



Kitchener-Waterloo Bonsai Society



Newsletter

June 2005

www.kwbonsai.com

President's Message

Summer has come, by now all your trees should be looking quite good. This is the time of the year when I finally give up and stop watering the plants that didn't make it through the winter. Luckily this year I had no major casualties.

I am still in the process of getting my tropical's in full sun, I keep them in the shade and gradually introduce them to full sun. Even though I am careful, I still manage to burn a lot of the leaves. For some of the trees I just leaf prune them bare and place them in full sun right away, this method seems to work the best. The other advantage of total leaf removal is that any scale insects or aphids are also removed with the leaves. Having the bare structure gives you an excellent opportunity to study and prune the branches. Next year I think I will leaf prune all my tropicals.

This months meeting is an open workshop, just bring in any variety of tree to work on or get advice. This is a good time to get rid of any extra trees or cuttings you have that need a new home. There is no official meetings in July and August, but we usually meet in someone's back yard to tour their collection. Our vice president Les will have his collection available for one of the months, but we still need one more collection to tour.

I hope every one is enjoying all the shows and demonstrations that have been going on with the Toronto and the Guelph clubs. Have a good summer and see you soon.

Nigel

Upcoming Events

Next General Meeting:

June 15, 7:30pm

Topic: Open Workshop
Homer Watson House

Eldon Leis's Art Exhibition
June 4 - August 14

Brant Bonsai Society:

Sunday June 12 –Open House
at Tranquility Place

Brantford Garden Club Show
August 13

Toronto Bonsai Society:

Spend Wednesday evenings at various member's gardens, incl. R.Goebel, A. Skolnik, D. Johnson and J. 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

"Your tree didn't die. You killed it."

John Naka

Mike's Musings

Last month, I spent some time in Germany to visit family and friends - a few days in the rolling hills south of Frankfurt, and a little over a week in Munich, Bavaria. While I didn't manage to visit Paul Lesniewicz's Bonsai Centre in Heidelberg (I know, I know, I *should* have found the time), I visited a relative and a friend who both have been bonsai enthusiasts for a long time. Ralf for at least 25 years, and Gilles for almost all of his 40 years. I was very impressed, especially since Gilles grows them on the 5th floor rooftop in the middle of Munich, and Ralf in a cold-house above his garage.

Beautiful trees, some grown from seeds - Gilles is extremely patient - some purchased for - 700 Euros (about \$1000). I also spend time at a garden centre in Munich admiring their wares. A Ginkgo bilboa (1500 Euro) 4 feet tall, with a 5" base, trident maples (300 Euros) 3 feet tall with beautiful nebari, and many, many more. Of course, they offered pots, akadama clay, tools, and wire as well. Beautiful trees, beautiful selection. I could have easily become envious if I wasn't envious already! Ever heard of a Zamioculcas? A gorgeous succulent that's all the rage over there but mentioned on only five Canadian websites, none of them garden related.

So what about us? Why don't we see quality bonsai items in the garden centres? Why is it that Ebay, the famous on-line auction house, shows a grand total of 16 items for sale in Canada, while there are 1374 listed in the US, 1117 in Germany and 646 in the UK?

And this dearth of offerings isn't limited to bonsai. Aquatic plants, my other hobby, has a similar pattern. So do orchids and many other plant related items. So I have to ask why?

Michael Eckardt

Tips & Tricks

Get a tree sitter a few weeks *before* you go on vacation.

Ensure they know what *not* to do, including *not* to kink the hose that runs water to the lawn sprayer. Water pressure is kind of important.

While they are at it, have them check the house for water leaks. An undetected water leak makes a %#\$ of a mess of your carpet – and the next 6 weeks of your life.

Vendor's review (1) by Leszek Rybak

1. Tropicals and succulents:
Belgian Nursery is #1 for the selection and pricing of both. Wide variety of starter plants are available and priced at \$1.99 to \$ 4.99 (the exception is *Bouganvillea* both small and large leaf varieties are at \$7.99). All the plants I got from them were healthy, well cared for. Most of them survived in my care. They also have bonsai starter plants available from time to time (selection varies) and they are also reasonably priced at \$ 15.00. Once in a while they have bigger trees - mostly Ficus varieties with good bonsai potential and priced around \$25.00. Belgian is a good place for small bonsai pots, plastic and clay training pots as well. Overall it must be one of my favourite places to visit, especially in the winter.

2. Deciduous and conifer trees:

My #1 choice is a Hortico Nursery (located off Hwy 6 just North of Hwy 5 - same road as Terra Greenhouses). Their website is www.hortico.com where all the info regarding hours of operation, location and price list is. They have a great selection of neglected trees in the "last warehouse" and are willing to sell them at bargain prices. There are boxwood, yews, numerous conifers etc.

See next month for the 2 part of Leszek's review.

Mining the Newsgroups

Not the newsgroups, but from the Internet Bonsai Club pages:

Bugs and Bonsai (1)

Written by Jim Lewis, Tallahassee, FL

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For some folks, bugs and bonsai don't mix. As soon as an insect is spotted in -- or even near -- our trees, we spray first and ask questions later. Maybe.

But a few well-placed questions before precipitous action can save money, guard your health and the environment's, and protect your trees.

The first question when you see an insect is whether it is a "good" bug or a "bad" bug. If you determine that it is a "bad" bug, the next question is whether it is causing a problem or just passing through. Next, if there is a problem, you must decide if you should spray, or if there's another, less drastic, way to proceed. Finally, if spraying is the chosen option, which spray?

