



THE KAI WIRE



SANSUI-KAI OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

As I See It

From Russell Benson
President

Well a hot SoCal summer is firmly upon us, and that can mean only one thing, the Sansui-Kai Annual BBQ. We will be gathering Saturday August 1st from 4pm till everyone goes home following the picnic and auction.

Help make this event another success for the club. Please bring donations for the auction, bring the potluck dish you signed up for (if you forgot, please ask me and I'll remind you, or, if you didn't sign up, surprise us!) bring a chair, bring a spouse, friend or significant other. Everything gets started after 4 pm at the Encino home of Don and Ileene Berkus.

I went to the Kathy Shaner workshop at the Huntington Gardens on Sunday, July 19. Kathy made great instructional demonstrations from trees brought in by attendees.

She presented a volume of information. I took note of a few things she shared regarding newcomers.

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The Trident's Tale

By Jack G. Reynolds

Ray Blasingame is one of those quiet talents who comes with impressive credentials and artistic gifts. He has a degree in horticulture and even before he got that he was taking lessons from Melba Tucker while still a teenager. He came to Sansui Kai to show us how he grows and styles his trident maples.

For his demonstration Ray provided a trident maple that he had grown from seed. It had very good trunk development.

Ray had worked on this tree in the ground and in a training pot for ten years so the trunk had good taper and a large number of branches from which to choose the best for future development. In branch removal he considered the best way to get scars to heal.

He said if a healthy branch is left just above a scar, healing will be faster because more sap will flow around the scar. Lower branches should be larger in diameter than upper ones and branches are best on the outside of curves.

Ray discussed how he grew his trident maple trees from seed. The process involves soaking seeds, sprouting them in the refrigerator, sowing them in flats, transferring to "thumb pots" for a year, then transferring to one-gallon pots, and in another year to the ground in rows.

He places trees straight up as well as at angles so that they are not all uniform. He leaves enough distance between trees to allow him to shape them while in the ground. He grows them in the ground for 9 to 10 years.

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Trident's Tale *continued from page 1*

While in the ground, he prunes the trees 2 to 3 times a year for good trunk taper and branch structure. When pruning, he does not use tree seal. Ray thinks that sealers trap disease organisms underneath them.

He waters the trees using a drip system while they are in the ground and he does not fertilize. Ray lives near El Monte where the soil is naturally well drained and the water is of a high quality.

When the trees are ready for pots, he digs 8 to 10 inches from the trunk. An undercut severs the bottom roots. He does this just as the buds are starting to swell in the early spring.

In pots, he grows the trees in a potting soil mixed with pumice for better drainage.

He fertilizes on a two week cycle with Ironite on the 1st of the month and ammonium sulfate on the 15th.

Ray believes that regular light fertilizer will achieve the best results. Over fertilizing can lead to disease such as fireblight, a fungal disease.

Because trident maples heal very easily, they lend themselves to many types of grafting. Ray has done a lot of grafting of these trees including the "thread" and "approach" grafting methods.

Ray also discussed quick and inexpensive ways to sharpen tools. He demonstrated a variety of sharpening stones with grits from 600 to 6000. The latter are used for sharpening grafting knives, which require a razor edge.

He showed how a sharpening stone is improvised by sticking sandpaper to a piece of plate glass with water. Such an arrangement is only good for a few passes of the tool but this is all it takes to keep a tool sharp.

--Jack Reynolds



Ray Blasingame, left, styled a trident maple he grew from seed at his El Monte home. Up close and personal are members Tony, Albert, and Rafael.



Elliot Farkas wins the finished tree in the raffle.

Photos by Michael Jonas



Naka Notes by Jack G Reynolds

The bonsai are in their summer slump. By now most of their growth has slowed or stopped completely. What should we be doing? Be very water vigilant.

Check everything at least once a day and make sure that nothing is going too dry. Water in the morning and spray everything including trees, benches and surrounding walls and ground beneath them. The humidity is good for the trees. Check again about sunset and water anything that looks too dry.

