner. Much to my surprise, the tree has sprouted new growth, and looks pretty much the same as before the deer attack. One win. I have a bougainvillea about which I wrote last month. It has rot at the base of the trunk, which I treated with super glue, followed by repotting. The trunk was very lightweight, and my suspicion is that the rot on the interior is more extensive than I could see. Following the repotting the tree began to lose much/most of its foliage, and I thought that it was not going to survive. Miracle of miracles, new growth appeared last week. Not everywhere, but enough to make me a bit more optimistic about its survival chances. Win two. I inherited a ficus from Brian Brandley at last years picnic. It produced blooms directly from the stem – there was no petiole. I had never seen flowering in this fashion. Well, besides these blooms, the tree produced no new growth – nada, zip, zilch. Everything was still green so I wasn’t worried about whether it was still alive, but I was curious about the tree had gone more than a year with no new growth. Last month I finally got many of my tropical outside, and this ficus went crazy. New growth everywhere. Win three. In the loss column, I lost a nice boxwood – also a Brandley bequest. There is a boxwood blight(?) that is ravaging boxwood. I had been treating all my boxwoods with a fungicide – Daconil. But, I couldn’t save this one. One loss. The squirrels or chip monks chewed off the new growth on my literati sumac. They didn’t kill it, but it appears all of next years buds are gone. Lastly, a few of the red Japanese maples from this spring didn’t make it. They were pretty small to begin with – perhaps spaghetti-size in diameter, and only a few inches tall. They apparently didn’t

have enough stored energy to get them going. They put out some early growth and then expired. Loss two.

Pinterest

If you aren't familiar with Pinterest they have a significant bonsai section. Mostly interesting pictures. Recently there was a post of "the best 22 tree species for bonsai". This, of course, is only someone's opinion, and I would not agree with every choice. However, it is interesting to see what someone else thinks. So, here it is:

1. Japanese Maple
2. Bodhi tree (Ficus Religiosa)
3. Cotoneaster horizontalis
4. Baobab
5. Common Beech (Fagus sylvatica)
6. Boxwood
7. Pomegranate
8. Juniper
9. Ficus Retusa
10. Ficus Benjamina
11. Jade
12. Crape Myrtle
13. Fukien tea (Carmona retusa)
14. Chinese elm
15. Bougainvillea
16. Dwarf Schefflera
17. Indian Banyan (Ficus benghalensis)
18. Adenium
19. Olive
20. Azalea
21. Guava
22. Pine

It is interesting that they listed four different ficus, but lumped all the pine in one category, and all the juniper in another. We all know that some pine make outstanding bonsai, while others are pretty worthless as bonsai. Same for juniper. And some of these species listed you won't find at any nurseries in Wisconsin.

Nursery Deals

Some retailers have already cleared out all their nursery stock, but some sales are still yet to come. Last week Barbara and I were on a garden tour to Iowa. We stopped at a nursery where one section was priced at "50% off the lowest price". I found two white cedars and a bird's nest spruce. Total cost = \$5. Locally, Barbara found a very nice Hinoki cypress. So, keep your eyes peeled.

Ponytail Palm

This has little to nothing to do with bonsai, but I found it interesting. Some of you are familiar with a succulent called 'ponytail palm' - *Beaucarnea recurvata*, It is also

sometimes referred to as ‘elephant’s foot tree’. Where the plant enters the ground, it produces a bulbous-looking swelling – hence, its name. The Des Moines Botanic center was re-doing its interior conservancy, in which they had two large ponytail palms. I’m guessing they were ten or twelve feet in height. Having no good place to store these while they worked on the interior of the conservancy, they did what any good horticulturist would do. They bare rooted them and put them in the parking lot! *Six months later*, the trees had lost half of their weight due to the desiccation of the pseudobulb. They were replanted in the conservatory, and today they are happy and growing as always! I have a small ponytail palm that I have had for at least 25 years. The one time it nearly died it was a problem of too much water. More succulents are probably lost due to over-watering than under-watering.

The Des Moines Botanic Garden also has a collection of about 10-12 very nice bonsai. Alan and Helene Magruder, who some of you know, and the Ladnay Collection were the primary donors.

- Karl

Badger Bonsai Library

The list of books that badger bonsai society has are in an online database that you can access from any computer. It can be viewed at <https://oyster1.libib.com/>

If there is an item you would like to check out, please send an email to oyster1@charter.net with the title “bonsai book” and I’ll bring it to the next monthly meeting

- Derek