

Journal of The Ottawa Bonsai Society

Journal de la Société de bonsaï d'Ottawa



February/Février
2005

www.ottawabonsai.org

Vol. 20, No. 6

In this issue:

Dans ce numéro:

Notes from your steering
group / Le mot de votre
conseil d'organisation 1

Events Calendar /
Calendrier d'activités 3

Courses / Cours 3

Bonsai design (part 1) 4

Meeting Location/
Lieu des rencontres 6

NOTES FROM YOUR STEERING GROUP

January 17th was snapping cold in Ottawa but nonetheless we had a good turnout for our meeting. And it was nice to welcome a few more new OBS Members.

Yvon Bernier announced that members could sign up to receive the OBS Journal by email. More precisely, notice by email will be given that the latest issue has been posted on the internet with a link that may be used to view or download information at the recipient's convenience. Prior issues of the Journal are accessible from the OBS web site.

Yvon invited members interested in an intermediate-level bonsai course to indicate preferences for the course topic, such as "creating a bonsai forest". Also Yvon called for final bids for magazines of a former member that have been offered for sale to OBS members by silent auction.

Vianney Leduc opened the evening's program with a brief discussion on the well-designed log sheet he uses to record important information on and progress of his trees. He illustrated how such a log would complement plans for development, structuring and refining cycles like those outlined by Peter Adams in *Bonsai Design*, one of the books available to members from the OBS library. Copies of Vianney's log template were available for members.

Vianney followed with a discussion on Dwarf Japanese Yew, a species of interest to many of us who already are taking more than our share of the sunny areas of the garden for our bonsais. Vianney covered in detail the qualities and limitations of the species that are important for bonsai enthusiasts. Ian McRae mentioned that many trees sold in Canadian nurseries are Japanese/European hybrids, better suited to our climate. Information sheets on Yew were distributed.

The main event of the evening involved group-discussions on four nursery junipers selected for the OBS at the end of the 2004 growing season that Vianney brought from his cold room. Members were divided randomly into four groups of about 6 persons and Barney Shum, Ian McRae, Mike O'Connor, and Vianney Leduc each led a group in preparing four plans for styling the junipers after they are out of dormancy. Suffice it to say that the trees all have bonsai potential and presented interesting choices and challenges. Four good plans for styling evolved and newer members got acquainted with those more

experienced. Everyone seemed to enjoy the exercise and perhaps the best news for the OBS is that our newer members have lots of creative ideas.

We extend kudos to the four group leaders and special appreciation to Vianney for his efforts and contribution to the January program.

They are sold as Japanese Yew...



but they are likely to be hybrids...

Ottawa Bonsai Society
P.O. Box 4254, Station "E"
Ottawa, Ontario
K1S 5B3

Société de bonsaï d'Ottawa
B.P. 4254, succursale E
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1S 5B3

Ottawa Bonsai Society Events Calendar



Monday February 21 at 7:00 p.m.

There will be two main activities. The first will be a presentation by Loretta MacDonald of BONSAI Concepts Canada on tropical / indoor bonsai trees. The second will be a critique of trees from a series of slides done by Barney Shum.

The following two meetings:

Monday, March 21 at 7 p.m.

Monday, April 18 at 7 p.m.

COURS INTERMÉDIAIRE SUR LES BONSAÏS

La SBO offre un cours théorique sur les principes de création d'une forêt!

Le coût de ce cours est fixé à 20\$ par personne, payable au début du cours. Le cours sera donné **samedi le 5 mars** de 9h00 à midi. Le seul prérequis est d'avoir suivi le cours théorique de débutant.

Les membres intéressés devraient s'inscrire auprès de Yvon Bernier : (819) 684-0586 ; fax (819) 684-7365 ; ycbernier@infonet.ca

BONSAI COURSE FOR INTERMEDIATE

The OBS will be conducting a bonsai course on the design principles to create a forest!

Cost of this course will be set at \$20 per person to be paid at the start of the course. The course will be held on **Saturday March 5** from 9:00am to noon. The prerequisite for this course is to have attended the beginner's course.

Interested members should register with Yvon Bernier : (819) 684-0586 ; fax (819) 684-7365 ; ycbernier@infonet.ca

Atelier pour débutants sur la formation d'un bonsaï, le samedi 7 mai, édifice #72, Ferme expérimentale centrale, de 9h30 à 15h30.

