

Journal of The Ottawa Bonsai Society



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Notes from Your Steering Group

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The past meeting was an interesting mixture of discussion. Duart Crabtree led off a talk between the differences in group plantings based on the writings of Yuji Yoshimura. This focussed on the differences between "Natural" and "Formal" styles, and then moved on to the characteristics and differences between Bonsai and Penjing. This participative and free ranging discussion brought out a number of ideas that were new and interesting to many members.

The second part of the meeting was focused on member's trees. A number of trees were examined for improving branch structure and rootage. This was a useful learning experience where senior members were able to pass on their knowledge to the junior members and allowed for personal growth in both groups in the art of Bonsai.

The Steering Group has been working on a number of activities for members. Mark these dates on you calendar and look for more information in this and upcoming OBS Journals.

June 14th – Workshop, AGM, Wine & Cheese, Dinner

Sep. 6th – Trip to the 25th anniversary Montreal Bonsai Society Show

Sep. 13th & 14th – OBS Annual Show at the Japanese Embassy. We need photos of bonsai for the publicity brochures. If you have any, please bring them to the June 14th AGM.

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To be determined – Bonsai Course

Ottawa Bonsai Society Events Calendar



Bonsai Workshop, AGM, Wine & Cheese, Dinner

June 14th, 2003

Workshop 10:00 to 4 p.m., AGM 4:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Wine & Cheese 4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Dinner – 6:30 p.m.

Building #72, Central Experimental Farm

Instead of our usual meeting on the third Monday evening of the month, for the month of June we are replacing our regularly scheduled meeting with an intermediate workshop. The workshop will be held at our usual location but on Saturday, June 14th from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is open to all members who have some basic knowledge and experience in bonsai. Bring one of your own trees that requires a makeover or raw nursery material. Maybe it's time to tackle that difficult tree that you are not quite sure of? Barney Shum will lead the workshop and provide guidance in terms of bonsai design. Other senior members will be on hand to help you through the technical elements. Cost for participation in the workshop is \$10 to help offset the cost of the room. Wire will be supplied and there may be a few tools available but it would be best to bring your own. We are having trouble sourcing bonsai soil so it would be best to bring yours. Advanced registration is requested. Please call Barney Shum at 746-2398 to save your spot. If you can't make it as a participant, please feel free to join us later in the day as a silent observer (free of charge) and stay for the AGM and Wine & Cheese.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will follow the workshop from 4 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. This will include the election of a new slate for the Executive, a report from the Treasurer, and a quick summary of the year. This is followed by the Annual OBS Wine and Cheese (your membership money hard at work, so don't miss out!). Members and guests, while sipping on wine and nibbling on cheese, will be able to discuss the workshop trees and I'm sure there will be lively, inspired discussion.

Members and guests are invited to the OBS Annual Dinner (self-paid) which will follow the Wine and Cheese. Arrangements are being made to go to a Japanese restaurant. Please call Duart Crabtree at 235-8059 so that he can confirm the reservation for the number of people going.

Penjing - Part II

by Maureen Mark

(reprinted from OBS Newsletter Volume VI, No. 1 (May 1990))

The Schools of Penjing

As the art of Penjing spread across China, the large distances and lengthy transportation times required to travel between regions resulted in the development of different styling techniques in each region. Also, the regional variation in topography and land-forms resulted in subtle variations in the refinement of the basic styles. Each 'school', as they became to be called, developed its own techniques for styling and refinement and often used different materials. The basic styles (e.g. upright, hanging cliff) can be found in all the schools of Penjing.

There are two major groups of schools. The Southern group includes the Guangdong, Guangxi and Fujian provinces. This group became known as the "Lingnan School". The Northern group is centred along the Yangtze River Valley. The major cities are Shanghai, Suzhou, Yangzhou, Chengdu, Nantong and Hangzhou. Each of these cities further refines the basic northern styling and each became the centre of a distinctive school.

The Northern Schools

All trees trained in the northern schools share one feature: the presence of distinctly shaped foliage layers. Each foliage layer is shaped into a cloud-like structure and is distinctly separated from the next layer by a significant amount of empty space.

The Suzhou School

This school is characterized by the aged appearance of trunks and curved branches. The traditional tree forms were fairly standardized. The major style, called 'Six Platforms', Three Bases and One Top', requires the trunk of the tree to be twisted into a total of six curves with three branches extending to the right, three to the left (six platforms), and tree to the back (three bases), with a rounded cluster for the top (one top).

The chief styling method used is cutting, supplemented by bending of the trunk and limbs if required. The trunk and limbs are bent into S-configurations using palm fibre strings. Meticulous pruning of the tree is carried out to refine the shape.

