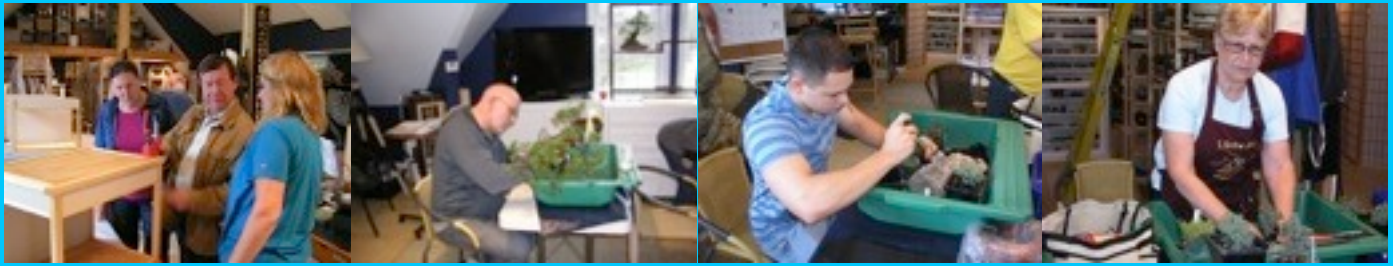


pfm bonsai studio ramblings



January 2013 Volume I

As we enter a new year

I have always wanted to create an informational newsletter for the studio. So, I thought why not? Today I start what I will hope will continue for many years. The intent is not only to keep everyone informed about what is happening at the studio but also to be informative about all things bonsai. Please let me know what you think about my efforts and what you would like to read about.



Winter Bonsai Work

When I started out learning about bonsai, we were told that winter was the

time for sitting back and reading our bonsai books and magazines. Our bonsai were all snug in their winter storage. Clean and sharpen tools. Prepare some soil. Order wire and pots. Otherwise nothing could be done with our trees.

Boy have things changed.

We now know that winter in cold country is the time to work on our trees. For deciduous trees, it is the best time to wire. IF the trees are completely frozen, wire but do not bend. IF the trees are not frozen, bending is possible. It is also time to trim deciduous new growth back to two buds per branch. Remember to consider the direction you want new growth to go when doing this. Pines are at the best

time for full styling work. For those of you lucky enough to have a greenhouse or light garden, it is transplant time. Spring in the greenhouse or light garden starts on December 21st. As a result, complete styling or restyling can be done on trees kept in these conditions. When working on winter stored trees, keep done the time you keep the trees indoors. I keep my work area at 50 degrees F to extend the time I can work on them.

Here at the studio, I offer greenhouse storage for workshop trees styled in my winter workshops to give my friends the benefits of a greenhouse in winter. Speaking of the greenhouse, here is a photo I took before removing the fruit from my *Pyracantha* so I can promote another year of good flowering and fruiting.

Of course winter is a good time to look over the offerings of bonsai events in 2013 and plan the furthering of our bonsai education.





Featured Species:

Amur maple Acer ginnala

by Pauline F Muth

A tall shrub or small tree native to northern Asia. Popular as a small, multi-stemmed specimen tree. Outstanding bright reddish fall colors are influenced by soil conditions and the cultivar grown. Very hardy and easy to grow. This species is ideal for all sizes of bonsai. It adapts readily to leaf reduction and pot culture. In the Northeast, it offers the additional bonus of extra hardiness and beautiful fall color.

Leaves and Buds

Bud Arrangement - Opposite.

Bud Color - Reddish-brown or lighter. Bud Size - 1/8 inch, imbricate buds.

Leaf Type and Shape - Simple, 3-lobed, center lobe longest.

Leaf Margins - Doubly-serrate. Leaf Surface - Glabrous.

Leaf Length - 1½ to 3 inches. Leaf Width - 3/4 to 1½ inches. Can be reduced to at least half these dimensions.

Leaf Color - Dark green above, light green beneath.

Bright red fall color is typical.

Flowers and Fruits

Flower Type - Borne in small panicles.

Flower Color - Yellowish-white, fragrant.

Fruit Type - Paired samaras (schizocarp).

Fruit Color - Brown to red, variable.

Form

Growth Habit - Multi-stemmed, variably rounded in outline.

Texture - Medium-fine, summer; medium-fine

Crown Height - 15 to 20 feet.

Crown Width - 15 to 20 feet.

Bark Color - Grayish-brown on older branches.

Root System - Fibrous, shallow. This makes it idea for pot culture



Soils

Soil Texture - Adaptable to a variety of soils, except alkaline or poorly-drained soils. Use a freely draining bonsai medium with a fairly neutral pH.

Soil pH - 4.5 to 7.5. Subject to chlorosis on alkaline soils.

Does not tolerate salinity.

Cold Hardiness USDA Zone 2.

Water Prefers moist, well-drained soils. Moderately drought tolerant.

Light Full sun to partial shade. Position in sun, along with nutrition, affects fall color.