Cet atelier s'adresse directement à ceux et celles qui ont suivi le cours pour débutants au mois de novembre. Durant cette session, les participants recevront les conseils de membres chevronnés de la SBO et procéderont à la formation de leur propre bonsaï à partir d'un pant de genévrier San Osé. Ce plant, un pot approprié de même que le terreau et le fil pour ligaturage seront fournis. Les instructeurs mettront leurs propres outils de bonsaï à la disposition des participants qui n'auraient pas les leurs. Autant les participants que les instructeurs devraient apporter leur lunch – l'endroit dispose d'un frigo et d'un four à micro-ondes. Le coût de cet atelier est de 55 \$ par personne. Il y a une limite de 15 places !

Les membres intéressés devraient s'inscrire auprès de Yvon Bernier : (819) 684-0586 ; fax (819) 684-7365 ; ycbernier@infonet.ca

Bonsai Development Workshop, Saturday, May 7 in Building #72, Central Experimental Farm, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

This is a workshop aimed specifically at those who have taken the Beginners' Bonsai Courses given last November. Participants will receive assistance from experienced OBS members to begin developing their own bonsai using nursery grown San Jose junipers. The plant material, a suitable pot and the necessary supplies will be provided. The team of instructors will make their own bonsai tools available for sharing among those participants who may not have their own. Participants and instructors should bring their lunch; the room is equipped with a fridge and microwave oven. The cost of this workshop is \$55 per person. There are only 15 places available!

Interested members should register with Yvon Bernier : (819) 684-0586 ; fax (819) 684-7365 ; ycbernier@infonet.ca

BONSAI design (part 1)

By Walter Pall

Classical: This is the style which is commonly associated with "good" bonsai. These are trees which stick to the well known Japanese rules. They are usually slightly expressionistic and abstract. This means, the designer does not try to give the impression of a real tree but rather he has an inner feeling for the ideal tree which he expresses. This always applies to conifers. Deciduous trees are often naturalistic and less expressionistic. A good classical artist is seen as one who uses (copies) the classical forms and conforms to the classical rules as far as possible.

Yuji Yoshimura has given an excellent historical overview of the development of the art of bonsai. According to him the development of classical bonsai started around 1600 with an early period which lasted until 1800. The middle classical period from 1800 to 1950 brought considerable refinement. The late classical period lasts from 1950 to today. In this period the refinement has reached new heights. Yoshimura sees most bonsai which were not styled or maintained in Japan outside of the classical group, either in the neo-classical or contemporary style.

There is the early-classical bonsai style, which can only be in the forms which were accepted before the

19th century: formal upright, informal upright, slanting, cascade, single trunk multitrunk, group, and on rock. In the 19th century the literati form was introduced in Japan. In the 20th century the formal broom form was developed.

Yoshimura sees most bonsai which were done in some sort of classical fashion outside of Japan as done in the neo-classical style. These are "bonsai that have been created based on the Japanese aesthetic sensibilities and the fundamentals of classical bonsai but which go beyond the framework of the classical bonsai of the past and were created through the subjectivity of the individual".

The classical style is being repeated in the West since a couple of decades over and over again. Nothing was really added to it. The forms often became a cliché, stereotyped. The classical rules, which should really just be guidelines were far too often followed rigidly and even misunderstood. It became common practice to style deciduous trees as if they were conifers. This is so widespread by now that a naturalistic deciduous tree looks awkward to most western bonsai enthusiasts. They have gotten so used to the high level of abstraction of the classical trees that a natural looking bonsai seems strange. Many western bonsai enthusiasts are not aware that a great percentage of deciduous bonsai in Japan are not styled like a conifer, but rather in a naturalistic style. The "specimen" trees that are exported are, however usually styled in a stereotype way. This is because they are cheaper to develop that way and the western public expects them to look that way. Also conifers are often styled with conical apexes in the West, which sometimes is appropriate, but more often is a common misunderstanding of classical rules. Most good classical bonsai in Japan have rounded apexes.

Thus the term neo-classical is often used in a derogative way, meaning a bonsai which is styled as a cliché, which is a copy of a copy of a copy. And the quality is deteriorating with every copying. The bonsai somehow look all the same, as if they were cut out with a cookie-cutter – "cookie-cutter bonsai".

There is a tendency in Japan recently to heavily under pot deciduous trees. Especially enormous trident maples are seen in incredibly shallow pots. A similar phenomenon is the exaggeration of a powerful nebari. There are some tridents with a nebari that has crossed the borderline to grotesque. These are developments to the extreme. A shallower pot and a stronger nebari make the bonsai more powerful. So this is what is done. But there is an optimum and beyond that it is getting worse again. It is typical for an art style to go to extremes in a later period. The debate is open whether these grotesque tridents are neo-classical or just very late classical.