Trees styled in the Suzhou school are characterized by old-looking trunks with a large number of branches, sharp contrasts between dead wood and lush sections and a plump, smooth foliage layer rounding out the top.

The Suzhou school specializes in deciduous species such as hedge Sageretia, Chinese Elm, trident Maple, Plum and Pomegranate. However, conifers such as Chinese Juniper and Five-needle Pine are often used.

The Yangzhou School

The philosophy of the Yangzhou school is that a branch should not be straight for the length of one 'cun' (3.3 cm.). The popular rule is "three curves per cun".

Penjing from the Yangzhou school feature odd numbers of neat, distinct foliage layers. Each layer is trained into thin, flat oval-shaped masses. Penjing with one to three foliage layers are known as "Platform Style" and designs with more than three layers are known as "Ingenious Cloud Style". Most trunks are trained to spiral into "Roaming Dragon Curves".

As with the Suzhou school, training techniques involve cutting, bending with palm fibre strings and meticulous pruning.

Common materials used in the Yangzhou school include Pine, Juniper, elm and Boxwood.

The Sichuan school

This school is centred in Chengdu. It promotes the twisting of trees into a multitude of shapes and often show a touch of the unusual. Sichuan Penjing are noted for their grand and dignified appearance.

Standard training formulas are often named. thus, "Square turns" results in a tree whose trunk is trained to form vertical and horizontal lines with sharp corners for each turn.. Each "curve" becomes progressively smaller towards the top of the tree. Turns in the trunk usually occur in odd numbers and a branch extends from each corner.

Other formulas include "Reversed Curves", "Large Curves with Drooping Branches", "Spiralling Branches", and "Old Woman Combing Her Hair".

Training techniques employed are cutting, training with palm fibre strings and pruning.

Popular materials used in the Chengdu school are *Diospyres armata*, *Serissa foetida*, *Chaenomeles lagenaria*, *Ginkgo bilboa* and *Podocarpus macrophylla*.

The Shanghai School

As a major centre of land and water traffic, Shanghai's Penjing artists had ample opportunities for exchange of information from other parts of China and from abroad. As a result, Shanghai Penjing are much more diversified than those of the other northern schools. Many more species are also used for training Penjing.

Trees from the Shanghai school display freely flowing curves with extending branch lines and angular branchlets.

Training of Shanghai Penjing involves cutting, bending with metal wire and pruning. The trees are trained with wire to form smooth curves. The branchlets are pruned to form bold, angular lines. There are no formulas for the Shanghai Penjing artist to follow. The trees are to follow nature.

Common trees used in Shanghai include conifers like the Five-needle Pine, Black Pine, Yew, *Podocarpus*, and Juniper. Many deciduous, flowering and fruiting trees are also popular.



M.A. Rahim's (a past President of the OBS) group planting of larches.

Trees at the meeting's show table.



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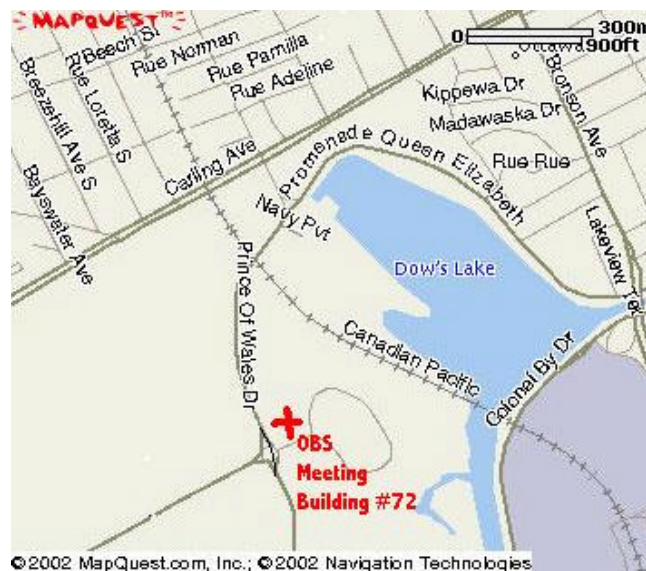
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***** What's New! *****

Bonsai Course

There have been many inquiries about a bonsai course. Many new and older members who would like to brush up on their bonsai design and techniques have been asking about when the OBS will be offering a course. The simple answer is when there is sufficient demand. If you are interested in participating in a bonsai course, please call Yvon Bernier at 684-0586 and let him know you are interested.

Meeting Location



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".

- People who are interested in receiving the Journal through e-mail instead of regular mail, please send a note to barney.shum@nlc-bnc.ca.
- Suggestions on topics you would like to see in the journal would be welcome and appreciated. Please send them to barney.shum@nlc-bnc.ca