

pfm bonsai studio ramblings



April Volume I

Welcome to the busiest month in bonsai in the great Northeast!

Weather can be fickle here as we all know, but eventually it is time to get all our hardy bonsai out into the gardens and getting all that transplanting completed. It is also the month to collect new trees and style those ready for the process.



I LOVE spring!! I just wish there was time to enjoy it. The last two years found us with very early and short potting seasons. As a result, some

trees were not transplanted last year. As a result literally everything in the nursery and in my collection must be transplanted this year. **Just to make April**

more interesting for time constraints, MABS is in the middle of the month. This year's program at MABS is a true knock out! The younger generation of Japanese trained bonsai artists will be sharing some of their knowledge with us.: Ryan Neil (USA), Peter Warren(UK) and Minoru Akiyama (Japan). It is well worth the trip to Grantville PA. To insure enough time for me, I am writing this issue in mid March during a gently snowing outside my window. Being an optimist, I am presuming that April will bring the needed warmth for potting season.



Feedback on last month's article on cutting branches/healing.

Some of you called, some visited, and a few wrote in response to my article. The person who inspired me to write last month's article, Jim Stopfer of the Long Island Bonsai Society, sent me a email which you will find later in this newsletter. He quotes the studies from Dr. Shigo. His work is definitive in the tree pruning industry. I totally agree with his work and the recommendations from the many forestry universities for in ground outdoor work. My point in the article last month was that in bonsai we are trying for the best possible healed over wound and with the care we take on our bonsai, we can achieve this in the ways I described. Jim...I too love you anyway. The best thing about the article, I think, is the discussions it promoted. We all have our own experiences to rely on. Thus the conversation will go on. The most interesting thing I have heard is about the various successful ways people have of insuring good healing. My advice: Experiment on stock trees and see what works for you.



Species of the Month: American Larch



Why is larch a good subject for bonsai?

- Beautiful rough trunks
 - Variety of bark colors from grays to reds to browns
 - Very flexible
 - Extremely hardy
 - Deciduous
 - Wonderful spring color
 - Outstanding fall color
- < Larch by Nick Lenz

Bonsai in the Wild

- In the bogs of the wild, larch develop slowly with wonderful motion to the trunk and branches
- Needles are shorter and compact
- Lichens form on the bark adding to the feeling of age
- Nursery or field grown larch are fast growing and straighter

Where do you find good bonsai larch?

- Bogs of the Northern USA and Canada
- Lake shores
- Mountains
- In plantings (usually straight up)
- Collectors need to watch the form of the branches and collect only those that can make good bonsai.



COLLECTING LARCHES

- Bog larches are easy to pull but you will get wet!!
 - The roots may go on forever HOWEVER as the bog develops, larch develop adventitious roots near the surface...saw off the old lower ones
 - Shore larch require a canoe or boat and pry bars and shovels
 - Larch can survive collecting with a small amount of roots but keep the large ones with a good store of nutrients to develop new roots.
 - Collect BEFORE they leaf out or fall as green fades
 - Keep roots wet and packed in Sphagnum...you can keep the moss from the swamp also
- Remove shoots that are weak and useless once the larch is bagged

TO PLANT

- Remove weeds
- Clip off dead roots
- Keep all fine roots
- Dust lower trunk with rooting hormone
- Do not pull off sphagnum...work soil into it
- Use a soil mix that has decomposed organic matter
- pH 5.5 is ideal
- **mycorrhizae are very vital**
- Fertilize as trees begin to color up in spring...lightly the first year
- In early fall fertilize well to induce bud formation
- **Keep well watered and in full sun**
- Misting helps but not after tree matures
- Watch for borers brought home ...treat preventively



CULTURE

- Deciduous...grow rapidly...pinch
- Will take more root pruning than other conifers
- Can begin work in second year of captivity once healthy
- Transplanting requires removal of lower trunk to get eventually into bonsai pot...preserve new fine roots...shorten
- Start wiring early....Tie branches down if needed
- Growing in ground is very beneficial to nebari
- With or without container

GROWING MEDIUM

- Must have loose medium...fluffy
- pH 5.5 ideal
- Well inoculated with mycorrhizae

TRAINING

- Pruning to bud point
- Prune back to bud pair to develop ramification
- Add motion to all branches pointing buds outward to develop aged looking branches
- After cutting large branches, use petroleum jelly and cover with Al foil to prevent drying out
- Take well to grafting in summer
- Undercut
- Approach
- Thread
- Air Layering by creating bog in early spring as buds swell

LEAF PRUNING

- Up to to July only after fertilizing a few weeks before
- Careful not to damage bract
- NEVER needle prune a weak larch
- leafs out in about one month with small needles
- Will produce more buds next season
- Needles will stay on longer into winter



Once a larch is developed:

- They still need wiring..do in winter but NOT new branches
- Wire new branches in spring
- Eventually they need cut back and the ramification redeveloped
- Fertilize in mid summer lightly to promote buds
- Do less root pruning--Transplanting...wedges so as not to simulate top growth
- Watch for borers--Become more insect prone
- Protect from drying out in winter

Styles of Larch Bonsai

- Larch works in most styles except broom and table top types
- Excellent for root over rock due to very pliable roots

Problems

- Borers
- Adelgids (white pine-larch)
- Scale like aphids at the base of needles
- Pine Bark Aphid
- Larch Saw fly larve
- Gypsy Moth
- Japanese Beetle
- Scale
- Larch Casebearer
- Needlerusts
- Canker
- Leaf Cast



What is Happening in the Bonsai World?

