

Things of Beauty Come in Small Packages, Including Trees

By LILLIE L. MADSEN
Farm Editor, The Statesman

Do you remember the time-worn expression: "Little, but Oh my!" That's a pretty handy saying when you go shopping for trees of Lilliputian form.

I found a delightful little one the other day. It leaned all to one side, was healthy, green in color, looked like miniature oaks and small, but strong winds had worked it over for centuries, or as if an artist might have put it together.

Actually, neither was the case. It had just been taught to grow that way for a 100 years or so. Idly, I asked "How much?" expecting to be told "about \$10."

"You couldn't buy it for less

than \$200," the owner said, looking sort of worried, as if he feared I might try to buy it. "It's more than 100 years old."

He needn't have worried. Not after I heard the price—although it was a beautiful specimen.

However, I found, all miniature trees aren't trees that have been "taught to grow that way." And all miniatures are not that expensive. Some of them grow "that way" naturally. And some of them are just \$10 to \$20 a piece.

Billings Has Collection
Bruce Billings of Silverton who now has some 450 trees in "training," first became interested in miniatures through natural dwarfs.

"Trees were really in our blood," Mr. Billings told me, as he spoke of his father winning the Gold Medal for his apples at the Lewis and Clark Fair in Portland in 1905.

Mr. Billings was born at Mackburg in Clackamas County, but moved to Hood River with his parents, when he was two. His interest in collecting miniatures started 35 years ago while he was working in a forest service fire camp up in the Red Hills district above Hood River. Two of his brothers were already forest rangers.

"I ran into thousands of dwarf trees, all growing in pumice, stone, rock and gravel. They were 200 to 500 years old and some of the junipers were no more than 10 feet high. Others were much smaller," Mr. Billings said, as he showed us a little, windswept juniper which was his "first collection." It still was no more than 18 inches tall.

After the fire camp stretch, he went to work as propagator for various landscape and nursery companies in Portland, and the idea of his miniature trees went along each year, during vacation, others being added to the collection.

Go Tree Hunting
"We went from the Canadian border to San Francisco, finding many fine specimens," he said, as he told of the "Shasta Dam area being particularly rich in good little trees." Those which gave indication of dwarfing were "kept in form."

"It's really much easier to grow a large tree. It takes the patience of the Oriental to perfect the process of the dwarf," Mr. Billings said, looking over his huge collection of little trees. "These are in training," he pointed out, showing an occasional tree

wired—like a youngster's crooked teeth, only here the "crook" was the desired shape.

It takes from three to five years and longer, depending upon how the tree was first grown, and the shape one wants it to acquire, to "dwarf" a tree. That is — to start the dwarfing process. After that comes years of further growing, which is more "stopping growth" than inducing growth.

Watering Important
"Watering is perhaps the most important thing," Mr. Billings said, as he carefully wired a small maple into the weird shape which makes so many of the dwarfs so attractive. "You have to learn just how much water—barely enough to keep the tree alive—to give it. Sometimes, if the tree doesn't have a good color, I give it a weak solution of fertilizer to bring back the color and keep it through the winter."

When trees are removed from their native habitat, sufficient soil for the container to be used is taken, along.

"That soil lacks something that helps make the tree dwarf. I want to be sure to have that lack of something," Mr. Billings explained.

Along with his collection of small dwarf trees, Mr. Billings has a fine collection of rocks.

"Good rocks just naturally go with miniature trees," he said.

Ancient Art
Dwarfing trees is an ancient art, dating back to the 13th century. In the Orient, where the art was believed first perfected, dwarfing was the pastime of emperors and the aristocrats alone. About a half century ago, the working people, too, were let in on the art. It is in the Orient

that the term Bon Sai originated, as referring to the dwarf tree, and the word has crept into the English language where it is now treated under that name in such indisputable authorities on usages as Encyclopedia Britannica.

Noriko Kobayashi, writing in his small book "Bon Sai," says that "really excellent material for a bonsai masterpiece is very rare. One plant in a thousand is the usual proportion. (Here he was talking of finding the dwarf trees in nature). But when found this rarity of rarities becomes a priceless bon sai in the hands of a past master of the art."

