

Long Island Bonsai Society – Monday, March 14, 2011

Main Program – 8:00 p.m. Bobby Maher- Azalea Bonsai

Early workshop – 7:00 p.m. Tom O'Connor – Potting Techniques

The Classroom at the Main Greenhouse

Planting Fields Arboretum

*Long Island Bonsai Society
c/o 38 Elm Street
Lynbrook, NY 11563*



*The earth and all its beauty reawakens
after a long winter's rest.*



February's Meeting ...

Tom Marinace did an outstanding job on Daiza making. As we were given several options on how to achieve the goal of displaying a rock/stone properly, several members were thinking, great, another hobby to enjoy. Seeking out the perfect stone, whether you find it locally along the North Shore locations that Tom mentioned, along the Delaware River, or on a vacation trip – they are out there just waiting to be picked up and brought home. I personally am going to give **Bondo** a try – that seems like the one least likely to cause bodily harm to those of us who may be less than skillful with saws, routers, chisels and wood carving tools. But then again, I am a glutton for punishment, and would like to try my hand at a wooden daiza at some point - perhaps when I no longer need my two good working hands to earn a living with.

Thanks Tom for sharing the knowledge you have gained over the years perfecting your craft. (Tom is always ready willing and able to be employed as a craftsman for a daiza for the stone in your collection, or a beautiful stand or shelf to display your favorite things on)



The green daiza in the first photo was carved out of Bondo (which is mainly used for body work on automobile repairs – but is a great product to use for replacing rotted out wood on your home as well) to which several coats of auto paint was applied to produce a beautiful finish. (Joe Coester posing with Tom won the stand and stone in our raffle)



March's Meeting...

Bobby Maher has been with us several times before, but it is always a pleasure to have him bring us a new program, with new material – this time it will be on azalea. Bob started his career in bonsai at the age of 15. He has been associated with some of the most important practitioners of bonsai in the world: He studied in Japan with renowned master Susumo Sudo for four years, and was mentored by Chase Rosade. Bob was curator of the bonsai collection at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden for eleven years, from 1995 to 2006 His home and studio is located in East Greenville, Pa.

Spring is fast approaching, and there is little to compare with azalea bonsai in full flower. Over the years we have seen several in our Tokanoma, and they are breathtaking, and inspirational - especially those acquired as **road kill** as Hal Mahoney affectionately refers to some beauties that he has acquired by the curb waiting for a garbage truck to haul them away as trash. Very shortly, as the weather warms, you will see some landscape discards just waiting to be given a new home. Some plant material is quite hardy, and will recover nicely from being uprooted and tossed aside. You know what they say, someone's trash is another's treasure.

LIBS on Facebook

Our club has become a member of Facebook. It is hoped that our mission to offer information to the public about the art and culture of bonsai will be disseminated through this media. If you are already a member of Facebook, please search for Long Island Bonsai. When you find it go to the "wall"; make a comment about the club. We may discover and attract latent bonsai talent in the Long Island community or even individuals who may live far away but have the same enthusiasm for our hobby.

Ahh Spring! The season when there's never enough time to do it all...

Spring is a busy season for us – making you wonder why in heavens name do I do bonsai – it might be time to reconsider the number of trees in my collection – I'll culls some stuff and put them aside for the summer auction. Even though the list of chores in the spring seems never ending, we soon buckle down and tackle the things that really need to be done – the ones you put off last year, and perhaps even the year before that. Unless you have just a few trees, which conventional wisdom should be the rule, you never get to all of the things that should be done, but hopefully you do get those that must be done done. Trees are forgiving to a degree, but if you neglect re-potting, root pruning, removing wire, improving the soil mix, eventually your tree will start to decline, and if you ignore the signs, your tree will be lost.

Some of the things you should try to accomplish in early spring (like now)

Clean those empty pots. We've all got pots laying around with bits of last year's soil in them, or with mineral buildup around the rim. Hot water and soap will take care of the dirt, but

mineral buildup is a tougher job.

Unglazed or matt-finished pots seem to be the most difficult to clean - deposits seem to attach to the rougher surface, but steel wool and rubbing with mineral oil will help make it look better – even if some deposits remain stubbornly attached. A glazed pot's smooth surface can usually be cleaned with caustic bathroom cleaner and a plastic-pot scrubber. Wearing rubber gloves is a good idea. A general all purpose cleaner is soaking in equal parts, white vinegar, water and alcohol for 10 minutes, followed by a good scrubbing with a kitchen sponge scrubber. If you have high quality pots, you want to use the most gentle method possible to remove the deposit buildup.

