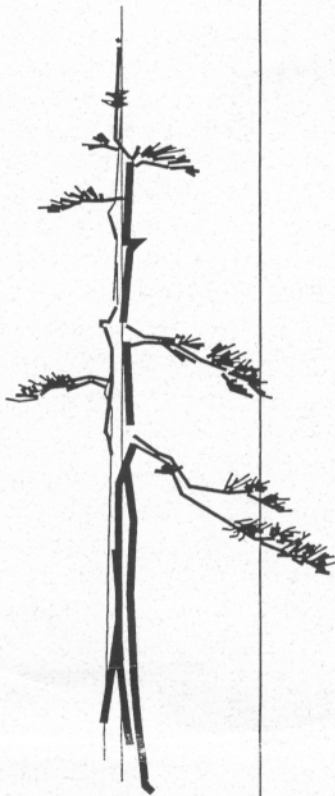


June 2005

Bonsai News



*Milwaukee
Bonsai Society*

P.O. Box 198
Brookfield, Wisconsin
53208-0198

Information Line
414-299-9229

JUNE MEETING – Club Show and Bonsai Styles

A program on “Styles of Bonsai” will be presented during the June meeting, in addition to the Club Show. Each style of bonsai has certain requirements that help to create the proper image of a tree in that style. Jack Douthitt will be discussing the various styles and the demands they make on the bonsai artist. Also, when we have the Folk Fair Exhibit we always play a game with the people that attend the exhibit. That game is based upon styles. We want to play the same game with some of our members and see how well you do. It is fun (and educational) all at the same time. Bring your trees for the exhibit, and stick around to play the styles game with us!

IMPORTANT NOTICE: If you will be bringing a tree for the club show, it **MUST BE THERE BY 7:00**. In order for us to prepare for the judging, we must ask that you plan to arrive early with your tree(s). When you arrive, we will have you fill out a small card with the common name, the scientific name and the approximate age of your tree(s).

STUDY GROUPS

A number of people have already signed up for Study Groups in the Western Milwaukee Area, North Shore and Southern Milwaukee Area. This is a chance for you to

get together informally with folks in your area to work on your bonsai. If you would like to participate, sign up at the June meeting or email: krisziemann@mac.com.

Martha Meehan in JULY

We are anxiously awaiting the return of Martha Meehan to Milwaukee. Martha operates a nursery near Washington DC where she grows many varieties of bonsai. Martha is known to us for her work with tropicals. She has done previous demonstrations on root over rock and bougainvillea. Tuesday July 5, Martha will be styling a Chinese Hat tree (very interesting flowers which look like chinese hats) at our club meeting. Come prepared with lots of questions for her on tropicals. Wednesday evening from 6:00 - 10:00 Martha's workshop will be with 10 year old pomegranates. The cost is \$85. Limit of 10 people so please be prepared to sign up and pay at the June meeting or call Darlene at 414-445-1743. Thursday evening is the BYOB (bring your own bonsai) workshop (again a limit of 10 people). You may bring as many trees as you wish, but you might not get to work on all of them. The focus is, again, on tropicals. This workshop is only \$20. Please be prepared to sign up and pay at the June meeting or call Darlene at 414-445-1743.

KRIS' KORNER

What can I say? It sure doesn't feel like spring yet (at least at the writing of this message)! I must say it makes for easier days with the students in classes!!

With the coming of warmer weather a lot of trees will be coming out of their winter hiding places. Everything but my tropicals are out already. I'm waiting for consistently warm night-time weather for those to be brought out. Take care in not shocking your trees by putting them in direct sunlight right away. Filtered sun is good until they 'toughen up'.

We have sooo much going on this summer. Our June show starts it off. Come with your cameras to take pictures of the gorgeous trees the members of our club will bring. Get some ideas of a good presentation of a tree... pots... stands... accents plants... etc. If you are bringing a tree, please make sure you have it at the church by 7:00.

In July, we are excited to have Martha Meehan return to help us with our tropicals. Three evenings with lots of information. If you are not participating in the workshops, please do come as a silent observer!

And sooner than you know, State Fair will be here. We will have information in our next newsletter with more particulars. The evaluation form is included in this newsletter so you can see how the trees are judged. We expect it to be another fantastic show, with the Madison and Appleton Bonsai Societies participating also. Stay tuned...

That's about it for now. See you at the Show!