If you have nerve enough to go on a vacation, make sure that someone reliable will take over the watering. Consider a drip system, but even that needs to be checked daily to see if there are any clogged drippers or if the cat has knocked it out of a pot. And it is sometimes necessary to supplement on very hot days.

John Naka says that automatic sprinklers are not completely accurate because there is a tendency to over-water. In addition, every tree requires different watering.

Someday I will do that article I have been promising on my experiences installing drip irrigation at our house.

Rotate trees regularly every two to three weeks to prevent one-sided growth.

Trees may be trimmed but no drastic pruning should be done on most things because it will promote new tender growth that will tend to either burn off in the heat or freeze off this winter. Exceptions would be olives, pomegranates and bougainvilleas, which love the heat. Wiring can also be done.

Don't transplant or repot anything at this season. Possible exceptions would be the heat loving things mentioned above.

Fertilize as usual. Why fertilize if growth has stopped? The answer is that growth hasn't really stopped. Everything is pushing its root growth now. And, fruits may be growing on the fruiting varieties.

As I See It

From Russell Benson (continued from page 1)

Many newcomers acquire a range of different plants from many sources, with many different planting soils.

One way to resolve drainage issues quickly is to "tilt" the pots with shims or such that will drain any pots with excess water pooling on top. Another suggestion was to attend as many demos as possible. With more experiences comes more knowledge. This is something I am still trying to accomplish myself.

I hope to see you all this coming BBQ, and hoping the "not soon enough" cooler Fall weather comes quickly.

I look forward in coming month's to putting together some community outreach in the parks (suggested by Frank Cuva), continue our help to Denny Roche with the Bonsai Garden and strengthen Sansui-Kai's membership base, among other items

Events of Interest

Annual Potluck and Barbecue 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 Annual Potluck and Barbecue Benefit.

September Meeting

Ted Matson will create a new episode in the three-year demonstration development of the club's Prostrata juniper. The tree was acquired in August 2007, and is being developed over time under Ted's masterful hand.

Members' Tree Workshop

Come September, members are invited and encouraged to come early on meeting Wednesdays for the members' work sessions. Bring your trees and tools and work with other members from 5 to 7 pm before the demo begins. The work sessions are on hiatus during August and resume in September. In October, in lieu of a demonstration, members will bring their own trees for the first regularly scheduled "Members' Tree Clinic." Members will discuss and work on their own trees for the entire evening.

Golden State Bonsai Federation Convention

The Annual convention is scheduled for November 5 through 8, 2009 at the Riverside Convention Center in Riverside CA.

SANSUI-KAI Administration

PRESIDENT

Russell Benson (323)633-3461
rb2step@aol.com

Acting Program Chair

Jack Reynolds (760)379-8292
jrbonsai@verizon.net

2d VICE PRESIDENT & Membership Chair

Dan Kashinsky (310-455-2185)
kaptankaiser@charter.net

TREASURER

Michael Jonas (818) 776-0813
mjonas48@hotmail.com

SECRETARY

Karyen Cavanagh
karyenc@aol.com

KAI WIRE EDITOR

Mary Tatro (818) 885-0180
emteechicago@yahoo.com

SUNSHINE GUY:

Frank Cuva (818) 363-1344
cuvafitness@sbcglobal.net

REFRESHMENTS: Sonja Kobler (818)784-8765
BENEFIT DRAWING: Gloria Downie (818)848-1112
LIBRARIAN: Alan Loman

WEBSITE

www.sansui-kai.com

What's Ahead

**Saturday
August 1**

4:00 PM

Annual Pot Luck
**Barbecue Benefit
Encino Home of Don and
Ileene Berkus**

**Wednesday
September 2**

7:30 PM MEETING

Ted Matson
Resident Juniper Revisited

**Wednesday
October 7**

7:30 PM MEETING

Members' Tree Clinic

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.