Kobayashi tells of the difficulty of transplanting the dwarf materials, and refers to the "great hazards in successful rooting."

"The first thing to do when the right material is brought in is to plant it in sandy loam containing little organic matter and to put up a shelter to keep off the sun and the wind. At night the shelter must be taken away, to expose the prospective bon sai to the dew, while the foliage must be sprinkled with water during the daytime. Thus tended, the plant should take root."

This author adds that "any kind of tree is capable of being trained into a bon sai, the only stipulation being that it should have small leaves and dense twigs."

As the foliage of a plant grows in proportion to the quantity of its roots, root-pruning is one of the important means of growing bon sai. The young plants are root-pruned freely, while the old ones only slightly.

Secret Given
Kobayashi says that "in order to produce many leafy branches, it is

Works to Keep Trees Small



Some folk give everything they can to a tree to make it reach a good size. Bruce Billings takes every way he can to make the trees stay small, like this old Eastern Oregon Juniper on which he is working. Other trees from left to right are Alpine Hemlock, 75 years old; White Barked Pine, from high in Cascades in Santiam Pass; Ponderosa Pine, hardest of all to move; Maple from headwaters of Metolious. If you were to buy any of these pictured here, you'd pay from \$35 to \$100 apiece. (Statesman Garden Photo.)

necessary for the plant to have plenty of fibrous roots. A plant with a few rough branches presupposes a few, long thick roots radiating through the soil. So the important thing is to root-prune a bonsai judiciously at the time of transplantation. Herein lies the secret of keeping bon sai alive for ages."

Root-pruning must be done rapidly in a damp room, well sheltered from wind or sun. Care must be taken not to expose the roots to either the wind or sun.

In planting a dwarf tree, great care must be taken to place it at the right depth and in the right position in the pot. Soil must get into every portion of the pot, leaving no air holes, and packed to a uniform firmness. Do not take the tree out into the air until the roots have started growing again.

Bamboos are one of the favorites of the Japanese for bon sai. One might think it almost impossible to take shoots from the luxuriant bamboos that grow to heights of 50 to 60 feet, but experts in the art of

bon sai culture, often obtain beautiful small bon sai by taking the underground stems from these large growing trees. For bamboo bon sai, pots only about an inch deep are used. These may be eight or 10 inches long and three or four inches wide. The bamboos must be transplanted every year just before the young shoots appear. Take the plants out of the pot and cut off part of the matted roots, then break up the tangled roots and prune away about half of the original roots, and replace the old soil with fresh.

Fuji, or Japanese wistaria, is another plant that lends itself to bon sai—and it will flower in "captivity" if grown correctly.

"It is an old art, but there is something new to learn about it all the time," Mr. Billings said, as he showed us his outdoor arrangement of little dwarf trees. Back of the Billings home, he has arranged, in a group of oaks, a natural setting for the little trees, all in pots. There are little hills and little valleys to set off the odd-shaped little trees, as well as the very straight miniature ones.

"I've really just started," he adds.

Miniatures Show Grace



This isn't a very big tree but has taken a dozen years or more to reach its size, and it can't be had for less than \$75, says Bruce Billings, its owner, who managed to keep it from growing large. It is a Swiss Stone Pine. (Statesman Garden Photo.)

Garden Calendar

Aug. 7 — Rockaway Flower Show.

Aug. 7 — Annual picnic of Oregon Geranium Society, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Stenzel home, 14110 N.E. Gilson St., Portland, 2 p.m. No host.

Aug. 7-13 — Begonia and Fuchsia Show, Gresham.

Aug. 9 — Woodburn Garden Club. No host picnic, Settlemeier Park, 6:30 p.m.

Aug. 10 — "Salute to Klamath Basin" Flower Show, Klamath County Fairgrounds, Klamath Falls.

Aug. 11 — Annual Herb Tea Lebanon, 1 p.m. Mr. and Mrs. Earl Michelson, 951 Park St.

Aug. 12 — Jefferson Friendly Garden Club, City Hall ice cream social, "God's Country Garden" theme.

Aug. 13-14 — Gladioli Show, Spokane.

