



BADGER BONSAI SOCIETY

Promoting and Enjoying the Ancient Art of Bonsai Since 1972

NEXT MEETING:

November 12, 2009

6:30–8:00 pm

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

3330 Atwood Ave. Madison, WI

MEETING AGENDA:

club elections and ideas for meeting activities.

CLUB OFFICERS:

President..... Ron

Vice President/

Librarian/Newsletter..... Greg

Secretary..... Duke

Treasurer..... Gary

Communications..... Devon

Refreshments..... Elaine

President's Message November 2009

Another season of bonsai growing is on its way to winter hibernation, but there is still time to finish those things that you should do before your trees settle in for their long winters nap.

There is still time to do the following:

- One last fertilization of 0-10-10 or similar fertilizer that will help your trees build strength for next year
- Spray your trees to kill any pests that have set up residence on your trees. I highly recommend a combination Fungicide/Insecticide/Miticide to address all possible scenarios
- If you have pines there is still time to pluck needles to help promote back-budding of new buds for next spring
- Time to prune your deciduous trees to even out the bud break for next year
- Remove weeds from your pots
- Remove moss that is growing up the trunks of your trees

If you are burying your trees in the ground now is the time before the ground is frozen.

If you are storing your trees in the garage of a cold frame you still have some time because you want your trees to go into dormancy before packing them away.

And DON'T forget you will still need to WATER your trees, not as often but they will need some water.

At our November meeting we have a number of items to review and act upon. The first will be the election of a new slate of club officers. We will need volunteers for the following officer positions:

- President - be the focal point of club functions and ensure that individuals are in place to lead club functions (examples- Club show; Meeting programs; Workshops)
- Vice President – be the back-up to the president should they not be able to attend, or conduct functions
- Treasurer – Collect Dues from members and disperse club funds as necessary
- Secretary – Record meeting minutes when necessary and work with treasurer to ensure that new members are welcome to the club.
- Webmaster – Maintain club website with posting of current newsletter and other club information

All of these offices are for One Year terms with the Presidents office having a two consecutive term maximum, to keep the leadership fresh. Other offices may be reelected beyond two terms.

Just a reminder to all members you do not have to be knowledgeable about all things bonsai to be an officer. These positions help guide the direction of the club, and manage the clubs finances, they do not have to teach bonsai. Because we are a relatively small club all members need to step up and help manage the clubs functions, we cannot rely on just a few members to carry the load all the time. So please consider volunteering for one of the positions for next year.

Finally we started some discussions on what topics we would like to address next year at our meetings. I took some notes and below are what I recall being brought up and at our November meeting we can narrow these down and decide which ones we will address in which months next year:

- Sketching/Drawing Workshop to help those who would like to learn how to draw their trees
- Discussion about Design as it pertains to bonsai
- Discussion about pots and how and why certain pots are better selections for some trees than others
- Possible collecting trip in the wild or possible urban collecting
- Visit a nursery and learn how to pick stock with bonsai potential
- Repotting session
- Review basic bonsai skills – proper tool use, wiring techniques, making jin and shari
- Have our May show judged and critiqued
- Consider a Fall One day show
- Tanuki/Phoenix Workshop (using a piece of deadwood and blending a live tree to it)
- Guest Artist Demonstration and Workshop
- Club Member Garden Tours
- Group plantings – Amur maples or other species.

As you can see we have a vast number of possibilities to choose from and if you have something that is not listed above bring that idea along so that it can be added to things we have to choose from.

See you on November 12th, come early, vote early and like in Chicago, vote often.

Ron



Please make sure to attend our next meeting. Officer elections are very necessary to ensure the health of our club. Also to be discussed at this meeting will be topics and events for the following year. Come, give us some ideas of things in the world of bonsai that interest **YOU** items that you would like to learn more of like repotting, insect control, pots, wiring, how to choose trees, anything, but you need to let us know so we can plan for the next year. To temporarily jump ahead at our December meeting will be our Christmas/holiday meeting, be thinking of what holiday treats you are going to bring to share with the rest of us. It is a club tradition to bring your favorite holiday treats to share with us all. Another tradition is to have our January meeting at the Imperial Gardens West on Allen Blvd in Middleton, good food good company. Also speaking of traditions, club dues will be coming up shortly, membership costs will be discussed. See you all Thursday night.

