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The
Satsuki Azalea
Society.



Newsletter

ISSUE 22

Editors ramblings....

Where has the time gone!!! Another Annual Show and AGM has been and gone and the summer heat is with us. Well, two out of three isn't bad! I guess it's because the show was late this year that I am way behind with this issue and my annual reminder that subs are due. Those of you who made the show will I'm sure agree with me that the Society's display was impressive and our thanks go out to Brian Evans and his team at Wessex Bonsai Society for a well organized, and hopefully for them, profitable show.

At the show I bumped into Doug Bessey, one of our long-term members who thoroughly depressed me (only joking) with story's of his visit to the Satsuki Festivals in Japan earlier this year. He was kind enough to write a report and provide pictures of his adventure, which you can read on page 3. Try not to turn green with envy like I did.

Earlier this year the European Bonsai Association Congress was held in Trevarez, France. Although not specifically a Satsuki event our own Mr. Kennedy was there demonstrating so I would like to thank Brenda Esslinger, who was lucky enough to be there, for her review on page 8

In the last issue I asked for feedback re:Mycorrhizas (Web site article on page 3.) Alan Billam took me at my word and has been making inquiries. See page 6 for results.

Unfortunately, the person who was *volunteered* to write the show report hasn't managed yet so that will be something to look forward to in the next issue. To whet your appetite there is a picture of the display on the opposite page.

Ray Beddow.
Editor.



The Societies stand at Bournemouth 2002.

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COVER PHOTO

This is the tree that was voted best in our display and is owned by Mr. Bob Thompson. Congratulations.

Trip to Japan 2002.

When in 1999 The Satsuki Azalea Society's trip to Japan was cancelled I was extremely disappointed and decided that, failing another Society's trip to Japan taking place I would make an independent trip to visit the Kanuma and Ueno Park Satsuki festivals at some future date.

This year at the start of June I was fortunate to be able to make the trip to Japan to visit both the Satsuki Azalea festivals at Kanuma and Ueno Park in Tokyo.

To travel in Japan it is good value to obtain a Japan Rail Pass, this has to be applied for in the U.K. as it is only available to visitors to Japan, since with this pass one can travel the length and breadth of Japan at a fixed price on a rail service that is clean and punctual. Also most of the station names are displayed in English as well as Japanese.



3.

To visit the festival in Kanuma I stayed in the nearest larger city of Utsumomiya, as there are no Western style hotels in Kanuma, and took the train to Kanuma a journey of about 15 minutes. It is advisable to obtain the services of an interpreter in this part of Japan as few people speak English and none of the road signs etc. are in English.

The Satsuki Azalea festival in Ueno Park, Tokyo appeared as a much more informal show with the azaleas being exhibited on benches under canvas covers situated around Ueno Lake although the quality of the exhibits appeared equal to those at the Kanuma festival.

All the exhibits are open to the public using the park and there appeared to be no obvious precautions against theft and/or vandalism.

As Alex Kennedy has commented previously the size and quality of the exhibits at both these festivals is astounding and the art of presentation is something probably only the Japanese are capable of.

Whilst in Japan a visit was made to a bonsai Museum owned by Kunio Kobayashi who I understand is a Grand Master, this was very worthwhile since as well as being extremely interesting he gave freely of advice and information. However, again an interpreter would be required since Mr. Kobayashi speaks no English.

One Satsuki azalea in the museum displayed in a Tokonoma was valued at three million yen (Approx. £16,500)

Visits were also made to the Kanda-en Satsuki Azalea nursery in Shiraoka and other bonsai nurseries in the bonsai village of Omiya.

I would recommend anyone with an interest in Satsuki Azaleas to make the journey to see these two festivals but it is a long way to go and Japan is expensive.

4.

If anyone is thinking of making the trip I would be happy to give them any information I have available.



Whilst writing could I ask if anyone has information on Satsuki Azalea festivals in America and the American Satsuki Azalea Society.

I do not have a P.C. so website addresses would not be of value.

Douglas Bessey.

Mycorrhizas

The article in the last issue re: Web sites has raised a comment or two, especially the section about *Mycorrhiza*. You may recall that I expressed doubt at the time and asked that if anyone had any information I would love to hear from them. Well, Alan Billam has been making inquiries and it appears that my doubts could have been correct.

Alan contacted John Mc Lauchlan who appears to agree with me. (Although he is not 100% certain) We will have to wait and see if he comes back with any further information. Mr. Mc Lauchlan finished his reply by recommending the use of Humate and included a copy of a magazine article extolling its virtues. (A copy of the letter and article has been included for your perusal)

I remember some time ago that Humate was being hailed in magazines and at shows as the best thing since sliced bread but all seems to have gone quiet now. Have any of you used it? Is it as good as the article suggests?

Neither I, nor any of my Bonsai buddies use it so are we missing out? Once again it would be nice to have some feedback to pass on to fellow members.

Other comments I received regarding the Web Site article were that people couldn't find it! Because I was working from a photocopy I had been sent, I must admit that I didn't try to open it up myself so apologies if you tried and failed. The site itself should be found as a link from the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society site but unfortunately I couldn't get in either. Whilst trying though I did find an interesting site:

www.geocities.com/tokyo/garden/1666/

I didn't have much time to study it but it appears to list bonsai societies, associations, nurseries etc. all over the world.

