



# BONSAI NEWS

October 2017

## GREATER LOUISVILLE BONSAI SOCIETY

Ross Clark, editor

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### OFFICERS' CORNER

Our next meeting will be at the **Bon Air Library (2816 Del Rio Place, Louisville)**, on **Thursday, October 19, 7 to 9pm**. This will be a different but interesting meeting. All material will be provided and assembly will be very simple. We did this years ago, and many club members are still using the stands they built.

The cost for materials will be \$10 per stand. If you purchase two stands, you will get a third stand for free; in other words, three stands for \$20. Don't pass up this opportunity to get some bonsai stands without spending an arm and a leg. [Your editor, having recently purchased a couple of stands, is missing some appendages.]

Many thanks to Tim Weckman for his terrific presentation on hornbeams at our last meeting. His presentation covered the types of hornbeams, where they are found in nature, and notes on their culture as bonsai.

I also would like to thank Tom Holkamp for inviting us to hold our September meeting in his workshop, and for his hospitality. It was a very pleasant location, complete with a giant clump of nice hackberry trees.

I've been working on next year's programs, and things are falling into place. Most meetings will be held at Bon Air Library, and the dates have been finalized. Details will be published in next month's newsletter.

Three cheers for bonsai!!!

*Earl Ekman*

President



## **2017 OFFICERS of the Greater Louisville Bonsai Society**

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Dick Blayney, Steve Hammel, Linda Kossman, Tom McCurry, Marian Taylor, newsletter editor *ex officio*

*The Editor thanks everyone who helps this newsletter succeed and welcomes ideas, suggestions and articles. Please address newsletter items to ross.clark@eku.edu. The deadline for the November-December 2017 issue of this newsletter is Wednesday, November 22.*

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## **2017 MEETINGS OF THE GREATER LOUISVILLE BONSAI SOCIETY**

*(all meetings in Louisville, Eastern time, unless otherwise indicated)*

**OCTOBER 19, Thursday, 7-9pm, at Bon Air Library.** Building of **bonsai show stands**. See page 1.

No tools are necessary at the meeting.

**NOVEMBER 8, Wednesday, at Bon Air Library**, time tba. **Important business meeting.** We will vote on our revised constitution and by-laws and finalize plans for 2018 meetings and events.

**DECEMBER 2, Saturday**, time and place tba. Annual **holiday party**.

*Additional details will be published in this newsletter as they become available.*

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## **SOME 2017 SIGNIFICANT BONSAI EVENTS, EASTERN NORTH AMERICA (listed by date)**

*Additional events and details will be posted in this newsletter as details become available.*

◆ For additional information, click on the green links.

**Bonsai: A Japanese (and now everywhere) Horticultural Art, Thursday, Oct 12, 6 to 7pm**

Lee Squires and Dick Blayney, long-time members of the Greater Louisville Bonsai Society, will present a program on bonsai history and culture, including a “show and tell” of different bonsai styles. **FREE ADMISSION.**

Location: [Art Institute Crane House](#), 1244 S. Third Street, Louisville.

[Carolina Bonsai Expo](#), Oct. 13-15, North Carolina Arboretum, Asheville

**An Evening of Bonsai with Rodney Clemons, Thursday, Nov. 2, 6-8pm, Waterfront Botanical Gardens**, Sawyer Hayes Community Center, 2201 Lakeland Road, Louisville. This is actually an annual membership meeting of the WBG, but they are inviting folks interested in bonsai to join them. Admission: WBG members, free; general public \$20; students with ID, \$5. **Information on how to obtain tickets and other details of this event will follow in THE NEXT issue of this newsletter.**

[Winter Silhouette Bonsai Exhibition](#), Dec. 2-3, North Carolina Research Campus, Kannapolis, NC

## **2018**

[American Bonsai Society Convention, April 19-22](#), Collinsville, IL (suburban St. Louis). DON'T MISS IT!

You could register [today](#). Really, you could; just click on the link to learn more.

## **History of the Greater Louisville Bonsai Society: A Multi-Part Series – Part 5, October 2017**

by Lee Squires

### **FRANK OKAMURA DEMONSTRATION AND WORKSHOP**

In the July issue I wrote about the 1976 BCI Convention in Washington D.C. In this installment I continue with a very interesting meeting the Louisville Area Bonsai Club had in April 1976. We had many novices in the club in the mid-70s, so having any bonsai master in for a workshop was an exciting treat for all members. Our meeting committee decided to have Frank Okamura come to Louisville and give a one day demo and workshop. He was 64 at the time, and was a noted nationwide lecturer, writer and instructor.

