



# CHINA TRADE BONSAI SOCIETY

<http://www.chinatradebonsaisociety.org/>

Monthly Meetings: 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month, March-November 6-8pm at the Connecticut College Arboretum, New London Hall. Visitors Welcome! For further information contact Tom Lee (President) at [twcl@comcast.net](mailto:twcl@comcast.net)

August 2004

## China Trade Bonsai Society

### Officers:

President – Tom Lee  
Vice-President – Steve Tomicheck  
Secretary – Joe Purtill  
Treasurer – Alice Kuo

### Points of Contact:

Programs – Tom Lee  
Publicity – Platt Arnold  
Operations – Steve Tomicheck  
Webmaster – Evan Jackowitz  
Photography and Newsletter – Robert Sant  
Hospitality – Carol Gazso  
Connecticut College Liaison – Jeff Smith

## An Evening With Colin Lewis (part 2)

Last month we published the first of several articles covering Colin Lewis' visit to the China Trade Bonsai Society on Wednesday, June 2, 2004. This month, we continue the series with the discussion on Tom Lee's Japanese Red Pine.

Japanese Red Pine (*Pinus densiflora*) is a wide spreading, "two-needle" pine with a slightly reddish bark that can grow to between 40-60 feet high. Tom purchased this tree in 2002 at a local nursery in Guilford, Connecticut during a 30% off all trees in stock sale. Ironically, because of its size and density, the cashier said that this young Japanese Red Pine was a shrub, not a tree, and would not offer the discount. After much discussion and several attempts to explain the difference between shrubs (e.g. Mugho Pine) and trees, the line behind him was getting quite long. All at once, everybody shouted, "He's Right, Japanese Red Pines are Trees!" Tom got the 30% off.

After purchasing, he transplanted it into his back yard for about a year and a half.

In April 2004 he dug it up and did a rough pruning in preparation for Colin Lewis' June visit.

Colin began this tree's discussion asking "what's wrong with this tree" and how to correct it.

First, the first branch was slightly over half way up the height of the trunk. Ideally this would normally start at about one-third point. This could be corrected by pulling it down and wiring it so that the foliage appears at the desired area. Next, there was a large jin on the inside of the trunk and a small inverse in the trunk taper where the branches once were. He suggested creating a large shari from the base of the tree to this jin to compensate for both. Additionally the ends of the branches contained numerous clusters of candles. These he suggested pinching back into pairs and occasionally three.

Colin then went into a very detailed discussion on styling two-needle pines, and their care.

**Candle Pinching on Two-Needle Pines.** Generally, pinch the weaker (lower and inner) candles first, wait a week or so, pinch the mid-strength candles, wait, then lastly pinch the strongest candles to get the most even back budding. To promote aggressive back budding, remove all new candles completely just when they are starting to open, however, don't do this too often since it is rough on the tree. By twisting the candle tips, it releases the branches to back-bud. Pinching a candle when the needles are just starting to spread results in the most aggressive budding. When breaking candles, break at the desired length of the node you want (e.g. 1 ¼ inches), and new buds will form at candle tips.



*Tom's Japanese Red Pine Before*



*Tom's Pine Under Initial Review*



Colin Discussing Pine Branch Detail



Finished Sketch

**Shaping.** Branch should come down, in a bowing fashion. Nodes should branch in two's and three's. Ramification outward with needles facing upwards. Pluck old needles preferably in the late fall (Nov/Dec) or early Spring (March/Apr), or if necessary, anytime else. Remove needles from the bottom of the branch to create the illusion of age. Wire with loop at end of wire to point needles up.

**Removing a Large Branch Without Leaving a Large Jin.** Remove the branch then whittle away with small knob cutters. Create a small indent around the smaller jin and allow bark to fill in. Break ends of jin off with pliers to create a more natural look.

**Fertilizing.** Pines do best with a "backwards" feeding schedule. Early spring feed with a low nitrogen fertilizer. This will minimize excessive growth. After the growth is set (pinching done), feed with a high nitrogen fertilizer to form new buds. As the season progresses into fall, feed with a lower nitrogen fertilizer to harden the buds for winter.

Tom took Colin's expert tips on wiring and pruning, and in July began shaping his pine into a bonsai. Note, working on pines in the summer is not recommended since the bark is the softest and bleeding of the sap can be a problem. To partly compensate for these issues, ensure you use raffia before you wire and a sealant such as cut paste for any major pruning areas. Generally, major pruning of pines should be conducted between October and March, preferably in the fall.



Removing a Large Branch Without Leaving A Large Jin

Below are photos of Tom's Japanese Red Pine at its current stage in development. Next month I'll feature his discussion of Connecticut College's Natal Plum and Joes Shimpaku Juniper.



