



# BADGER BONSAI SOCIETY

Promoting and Enjoying the Ancient Art of Bonsai Since 1972

BADGER NEWS | A PUBLICATION OF THE BADGER BONSAI SOCIETY | APRIL 2009

## NEXT MEETING: April 9, 2009

6:30–8:00 pm

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

3330 Atwood Ave. Madison, WI

**MEETING AGENDA:** Bring your own tree to work on, get help and advice from club members pertaining to perfecting your trees. If time Ron will give us advice on applying wound dressing. Discussion on trees for June workshop.

## CLUB OFFICERS:

President..... Ron

Vice President/

Librarian/Newsletter..... Greg

Secretary..... Duke

Treasurer..... Gary

Communications..... Devon

Refreshments..... Elaine

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

For the most part winter is behind us and spring is working its way into our daily schedule. Your trees should be coming out of their dormancy and starting to wake up to another year of growth and change. Last month we demonstrated how the composition of our "soil" can effect the water and oxygen exchange with the roots of our trees. If your tree has not been repotted in several years now would probably be a good time to pull the tree from its current habitat and inspect the rootage and review if some roots can be removed to allow the tree to set lower in its pot or if some large roots can be eliminated to make room for more fine roots. I will bring a couple of photographs of the yew that I had at the March meeting to show you what a healthy root system looks like when pulled from the pot.

This is also a great time to start shaping a tree by controlling the new buds, removing those that will put growth where it is not needed and to fill in where there currently are voids of foliage.

So our main focus for the April meeting will be to work on any trees that you bring to the meeting. We can review them as a group and confirm or suggest what steps you may want to consider for the trees future shape. Therefore the April meeting is basically an open workshop to address one or two of your trees. So bring trees, one minimum, bring plastic to cover the tables and bring any soil, wire or other items that you think may be needed to work on your tree.

We will also talk briefly about establishing a fertilizing schedule for your trees for the coming year, as this should probably start in mid to late April to realize the full benefit of having a plan.

Looking foreword to May we will have an air-layering demonstration and some discussion about show prep. And finally think about signing up for the workshop in June that will be likely be using boxwoods, we will be looking for a general

commitment of attendees so that we can have the proper number of trees available. In May we will have examples of the trees and will need full commitment to the workshop at that time. Right now I am going to do my best to keep the cost in the \$60.00 or lower range but will not be able to confirm this until I go to get stock in late April.

Hope you have had a chance to look at our website, [www.badgerbonsai.net](http://www.badgerbonsai.net), this newsletter should be there also and look at the things Devon has created and let him know what you think and let the board know if you have any other suggestions as to what could be put on the site.

Look forward to seeing you on April 9th at 6:30pm, as the meeting will start promptly to meet our earlier time when we have to leave the building.

Let me know by Wednesday evening on April 6th if you need any supplies that I could bring to the meeting, such as tools, wire, soil, pots, etc.

Think spring,  
Ron

#### **WATER RETENTION EXPERIMENT:**



At March's meeting Ron F performed an experiment meant to demonstrate the water retention of elements used in our bonsai soils. Some elements such as Chicken Grit retain very little water; where as others such as Akadama Clay retains quite a lot of water.

The roots of your Bonsai need water and oxygen to thrive, by knowing what elements in your soil are capable of in delivering this needed water and oxygen,

will help you in creating the appropriate mix of the soil elements to best suit the needs of your trees. Roots use both water and air. Too much water and too little air cause the roots to get soggy, wilt and die. Too much air and too little water will cause the roots to dry out and die.

Large, porous particles hold air and water well. Akadama soil, lava rock, pumice, "Dry Stahl", "Turface", clay cat litter are a few examples of this. Other materials such as sharp granite "Chicken Grit", and decomposed granite provide free and fast drainage of water and also provide places for storage of oxygen. Organic material is also useful in bonsai soil mixes. These also help retain water and even supply some needed nutrients. A Word of caution here: Organic materials do break down and in time will clog the porous holes in the other materials and this will lead to root mortality.

Ron has in the past recommended soil using "Chicken Grit", "Turface", and "Dry Stahl". Bonsai Bob has recommended soils containing "Chicken Grit", "Turface", and an organic called "Ducky Doo". Try different soils with varying combinations of these materials, you need to find one that is right not only for your tree but also for you and how you treat your trees.

### **SPRING CHECKLIST:**

Found this on bonsaiTALK forum, a checklist for spring. Repotting Supplies- gather together things like soil, wire, and drainage screen. Have enough on hand to finish the task. Have the pots cleaned and screened

**Fertilizer** You should start applying organic fertilizers when temperatures start reaching 50-60 degrees.

**Plant's Exterior Health-** Give each plant a thorough look see. Check for wire missed in the fall, wire left on will bite into the newly swelling bark. Look under branches for insect damage. This is where they hide over winter and lay eggs. As soon as the rains stop apply lime sulfur to the jins and sharis, check for rot and treat. **Plants Interior Health-** Check for insects, nematodes are problems seen on the roots. Check for root rot and repair when repotting.