Frank Okamura was the Bonsai Curator at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden in Brooklyn, New York. He was hired by the BBG in 1947 and worked until his retirement in 1981. Frank died in 2006 at the age of 94. According to his obituary in the New York Times, Frank's first job at the BBG was the curator of the Hill & Pond Japanese Garden. It had been vandalized during World War II, and Frank was charged with putting it back together. He did a superb job. Soon afterward, Frank was given the huge task of building their bonsai collection. In 1925 the BBG had 32 trees in its collection. They wanted to add more trees and improve the ones they had. Frank dug into that job, and today the BBG has over 350 trees in their collection, thanks to his efforts. In 1958, Frank and his wife Toshimi opened one of the first Japanese restaurants in New York City. It was near Columbia University and they named it *Aki*. After Frank's retirement in 1981, Japanese Emperor Hirohito awarded him the Order of Sacred Treasures medal for his work in increasing bonsai knowledge throughout the world.

Frank stayed at Russell Proctor's home in Indian Hills. Mr. Proctor's cook and manservant, Wheat, waited on Frank hand and foot. There were no bologna sandwiches served to him on a paper plate while perusing Mr. Proctor's trees. Wheat cooked superb breakfasts for Frank. I was invited as a guest, since I was the club president and good friend. When Russell needed Wheat, he would ring a hand bell and Wheat would scurry in and see what was needed. Generally, it was to make us another hot toddy. Wheat put a jigger of bourbon in a coffee cup and poured hot water over it. He added a cinnamon stick and a lemon wedge. Sugar was optional.

After the workshop, several of the members went to the Oriental House for dinner on Saturday evening. The Oriental House was built in the early 1960s and was owned by Hennie Woo and her husband. She was a great chef and he was the typical Chinese businessman. They were great friends of Russell's and they loved having a Japanese bonsai expert and restaurant owner eat at their establishment. They owned a house on Fairmeade Rd. around the corner from the restaurant and they had two bonsai. Russell and I would eat lunch there on occasion and then go back to their house and advise them on the care of the trees. They are the same people who built the current Oriental House building with all of the ornate and colorful wooden "oriental gingerbread" trim on the exterior and interior of the building. Currently, it is rotting and falling apart, since the current owners don't care to spend the money on painting and the very expensive repairs that are needed. I remember Frank ordering two bowls of white rice that evening and he ate both of them with chopsticks. That memory sticks with me as sticky rice grains clung to his "papa-san" beard. Quite funny !

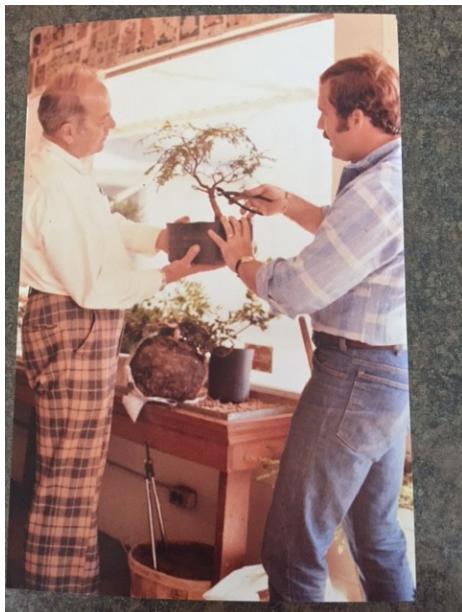
We started the demo and workshop on a Saturday morning around 9:00 AM and ran all day with a break for lunch. We had around 20 members present as I recall. Frank looked at each tree and made verbal opinions before the whole group, trimmed a bit on some; others he handed back to the owner to let them do the work. This worked very well and Frank explained bonsai philosophy along with the positives and negatives of each tree. He was esoteric and thoughtful in his presentation. Many of our new members were not familiar with "bonsai butchering" as I call it, as bonsai masters sometimes like to do to get back to the bones of a tree. Sometimes this is painful value for the uninitiated. The Maugers from Paoli, Indiana were such a couple as Frank examined their White Pine. After some chops here and there and a necessary jin, he handed it back to Don and Ruth. Their expressions were priceless, as you can see from the photo ([next page](#)). I was Frank's assistant and helped him with a few trees as we closed in on 4 o'clock. After all, 5:00 is traditionally cocktail hour, so it was about time to clean up and head for cocktails and dinner.

