BCI Diplomatic Mailbag - The Ambassador's newsletter: Communicating with BCI members around the World

2009
June
Edition

BCI- Ambassador's Newsletter

Officers and Board of BCI

I. Chi Su – **President**
E-mail: ic.su@msa.hinet.net

Glenis Bebb – **Executive Director**
E-mail: glen@bonsainursery.com.au
Robert (Rob) Kempinski – **1st Vice President.**
Email: rkempinski@cfl.rr.com
Willi Benz - **2nd Vice President**
E-mail: Benz-W@t-online.de
Pauline Muth – **Recording Secretary**
E-mail: Pauline@pfmbonsai.com
Louise Leister – **Corresponding Secretary**
Email: mysecretbonsai@bellsouth.net
David Radlinski - **Treasurer**
E-mail: dgradski@zoomtown.com
Linda Brant– **Immediate Past President**
E-mail: lbrant@comcast.net
Solita Tafur Rosade – **Goodwill Ambassador**
Email: solita@rosadebonsai.com
Donna Banting – **Managing Editor**
E-mail:BCIeditor@aol.com
Poncevic "Vic" Maramba Ceballos **- Legal Advisor**
E-mail: bonsairp@yahoo.com
Jim Brant –**Web master**
E-mail: bciwebmaster@comcast.net

Directors
Guillermo Castanõ Ramirez
Email: castañoo@prodigy.net.mx
Les Dowdell
Email: hokkoku@telusplanet.net
Ian Glew
Email: iglew@b022.aone.net.au
Joan Greenway
Email: joan.greenway@gmail.com
Frieda Joris
Email: friebonsai@hotmail.com
Min Hsuan Lo
Email:bonsailo@mail2000.com.tw
Frank J Mihalic
Email: dagwood@ncweb.com
Susumu Nakamura
Email:dolphin7@mub.biglobe.ne.jp
Chiara Padrini
Email: chiara@padrini.it
Nikunj Parekh
Email: nikunjyo@vsl.com
Robert Steven
Email: markamtr@cbn.net.id
Ed Trout
Email:ficus@aol.com
Budi Sulistyo
Email: budisulistyo@yahoo.com
Zheng ZhiMin
Email: cczhengzw@shunde.gov.cn
BCI Web site
http://www.bonsai-bci.com

Editors Message

Hi to all
The year is almost at its mid point and in Australia we are approaching our first day of winter and in other parts of the World Bonsai enthusiasts are readying themselves for spring and summer.

It made me think just how varied our climates are across the world after spending 4 days with Bill Valavanis who was international demonstrator at our National convention in Australia . Bill showed the snow and ice that his Bonsai are subjected to and that for a large part of the year his garage is used for storage of Bonsai.

Listening to this and thinking of my climate – semi tropical and how different it was but still a common bond exists across all climates and that's Bonsai.

I am off in a few weeks to New Orleans and I will enjoy a change from the hurly burly of organizing a convention to the more leisurely attendee and Board meetings and naturally Ambassadors meeting.

Hope to see you there and say G'Day.

Ian Glew – BCI Ambassadors Newsletter Editor : iglew@b022.aone.net.au

What's in this issue?

New Orleans June 2009

It is almost upon us New Orleans is hosting the BCI conference on June 19, 20th and 21st 2009 outstanding demonstrators including Bill Valavanis is just the beginning , if you require details Email the following bcibizness@cox.net see you there.

Don't miss out book now.

AABC Ltd 22nd Annual Convention

Proudly hosted by Bonsai Society of Queensland Inc in Brisbane Queensland 22 – 25th May 2009

What a weekend 250 Bonsai addicts or tragic's as our MC called us gathered to attend the weekend, great time had by all and as with all of these events it is not just the content which is important but the meeting of friends and acquaintances that only meet annually.

Bill Valavanis certainly made the weekend and we worked him very hard, Bill is a demonstrator not to be missed, knowledgeable, experienced, respected and an ultimate professional. If you have not seen him I would strongly recommend attending one of the 9 or 10 (or all of them) conventions that Bill presents at through the year. **New Orleans is his next one so don't miss out.**

With all of the conventions it is not just the Bonsai that make the weekend it is catching all the old friends and making a few new friends that makes the event.