Kris

NOVICE CLASSES

Congratulations to the graduates of the Novice Class of 2005!! They are:
Nick Barth, Susan Coleman, John Decker, Nancy Ellis, Don Gumieny, Laura Larrabee, Susan Lindell, Christine Pezall, Richard Pezall, Greg Polak, and

Elli Wilder. We hope you enjoyed your classes and learned a lot from your experienced instructors.

NURSERY CRAWL 2005

This was a banner year for the nursery crawl. With 17 people attending: a grand total of \$1280.53 was spent on future bonsai! Thanks again to Tony Plicka for passing on discounts to us.

Suggestions for Club Activities?

Do you have any ideas for next year's Tuesday night meetings? Or a workshop you would like to attend? Please email me (krisziemann@mac.com) or drop a note in the suggestion box at the next meeting. Thanks. Kris

2005 Club Events Calendar

June

Tuesday 7 - Club Show, Styles, photography
Friday 17 - Sunday 19 - Asian Moon Festival
Sat 25 - Sun 26 - Master's Class

July

Tuesday 5 - Martha Meehan / Tropical Demonstration
Wed 6 - PM Workshop with Martha Meehan - one species
Thur 7 - PM Workshop with Martha Meehan - Bring your own tree
Sat 9 - Wauwatosa Show

August

Tues 2 - Styles: What to look for in nursery stock for a particular style
Thur 4 - Sun 14 Wisconsin State Fair
Fri 19 - Sun 21 - Chicago Summer Show

September

Tues 6 - Ted Matson - Discussion and Critique/Master Class Exhibit
Sat 17 - AM Public Workshop

October

Tues 4 - Dead Tree Contest/White Elephant Sale/Preparing for Winter

AND MORE EVENTS TO COME!!!

Novice Class Buddy Bucks

A BIG THANK YOU to the folks who helped out with the Novice Classes! Here are their Buddy Bucks:

5 Buddy Bucks: Kris Ziemann

3 Buddy Bucks: Darlene Shaginaw

2 Buddy Bucks: Ron Fortmann, Camrin Lafond, Jean Sher, and Allen Kosarek

1 Buddy Buck: Sharon Schmidt, Scott Hurula, Jim Toepfer, Joe Nemecek, Tony Plicka, Pam Woythal, Jack Douthitt, Jeff Moths, Joe Herbert, and Steve Carini.

June Bonsai Care Tips

Stolen from the newsletter of the Great Swamp Bonsai Society (NJ), Dan Boehmke, editor.

Flowering should be over now and new foliage is maturing. Now begins the summer routine...

Chinese Junipers are the only trees that you should consider for repotting at this time, provided they are shielded from drying wind and sun. If a tree appears to have outgrown its pot, you may safely place it into a larger pot providing its roots have not been damaged.

Begin your daily watering routine and mist the foliage at the same time. Early morning or evening would be the best time for this activity.

Continue trimming your trees. Some will tend to slow their growth toward the end of the month in anticipation of another spurt later in the season. Later growth will appear at the tips of the earlier

shoots unless they are trimmed back. Keep pinching your conifers as they grow. Deciduous trees that have hardened off can be leaf-pruned at this time.

Pine and spruce can be pruned now. Start with the smaller branches and proceed to the larger ones as we near the end of the month. Pruning of deciduous trees is OK, but they may tend to throw new shoots around the pruning site.

Keep checking for insects and disease and keep the weeds out of your pots. Weed roots rob your tree of nutrients. If you have trees that do not show any signs of new growth by the end of the month, it may be time to sound "TAPS" for them. If this is the case, inspect them closely both above and below ground to find out what caused their demise. This knowledge may help prevent similar losses in the future. Air layers can be successfully started now.

Wire, wire, wire away on any trees that seem to need it. Check earlier wires to see that they have not begun to dig into the branches. You will recognize the symptoms and can remove the old wire in favor of new.

Your feeding schedule can begin in earnest with a well-balanced fertilizer. Alternate feedings of bone meal, blood meal or a seaweed/fish combination with a higher phosphorus fertilizer. This will provide needed nourishment for your trees.

Consider soft wood cuttings of Chinese elm, zelkova, Japanese and trident maples. They should root up in 3 to 4 weeks if conditions are favorable. These cuttings will be ready for individual potting by the end of next month (July).