These events were covered in tpast issues. See their websites for more details.

I hope to see you at the * events.

April MABS *

<http://midatlanticbonsai.freesevers.com>

April BCI in China <http://www.bonsai2013.org>

June International Bonsai Colloquium *

<http://www.internationalbonsai.com/index.html>.

September 12-15 ABS Love of Bonsai Learning Seminars *

www.loveofbonsai.com

October Artisans Cup *

<http://www.artisanscupofportland.com>

PBA FESTIVAL AND SHOW MAY 3-5

<http://www.usna.usda.gov/Education/pbaworkshops2012.html>

LAST CHANCE



If you planned on purchasing one of the BCI accents pots I created for BCI's 50th anniversary, let me know immediately.

I will be shipping the remaining pots to China next week for the BCI convention in April.

If you want a pot, they are \$30 to pick up at the studio or and additional \$6.95 if they need shipped to you.



MABS worth repeating



MABS 2013

Join the members of our sister Midatlantic Bonsai Societies regional clubs to celebrate 30 years of great bonsai festivals. This year's event will be held in Grantville, PA at the Holiday Inn.

It will feature three outstanding bonsai artists: Ryan Neil, Peter Warren and Minoru Akiyama.

Special surprises for our anniversary too.

<http://midatlanticbonsai.freesevers.com>



May 25-27

pfm bonsai

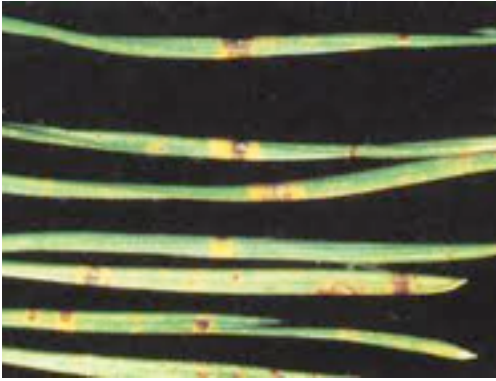
open house 10-5

Come and visit the studio.

Wander in the gardens.

Explore all we have to offer the bonsai world.

Bonsai Techniques PINE NEEDLE CAST: Treatment & Prevention by R.C. Jin



I will remember 1994 as the year of the rain which caused both good and bad things to occur. The positive consequence of the abundant rainfall was the lush growth of lawns and garden plants. The negative effects mostly pertained to my bonsai collection; the major one, being deprived of my daily watering routine. According to my wife, I whined for six weeks.

I enjoy the ritual of watering which Mr. Murata pointed out is an act of love. The life of the bonsai is dependent upon it. In addition to being a life sustaining act, it allows me to observe each tree for signs of trouble.

The heavy rains also caused some problems to the health of my bonsai, such as slime mold, over fertilization, and spread of disease. Thanks to the excellent drainage of my soil mix, I did not suffer any root rot. I agree with the Japanese that pines are the king of bonsai, and, therefore, it is important to know how to care for them.

I assume some of our newer members may not know how to identify and treat health problems of pines, so here is some timely information. First, here are some tips on diagnosing problems with pines.

1. If the tips of the needles turn brown, it is usually due to growing conditions, such as poor drainage or fertilizer burn.
2. If the needles turn a gray color all over, it is spider mites.
3. If yellow spots develop about halfway down the needle and later turn brown, it is needle cast which may also appear to be mechanical damage; the needles will break and hang down.

Needle cast is caused by a fungus called *Lophoderminum* which has several varieties. The one that causes needle cast on pines is *panastri*. American and Japanese horticulturists have determined both bonsai and field grown pines are susceptible. Bonsai most likely to contract the disease are: Japanese red pine, Scotch pine, Black pine, Japanese black pine, and Japanese white pine.

It takes one year for the fungus to complete the cycle. Infection occurs in late summer when ripe fungus spores enter healthy needles. No change happens to the needles until the following spring in late March or early April when the one year old needles develop yellow spots about mid-point. During the next several weeks the spots turn brown, get larger and kill the needle, causing it to drop.

The good news is control of this disease is possible, if certain procedures are followed. During the summer the fungus develops small, black, fruiting bodies which ripen by July in the Atlanta (Zone 7) area.

The cycle is repeated when the ripe spores absorb water and forcibly expel new spores which are carried by the wind or water to infect new needles. It is during this time prevention can be accomplished with proper spraying.

A fungicide has been developed which effectively controls *Lophoderminum pinastri*, if applied at the proper time. The chemical is clorothalonil which is available from Chevron Chemical as **Bravo**, or **Daconil 2787**. Bravo is best for needle cast because it contains a 40% solution. Daconil 2787 contains only a 29% solution but can be effective if used in a strengthened mixture.

