



Kitchener-Waterloo Bonsai Society



Newsletter

July 2005

www.kwbonsai.com

President's Message

Beautiful weather for bonsai trees!

The rain barrels are getting empty as we haven't had any rain in over a month. If you run short of water, fill the barrel with the hose and let it sit a few days so the chlorine evaporates away.

This is a good time for defoliation of your trees as the first set of leaves should be hardened. Only defoliate a really healthy tree.

Defoliation allows you to see the branch structure for accurate pruning and increases the fine branch structure by forcing another period of growth from the tree. Prune back to the small buds to get even smaller leaves.

Defoliation can be full or partial. Partly defoliating a tree is to balance

the growing strength by removing the leaves from the most vigorous parts of the tree. This also allows light to reach the developing branches below.

The first meeting in August will be a workshop on making fertilizer cakes. These cakes are placed on top of the soil and slowly release nutrients into the soil every time you water. I will write up a list of all the ingredients you will need in the next newsletter.

We will be meeting at Eldon's house for a backyard tour of his trees this month, and then in August we will be meeting at Les's house. Thanks to both Eldon and Les for hosting the club!

Nigel Saunders

Upcoming Events

Next General Meeting:

Don't forget, there is no meeting in July or August.

Happenings:

Bonsai Garden Tour on July 20

6:30 pm at the Leis's:
184 Herbert St, Waterloo,
743-3763

Brantford Garden Club Show
August 13

Toronto Bonsai Society:

Spend Wednesday evenings at various member's gardens, incl. Rainer Goebel, Arthur Skolnik, David Johnson and Judy Paradi. Check torontobonsai.org for times and phone numbers.

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Time and Place.....

Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month (except July, August and December) at 7:30 pm at the Adult Recreation Centre, corner of King and Allen Streets in Waterloo.

Zen Wisdom

When the tree is ready, the scissors will appear.

Mike's Musings

As it usually happens, I have recovered from my losses during my vacation. One of dead trees lives again, proving only too clearly how strong its will to survive is, despite my best efforts to kill it.

It is a little Amur maple, only 12" tall. I bought it last fall from Tillich's when it looked a little wilted. It had a nice nebari but the trunk had an awkward bulge, about 1" off the ground. Graceful it wasn't, but cheap. So I took it home and it promptly lost all of its leaves. I almost wrote it off, but I thought, "Nah, let's keep it and see what happens."

It was in the garage in the early part of winter when, against all my expectation and any of the rules it ought to adhere to, it leaved out in February after that warm spell we had. Well, since it was only a warm spell, I had to bring the impatient maple into the house and put it into an East facing window (the only one not accessible to the hands of a curious toddler.) There it developed beautiful red fringed, lime green leaves that grew very well indeed. It didn't mind the dry air. It didn't mind the minimum light. It even didn't mind the near permanent fussing from an eager bonsai-newbie. It didn't even blink an eye when it went outside in the early spring.

But then, during my trip, it dried out and "died". For good. All the leaves fell off, and some tips developed that brown colour so characteristic of firewood.

Darn – I had just started to like that little tree with its funny trunk. Putting my research to good use, I scratched the bark with my fingernail to discover some green underneath the brown outer bark. But seeing what happened to my other maple and my larch, I thought it was just a matter of time before it too would join the others in compost heaven. But then, to my surprise and delight, one of the tiny buds was just a little bigger one day than the previous day and I became hopeful that it might live yet. And, sure enough, one by one, the new buds opened and the tree is now full of gorgeous leaves again.

I think I will let it recover for the rest of the year with judicious feeding and watering and perhaps it will be ready for next year.

Unless I kill it again.

Michael Eckardt

Vendor review (2/2) by Leszek Rybak

3. Herbs and small shrubs: Humber Nurseries is the best one. They have the whole greenhouse allocated for herbs and tender shrubs. Myrtles, guavas, pomegranates, eucalyptus, many varieties of lavender, rosemary, thyme, geraniums etc. are available at good prices (around \$ 4.00 to \$ 5.00) for starter 4" pots. Humber is located on Hwy 50, North of Steeles and South of Hwy 7 in Etobicoke. They have a website as well.

4. Northland Nurseries (3.99 Nursery as we call it) is not \$ 3.99 for a 1 gallon pots anymore. They raised their prices to \$ 4.99/pot. The price is still good, the selection OK, you have to be a little bit picky as some of their plants are very small for the size of the pot. Also I found most of plants I got to be very pot bound making it hard to repot and to work with roots. Their selection of Junipers is very good, also several shrubs are OK (Viburnum, Wegelia, Euonymus). It is worth going there for the variety and price especially at the initial stages of creating the bonsai collection.

This is pretty much it as far as my experiences with the vendors go. Just one final item: Ikea has a good deal on Lazy Susans: \$ 15.00 for 16" dia. wooden turntable - excellent for trees, rubberized base for non-slipping, ball bearing mech-anism. I got one and am very happy with it.