**Clean the Tree Benches-** Insects prefer to lay eggs in dark wet areas. Check undersides and clean well. Sprinkle SEVIN around the area. Try wrapping copper around the footings that touch the ground. This is effective in stopping snails and slugs from finding your trees.

**Watering Systems-** If you have one check to see if it works now, don't wait until the temps reach 100 deg. Don't forget the Potensai- These may need to be repotted also. They need the same attention as your award winning bonsai.

**Set A Goal-** The best way to increasing ones skill level is by goal setting. Pick something that you would like to improve, make the effort to do this religiously the whole year. Be it Fertilizer, wiring, pinching, defoliation, or grooming. Pick one and stick with it. Next year try something else. Your skills will improve.

**Non-Potters-** These need attention also. Remove moss, scrape moss off of trunks, remove top layer of soil, replace this with fresh soil.

**Sharpen those tools-** It really does improve the efficiency of your work. You make better cuts and they heal faster. A little oil on them will help. Disinfect your tools as often as possible, dirty tools transfer nasty critters. Alcohol works best.



**Did you hear of the Zen Master ordering a Hot Dog  
- He wanted one with everything!**

Sometimes bonsai gets a little too serious, I know you are dealing with a living organism, care and trained thought go with the territory. In getting away from the Eastern traditions we westerners are putting in a little levity in our bonsai.



I got a good laugh at this website. [www.crashbonsai.com](http://www.crashbonsai.com). This guy took two hobbies and brought them together. His love of bonsai mixed with modeling of cars. He will take a model put it together figure out how to position it and what needs to be done to it. Disassemble the model add fire, pressure, bending whatever it takes to make it look like a "Crash Bonsai" Use your imagination, have fun with it. It is healthy to be able to laugh at yourself. I remember a long time ago Mary made a comment of making a bonsai like one of our street trees cut like a doughnut with a power line going through it. Enjoy yourself, enjoy your hobby!

Greg



### Story of a Japanese White Pine (*Pinus parvifolia*)

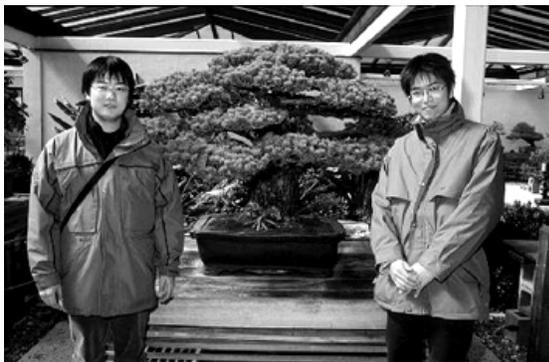
Found this at the National Bonsai Foundation web site.

Thursday, March 8th, 2001 was anything but a typical day at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. That morning two Japanese brothers landed at Dulles Int. Airport and, after checking into their hotel, they headed straight to the museum. Shigeru Yamaki, 21 years old, and his brother, Akira, 20, are the grandsons of the late bonsai master Masaru Yamaki, who in 1976 donated one of his most prized bonsai as part of Japan's Bicentennial gift to the American people.



When the brothers arrived at the Museum, they approached one of the volunteers on duty that day. Yoshiko Tucker, asking her in Japanese for directions to where their grandfather's bonsai might be found. Yoshiko and another volunteer, Michiko Hansen, quickly alerted Curator Warren Hill that important visitors had arrived. Warren then greeted the brothers and guided them to the magnificent Yamaki bonsai.

This Japanese White Pine (*Pinus parvifolia*) is approx. 375 years old, and is the oldest specimen in the Japanese Bonsai Collection. Masaru Yamaki had made the gift of this bonsai before the brothers were born and so they had never seen it, although they were very familiar with it through photographs and family stories. As they stood respectfully in front of their grandfather's ancient bonsai, Warren could not imagine the bonsai's hidden past that was about to be revealed to him.



Warren invited the two brothers to lunch. Yoshiko and Michiko also joined the group, and they translated the ensuing dialog with the brothers. The Museum's records showed that the Yamaki bonsai had been donated by Masaru Yamaki of Hiroshima, but little was known about the donor or the history of the Pine.

The brothers explained that their family had operated a commercial bonsai nursery in Hiroshima for several generations, but now the nursery is a private bonsai collection. Their father (Masaru's son), Yasuo Yamaki, is a landscape architect and a member of the Hiroshima Prefectural Assembly; Their mother, Michiko is an artist. They live in the family home, which is adjacent to the bonsai garden. Former students of Masaru Yamaki now take care of the family's large bonsai collection.

**But what happened at 8:15 in the morning of August 6, 1945, when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima?**

On that day, Shigeru said that all the family members (his grandparents and their young son- Shigeru's father) were inside their home. The bomb exploded about three kilometers (less than two miles) from the family compound. The blast blew out all the glass windows in the home, and each member of the family was cut from the flying glass fragments. Miraculously, however, none of them suffered any permanent injury.

Masaru Yamaki became a very influential member of the Japanese bonsai community, living until age 89. His widow, Ritsu Yamaki, is now 91 and still living in the family home with Shigeru's father and mother.