To control needle cast there are several cultural requirements, including a prescribed spraying program. First, the spraying (these directions are for zone 7 only). Timing is critical, spraying after the infection has occurred will not stop the disease.

Bravo: mix 2 1/4 teaspoons per gallon of water

Daconil 2787: mix 4 teaspoons per gallon of water

June 2012 A wetting agent must be used with the solution because of the wax on the needles. Spray four times at two week intervals starting July first. Spray the needles and branches to the point of run off. Cover the surface area of the container with plastic or wax paper to prevent the fungicide from damaging the micorrhiza, which is a subterranean beneficial fungus. During this eight weeks your tree will be white and ugly, so don't be alarmed.

Each time it rains, spray again. Now, for the cultural steps:

1. Isolate stricken trees to prevent spreading.
2. Remove all infected needles from the tree and soil surface.
3. Avoid wetting the needles during July and August.
4. Needles must be dry when pruning.
5. Keep your pines in as much sun as your yard allows. So, mark your bonsai calendar with the spraying dates, and good luck.



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EDITORS NOTE: IF YOU GROW PINES, TAKE THIS VERY SERIOUSLY IF YOU WANT THEM TO LIVE. START NOW WITH YOUR TREATMENTS!!!! The article was for zone 7, start your spraying now here!!

A RESPONSE FROM JIM STOPER ON MY PRUNING ARTICLE MENTIONED ON THE FIRST PAGE.

HI Pauline,

This morning I received In e-mail the ABS blog written by Dave Bogan. A section contained an article from you re: Bonsai Tips. You mention "Do not leave branch cuts ROUND.....they do heal well.Use a sharp knife to make an eye shaped cut parallel to the branch. This will insure that the wound neatly."

Recently Dave Bogan mentioned this in a prior similar article and Julian Adams wrote this as a regular article in Bonsai Magazine recently. Since I started reading and practiced bonsai this has been this advice. Upon purchasing Dr Shigo's popular book Tree Pruning A Worldwide Photo Guide indicates the exact opposite advice as per page 33 "Woundwood forms only to the sides of improper cuts. The living tissues above and below the cuts die back." Page 152 , "When pruning cuts are made properly , a circle of woundwood will form the next season".

Universities, extensions, and arborist publications from all areas in the country echo this sentence from North Carolina State University horticultural department." Properly pruned branches will have a circular closure around the wound. When the branch is cut too close to the trunk, the closure will be oval or distorted." This from University of Florida Extension "Good pruning cuts -----leave a round-shaped wound, whereas flush cuts are oval-shaped." This from University of California, "A smaller (more round) cut is not flush to the attachment will cover quickly and limit the ingress of decay fungi."

Dr Shigo in his above book acknowledge "For some bonsai designs, flush cuts are made to bring about the effect of injured and weathered old tree."

I know why we do this for design but to state do not make round wounds as they don't heal well is contrary to science. For thirty years I have used a concave cutter and made oval rather than round wounds. Some tree species healed very fast and others remain open after years. Anecdotal opinions may have been over the years.

I love you any way.

Jim

MY RESPONSE IS ON PAGE ONE.

APRIL EVENTS

AT PFM BONSAI STUDIO.

CALL OR EMAIL TO REGISTER FOR ANY OF THESE



Monday Bonsai Study Group 6 PM or so

Come and play and learn with our Monday study group. There is no charge for this group. We come together and work on a project. Or we simply bring some of our trees to work on. Some join in a pizza before beginning .we chip in for the food. Bring materials to work on and join in the fun. NO Meeting April 22

April 1-5 The studio is open all week. New bare root trees have arrived. I will be potting them up all week. Come and help or buy before they are potted and grow them on yourself. (Tridents, Zelkova, Quince, Spruce, Amur Maples, Crabapples, Wisteria and Cherries) Good time to get your potting supplies or bonsai advice.



April 13 10-5 Martin Schmalenberg Design Workshop

\$100 Bring a good number of your bonsai that need design improvement. Bring tools, wire, etc and your lunch. Be prepared to work and improve your bonsai. REGISTER IN ADVANCE BY APRIL 1.

April 6 Studio Closed

April 7 Blended tree bonsai workshop

\$40 plus materials. Register in advance please.



April 14 Intermediate Bonsai Course Session 2.

Still time to join the group. Open workshop in the morning. Course starts at 2 PM.

April 17-23 Studio Closed. Pauline on tour and at MABS.

April 27-28 Depending on the weather: Forest workshops.

pfm bonsai studio supports

Mohawk Hudson Bonsai Society <http://mohawkhudsonbonsai.org>

MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies - www.midatlanticbonsai.freesevers.com

American Bonsai Society - www.absbonsai.org

Bonsai Clubs International - www.bonsai-bci.com

National Bonsai Foundation - www.bonsai-nbf.org

Artisans Cup in Portland <http://www.artisanscupofportland.com>.

please visit www.pfmbonsai.com for current happenings at the studio

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