It was outstanding to have Frank Okamura here. I had him at my house on Sunday morning after Wheat fed him a country breakfast at Mr. Proctor's. He did ask me the age-old question, "what are grits"? I showed him my collection and he gave plenty of advice. Also, I had a collection of gnarly, ancient, eroded limestone rocks that I had collected a few years before. Frank admired them and wanted one for a root-over-rock maple he was going to create back at the BBG. I let him have his choice. He tied a piece of cotton rope on each end of the 10 lb. stone and made a rope handle so he could carry it on the plane. That wouldn't be possible today. ([Photos on next page.](#))

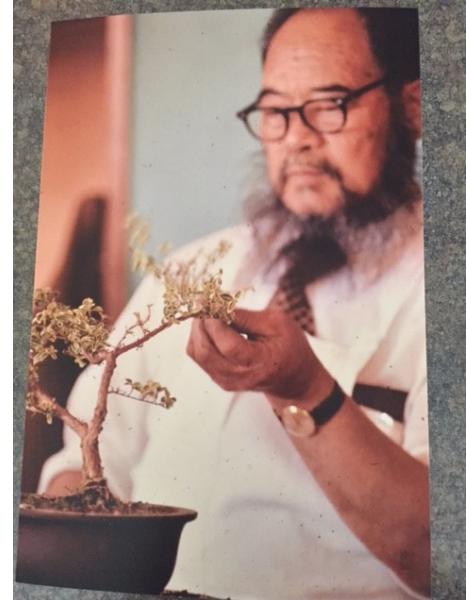
*Okamura workshop, continued.*

On the way to the airport, I took him on a tour of Cave Hill Cemetery and showed him all of the neat things we were doing with plants. He was impressed and never had seen a cemetery like Cave Hill. Years into the future, I took John Naka and Dan Robinson on the same tour, but that's a story for another day.

### Photos from Frank Okamura's Visit to GLBS in 1976 (40 years ago!)



Lee Squires assists Mitch Leichardt, owner of Leichardt Nursery in Bowling Green, trim a dwarf hemlock at the Okamura



Frank examines a variegated Serissa.



Frank makes styling suggestions for the Maugers' white pine.



Don and Ruth Mauger from Paoli, Indiana seem to be in shock after Frank trimmed and jinned their white pine. This is certainly a contender for the record of the most hilarious photo taken in our Club's history!



— Just thought you might enjoy this recent photo of John Naka's Goshin. —ed.

## THOUGHTS AND OPTIONS FOR FALL PRUNING

by Ross Clark

"When should I prune trees and shrubs?" is a common question people ask landscapers. The stock answer is, "Prune when the knife is sharp"—in other words, prune at any time.

That advice works for landscapers, but it's not the best answer for bonsai. There are various good reasons for pruning bonsai at other seasons, but there are very good reasons for pruning in October. This time of year, the growing season is coming to a close. Plants are lower in moisture, not as sappy, which is a minor consideration. Pruning in fall, before plants go into winter quarters, saves space in wintering facilities; more plants can fit into less surface area in your wintering quarters, when they typically are kept close together. Two additional and perhaps more important reasons why this is the best time to prune are that (1) you can influence the design of the tree next year by pruning now and (2) by waiting until now to prune, trees have achieved maximal diameter growth and food storage. It's really simple; if you prune earlier, you lose the photosynthesis that extra leaves would have produced. In other words, when you prune leaves, you prune photosynthesis.

Here are some visual examples of fall pruning options... mostly from relatively young plants.



This pine was not decandled earlier in the year. The new terminal buds are clearly visible. Late in fall and through winter, new buds will form immediately below the terminal bud. When the additional buds have formed, you can just twist off the terminal buds. The non-terminal buds will form candles next spring, and you can choose the two or three weakest new candles, let them develop in spring and then decandle them in July (in our area). That way, you encourage branching and by decandling later, you can reduce needle length the following year. Traditional bonsai dogma says that you should allow only two buds to develop. However, if you encourage three buds, you will increase your design options; an extra twig can be removed at any time.



This 14 year-old Japanese maple at left now has a trunk diameter of about 2 inches and good surface root flare (esoterically known as *nebari*). Upper branches have been encouraged to grow in order to thicken the trunk. It is now time to encourage the development of a mature tree silhouette. The photo at right shows 2 strong branches that have been encouraged at about mid-height in the tree. It is time to remove them. At the node immediately below the two strong branches are 3 small branches. The trunk will be pruned midway between the strong branches and the 3 weak branches below (pruning site indicated in red.) The wound will be sealed and the trunk will die back to the 3 weak branches. Next year, one of the 3 weak branches will be selected as the new tree apex.