Tips & Tricks

Dead trees look great in the winter when they don't have any leaves anyway. (They also could help reduce the heating bills.)

Mining the Newsgroups

Not from the newsgroups, but from the Internet Bonsai Club (IBC) pages:

Bugs and Bonsai (2/2)

*Written by Jim Lewis, Tallahassee, FL
(reprinted with permission)*

Your choices

The key in any control program is to use the least toxic alternative that works*. If you discover only a few beetles or caterpillars, or for scale insects and for minor infestations of most other buggy pests, the most effective control is hand picking (or squishing). Mashing aphids is a most satisfying experience -- really -- although the more squeamish among us may wish to wear gloves. Sometimes -- for spider mites and aphids -- a forceful spray of water may end an infestation.

At other times a chemical spray may be the only alternative. Always use insecticides that are labeled for that insect or that plant. Pesticides can damage your trees. For example, don't use insecticidal soaps on maples. And be very careful of using certain horticultural oils during the warm months. Always read the Label! And, follow instructions. (More spray is not better.) Spray in the evening to reduce the impact on pollinating insects.

Trading Post

FREE: Amur maple seedlings (3 items) (tough trees!), horse chestnut seedlings (2 years old), maybe one dozed

1. **Wanted:** Contributions to the Newsletter

Here is a bug-by-bug rundown of some of your options:

Regular misting will help keep spider mites away. The most effective method of control is a heavy spray of water directed at the infected part of the tree. Sulfur, soaps, and oil sprays will help, but they must be reapplied, perhaps weekly for a while. Spider mites are resistant to most other pesticides except in doses that are not recommended on the pesticide label.

Aphids are easily controlled. For the non-squeamish, smushing them with the fingers is the easiest method, but horticultural oil, insecticidal soaps, pyrethrum-based pesticides, and neem oil- and sulfur-based pesticides are the least dangerous among the long list of insecticides that may be used. Again, not all of these chemicals may be suitable for all plants or at all times of the day or season. Read the label. Lady bugs, aphid midges, and green lacewings are among the insects you can buy to control a major aphid attack. The trick, however, is keeping them around after the aphid population drops. Yellow sticky traps also work if you don't mind hanging them around your growing tables.

Adult scale insects have a hard, waxy coating that makes them hard to kill with insecticides. On the other hand, scale seldom is present in such large numbers that hand picking is difficult, so hand picking is an easy alternative to sprays. Juvenile scale insects, called crawlers, can be safely attacked with horticultural oil or soap sprays.

Whiteflies and mealy bugs can also be

controlled by soaps and oils as well as by neem oil and pyrethrum-based pesticides. For whiteflies, yellow sticky strips also work.

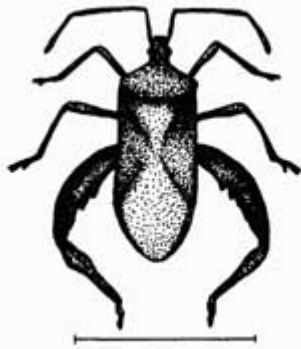


Figure 3 (big footed plant bug)

Pyrethrum-based sprays seem to be most effective against lace bugs and other "true bug" pests (Figure 3), but soaps and oils work too. Hand picking is usually the easiest method of control, since they seldom are present in large numbers. Look deep inside the foliage and on the underside of the leaf. When plants are in flower, you often will find several ticked in among the flower petals. Caution: Some of these bugs bite!

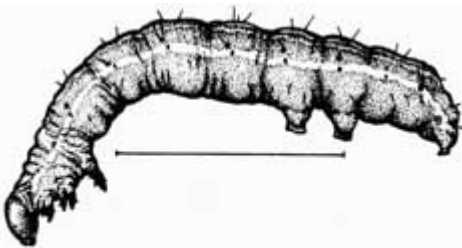


Figure 4 (looper)

Caterpillars (Figure 4) are easily controlled. Picking them off is simplest. You can squish them, or if they'll eventually become a beautiful butterfly, move them where they can chew to their heart's content. BT (*Bacillus thuringiensis* -- a bacterium) spray or powder is effective, and pyrethrum-based

insecticides also work. Many predatory insects prey on or parasitize caterpillars, so indiscriminate spraying isn't a good idea.

Beetles are a bit more difficult to control. Many do their dirty work at night. Spraying a pyrethrum-based insecticide in the evening -- making certain to include the undersides of leaves -- works best. Rotenone sprays also work.

Bark beetles and borers are another story entirely. Pruning affected branches is generally the only true "control" but that likely will mess up your tree. A wire jammed into the hole of a fresh infection sometimes works. You can try to inject a pyrethrum insecticide into the hole with a syringe, plugging the hole with beeswax or clay. But prevention -- providing good growing conditions -- is best.

Your best bet: Avoiding bugs, disease, and sprays

In fact, when it comes to healthy bonsai, cleanliness is next to godliness. Especially indoors.

