



Great Swamp Bonsai Society

NO MEETING IN DECEMBER!

Next meeting: **TUESDAY, January 8th**

December 2018 Newsletter

No Meeting in December—Next meeting January 8th: CLUB HOLIDAY PARTY AND BONSAI AUCTION

Our club takes the month of December off, and regroups the second Tuesday of January for our annual **Holiday Party and Bonsai Auction**.

Please have a look through your bonsai collections, accent plants, pots, tools, stands, books, magazines, DVDs, display materials—really, anything that you feel might attract the purchasing attentions of bonsai enthusiasts.

That tree that you've worked on—or not—that you just don't know what to do with? It may be just the thing another member of the club is looking for. Our standard arrangement is to split the proceeds with 15% going to the club, but you are welcome to donate more, or all, of the proceeds from your auction items to the club as you wish. If you have something for which you would like to set a minimum bid, please feel free to do so.

As for the food and drinks, we welcome any and all contributions in the area of holiday treats, hors d'oeuvres, desserts, fruit or veggies, dips and chips, and non-alcoholic beverages. We will supply cups, plates, napkins, and cutlery, but if there's something special you need for your contribution, please bring it along.

Please also feel free to bring any bonsai that you wish to show, or for questions and comments, even if it's not for the auction.



Looking Back: November meeting – Bonsai First Steps

For our November meeting, club member **Fred Aufschläger** suggested, and led, an excellent presentation/workshop based on the first steps necessary in creating a bonsai from previously un-styled raw material. Fred emphasized the importance of cleaning out dead and unwanted branches, saving some of them as possible *jin* (intentionally retained dead limbs), and inspecting the trunk, major branches, and exposed roots to determine the front of the future bonsai. It is in this early stage where the overall design decisions can be made which will determine the direction and style of the bonsai as you progress from season to season, and year to year.

Several trees were provided by the club, and several club members brought trees of their own. This meeting provided a good opportunity for hands-on experience alongside some of our more experienced members. Thanks to everyone who participated, and thank you Fred for a good topic and a great meeting!





(left) Fred leads the presentation using a nursery-grown arborvitae as raw material. (below, left to right) Brian O'Byrne, Izzy Gurler, Andreas Efthymious, and Mary Larsson (mostly hidden behind Fred) proceed.



Our “Bonsai Show” signs have arrived!

At our November meeting we spoke about ordering “yard signs” to help promote our June Bonsai Open House. Those signs have arrived (see photos), and so now it’s your turn to figure out if there are places in your community that might be good spots for these signs, put into place about two weeks prior to the show (which is the first Sunday in June). (We also have wire stakes to hold them up.)

To clarify: the image on the right shows the signs we will place around the Arboretum grounds on show day. The image on the left shows the signs we will disperse among the membership—and we will add the precise calendar date with black magic marker (hoping to reuse them in future years).

As you consider your options, please keep in the mind (a) whether your community is a likely source of possible attendees; (b) how many signs you think you can reasonably use (we have ordered 50 in total); and (c) please contact your local municipal office to determine how to obtain permission to place signs at the sites you have chosen (make sure to emphasize this is a not-for-profit event, and free to the public).

Failing everything else, you could, of course, place a sign on your own, or a well-located friend’s, front yard. (Or a friend’s business front window, or a friendly garden center or public library, etc.).

We have a few months to figure it all out, but get started so that we can make the best use of the signs we have. Thanks!



Bonsai Tip from your Editor: The Support Value of Joining a Club

There are many obvious benefits of joining a Bonsai Club/Group/Society, but one of the most rewarding of these is easily overlooked. I am referring to the “moral support” one can gain from having a circle of sympathetic, like-minded enthusiasts who not only understand your interest in bonsai, but can empathize with the various ups and downs that you may encounter as you proceed along the path of this challenging and stimulating enterprise—and, many times, offer insights, suggestions, and alternatives that you might not reach on your own.

On Monday, October 29th of this year, I came home to find that one of my favorite, and longest-standing bonsai had been badly damaged by wildlife—it appeared that something robust (probably a deer) had gotten its feet tangled in the branches of the tree, and stumbled around for a few yards before breaking loose, tearing more than half the major branches from the trunk in the process.

I had worked on this tree for about 30 years and had shown it several times at local bonsai shows. In fact, this tree was the subject of a photo-essay in one of our recent newsletters. I was dismayed and disheartened by the sight of the tree, cast to one side, its branches broken and scattered around the lawn, the tree looking like the victim of some vicious act of vandalism.



The spruce bonsai, before (left) and after (right).