Good bugs vs. Bad bugs

Everyone knows the ladybug. The ladybug is such a voracious predator on aphids that their eggs and larva are aggressively marketed in organic gardening magazines. The praying mantis also is touted as a "good" bug, but as the Tyrannosaurus rex of the insect world it eats anything it can catch, good or bad.

Some wasps parasitize caterpillars. The assassin bug and others of the insects called "true bugs" (the Hemiptera -- ambush bugs, pirate bugs, and spined soldier bugs) are fierce predators on other insects, including aphids, caterpillars, beetle larvae, thrips, and their pestiferous "true bug" kin. (You can tell a "true bug" predator from a "true bug" pest by their mouth parts. Predators have short, stout beaks. Pests have long, thin, sucking mouth parts.)

The large black ground beetle with its wicked mandibles hunts caterpillars, crickets, and unwary grasshoppers. Lacewing larva (and a few

adults) help control scale insects and also prey on aphids. Spiders, hated by almost everyone, help keep many pests in check.

Some other "good" insects:

Syrphid fly larva eat aphids. Earwigs prey on pests on and in the soil. An entire group of predaceous mites prey on many small pestiferous critters -- including spider mites. Damsel bugs eat small caterpillars and aphids. The iridescent tiger beetle feeds on a variety of insects, not all of them pests. There also are parasitic nematodes and beneficial bacteria, viruses, and fungi.

As you can see, 'spray first and question later' may not be the best policy.

Bad bugs

For bonsai-ists, a relative few bad bugs ruin the reputations of the rest of the insect world.

The most damaging insects on bonsai tend to be the sucking insects, those that insert mouth parts into and through the bark to suck plant juices. Sucking insects include spider mites, aphids, scale insects, whiteflies, mealy bugs, lace bugs, and some other "true bugs."

Of these, spider mites may be the most notorious. (Mites are not insects but are related to spiders and ticks.) A heavy infestation can suck the life from a plant. Spider mites are most likely to attack plants that are under watered, or stressed -- a newly repotted bonsai, or one that lives indoors. If a filmy webbing appears among the branches of your tree, suspect spider mites. The mites themselves are tiny, showing up only as red or brown specks on a white sheet of paper held under an infested tree that is tapped sharply to dislodge them.

Aphids often appear on tender new growth. They are small (although larger than spider mites), but since they usually cluster near the tips of branches, they are easily seen. Aphids are a more serious pest for perennial flowers than to bonsai, where they seldom cause major damage

to an otherwise healthy outdoor tree. An unchecked attack of aphids, however, can weaken a tree, making it open to attack by other insects, or pathogens. And, some aphids carry damaging viruses. Ants indicate that you may have aphids.

Scale insects do their most damage on trees that are already stressed. Scale insects come in many shapes and sizes and colors and can be hard to see. Look for unusual bumps on the bark or leaves (or occasionally, fruit).

Whiteflies and mealy bugs can become serious problems for broad-leafed evergreen bonsai -- camellia, gardenia, and azalea. Along with aphids and spider mites, they are the bane of indoor or greenhouse growers. Both are warm-weather insects.

The Lace bug, a harmful "true bug," is particularly fond of azalea and rhododendron, but will attack other flowering plants and many trees. However, except on azalea, and on trees that may already be under stress, they seldom threaten the life of a bonsai. Look on the undersides of leaves.

While the azalea caterpillar can defoliate an azalea almost overnight, the chewing insects (beetles and caterpillars) usually do not seriously injure bonsai. But, their depredations are unsightly. If you discover holes in the leaves of your favorite broad-leafed bonsai, you can suspect beetles. If the leaves suddenly have scalloped edges, caterpillars are more likely to be the culprit. Or, Snails might do either. Look for their slimy trails.

Bark beetles and borers: You are less likely to find these in an established bonsai than you are to find borers already present in trees you collect -- or purchase from a nursery. Borers generally attack already-stressed trees, providing the coupe de grace to a tree that was weakened

Trading Post

I'm still looking for a few old and weathered 2x10s for an outdoor bonsai stand. Contact me by email or call 662-6991. Thanks, Mike

from some other cause.

To Spray or Not to Spray?

So, you have discovered a bad bug -- or bugs. Do you call out the big guns, or not? Ask several questions: Is your tree damaged? Is the damage extensive? Are there a LOT of these bugs?

If the answer is 'yes' to any or all of these questions, you should identify the culprit. Start by determining whether you have sucking or chewing insects.

On the other hand, if you've found a villain but there is no evidence that it has harmed your tree, just remove the trespasser. If it has chewed a leaf or two, pick them.

Sometimes you won't see any bugs but you know that something's wrong. Carefully note symptoms. Yellowing, spotty, or wilted leaves, and a general impression of decline indicates that a sucking bug may be involved. Chewed leaves, but no perpetrator in sight indicate beetles or snails doing stealth attacks at night. Caterpillars usually are easy to spot.

Or you may have an inorganic problem -- too much or too little water, a fertilizer overdose, or even an ill-advised spraying with a pesticide that's not recommended for that tree. Also suspect a fungal root rot, or a bacterial or viral disease -- topics too large for this article.

Once you know the cause, you can begin to think of solutions.

Cont'd in next month's Newsletter