

# Journal of The Ottawa Bonsai Society



March/Mars  
2003

[www.ottawabonsai.org](http://www.ottawabonsai.org)

Volume 18, No. 5

## Notes from Your Steering Group

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The February OBS meeting featured a one-hour Bonsai Clubs International video presentation *Grow Successful Bonsai: A Step by Step Guide*, with Peter Adams of England. In his video, Adams discussed the art of bonsai, collection and maintenance of wild bonsai material, bonsai styles and how to achieve them, and hard and soft pruning of deciduous and evergreen species. It concluded with a very interesting and effective demonstration on group styling of a cryptomeria forest.

The short program was a talk by Vianney Leduc on "adding elements of interest to coniferous trees". It was a most appropriate complement to the video. As usual, Vianney's presentation was well prepared, backed-up by sketches and other

For the March meeting, the program will feature Part Two of Vianney Leduc's talk on "adding interest elements to bonsai", as well as a Bonsai Clubs International slide show on either Harmony in Bonsai or Rock Planting.

We have been informed by Marc Dufour, who some members know, of the recent setting up of a website devoted to Canadian Bonsai. Mr. Dufour invites OBS members to visit his website and offer comments and suggestions about it. He has also set up a forum for OBS members. The site can be found at:

<http://www.gcb.groan.ca>

Ken McDougall informs us that he recently placed a large order for quality bonsai soil (perfect for our climatic conditions). He expects to receive the order in late April and invites those interested in buying some at unbeatable price to contact him either through E-mail at [kcmcdgll@storm.ca](mailto:kcmcdgll@storm.ca) or by phone at (613) 733-9110

visual aids and, best of all, illustrated on 3 of his own junipers: a "blaauw", a Japanese dwarf ("procumbens nana") and a "shimpaku" in the phoenix graft style. He showed how, through patience and careful attention to details (creation and refinement of deadwood, carving to accentuate natural features of the trunk, splitting of foliage pads on branches), one can, overtime, greatly improve the appearance of one's trees. A very effective presentation.

We have just added four books to our library: *The Art of Bonsai Design* by Colin Lewis, *Bonsai Landscapes*, by Peter Adams, *Beautiful Bonsai*, by Bruno Delmer. Nous avons également ajouté un livre en français *Bonsai*, par l'artiste bien connu Colin Lewis.

Pour la rencontre de mars, le programme comprendra une seconde tranche de la présentation de Vianney Leduc sur «l'ajout de facteurs d'intérêt aux bonsaï», puis un diaporama de Bonsai Clubs International portant soit sur l'harmonie dans le bonsaï ou la plantation de groupe sera présenté.

Marc Dufour, que quelques-uns de nos membres connaissent bien, nous a récemment informé de la création d'un nouveau site web consacré aux bonsaï, fait spécifiquement pour les Canadiens. M. Dufour invite les membres à consulter ce site, à lui faire part de leurs commentaires ou suggestions et à échanger avec d'autres sur le forum qu'il a établi à l'intention des membres de la SBO. Le site est à l'adresse: <http://www.gcb.groan.ca>

Ken McDougall nous informe qu'il vient de placer une grosse commande de terreau de qualité pour bonsaï (parfait pour nos conditions climatiques). Il s'attend à recevoir son chargement vers la fin d'avril et invite ceux qui voudraient s'en procurer à un prix imbattable à communiquer avec lui, soit par courriel à [kcmcdgll@storm.ca](mailto:kcmcdgll@storm.ca) soit en composant le (613) 733-9110

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## The Ottawa Bonsai Society News

Next meeting/ Prochaine rencontre: **Monday March 17, 2003**

**Lundi le 17 mars 2003**

Time/ Heure:

**7:30 pm**

Location/ Endroit:

**Building # 72**

**Central Experimental Farm**

**\*\* Bring in your trees for discussion or guidance \*\***

### Lectures:

Our hostess at Friends of the Farm, Diana Dakers, has organized a lecture series.

The cost is \$10.- for members of Friends of the Farm and \$12.- for non-members.

