



July 2005

Treasure Coast Bonsai Society

## Joshua Roth New Talent Competition - American Bonsai Society

By: Bart Thomas

*-The annual Joshua Roth New Talent Competition was held this year at the World Bonsai Convention in Washington D.C. Bart Thomas, an entrant into the New Talent Competition, wrote a journal detailing his experiences with the preliminaries, preparation, and styling of a ponderosa pine in the Joshua Roth New Talent Competition. His journal will be published in the Bonsai Post over the next two or three issues. This article focuses on the preparation part of the New Talent Competition. Hopefully it will inspire more Treasure Coast Bonsai Society members to enter into the competition.*

April 17, 2005: Now that the entry has been submitted, I find myself reviewing everything I may need to remember for the final phase (assuming that I will be a finalist, because I must be ready to be one.) I know that I am getting ahead of myself, but, if the opportunity comes, I must be ready!

The final phase will use ponderosa pines, collected by Andy Smith. I have been studying the ponderosa pre-bonsai on his web site, mentally styling each of them. It has gotten to the point where I wake up in the night with a cold sweat because I am dreaming about Andy, with a demonic grin on his face, carefully seeking out eight nearly identical trees that could serve as football goal posts! Andy has been in this competition before, so I know he knows how to drive us crazy!

I have mentally reviewed the ponderosas I have styled, trying to commit to memory the answers to the questions I would ask my sensei were he present for this styling. "Let's see. Get rid of the old needles and clean the tree up. Then start to think

about styling!"

This, too is valuable experience for me. It's like preparing for an exam. You have to organize what you have learned so that you can recall it when you need it in a hurry.

Then, there are the myriad little details: a small bottle for lime sulfur, brushes, paint, where is that pair of needle tweezers? (I can no longer grow pines at my townhouse because the landscaping has matured around me.)

Thinking of questions and getting the answers in advance: If these trees were collected last spring, should I dismiss any ideas about possible trunk splitting? What tools do I need to borrow to bring? Turntables and wire are provided. What size? Will the turntables have tie-down hooks to hold a new potting angle firmly? (Better bring sandbags AND wedges!) Do I need my die grinder carving kit, or will the Dremel be enough? Do I have the right color cut paste?

April 20: Andy Smith, who collected the trees for the competition, was at our club. I learned that the trees are small. He figures that we'll all be done by lunchtime! That also suggests that some of the equipment for heavier work may not be needed. Andy is also selling a DVD on Ponderosa Pine wiring techniques - working with difficult trees. I'm very glad I bought a copy. It's excellent!

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April 24: Waiting for word of the success (or lack thereof) of my entry reminds me of waiting for a college admission. I feel my application was strong, but there are a lot of other good candidates out there.

May 1: Waiting.... Notice is supposed to be out by May 1<sup>st</sup>, but this is bonsai. Lots of things don't happen on time.

May 2: The letter was in the mailbox. I'm in! Now, I'll start contacting previous finalists to get ideas and tips. Also time to get serious about what to take with me. They will provide turntables and wire.

May 3: Talked with Mike Pollock, last year's winner. He said to take everything! Last year, they only provided aluminum wire, lighting was poor, and outlets for power tools were hard to find. Fortunately, one entrant had an extension cord, which they took turns with. I guess I'd better take my turntable, which has tie-downs, as I'm sure the potting angle will change! Also copper wire! Mike did say that the most important thing was to have fun. Good point!

May 7: Still thinking about Andy's comment about how quickly we should be done. This suggests that I should take extra time to think about the tree. Maybe I should take some quick photos and go to breakfast! (The contest begins at 8AM on Sunday morning!) Wonder what the other finalists would think if I did that!

May 10, 2005: Horst Krekeler did a demo at our club with a pitch pine. One point he made was that in demos, most folks turn the tips up, as Andy recommended in his DVD. Horst says that is wrong, because it

will focus growth in the tip. If you leave them straight, you have a better chance at getting back-budding. I wonder which the judges in the NTC will prefer.

May 14: Chase's Open House. Robert Mahler (Bonsai Curator at Brooklyn Botanic Garden) did a remarkable demo on an old garden azalea. Chase was much too busy to answer some technical questions I had for him.

