

Nashville Bonsai News

December 2010

www.nashvillebonsai.com

created & published by **Dave & Barbara Bogan**



December, what can we say but “I can’t hardly wait till spring”. I’m not sure if December is more depressing or if January and February are worse. I think December is worse because it’s such a transitional month during which we must prepare ourselves for what’s to come. I think sometimes I actually feel colder in December than I do in January. Oh well, the Bonsai are now all snug in their winter quarters. Luckily, we are blessed with having an attached large cold room and of course a heated greenhouse. These honestly make winter a little more bearable. Soon, it will be time to bed down our pines and junipers. They of course will spend the winter outside. Simply setting on the ground and mulched in with pine needles. Hopefully the next time I write the newsletter, I will be again be excited about our trees and be dreaming of spring.

**No Meeting
In
January**



***Dave and I would like to wish
everyone a very Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year***



Club Web Site : WWW.nashvillebonsai.com

A visit from the Top Master (at least in our opinion) - Ryan Neal

Barbara and I now consider ourselves very lucky and honored after our recent visit from Ryan Neal. After numerous phone calls and e-mails, Ryan paid us a visit mid November. Luckily, we had arranged for him to work with us for two full days. Ryan needless to say, exceeded our initial expectations and helped us to take several of our trees to the next level.

Barbara and I probably had a more difficult time in deciding which trees we would have Ryan look at. We settled on several of our pines and once completed, everyone of them were transformed into something we had not envisioned previously. We started with Barbara's Kokonoe white pine. When we brought it into the work area, Ryan's first comment was that it was probably the largest Kokonoe existing in the U.S. at this time. Some of you that know this tree, know that Barbara had obtained it several years ago from a Bonsai grower in Huntsville AL. Over several years, we have admired this tree but saw several faults that we honestly were afraid of attempting to correct. With his skills learned from working with Kimura for 6 years, he soon (4 hours) transformed this tree into an absolute masterpiece. He changed a few areas that we

had honestly not considered and then wired the entire tree. It was an unbelievable transformation.



One of our Zuishio white pines. Ryan did the hard pruning then I wired it our totally.

Before

After



Ryan—Hard at work in Japan @ Kimura's Garden

The second day of Ryan's visit was just as surprising and productive. After reviewing our collection on Saturday, Ryan had decided to work on our "one seed" collected juniper the second day. Many of you know of these junipers as the ones that Randy Davis had collected several years ago. Estimated at close to 200 years old, I had carefully allowed it to grow and gain strength for 4 years in order to be sure it was healthy. It had then been repotted into a large pot, received some initial pruning and wiring and then again allowed to grow for two years. Well, it was finally time for it to become a stand out tree.

When Ryan and I started studying it, I of course had a preconceived idea as to what I wanted this tree to become. Of course, I had studied it over the years and in my mind, I had a definite plan in mind. Well, I soon decided I had made a beginners mistake. I always review a tree and look for its best features and then evaluate the tree based on its other features. In the case of this juniper, I apparently had tunnel vision. The juniper had fantastic dead wood and a large deadwood wing so, I had chosen this area as my proposed front. Ryan, of course based on his training, reviewed the entire tree and did not allow the main feature to dictate or influence its future design. After turning is only two times, he chose an entirely different front. It was like I was blind before. The chosen front was perfect. It showed a lot of natural deadwood but more importantly, it showed the real flow (& taper) of the trunk and branches. A few hours later of pruning and detail wiring, it was a totally different tree. As part of the design Ryan showed us his technique of splitting a live vein from deadwood. I had of course studied this technique but had never practiced it. Ryan's swift but decisive work soon had a 1" live view separated and bent to a new position. He starts by studying the area and then using root splitters, he carefully separates the live vein. Next he carefully carved the view and removed the remaining deadwood. As he carved, he tested its strength and flexibility. Once he felt it was bendable, he laid two piece of heavy copper wire on the vein. One on top and the other below on the bottom side. Next, he wrapped it with several strands of pre-soaked raffia. Pulling the raffia very tight as he wrapped it around the vein. Once securely wrapped, he simply but slowly bent the vein into the new position and location as a new apex area of the tree. Wow, what a change.

