

*Long Island Bonsai Society – Monday, July 11, 2011*

*Main Program – 8:00 p.m. Pauline Muth –*

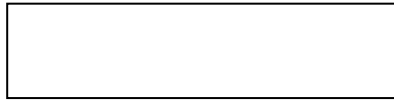
*Larch - Styling & Care*

*Early workshop – 7:30 p.m. Helpful Tips for Garden Bonsai*

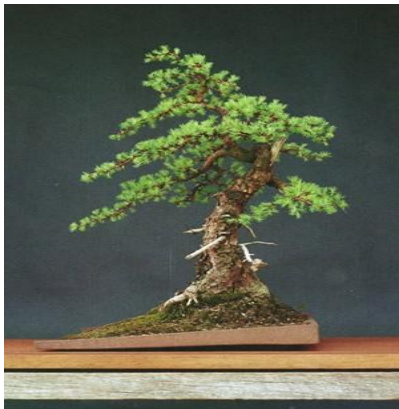
*By Hal Mahoney*

*The Classroom at the Main Greenhouse Planting Fields Arboretum*

38 Elm Street  
Lybrook, NY 11563



*It is one thing to shape a tree into form, but when you are able to convincingly deceive ones perception of reality, something much more is accomplished than just a simple bonsai.*



## *Our May meeting...*

It was great to see several new faces, and as always great to see Steve and Freddie Villandre – your little one is a sweetie, and sorry that parenthood keeps you from being able to attend meetings regularly. It is more rewarding to watch her grow and mature, than to see your trees develop into bonsai.

## *Sunday's workshop*

Min Hsuan Lo's workshop was well received, and several members brought their newly created bonsai in for our Tokanoma – quite impressive results, and with time the shore junipers look like they will really mature into majestic bonsai.



Our new members, Rita & Rich Steiner with the raw material, thinking – 'ok – now where do I/we start!'

Along came Jim Stopfer to the rescue.



It is often daunting trying to decide where to begin, and wondering where am I suppose to be taking this tree on its path to becoming a bonsai. We often hear the advice "listen to the tree" – well let me tell you I have had some very silent trees – just sat there, not saying a word for a very long time, but eventually even the most strong silent type give you a few hints as to what style might actually work out well. What is the worse that could happen if you made an error - sometimes mistakes turn out to be a good one and a really good bonsai may stay undiscovered without a mistake.

Those of us attending Monday's meeting heard the dreaded sound of a cracking branch while Lo was bending a major branch on the San José Juniper he was working on. Lo felt that the branch could heal, and he placed additional wire along the damage to help give it time to mend, but if the branch dies, it could be turned into additional Jin, or removed completely - bonsai is an ever changing art. Challenges should be viewed as opportunities, not obstacles.

It is wise to allow a tree to dry out for a day or so prior to major styling – a dry tree is less prone to cracking – which may seem counterintuitive, but the branches are more flexible when they are on the dry side. Our demo tree was dripping water throughout the evening, and perhaps we might not have heard the cracking sound, if it had dried out a bit.



Lily Stiel shows off her handiwork to Hong Chow at the workshop

## *Early Workshop...*

Jim Byrne brought in what looked like a bonsai that was in trouble – hardly any leaves in sight – generally not something you want to see on your bonsai – but Jim is an excellent caregiver, and this maple was being defoliated. Jim went on to explain what a mindless boring task defoliation is, but then justified this task by explaining how it will achieve greater ramification, and produce the desirable smaller leaves that we are all trying to coax out of our trees.



If Jim looks like a pitchman in this photo it is because he was selling those handy dandy little nippers – "Yours for only \$1.00 – bargain of a lifetime." At the conclusion of his demo, they were scooped up, and they are a handy little scissor, much easier to hang on to and easier to maneuver

in and around all those leaves and branches. (secrete – these nippers are used by sewers and quilters, and can often be found – at a higher price – in those establishments.)

The best time to defoliate your tree is mid June. Jim suggests that you defoliate one year, and root prune the next – that is if your tree is healthy and vigorous.

Removing all the leaves gives you a good opportunity to see the structure, and perhaps find a missed piece of wire – and the good thing is you have a bit more time to study the tree than you do during the hectic late winter early spring repotting season.

Over the years Jim has brought in many beautiful specimens, so it is obvious that he knows a bit about developing a tree into a bonsai.

### *Why leaf prune...*

Leaf pruning on a healthy growing bonsai usually results in a new crop of smaller leaves, but additionally, it allows light to reach the inner and lower branches – giving a chance for additional budding (ramification) during the same season. The new leaves generally produce a better Autumn coloration. Leaves that have suffered from sun scorch or insect damage are replaced. Basically it is like having a second Spring, but with less energy to produce the big healthy leaves your tree put forth initially.

You do not want to leaf prune a tree that is struggling – only healthy trees can

withstand the defoliation reliably.