**And what about the Yamaki Pine?**

The great old Japanese White Pine and a large number of other bonsai were sitting on benches in the garden. Amazingly none of these bonsai were harmed by the blast either, because the nursery was protected by a tall wall. A Japanese broadcasting

company would later film the bonsai garden and report on how the wall had saved the bonsai.

When Shigeru returned to Japan, he obtained from his father a wealth of information, including photographs, documenting the illustrious bonsai career of Masaru Yamaki. On September 1 of this year, Shigeru came back to Washington, D.C. bringing with him copies of these invaluable historical materials. The Foundation hosted a luncheon in honor of Shigeru on September 3, attended by Warren Hill, Jack Sustie Young Choe, Yoshima Komiyama, Kazuma Maki (a friend of Shigeru from Japan, and Felix Laughlin.

Shigeru confirmed that his grandfather's bonsai originally came from Miyajima Island which is just south of Hiroshima, Japanese White Pine bonsai from Miyajima are considered very valuable because they are so rare.

Masaru Yamaki was proud to have given his Japanese White Pine bonsai to the American people as part of Japan's Bicentennial gift. (For the story behind the Bicentennial gift see *The Bonsai Saga- How the Bicentennial Collection Came to America* by Dr. John Creech, published by the National Bonsai Federation in 2001) After the Japanese White Pine arrived at the U.S. National Arboretum, he came to see it in its new home in the Japanese Pavilion at the Arboretum (now part of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum).

Masaru Yamaki learned the art and science of bonsai from his father, Katsutaro Yamaki. After WWII, Masaru Yamaki was one of the leaders of the effort to revive bonsai as a commercial enterprise in Japan, and he served for many years as the director of a cooperative association that promoted the production of improved varieties of bonsai in the Hiroshima area.

He was well known for his masterpiece Japanese Black Pines (*pinus thunbergii*) as well as his Japanese White Pines. Bill Valavanis visited Masaru Yamaki in 1970. He recalls being struck by Mr. Yamaki's magnificent Japanese Black Pines with extremely heavy trunks planted in very small pots. This combination illustrated the technical knowledge and skill required to produce small feeder roots on a heavy trunk necessary to keep the tree living in a small container. He also remembers some very unusual Nishiki Japanese White Pines having corky bark. Mr. Yamaki had one of the original cultivars.

Friends of Mr. Yamaki included the other leading figures in the bonsai world in Japan, such as Saburo Kato, and Toshiji Yoshimura (father of Yuji Yoshimura). In 1983, he was awarded the prestigious "Yellow Ribbon Medal" by Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone- the first such award given to a member of the bonsai industry. To commemorate Mr. Yamaki's receipt of the Yellow Ribbon Award, the famous sculptor, Katsuzo Entsuba (himself a member of the Order of Culture Award, the highest award given in Japan for contribution made in developing Japanese culture) produced a limited-edition cinnabar ink-seal bronze box.

The Yamaki Pine is truly a testament to peace and beauty, and we are fortunate to realize the miracle of its survival in 1945.

We are very grateful to Shigeru Yamaki and his father, Yasao Yamaki, for the most interesting information and photographs they have provided concerning the Yamaki Bonsai and its donor, the bonsai master Masaru Yamaki. For more of these

photographs, please visit the WBF website at [www.bonsai-nbf.org](http://www.bonsai-nbf.org).

Over time, we hope to uncover additional historical information about the other bonsai in the Museum, and intend to report on those efforts in future issues of the NBF website.

I know I visited the National Arboretum around 1985 I will need to check old photos to see if I took any bonsai pictures. If anyone else might have any pictures from the Bonsai pavilion and want to share them with other members please bring them to a meeting.

Greg

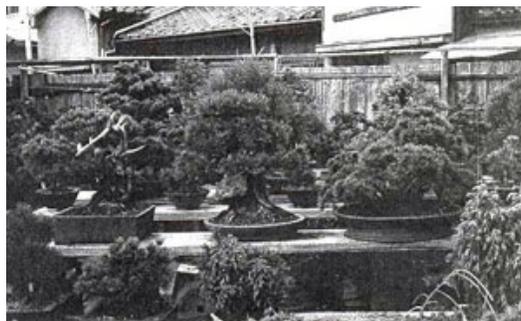
### Masaru Yamaki's Views on Appreciating Bonsai

Each bonsai has its special qualities. Some express changes in the four seasons, while others express the elegance of nature in a pot.

Bonsai is not limited to expensive trees in a classic shape. Indeed, by using excessive wire or growing unnecessary branches in order to create a classic shape, the artist may fail to express the trees essential beauty.

Trees best expressing bonsai no kokoro (the spirit of bonsai) are often marked by unaffected simplicity. Even if the tree has a slender trunk, it can still touch one's heart deeply, conveying with overflowing vitality the beauty of nature in fields and mountains.

Masaru Yamaki



**JOHN NAKA HAIKU**

Last Leaf Has Fallen  
Tree Will Sleep And I Will Dream  
Spring Is Tomorrow

