

# Journal of The Ottawa Bonsai Society

## Journal de la Société de bonsaï d'Ottawa



**November/Novembre  
2007**

**www.ottawabonsai.org**

**Vol. 23, No.4**

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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

### Notes from your Steering Group Le mot de votre conseil directeur

We were happy to welcome new members to our society at the October meeting!

Vianney Leduc gave a short presentation on wintering trees in our area which can be challenging for some species. He covered wintering techniques for a wide range of trees from tropical to the very hardy native trees.

Members also shared some of their techniques used. One of these techniques was to use a styrofoam white cone which has some advantages. This technique has been used successfully in the past by some older members to protect smaller trees. As with other techniques (such as using a cold room), the timing of this method is weather dependant and one has to ensure that the soil stays humid until it becomes frozen.

Mike O'Connor then presented needle plucking techniques that can be applied in early fall. He had brought a nice native collected white pine and a small Jack pine to show example of the technique.

The white pine was a taller tree that he cut drastically to keep only the bottom part of the trunk and the first branch. This was a good example of how sometimes just using a single branch from a tree can lead to nice movement in the trunk and good taper! He also explained that the design of this tree would likely result in a windswept style. The Jack pine was basically a small baby of a collected tree!

He explained different needle plucking methods to be used depending on the goals, from encouraging back budding to managing the energy of the tree. By removing more needles or reducing the branch size in strong area of the tree, the energy will be redirected to weaker areas.

The presentation was interesting and timely!

As a follow-up to the reference in last month's Journal about the Nakamura Lecture and Demonstration at the Japanese Embassy on September 6th, we are including in this month's issue the text which Master Nakamura distributed to attendees, wherein he expands on his personal philosophy and aim about the art of bonsai.

## Next meeting

**Monday, November 19 at 7:00pm**

The meeting will be in two parts. Duart Crabtree will first give a brief presentation on his recent visit to the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington DC. Ian McRae will follow with a discussion on Azaleas, with some live material on display as well as a presentation showing pictures of azaleas in flower

**NOTE: There is no meeting and no newsletter in December. The first members meeting in 2008 will be held on January 21.**

### BONSAI COURSE FOR BEGINNERS

The OBS will be conducting a bonsai course for beginners this Fall to be followed in the spring by a workshop during which participants will have the opportunity of developing their own bonsai using provided material. The theoretical course on bonsai fundamentals will follow the *Bonsai Design – Level 1* course developed by Barney Shum and Lynn Edmonds. On completion of this one day course (5-6 hours), participants will have the essential knowledge required to begin to develop bonsai for our climate zone. Lecture notes will be provided. Cost of this course is set at \$20 per person for OBS members and \$25 for non-members, to be paid at the start of the course.

**DATE:** Saturday, November 24, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Building #72, Central Experimental Farm

**REGISTRATION :** No later than November 15

Yvon Bernier : (819) 684-0586 ; fax (819) 684-7365 ; [ycbernier@videotron.ca](mailto:ycbernier@videotron.ca)

### COURS SUR LES BONSAÏS POUR DÉBUTANTS

La SBO donnera, cet automne, un cours pour débutants, lequel sera suivi, au printemps, d'un atelier au cours duquel les participants auront l'occasion de créer leur propre bonsaï à partir d'un plant de pépinière. Le cours théorique repose sur les enseignements du manuel *Bonsai Design – Level 1* écrit par Barney Shum et Lyne Edmonds. Ce cours d'une journée (5-6 heures) fournira les éléments de base qui permettront à ceux et celles qui le suivront de commencer à former et à entretenir des bonsaïs dans nos conditions climatiques. Le manuel de base est écrit en anglais et le cours sera donné dans cette langue, mais l'instructeur principal, Vianney Leduc, se fera un plaisir de fournir des explications en français au besoin. Le prix de ce cours est fixé à 20\$ par personne pour les membres de la SBO et à 25\$ pour les non-membres, payable au début du cours

**DATE:** Le samedi 24 novembre de 9h30 à 15h30, Édifice #72, Ferme expérimentale centrale

**INSCRIPTION :** Au plus tard le 15 novembre

Yvon Bernier : (819) 684-0586 ; fax (819) 684-7365 ; [ycbernier@videotron.ca](mailto:ycbernier@videotron.ca)

### NOUVEAU MEMBRE / NEW MEMBER

Nous souhaitons la bienvenue à :