I sent before-and-after photos of the tree (as shown on the previous page) to several members of our bonsai club, mainly to share my exasperation, and was surprised—and pleased—to receive the following immediate replies:

“It had too many branches before. That deer is not totally wrong. Turn that tree around so that that prongs of the lower branches are facing left—that's the new front. *You can rebuild it. Make it better than it was*—Steve Austin, 6 Million Dollar Man”

“The tree is not now a perfect mother and daughter bonsai—it is a stressed ancient tree hanging on to life. It now reflects aspects of *wabi sabi*. It now has a history of nature trying to kill it—a WOW factor. Remove the bark from the broken branches now. Perhaps you will decide to remove or re-position some branches. The tree now attracts attention.”

My point in sharing this is that, as part of a club, you have the advantage of different perspectives, not only on the “new” tree you hope to work on, but “old” trees you’ve run out of ideas for, or “disasters” like this one, where you just might have given up hope without the encouragement and creative input of other pairs of eyes.

Thanks, friends.

-- John Michalski

Homemade Bonsai Turntable from music stool

Alert club member **Mark Sanders** has produced a quite serviceable bonsai turntable from a disused music stool, and wonders if anyone out there would be willing to bid on one at this year’s **club auction in January**? Email John Michalski at huonia@aol.com if interested, so Mark can get to work!



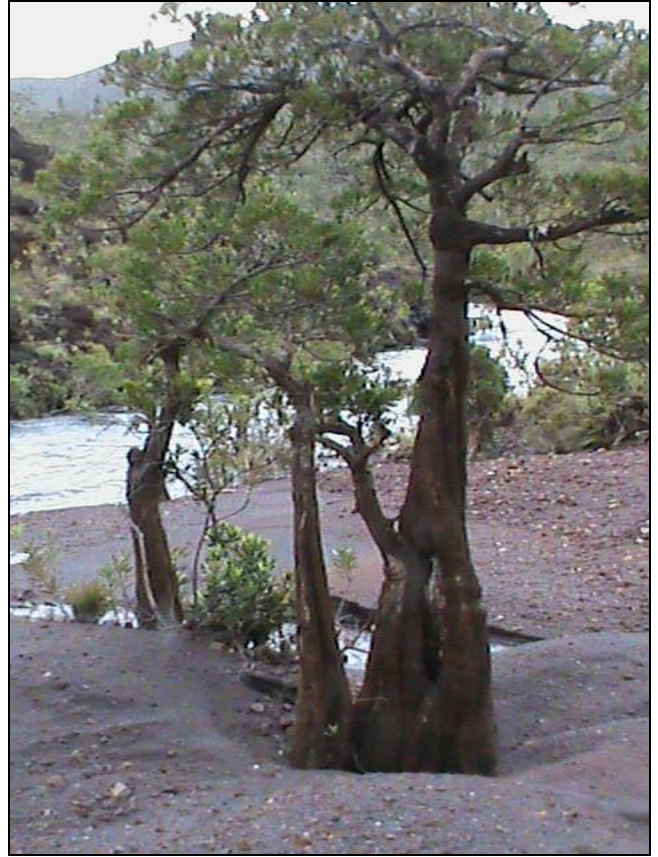
Nature's Own Bonsai—New Caledonia, 2013

For those of you so far unacquainted, I often travel abroad, during my holidays, as a tropical dragonfly researcher. New Caledonia is a south Pacific island that is overseen by the French (they don't like the word 'colony'), that I visited on one of my trips back in 2013. New Cal is about 1,000 miles due east of Australia, about 900 miles northeast of New Zealand, and isolated as it is, it is populated with some very weird plants and animals. About half the dragonflies are endemic, that is, found no place else in the world, which is what brought me there in the first place.

But when my crew drove down the island, to its southeastern tip, the landscape changed markedly, from forested mountains to red, rocky, barren ground covered with a scattering of some of the strangest trees I have ever seen. At one river we encountered an entire small forest of some kind of primitive podocarp tree (*Retrophyllum minor*) that just floored me with its obvious bonsai appeal. Some of these trees are hundreds of years old, yet none are taller than about six or seven feet.

I just thought you might enjoy these photos. -- JM





Plant Care Tips for December

Surprise! Winter came early this year! By the time you read this, we will have already lived through the startling cold snap of the Thanksgiving weekend—the usual “start date” for putting your hardy trees into winter storage.

