

IT'S SUMMER TIME

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 8 AUGUST 12, 2016

CLUB MEETING PROGRAM FOR AUGUST 20, 2016

Schedule and agenda for the August meeting:

9:00—10:00 Work on your trees.

10:00—11:00 Raffle and Show & Tell

11—12:00 This Program relies on you to participate.

BRING A TREE THAT IS "FINISHED" OR FULLY WIRED. Everybody will receive a critique sheet and 5 minutes to score a tree. A discussion of the tree and the judging will follow. We will move through each tree the same way. The purpose is to learn what to look for in a well-designed tree and how to improve each tree.

Our goal as a club is to provide an educational experience so that our members will improve in their skills and abilities. The critique is a valuable method to learn and grow in this art form.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *This is a new format for our newsletter. Please be patient, it will take some getting used to...*
- *We need your help to prepare this newsletter. Please send articles or points of interest.*

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FUTURE EVENTS

September 13, 2016

What: Workshop with Sergio Luciani (BSF touring master)

Where: SPALC Building

When: 6 PM

Note: This is a BYOT workshop. Space is limited. Must sign up, and pay at August club meeting. Cost will depend upon number of workshop participants

November 5 and 6

What: BSSWFL Annual Show and Sale

Where: Garden Council 2166 Virginia Avenue, Fort Myers

When: Set-up Friday noon until ?, Saturday 9 – 5, Sunday 9 – 4

Note: All Club members are invited to exhibit one tree (smaller space than last year). We also need lots of workers for set up, greeters, docents, gophers. More to come

WE NEED
VOLUTEERS FOR
THE ANNUAL
SHOW.

SIGN UP AT THE
AUGUST
MEETING

SPECIAL EVENTS

Pedro Morales will be in Tampa for a "Bring Your Own Tree" workshop. This is your chance to work with an international Master in tropicals so don't miss it.

Pedro Morales
August 27th

Saturday 27th:
Tropical Workshop
9am-1:30pm
(Tree Provided)
or
Bring your own tree
(BYOT)
2pm-6:30pm

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HOW IS YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY?

One of the tools to analyze and improve your tree is through an analysis of a 2D photograph. Pictures don't lie and you can see flaws or room for improvement with a simple photograph. Here is an article on how to photograph your trees by a professional photographer. This gets technical but worth the read.

By Sam Ogranaja

Bonsai Photography

Whether you're a bonsai professional with a full nursery or a hobbyist with only a few trees, photographing bonsai is a practice all bonsai growers should do regularly. A record of each stage of growth is extremely important for many reasons; to track progression is probably the most obvious. A good photo will reveal weak spots in the tree and whether it's lacking ramification or a needed branch. We get used to seeing our trees daily, but evaluating our trees through a photograph forces us to focus on the positive aspects of the tree as well as the negative issues must be addressed for improvement.

Just as bonsai has "rules", taking a good bonsai photo also has some basic "rules" as well. And just like most advanced bonsai growers who sometimes deviate from the basic rules, you can experiment with your picture taking to suit your own style but it's important to start with the basics principles of photography before you can develop your own style.

The camera for photographing bonsai requires manual adjustments that allows for focusing, setting the ISO, adjusting the aperture, and adjusting the exposure time.

Hand holding the camera to photograph your bonsai is not suggested because it is too difficult to compose your image and it is only more reason why you may not like your photograph.

Light is important to your photograph but it doesn't have to be an elaborate lighting system if you decide to photograph your trees in a controlled environment indoors. Photoflood results. A tripod is preferred and it needs to be sturdy to safely hold your camera in position without shaking or toppling over. To prevent the camera from shaking during the exposure, squeeze or lightly depress the shutter button. An alternative to this If you have a self timer on the camera is to set your camera on a 2 second time delay which will ensure that your finger will not shake the camera as you pressed the shutter.

To avoid a confusing or distracting background when photographing your bonsai, you will need to find a uniform background material to have your bonsai be the main object of your photo. The background can be of any color, white, blue, gray, or black. A darker background, regardless of color, will make your bonsai stand out in the lights and reflectors are inexpensive and can be purchased at any of the big box stores. It's important to avoid mixed lighting falling on your subject at the same time such as fluorescent lights, tungsten lights, or sunlight from windows in the

room. If you decide to photograph your bonsai outdoors, the light required will need to be as soft as possible to get the best result. Direct sunlight may not be the best. Think of the sun; when it's out shining in all its glory, you have a strong shadows behind your tree. This is called direct or hard light. Now think of an overcast, cloudy day. In this setting you won't have a cast shadow. This is called diffused or soft light. Whether it's a natural light, a cloudy day, or recreated with studio lights diffused by modifiers, shooting with a soft light will create the best looking bonsai photo you can create.