Aug. 14 — Seaside Dahlia Parade.

Aug. 17-18 — Gladioli Festival, Grants Pass.

Aug. 18 — African Violet Society, no host supper, Mayflower hall, 6:30 p.m.

Aug. 20-21 — Grande Ronde Gladioli Festival, La Grande.

Aug. 20-21 — Symphony of Flowers, Anchorage, Alaska.

Aug. 20-21 — Pacific International Gladioli Show, Everett, Wash.

Aug. 20-21 — Gearhart Flower Show.

Aug. 22-23 — Puget Sound Fuchsia Show, Fredrick & Nelson's, Seattle.

Aug. 24-25 — Washington County Flower Show, Hillsboro.

Aug. 25-26 — City of San Francisco Flower Show, 2 to 10 p.m. City Hall.

Aug. 25-26 — Dahlia Show, Bremerton, Wash.

Aug. 26-28 — Polk County Flower Show, Rickreall.

Aug. 27 — Annual Jay-C-Ette Flower Show, Silverton.

Sept. 3-10 — Oregon State Flower Show, State Fairgrounds, Salem.

Sept. 3-4 — Pacific Northwest Dahlia Show, Forest Hall, Forest Park, Everett, Wash.

Sept. 20 — 8 p.m. Salem Rose Society meeting, YMCA.

Sept. 22-24 — North Marion County Flower Show, Woodburn.

Nov. 5-6 — Annual Chrysanthemum Show Study Club, Portland Chamber of Commerce Visitor's Information Center.

BOOK OF THE WEEK

A new book that is very usable to any gardener is "Improving Your Garden Through Soil Management," by Earl Downey (Crown Publishers, \$3.85). It tells in simple terms, how specific garden tasks and problems can be solved. The book is divided into three parts: Soils, vegetable crops, and (part 3) lawns, flowers and berries in the esthetic phases of gardening.

TOOL TIPS

DOUBLE DUTY can be obtained from a hand saw by rounding its end and filing and setting teeth in it. The American Builder, trade publication, suggests this as a handy gimmick starting saw cuts in plywood, floors, etc.

Questions & Answers

Question—Mrs. E. L. inquired, a couple of weeks ago about a cobra lily. The garden editor wasn't sure of the reply. But George Ailing, widely known Salem gardener was.

Answer—Thanks to Mr. Ailing: The cobra lily is a local name for *Darlingtonia*, a native in sections of Southern Oregon, recently sold here. It is a bog plant so should be left in peat moss, no soil, no fertilizer, but constant moisture, and no hot sun.

Question — Lilac started to shoot out good healthy flowers this spring, then shriveled up. New growth would come but this would do the same. Looks like whole plant is dying. What to do? G.D.

Answer—Difficult to say. Could be a couple of things. Sounds like root rot, or the stems may have been damaged by anthracnose which destroys bark. In either case the shrub should be removed and the soil sterilized before planting another.

If the foliage was black as though it had been burned, it might have been blight. This can be controlled by copper sprays. This disease is not fatal and may be cured if a few cultural faults are corrected. Don't give it too heavy feedings of nitrogenous fertilizers, or manures in spring or summer. Don't overwater. Provide good ventilation around it. If it needs fertilizer give it some bonemeal in fall.

Question—The outside paint of our house blisters and the windows get covered with steam. Is there any way that you know of, or can find out, how to stop it? O.C.C.

Answer—Window steaming is said to be an indication that indoor humidity is too high and water vapor in the air condenses when it strikes the cold surface of the glass. A house engineer of my acquaintance, says this can be best prevented at the time of building a house. In a house already built, a vapor barrier may be installed on the warm side of the wall. Otherwise reduce humidity by preventing unnecessary evaporation of water inside the house such as permitting water to boil longer than necessary, opening windows in bathroom after a bath, providing ventilating fans in kitchen and laundry.

Question — Was told there is a "right time" to cut gladioli spikes so that one can enjoy them for the longest period. Could you tell me how to know when this time comes? I.T.C.

Answer — For longest enjoyment, gladioli experts say to cut the spikes when the two florets, lowest on the stem, are open. The others will then open in water. Pick off the older ones as they fade, and shorten the stem to keep it in proportion to the bloom.