May 16: Still thinking up questions to ask Chase before I go. Although I prefer to use Vet-Rap instead of raffia, I'll bet the Japanese judges will want to see raffia instead. I'd better take some along and something to soak it in! (I can still use the Vet-Rap to secure longitudinal wires under the raffia!) Chase agrees.

Also, I should ask about the pine tips (see 5/10) Chase says to leave them straight. Should I take moss? (These are desert trees, aren't they?) Chase says it would be nice. (This sort of raises other questions about horticultural considerations in the judging: potential survival of the tree, etc., which Chase says are considered by the judges.)

May 19: Started to consolidate stuff to take. In addition to styling tools, taking 3' piece of bamboo (in case I need a prop) Lime sulfur (with paint, brushes and cups for mixing), pieces of plastic tubing (as pads for wire & props) sand bags, wedges, bungee cords (to tie down to turntable), epoxy, root hook, rake, tweezers (both needle & regular), turntable, copper wire, spray bottle, moss, Vet-Rap, Li-Ion Dremel, charger, and tools, draw knife, and raffia (and tub to soak in).

May 21: Played with pine scraps, experimenting with Lime Sulfur and acrylic paints to get a better idea as to how they work together when applied the same day. I have come to the conclusion that I want to apply the lime

sulfur, let it dry, and *then* paint. Otherwise I seem to get an unpleasant yellow tinge, which goes away in about a day. Maybe it's just the brand of lime sulfur I have.

I have also revisited the Golden Arrow (Andy Smith) web site and captured images of all the small ponderosas, so that I can play with them in Photoshop. (Mainly experimenting with potting angles) Why do I think the contest trees will be totally different?

May 23: Yet more questions for Mile Pollock: In some of the photos I saw that you used doorstops as wedges. Did you bring them, or was this an emergency acquisition Also, how did you mark the pot angle for the display and judging?

"The doorstops were mine and I brought them to the competition. I used wooden wedges and vet wrap to set the angle of my tree and keep it right when they moved the tree around each day (the wedges were given to me by Todd Hansen, another competitor). Other people just shaved their root balls to put the tree back in its pot in the new orientation. One of these methods should work for your tree."

May 26: Began packing all this stuff! Some things are going to have to be left behind! Torch and fuel will not make the trip. (I'd probably set the tree on fire anyway!). Collected some moss to dress it up, even though we will not repot. (Those "doggie meal" containers from restaurants are great!) I have one tool bag, I large tote bag, and the turntable (tabletop base only). Had I been driving my own car, I'd have taken more. Can't imagine how I'd have packed this stuff to fly!

May 28: Have met most of the previous contestants who are competing again this year. A nice bunch of folks. Things begin Sunday at 8 AM. The trees are bigger than I expected, some with 1 ½ -2" trunks, but look like most will be fun to work with. As far as all the "special" stuff I brought, the deal seems to be that I have "first dibs" on it. After I have used what I need, others can ask to use it. It's that type of competition. We'll all do our best, and have to be happy if that produces a good tree. The luck of the draw of the trees is out of our control, and the object is to have a good time and make friends with each other. I think that's the bonsai way to do things.

Besides the agent orange will not take effect before the judging! ;-)

Note:

2 Books to read and reread while getting ready to go:

DeGroot: Basic Bonsai Design

ABS Bonsai Manual for Appreciating, Judging, and Buying Bonsai

(Both available from American Bonsai Society)

I wish I had taken an airport-type cart to lug all this stuff around the hotel with!



## Calendar of Events

**July 12th at the St. Lucie Ag. Center-** TCBS will hold its normal monthly meeting at the St. Lucie Agriculture Center on Tuesday, July 12th starting at 7:00 P.M. Members are encouraged to bring in their problem trees that will be discussed and corrected during the meeting.

## TCBS Board of Directors

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Treasure Coast Bonsai Society



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**Come  
Join Us!!**

TCBS Meetings take place at 7:00 P.M. on the second Tuesday of every month.

Meeting Place: St. Lucie Agriculture Center on Picos Road