

The Vancouver Island Bonsai Society

NEWSLETTER

March 2015



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2014 VIBS Officers

President: Mark Paterson
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Past President: Bob Taylor
Treasurer: Larry Phillips
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Librarian: Kathi Morrison
Newsletter & Website: John Mitchell
Board member "without portfolio" Jim Morrison

Next Society meeting: Monday, March 16th, 2015

7:00 pm at Garth Homer Centre

Please note new meeting time!

Scheduled: Re-potting and spring pruning with demo. Show & Tell: Maples & pruning techniques

Expert advice: There is a standing invitation to all members to bring in any tree that you would like an opinion or advice on – tap into several hundred years of collective bonsai experience.

Club activities: Please share your thoughts on activities that you would like to see. See the Activities Calendar:

<http://www.victoriabonsai.bc.ca/bonsaiCalendar.htm>

Raffle table: Please consider bringing an item for the raffle table - it is a good fund-raiser for club events and this year promises to be a very good year for special events.

Entering the building: Please be aware that the front door is the only entry/exit to the building. Security has become a significant issue for the Garth Homer administration and access to the building is now limited to the front door.

Last meeting:



Annual Bonsai Pot Sale!

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Last Meeting Bonsai Pot Swap & Seasonal Care of Pines



Maurice provided, as usual, an information packed session on the care of pines and provided a number of his own bonsai of several pine varieties for our enjoyment.

I took the opportunity to increase everyone's awareness of a particularly nasty "needle cast" disease that seems to be increasingly making its presence known on the Island.

I was first alerted to the situation by our friend Anton in Campbell River that "Red Band Disease" or *Dothistroma pini* needle blight would appear to be well established here. The disease is caused by a fungus that germinates from spores spread by wind & rain and infects pines throughout the growing season. The spores are contained within "fruiting bodies" produced in infected needles that the tree sheds in the fall. The release of the spores the following spring seems to be nicely timed with the appearance of the needles emerging from needle sheaths as the new season's growth begins. It's very important to clean up and burn fallen needles so that the fruiting bodies don't release spores in the upcoming season.

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Last meeting - Seasonal Care of Pines (cont'd)

Properly used, copper fungicides like Bordeaux mixture (sometimes marketed as Bordo mix) can prevent infection by this disease (and others). It was used first in Bordeaux, France to control downy mildew in the vineyards, hence its name.

Bordeaux mix is available prepackaged at many garden centres and is a mixture of copper sulphate and calcium hydroxide diluted with water. There are formulas on the internet for those who wish to mix their own and outlets like Buckerfields and Borden Mercantile carry these chemicals, as well as the commercial mixes. Integrity on Keating didn't have any in stock when I called but may have it now. The University of California (Davis) has a particularly good website with description & directions:

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7481.html>

Bordeaux mixture can stain everything it comes in contact with a bluish-green colour – be careful how you apply it! There are also warnings against applying it in cool weather - it can damage green growth by the release of large concentrations of copper ions (the method by which it is effective as a fungicide) in cool, wet conditions because the release of copper ions is continuous. Because it adheres well to plants it is a very effective winter fungicide (and bactericide).



On the Wednesday morning after our February meeting, I found a small Mugo Pine that I set aside last fall because it wasn't looking quite right — here it is on Feb 18th with what appears to be a full-blown needle blight. Upon discovery, it leapt onto the pile of refuse that I had burning in the garden (one of my neighbours encourages a black knot and bacterial blight-

... photos: John M

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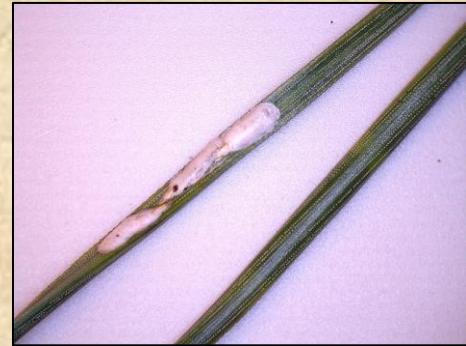
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ridden plum tree that overhangs one of my bonsai benches - I'm always burning her unwanted debris).

It must be that peculiar condition wherein once one becomes alerted to a certain condition or situation, one begins to see it everywhere. Here is another sick mugo pine on a commercial lot near Wilkinson & Interurban in Victoria:



Here are close-ups of the needles:



The "banding" shown may not be symptoms of Dothistroma needle blight (DNB) specifically but are characteristic of "needle cast" diseases generally. The photo on the right shows Pine Needle Scale a.k.a. Oyster Shell Scale (an insect), probably an opportunistic infestation of a compromised tree. Serious pest. Copper for the fungus – wipe the scale off bonsai with your fingers or Q-tip dipped in soapy water & check growing conditions (drainage,etc).

