



THE KAI WIRE



SANSUI-KAI OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

As I See It

*From Russell Benson
President*

While shopping for some nursery stock recently I was reminded that buying plants and beginning to train them as bonsai today means I may get results in ten years -- not ten days, weeks or months.

With instant messaging, housing prefab, fast food and instant soup, we're looking for immediate results. Bonsai takes a slowdown to the speed of Zen.

A branch cutting or grafting gives me a slight head start in bonsai time. But what kind of mind is required to plant a cherry seed this summer knowing it will be 2019 before there are substantive results?

Balancing my fast-paced world requires space for serenity, peace and joy. Bonsai reminds me that the destination is less important than being present for the miraculous journey of a living work of natural art. I can let the frantic demands of my world rest while I spend time with my trees.

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POSITIVE THOUGHTS ABOUT NEGATIVE SPACE

by Jack G. Reynolds

Bob Hilvers focuses on the aesthetics of the bonsai craft. His June demonstration showed methods for creating jin and shari that beguile the eye into believing that they are old and weathered.

For his subject, Bob furnished a small California juniper, which had a quantity of dead wood.

A tree, its pot and soil are a composition of form, color, line, shape, scale, positive and negative space he said. Bonsai has an additional value: time, because it is living and evolving.

The look of age is a primary goal of bonsai. Young trees have cylindrical trunks and branches, so we sculpt them into more rugged, older looking shapes.

Bob's tool kit includes various brushes, dental picks, markers, gouges, needle nosed pliers, a small propane torch, aluminum foil, paper toweling, cotton balls, lime sulfur, Min Wax wood hardener, India ink or black water color pigment, modeling clay, a few small cloths, string and rubber bands, and a dremel with a set of bits.

Jin living branches by crushing, then strip the bark with jin pliers. Achieve natural broken ends by splitting the square ends in a couple of directions. Soften the frayed look by charring the ends with a torch, a wire brush or dremel wire wheel.

Bending fresh jin from live wood is easily done with wire. To bend hardened jin,

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Negative Space *continued from page 1*

Bob uses a steam technique. He wraps the branch in wet paper towels and covers that with aluminum foil to create a steam chamber. He protects living parts of the tree with clay on bark, cloths and foil on foliage and branches. He heats the jin foil with a torch for as long as it takes to make the branch limp and flexible -- usually a few minutes. After bending the branch to the desired angle, he uses the torch to dry it out, so it holds.

He creates or accentuates naturally occurring cracks and grooves with gouges or dremel bits. This type of work lifts small fibers out of the wood, which can be burned off with the torch.

Newly created jin is yellow. Old wood is silver-gray. Lime sulfur preserves dead wood and turns it white. Bob and others feel if the treated wood is too white to look natural, India ink can be added to turn it gray.

A subtle trick is to paint the interiors of cracks and grooves with black pigment before the lime sulfur is applied. After it has dried, brush it smooth with a wire brush to blend in the shades.

Allow newly-created jin to dry for a couple of weeks before applying lime sulfur, then reapply annually to keep up its preservative and color effect. When using lime sulfur, protect the roots by covering the soil surface with foil or waxed paper.

His treatment for dead wood rotting at the soil line is to pick out all the soft rot and then apply MinWax wood hardener with a brush in layers until it will no longer be absorbed. Then use coarse gravel next to the trunk to keep the area as dry as is practical.

Another way is to heat treat the dead wood using a small torch. Protecting live areas with clay, wet cloth and foil, torch until the wood begins to scorch. The color change has a natural appearance.

--Jack Reynolds



Photos by Michael Jonas



Naka Notes by Jack G Reynolds

This first month of summer, trees will be leafed out and growing rapidly. Your main concern this time of year should be to carefully tend your trees during the heat.

Rotate them every week or two. Hot pots can cook roots so protect the pot by covering it with sphagnum moss or burlap. Set trees on the damp ground in the shade. Put up shade cloth on an overhead frame. Water overhead in the morning so as to dampen the benches and surrounding ground. The higher humidity is good for the trees except for pines.

