

China Trade Bonsai Society

Visit us on the web at: www.chinatradebonsaisociety.org/

Monthly Meetings: 1st 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 <mailto:twcl@comcast.net>



March 2006

Note: This month's meeting (March 1st) will be in room 207.

Welcome to the March CTBS newsletter. The club's February meeting was primarily a planning one and as a result, we have finalized the year's club schedule. We also talked about the Bonsai and Asian Arts Festival (BAAF) on June 24th. This year should be even better than last!

John Romano To Come 3 Times This Year

John Romano entered this larch in this year's World Bonsai Friendship Federation's World Bonsai photo contest. This shohin was chosen for one their international bonsai awards. What a tree!!

John is a bonsai teacher, enthusiast, and award-winning bonsai artist. His practiced hand has guided many students over the years, and this year, he has agreed to conduct a season-long seminar with the members of CTBS. He will be coming in the months of **March, July, and November** to critique and develop member's trees. This is a bring-your-own-tree event, during which John will evaluate, help your set goals, and develop one of your trees. This is a wonderful opportunity to work with a bonsai master on a long-term project.



Yin Yang



"Do nothing." ; "Cut this branch here and in about ten years you'll have a nice tree." ; "Good, now you should repot this in two years, until then, do nothing." ; "For sale, potensai, white pine, \$500, will be very nice one day."

Yikes! I don't know about you, but I was NOT ready for this kind of talk when I first got interested in this hobby. I was not ready for how I defined "patience" to be so drastically altered. But it has. Since I got into bonsai, I have had to completely redefine what patience is. Two years ago,

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China Trade Bonsai Society Schedule of Events, 2006

Notes: "BYOTTS" = Bring Your Own Trees, Tools, Supplies Workshop

Regular Wednesday Meetings	Topic	Date
CTBS	Planning Meeting	Wed, Jan 4
CTBS	Planning Meeting	Wed, Feb 1
John Romano	BYOTTS Workshop 1of3: Evaluation, Goals Setting, Photos	Wed, March 1
Tony Alario	Bonsai Demo	Wed, April 5
Todd Hansen	Discuss History of Number of Trees Demo	Wed, May 3
Suthin Sukosolvisit	White Pine Demo	Wed, June 7
CTBS BAAF Committees	BAAF Preparations and Member's Tree Critiques	Wed, June 7
John Romano	BYOTTS Workshop 2of3: Pruning, Wiring, Defoliating Maples, Candle Pruning Black Pines	Wed, July 5
Todd Hansen	Bonsai Design Critiques Demo	Wed, Aug 2
Tom Lee	Lingnan Penjing Techniques Demo	Wed, Sept 6
Member's 80/20 Auction	Member's Auction (80/20 Rule Applies)	Wed, Sept 6
Joseph Stempien	Windswept Style Demo	Wed, Oct 4
John Romano	BYOTTS Workshop 3of3: Cutting Back Deciduous, Black Pine Thinning. Wiring	Wed, Nov 1
CTBS	Holiday Party & Yankee Swap	Wed, Dec 6

Other Bonsai-Related Events of Interest

Event	Topic	Tentative Date
MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies - Regional	Annual Exhibition, New Jersey	Fr-Su, April 21-23
CTBS Exhibition at Holdridge Nursery	Mini Exhibition and Workshop	Sat April TBD
New Haven Bonsai Society	Annual Exhibition, Edgerton Park	Sa-Su, May 20-21
Co-sponsored by CTBS and CC Arboretum, 2006 Bonsai & Asian Arts Festival	Bonsai, Asian Arts, Vendor Sales, Auctions, etc.	Sat, June 24
Hartford Bonsai Society	Annual Exhibition, Elizabeth Park	Sa-Su, July 15-16
New England Bonsai Gardens	Annual Exhibition, Bellingham, MA	Sa, Sept 9
Tower Hill Bonsai Societies - Regional	Annual Exhibition, Boylston, MA	Sa-Su, Sept 16-17
CTBS Exhibition at CC Arbo Plant Sale	Mini Exhibition and Workshop	Sat, Oct TBD
CTBS Exhibition at Holdridge Nursery	Mini Exhibition and Workshop	Sat Oct TBD

(Yin Yang continued:)

I would be upset if my dinner was more than ten minutes late, if it took more than three days to get something in the mail, or if I had to wait much past July to get fresh tomatoes off the vine. Like most Americans, my life has become increasingly rapid, and my expectations for results have kept pace. Good or bad, we are now a nation in which time has become something extremely valuable and subjected to severe abuse. We have become master at twisting, compressing, reorganizing, and controlling time. We think nothing of making multiple commitments knowing that in a perfect world, we might be able to keep them, but also realizing that the world is anything but perfect. This does not seem to phase us.

I read recently that the average "cut" time between scenes for youth-oriented video programming (the number of seconds a scene is left on the screen before you cut to another) has decreased from an average of 12 seconds to a now-average 3-4 seconds. It seems as though our brains are being rewired to accept the world as a place where we don't have time to be patient, we must have change and must have it now. Certainly, I can see why bonsai would not appeal to your typical under 30 year-old American. Perhaps this is why it is so difficult to attract new aficionados, it just doesn't make sense to the majority. When you really look at it, bonsai is a hobby in which patience is celebrated by better trees. It is in a sense, a test of patience. If you've got it, you'll be the envy of the local club because your trees will have beautiful structure, thick trunks, exceptional ramification, and a carefully groomed appearance. If you lack patience, your trees will be immature, poorly groomed, and will have been pushed too quickly into pots and shown as more important than they really are.