Tony Plicka
(414) 761-9298
Fax (414) 327-4882


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State Fair Evaluation Form

Here's the evaluation form for Wisconsin State Fair. All the trees will be evaluated in this format by the esteemed judges. Some judges may use this score as the basis for awards, while others just use it to provide comments. It is often helpful to review your own tree using this form when you prepare for the display.

Bonsai Evaluation Form

Tree	Date:
Score	Description
1 2 3 4 5	Health
1 2 3 4 5	Trained to style
1 2 3 4 5	Branch placement appropriate
1 2 3 4 5	Branch structure - ramification
1 2 3 4 5	Rootage - nebari
1 2 3 4 5	Foliage - color, size
1 2 3 4 5	Trunk - Shape, taper, thickness
1 2 3 4 5	Surface treatment
1 2 3 4 5	Artistic Quality - presentation, training
1 2 3 4 5	Pot selection, appropriateness, balance
1 2 3 4 5	Appearance of Age

Comments:

Steve Pilacik enlightens the club with his Japanese black pine techniques

MBS Meetings and Information Line:

The Milwaukee Bonsai Society meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church, 3030 W. Oklahoma Avenue. Call the MBS Voice Mail/Message System at (414) 299-9229 to learn about upcoming events and meeting times. To contact the club via email: mbs@asapnet.net Look for us on the web at: <http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org>



Short Articles

Pinch, Pinch, Pinch

By Dave Bogan – Evansville, IN

Recently while I was visiting a club member's collection, he mentioned how unruly some of his deciduous trees had become. I told him of how I try to pinch new growth all year as it appears. He was of the opinion that you had to let it all grow and then pinch back every so often. I guess this would work but it gets old. I try to pinch my foliage's new growth as it appears. No, you can't go thru your whole collection every day. I simply do it as I water or when I like to take a quiet stroll thru my collection (most every day). You will be surprised; a little pinch here and there really keeps your collection in continual nice condition. A good rule is, when you see growth start to extend past the general outline of the tree, pinch it back. But, don't simply pinch it back even. Pinch a little further back. If you pinch even with the outline, you will soon be forced to prune it back for shape. Remember that this newly pinched spot will grow and extend. This goes equally for deciduous trees as well as for your junipers.

Juniper Foliage

By Dave Bogan – Evansville, IN

When it comes to junipers, there are two ways or reasons to pinch and lightly prune. We are aware that growth on a healthy juniper can be rampant, but the majority of growth is only at the tips. Junipers rarely back bud unless we force or trick them into it. Actually in a regular plant (non-bonsai) very few junipers will bud back on their own. Most trees, shrubs or plants, unless we trick them, will continue to grow outwards, stretching for the light.

If you want a branch to increase thickness or regain strength - maybe due to spring repotting - do not pinch the foliage until mid-summer (late June or July). This will of course help create strong and larger branches. Once the desired size is obtained and it is pinched/pruned (at the proper time) it generally will stimulate budding back of the remaining sub-branches.

If you want to maintain the foliage area or the silhouette, then you simply pinch off the new buds as they appear. This technique does not stimulate back branching and will, in fact, slow down the tip growth. Although junipers are vigorous growers, continual pinching back will result in a weakening of the tree. For this reason, you should alternate your techniques. After a couple of years the foliage areas become so thick you must thin them out. If not thinned out, the inner areas will die back due to lack of light. If for some reason a branch weakens, don't pinch it. Allow it to grow and regain strength.

Another technique, or should I say requirement, is to remove dead needles as they appear. Junipers will typically "shed" foliage in June or July. Similar to pines shedding their old needles. This dead foliage also adds to shading, holding moisture (and potential disease) or deflecting the sun just as dense growth does. Plus, these dead needles are very distracting. So keep you foliage areas clean and your entire tree will benefit.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following pages contain a wonderful article on photographing your bonsai from the Louisville Bonsai Society. I did not have the patience to retype it, so please disregard the Louisville heading and incorrect page numbers!

PHOTOGRAPHING BONSAI - GEORGE BUEHLER

In 1989, Tom Zane (Florida Bonsai Society) wrote an article on photographing bonsai using a film SLR camera. In 2004, he issued a short update in the Florida Bonsai Society newsletter. With Mr. Zane's permission, I have incorporated his two articles and added some additional information into this article.