Something I have learned from the scientific literature is that high humidity promotes needlecast disease in pines, so I spray my pines' needles infrequently. However, junipers and deciduous trees all seem to like a good wash.

Fertilize everything. Remember frequent dilute fertilizer is better than infrequent heavy applications.

Trees can be defoliated this month but no later. Remove all leaves and set the tree in a shady place for a couple of weeks until the new leaves are just beginning to pop. Cut down on the water because without leaves, there is little transpiration and the soil will remain too wet. Remove buds and most of the fruit from flowering trees. If you left fruit on the tree last year it might be a good idea to strip it all off this year. Fruits are very taxing to the tree.

Don't transplant this month. Exceptions are pomegranates, olives, bouganvillias, willow, and tamarix. Shaping of trees can go into June but you should have already done your candle pruning on pines. Air and ground layering can be done this month.

Watch for pests. Woolly aphids might show up in any apple relative. Spider mites are a potential problem in junipers. Mealy bugs are a problem at our house. Mix sprays according to directions or weaker. It is possible to burn trees with too strong a mixture. Wait till sunset or move the tree into the shade for spraying.

As I See It

From Russell Benson (continued from page 1)

Speaking of acquiring bonsai material, the quickly approaching August 1st Barbecue is a great opportunity to get new plants and support the club at the same time.

Let Karyen Cavanagh know what you'll be bringing for the potluck. And start perusing your collection for the perfect trees to donate to the auction. A tree you may have "out grown" may be the perfect tree for someone starting out. What do you have that's ripe for passing on?

I would like to send a special thank you to my best friend in NYC. Rob Scarpa volunteered to redesign the club brochure. This updated bi-fold design is sure to attract new members. Pick up some copies at the next meeting and share them with your networks, nurseries, gardens or anywhere you might find a potential bonsai enthusiast.

Recently when a long time Sansui-Kai member saw the new flyer they said, "WOW, I would join that club".

Events of Interest

July 1 Demonstration: Trident Maple

Ray Blasingame will style a trident maple at the Wednesday, July 1 Sansui-Kai general meeting.

Ray has been doing bonsai for 20 years. His first teacher was Melba Tucker followed by Ted Matson. He is a member of many bonsai clubs including Santa Anita, Descanso, Kofu Kai, and California Bonsai Society.

Members' Tree Workshop

Come early on meeting Wednesdays for members' work sessions. Bring your trees and tools and work with other members from 5 pm to 7 pm.

Kathy Shaner Workshops

Instruction and critiques at the Huntington Botanical Garden basement auditorium Saturday July 18, 1-4 pm (\$5); and Sunday July 19, 11 am to 4 pm (\$10). Call (949) 497-5626 for information and reservations.

Annual Potluck Barbecue and Benefit

Saturday, August 1, 4 pm at the Encino home of Don and Ileene Berkus. Bring your swimming suit, a donation for the benefit auction, and a dish for the potluck table.

No August Meeting

The regularly scheduled August meeting is preempted for the Potluck and Barbecue Benefit.

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What's Ahead

Wednesday
July 1

7:30 PM MEETING

Presentation: Ray Blasingame
The Trident Maple
Refreshments: Dan Kashinsky,
Mort Lowy, Grace Sy
Niche: Jack Reynolds

Saturday
August 1

4:00 PM

Annual Pot Luck
Barbecue Benefit
Home of Don and Ileene Berkus

Wednesday
September 2

7:30 PM MEETING

Ted Matson
Resident Juniper Revisited

MEMBERSHIP

Sansui-Kai is dedicated to the learning, use and teaching of the horticulture techniques and artistic principles needed to grow, design and care for bonsai. Regular membership is \$22. Family membership is \$27. Corresponding membership is \$7 limited to any previous club member now living outside a 50-mile radius of the meeting place.