Classic is a period in art history in which a zenith of artistic development was reached. A period of just repeating something what was developed in a classic period without adding new aspects is called classicism in art history or neo-classical. In a way one could go with Yoshimura and see what the majority of westerners by and large are practicing as bonsai art as neo-classical. This is a somehow derogative term, which, however expresses well the feeling of some artists who are becoming more and more allergic against classical appearance. Some even are starting to see classical bonsai as old-fashioned. This is normal during a time of change. This state of mind is necessary to start questioning traditions and to dare doing completely new things. It does not at all mean that classical bonsai are really outdated. Classical in the sense of proven value through time honored and developed traditions and a heritage to look up to will always mean this to the wise avant-garde artist.

One would have to note here that the Chinese trees don't usually fall into what is normally called classic category, as this is specifically a Japanese classic. Penjings have their own classical appearance, which now more and more reappears in contemporary western bonsai. The classical Penjings are much more naturalistic, impressionistic and often are transcendental. It is interesting to observe that the modern, contemporary bonsai in China and other Asian countries seem to be created more according to the classical Japanese style. This is certainly true of bonsai in Taiwan, where e.g. one can see extraordinary ficus bonsai which look like an enormous pine – they are neo-classical.

Classic and classical are not the same! Webster's dictionary: classic: of the first or highest quality, class

or rank: a classic piece of work. classical: of or pertaining to a style of literature and art characterized by conformity to established treatments, taste, or critical standards, and by attention to form with the general effect of regularity, simplicity, balance, proportion, and controlled emotion. So it is no contradiction to say that a truly outstanding bonsai can be a classic example of the contemporary style.

Ottawa Bonsai Society
Société de bonsaï d'Ottawa

Meeting Location / Lieu des rencontres

2004/2005 Executive

Exécutif 2004/2005

Treasurer / Trésorier

Yvon Bernier
208, avenue des Explorateurs
Gatineau, QC J9J 1M9
(819) 684-0586

Nos rencontres se tiennent à l'édifice #72 de la Ferme expérimentale centrale. Pour vous y rendre, prenez la direction sud sur la promenade Prince of Wales jusqu'au rond-point à l'intersection National Capital Driveway et Prince of Wales (qui est aussi l'entrée principale de la Ferme expérimentale et de l'Arboretum), où vous prendrez la direction Est menant à l'Arboretum. Une courte distance plus loin, à la première fourche, Prenez la route de gauche qui mène directement à l'édifice #72 (vous verrez une affiche juste en face de l'édifice, de l'autre côté du chemin, qui dit «Friends of the Farm» .Le stationnement est situé de part et d'autre de l'édifice.

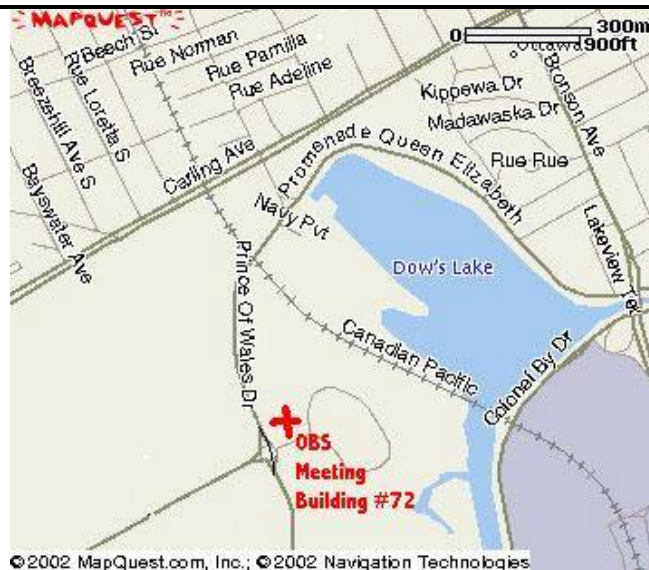
Librarian /Libraire

Mike O'Connor

Steering Group

Comité d'organisation

Yvon Bernier
Duart Crabtree
Vianney Leduc
Art Phelan
Barney Shum
Gordon Williams
Matt Yakabuski



Our meetings are held at Building #72 at the Central Experimental Farm. Heading south on Prince of Wales, at the traffic circle at the intersection of the N.C.C. Scenic Drive and Prince of Wales, the major entrance to the Experimental Farm and the Arboretum, exit east into the Arboretum. After a very short distance, where the road divides, turn left to Building #72 which will be down a short distance on your left. There is parking just before or just after the building. The entrance is on the street side (east side) and there is a sign reading "Friends of the Farm".