Why would we suggest photographing your bonsai? If, like me, one of your hobbies (other than bonsai) is photography; it's a way to use one hobby to complement another. There are also several legitimate reasons to photograph your bonsai:

- Record the evolution of the bonsai's design from material tree to ready-for exhibit status.
- Provide a visual reference of another enthusiast's design you particularly like and would like to emulate or study.
- Use as a study aid to determine which branch to remove or bend. This can be done in conjunction with "bonsai virtual design". The digital styling of a bonsai tree which will be presented next month.
- Use as an attachment to a database of your collection.
- Use in conjunction with an article, story or catalog for print or for viewing on the internet
- Document the existence for insurance.

Whatever your reason for taking the picture, you want it to be the best possible representation that you can get. You also want to be able to see as much of the tree as you can with no shadows, no blurs, and at the correct angle. In the following article, we will give a simplified explanation of the camera basics, discuss the difference between a film and digital camera and give some pointers on getting the best picture of your bonsai.

CAMERA BASICS

In taking pictures of bonsai, any camera will do. A single lens reflex (SLR) type of camera is generally the best to use. However, today a digital camera offers the quickest method of "seeing" the picture. In a pinch, even one of the 'throw away' type cameras will work if you realize its drawbacks.

A camera, whether SLR or digital is nothing more than a light-tight box with a lens, a shutter and something to hold and transport the "film". This is pretty simplistic, but that is really all that a camera is.

At its simplest, a lens is just a curved piece of glass or plastic. The lens acts much like the lens in our eye. It focuses the reflected image of our subject onto the "film" much like our eye focuses an image onto our retina. Some lenses are fixed focus, as in the Instamatic type of camera. Others have variable focus, which must be set by the user.

The aperture within the lens of a camera is like the pupil of the human eye; it dilates to let in more light or contracts to restrict the amount of light which passes through.

Another important feature of the camera is the shutter

speed. The shutter on a camera is like our eyelids. The shutter regulates the amount of time that light from the reflected image passes through the lens to the film. With a camera, the shutter remains closed except when we're taking a picture. Our eyelids are, of course, open most of the time, but the function of the shutter and eyelid is quite similar.

The lens, aperture and shutter are the basic components of the camera, and on an adjustable camera, you must regulate them properly, and in conjunction with each other, to get good pictures. On a digital camera, most of these functions are regulated by the automatic settings of the camera, but can be overridden to manipulate the quality of the picture, if desired. So how do you know how to regulate the components? We will discuss some of these aspects in the "Taking a Picture" section. If you are fuzzy on the operations of your camera, read the manual so that you know the various options.

SLR

An SLR gives you a wider choice of lenses and accessories and it is easier to do close-up shots because there is no parallax problem (simply - distortion of the straight line light path). You are also viewing the subject through the lens that will take the picture, so what you see is pretty much what you will get. However, as stated above, the lens, aperture and shutter must be regulated properly to get a good picture.

Since the focus is variable on the SLR camera, the user must set this. Focus is set by estimating the camera-to-subject distance and turning the focusing ring to that distance or by looking through the viewfinder and turning the focusing ring until the picture to be taken is in focus.

On the SLR camera lens, the aperture setting ring has the relative size represented by "f-numbers". They may be f4, f4.5, f5.6, f9, f11, f16, etc. The important thing to remember is that the larger the number, the smaller is the aperture (opening). So if you need a lot of light to pass through the lens, use a small number, like f4 rather than a large number, such as f16. Remember that the lens focuses the light onto the film, while the aperture regulates the amount of light which is allowed to pass through the lens and strike the film.

On most cameras we can regulate the shutter speed to stay open a long time or a short time. Shutter speeds are represented on the shutter speed control by: 1, 2, 4, 15, 30, 60, 100, etc. These numbers represent the time that the shutter will be open. 1 means that the shutter will be open 1 second. 2 means 1/2 second. 15 means 1/15th of a second, and 100 means that when set, the shutter will only be open 1/100th of a second. You should not try to handhold a camera with the shutter speed set below 1/60th of a second. For slower speeds, mount the camera on a tripod. Whatever the shutter speed, don't slap the shutter release and jar the camera. Press it firmly while holding the camera securely. This will prevent blurred pictures caused

PHOTOGRAPHING BONSAI

by camera movement.