## Fall pruning options, continued



Kiyo Hime Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum 'Kiyo Hime'*, above) are very cold-tolerant, nice little trees, with thin twigs and very small leaves. However, they have a tendency to spread laterally rather than grow vertically. This tendency needs to be resisted by pruning from when the trees are young. Immediately before being put into winter quarters (outdoors) **the lateral branches of this 6 year-old Kiyo Hime will be pruned to one or two nodes, as shown in the right photo**. The upper part of the tree will not be trimmed, to encourage top growth next spring. This process will be continued indefinitely. The bottom branches have not been pruned until this year, to encourage trunk development. Trunks and basal root flare (or *nebari* if you prefer to be esoteric) of old non-grafted Kiyo Himes eventually become massive compared to the height of the trees.



The 3 (actually 4, if you look very carefully) uppermost branches of this 4 year-old paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*, left photo) are already showing dominance. If we allowed them to continue becoming even more dominant, the lower branches never would develop. There are clearly three options: (1) Remove the top half of the tree and keep discouraging top growth, to develop a shohin tree; (2) Prune back the top branches to a single node and allow the top branches to develop into limbs of a medium-sized bonsai, or (3) Of the 4 top branches, remove all but 2 of them, wire the most vertical branch into a apical position, and keep but prune back the right branch and develop it as the first branch of the tree. At any rate, let the lower branches continue to grow to thicken the trunk. The trunks of paperbark maple will thicken rapidly. So, for the moment and with an eye to the future, option (3) is probably the best course of action.

This 5 year-old native hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*, photos right) was drastically shortened on Sept. 25 (about 3 weeks earlier than the usual time, so I could show you the results). Notice that the trunk top and wild uppermost branch have been removed. The lower branches have not been shortened as much, to encourage them to thicken further next year and boost lower trunk diameter. Next year, a new apex will again be encouraged to grow strongly, to thicken the trunk and develop new smaller upper branches



## Fall pruning options, continued



On a woodland trail

No boots will threaten this tree--  
Now safe in its pot

rc

This 7 year-old chalkbark maple (*Acer leucoderme*, at left) is at an early stage of development, because even when reduced by defoliation, its leaves are not very small. Because of its relatively long internodes and large leaves, the tree is defoliated in late spring. Also, just before wintering, all branches including the apex are trimmed back to a single node. This species is more suitable as a medium to medium-large bonsai. The fall color of its foliage is typical of a sugar maple, truly spectacular.



The emphasis on pruning this young 6 year-old Japanese beech (*Fagus crenata*, at left) is on encouraging ramification, compactness of growth, and trunk thickening (which is a slow process in beeches). For those reasons, branches are not trimmed during the growing season. The combination of **stem shortening (marked in red)** and **leaving young branches that were produced this year (at blue marks)** will produce new terminal growth and three branches next year from this single twig. There is no need to seal the stem cut, because this twig will simply die back to the node below it. All beeches naturally do this anyway, because beech buds at the ends of twigs actually are pseudoterminal, not truly terminal.

**Pseudoterminal buds** are produced when the tip of a branch dies back to an axillary bud. All elms and beeches and many other alternate-leaved trees do not have true terminal buds.



This approximately 20 year old Korean hornbeam (*Carpinus turczaninovii* var. *coreana*, left and right) is becoming overgrown. Its silhouette is becoming too broad and the branches near the top are too thick. It is in need of renewal pruning. This type of pruning is most successful, according to Owen Reich, at **"6 weeks before spring bud break."** There are two main options (right photo): Shorten the trunk to remove the upper coarse branches, and trim other branches back substantially (marked in red); or shorten the trunk and remove all branches (blue option). If the blue option is selected and scheduled as Owen recommends, the tree will produce many new branches from adventitious buds. It might work better if you fertilize with 10-10-10 a week before pruning. (Sorry about the flipped image.)



## Fall pruning options, continued



In nature, Golden Larch (*Pseudolarix amabilis*) is a straight-trunked conifer of humid warm-temperate mixed forest, in habitats (in eastern China) that receive 60 to 80 inches of rain yearly, with no dry season. They grow rather slowly. This specimen is about 12 years old, and will be trained as an upright, eventually with a rounded apex. If you enlarge the image to the right, you will see numerous well-formed buds. The long upper branch to the right will be entirely removed, other branches will be shortened, and one of the remaining uppermost branches at the apex will be selected as an apex for next year. This process will be continued for several years. (Includes some information from [conifers.org](http://conifers.org).)



Forest plantings need to be pruned in order to preserve a pleasing outline to the composition (avoiding the "lollipop" appearance that forest plantings are prone to grow into). Another important function of pruning forest plantings is to **assure that some trees do not become too dominant** at the expense of others—to give all trees access to sunlight throughout the season. Pruning also can be used as a tool for **helping some trees to grow slightly faster than others**. If you start a forest with trees of about the same size, you can subtly encourage some diameters to thicken faster than others, with the result that the trees eventually appear to be different ages. **The trident maple (*Acer buergerianum*) forest to the right** has been allowed to grow unchecked through the season. Sometime between when leaves drop and buds begin to swell next spring, careful pruning will help assure the objectives mentioned above.