AABC Ltd run a competition – **Betty Crawford is the sponsor of this fabulous award**, where by a member of one of the member clubs is nominated and drawn out and the prize is to attend the convention. Damian was the winner and pictured below with wife and young baby

The Winner – Damian Bateson – wife and young child enjoying the event

Glenis Bebb welcoming a guest

BCI award tree

BCI award Suiseki

Damian – daughter and Lee Wilson

Dot Koreshoff having fun

Tony Bebb (right) and Bruce Sullivan in action

Lindsay Bebb in action

Bill Valavanis and an able assistant in action

Bonsai Potting Mix or – The real Dirt

by Don Waitkus

Part three of this fabulous article is below thanks again to Bonsai Society of Florida's and I was given permission to reproduce it thanks BSF and Don Waitkus. Part four next issue

Part 3

CONSIDERATION 3: POTTING MIX COMPOSITION

The soil composition is not as critical as particle size, and it has been stated that the particle size is more important than the pH. However, the *pH should not be ignored*. A plant that normally lives in a 5.0 pH cannot be expected to do well at a pH of 9.0. Be aware of where your plant normally grows. If it normally grows on the forest floor in shade, it probably has a low ultraviolet tolerance, and it is getting a lot of naturally decomposed plant material for its food and, for that reason, will probably be in the low pH category. On the other hand, plants that grow in decomposed rock or limestone formations will tend to be more alkaline in nature. The term alkaline, again, is only relative.

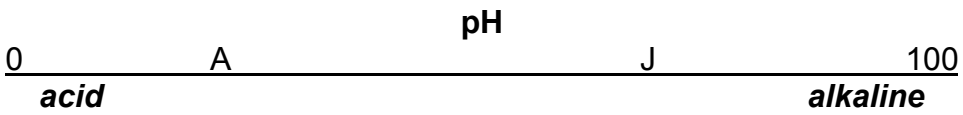
3a. Composition Variables

The soil composition is highly dependent on the type of plant to be potted. The variables to be considered are pH, leaf size and UV (ultraviolet) tolerance.

VARIABLE: pH - The Acidity or Alkalinity

THE BONSAI WORKSHOP provides information based on arbitrary or subjective values for various characteristics as they apply to comparative line graphs. It was not explained how the assigned values were determined for any of the characteristics. There was no explanation given for how the pH values of 0 to 100 compare to the normal pH scale. For that reason, I have opted not to describe these characteristics in any detail. I would be willing to discuss it further should anyone be interested. For the benefit of those who do not have the book, I will display the graphs **for informational purposes only.**

As shown in the following graphs, The A stands for satsuki azalea which has been given an assigned characteristic value of 23, while the J stands for shimpaku juniper which has been given an assigned characteristic value of 70. You will notice that each of the line graphs has the same characteristic value for each example plant.



VARIABLE: Leaf Size

Leaf size can be understood as the comparative difference between a large or small leaf or conifer needle, but without further definition.

VARIABLE: Ultraviolet Tolerance

The values here are based on whether the plant can take a lot sun, needs full shade or something in-between.

UV Tolerance

0 A J 100

intolerant ***tolerant***

3B: COMPOSITION

Based on the given assigned values, you can see that a satsuki azalea mix should consist of 3/4 organic and 1/4 organic materials. The shimpaku juniper should consist of 3/4 inorganic and 1/4 organic materials.

Potting Mix Composition

\- A J -

100% organic ***100% inorganic***

THE FIVE GROUPS AND COMPOSITION

GROUP 1: 3/4 Organic to 1/4 Inorganic
azalea, rhododendron, bald cypress, redwood, tropical foliage plants

GROUP 2: 2/3 Organic to 1/3 Inorganic
alder, birch, beech, hornbeam, elm, zelkova, dogwood, maple

GROUP 3: 1/2 Organic to 1/2 Inorganic
pyracantha, wisteria, quince, fig, corokia, holly, boxwood, apple, peach, pear, cherry, plum, cotoneaster

GROUP 4: 1/3 Organic to 2/3 Inorganic
larch, ginkgo, fir, spruce, hemlock, cypress, cryptomeria

GROUP 5: 1/4 Organic to 3/4 Inorganic
oak, pine, juniper, alpine and desert plants, jade (crassula), eucalyptus

I was impressed with the accuracy of the desert plants and jade mix shown in Group 5. This is the constituent makeup suggested by many cacti and succulent texts. You should be aware that within each Group there may be species, subspecies, cultivars or hybrids that will not precisely fit a Group, so you will have to extrapolate for those special circumstances.

Please note that the aforementioned blends are only suitable for pot mixes. Trees planted on rock slabs or clinging-to-rock style need a mud/muck blend of very little, if any, organic material.

BRIAN BATCHELDER OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Also, be aware that there is a school of thought that uses pure sphagnum moss for the potting medium; no soil or inorganic material. This is a favorite treatment by Mr. Batchelder, but it is frowned on by traditionalists. While frowned upon, it has certain appeal and should not be ignored. He completely removes any soil from the roots. He then proceeds to stuff sphagnum moss, which has been thoroughly saturated with water, around and into the roots during the repotting process. A sprinkling of moss is applied over the sphagnum, which eventually achieves the same appearance as the moss on a conventionally potted tree.