... all photos by John M

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Seasonal Care of Pines (cont'd)

Needle cast diseases (the tree "casts" its needles prematurely) are found world-wide and some are extremely serious pests of forests and tree plantations. There are several important needle cast diseases of conifers - keep a sharp look out for symptoms on your bonsai and surrounding full-size conifers. Learn to use copper sprays as a preventative measure properly. There are effective fungicidal cures available but the government won't let most of us have them anymore because, in past, we've been very careless in their use. One now needs to have an applicator's license, in most cases.

Here's a link to Anton's blog: <http://anijhuis.com/2014/06/11/pine-needle-brights-and-needlecasts/>

March meeting: Re-potting and Spring Pruning

Periodically, if our bonsai are healthy and growing well, it becomes necessary to repot our pot-bound specimens in order that they will continue to prosper. As roots fill the pot, air and water no longer circulate effectively and the tree's source of nourishment is compromised. Lack of oxygen has been known to cause roots to rot. Bonsai have been known to die under such circumstances (deliberately understated – I don't want to frighten anyone).

Over time, soil particles break down to finer and finer "dust" and that contributes also to an inability to hold water and oxygen.

The only solution is to remove the tree from the pot, prune the roots and replenish the "exhausted" soil. This is good time of year to repot many species.



It is not uncommon, it seems, to put off the repotting of bonsai until the tree actually begins to lift itself out of its pot – or so go the stories I've heard!

One would hope to get at this not unpleasant and essential chore sooner rather than later, then rest happily assured that your bonsai is growing fine new feeder roots and repaying you for your careful attentions with spectacular results.

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March meeting: Spring pruning

Correct pruning is an all-important aspect of the development of aesthetically pleasing bonsai. We will spend some time discussing and demonstrating pruning as a bonsai shaping technique. Correct pruning, along with other techniques, helps achieve "ramification" or the development of lateral branch and twig structure in a pleasing proportion with the miniature tree that you are creating.

We are just about to leave the prime season for observing the results of the natural process of dividing of main branches into two smaller branches, then into two more, etc; a process of bifurcation that we see so beautifully demonstrated in the full-sized Garry Oaks that abound in this area. The ultimate winter silhouette, I think. A convincing replication of this effect is one of the things we try to achieve in the creation of deciduous bonsai.



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Spring pruning (cont'd)



Proper pruning techniques were responsible for the nicely ramified branch structure of these elms (although further pruning and shaping might be indicated for the bonsai on the right ... maybe).

photos ... John M

Oh yes, I forgot to mention **the Pot Swap!** Barny said it was really, really exciting!



photo ... some guy

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The Club realized \$575 from the sale of bonsai pots at the February meeting!

Coming Events:

BONSAI WITH MAURICE BOMBEZIN

Date: April 11th

Time: 11am-1pm

Cost \$20 per person (plus GST)

Supplies Extra

Register at: www.downtoearthgardensandnursery.com

April Bonsai Meeting: April 20th

Shaping & wiring your trees - Bob Taylor will lead the discussion and demonstration. Members are encouraged to bring in a tree that you think needs wiring for advice & hands-on experience.

Show & Tell: Junipers

Sunday, May 3rd – Field Day - a visit to a local garden centre in the morning followed by Field Day at the Hort Centre Bonsai Garden. No admission charge. Also open to members of the HCP. Tables will be set up so members and guests can work on trees and solicit advice from fellow artists. Bonsai soil mix will be available for those wishing to repot their bonsai.

A reminder: Membership fees were due January 1st. Last date for payment of fees is the March meeting. Only paid-up members & guest subscriptions will receive newsletters and announcements after that date.

The local Garden Centres are up and running - it's time to start scouting out potential bonsai stock ... you can save for that trip-of-a-lifetime some other day.

Our little insect buddies will be well started on their springtime feasting - watch for them!

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Membership Renewal / Application Form 2015

I wish to renew my membership _____ or I wish to apply for membership _____ (new member)

Attached is \$30.00 for single membership _____ or attached is \$35.00 for family membership _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, Province _____ Postal Code _____

Phone (Home) _____ Phone (Other) _____

Please provide your e-mail address for information about various activities and notification of the posting of the Newsletter to the website: _____

If you are mailing this form, please mail to:

Vancouver Island Bonsai Society
Membership Coordinator
PO Box 8674
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 3S2



Spring raindrops on new Japanese Maple leaves