### BRIEF NEWS FROM NEARBY

The Mid-Appalachian Bonsai Kai is our sister bonsai society based in the Tri-Cities area (Kingsport, Johnson City, Bristol) of East Tennessee. Their show on September 9 and 10 was at the Natural History Museum and Visitor Center at Gray Fossil Site, near Johnson City. Almost 40 trees were on display. Tyler Sherrod, the guest artist, worked on a nice Utah Juniper and conducted a bring-your-own-tree workshop. Next show is planned for May 2018.—ed.



Best of show: A trident maple on a rock

Very nice show venue: excellent lighting and plenty of space



## SEASONAL SUGGESTIONS

It's time to **take inventory and make some decisions**. It's a good time to examine every tree carefully, assess how it's doing, and plan ahead what to do with it next year. Some people take notes or computer entries to remind them what to do with each tree. It's also not a bad time to make some tough decisions. All healthy trees grow every year. And when they grow, they take up more space. And it's hard to avoid ending up with more trees at the end of a season than we had at the beginning. So, if some trees are looking a little nicer at the end of the season, and some are sliding downhill, does one keep them all? At any rate, your **plans for wintering should be advanced by now**, since frost will occur most places before October is over.

Speaking of the weather, whither is it? By consulting various climate oracles (most of whom have been mentioned before), I've discovered that the Equatorial east Pacific Ocean has recently cooled rapidly and at the same time, the western Pacific has warmed to abnormal levels. As a result, **the gurus are now predicting a better than even chance that we will see La Niña conditions as early as next month**. Maybe by a month from now, we'll have more certainty. For now, the folks at The Weather Channel are predicting below normal precipitation for the winter with warmer than normal temperatures through late fall, but cooler than normal by December. That's a *La Niña* forecast. Stay tuned, and don't skimp on wintering preparations — too much mulch, if it is well-drained, won't hurt.

**Plants should be fully weaned off nitrogen by now.** My own preference is to give a final watering of 0-10-10 in a week or two, do the fall pruning (as outlined earlier in this issue), and watch the final bulking up of stems and the winter buds getting finally set.

When the summer temperatures finally break, **plants with foliage can take more sun without overheating**. Increased sun this time of year along with cooler nights and drier conditions help to boost fall color in many deciduous trees.

**Semi-tropical or tropical plants will need to be moved indoors when the temperature drops below 50 at night.** Also keep in mind that tropicals will grow farther into the fall than others, but eventually the shorter days will cause even tropicals to enter dormancy. But then, you could move them indoors and grow them under lights.

This is a time of year when we need to **pay close attention to soil water**. Lower temperatures mean less loss of water from leaves and stems, which means that soil will stay moist longer after watering. Different species will be going dormant at different rates, so don't water everything on the same schedule — you will need to skip some watering days for some plants, even though this is our driest time of year.

The cool days of fall are favorable to soil fungi, so **if you see some mushrooms in some pots, don't worry**; it usually just means mycorrhizae are doing well. The mushrooms with red halos in the photo below are in bed with a young beech. If you take pieces of mushrooms like this and sprinkle them on the soil of other plants of the same genus, you would be **inoculating new pots with beneficial mycorrhizal spores**.

Above all, enjoy your trees and be a nice person.

—ed.



# ADVERTISING (free to members)

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## SPECIMEN BONSAI FOR SALE

Sometimes it's worth it to take the time, expense and risk of traveling hundreds of miles and/or incurring big shipping expenses to buy a bonsai that has no special connection with GLBS. However, if a nice tree is available and the price is right, please also consider buying from fellow GLBS

**Trident maple grove** (*Acer buergerianum*), five years in training, approximately 22" spread, 28" tall. Lovely Tokoname pot is approximately 18 x 12 x 2.5" oval, glazed, Oribe with copper accents. \$260. Contact Ed Stanton at (859) 552-8215 or <[Stanton@uky.edu](mailto:Stanton@uky.edu)>



## SHIRTS SHIRTS SHIRTS

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To encourage advertisers to review and update their ads, we require advertisers to contact the newsletter editor at least once per year to request that an ad be continued or modified. All ads for specific trees should be accompanied by photos no more than six months old.

The GLBS Board has revised some aspects of this newsletter's advertising policy. Those changes will be announced in the next issue.

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