While you a busy cleaning those empty pots, think about which tree would look best in a particular pot. David DeGroot's book, **Basic Bonsai Design** has a chapter on pot selection which contains a great deal of information on what you should be considering when choosing a pot for a particular tree.

Why do we repot bonsai?

Basically, repotting is done to improve growing conditions for roots by eliminating congestion, matted roots and compacted soil. We are giving roots room to grow into

fresh soil. Fresh soil is looser, better, more aerated. Repotting is almost always beneficial when the soil seems to have hardened, resistant to pressure, and be difficult to water - water not soaking into the soil quickly.

Generally mature or established bonsai do not need reporting as frequently as younger developing trees. Often established trees can go for several years between repotting. The number of years since the last repotting should not be the main consideration, but the overall health of the tree is what you need to look at. Generally deciduous trees and broad-leaf evergreens need repotting more often than needle-leaved conifers do, but individual trees can vary within any given species. You have to learn from your trees, and understand each one's individual needs – if you generalize, your results reflect that type of care, if you cater to each tree's needs, one or two may actually turn out to be great trees..

Having a list or plan about which trees need repotting. Keeping some sort of record for each tree is a chore, but one that will reward you time and again. Having more than 4 or 5 trees gets confusing, remembering which got repotted when. Having a collection of 20 or more trees, makes it is impossible to remember what you did last

spring. However you keep these records – using a metal plant tag is probably the best (not best looking, but efficient and practical), use some file cards and you risk misplacing them, or losing one or two, so a bound book, or the computer could be helpful – the bottom line is try to establish at least that much of a routine. You might want to also make note of whether or how much root pruning was necessary. This can help establish the frequency of repotting.

As temperatures warm, the buds start to swell on the deciduous trees in early spring. If it has been more than 2 years since you last repotted one of your trees, be sure to check on the root's condition. If the pot is full of roots – you need to report this year. The fairly simple way to determine whether the roots have filled the pot is to grasp the trunk and gently try to move the tree from side to side - moves easily, you get a reprieve this year. If the tree doesn't move, lift the tree from the pot and look at the roots. (if it is wired in, you need to cut the wire first) Generally pulling straight up on a pot with straight sides is all it takes to free the root ball, however if the pot has a lip or is convex, you probably will need to run a thin blade

around the edge of the pot, cutting some roots, but freeing the main root ball intact.

If the roots coil around the bottom of the root ball, or up the sides – you see more root than soil - you need to repot. If you are lucky and there is soil on the bottom and around the edges of the root ball, repotting can wait another year. (remember to make a note on that famous list you are keeping so that you will know next year it is potting time for that particular tree.) Trim back excess roots, and replace the tree back in its pot, or plant in a new pot, adding fresh bonsai mix where needed, and make sure air spaces have been eliminated. (You might want to give the pot a good scrubbing before you replace the tree) A little pruning may be necessary to maintain the tree's shape, or to remove something that may have suffered damage over the winter.

Generally you start working on your deciduous material first – as soon as the buds start to swell, evergreens and conifers have a bigger window for repotting. Spring is not too late to do transplanting from the ground to a pot, but late winter probably is a better time. Transplant pines before the candles begin to elongate;

maples can be transplanted as buds leaf out, but beech, hornbeam and hop hornbeam are best transplanted before any green appears. If you miss that window, wait until next year (make a note on your record book as a reminder). Hawthorn and other flowering plants should be dug before flower buds burst. No one likes to remove flower buds, but ideally azalea and other flowering material, would do better if you removed the buds and transplant them in the spring. Sacrificing one year's flowers, for a better, healthy future is a small price to pay.

Spring chores also means cleaning your bonsai tables - scrub off the winter mold left behind by cold, wet weather and rotting leaves. Rake up garden debris – all this can help reduce the likelihood of allowing those over-wintered pests from attacking your trees as the weather warms.

If you did not check your tools out over the winter, make sure you do it now. you should clean, oil them, replace those that have seen better days; dull, ill-fitting tools, blades that no longer meet cleanly can damage your trees. You don't need to purchase expensive bonsai tools – many ordinary garden tools, or hardware

tools will do a good job and cost much less than official bonsai tools. (several of our members, and some demonstrators have many ordinary tools that they use, along with official knob cutters, and concave cutters – both of which are about the only tools that are not easily replaced with a Craftsman something or other)

Check on your supply of pesticides, and fertilizers – once the weather warms, growing trees need to be fed, and hungry pests need to be dealt with. While it is nice to be kind to our environment, and gentle with our tree's new tender growth, the good bugs that feed on the bad ones don't seem to arrive early enough, so be vigilant and keep an eye out for signs of infestation. Generally gentle and safe spring treatment can be had using one of the soap sprays, horticultural oils, a good forceful spray from the hose, or removal by hand.