Top View



Close-Up of Jin and Shari



Current Stage of Development

## **Tree Care for the Month of August**

Temperatures for the month of August average a daily high of around 80°F with lows in the 60's at night for the Groton area. Most bonsai summer growth has slowed or completely stopped during this time of the year.

- Periodically rotate bonsai with respect to direction of the sun. Morning sun is best. Watch for hot days and guard against sunburn.
- Water more frequently. When watering, water down the benches, ground and surrounding areas to increase the humidity.
- Be careful against any drastic pruning this time of year.
- Wire/Bend small branches for training.
- Fertilize as usual this month.
- Do not transplant or repot except in an emergency.

## Todd Hansen – Discovering the Tree Within The Tree

Todd may be a fairly recent member to join our club, but he isn't new to the art of bonsai or raising trees. He worked the family business of raising Christmas trees (Hansen Family Tree Farm) from 1981 to 2002 when he decided to sell his share of the farm and pursue his interest in bonsai.

Todd acquired his first bonsai in 1999, and by 2000, had successfully killed it. But his didn't dissuade him; in fact, he says he's "hooked". He continues to build his knowledge and skill by reading most anything he can get his hands on, studying tree's designed by masters, and critiquing them. He is the President of the Bonsai Society of Greater Hartford (<http://www.greaterhartfordbonsai.com/>), and most recently, the runner up in the 2004 Joshua Roth New Talent Contest held at BCI 2004 convention in St. Louis. His contest entry can be seen at <http://www.absbonsai.org/cmnu/NTC/ntc5/ntc5a.html>.

Todd addressed the China Trade Bonsai Society on July 7, 2004, speaking on what he calls "Discovering the Tree Within the Tree". Todd opened his lecture using the familiar logo from New England Bonsai as an example of the desired characteristics to search for in a tree.

In short, the desired characteristics are:

1. Nebari (Roots) – Should be interesting. Spreads outward from trunk. Even on all sides. Give the illusion of strength, age and balance.
2. Trunk – Natural and tapered. Can be either straight or show movement, but taper is the most important characteristic.
3. Bark – Should show character and age. Some trees like the Japanese Black Pine develop corky bark at earlier ages. Jins and sharis on trunk and branches also add to the aged look.
4. Branches – Again emphasizing taper. Taper from the bottom to the top so that the bottom branches are thickest. Taper all the way around, from the base of the branch to its tips.
5. Foliage – Build pads vs. leaves, and again tapering bottom to top, building the triangle. Pads should be in areas that will see sunlight. Work to build branch ramification through selective pruning and pinching. Remove basal growth (leaves at the base of the branch) to help convey age.
6. Simplicity – Simplicity helps convey the illusion of age.



*Identifying Desired Characteristics In Good Bonsai*



*Ficus Retusa Before*

Todd brought with him several trees that he's recently acquired to aid in the demonstration. The first was a ficus nerifolia, or willow-leaf ficus. It was small, spindly and had two-trunks. A couple of snips and the potential bonsai could be seen. The next tree was a small ficus retusa. In its pre-bonsai state it is upright, good foliage, and a few aerial roots. Todd recommended styling it as a semi-cascade. To the left is the before image, to the right are both the front and back after images in its new pot.



*After (Front)*



*After (Back)*

Following the transplanting and styling, Todd defoliated the ficus to help it recover from the potting and pruning since growing new leaves grows new roots! This will also help it back-bud and build ramification. July is a good time of year for the repotting and defoliating of tropical trees.

Todd then split the class into two groups to discuss the styling of another ficus retusa and a shimpaku juniper. Following discussion, each group showed and explained their choices.



*The Great Styling Debate Begins*



*Steve Explains Team 1's Style of a Shimpaku Juniper*



*Tom's Sketch for Ficus Retusa*

Following the class, the ficus styled by Todd was auctioned off to the club membership.

## **Tom's Road Trip** by Tom Lee

On July 17-18, Royal Bonsai Garden had it's 10-Year Anniversary Celebration. The weekend was primarily attended by members of Bonsai Society of Springfield and a couple of Greater Hartford Bonsai Society members (including Jack Hoover that provided a potting demonstration on Sunday) and myself from China Trade Bonsai Society. I dropped by on Saturday to see Ernie Kuo, a Bonsai Artist from California. He has won a number of national and international bonsai awards and has learned from his mentor John Naka and such masters as Masahiko Kimura in Japan.



