



Lighthouse Bonsai Society

Next meeting Sat. April 25, 9:00– 12:00 at Boca Raton Community Center 150 Crawford Blvd. Please bring a GREAT snack and something for the raffle table!!



Tree Talk
by Terry Wolfe

FICUS

Why the Ficus should be a part of your Bonsai Collection



Meeting Changes

May and June

**So YOU can hear about BSF Convention—May Meeting is May 30
So that all can enjoy Rodney Clemons June Meeting is June 20**

Ficus is, in my opinion, the best material for aspiring bonsai enthusiasts due to their ease of care and forgiving nature. There are many varieties available. Larger leaf types make great banyans. Aerial roots can be prolific with the right conditions. Willow leaf and burtt-davyi have smaller leaves and so work well as smaller trees.

Tiger bark has great caricature on its bark providing interest. Large trees can be propagated or rescued from a trash pile. Ficus can be confidence builders with success in propagating, grafting, building larger trees by fusing smaller trees into one as well as other techniques.

Ficus are forgiving but not bullet proof. Ficus will repay neglect with die back of branches. If you let the roots dry out or a branch to be shaded by others, you'll get die back. Full sun, will help keep trees healthy. An added benefit of helping to reduce leaf size. When watering make sure trees get a good soaking. Let the surface of 'soil' dry before watering again. If you have the right soil and size pot that should be the next morning. I use Miracle-Grow fertilizer every couple weeks which seem to keep them happy.

Just about any style is worth trying with ficus. But don't bother with jins, the wood won't last long, and is not natural to ficus. However hollow trunks or torched trunk can look very convincing. Due to rapid growth, wire can dig in, within a few weeks. Those who know me know I prefer tie downs to reposition branches. Besides that we get such rapid growth that clip and grow works wonders with ficus. Leaf stripping on healthy trees reduces leaf size. A healthy tree can be leaf stripped in spring. At the same time trim any branches that are in the wrong place. In the next couple of months it will be ready for another trim. Repeat every couple of months after that. From early November to late February I give the tree a rest from trimming. Please note that ficus 'too little' and variegated varieties don't respond well to leaf stripping. Protect them from freezing. Cold will cause little leaves to drop, but nothing too bad. One of the reasons I let trees go in winter with 'full canopy' is if it does get stressed it has strength to recover.

Common pest for ficus are Thrips and White Fly. Thrips will curl leaves, just pick and dispose of damaged leaves. White fly if only minor, when caught early, can be controlled by spraying the underside of the tree with blast of water from a hose. If it's a 'cloud' before you discover it uses a hose then treat with Bayer Tree and Shrub or other systemic pesticide. Ficus can have fungus issues, but these can be avoided by not keeping the tree overly wet.

A great book on ficus is Jerry Meislik's 'FICUS The Exotic Bonsai'. It covers care, varieties suitable for bonsai and lots of techniques to try. The section on indoor bonsai, not too helpful for us, but still worthwhile to read.

Saturday is learn with Vlad day

Want your tree to have a fresh look?

Be one of the lucky 10 to have your tree styled with Vlad's "touch."

First 10 to respond to this e-mail will bring their tree up front

or Styling with the Morikami Curator this Saturday

Remember!!!! First 10 to respond to this e-mail'

will be the lucky 10!!!!!!