Of course you can be impatient in this hobby and still have nice trees...if your pocket is deep enough; but that's another topic for another time.

Personally, I love the long wait. I love the fact that my trees come at me slowly, gradually exposing their beauty. I have several trees that when you first look at them they have a large "wow" factor, but it is my other ones that I find give me as much satisfaction. The more I get to know my weak, young, and undeveloped trees, the more I like them. Maybe I always pull for the underdog, but I am constantly amazed that every tree I have has something special about it, and I have lots of homely trees. One of these is a ragged cypress, saved from the junk pile at the local nursery. I styled it as a weeping literati and it is just really two weak branches. Most who see it think it needs to be put back into the junk pile, but to me, I have come to appreciate that it could be the poster child for endurance and overcoming the odds. Even though most of us could spend all this effort and try to exert total control over all aspects of a tree's life in order to make it exude this feeling of age and eternal strength, I have, through a certain level of inaction, discovered a tree which reminds me that struggle is noble and can supersede beauty at times.

The word "inaction" is an interesting one. The Chinese Taoist text, Chuang-tzu states when speaking of inaction, or wu-wei, that "superiors must adopt inaction and make the world work for them; inferiors must adopt action and work for the world." To me, this says that to be the most receptive to great creative possibilities, one must step away from the narrow range of pre-determined actions and allow all possibilities to front themselves to them. When we make a plan, we throw away other options, other paths and try and follow our plan as closely as possible. That is how we define a plan, as a course of action through a cloud of possible actions. I wonder, why not step away from planning, and watch the cloud carefully? Something will always become apparent.

If you are like me, I will see a tree at a nursery and have an immediate thought as to how it might be styled, but once you get it home and look at it over time, in the morning, evening, in the sun, during rain, first from a distance, then close, often a different shape, a different trunk line will emerge. I have had this happen to me so often that I now have a one month rule for nursery plants: wait a month before doing anything really drastic for styling. I wouldn't be surprised if I increase this to one year sometime in the future.

This "wait" is really not a period of planning, but a period of inaction, of wu-wei in which I open up my mind to the tree inside the plant. Similar to Michelangelo saying that he does not carve a statue out of the marble, but instead takes away everything that is not the statue. Built into this is the understanding that our attachment to the rational is in fact an attachment to being sightless, or ignorant. Being rational is embracing ignorance, being irrational is embracing all the other possibilities nature creates. It makes impossible things possible, just as a 400-year-old mountain juniper is beautiful because we can't truly understand the ancient forces which created it.

This is not to say that we should do nothing and great bonsai will somehow appear on our benches, but that we should have a "passive alertness" and learn to see those possibilities that a firm plan would otherwise close to us.

This past fall, I styled a little garden juniper into a semi-cascade and thought it looked fine. It had a terrific first section of the trunk and for its size, this section looked much older than the remainder of the trunk and the end foliage. I brought it to our monthly club meeting and immediately another member saw that I should cut the trunk after the first foliage mass and replant it at a different angle, making it a really effective shohin. He of course was right, the tree will look better. I never would have seen what his fresh eye saw. So when this happened to me, (and it seems to happen to all of us!) what really occurred? Basically, the stranger does not have a plan when he sees our tree for the first time and therefore is passively alert to many possibilities. We, on the other hand, come to see our tree just one way, and in that, become close-minded, celebrating our ignorance.



So what is the upshot of this? Well, I can now see that the horticultural need to let our trees to develop over years actually opens up a whole new strength in bonsai design. By having to wait to repot, style, graft, or ramify a tree, we have time for inaction. If we learn to release our plans for the tree and watch it carefully, often a brand new possibility will occur to us. Perhaps we can even start to rewire our brains to slow down and receive the rest of our lives not so much as planned events piled on one another but as events of limitless possibilities.

See you next month

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From The President

1. **In order to keep things moving with the 2006 Bonsai and Asian Arts Festival and keep up with any issues, I'd like to meet before our March-June CTBS monthly meetings (usual place at New London Hall), first Wed of each month at 4:30pm to iron out any issues. Kathy Dame will also be available as well from CC Arboretum. Please try to attend if you can. Thanks.**

2. There has been a lot of hard work this past few months from a number of club members to set up the great programs lined up for this year. We will be continuing to provide excellent speakers such as Suthin Sukosolvisit, John Romano, Todd Hansen among others. This year, a number of workshops as well as demonstrations are also planned for this year

Our indoor exhibition for our club last year has been a huge success, and expecting this year to be even better. The 2006 Bonsai and Arts Festival that we are cosponsoring with Connecticut College Arboretum is scheduled for June 24 at the Cummings Arts Center at Connecticut College. We will need your support in order for this to be successful, which includes providing your bonsais, pots, viewing stones and related artwork for exhibition as well as volunteering some of your time to help with the preparations.

This year, we have maintained our dues at \$25 which is a bargain for what we are providing. Please consider renewing if you have not done so already. Thanks and hope see you Wednesday, March 1.

3. China Trade Bonsai Society now has a PayPal option on its website. You can now pay you yearly membership dues via PayPal.

Dues Reminder

Just a friendly reminder—it's that time of year to renew your membership. CTBS annual dues are just \$25.

The dues received will help with the planning of programs for the coming year.

Please bring your checks to Wednesday's meeting, use the website's PayPal service, or you can mail them to:

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China Trade Bonsai Society

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