*Ernie Starting Demo on Small Needle Spruce*

Ernie Kuo demonstrated on a short needle Spruce. During the demonstration, we started talking about bonsai topics and some how one of Colin Lewis' students started talking about Colin's Ho YoKu bonsai school. Ernie asked what does Ho YoKu mean? Since nobody at the demonstration knew, that student called Colin and put Ernie on the line. After a brief discussion Colin said Ho Yoku means "Phoenix" in Japanese. Another interesting topic, Ernie, also mentioned how he got into bonsai. His former hobby was brewing beer. His wife thought he was gaining too much weight taste testing his beer, so she enrolled Ernie into a bonsai class in the neighborhood in order to persuade Ernie to change his hobby. Now he just enjoys beer and notes that it helps with his artistic expression at times when working on bonsai, so Suthin



*A Proud New Owner!*

(owner of Royal Bonsai Gardens) bought Ernie some beer. Note the Samuel Adams with the finished bonsai. After the demonstration, Suthin had an auction of various bonsai items including the Spruce that Ernie worked on. I was fortunate to win Ernie's Spruce. Additional information about Ernie Kuo and his artistry, check out his website at <http://www.geocities.com/erniekuo@sbcglobal.net/>



*The Finished Product*

## From The President

### We need volunteers to coordinate the following CTBS events

1. CTBS Field Trip Coordinator  
5<sup>th</sup> World Bonsai Convention,  
Washington D. C., May 28-31,  
2005 Schedule, Programs,  
Registration is now online.  
<http://www.bonsai-wbff.org/wbc5/main.htm>
2. China Trade Bonsai Society  
Annual Exhibition Committee.  
Jeff Smith update.
3. Regional Bonsai Society  
Exhibition Committee

## Club Calendar

**August 4** – Black Pine Nite with our own Joe Purtill. Bring your trees for show and tell! Following the meeting, we will have our annual auction of pre-owned (and loved) materials...so bring anything you'd like to sell. Twenty percent (20%) of proceeds will go back to the club.

**September 1** – Penjing/Saikei Design with Tom Lee

**September 18, 2004** –New England Bonsai Gardens Annual Members Exhibition

**October 6** – Bonsai Workshop with Kenji Miyata  
-Nomination of Officers

**October TBD** – CTBS Fall Exhibition / Connecticut College Arboretum Annual Sale.

**November 3** – Winter Care with Tom Lee  
-Voting of Officers

**December TBD** –Christmas Party  
-New Officers take Office.

## In the Region

**September 17-19 (date change)** – Bonsai Clubs of New England Exhibition, Tower Hill Botanical Garden, Boylston, Mass. (This date is as listed at <http://www.towerhillbg.org/thwebspecev.html>)

**September 18** – New England Bonsai Gardens Exhibition in Bellingham Mass. Teddi will be providing a table for us, so start getting those trees ready to show!

**September 19 (2 p.m.)**– *The Contemplative Garden: Where Inspiration Meets Nature* with Martin Mosko and Alex Nodel authors of *Landscape as Spirit: Creating a Contemplative Garden* at Connecticut College, New London in the Olin Science Center Auditorium. Cost \$7 for Arboretum members & members of the co-sponsoring Garden Clubs, \$9 for non-members Sponsored by the Connecticut College Arboretum, Co-sponsored by the New London Garden Club and the Duck River Garden Club of Old Lyme.

### **Minutes July 7, 2004 Meeting**

The regular meeting of the China Trade Bonsai Society was held at New London Hall, Connecticut College on July 7, 2004 with 12 members in attendance.

President Tom Lee called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. reminding them of the Pot Luck outing to be held at Platt Arnold's house and that the date had been changed to Sunday July 11<sup>th</sup> rather than Saturday due to Sailfest.

The President remarked on the successful program held by the club at Holdridges on June 19<sup>th</sup>. It was reported that of the five bonsai trees prepared by club members, four had been sold. It was estimated that the club could realize \$150 from the effort.

Tom discussed bonsai shows and setting up a committee to work towards setting up a regional show with other area club's and a future show of our own.

The club has been invited to be a sponsor at the new England Bonsai Gardens exhibition on September 18, 2004.

President Tom then turned the meeting over to Todd Hanson, a member of our club and President of the Hartford Club. Todd's presentation was a lecture and demonstration stressing "The Tree Within the Tree". Todd also stressed benefits from criticizing each other's trees.

Todd's presentation included an exercise in which members were in two groups. One group tried to find the tree within the tree of a ficus retusa while the other group did the same with a shimpaku juniper. Each group then reported how they would style their tree. The groups then changed trees and repeated the process.

The trees were then auctioned off to the members.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joseph Purtill  
Secretary