Bugs will attack stressed trees first. You will have fewer pest problems if your growing benches are clean, free of leaf litter and loose soil that can harbor pests and spores, if there is space around each tree to allow free movement of air, and if the growing area is not perpetually wet. And, sunlight always beats growing lights. If at all possible, your "indoor" bonsai should be outside in summer's warmth.

Here is one last recommendation -- perhaps the most important one: Make use of your county agricultural extension office. You are paying their salaries; take advantage of what they know.

Finally, remember that the only good bug is not necessarily a dead bug.

Notes

I do not recommend synthetic pesticides, though some of my references (see related article) do recommend them. Organic pesticides, while still chemical poisons and still dangerous to the "good bugs" and often to birds, fish, and small animals, break down into natural, non-toxic substances. Synthetic pesticides usually break down more slowly and into compounds that are themselves toxic -- many of them complex chemicals that are not found in nature.

Rarely -- where a tree suffers repeated infestations of the same sucking pest -- a systemic synthetic insecticide may be required, but first review sanitation around your growing benches.

Sidebar - Know Your Bugs

To best protect your trees and to keep from killing insects that are on your team, you need to know the difference between a good bug and a bad one and to be able to identify insects by the damage they cause.

Bug books

Here are some pest books that I like:

Probably the most comprehensive book on insect pests and plant diseases is The Ortho Home Gardener's Problem Solver, Ortho Books -- about \$25.00. My copy is dated 1993, but there is a newer edition. The Problem Solver covers pest and disease problems in the yard and garden, and though bonsai are never mentioned I usually can identify my bonsai problems here. The book concentrates on picturing symptoms rather than pests, so this isn't the ideal bug-identification book. While the solutions offered are almost exclusively via synthetic pesticides, this is the best book for identifying plant problems.

Southern Living Magazine has a similar "Garden Problem Solver." It tends to show

more pictures of the pests, but has a full section on the diseases, and another on which diseases affect different plants. Especially for the southern U.S.A., this is perhaps more useful than the Ortho book.

Good old Sunset Books has a slimmer but useful volume, Garden Pests and Diseases -- 1994, about \$10.00, that I often turn to even before the more comprehensive Ortho book. Sunset takes a true Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to pest and disease control. There are chapters on symptoms, treatment (with emphasis on physical and organic methods, but not forgetting the occasions when a synthetic pesticide might be the only control), and a full "Rogues Gallery" with clear pictures of all of the more common pests -- from aphids to water mold root rot.

The Florida Agricultural Extension Service offers a set of 24 excellent Insect Identification Sheets that include color photographs of common insects on one side of the sheet and descriptive information on the back. These sheets are available for purchase singly or as a complete set (\$17.00). The sheets were developed by faculty in the Entomology and Nematology Department of the University of Florida. You may order them via the Internet at: http://ics.ifas.ufl.edu/ForSaleResources/forsale_98/insectfr.html. While these sheets were prepared for Florida, they are useful for most of the United States. We just have more bugs, not different ones.

Other state extension services may have similar offerings. Check with your county agricultural extension office (the phone number is in the local government section of your telephone book).

Finally, check your local bookstore. There are many local, state, or regional insect ID books.

Bugs on the Internet.

Several university web sites have excellent pest management resources.

Ohio State University has a good one at:

<http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~ohioline/hyg-fact/2000/index.html>

The University of Connecticut has a useful IPM site at:

<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/IPM/general/misc/contents.htm>

The University of Florida's agricultural information site is extensive and useful: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/sitemap.html>

In the area of bug identification, the extension office in Vermont has prepared a useful on-line slide show of many kinds of insects:

<http://www.ext.vt.edu/departments/entomology/ornamentals/slideshow.html>

Most of the Audubon Field Guide book series is on line.

There is a link to "insects" here:

<http://www.enature.com> Here's a page with all (or most) of the caterpillars of the eastern U.S.:

<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/2000/ca/teast/families.htm>

Butterflies of the U.S., including many pictures of caterpillars, are here:

<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lep/id/bflyusa/bflyusa.htm>

Moths of the U.S. are here:

<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lep/id/moths/mothsusa.htm>

But, for the ultimate in bug sites it's back to the University of Florida's Entomology Department and its "Featured Creatures" pages:

http://www.ifas.ufl.edu/~insect/main/search_common.htm

Finally, if you are stumped by a "bug" identification, try the experts at your local

agricultural extension office. In Florida, in the rare occasion that the local extension agents can't identify the pest, you can send the insect (and \$8.00) to the University of Florida for identification.

Note: Illustrations are from the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Ron Stephens, illustrator. In: IFAS, Cooperative Extension Service Circular 563.

Jim Lewis live in Tallahassee, FL. He is a former environmental educator, and "former manager of" the Internet Bonsai Club.

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[Editor's note: you need to type the full URL into the address bar of your Internet browser – the line breaks above are a result of the column width of the newsletter – so do not hit "enter" at the end of a line.]