

# Bonsai show celebrates variety

BY MARTY FIGLEY  
SPECIAL WRITER

Vance Hanna of Birmingham is a bonsai enthusiast.

He has been president twice of the Four Seasons Bonsai Club of Michigan and will be in attendance during its 23rd annual show, which will again be at the Washington Square Building, Washington and Fourth, Royal Oak. Show times are 12:30-9 p.m. Friday, June 21, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday, June 22, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, June 23.

Hanna and Vance Woods of Roseville, another club member, were invited to show their specimens at the Japanese Cultural Club Exchange with the city of Detroit on Belle Isle in early May. During that event, the Japanese consulate introduced them to Kahn Itoh, general manager of Itochu International, who will judge this upcoming show.

Hanna has been growing bonsai for 25 years and grows a variety of plants. Most of them are outside all year; some of them are deciduous, others are evergreen. And, as he says, "I've got 'em everywhere."

"Of all my plants I probably do

have a favorite," Hanna said.

When his son was born he dug an *Ulmus carissifolia* in Bartlesville, Okla., and has won awards with it. It will be in the show in Royal Oak. Hanna recalls the ages of some of his plants using his children's ages as a guide.

An *Acer palmatum* "Bloodgood" caught my eye with its dark red foliage. He raised it from a seedling and grew it in the ground for quite some time. Now it sits beautifully in a pot. The ultimate height will be 30 inches.

"Classic proportions are literally everything in bonsai — height to width to size of pot, that is, the size of the trunk in relation to the depth of the pot and the height of the tree.

"For example, if the depth of the pot is four inches, the trunk width should be four inches and the height of the plant six times higher than the depth of the pot, or 24 inches.

"With proper pruning the trees will fill in to make a more proportioned classic statement."

An 18-year-old *Katsura* grown from seed is a knockout. Hanna grows others from seed as well as finding plants in northern Michi-

gan.

I asked him what was the most important thing necessary to grow these interesting plants. He said a high level of commitment, especially time. A person also needs to understand what keeps them alive.

They need a lot of water and sunlight ("it's not that difficult"). Hanna waters the plants every day during the growing season, sometimes twice a day. He holds the small plant in a large container of water, just up to the edge of the pot, until the bubbles stop. This takes just a few seconds. The larger plants are watered with a special Japanese bonsai watering can with a fine hose spray. Rain water is collected for this important requirement.

Very porous soil, almost a non-soil, is used in the containers, some of which Hanna has designed and made. The mix consists of 1/3 each of very coarse chopped granite or sharp builders sand, or chicken grit (easiest to find), for good drainage, Turface (chopped and fired clay pellets), which helps retain moisture in raised beds, and fine pine bark or chopped Spaghnum peat or both, or shredded oak leaf mold (really

good), which provides a source of organic matter. Conifers need less organic matter in the mix, but then need more fertilizer.

Hanna uses a slow-release fertilizer, a tri-organic pelleted product called "Bio-Gold" with a ratio of 5-6-3. It is scattered on the soil and when it is depleted he adds more.

In addition to the bonsai, Hanna grows a stand of bamboo, *Phyllostachys aurea sulcata*, along one edge of his yard, which makes a wonderful screen. He uses bent canes for edging along the front garden of his home, and as supports and plant name markers.

Demonstrations on styling, plant selection, soil mix, pruning, wiring, potting and more will take place 1, 3, 7 and 9 p.m. Friday; noon and 2, 6 and 8 p.m. Saturday; and 11 a.m. and 1, 2 and 4 p.m. Sunday. Best of Show judging will be 10 a.m. Saturday.

Hanna also teaches classes through the club as do other members. He is president of Mid-America Bonsai Alliance, which has members from eight states, and looks forward to the time when Michigan will host a symposium for that organization in the near future.

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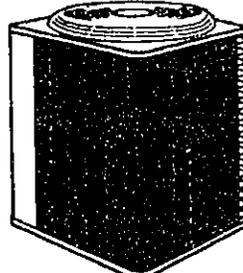
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