



Bonsai

News & Notes

Fort Walton Beach Bonsai Society Newsletter Vol. XXXI, No 2

February 2020

Club Happenings

Please sign up for host and tokonoma. This is the only way we can have snacks at each meeting and distribute the logistics evenly among the members. If you do not have appropriate trees, accent plants, stones or backdrops for the tokonoma, ask one of the older members to assist you. Most of them have the necessary materials to make a good looking tokonoma.

Club Library

Take advantage of the club library. There are wonderful bonsai books with beautiful pictures for examples to style bonsai and more advice than you can use in a lifetime. New books and CD's have been added to the library so check them out. Email Lynn to request a specific book.

Plant Displays: Kusamono. Shitakusa. Kokedama

By Olya Adams

Kusamono, shitakusu, and kokedama are stunning exhibits created with living plants and used as accompaniment to other objects or as standalone displays. These were originally small plants brought in with collected trees and then grown separately. They often depicted the area from where the tree was collected and were usually in the form of wild flowers or grasses. Accents can be used in many ways and



come in many sizes. They can be single plants or mixed plantings and used in tokonoma

or shohin displays or as standalone displays in their own right and are widely used throughout Japan. When we display bonsai, we often include an accent plant *shitakusa* which is translated from Japanese into: *shita*=below or under, and *kusa*= grass. This companion plant indicates the type of location where the bonsai grows. They often come from an area where the tree was collected.

Woodlands can be indicated by ferns and mosses; deciduous trees by grasses. Complementary plants indicate the season of the year as well. Shitakusa should not be more “showy” than the main focus. It should be in proper proportion to the bonsai. Plain accent plants should accompany fruiting and



flowering bonsai. Flowering and fruiting accent plants should be displayed with deciduous trees. Kusamono refers to a Japanese botanical art that developed alongside bonsai. The name is composed of two Japanese characters *kusa*=grass and *mono*=thing—which together suggest humble, everyday plants. Kusamono are the focus of the exhibit. It can be a combination of seedling type trees, flowers, and grasses. They can be displayed with either a



scroll, figurine or suiseki. A well-chosen kusamono reflects the season in which it is displayed. Besides the season, a kusamono should suggest a specific natural habitat—such as a wetland, meadow or



woodland. Kokedama, which loosely translated, *koke* = moss and *dama* = ball, is a ball of soil, covered with moss, on which an ornamental plant grows.

The idea has its origins in Japan where kokedama are very popular. It is displayed as the center of attention. It is usually nestled in a low container, at-

tached to a piece of driftwood or bark, or suspended from a string.

The original Japanese form of kokedama had miniature-sculptured bonsai trees displayed on handmade pottery or pieces of driftwood.

When planting a shitakusa, kusamono, or kokedama, be sure to choose plants that have similar growing conditions, for instance plants which need lots of water together or plants that like a lot of sun. Also be especially aware of plants that are fast growing - keep them in check, so they don't dominate the planting, killing off the rest of your plants.

You can choose pots, stones, wood, or tiles for your



plantings. There are many different styles, sizes and colors available. You can even make your own accent plant vessel, if you can't find one to purchase.

You can use grasses, perennials or mosses collected in nature or visit a nursery for more interesting cultivated forms. When displaying, they should not look like they have just been potted, please plan ahead, weeks if not many months ahead of a show. Cover shitakusa and kusamono with moss several weeks before a show, so no soil will be visible.

Your plantings should be watered regularly and fertilized just a little.

February - Coldest Month of the Year

By Lee Vanderpool

As I write this on January 21 at 11:00 AM, the temperature is hovering around 35 degrees Fahrenheit, not a day to be out and about. From now until the end of February you should be particularly aware of the weather and especially the temperature forecast for the following few days so you can protect your trees in case of freezing temps. Some members elms have already begun to put on their new leaves or some have not lost last summers foliage. These trees are vulnerable to freezing because sap has begun to rise and the new foliage is very tender. Rising sap will freeze causing splits in the bark of the tree and, when they thaw, loss of vital fluids and possible death of the tree. New leaves may freeze and normally the tree will recover within a few days but it will be weakened and its health will be impaired for a few months. If you can prevent your trees, espe-

cially the ones which are beginning to show signs of new growth, from freezing, the tree will thank you. Repotting and potting should be in full force in February. Replenishing the old soil will invigorate your tree and new growth and development should be better than normal. Spray all deciduous trees and evergreens other than pines and junipers with super fine oil to kill or control any scale which may be lingering on the plant. Application of super fine oil must be made when temperatures are above 40 degrees Fahrenheit. It is a little early to fertilize but, when nighttime temperatures remain steady at above 60 degrees Fahrenheit, begin your fertilizing regime. A single fertilization with liquid or water soluble fertilizer will assist the tree in getting its new season of growth started. Beginning around the first of March, start alternating fertilizers between liquid or water soluble, granular and organic. Hot weather will be here before you know it and work on tropicals must begin. Enjoy the rest of winter!



Dates to remember:

February 4 - Moss ball and kusamono workshop, see Olya's article, club participation.
Host: Fabians

February 20 - Maple workshop with Charles and Lee.
Host: Forrests

April 17 - Setup for Spring Bonsai Show

April 18 - Spring Bonsai Show

May 22-24 - BSF convention in Orlando

May 22-24 - Brussel's Rendezvous, Olive Beach MS

June 13 - Annual Bonsai Auction

2020 FWBBS Program Schedule

March 3 - Soil Mix: Lee

March 19 - Re-potting Pines: Lynn

April 7 - Show Preparation

May 9 - Russell Workshop

May 21 - Tropical Care: Charles, Rosemarie, Lee

June 2 - Decandling Pines: Charles

June 13 - Auction

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Ft. Walton Beach Bonsai Society, Inc website:
<http://www.bonsai-fwbb.com>

Meetings

Fort Walton Beach Society:

- 1st Tuesdays and 3rd Thursdays
- County Extension Annex Building
(across from the VW dealer), 127 Hollywood Blvd
- Board Meeting at 7 PM
- Membership Meeting at 7:30 PM

Pensacola Gulf Coast Bonsai Society:

- 2nd Thursday
- Pensacola Garden Center, 1850 9th Ave
- Board Meeting at 7:00 PM
- Membership Meeting at 7:30 PM

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Lee Vanderpool, Editor