A warm welcome is extended to :

Stephen Symons

**Bonsai, My Philosophy and Aims****September 2007****Susumu Nakamura**

There are many ways to grow Bonsai – it depends on the person. Even in Japan, 30 years ago I found an article in a major newspaper on "Watermelon Bonsai..." Bonsai has only recently become more well known throughout the world. 20 years ago, I took several Bonsai containers with me when I visited the United States. A female customs officer at the airport asked me "What are these?" I answered, "They are Bonsai containers." "Huh, what is Bonsai?" she asked me. I tried to explain to her about Bonsai using my limited vocabulary, "It is a tree that is dwarfed and shaped artistically. These containers are used to plant the Bonsai trees in." Unfortunately, she had trouble understanding about it because she had never heard or seen a Bonsai tree before.

Nowadays however, Bonsai has become more popular. I talked to an Italian gentleman on the airplane from Rome to Torino not long ago. He told me, "My wife gave me a small Bonsai for my birthday and after a couple of months it died! I can't understand why?" I asked him to explain what he had done with it and found out the reason – he had left it in a dark room for a long time. He didn't understand that it is a real tree that needs to be grown outside like any other tree. We can bring it in to appreciate it for a day or two but it needs to be outside to grow and be healthy. Regardless of whether people understand Bonsai correctly or not, it's popularity as a potted tree has spread around the world remarkably in the last ten years.

Let me try and explain what I believe Bonsai to be. Bonsai is a plant that has been grown in a container for appreciation and purposefully kept small or dwarfed using various techniques over a long period of time. There is a definite aim and plan to determine it's final shape. In China, there are many schools of Bonsai, which they call "Pen-jing." Each school has a different way to express their plants. After coming to Japan, Bonsai went through various transitions and ultimately came to express the essence of nature. By viewing Bonsai, one can enjoy and feel the serenity of nature.

In Japan, it has been traditional to describe Bonsai using the words "Wabi" and "Sabi." Wabi has the feeling of being quiet, calm, humble and even lonely. Sabi has the feeling of being simple, poor, declining, and very old. This concept of Wabi and Sabi came from the Tea Ceremony or "Wabi-Cha" which was developed by Sen-no Rikyu over 400 years ago.

As for myself, I do not think that Wabi and Sabi are enough to cover all Bonsai. I believe that they are important but I also think that "Ga" is needed. What is "Ga"? The concept actually comes from China. In China, they have the word "Rikugi" which means, "to make a poem". Rikugi has six requirements as follows: Fu', Ga, Sho', Fu, Hi and Kyo. Each is a different aspect needed to make a Rikugi poem. The second concept is the one I am referring to in Bonsai, "Ga." It has the sense of elegance, grace, serenity and modesty. Never loud, showy, or coarse. When we call someone a "Ga-jin", we mean that person is refined and has a noble spirit. He is never vulgar or low on word or deed. Therefore, in my opinion, even if a Bonsai is powerful, dazzling or intricate, if it doesn't have "Ga" then I can't say it is a good Bonsai.

Bonsai is a living thing that is always growing and changing. It is a different art from paintings, which also express through shape and color but are static and never change. Thus, we cannot keep and enhance Bonsai for a long time unless we have a good plan based on a sense of beauty and use good techniques. If we don't do these things, the Bonsai will be destroyed by haphazard pruning, shaping and cultivation. Then, we can no longer call the plant a Bonsai but a "Sakuochi" which means that it's health and beauty have declined. Therefore, it is extremely important to have an aim based on a sense of beauty, technique and experience.

When we Japanese study something, we have been taught to follow three principles. The first thing is "Shu" which means to be consistent by practicing the instructions of the teacher or the fundamentals faithfully. The second thing is "Ha" which means to break down or tear something apart, in this case change or reject the teaching of the instructor. Of course, we must have "Shu" before we can have "Ha" in Bonsai. The third and final principle is "Ri" which means to leave, go away, or be independent. Consequently, at the last stage of learning from our teacher we should advance on the basis of knowledge we have accumulated, with our own ideas, talent and creativity. Often, however, at this time we feel that we must assert our own views completely while ignoring the knowledge and techniques we have learned. We call this in Japanese "Namaiki" or "Namabyoho". It is difficult to attain greatness with such an attitude. Aside from these principles, I feel that it is very important to develop the best

characteristics of one's material or future Bonsai by observing it with a free and open mind. Observe each new plant with a fresh view toward using the plant's natural characteristics.