Film is the material on which the lens focuses the reflected image, the aperture allows a certain volume of light to strike it, and the shutter allows the light to continue to strike it for a given period of time. Film is rated according to its sensitivity to light. This is referred to as the film speed and is reported on the film container as the ASA or ISO. Typically you may be using film with an ASA/ISO of 100. This is a medium sensitivity film. The lower the rating number the less sensitivity the film has. So film with a rating of 24 is less sensitive to light than a film rated as 400, which is very sensitive. The less sensitive film is to light, the lower its ASA/ISO number will be, and the more light/time it will need to be able to record a reflected image focused upon it. Film comes in one of several end-product formats: color prints, color slides (transparencies) or black and white prints. Each pack of film comes with a detailed set of instructions, read them before using the film.

If you will be using color film, decide ahead of time the type of light source you will be using: outdoor sunlight/electronic flash or indoor tungsten light. Select your film accordingly, and don't mix light sources on the same roll of film. Once you have your film, be sure to set your camera with the correct ASA/ISO rating for that film so that the built-in light meter will know how sensitive the film is that it is working with.

Digital

There are digital SLR cameras that are a combination of the SLR and digital cameras. They offer the best of both worlds in that they have the versatility of being able to use many types of lens, having variable focus and shutter speeds with the advantage of storing the pictures on an electronic storage card. These cameras are extremely expensive (~\$1000) and will not be discussed here.

With most 'normal' digital cameras, almost all of the functions are automatic. About the only thing you have to do is to control the zoom and set the automatic focus (generally by slightly depressing the shutter button). Rather than having to use film, a digital camera 'records' the image on a mass storage device (memory stick, secure digital or digital storage card). A mass storage device comes in a variety of sizes (16 MB to <1 GB). Depending on the quality of picture you want to record and the size of the storage device, you can record many more pictures than on the largest size film camera (36 pictures). One of our digital cameras will hold almost 1000 pictures suitable for printing on 4" x 6" paper.

If you don't like the quality of picture you obtain with the automatic settings, you can alter the ISO, shutter speed and white balance to obtain just the effects you desire. Read your owner's manual to determine how to adjust these settings since each digital camera has different procedures to make these adjustments.

TAKING A PICTURE

In the discussion below, when we say film, this can either be regular film for an SLR camera or a mass storage device for a digital camera. If there are differences between taking a picture with a digital or SLR camera, we will try to note it.

When taking a picture of a bonsai, or most anything else, for that matter, fill the frame with the subject. Move in close or adjust the zoom of the lens to fill the frame in the viewfinder with the subject that you are interested in recording. Try not to cut off or crop any of the subject, but don't have a big and uninteresting border around the subject either. FILL THE FRAME with the subject. If a tree is vertical, turn the camera 90 degrees and photograph it having the long side of the frame matching the long side of the subject. FILL THE FRAME.

Look AT the tree, not down on the tree. Outdoors we seldom look down on a full-sized tree. View the bonsai from more-or-less straight on. Be able to see up into the branch structure. Photograph it the same way. Bend your knees, get down on your knees, raise the tree, do something to allow the lens of the camera to view the bonsai from more-or-less straight on. You will find that using a tripod or a solid support is better than trying to hold the camera in your hands. Manually holding the camera, since you will be photographing the bonsai at relatively close distances, can cause a blurry picture unless you have an extremely steady hand.

Avoid distracting backgrounds. Look at the pictures of bonsai which you really like, and you'll probably see a neutral background. If you can place the tree, place it so the background is not busy, cluttered, etc., which will detract from the tree. You can use the sky as a background, pavement, or out of focus grass or distant trees. In most instances, it is sufficient to focus on the tree's trunk. This will cause the background to blur or become out of focus. You will have to be careful using this technique since some of the back branches may also be 'fuzzy'.

So, remember to frame the picture, shoot from a realistic angle, and watch out for distracting backgrounds, which compete with the tree.

Whether you are indoors or out, adequate and effective lighting is a prerequisite for good pictures. If you don't have the subject well lighted, the film can't see it. There are a couple of ways to insure good exposure. One is to use the data sheet that comes with the film and follow the instructions carefully - SLR camera. The other is to use a light meter.

Most light meters are what are called, "averaging" meters. This means that they see the entire picture and average the amount of reflected light. You don't want to fool your meter by pointing it at a dark green tree with brown bark in front of a light colored wall in an indoor display. The meter will average the values and the tree will be underexposed. You avoid this by moving the meter up close to the most important part of the tree, take a meter reading on that part of the scene, and regulate your exposure accordingly. You want the reading

PHOTOGRAPHING BONSAI

off the subject; you are not concerned about getting a good reading off the background. This technique is applicable whether you are outdoors or indoors.