Greg

Earlier this summer while checking out the vast expansive Griffin Gardens and Bonsai Collection, I was aghast to find 40 or 50 nasty crawly goey caterpillars, well very soon after they became goey, on my only Pine almost bonsai. The one we worked on at a workshop at Bob's house. After looking closer it was determined that they were Pine Shoot Tip Moths and eating ferociously on the young tender new needles. I know that they were not there a week ago, but in less than a week there were 40 to 50 1/2 inch long writhing, wiggly, worms dining on my tree. Mad that all those bird feeders that I installed to bring in all sorts of birds which normally are supposed to like eating bugs like caterpillars, only brought in nasty noisy Grackles and Starlings which seemed to get angry at me if their precious seeds got damp or heaven forbid the feeders became devoid of food. Since the birds did nothing but leave deposits on my deck furniture, my next thought was to introduce the wigglers to the dark side of two flat rocks, not able to locate two appropriate pieces of granite, I was able to locate my trusty bottle of Insecticidal Soap. Half a bottle later, one fully drenched pine (I've read that you are not supposed to use this stuff on Japanese Maples), the little buggers lay unmoving in a wet goey mass. One crisis solved, I thoroughly checked out all the other trees in that area, nothing on anything else. No other bugs of any kind were seen ever again, this year anyway. Given another week I believe they would of eaten all the needles, even the older ones, totally

denuding this poor pine. As is I only lost new growth on part of the tree. This is not the proper form of needle plucking which Ron has talked about but maybe I will see some back budding in the next few years.



Thinking I was clear of any bug problem other than mosquito's, I enjoyed the rest of the summer and fall. Last month as I was watering my Schefflera bonsai I noticed that the pot itself was sticky, a couple of dead leaf clusters lying on the table was anything out of the ordinary. Now since the wife has no clue as to keeping anything green alive within the house, there is nothing alive except a few hardy dust mites, this is the only thing green within the home boundaries. This plant has not been moved in months, never taken outside, but on closer inspection there were dark spots on the undersides of some leaves. Being the pot as well as some leaves had sticky stuff on them I first thought of aphids, but I couldn't see any of the little suckers. A few days later while sitting in a chair next to the tree, the sun was shining in through the window and glowing through the tree, I saw dark dots as shadows on the underside of the leaves, upon closer inspection there they were, scale, not the big white wooly scale I am aware of but small dark scale of some sort. As young these little buggers crawl around. As the females get older they become settled (go figure) anchor themselves to the plant and grow a hard shell to cover them from predators and start to suck the life out of the plant(I won't say anything here). Control in the early stages of life is fairly easy as they succumb to Insecticidal Soap, Pyrethrin spray, Neem oil, a lot of sprays can take down when in the crawler stage. Control is much more difficult once they cover themselves and stabilize. The spray does not penetrate the shell. Other than picking off individuals with something sharp, or cutting off individual leaves, many treatments over time are necessary. This is mostly to control the males or young as they are free to move around and have soft bodies which are susceptible to sprays. Something I have just recently heard of is to mix 50% Isopropyl Alcohol with 50% water and spray the plant, top to bottom, taking care to get the underside of the leaves, do this at least once a week for as long as it needs. As the tree is under stress from the bugs as well as the treatment, continue fertilizing, watering and other care operations you normally do, to strengthen the tree. Refrain from assaulting the tree with any other stress inducing trauma such as major pruning, wiring, etc. Hopefully over time the tree will stabilize and the bugs will die. I will let you know how mine turns out.

Greg

Tools for the Beginning Bonsai Artist
by Julian R. Adams

BONSAI Magazine, May/June 1998
Reprinted in BONSAI NEWS January 2000

Those who are newly interested in the art of bonsai are often unsure about what tools are necessary to begin developing their bonsai skills. Three or four basic tools will equip one to perform most of the tasks necessary to produce and maintain an intermediate to advanced bonsai collection. It is the intent of this article to discuss the useful characteristics of basic tools and some of the more advanced, and less frequently used, tools in order to help neophytes decide which tools are needed right away and which can wait for later purpose.