The lectures take place at Building 72 of the Arboretum (the same place as our meetings). The next lecture is:

*March 19 2003*

BONSAI: DESIGN AND TECHNIQUES

Barney Shum (OBS)

One can pre-register by dialing 230-3276 to ensure a seat. Mr. Shum's lecture will be good publicity for the OBS. There is a large meeting room upstairs which holds 45 spectators and of course the smaller main floor lunch room where we hold our meetings.

### Meeting Date Changes:

Our regular club meeting for April would conflict with Easter, so it has been rescheduled to April 28.

**Correction:** Our regular May meeting would conflict with Victoria Day, so it has been moved to May 26.

### OBS 2003 Show:

We do not yet have a location finalized for the annual bonsai show. A tentative date of Sept. 13 and/or 14 has been set for a fall show.

The OBS new web site address / Nouvelle adresse site web de la SBO:

**<http://www.ottawabonsai.org>**

The OBS mailing address / L'adresse postale de la SBO:

**Ottawa Bonsai Society**

**P.O. Box 4254, Station "E"**

**Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B3**

- People who are interested in receiving the Journal through e-mail instead of mail are welcome to ask and send a note to [barney.shum@nlc-bnc.ca](mailto:barney.shum@nlc-bnc.ca)
- Les personnes intéressées à recevoir le bulletin sous forme de e-mail sont bienvenues de le demander et de m'envoyer votre demande à [barney.shum@nlc-bnc.ca](mailto:barney.shum@nlc-bnc.ca)
- Suggestions on topics and subjects that you would like to see appear in the Journal would also be welcome and appreciated.
- Les suggestions sur des points précis et sujets que vous aimeriez voir traités et discutés à l'intérieur du journal sont encore une fois bienvenues et seront bien appréciés.

# Bonsai Assessment

**By Barney Shum**

(Several years ago a group of bonsai enthusiasts got together and discussed the issue of judging bonsai. This is the product of our discussions, a bonsai assessment form identifying criteria and weighting factors and notes describing the criteria.)

## Bonsai Assessment Form

<b>DESIGN</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>PHYSICAL</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>TECHNIQUE</b>	<b>20%</b>
Repetition	/ 8	Trunk	/ 4	Health	/ 5
Proportion	/ 8	Surface roots	/ 3	Wiring	/ 5
Container	/ 8	Branches	/ 3	Pruning	/ 5
Visual Stability	/ 5	Foliage	/ 2	Other	/ 5
Mass and Negative Space	/ 5	Soil surface	/ 2		
Line	/ 5	Refinement	/ 2		
Colour	/ 5	Cleanliness	/ 2		
Movement	/ 5	Other	/ 2		
Impact	/ 5				
Other	/ 6				
60% of 60 = 36	/ 60	60% of 20 = 12	/ 20	60% of 20 = 12	/ 20

Must score 60% in each category to qualify. Tenths or fractions of points are fully acceptable.

## **Bonsai Assessment Notes**

### **DESIGN**

#### **Repetition**

Repeating patterns provide unity to the composition. It also provides a sense of order (constant) which adds to the sense of age. Repetition does not imply copying of form but more thematic, or echoes of form. In fact, variation is necessary as long as the main theme is respected.

Repeating patterns are most obvious in the shapes of the masses, negative spaces and overall silhouettes or sub-silhouettes.

It is also obvious in the use of line (e.g. all curved or all straight) and movement.

Repeating patterns can also be found in colour, texture, in both the tree and pot.

Repetition can be found in a series of elements as well e.g. minor tree similar in mass pattern with major tree.

#### **Proportion**

Proportion is the relative visual dominance of the design components and how they affect the overall mood.

Ideal trunk diameter to height proportion of 1:6 gives a strong, aged feel. Mood of tree is a factor (up to 1:12 is acceptable). Diameter of trunk is measured at where the surface roots start to divide. Height is measured from soil surface.

Trunk to branch proportions should also be 1:6. In most cases up to 1:12 is even more desirable giving a more aged appearance. An exception is the first branch. If dominance of the first branch is a major design factor then a ratio down to 1:3 may be acceptable.