Development of trunk

You can develop a seedling by planting it in the ground or in a large pot of a few years. You must wire and shape the trunk early. When you wish to thicken the trunk, leave extra branches to feed the trunk. It is best that these branches grow in the back of the trunk.

Bonsai are often developed from severe cut back of field grown trees as this species can bud out on old wood and the root system can be drastically cut back when transplanting. The cut is down diagonally with the highest point in the eventual front. Determine the front by examining the Nebari.

Larger trunks can also be developed by grafting several seedlings together using some of the tops as the eventual branches of the new tree.

Drastic pruning of the roots can develop Nebari. To develop good Nebari, you can bury newly cut specimens deeply in a pot. This keeps the roots moist and signals the plant to produce more roots. The use of rooting hormone increases this. In following yearly transplants, the roots that are produced are exposed to harden the Nebari. Young seedlings can also be grafted onto the base of trunks to correct the Nebari.

Air layering is often used to produce excellent specimens. This is especially valuable in producing mame and shohin trees or correcting poor Nebari or too long trunks. Trident also works extremely well developed from cuttings. Even larger diameters work as cuttings if done just as the leaves are beginning to harden in Spring.

Pruning

Pruning is to be done in the weeks before repotting in the spring. When branches are cut from a maple one small bud that develops at the base of the wound can be grown as a sacrifice branch to help heal the wound. New branches can be grown to diameter and then severely cut back and will then bud out. Care must be taken with cutting branches, as die back can occur.

Developing Ramification

When developing the branches, constant pinching of new growth is needed throughout the growing season. Allow 2 sets of leaves to form and cut back to one set. When this is done properly, a fine ramification will develop over time. As leaves are cut or defoliated, dormant buds at the base of the petioles are activated.

New branches must be wired early to direct their placement. Care must be taken with the wiring as maples grow quickly. Watch the wires, as the branch grows into the wire, remove the wire and rewire if needed.

Excellent **leaf reduction** can be achieved over time. The maple can be defoliated in spring when the first set of leaves is developed. Cut the leaves off in mid petiole. The new set of leaves will be smaller in size. On more mature specimens, selective defoliation can be done to achieve the results you wish. In any case defoliation should only be done on extremely healthy trees. Only well fertilized bonsai with the proper root to soil balance can be treated in this manner. Trees defoliated will also develop smaller leaves in the following years due to the reduced supply of stored food.

Removal of larger leaves throughout the summer will allow more light into the interior and increase budding.

Older specimens may need to have their branches cut back and regrown to redevelop ramification.

Cultivated Varieties

- Compact Amur Maple (Acer ginnala 'Compactum', syn. A. ginnala 'Bailey Compact')
- Embers Amur Maple (A. ginnala 'Embers') - Produce showy red samaras in addition to red fall leaf color.
- Flame Amur Maple (A. ginnala 'Flame')
- Red Wing Amur Maple (A. ginnala 'Red Wing') - Produce showy red samaras in addition to red fall leaf color.

Pests and problems

Relatively problem free. Sensitive to phenoxy herbicides. Iron chlorosis commonly occurs in alkaline or poorly drained soils. Leaf spot sometimes occurs. If it becomes a problem, a general fungicide helps.

sources <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/trees/handbook/th-3-85.pdf>

Muth, P. Close Up on Trident Maples

TECHNIQUE OF THE MONTH: USING ROOTING HORMONES

Rooting hormones replicate the natural chemicals produced by plants to regulate specific types of growth. These chemical hormones are called **auxins**. Auxins are synthesized in the cells of the plants. Gravity transmits the specific auxins that control the formation of roots to the lowest part of the plant. In growing plants this is normally at the base of the plant in the soil. The root auxins chemically signal the cells at the base to develop as root cells.

When a branch of a plant like a rhododendron bends and reaches the soil, the rooting auxins travel from the leaves down to the point at which the stem touches the ground (the lowest point for this auxin). If the conditions at this point are warm and moist, roots will form. After the roots are well established, the stem attaching the branch to the plant is cut and the new plant will grow on its own.

Botanists learned that the auxin **indoleacetic acid (IAA)** is naturally manufactured by plants to promote root growth. IAA is not stable when exposed to light or high temperatures. Nature uses these factors to control growth but these properties also make it difficult to store and use. In place of IAA, two synthetic auxins are generally used: Naphththalene acetic acid (NAA)an/or **Indolebutyric acid (IBA)**. These auxins are more stable than IAA but they have a limited shelf life of six to eight months. It is wise to purchase rooting hormones in small quantities and then store them in a cool dark place tightly capped.

Several companies manufacture rooting powders. These powders contain one or more auxins in a talc base for application. Liquid auxin mixes can also be purchased. The liquids are usually concentrated and are mixed with water to use. Use the rooting powder or liquid in the correct strength for each type of plant. Herbaceous plants use a weaker strength than woody plants. I prefer to use Hormodin 3 for woody cuttings so often needed in bonsai.

To use the rooting powder or liquid for cuttings, put a small amount in a separate container where you can dip the dampened cut end of the plant before inserting it in the rooting medium.