From the specimens that were shown, it appears that recovery and growth is quite rapid. All the plants were quite lush in appearance.

OTHER UNRECOMMENDED BLENDS

Other texts do not exactly coincide with the above mentioned groups. For example, one text states that pines and conifers should be potted in a mix containing 50% organic and 50% inorganic materials; maples and zelkovas should be potted with 80% organic and 20% inorganic materials; and fruiting or

flowering plants should be potted with 100% organic materials. Also, the average mix proposed by Brooklyn Botanic is 70% organic and 30% inorganic.

Another text proposes an average mix as 2/3 organic, 1/3 inorganic. This same text states that conifers should be potted in a mix containing 50% organic and 50% inorganic materials and that broad-leaf plants should be potted in a mix containing 75% organic and 25% inorganic materials. Furthermore, they also suggest that you can use soil from your yard and state that you do not even have to strain it before using it in your potting mix.

In all the above cases the inorganic material was sharp sand and the organic material was soil or humus with some peat, manure, or leaf mold.

You can easily see that there can be an infinite variety of potting mix blends and, thus, a major source of confusion for the average hobbyist. In all fairness, though, it should be noted that these are all relatively old texts and may not reflect current thinking by the authors.

CONSIDERATION 4: MICROORGANISMS

This consideration is not as important as the previous three, but it should not be ignored. It is interesting to not that many of the bonsai texts suggest that you take soil from your garden or collect it from the wild. Apparently, they have no concerns for weeds, disease or pests that could also be collected with the soil. Some texts went so far as to tell you to bake your soil in the oven to sterilize it.

Many plants take advantage of microorganisms to accomplish life processes. Fertile soil is full of microorganisms and many forms of bacteria that contribute to the beneficial breakdown of the soil. Now, if you are of a mind to go into your garden and collect some soil for bonsai, and if you bake that soil in your oven for a while, besides the smell, you will find that you have probably killed off as many good guys as you have bad guys. Not a good trade off and expensive. As a side comment, Vapam, the soil fumigant, has a formulation for fumigation of soil batches that will be used for potting mixes, but you can't use the soil for about three weeks, because of the need for the gas to dissipate.

If you want to use soil/loam/humus in your mix, it is best to buy a bag of potting soil, not potting mix, from your local garden center. Just be sure that it has been treated to kill the weed seeds and pests. You can use composted cow manure or shredded peat moss or any combination of these materials, which will be discussed in more detail later.

MYCORRHIZAE

An interesting microorganism is the mycorrhiza. It is a beneficial fungus that attaches itself to the roots in the form of nodules and is usually visible to the eye. Mycorrhizae live in a symbiotic relationship with plants. The mycorrhizae derive water and nutrients from the roots of the plant, and the plant benefits from the nodule, because the fungus can process atmospheric nitrogen as a nutrient. Your bonsai can benefit from its existence, if you inoculate your bonsai mix with a known population of mycorrhizae. While mycorrhizae are normally associated with pines, many other plant species can benefit from this fungus.

Fungicides, such as Benomyl, in certain formulations can be critically detrimental to the formation of mycorrhizae. Some texts recommend that you use small portions of the original soil from the root area of the plant and blend it in the potting mix during repotting.

For more information on this subject, obtain IFAS bulletin OHC-18, ***Mycorrhizae for Nursery Production*** from your Extension Office.

This will conclude our discussion of bonsai potting mixes for this month. In our installment next month we will begin with number 5: Aesthetics.

-o0o-

Adapted and reprinted with permission from ***NFBC NEWS***, Newsletter of the North Florida Bonsai Club, Vol. 8, No. 4, April 1995, pp. 5-6, No. 5, May 1995, pp. 3-4, No. 6, June 1995, pp. 4-6.

Ambassadors competition

Off to New Orleans and certainly keep in mind the meeting of all ambassadors scheduled for breakfast but if there is a change to this time it will be advertised so watch out and please make time to come along meet the other ambassadors, board and myself

By the way we raffled the towel and the badges and raised over AUD $100 the recent AABC Ltd convention -**All money raised will be donated to BCI!**

Closing and next Issue

As always and a common plea from all newsletter editors – articles please.

Please feel free to circulate this newsletter throughout your club and please don't hesitate to take portions of it and use it as part of your club newsletter, it is meant to be shared and Email makes this task very easy and inexpensive.

See you in New Orleans