Height of first branch should be 1/3rd up the tree. Branch spread should be 1/2 the height. Tree should be mounded up the diameter of the trunk. Tree position should be off-centre and slightly towards the back of the pot. Note that there are significant exceptions to these guidelines depending on style and mood.

Width and height should never be equal.

Foliage should not be disproportionate for the overall size.

Surface roots should be proportionate to the trunk diameter.

Branch spacing, diameter and length should generally diminish as they progress up the tree.

Trunk tip and base usually move in the same direction.

Secondary and tertiary branch patterns follow the same rules.

Consider the visual impact of the foliage masses, the negative space and the relative mass of the structure.

Consider the visual impact of the tree vs. the container. The tree should be the dominant factor. The container should be no more than 30% of the visual mass of the composition.

### **Container**

Pot length should be 2/3rds the height of the tree. Pot depth should be diameter of trunk.

Is the container consistent with the overall mood of the tree? Consider colour, line, texture, designs or drawings on the container, etc.

Note that the container can act as a background or framing for a tree and does not necessarily have to be consistent with the tree.

### **Visual Stability**

Provides a sense of permanence and thus age. Does the composition, including the pot, look stable? Note that foliage masses are often used to counterbalance the lean in the tree. Also note that the horizontal masses or horizontal underlines to masses lighten the visual impact of masses much like clouds.

### **Mass and Negative Space**

There should be an appropriate balance of mass and negative space. The heavier or more aged the mood of the tree, typically cued by trunk thickness and taper, the more mass it can support. There should always be enough negative space to see the main structure or line.

Distribution of mass and negative space is very important. This is key to visual stability and to repetition. Overall, distribution should be relatively even.

Masses should appear natural and not manicured as in topiary. They should exhibit variation in form.

Masses should be shaped in such a manner to work with movement. Take into account trunk taper and shape of foliage masses.

Attention to negative space is as important as attention to mass.

### **Line**

Structure or line of the composition should be readily apparent.

Shape and direction of lines should be consistent e.g. all curved moving in one general direction.

Major line(s) should be easily identified from minor lines.

### **Colour**

Harmony or contrast. Refer to the colour wheel.

If this is the prime design concern, assessment in other design criteria may be relaxed.

### **Movement**

Movement is the life of the composition. It adds to the sense of vitality or drama.

Does the composition flow easily? Is it consistent?

Squint your eyes and step back. Can you discern movement?

### **Impact**

Consider the composition's silhouette and its three dimensional aspect. Is there a focal point? Does it draw attention away from the overall composition? Is there a consistency in character, mood, or feeling?

### **Other**

Consider texture, tension, visual speed, etc. Provide explanations.

## **PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

**NOTE: In this assessment, physical characteristics are used to account for any physical part of the tree which detracts from the overall design. Assessor should provide close to full marks if the physical characteristic does not detract from the overall design.**

### **Trunk**

There should be an obvious trunk line with no visually competing branches. The trunk should have significant taper. The diameter at the base of the tree should be equal to one sixth of the height of the tree. The trunk should be interesting through the use of texture, line, colour contrast, etc.

### **Surface Roots**

Surface roots should be exposed and vary in size but be in reasonable proportion to the trunk. They should radiate in an irregular pattern from all sides of the trunk base. They should provide a visual anchor for the composition.

**Branches**

Starting about one-third up the tree, the branches should be placed in an ever-tightening spiral around the trunk in three planes, left, back and right. The lowest branch should be the largest and the size and length should vary in a generally diminishing ratio as they go up the trunk. The spread of the lowest branches should be roughly one half to two-thirds the height of the tree. Branches are usually grouped in threes, one to the left or right, one to the back and one to the opposite side. Major branches are placed on the outside of a trunk curve.

**Foliage**

The foliage is used to complement the basic structure of the tree not hide it. It is used to create mass and balance. The leaf size should be in general proportion to the size of the tree.

**Soil Surface**

Mounding should be apparent. Moss, lichens, or other accent plants should be appropriate but not detract from tree particularly surface roots. Colour should be consistent with overall colour scheme.