Most species of deciduous trees respond well to defoliation by replacing larger leaves with a second crop of smaller leaves. Of course some species genetically produce small scale foliage, and others have large leaves, so it is wise to select potential bonsai material with that in mind – leaf pruning is a great method, but it does not produce miracles. Also keep in mind that flowers and fruit do not reduce in size no matter what you try, so choose fruiting and flowering material that is small or your tree will not appear in proportion. (it is your tree, and if for that small period of fruiting or flowering time it is out of scale, enjoy all the other attributes your bonsai has to offer.)

A few guidelines to keep in mind if and when leaf pruning...

- June is the best time to leaf prune – this gives the tree an enough time to re-leaf.
- Cut each leaf off leaving the leaf stalk attached to the branch – just remove the actual leaf. Pulling the leaves off can damage the bud that lies next to the stalk.



The stalk will fall off as the new bud develops at the stalks base.

Elms (Zelkovas) do not have stalks and those leaves can be pulled off by hand.

- Leaves can remain on a weaker section of the tree, but generally all the leaves are removed.
- Removing the growing tips will encourage back budding = the ramification we want.
- Without leaves, the need for water is reduced, cut back somewhat until leafing out occurs.
- Situate the tree in sun to encourage and stimulate budding.
- You can expect new leaves in four to six weeks. Occasionally a tree will not re-leaf. Don't panic (yet) it could just sit there until Spring because you waited until too late to defoliate, did not give it enough sunshine after defoliation, or the tree was a bit on the weak side. It should come back to life next spring – providing of course you keep it waters, and fed.

A lesson I learned too late is that a tree that looks dead, may in fact just be taking a time-out – keep the faith, keep it moist, and often it will spring back to life. Scrape the bark with you fingernail, if it's green underneath – there is still hope) Anyone doing bonsai who has never lost a tree - or many, many trees for that matter - is being less than truthful.



Special thanks to Francine and Jim Stopfer for picking up

and hosting Min Hsuan Lo; Tom Marinace for filling in and running the workshop at a moment's notice; Hal Johnson for hauling in the soil and trees for the workshop; Tom Nerrie for finding the excellent deal on the workshop trees, and taking care of them until needed; Hong Chow and Jim Stopfer for bringing their workshop trees for the Tokanoma; Jim Byrne for his early workshop and last but not least Ruth & Marty Haber for bringing in coffee, cake and fruit for the evening's refreshments – AND for sharing your birthday with us Marty! Thanks too to Dan Skabeikis and all the bonsai things he brings to sell each month.

Now that's what makes a club work – everyone pitching in makes the work load lighter – and we all benefit from the efforts put forth by others.

### Joint open-house event

Saturday, July 9<sup>th</sup> – 10 am - 2 pm  
Hal and Marion Mahoney's home, (Deer Park) and Steve Borakowski's (15 Whitehall Lane, Commack)  
Delight in the wonders that Hal has created over his many years of learning and doing bonsai. His creativity and innovative approach is everywhere you look.  
Steve is a relative newcomer, but his work shows a true artist's eye as he fits his bonsai creations into his first love – garden railroading. And if those two hobbies don't keep him occupied, he has a beautiful koi pond to complete his private little world.  
It has been a while, and I'm hoping to get go this year.

## Annual Picnic Save the date -

Sunday August 7<sup>th</sup> - 11 am - rain or shine



in the Main

Greenhouse. We will be holding our semi-annual auction and Marion will be doing her silent auction as well. Please support your club by attending, donating and bidding.

**\$13.00** in advance to Steve Borakowski, 15 Whitetall Lane, Commack, NY 11725 by August 1

**\$15.00** at the door. You need to show your membership card upon entry to Planting Fields, Club will pay the entry fee.

Board Meeting at Steve's on August 1 at 7:00 pm - all members are welcome to attend, but please call to

**RSVP - 631-499-0363**

### Name Tags...

If I have not given you a name tag yet, please let me (Dee Fleck) know. Wearing your name tag gives you a free raffle ticket when you purchase raffles, but more important, it give us all an opportunity to get to know each other by name. We are all here to share a common interest/curiosity about bonsai, and it is nice to be able to say "Hi ...." I will try to have tags for our newer members ready for the next meeting – but efficiency is not my middle name, and there is always the possibility that I missed your name when doing tags, so don't be shy and remind me.

### July's meeting...

Pauline Muth will back with us, and as always she will provide an informative, and through program. She will be using larch for her demonstration, and larches make great bonsai material – especially if you have the opportunity to obtain yamadori (collected) material.

(I think bonsai people are wise to have an attorney on retainer, as sometimes we may be operating on the outer fringes of the law when it comes to obtaining good bonsai material – even though we always stress the need to obtain proper



*permission before collecting – yeah right! I always travel with a shovel, plastic bags and twine – hey you never know when and where you will find something that just calls your name and begs to come home with you.)*

Pauline has been with us many times, and each time it's a pleasure. Pauline is a retired teacher, and she always comes to class well prepared (well, with the exception of her last visit,

but her son took the blame for that one, and being the trooper that she is, she worked on the fly, and the program went on without the power point program that she prepared to enhance her presentation.