The next requirement is composition. Once you've set up your background and identified the front of your tree, you will need to set the tree onto something that will not draw attention from the tree. This can be a display stand or some object that is appropriate for displaying the bonsai. The table top for holding your display should complement the tree such as a bamboo mat, colored burlap, or any color fabric, etc. In determining your composition by viewing the camera's display screen, adjust the camera to frame the bonsai and be sure to raise the camera so you can see the soil above the pot, but not so much that you can clearly see the back lip of the pot.

Now that you have an understanding of soft vs hard light and composition it's time to discuss focusing, Depth Of Field, and Aperture. Focus is adjusting the lens to produce a sharp image. Take your time to critically focus on the tree to insure sharpness. It is important to understand that you need to manually focus on the bonsai because the "auto" function of the camera may not focus on the appropriate area of the tree or not even focus on the tree. Depth of field is how much of the scene will appear sharp. It determines how much before and after your subject will be in sharp focus. Our subject is bonsai so you should have depth of field for sharpness from the point closest to the camera to the point furthest from the camera. You control the depth of field by adjusting the aperture. The word aperture means hole or opening. The easiest way to understand aperture is to think of the pupil in our eye. When the pupil is fully dilated, this allows more light into our eye so we can see under dim light at night. Under full sun however our pupil is constricted so as to not let so much light into our eyes that everything is overly bright and we can't see. So the wider the aperture, the larger opening (say f/1.4) the more light that will reach the film or digital camera sensor, the smaller the aperture the smaller opening (say f/22) the less light will reach the film or sensor. The wider (f/1.4) the aperture the shallower the DOF becomes, the smaller the opening (f/22) the DOF extends greatly. We'll need to use a smaller aperture to allow for greater DOF. It is suggested that when photographing bonsai you should use an aperture range between f/11 - f16 so as to have as much of the tree in sharp focus.

The camera you select for photographing your bonsai needs to allow you to set custom settings to include shutter speed and ISO. Shutter speed is the length of time you allow the light coming through the aperture reaching the sensor or film. Think of it as blinking your eye. A fast shutter speed of 1/4000 sec. will allow a shorter time for the light to reach the sensor than 1/40 sec. ISO (International Standards Organization) is how sensitive the film or sensor is to light. The ISO is important in

HOW'S YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY? (CONT'D)

photography in that it can be adjusted to achieve the desired aperture and shutter speed. While a high ISO of 3200 is more sensitive to light and will allow you to take a photo of a fast moving object, this also degrades image quality by what is called noise or grit in the image. Noise in digital photography is equivalent to graininess when using film. To avoid this problem a lower ISO should be used. Depending on the digital camera that you have chosen, anything higher than an ISO of 200 will bring noise to the image. It's best to shoot at an ISO 100 if possible with your setup for the highest image quality.

Now that you have the tree arranged, the lighting adjusted, the camera on a tripod, the tree in sharp focus, go to Manual programming on the camera and set your aperture at $f/16$, ISO at 100 and Shutter speed at $1/200$ sec. Whether you're shooting inside or outside, this will give you a base exposure. If the image is too dark, lower the shutter speed to $1/100$ sec. If the image is still too dark set it to $1/50$ sec. It's really a testing game until you find the right exposure. You can also open up the aperture by using $f/11$ but you need to make sure doing so isn't reducing the DOF for your bonsai. Zoom into the picture to check critical focus and sharpness. You may need also to change the ISO to give you the best aperture and shutter speed. This is all trial and error until you find your happy point. Once that has been identified, bring in any tree you need photographed and simply move the camera for best composition. If a tree is larger or smaller than the one prior, move the camera back and forth or zoom in or out if using a zoom lens.

The image provided to you will be a color corrected JPEG file. You can print an image from this file anywhere, be it on your printer, by CVS's 1 hour service, or a real photo lab for best results.

There are plenty of photo editing options out there, some quite complex that allow tremendous control but can be tough to learn. Some that are quite easy to learn but don't allow as much control. **GIMP** (GNU Image Manipulation Software) has been around for a while. It's great but tough to learn. **Picasa** is a great simple program that is a free offering from Google. While it doesn't allow incredible control, it's fun and easy to learn.

End

That is specific info on how to photograph your tree. Of course your camera may not have all of the bells and whistles of a digital single lens reflex (DSLR) so adapt the lighting and set-up to your needs.

I purchased a 6' x 6' roll-down shade blind from Lowes, mounted it on the ceiling of the lanai and pull it down when ready to photograph. It's quick and easy and gives a clutter-free background. This is a consistent framework to compare how a tree develops over time. Here is what the shade looks like:



You will be surprised what a photograph will tell you in a few years. When you work on a tree over time, photographs will give you perspective. Yes, it really is growing and, yes, it is getting better.

So, take better photographs of your trees and enjoy your Bonsai journey.