During Ryan's visit, we studied and examined several of our trees. I must say, even though Barbara and I have been in Bonsai for many years, we always enter these sessions with an open mind. We long ago learned that an extra set of eyes (especially well trained eyes) can see things that you simply overlooked or allowed your vision to be clouded by your own narrow-mindedness. Through Ryan's trained vision, we saw several faults in our trees. Now I will say, Ryan numerous times stated we have a very nice collection and most of his recommendations were intended as suggestions to improve or enhance what we had already started. I must say, in our opinion, we have never met a more talented but yet modest "Bonsai Master" and I do emphasis' MASTER. In over 25 years of meeting so called bonsai masters, I must proclaim Ryan Neil as the best and I'm very sure we will have Ryan back and am also sure, everyone in the American Bonsai community will also be exclaiming his skills as the best. If you ever have an opportunity to work with or simply listen to one of his lectures, don't pass it up. It will be a high point of your Bonsai experience.

Tools:

Get all your tools together. Give them a thorough cleaning and sharpen them. Sharp tools are a must. If your tools are dull they will crush the wood fibers instead of cutting cleanly. Most tools will only need a quick honing with a stone or diamond file. Always try to maintain the original bevel. Using a marker, paint the bevel with ink. The ink will be rubbed off as you sharpen the tool showing you if your angle is correct. Always sharpen against the edge or up the bevel. Sharpen a cutting tool until you can feel a slight edge forming on the bottom. This is a slight curling of the metal, showing you have created a very fine edge. Once you feel this curl, lightly run this edge across a very fine hone, which will remove it. This only takes one or two swipes. Don't over do it. Never allow a pair of shears or scissors type cutters to close until you have removed this burr from the bottom side.

Writing a Newsletter

Recently, I was looking for an old article I had written several years ago. I had no luck looking back through my computer files so I had to go back further into my old printed copies. I now maintain an electronic file but prior to 1999 I was not that diligent. Even my printed copies only dated back to the mid 90's. I know I was writing the newsletter before this but I didn't save any of the copies. I guess back then I was either not proud of them or thought this job would only be short term (guess I was fooled!).

Sorting through these old issues, I soon forgot the real reason for my search. I was soon caught up in reading some of the back issues. I was amazed at some of them. Many of the issues from the early years were only two or three pages and honestly, not that informative. Actually some of them were quite boring, as all they contained was articles about the club or some basic techniques. As I continued reading past issues, I came to several conclusions.

1. Either my knowledge has improved or I simply became "wordier" than I used to be.

2. I definitely saw that my views on Bonsai have changed considerably over the years. As with everyone else in the beginning I thought the rules were "unbreakable". Boy have I changed. After reading several and thinking of how I write now, I noticed that my (now Barbara & I) newsletter has become a personal forum of my views and procedures. Right or wrong!

Some newsletters I read usually include several articles & pictures about a club event. I have always thought if the members wanted to see an article about last months meeting, they should have attended. I prefer to write more articles on Bonsai and hopefully expand our member's knowledge. No, I am not claiming to know that much about Bonsai but what I do know, I'm willing to share. My experiences come from a lot of dead trees or failed experiments. I've always thought that just maybe by passing on my failures, ideas & accomplishments, I might help a new member and hopefully help save a tree.

Over the years, I have asked members to submit articles and I have received a couple dozen or so. Generally though, my newsletter is comprised almost entirely of my articles. So, if you don't like my ramblings, and want to see more diversity or ideas, you need to submit some articles. I don't want to seem ungrateful but how many of you have ever considered what it takes every month to write at least 8 pages of articles on Bonsai. I sometimes go for weeks trying to think of things to write about.