To summarize, I feel that the concept of "Ga" (elegance, grace) is the spiritual backbone of Bonsai with "Wabi" (calm, quiet) and "Sabi" (simple, old) as the building blocks for growing Bonsai. We must forever renew our knowledge and keep a beginner's interest and mind.

I hope to have a happy life with Bonsai as my lifelong friend.

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### Winner of Draw for New Members / Gagnant du tirage pour les nouveaux membres

The winner of the draw for a free **Beginners Bonsai Course** among members who joined the Ottawa Bonsai Society during our Annual Show 2007, held at the Japanese Embassy on September 8 and 9, is:

Le gagnant du tirage d'un **cours sur les bonsaïs pour débutants** parmi les personnes qui se sont jointes à la Société de bonsaï d'Ottawa durant notre Expo Annuelle 2007, tenue à l'ambassade du Japon les 8 et 9 septembre derniers, est:

**Ed Ellsworth**

Warmest congratulations Ed / Sincères félicitations au gagnant!

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### **BONSAÏ GROS-BEC**

**40 Imbeault**

**St-Alphonse-Rodriguez PQ**

**J0K 1W0**

**(450) 883-1196 [info@bonsaigrosbec.com](mailto:info@bonsaigrosbec.com) / [www.bonsaigrosbec.com](http://www.bonsaigrosbec.com)**

In the beautiful Lanaudière region, north of Montreal, we invite you to visit our greenhouses and our collection of bonsai and penjing from China, Korea, Japan and Canada.

We have a large choice of pre-bonsai as well as bonsai, pots, tools, wires and soil. Among others, we have a supply of magnificent juniperus chinensis shimpaku, ulmus parvifolia, serissa foetida and ficus microcarpa (of all sizes).

A 10% discount will be given to members of the Ottawa Bonsai Society on pots, tools wires and soil. We are open Tuesday to Sunday from 10:00am to 5:00pm. Please call for an appointment to visit us. We regret that we are unable to accept payment by credit or debit cards. Guided visits are available at \$5 per person.

We look forward to share our passion with you all!

**Suzanne Piché and Robert Smith**

**Ottawa Bonsai Society**  
**2007 / 2008 Executive**  
**Société de bonsaï d'Ottawa**  
**Exécutif 2007 / 2008**

**Treasurer / Trésorier**

Yvon Bernier  
 208, avenue des  
 Explorateurs  
 Gatineau, QC J9J 1M9  
 (819) 684-0586  
[ycbernier@videotron.ca](mailto:ycbernier@videotron.ca)

**Editor / Éditeur**

Vianney Leduc

**Librarian / Bibliothécaire**

Mike O'Connor

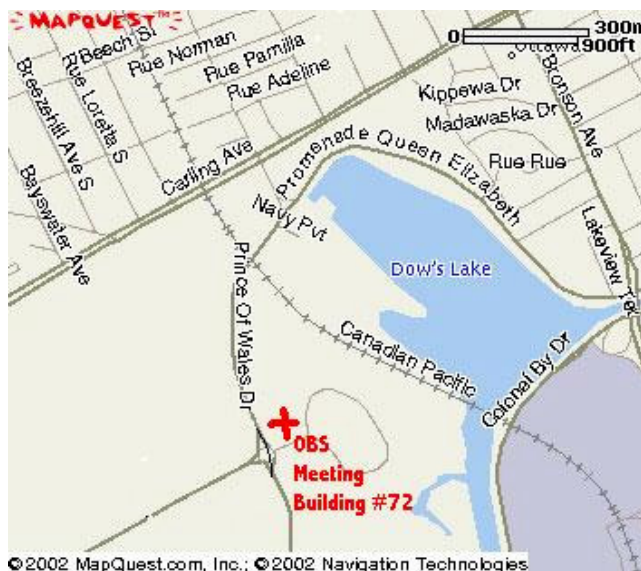
**Secretary and Director  
 of Public Relations  
 / Secrétaire et directeur  
 des relations publiques**  
 Duart Crabtree

**Steering Group  
 Conseil directeur**

Yvon Bernier  
 Duart Crabtree  
 Eric Langlois  
 Paul Lauzon  
 Vianney Leduc  
 Mike O'Connor  
 Barney Shum  
 Gordon Williams  
 Matt Yakabuski

## Meeting Location / Lieu des rencontres

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.



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".