**Refinement**

Branch ramification is a key concern. Trunk line and exposed structure should provide interest. Trunk should have a well-defined bark texture. Strong surface rootage adds to sense of age as does soil surface covered with moss and downward branch angles. Focal points of deadwood are also effective.

**Cleanliness**

No damaged foliage. No destructive insects on tree. No debris on soil surface. Pot is clean with no calcium deposits. Trunk is clean unless intentionally covered with moss or lichens.

**TECHNIQUE****Health**

Tree appears healthy. No insect or disease damage. Vigorous growth indicated by foliage close to the trunk, well balanced growth at top and bottom of tree.

**Wiring**

No wiring scars. Existing wiring is neat and orderly and as unobtrusive as possible.

**Pruning**

No apparent man-made scars. No sign of wood rot on deadwood. Light pruning or pinching should be hidden by new growth.

## Membership Information

We extend our most hearty welcome to new members.

Our membership list now shows the names of about 65 people, close to 30 of whom have, for one reason or another, neglected to renew membership in our Society.

I am urging those in that situation to renew as soon as possible, either at the next regular meeting or through the mail.

Our fees remain the same:

\$35 per year per household and \$15 per year for students or corresponding members (available outside the NCR)

Your renewal month is indicated on the address label of the Journal.

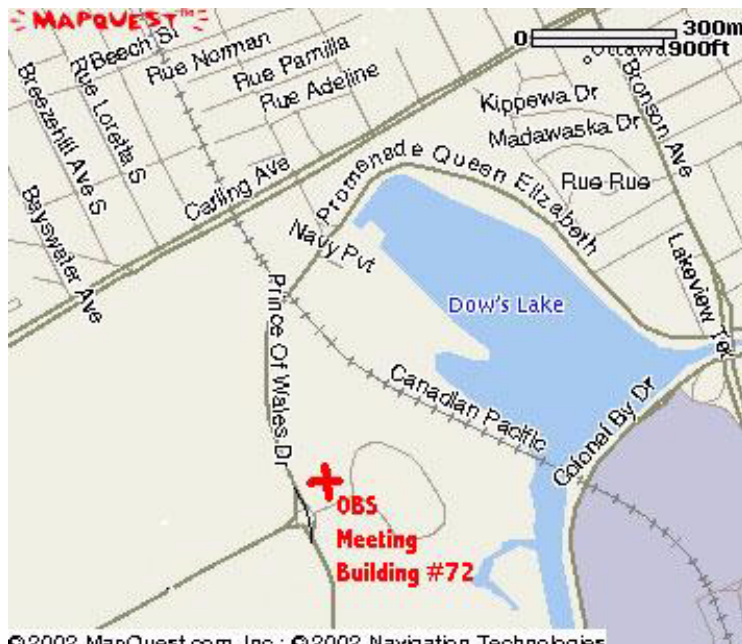
## A Visit with M.A. Rahim

Myron Mech, and Duart Crabtree reported on their visit with M. A. Rahim, a past president of the OBS.

Rahim has donated his prized sageretia tea to the Montreal Botanical Gardens where it will be on display in their Japanese pavilion.

Rahim also donated forty back issues of *Bonsai Today*, *International Bonsai*, and BCI's *Bonsai Magazine* to the OBS library and provided eight sets of trays for group plantings that were quickly snapped up by members in attendance. Rahim's thoughtfulness is much appreciated.

Rahim still has some quality bonsai from his collection that Duart will bring to the April meeting for examination by the members. These will be described in some detail in the April issue of the *Journal*.



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## Meeting Location

Our meetings are held at **Building # 72 at the Central Experimental Farm**. From Prince of Wales turn east off the traffic circle at the corner of N.C.C. Scenic Drive and Prince of Wales. This is also the entrance to the Arboretum. One then turns left, which is north, to Building # 72 which is on the left, west, and has a parking lot. The entrance to the building is on the east side and there is a sign saying "Friends of the Farm". (From the west end take the 417 to Parkdale south to Carling, (left turn) east on Carling, (right turn) south on Prince of Wales Drive. From the east take the 417 south to Carling, (right turn) west on Carling then (left turn) south on Prince of Wales.