The Concave Pruner

The single most important bonsai tool is the concave pruner. Its primary function is to remove branches in a manner that promotes rapid and smooth healing of the wound. Its name comes from the shape of the cut and wound left on the woody trunk or branch. When properly used the concave pruner leaves a wound on the trunk that is taller than it is wide and slightly concave. The characteristic shape of the concave pruner wound makes use of the fact that wounds on the trunk of trees heal in from the sides rather than from the top and bottom. The concave depression into the trunk allows the wound to callous over without creating undesirable bump on the trunk. The 8 inch concave pruner is the most versatile size.

The geometry of the cutting edges of the concave pruner is very precise. This allows one to use the pointed end for pruning very tiny limbs and even individual leaves. To preserve this precise geometry, concave pruners should never be forced by cutting material that is too large or too hard. A general rule is to never cut material that is larger than one half the size of the pruners cutting edge measured from heel to tip. The typical 8 inch pruner is about right for cutting branches 1 1/2 inches in diameter or smaller. When cutting near capacity in size or extra hard wood, it is recommended to use the portion of the blades near the heel, rather than near the tip. This utilizes the extra thickness of the blades near the heel as well as the better mechanical advantage resulting from this portion of the cutting surfaces being closer to the tools pivot.

All tools have a range of useful performance. If the limb is too thick for a concave pruner or has potential of splitting back into the bonsai, make the cut using a saw or large conventional pruner. The cut should be about one inch from the trunk. Then use a knob cutter to nibble away the stub and to contour the final wound surface on the trunk. Use of knob cutters is discussed later.

The Bud Scissors

Bud scissors are the best tools for trimming leaves, buds, and small branches. The short blades and finger holes give excellent control, enabling the user to reach into interior parts of the bonsai for trimming with precision. Although primarily used for delicate work, the mechanical advantage generated by the short blades gives considerable cutting power when needed. As the blades of the bud scissors are closed, the

shafts of the handles remain apart. This helps prevent inadvertent crushing of other parts of the bonsai by the closing handle shafts.

Bonsai Wire Cutters

Training bonsai normally involves the use of wire to position and shape trunk and branches. Either aluminum or annealed copper wire is used for this purpose. The wire cutter commonly available at the local hardware store are adequate for cutting wire when applying it to bonsai. This is not the case when cutting the wire to remove it from the bonsai being trained. It is good practice to remove training wire by cutting it off. The training wire is in close contact with the trunk or limb. Therefore only the tip of the wire cutter is used to sever the wire. Otherwise the branch may be seriously damaged. Relatively long cutting blades on hardware store cutters have very little mechanical advantage at the tips, making wire removal a difficult chore. Those with physical ailments such as tennis elbow or arthritis may find wire removal quite unpleasant with standard wire cutters.

Bonsai wire cutters have very short cutting blades. This greatly increases the mechanical advantage of the tool. For years I used a standard wire cutter to save the cost of buying bonsai wire cutters. This was false economy! I can't believe I tortured my elbow for so long over the price of a relatively inexpensive tool.

The Knob Cutter

This tool sometimes called the melon ball cutter has several unique capabilities. It is a valuable addition to the bonsai tool kit even though it is used much less frequently than concave pruners or bud scissors. The cutting blades of the knob cutter are shaped somewhat like two halves of a sphere coming together. The shape allows the tool to aggressively bite into the wood. Protruding stubs are easily and quickly nibbled away by the knob cutter in a controlled fashion. It can remove lots of wood quickly yet is precise enough to shape the final surface cut on the trunk or branch. An additional use of the knob cutter is the removal of undesirable root or trunk material in the area of a partially removed tap root.

Julian R. Adams

For more information about bonsai tools and their uses and or their care check with Ron at our next meeting. He carries a large tool bag with many varied tools of all sized for almost any task. He also has many tools that he would be happy to sell to you.

The above article was posted in an old copy of our newsletter from the year 2000, as the club librarian I have access to most of them covering many years. Trying to catalog all of them and also the many Bonsai magazines which the club has seems to be a daunting task. Something I have been attempting to do over the last few years. I am working on a list and a brief summery of the contents of each magazine that we have. As I get to this I will be posting to the website in the library area. Right now I have a list of books available to members, to this I am trying to include a short book report for each title. This will help you to decide if a book or magazine would be worth checking out. Please if you are interested in a book or magazine let me know and I can bring it to the next meeting. Since it is getting to be winter and there is not much left to do with your trees. Reading and or just looking at the pictures of completed Bonsai will be a nice time mover as you sit next to the fire, drinking warm mulled cider.

Thanks
Greg