Flash photography of trees indoors presents its own set of worrisome circumstances. If the flash is automatic with no adjustment, as on an Instamatic type camera, then you have little alternative but to shoot and hope for the best. If the flash meters itself is an automatic one which works much like a light meter, then you again have to be careful that the flash is not fooled by a light or dark background which will alter the proper exposure of the tree. One way of avoiding this is to compensate for the background by adjusting the aperture. If everything indicates that the proper aperture is f11 when on auto flash, and the background is light in color, open the aperture up one or two f numbers to give more light, thus overexposing the light background and getting a better exposure on the tree. Do the opposite in adjusting the aperture if the background is dark. Remember; light meters and auto flashes are stupid. They call it exactly as they see it, all of it. They don't know what area is more important to you. You have to fool them occasionally to get good pictures.

Another problem with flash photography is the shadow of the tree on a close background. One solution is to increase the distance between the bonsai and the background to eliminate or to reduce the amount of shadow. Another thing you can do if your flash unit can be detached from the camera, is to hold the flash a foot or so above the camera, causing the shadows created by the flash on the background to be lower, and maybe less competing with the lines of the tree.

Floodlighting or studio lighting is the ideal way to illuminate the bonsai for photographing. Don't gasp and say you can't do it. A simple set up is to use a 4 by 8 sheet of plywood, painted white on one side (the other side can be used when working on bonsai). The background which is behind the tree should be behind the entire tree so that branches and tops do not extend beyond the background. The following can be used for your background:

- "Photo gray" color screens or boards. They provide a uniform background which has little or no influence on the exposure. These can be obtained from a number of camera shops. If you are sending a picture for publication, you should invest in this background since when printed, it shows great contrast between the tree and the background.

- An alternate background is a cheap roll-up type curtain or shade available for porches. It is important to get a white one. The strings used to pull it up are pulled out of the way to avoid creating two vertical lines in the background.
- A cheap method is to use a white sheet. The distance from the tree to the background should be approximately three feet.

For proper lighting, three lights are used at one time. One is under and behind the table and is a 150 watt incandescent bulb. It is there to light the background to eliminate or to soften any shadows. The other two lights are inexpensive clamp-on type mounts with aluminum reflectors available from any general merchandise store that shine on the tree from both sides. The bulbs in them, however, are special. They are photoflood bulbs, daylight color balanced, which are available from camera and photo stores.

The camera is mounted on a tripod, metering is done on the subject, the frame is filled, a large aperture is used to blur the background, and we have an acceptable photograph of a bonsai by an amateur photographer.

Your setup can be as complicated or as simple as you want. When I take pictures, I use the setup shown in the attached picture (this is also my workshop). My overhead light is a



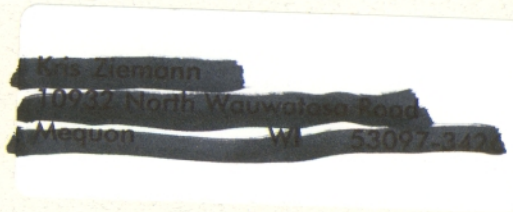
My Setup in my workshop

daylight fluorescent light. To illuminate the background, I use a shop light that is equipped with a tripod. My background is about 36" behind the subject and the camera is placed as close as possible to get a "full frame" picture. This obviously doesn't give 'professional' quality pictures but does give very acceptable shots. I plan on substituting the shop light with regular daylight photoflood lights in the near future. Using the shop light gives a slightly 'yellow' background.

CONCLUSION

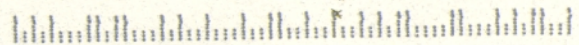
I hope that this article has given you some insight into taking pictures of your bonsai. I have taken many (good and bad) pictures of my trees and use them to see how the trees are progressing toward the final 'specimen' style. I also use them to try to perfect my styling techniques. I have not had this problem, but I could use these pictures for insurance purposes also.

I recently started investigating the use of these pictures to do some 'virtual styling' (adding or removing branches using the computer). In a future issue, I will present the techniques and necessary equipment to do this.



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*Each blossom that falls
Creates, all over again,
The universe of spring.*

- Basho