

Long Island Bonsai Society - Monday - February 10, 2014

Suiseki - Japanese Stone Appreciation - 7:30 pm

Members are asked to bring in a stone or two

Main Classroom - Planting Fields Arboretum

Long Island Bonsai Society
PO Box 308
Malverne, NY 11565



*Waterfall stones are extremely popular.
White minerals are occlusions in the
darker stone mimicking a waterfall.*



*Figure stones are just one of the
many classifications used in
Suiseki.*

January's Meeting...

Once again Vin Russo entertained and educated us with his free flowing knowledge of bonsai and his skillful manipulation of the material he was working on.

Vin's Dad game him a book when he was 12 years old and it contained illustrations on a style called Horai – an extremely contorted style of bonsai. There are not an abundance of Horai style bonsai in people's collection as the "collection" of these trees has long been prohibited in Japan. In nature, heavy snow falls cause the tree to grown in a twisted, compact manner. Sometimes these twists and turns remind us of some mythical creature such as a dragon, snake or octopus.

Vin did not rely on the forces of nature to replicate the Horai style. He took a young 2 year old seedling wiring it, and twisted it into a contorted shape (it can be done by twisting a tree around a stake in the ground) and left it for 10 years. During that time the tree continued its normal growth growing over the wire which is now no longer visible. (Young trees do not have 'bark' as such, so scaring is minimal. Two fairly heavy gauge wire was



used. Vin's tree is a black pine, but white pine work quite well in this style and his "young seedling is a white pine". (the pink nails are not Vin's)

Two sketches were made



and the audience chose the sketch Vin would replicate. (The tree on the left was clearly the audiences' choice)

The following applies to black pine:

Needle plucking was started, removing all needles growing near the trunk. More new

needles = more growth. More needles were removed from the top (apex) of the tree

as black pine is apically dominant and you need to maintain "balance" when styling so limiting growth in a particular area is important.

In May it is generally recommended that candles be

broken in half, but on Long Island Vin removes the entire candle. In its place several new candles will emerge – select two of the new candles and remove

the others. The candles you chose will become "branches" in time, so select the candle in the proper direction you plan on developing branching in. The "new" crop of candles will emerge in August or September and due to the short time left for them to develop, you will get "short" needles.

In September or October pull old needles, this allows light to reach the inner portion of the tree which often stimulates adventitious buds to break increasing additional ramification. When you pluck the needles you pull the needles straight out (away) from the tree, not downward as they often damages the bark. To neaten up the tree and unify its look Vin grasps a cluster of needles and cuts them off. There will be some browning on the cut ends. Late fall or early winter is the best time to cut the needle clusters – often stimulating adventitious buds to break increasing additional ramification.

Mugo pine can make good bonsai but here in our region they just don't get to be a good bonsai as they are very dense and it is hard to get a style out of them. The ones we see in books usually are European bonsai collected from the mountains and are "aged" by nature.

White pine air layer fairly readily, but must not be allowed to dry out.

It is important to remember that each species has different requirements, and you need to apply the correct one to the right tree.

Ideally a tree should be kept at a constant cold temperature for the winter as tip:

Tip: Copper wire is best on evergreens, and use aluminum wire on deciduous trees. Aluminum is gentler on the tender bark, but it takes a heavier gauge wire to achieve the same holding power.



Wiring of the 2 year old seedling – two strands of copper wire used – it will remain permanently and the tree will just grow over it as the trunk increases in diameter.



Close up of the fully wired and needle plucked tree. You can really see how close the twisted trunk is. I wonder if in many years down the road will that become a fused large swelling, or will it retain its distinct separation as it grows thicker?

Vin wires the entire tree then does his bending and styling – often cutting off the things just wired. Young branches grow quickly, you need to be certain to remove the wire before it cuts into the tree causing scaring.

March in our area is the best time to repot pines. They seem to do best in fir bark, haydite (hard to locate here), volcanic soil such as turface and fir bark.

One of our members Chris to us where he obtains his turface - All Pro Horticultural 54 Railroad Ave, Copiague, NY 11726 - MVP brand (631) 789-6680 – a 50 lb bag cost approximately \$13.00

Another mentioned fir bark can be obtained from pet stores companies as it is used for reptile bedding.

It is really nice when members are willing to share their resources rather than keeping the good sources secrete. Often we hear the name of a product, but cannot find a local resource, or know what is available locally that can be used as a substitute. Thanks again for the resources.

February meeting... Last year we had as one of our winter programs a Suiseki display featuring members stone collection – which was rather impressive. Francine decided it was worth scheduling again. So please if you have some stones you would like to share with our members that evening – GREAT. The more the merrier! Most of us were willing to speak about the stones we brought in – but that is not required, so don't be shy.

There was an interesting 2004 article in International Bonsai magazine illustrating some of the styles stones are classified in according to Japanese tradition.

There are mountain, coastal, distant mountain, waterfall, hut, stones, animal, human, mythological stones. Interestingly the article state that Westerners like the stone to look like a more realistic stone, Japanese prefer a suggestive feel – one that allows your imagination to see what you wish to see.

Some stones that will be displayed on a daiza tend to appear with a “polished” surface, other sones displayed in a suiban (water basin) which can either be extremely shallow, or deeper, con-

tain very fine sand or water. Or they can just be displayed on slab.

Stones often are aged by remaining exposed to the elements for years before being placed on display. Natural again improves the surface “opens the surface” - it is felt that it takes 10 years or more to properly age a stone. Some stones are “handled” several times a day and the oil contained on your skin imparts a subtle luster that is difficult to replicate. Other stone are polished mechanically. Some stones are “untouched” others are cut to fit a particular display method.

Some stones are fine and delicate, others massive and heavy. Colors vary – often it is said that black stone are the “best”. As long as it is not a strange unnatural color that would not exist in Japanese nature, it is acceptable, so there are dark brown, blue black, gray black, red – can contain occlusions such as the chrysanthemum stone which looks like a flower, or the one that looks like a waterfall.

Even the method of display varies – some are on daiza – wooden displays shaped and cut to fit a particular stone – some are in water

basin. The above is based on the Japanese philoso-

phy of stone collection. Here in the Western world we take more expansive view of collecting - all colors, surfaces and styles are collected. The bottom line is suiseki is another fascinating hobby that meshes well with bonsai.

Our program will be as interesting and diverse as the stones and stories that you bring on Monday.

Your stone does not need to be special – it can be obtained right from your back yard. Let's see if we top last year's display. Feel free to bring in as many stones as you can carry.



Looks like a mythical figure. (from last year's show)



Fine example of a Chrysanthemum stone (from last year's show)



A variety of mosses cover this stone and it is beautifully artistic. (from last year's show)

We have indoor greenhouse facilities for winter storage for both tropical and hardy plants.

We also carry hard to find specimen plants for your garden.

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Bob has stuff out in his poly houses, loads of pots, wire, soil mix so

don't let it being winter deter your visit to Suburban Bonsai.