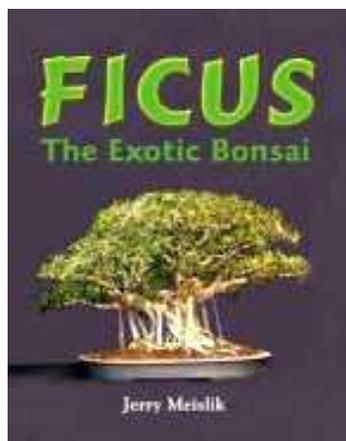


NEXT CLUB MEETING:

June 28, 2017

Jerry Meislik, long-time AABS member, is an internationally recognized expert on Ficus bonsai, and author of *Ficus, The Exotic Bonsai*. He will be discussing exposed-root style tropical bonsai at our next meeting, Wednesday, June 28, 6:30-9:00 at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens. In addition to the "Introduction to Jerry Meislik" article you'll find in this newsletter, you might also enjoy visiting his website – <http://www.bonsaihunk.us/>



Reminder - Win a spot in a workshop!

NEW FOR 2017 - One space in each workshop will be filled by means of a drawing. The drawing will take place during the meeting the month before the workshop. Anyone present at that meeting may put their name in the 'hat' for a free spot at the workshop. If the name drawn has already paid for the workshop, their fee will be refunded and their space will become available.

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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE:

Ron Milostan

Our May meeting 'bring your own tree workshop' was a great success. Lots of members, lots of trees and lots of advisers. While meeting and greeting guests I was asked a question that has kept me thinking for quite a while. I was asked how many classes would need to be taken to become a Bonsai Master. First, I told this visitor that I had taken dozens of classes already and continue to take classes in person and on line. I still attend seminars whenever possible and I already have 20 years of experience. I am not even close to being a Bonsai Master.

I suggested that maybe 100 classes with a Bonsai Master would be a good start. He was surprised. I then explained some of what he needed to learn. First is the basic understanding of how a tree grows. Other basics include: pests, diseases, nutrients, water needs, light, soil, location. Then comes the study of techniques like wiring and grafting and potting. I never came close to talking about the many styles of Bonsai. I suggested he choose one species of tree - at least this would lessen what he would have to learn. Maybe he would only need 90 lessons.

I think that is what keeps many of us interested in our obsession - there is always more to learn, always a new technique, always a new species to tackle.

An introduction to Jerry Meislik, our June Speaker

Jerry Meislik could be called the Ficus Whisperer, but actually, this nationally recognized bonsai expert is incredibly knowledgeable about all tropical bonsai and bonsai in general. He is a life member of the Ann Arbor Bonsai Society and was once its President. His interest in bonsai began when he was a teen at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden. Perhaps at that time, he did not recognize that bonsai was his destiny, and that he would someday become a contributing author to the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens book. Later, though, he lived in Florida, where tropical bonsai began to mesmerize him, and he began to study trees in earnest.

Jerry studied far and wide with many experts and particularly loves the tropical because they offer a year round hobby. Although for Jerry, one could hardly call his interest in bonsai just a hobby. He has written countless articles and published books on the topic of bonsai as well as conducted demonstrations and lectures on a variety of bonsai topics and interests. His book, Ficus: The Exotic Bonsai is available on Amazon. He was also author of Introduction to Indoor Bonsai, and contributing author to other books, and over fifty magazine articles. He has a passion for finding and using native materials and adapting the unique and unusual to the field of bonsai. He is also a highly qualified judge of bonsai. Growing bonsai with a purpose-built lighting system is a specialized area of expertise for him as well.

I would encourage you to view pictures of his incredible bonsai on the internet. More importantly, I am sure you will benefit from listening to this nationally recognized bonsai expert, Jerry Meislik, speak on a topic so near and dear to his heart at our next meeting!

UP FOR DEBATE: By Aaron J. Binns

Several years ago I attended the Meijer Garden bonsai show and watched a demonstration by Pauline Muth on land and water Penjing. Penjing, for those who may not

know, is the Chinese version of bonsai. There are some differences in the overall look and style of the trees but most of the time if you showed me a single tree and asked if it were Bonsai or Penjing I wouldn't be able to tell you. The exception is land and water Penjing; landscapes generally planted on white marble slabs. I immediately purchased an oval marble slab with the intent of creating my first landscape. The process was very fun but required some additional steps that bonsai growers aren't typically faced with. I am including a picture of what I did below for reference. Note that it isn't a masterpiece but again, it was a lot of fun. Also note that several weeks have passed since I put the Penjing together and the trees are growing vigorously. I need to trim them back already to regain some definition. If after you finish reading this you would like more information, I recommend the book, "Penjing: Worlds of Wonderment". Here are the basic steps for anyone who is interested:



Step 1: Collect Your Supplies

The first thing to get is your marble slab. Its size and shape will be your canvas so it is important to pick one you like. It is relatively easy to find smaller slabs. It is not easy to find medium to large slabs, at least not locally. Since a landscape generally requires three or more trees, small slabs will limit the species you can use in your Penjing to those variety that can be trained as Shohin. The next thing you should look for are good rocks. This sounds easy... but not so. There are a hand full of rock types that are commonly used but not so easy to find. They include but aren't limited to Ying Rock, Turtle Shell Rock, and Phosphatic Rock. Truthfully, any rock that is hard and therefore durable, and has elements that can be used to represent large scale landscapes in miniature can be used. Finally, select your trees. Two things to note here, first, I mentioned the trees last. The truth about Penjing is that the point is to create a landscape not a perfect tree so the trees themselves do not have to be

perfect and are only an element in the composition not the absolute focal point. Second, you can use any of the species that you are familiar with in bonsai, there is nothing special about tree selection. In addition to these supplies you will need a few additional items that are not typically used to create bonsai:

- Coarse sandpaper
- Super Glue and baking soda
- A wet saw
- Thin set mortar
- Bonsai muck

Step 2: Assemble the Bones

The back bone of your landscape will be the rocks. Buy more than you need so that you have some choices. Choose rocks that have similar features so that in the end you get a composition that looks consistent. In other words you probably don't want to use very rough rocks and very smooth rocks in the same planting, the result will look confused. Play with the arrangement for a bit and test fit the rocks together until the result looks like a consistent and continuous landscape. If you remove the trees from a Penjing it should still look like a landscape. Also, don't pile rocks around the entire planting without leaving gaps for water to run off. There are no drainage holes in your marble slab so you are relying on the water running off the side of the very low lip of the marble slab.

You may need to modify a rock. For instance, if you want a rock to sit perfectly flush on the marble slab, you will have to cut the rock. This can be done easily enough with a wet saw and a good blade. Please be very careful using this type of equipment. Find a way to hold the rocks to protect your fingers. This is not always easy. After you have made your cuts and decided on the position of all of your rocks, use coarse sandpaper to scuff up the surface of the marble this will allow the mortar to create a better bond between the rocks and marble. Take care to only rough up the marble where the rock will cover, you don't want scuffed marble to be visible in your final product. Use mortar to "glue" the rock to the slab. Put the project aside for a day or two to let the mortar set.

Step 3: Prepare the Muck

Muck is used to build structure. If you want a river running through your design, it will be built using muck. If you want to hold soil in between two rocks that don't come all the way together you will use muck. If you want a slope covered with moss... muck it is. The muck should

be hard enough to hold shape but soft enough to hold enough water to keep moss happy. In the picture of the Penjing I created if there is moss you can be sure there is muck underneath. I found this formulae someplace on line and it worked great. Don't be afraid of the potter's clay, you can get it online and it is very inexpensive.

Muck recipe:

- 2 parts potters clay
- 2 parts pine bark
- 1 part sphagnum moss

Mix all of the component with water until you get a peanut butter texture. Any muck you don't use can be wrapped in plastic wrap and frozen for use later.

Step 4: Prepare and Plant

Prepare the trees you have selected for your project. There is no difference here than standard bonsai. Try to make each individual tree look as good as possible. Attach tie down wire directly to the marble slab with super glue. Apply the super glue, insert the wire, and dust the glue with baking soda. The glue will harden immediately. The baking soda is like magic. When placing trees in your landscape remember that if the composition looks better by placing a tree such that its "front" is not toward the front of the Penjing this is not a problem. It is the overall impression that is most important. Apply muck as necessary and be sure to add moss.

Step 5: Enjoy

Maintain the trees like you would any of your other bonsai.

FOR SALE OR WANTED:

Ads in the Newsletter: All members can offer for sale any bonsai and bonsai related materials in the newsletter or at the monthly meeting with no sales fee. AABS Society Members' ads are free to publish in the Newsletter. Deadline for submissions to the Newsletter is the 5th of the month.

Prizes for the Raffle: We are soliciting donations suitable for prizes to be raffled during each general meeting, and,

for the Annual Bonsai Show Raffle. If you have a tree, bonsai pot, tool or anything else bonsai related, that you do not use anymore and is still in good condition, consider donating it to the Society. Please see Bill Struhar at any meeting, email Bill at wm.struhar@mail.com or call (586) 468-7169.

Club Logo Now Available: we will embroider the club logo on your garment for \$12 (plus modest additional charge for lined garments).

The logo comes in two forms; light green tree on dark green background, or dark green tree on light green background, with a border on both combinations and AABS lettering and Chinese characters with appropriate contrasting color depending upon the garment color.

Bring your garment in a clear plastic bag to a meeting, select your colors, pre-pay Bill Struhar, and your garment will be ready one or two meetings later. (The vendor may require a minimum of five garments per order)

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AABS AD-HOC COMMITTEES

Visit us on the Web:

<http://www.annarborbonsaisociety.org>

The AABS President is an ex-officio member of all committees with the exception of the Nomination Committee.

Fund Raising: William Struhar

Web Administration: Bob Bauer

Nomination Committee:

Show Committee: Ron Milostan and Paul Kulesa

Annual Auction: Paul Kulesa

Membership dues are \$25. Please pay by check, written to Ann Arbor Bonsai Society or bring your credit card to the meeting and pay! AABS now accepts credit cards for membership fees and other AABS activities. Please talk with the Treasurer at the next meeting.

Tamara Milostan – Treasurer AABS
4228 Highcrest Dr.
Brighton, Michigan 48116

AABonsaiSociety@gmail.com

The Ann Arbor Bonsai Society is affiliated with the American Bonsai Society: <http://absbonsai.org> and the Mid-American Bonsai Alliance: <http://mababonsai.org>

Support Local Bonsai Vendors

Hours: Wed., Thurs. & Fri.: 11:00 am to 6:00 pm Sat., 1:30pm to 5:00pm
CLOSED: Sunday, Monday & Tuesday



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