I receive newsletters from other editors and many of them write & publish excellent newsletters, which are Much better than mine. Two of the best are:

PBA Clippings newsletter of the Potomac Bonsai Association **written by Betty Yeaponis**

BONSAI NEWS newsletter of The Louisville Bonsai Club **written by George Buehler**

Both of these editors put a lot of work & time into their newsletters and are very professional in their format and writing. They also receive a lot of feed back or articles from their membership. I have a long way to go to be in their league. I think some of my articles rival theirs in content but my English and format are not near as professional as theirs. Maybe I'm still just an ol country boy at heart. So you will need to over look some of my "English". I must though admit, Barbara is working hard to change me or at least my writing style.

Luckily, I love to try new things and experiment with my trees. This gives me a lot to write about and I hope it gives you a little incentive to try new things.

Ultimately, I think all editors consider their newsletters to be a labor of love. You have to really enjoy this to continue month after month. But again, I think (right or wrong) each newsletter becomes the editor's forum to pass on his or her own personal views and even some personal accomplishments.

So, if you feel at times that I get to "wordy", one sided, close minded, repetitive in my views & articles, too personal, complain a lot or can't seem to correct all my spelling & grammar, lets talk, maybe you could help me.

Thanks for listening

Dave

Wounds - Treat them well

I doubt if you will ever see a Bonsai that doesn't have a wound on it somewhere. Wounds below 1/4" typically don't cause any issues. It's the larger ones that you need to be concerned with. Remembering, trees are alive (hopefully) they will over time heal most wounds on their own. The way they heal and the time it takes are the issues we must consider and take action with. Any wound of appreciable size should be looked at and worked on AT minimum, once a year.

With some, the problems arise from the first or initial designing of the tree. How many times have you removed a limb and did not take time to clean the wound properly? We all do it, promising ourselves we will deal with it later. Now, I will admit, there are some species where it is better to leave a stub (azalea come to mind) and let it die back naturally. Either type, we should always plan to spend time working on every wound.

Wound treatment. Typically, we want a wound to heal flush with the limb or trunk. There are several ways to help the wound to heal flush.

1. After removing the limb, trim the area into a concave depression. This can be done with a variety

of tools— concave cutters, knob cutters or several types or shapes of chisels. In my case, I do a little clean out but generally allow the wound to dry for a week or two prior to carving out the depression. The depression should typically be about twice the depth as the surrounding bark. You don't need to carve out a valley. Remember, you want a flush wound eventually. Once cleaned and slightly carved out, make sure you clean the edges very neatly. A sharp razor knife works well for this. Once clean, I apply a small amount of wound dressing and then swipe the wound back off. Removing the majority of wound dressing. Never leave a build up of wound dressing that will be encapsulated into the new tissues of the wound. Remember again, a tree is a living thing. They will heal and protect themselves.

When wounded, a tree will close off the wound area—called compartmentalization - If you have ever split a section of wound which contained a wound you will be able to see this. The tree actually builds a barrier internally. Then heals from the outside via new bark and callus formation.

2. Another way of flush healing is through adding a wrap or bandage to the area. A simple technique. You clean the wound as above. Now, you simply wrap the area tightly with a cloth wrap. Or I have used electrical tape. The only problem with tape is it may leave a slight glue residue. The wrapping puts pressure on the area and the newly forming callus must grow outward and not swell. This technique actually has another benefit. The wound actually heals faster. The newly formed callus seems to spread faster since it is slightly thinner.

A real issue with wound healing (either method) is that you must periodically inspect the wound. Even though the tree wants to heal the wound, the callus formation will slow down. Callus formation seems to slow especially in dry weather. If I am diligent, I work on the wounds two or three times a year.

Wound cleaning. Generally I can use my fingernail to scratch the edges of the wounds. By re-injuring the wound the tree seems to not slow its healing process. In fact it seems to speed up after each re-injuring of the callus. I also check the exposed wood to make sure it is staying dry and not rotting. If you find soft wood, you must clean it out back to fresh tissue. Never allow a callus to heal over rotted or soft wood. If required, clean out the soft wood, treat it with "minwax" brand wood hardener and add a small amount of wood putty to the depression.