It is best to use a chopstick to create a hole in the medium and then put the cutting in the hole. If you use the cutting to make the hole you will remove some of the rooting powder. Never return extra powder to the original container. It may be contaminated with bacteria and moisture. This can shorten the shelf life and/or transmit disease to other cuttings. **DO NOT HANDLE THE POWDER. USE GLOVES.** Do not breathe in the powder either!!

Rooting hormones are also used to promote root growth in newly trimmed and potted bonsai. When you have styled a bonsai and cut its roots or repotted an established bonsai, brush the cut roots with the rooting auxin before planting. This is especially worthwhile when a large percentage of the roots have been removed while styling the bonsai. Excellent small bonsai can also be created by using auxins to promote the formation of roots when **air layering new trees** from established trees in landscapes, nursery stock or older bonsai.



What is happening in the bonsai world

You may learn a lot from the internet, friends and books but there is nothing like

getting out to a bonsai convention to stir up the creative juices. You may choose an event that is fairly local or travel the world. Regardless there is

much to learn and more to see. As you travel remember to take in some of the wonderful bonsai collections that are springing up everywhere. As time passes, I will feature some of them in my newsletters.

The events featured this month are near and dear to my heart. I hope to see you at them. We can not make it to every event, but choose at least one this year to attend and you will be amazed at how much you can learn.

ABS Learning Seminars 2013



This annual event will take place close to my home. It will be in Saratoga Springs NY September 12-15. My local club, Mohawk Hudson Bonsai Society, is the co sponsor of this North American event. It is a college type weekend of bonsai classes featuring the lessons of 12 bonsai masters from all over North America. There will be a wonderful masterpiece bonsai exhibition and great vendors. Classes are filling register soon. Check it out at

www.loveofbonsai.com

MABS 2013



Join the members of our sister Midatlantic Bonsai Societies regional clubs to celebrate 30 years of great bonsai festivals. This year's event will be held in Grantville, PA at the Holiday Inn.

It will feature three outstanding bonsai artists: Ryan Neil, Peter Warren and Minoru Akiyama.

Special surprises for our anniversary too.

Check it out at <http://midatlanticbonsai.freesevers.com>

BCI 2013 CHINA



Want to travel a bit further?

Join the fun in Yangzhou China for BCI's 50th anniversary.

Tours of China are also linked to this event.

Check it out at

<http://www.bonsai2013.org/>

January Offerings at pfm bonsai

Are you ready to start the year off learning some more bonsai techniques?

Do you need a friendly place to work on your bonsai during our free open workshops?

NOTE: DEC 29 AND 30 ARE FREE OPEN WORKSHOP DAYS...if you got a new bonsai as a gift, this is a good time to bring it in for advice.



Monday evenings 6:30 PM Study Group

Come and play and learn with our Monday study group. There is no charge for this group. We come together and work on a project. Or we simply bring some of our trees to work on. Some join in a pizza before beginning. we chip in for the food. In December we made small scrolls to use in shohin sized tokonoma. Who knows what the next project will be. We are open to ideas. Join us Jan. 7



January 5, 6 and 13 Free Open Workshops A time to work on your trees in the company of friends. These are subject to schedule changes...please call ahead.

January 12 Saturday Mame and Shohin Bonsai 10 AM

Start the morning with a comprehensive lesson on small bonsai. After the lesson, create one or more of these small bonsai. \$40 plus materials of your choice limited to 8 participants



January 19 and 20 10 to 5 each day +

Martin Schmalenberg Study Group Forming Study once a month with Martin Schmalenberg. This will be a total immersion in design concepts, (maybe radical changes)....deciduous trees maintenance and pruning to increase ramification (winter silhouette), pine techniques part II, problematic trees that people don't want to give up on. The monthly sessions would reflect the

seasons and the required focus that each season needs. There will be many discussions on bonsai style, especially, conventional vs. "spirit " This would be serious study. One thing for certain: **Your trees will dramatically improve due to your work with Marty.** The first session will be Jan 19-20 10-5 each day. Members of the group will bring their calendars to determine the dates for the rest of the year. The fee will be \$100 per person for each weekend. **There are a few openings left.**

January 26 10 AM Creating Saikei (landscape planting) in pot or marble \$40 plus materials of your choice limited to 4 participants A lesson on saikei will start the day with plenty of inspiration. After the lesson, students will select the materials they wish to use and create a saikei for their collection.

Register for any of the events by email or phone.

\$40 payment secures your place in a class.

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pfm bonsai studio supports

Mohawk Hudson Bonsai Society <http://mohawkhudsonbonsai.org>

MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies - www.midatlanticbonsai.freesevers.com

American Bonsai Society - www.absbonsai.org

Bonsai Clubs International - www.bonsai-bci.com

National Bonsai Foundation - www.bonsai-nbf.org

Artisans Cup in Portland <http://www.artisanscupofportland.com>.

please visit www.pfmbonsai.com for current happenings at the studio

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