Question—Have a bittersweet vine which I started from a seed from my old home in the Midwest. Sets fruit each year but this falls off in late June or early

July. Is it the weather here? It seems to me you have awfully chilly summers. Only our second one here. I started the bittersweet in the east in a can so that I could take it west with me to have something from home. It has grown well, but doesn't amount to much without its fruit. O.J.

Answer — Probably needs a pollinizer. Poor pollination will cause the fruit to start and then fall to mature. We've had cool weather the past two summers. Stick around awhile, and I'm sure you'll come to think our summers are the best ever. You don't, I hope, miss the intense heat the Midwest is "enjoying"? However, we assure you, we'd like to have a little warmer summer too—like we have in the average year.

Question — This is Iris planting time isn't it? I'd like some pink ones, but I went to an Iris show at Silverton about three years ago and every pink one I saw was around \$20. Are there any varieties of pink that sell for less? N.H.S.

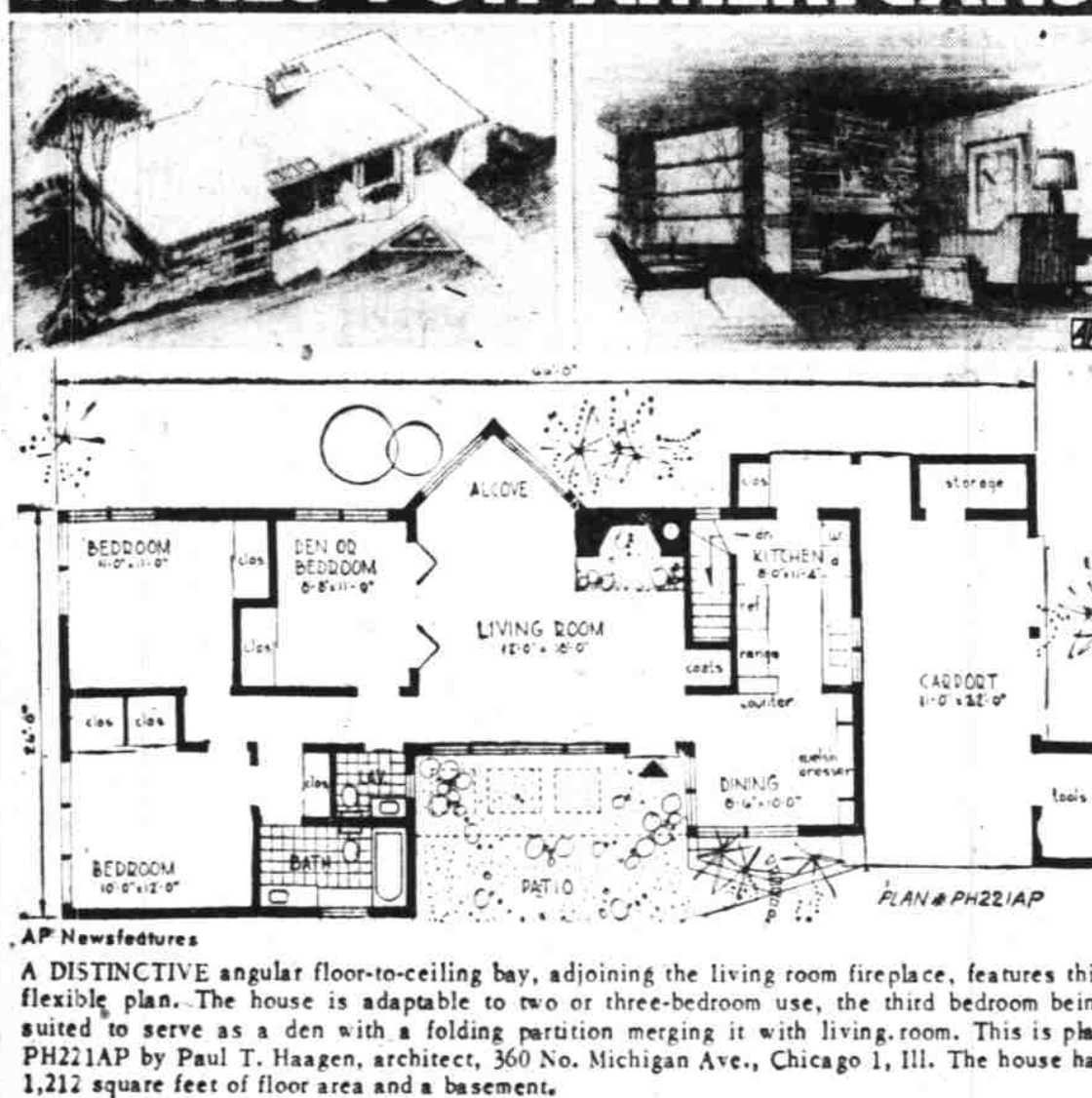
Answer — Yes, there are many of the pink ones that sell for less than \$20 — and some which sell for more. Lovelight is a blending of pink and pearl which goes for \$2.50. Love Story is a flamingo pink, at \$3.50. Another flamingo pink is Paradise Pink, at \$5. Pink Bouquet, a baby-ribbon pink with an orange beard, goes for \$8. Pink Cameo has dropped to \$1; Pink Formal to \$4; Pink Plum (an orchid-pink) to \$3, and Pink Reflection to 75 cents.