I'm sure; some of you may disagree with my treatment of wounds and my almost non-existent usage of wound sealers. There may be some newer wound sealants on the market today but 99% of them have no real affect on the actual healing of a wound. If you refer to nature, trees heal themselves. Now I will admit in the case of very large wounds a tree will not heal itself but with proper techniques it will in bonsai. My main objective for using any sealer is to hold moisture in so a wound will not dry out too quickly and to also keep external moisture out to prevent diseases. A very thin film of sealant will do this. Heavy applications of sealers look bad, no one ever removes it and eventually, the callus will grow into it and create a terrible looking wound.

Root Spread on a new young tree

Some of you may be working with very young trees that you're growing on to become Bonsai. Many times during the first or second re-potting, you have a tangle of roots. Roots that seem to go in every direction and are hard to spread out. A little trick I have developed to help create a spreading and yet flat root system on new saplings is to use perforated mesh. The same mesh you use in the drain holes of your pots. Depending on the size of the tree and roots, try starting with a 4 or 6" circle of mesh. Set the

sapling on it and gently spread the roots out in a radial manner. Now, use cotton thread (don't use synthetic thread) sew the roots to the mesh. It doesn't need to be real tight, just enough tension to hold it in place. You can even push down on the tree and help flatten the roots even more. After you have "sewn" the tree roots to the mesh, pot or plant it as usual. Generally, the cotton thread will rot away long before it will cut a root. Even if it cuts a root, it won't hurt. The root will just send out new roots at the cut point.

What's wrong with collecting or re-potting a tree now?

Every fall I get the same questions. Can I repot a tree now? Can I collect a tree now? My answer is always the same. YES—if you can protect them. Actually fall is an excellent time to do both of these activities. Most trees go semi dormant in fall at least in their upper growth areas. Down below, the roots are still growing and working. They will grow until the ground temperatures get cold. A tree with a cold top and warm feet will always grow roots. So, if you want to perform any of this work now, simply keep them above freezing and they will be fine. A cold frame works well or a greenhouse is excellent. I do most all my spring work in January & February. Our trees live in a cold room and by mid February, I have trees budding out in full spring growth.

Several members have expressed the need to offer some Saturday meetings since it is too hard to get to Cheekwood on Tuesday evenings, so in 2011, we plan to offer some meetings at Cheekwood and some meetings at member homes on Saturdays.

If you would like to host a meeting at your home next year, please let me know.

Thanks,

Barbara

Dues Are Due for 2011

Family membership, still only \$20.00 per year

Please send your check to:

Chad Kinkle

530 G Nevada Ave.

Nashville, TN 37209

22nd Annual Nashville Lawn & Garden Show

Thursday, March 3 – Sunday, March 6, 2011

“Here We Grow Again!”

at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds in 2011

*An acre of live gardens ▪ Series of free lectures ▪ Floral design gallery
100s of vendors ▪ Free parking at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds!*

**Hours: 10 am – 8 pm on Thursday – Saturday, March 3 - 5
10 am – 5 pm on Sunday, March 6**

**Cost: \$10 adults; \$9 seniors (age 65+); \$1 children 12 & under
\$15 4-day show pass; discounts for groups of 15 or more**

Produced by the Horticulture Association of Tennessee

We will need help from many of you to sit in our booth to discuss NBS membership and activities. Free admission to those who can work. Be sure to put the dates on your calendar.

Check out our Web Site

bogansbonsai.com

New Talent Bonsai Competition

2011 ABS/BCI Symposium in Louisville, KY

Annual competition to recognize and promote North American bonsai

For information and contest rules check out:

<http://absbonsai.org/latest-news/87-new-talent-competition>

or email Harold Johnson: haroldjrntbc@yahoo.com

Bonsai in the Bluegrass

Two Stage Event:

1st Stage - judging of submitted bonsai photos

2nd Stage - participants will design their own tree



2011 Upcoming Events

Jan. No monthly meeting

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