Pauline has a studio in West Charlton, NY and enjoys working with larch a great deal and also doing shohin and accent material. Pauline loves to travel and meet new people. Her full-time “retirement” now allows her the freedom to do so, and working with bonsai provides lots of opportunities to get around and meet lots of new people and visit new places.

Pauline generally brings lots of bonsai items for sale - tiny pots, mycorrhizae, (beneficial fungi) tools, some

books, and all sorts of other goodies.

### *June's meeting...*

Hung Min Lo was soft spoken and told of his very early experiences working and learning about bonsai with his father. He spoke with lovingly pride about a saw that belonged to his father, and that he cherished, he also spoke with the hopes that a father always has for his son to follow in his footsteps, but so far his own son does not want to be interested in bonsai. But as fathers do, hope is there that one day his teen-aged son will continue in the tradition of those who have gone before him.

Lo spoke about a technique he uses to encourage budding and leafing out when a tree is cut off at the trunk line. He covers the cut off end with a cup filled with cotton balls that are moistened, and that seems to encourage the tree to send out growth. (it's worth a try)



Lo cleaning out unnecessary branches so that he can see the main line of the tree.

Lo discussed the several “fronts” that were available on this particular tree, asking the audience for their input. Ultimately agreement was reached as to the best front.

The tree had a natural indentation running up and curving gracefully on the trunk. Lo would enhance the lifeline by following that natural cleft in the tree by gouging it out.

Lo prefers to work with hand tools as he feels they give a finer finish without the “fuzzies” that power leave. He had some very interesting small hand tools that made short work of the project and did yield an attractive smooth finish. (unfortunately most of these tools do not seem to be readily available, but perhaps an internet search might yield good results.)

The trunk was also vigorously wire brushed to remove the flaking bark common on junipers, and bring out the attractive red bark that is underneath.



Lo increasing and exposing the tree's life-line.

With just a few quick strokes with his sharp hand tools, and the tree's life line is expose, greatly enhancing the appearance of age and stress the tree is depicting.



Jules Zuch was the lucky raffle winner.



Lo mentioned a book that he has done called *Bonsai Journal*. It is written mostly in Chinese, but the pictures are wonderfully done chronicling the progress of 60 trees as they were developed and transformed from 1986 through 2006.

### *Summer Bonsai Chores...*

In addition to defoliation during the summer months, feeding and watering are busy activities – the sun and drying winds make watering more than once a day necessary – especially for bonsai in small pots. Unfortunately even one day in the hot sun, without water can spell disaster for a small tree.

Maples and other deciduous trees are happier located where they are protected from the hot mid-day and late afternoon sun. Remember each yard – big or small has micro climates, find out which location offers the situation your tree will benefit the most from - aesthetics aside. A shade cloth may not be a thing of beauty, but a dead bonsai definitely is not beautiful.

If you are going to be away on vacation your best bet is having a bonsai friend with time on their hands that can come by daily and check on

your trees. Automated watering systems are great until they malfunction (ask Hal) well meaning family and friends may not “understand” your instructions and the plants needs, so that doesn’t always work either.

I have reasonable success – by wrapping the top of the well watered bonsai container right up to the tree’s trunk with “saran wrap” – looks ugly, takes time, but it does work and keeps the tree moist for a good 10 days. Hey whatever works!

Trees are hopefully happy as a lark and growing like crazy which on a finished or almost finished bonsai is not a good thing, so you need to keep after the wayward leaves and twigs or all your hard work can become undone in one great summer. Lots of growth on a young developing *wanabe* bonsai could be a good thing, but you still want to keep track of the goal you have in mind for it. Pruning scars take a long time to heal so don’t let it get totally out of hand.

Keep your eye out for sales – many nurseries hold summer sales to clean out the “old” stock – there are bargains to be had. Don’t overlook their “trash” pile, what most people wouldn’t look at twice for the landscape is usually exactly what we are looking for as raw potential bonsai material.

Summer is a good time to relax and read some of those

bonsai books or magazines we all have in our collection, See what techniques are there that sound interesting, and might be worth trying.

I have see several versions of the multiple<sup>5</sup> trunk branch fusing method that we had demonstrated and had as a workshop a year or so ago. It does seem like a good one to try with a few varieties of trees. It definitely can cut down on the waiting time to obtain a tree with a good thick, tapering base.

*Once again we have no willing volunteers to do Coffee and... so be sure to stop by Starbucks or Dunkin’ Donuts if you want anything at our next meeting.*

*Be a willing volunteer and it will be greatly appreciated.*

*July’s Tokanoma will be a cascade style bonsai by Jim Stopfer*



*Sample of a cascade style*