Question — Last spring we had a lot of trouble with a little worm at the tops of our young cypresses. You mentioned something then to control these, which proved effective. Would you tell us again what this is? D. F.

Answer — Malathion, I believe. Lead arsenate sprayed on the trees now will also help prevent damage from the moth.

Question — Talked to a Silverton man who works at Salem this week, and he told me about some lawn dope he had told him about which he said "sure did away with the weeds and gave me a nice lawn." Would you please tell me what this is? Haven't written to you before and don't know if there

HOMES FOR AMERICANS



A DISTINCTIVE angular floor-to-ceiling bay, adjoining the living room fireplace, features this flexible plan. The house is adaptable to two or three-bedroom use, the third bedroom being suited to serve as a den with a folding partition merging it with living room. This is plan PH221AP by Paul T. Haagen, architect, 360 No. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Ill. The house has 1,212 square feet of floor area and a basement.

is any charge for information, but the family sure reads your columns. P.R.H.

Answer — Sent you the name of material which I may have mentioned. Am not sure which one you are referring to, but this will do the work if directions on container are followed. No, there is no charge for this service in The Statesman, and we are happy to hear from you. Come again, if you think we can be of service.

Question — Leaves of our walnut in our back garden are turning yellow and some are dropping off. What is causing this and what should we do? New Readers.

Answer — This could be due to a number of things: Botrytis, which can be controlled by copper sprays or ferban applied in the spring. Lack of sufficient boron,

aphids on the leaves, or too much damp weather or lack of water at the roots during dry weather. Walnuts like good air circulation, full sun, plenty of water in dry times but not water standing around the roots. Every three years or so, a little boron under the tree — out to the tips of the branches — will help it. There are a lot of things to know about a tree to prescribe correct treatment. May be by mentioning these, you can diagnose and treat properly.

Question — Have a very nice little Gravenstein apple tree which set quite a bit of fruit this year and now every single apple has dropped off. They didn't all drop

at once, but every day we lost some. Have followed the recommended spray program as you have been giving it in The Statesman. D.G.

Answer — Likely poor pollination from the wet weather. Also sudden hot weather after days of cold weather, and then the great amount of mildew on apples this year, are likely the causes.

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Things to Do

Start that new compost heap. We saw a good one the other evening out at the Carl Wolz home at 641 Wayne Drive. He had made a narrow alleyway by means of two attractive fences, at the back of his garden. At both ends of the alleyway he had built, from painted boards, a compost box. The whole affair was not at all unattractive.

Do a little extra baiting for root weevil in the home strawberry patch and around your azaleas and rhododendrons.

Also bait around arborvitae. Weevils are very hard on these. Remove this year's bearing canes of raspberries as soon as they finish bearing. All new shoots that are not needed for next season's food, should also be removed now.

Plant next year's pansy bed. Get them in (the seed) by mid-August.

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