Use a balanced fertilizer on non-flowering bonsai - generally equal amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Occasionally use a fertilizer with micronutrients, including chelated iron, manganese and magnesium, other important micronutrients including Zinc, Sulfur, Boron, Copper, and

Sulfur. Some people feel organic fertilizer is best, other feel inorganic is, but both are food for our bonsai, and it is important to provide the best balance of nutrients possible.

Feeding every two weeks is a good general springtime schedule. If you are striving to maximize growth and development, feeding weekly until mid-summer will help speed things along. Opinions differ, some feel you can start fertilizing within a week after repotting if you trimmed the roots, and others feel you can feed right away. (as always, there are many theories, and opinions when it comes to bonsai – do what you feel is right, and you will learn from your mistakes, learn from the mistakes of others, and eventually you will find what works for you and your trees)

Trees grow rapidly in the spring, so be sure you check the wires – whether you put them on this spring or they were on from last fall – you want to remove them before they cut into the tree.

As the window for all the spring chores closes, and you say that's it, I am not getting one more tree, keep in mind that **Mid-Atlantic Bonsai Societies' Spring Festival** will be held

April 15 – 17th in Grantville Pennsylvania (about four hours away

from the Nassau Queens border). This year's speakers are Yasuo Mitsuya from Japan, Steve Tolley from the UK, and Kathy Shaner, from the USA. Full registration prior to April 1st is \$160 – Holiday Inn's Convention's location) room rate is \$90.00 single or double occupancy. Contact Mr. O'Byrne, 234 Sagamore Road, Millburn, NJ 07041 for additional information and registration material.

One last spring chore – take the time to enjoy the trees you have, recognize those that will probably never make it as a prize tree, think about what steps you can take to improve it – don't be afraid to bring it in to one of our meetings and ask those members who have had lots of experience for their help – they might just come up with an idea that can turn your tree around. If you don't want to do that, try something out, something radical – Kimura, Robinson, and many European artists work way outside the conventional box when it comes to their approach to bonsai, and the results speak for itself. After all nothing ventured, nothing gained. The hobby of bonsai is a journey without end, and an intriguing road to travel.



Thanks for the special Valentine's Day dessert buffet – it was a tasty treat.

E-Mail Addresses

In an effort to conserve the Club's funds, receiving the Newsletter via e-mail rather than as a hard copy would help us achieve that goal.

If you wish to receive the newsletter as e-mail please let me know and send your address to:

dfleck@manhassetlibrary.org



Our president, Steve Borakowski, had his original planned visit to the Veteran's Hospital in Northport snowed out but Winter Wonderland was finally held on Thursday, February 17. Steve treated the vets to a bonsai demonstration during the event using boxwood material. The festivities went from 11:00 am till 3:00 pm. with lots of food and a band and other entertainment to help bring some sunshine into the lives of our vets and their family members who were in attendance. Jim Stopfer was Steve's able assistant and cameraman. One of the Vets won Steve's demo tree. Thanks to both of you for your outreach efforts and thoughtfulness to our vets.

Name tags... I really did have a system when I made up the tags, but somehow all that planning went downhill fast. I did have to cannibalize some tags to replace the missing ones, so now I have no idea who still needs a name tag, so if you would be so kind as to help me out, I will try to have one ready for you for the next meeting (although I will be away until just before the meeting to let me know who is still without a tag. E-mail me at dfleck@manhassetlibrary.org

If was nice getting an extra raffle ticket by wearing my name tag, but to no avail I still did not win another great raffle prize.

It was nice to see Tim Novak back at one of our meetings. We really missed him, and hope perhaps he will find the time to drop in every so often. Coming back as a member would be even better.

Special thanks to ...

Dan Skabeikis our member/vendor for bringing in so many nice items month after month for us to buy - one can never have too many bonsai, and bonsai related things. Having Dan at our meetings gives newer members an opportunity to purchase some material to work with, pots, and viewing stones.

Thanks Dan, know that we appreciate your contributions to our club and its members.

Arbor Day is April 30th. Our club will be participating again this year – with a better, more visible location that should have lots of foot traffic.

Volunteers to man our table will be needed, as well as trees to display. Set up will be on the 29th. Please be a willing helper in some way for this event.