New beginning.

My interest in Satsuki as a hobby has had to take a back seat over the past couple of years while I have been sorting out a new direction in my life. Having now sorted out my situation in terms of earning a living, I hope to be able to devote more time to Satsuki again.

For a great many years now, I have listened to Satsuki enthusiasts from the Midlands and the North lamenting the fact that Cornwall was too far away for them. A number of people have described Satsuki as more of a Southern hobby, because growers in the North lacked a ready source for material, advice, courses and inspiration. My move to the Dai-ichi Bonsai & Satsuki Centre near Redditch, will hopefully help to remedy this problem.

Over the next couple of years we hope to develop the best possible Satsuki resource, right in the centre of the country. Apart from offering a wide choice of Satsuki to buy, we are offering courses on their care and training. The Centre also has a gallery space that could be used by clubs such as the Satsuki Society for small exhibitions. It might also be a suitable place to hold meetings.

I think we all feel that the Satsuki Society has lost some of its original impetus over the last two or three years. I hope that the creation of a new Centre dedicated to the hobby will play some part in regenerating interest and enthusiasm.

Alexander Kennedy

A Continental Twist to an Oriental Art

Sightseeing, good food, even better wine, suiseki and bonsai – in whichever order you like, that would sum up the attractions of this year's annual European bonsai event held in the Château de Trévarez in Brittany, France, on 25-26 May.

The European Congress of Bonsai & Suiseki was hosted by bonsai clubs of the region, in collaboration with the European Bonsai Association (EBA) and the Fédération Française de Bonsai (FFB). Although a great deal of the show's promotion was spearheaded by the Club Bonsai de l'Iroise (CBI), the congress was a shared effort by all the local clubs in Brittany.

Aside from the 2002 New Talent competition, there were talks and demonstrations from prominent European bonsai artists. The UK was represented by Alexander Kennedy, Tony Tickle and Gill Taylor-Duxbury. Alex Kennedy's demo was on styling of a Satsuki azalea, while Tony Tickle's work on a Yew included some heavy carving. With departure from her name 'norm', Gill Taylor-Duxbury created a tall conifer group planting. The other European demonstrators were Oscar Roncari (Switzerland), François Jeker, Alain Arnaud and Thierry Font. (All France)

Due to space constraints in a nonetheless large demonstration tent, each artist had to share speaking time with the others. There were quite a few Satsuki enthusiasts present in the audience, judging by the number of people gathered around Alex Kennedy's demo. A party of around half-a-dozen Belgians had even come down specifically for Satsuki. Alex was bombarded by a lively Q & A on the care and culture of these azaleas, spearheaded by Michael Sachal, former president of the FFB. Michael also played

the part of interpreter that afternoon. At the end of the event, the trees used for the demos were auctioned off and Alex's tree was purchased by one of the stewards of the congress.

In the main halls, talks included a lecture on shohin and mame, an introduction to the art of suiseki as well as its display with bonsai, kusamono and other art objects. Also covered were the assessment of bonsai pots and their quality and comparison of the Chinese and Japanese approaches to the art of bonsai.

The exhibition hall was top-notch indeed. These were converted stables but the amount of natural light within was dramatic, if nothing else. Everything was designed to show the trees to their advantage: most notable were the display tables high enough to bring the trees to eye level. Backdrops and tables were dressed with uniform beige cloth. Trees were well spaced out, with the now ubiquitous Japanese-style bamboo cane dividers. This layout definitely highlighted each tree's individual presence while giving the viewer the best possible position for prolonged admiration without risking backache.

Not surprisingly, the majority of the trees on display were from French enthusiasts. Newcomers to bonsai were not forgotten – other exhibits including bonsai tools, various compost/soil mixtures, etc. each exhibit was accompanied by a detailed description of the article plus its function, usage and history.

The event was well attended by bonsai enthusiasts and there was an even greater number of walk-through attendance from the general public. Given the layout of the château, the demos, some displays and the trade area were held outdoors, albeit under cover. And speaking of cultural differences, visitors to the show were supremely undeterred

by the weather, staying all the way until closing time despite the heavy intermittent rain.

The impression given by the French general public is that their interest and appreciation of bonsai is primarily for its cultural and artistic aspects, rather than as a horticultural hobby. In this part of the world, bonsai's mass appeal tends to be its Oriental roots. This was also reflected in the lecture topics during the weekend.

Despite the weather, which was very much like the South of England, there was plenty to see and do. And while the quality of the trees on display at Trévarez will have a way to go to match that of the Ginko show in Belgium, given the level of the participants, the show nonetheless provided an interesting glimpse into bonsai on the Continent.

Brenda Martinez-Eslinger.

And finally.....

At the AGM it was decided that because we had such a healthy bank balance there would be no need to increase subscriptions which are now due. To ensure you receive your next issue, please renew straight away by sending your cheque, made payable to "The Satsuki Azalea Society" to my address on the back page.

The AGM was the first anniversary of my taking over the editorship of the magazine and I would like to thank everyone who has supplied articles and photographs. Without your help you might well have been reading the football results I threatened you with! Hopefully you have found them informative and interesting enough to want to renew your subscriptions.

Ed.