Your Trident and Japanese Maples, and Japanese Black Pines, need a bit more winter protection than most of our hardy species. A cool greenhouse would be optimal, but if this is not an option, a wooden frame covered with plastic sheeting is a good substitute. Continue to spray the trees with an insecticide and fungicide on dry sunny days. [DY]

By now your deciduous bonsai have shed all but a few of their leaves or needles, and we have been lurched right into the cold season—with continued reversals into more seasonal temperatures.

Your trees need a well-deserved rest, but you needn't go dormant yourselves! It's a great time of year to assess the design of your deciduous trees and wire your evergreen trees, to plan your repotting schedule, mix or purchase bonsai soil, clean up and sharpen your tools, read some good books and periodicals, and travel the countryside looking for suitable material from the field.

Any non-hardy trees should be inside by now, of course. No more fertilizer for your hardy (outdoor) trees, and you should be able to reduce your watering schedule soon. Remember, leafless trees need less water, but don't allow the soil to dry out completely! This holds true throughout the winter months. Your hardy trees are usually placed into winter protection by early December, so by the Holidays you definitely need to have them stored safely for the season.

Remember, winter protection is chiefly concerned with: a) preventing the soil from repeatedly freezing and thawing; b) preventing wind from dehydrating the upper portion of the plant; and c) preventing the soil from drying out completely. You may also have to concern yourself with rodents that sometimes feed on the bark of dormant trees. If you store your trees in a shed or other enclosure, don't do it too early or you may encourage new growth if we get continued warm weather. Wiring may be performed on most conifers during the winter months, but deciduous trees are often too brittle to survive branch-bending, so postpone wiring on leafy trees until spring. [JM]

Save and Bring In Your Discarded Bonsai Wire

Please remember to save and bring in those wire clippings. **It helps if you cut your wire into short (3-6 inch) lengths, as it packs more easily for transport and sale.** About once a year we bring them to a scrap metal dealer and swap them for cash. It's usually about enough to equal one or two paid memberships, so it really does help keep the GSBS afloat.

Dues are Due

Dues are normally collected at the September meeting. If you have not yet paid up, please bring cash or check to **club treasurer Rick Myers**, or mail it to his address on the last page of this newsletter. Annual membership remains at \$40 for individual, \$50 family membership, and helps support club activities such as hosting touring experts. See last page for details.

Visit our webpage at <http://www.arboretumfriends.org/gsbonsai/>

Novices and non-members always welcome!

Come and plan to get your hands dirty!



Calendar of Events for 2018-2019

December: NO MEETING

January 8th: Holiday Party and Bonsai Auction.

Please begin scouring your collections for trees, pots, tools, etc. to put up for auction—the more the merrier!

February: NO MEETING

March 12th: Wood-carving Workshop. Bring your own material and tools, if you have them. We will have some dead material on hand to practice with, as well as living.

April: Mid-Atlantic Bonsai Societies' (MABS) Spring Festival. Stay tuned for details.

Also April: Guest artist Marc Noelanders, fresh from MABS. **Date to be determined.**

May 14th: Phoenix/Approach Graft Workshop/Repotting Workshop. Learn how to graft live “whips” onto dramatic deadwood, to create stunning bonsai material. (Repotting Workshop may be moved to April depending on room availability.)

June 2nd (first Sunday): Annual GSBS Bonsai Open House. Stay tuned for details.

GSBS Contact Information:

President: John Michalski
huonia@aol.com

Phone: 973-829-0094
223 Mt. Kemble Avenue
Morristown, NJ 07960

Past President: Diego E Pablos
neyamadoribonsai@gmail.com
Phone: 973.224.8139

Vice President: Bill Kasakoff bill.kasakoff@gmail.com

Secretary: Mark Schmuck lofty235@verizon.net

Treasurer: Rick Myers spruce80@verizon.net
80 Kenvil Ave
Succasunna N J
07876

Newsletter: John Michalski huonia@aol.com

Club Information

Location:

The Frelinghuysen Arboretum
353 East Hanover Ave,
Morristown, NJ 07962

Date:

Usually the second Tuesday of each
Month, (check our website for
special dates and locations)

Time: 6:30 – 9:30 pm

Remember to check our website
(<http://www.arboretumfriends.org/gsbonsai/index.htm>)
for special events, dates, updates
and latest information.

Great Swamp Bonsai Society

c/o John Michalski
223 Mount Kemble Ave., Morristown, NJ 07960

Great Swamp Bonsai Society Membership Registration:

Send to:

GSBS c/o Rick Myers **New** **Renewal**
80 Kenvil Avenue
Succasunna, NJ 07876. **Individual (\$40.00)** **Family (\$50.00)**

Name(s): _____ **Email:** _____

Address: _____ **Phone:** (_____) _____

If Family Membership, please list other members:
