



BADGER BONSAI SOCIETY

Promoting and Enjoying the Ancient Art of Bonsai Since 1972

Badger News | A Publication of the Badger Bonsai Society | OCTOBER, 2010

NEXT MEETING DATE: October 14th, 2010

6:30–8:00 p.m.
Olbrich Botanical Gardens
3330 Atwood Ave. Madison, WI

MEETING AGENDA: FALL CLEAN UP & WINTER PREP.

Bring in bonsai that need TLC before Winter 2010/11 sets in. Fall is a great time to check for biting-wire, prune dead foliage and get ready to protect your trees until next Spring. Plus Winter storage tips; group discussion while we work.

CLUB OFFICERS:

- President** Tim
- 1st Vice President** Matthew
- 2nd Vice President**..... Devon
- Secretary**Duke
- Treasurer** Gary
- Librarian / Newsletter**Greg
- Refreshments**Elaine
- Past President**..... Ron

That Time of Year - President's Message

By: Tim

Tears are welling up in my eyes... Pardon me... Okay, we are nearing the end of the bonsai season. Although tropicals and subtropicals stay indoors and, for the most part, can be worked on all year long, most of us have collections consisting mostly of hardy plants able to thrive in our climate zones. Junipers, maples, pines, etc. need to stay outside all year long and should have always been outside. This is the hardest concept for people new to the art to grasp. That's right, do not purchase cold hardy trees at Christmas time. They should be dormant and need the cold to stay that way.

This is old boring stuff for most of us. This month we will show and talk about ways that other members winter over their trees. Even the old hard and crusty bonsai enthusiast can learn new ideas. Not all of the ideas will be practical and cost appropriate for everyone, but I do think important ideas can be gleaned from what is said and shown. I will also demonstrate how to prepare wire, mix soil, and present an easy design for a bonsai stand. There are some chores to keep us busy, at least for a while, during the late fall and early winter. During the mad spring rush of transplanting and pruning, you will be glad that you prepared ahead of time. Now if only I would heed my own advice.



Fall colors, it's one reason we love the Midwest, after all.

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Come to the meeting, chat with other members, have some coffee and cookies, and participate in the discussion. Oh, by the way, next month is elections. Please consider trying for an office. All people presently in all of the positions would prefer a break. Ideally, new people in every position would be nice to help keep up the energy and creative ideas. In smaller member changing organizations, this is not always possible. As president, you do not have to be a teacher and be super

Trees of the Month

Trees with fall colors and/or anything you need to work on or wish to ask advice about.

If you have a tree that is showing it's Fall colors, please bring it in and share with the club. Also, we're nearing the end of our Bonsai calendar and if you have a tree you wish to bring it to clean up before winter, this will be a great night for that.

President's Message Continued...

knowledgeable. You do need to take charge, organize, and help come up with new programs. You can use other members to lead various programs. All of us would prefer a break. We have a great bunch of dedicated people filling these positions. They have remained in those positions only because no one else has stepped forward. Please give me a call at to let me know your interest or just show up in November. Maybe you could talk to someone else into running for an office. Please, please do not be put off if others are running for that position. I would appreciate just your trying. Once you are in that office, me and others are always available for advice, even if we are not holding any office. I have an opinion on just about everything.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the meeting,
– Tim

P.S. So, I have an ego. Last month, I bought the last Carissa and I took it home to style and re-pot. It looks really cool. Unfortunately my arms are going to be too full to bring it to the meeting. Stop by if you would like to see it. In a few weeks it is going to my niece.

October Announcements

By: Devon

Bring a tree to October's meeting to remove old wire, set new wire, pull weeds, prune the dead foliage, etc. I don't recommend any branch pruning at this time because as the trees go dormant, you run the risk of die back. Not to mention, you just might lose a branch or two over winter and there is no reason to make things worse come spring. October is a great time to finish up any end of year business on your tree.

Speaking of business, as Tim stated in this month's president's message, officer elections are next month (as are mid-terms for our country, which are far more important, I digress...). Please consider running for an office. Get involved in the club at



a deeper level. Help guide the programming to include workshops and subject matter YOU are interested in discussing. If you are interested in being an officer and have any questions, please don't hesitate to approach one of the officers at the next meeting to discuss the requirements. There is not a tremendous amount of time commitment and being involved at this level is quite rewarding.

Speaking of getting involved, I am still most interested in receiving content from members for the newsletter and the website. Help us grow our Friends on Facebook by liking us and spread our word by following us on Twitter (if you do Facebook and Twitter, of course). This past month, I posted an article on the website about overwintering your bonsai. I've repropose that article in this issue of the newsletter.

Speaking of overwintering (sensing a trend here?) please bring your stories and methods of how you protect your bonsai over the harsh Wisconsin winters. This is the kind of thing that will require trial and error. We lose trees over winter. It's a sad fact of being a bonsai artist and living in Wisconsin. However the more experienced members have found methods that work for them. They have also tried things that have NOT worked. Please bring your war stories so we can swap stories while we work on or trees. If you have photos, great but they are not required.

And finally, speaking of what's required, fun and enjoyment are requirements for this hobby. I hope you are all enjoying yourselves as you work on your living-works-of-art. Any hobby should bring you enjoyment and bonsai is no different. Patience is another requirement as these are living things and have a mind of their own. Be patient, have fun. I recently heard "Bonsai is a journey, not a destination, enjoy the journey."



Winter Storage

By: Devon

Depending on where you live, fall clean up and winter preparation can mean many different things. For the purposes of this article I will focus on Wisconsin, where Badger Bonsai Society resides. I'll discuss winter storage for hardy plants (juniper, pine, maple, etc.) as tropical species (ficus, schefflera, carissa, etc.) could not possibly be expected to survive the winters of Wisconsin and must move indoors by September 1st or earlier.

Wisconsin runs the climate zones from 3-5 which means the temperature can be as low as -10 to -30o f. In my opinion, it's best to assume that it can drop below -20, if even for a few hours, so the plants must be protected or they can dry out, roots can burst and pottery will shatter. Why not just bring them all inside you ask? Because they are hardy, outdoor trees which require a dormancy, a period of rest. If you keep your hardy trees inside, they will eventually exhaust themselves and die.



A snow covered cold frame

You can overwinter your hardy bonsai in an unheated, rarely used shed or garage, nestled in garden beds, or in a climate controlled greenhouse kept just above freezing, say at 34of. Most of us will not have the greenhouse option, and if you did, you probably don't need this article, so I will explore the outdoor options I mentioned.

I've had the best luck building bonsai shelters on the East side of my house, right up next to my foundation. The North side may work as well, though mine is not as accessible, so I use the East. The North and East sides will receive the least amount of temperature fluctuation, you don't need sunlight, you need a constant temperature.

Starting around Halloween and finishing by Thanksgiving, I perform the following winter storage ritual, and my trees are alive and well come spring:

1. I place the trees on a small platform of bricks and lumber, to keep them off the ground and discourage insects from taking up residents in the pot.
2. Then I build a crude chicken-wire hoop structure, leaving the top completely open (this is VERY important), but tall enough to be higher than the tallest tree. This is to discourage the larger pests from making a home under my branches and feeding on my tree trunks through the season.
3. Next, I wrap the outside of the fencing with a tarp (construction plastic will work too) on the three exposed sides (remember, one side is next to my house) and secure it to keep the cold, drying winds from attacking my bonsai. I water as I would this time of year. Don't stop watering!
4. When the maple trees in my yard drop their leaves, I back fill my structures with the fallen leaves. This keeps the trees insulated, breathable and you can water though the leaves.
5. As the snow begins to fall, I start to construct an igloo of sorts around the sides of the structure, again leaving the top mostly open. I build up the walls right up to the side of my foundation and put some snow on top to keep the constant temperature.



A "hoop house" constructed of wood and tarps.

Constant temperature, that is the name of the game!

Assuming you work with species that can withstand our climate, keeping a constant temperature is how you keep your bonsai alive. The reason I keep the tops of my structures open is to keep from having a heat buildup during the day, only to drop and condense during the night. Keeping them next to my house ensure a little bit of warmth as my home will be warmer than my open yard. On the east (or north) side, keeps the least amount of sun. A shed works well as does an unheated garage. BUT, if you use your garage (open and closing the door two plus times a day) I would recommend another location as the temp exchange will be great as the big door open to park a car plus the heat from the car as it comes into the garage and cools off. This could be just enough to freeze/thaw/freeze your bonsai causing irreparable damages to the tiny branches and roots.



Plastic tubs containing bonsai and back filled with mulch and kept in an unheated garage for the season.

This is very similar to my method of tarps and leaves.



A cold frame prior to being closed up for the season.

If you have the space and the back for this kind of thing, short of a temperature controlled greenhouse, I'd say this is one of the best ways to overwinter bonsai.

Badger Bonsai Goes Global

E-mail: info.badgerbonsai.net

Web site: badgerbonsai.net

Twitter: twitter.com/BadgerBonsai

Facebook: [tinyurl.com/39bqy22](https://www.facebook.com/tinyurl.com/39bqy22)



Actually, the real Facebook URL is insanely long, so I created this "tiny URL" as a faster way to get to the page.

Four ways to share and enjoy your club:

Facebook

Twitter

Web/RSS

E-mail



Make a Bigger Trunk

By: Greg

A few months back I wrote an article for the newsletter on making a better Nebari starting with cuttings. Since cuttings take sooo long to produce a Bonsai, 10 to 15 years, I came across an article on making a fatter trunk on an established tree. The article came out of a recent Bonsai magazine but I put it away and have forgotten which one it was or what month, so I will do this from memory with a little editorial embellishment. I will not have any fancy photos so I hope that I can write this as descriptively as possible.

Most of our Bonsai come from landscape material. These plants are grown by nurseries with one thing in mind "Grow the plant as quickly and as large as possible in as little time as is needed." This is done by growing in shade houses and copious amounts of water with a lot of fertilizer added each time the plant is watered. This results in large bushy plants with trunks all one size from the bottom up. Since in Bonsai trunk taper is highly valued, these uniformly sized stems are one of the more detrimental aspects of using landscape material.

How does one go about making a tree with good trunk taper! The question here is in doing it in as little time as possible. In nature it would take 50 to 100 years to achieve the taper that a proper Bonsai deserves. Our western lifestyle and culture do not allow our thought process to comprehend this. We desire results almost immediately if not sooner! I have read articles on growing trunks using proper plant nutrition, sunlight, talking to the trees, making vertical cuts in the trunk, and beating the trunk with rolled up newspapers, these last two actu-



ally work by loosening the cambium and creating scar tissue which fattens the trunk. The following procedure is like the last two, is quite invasive and needs to be preformed on a very healthy tree.

This procedure is best done while one does a normal re-potting, since this is quite time intensive make sure you have plenty of water to keep the roots from drying out. Get the roots to the point that you need them, cleaned, groomed and pruned, turn the tree root side up, don't forget to moisten the roots. Take a very sharp knife, razor blade knives work the best, technology has allowed us to make new blades that are sharper, thinner, and stronger than normal. The sharper the blade the thinner the cut, making for a cleaner cut and thus healing is quicker and with less stress on the tree. Make one cut through the trunk from the roots up a few inches, See I told you that this was quite invasive. Take care not to cut your fingers as you are dealing with a sharp knife and probably not cutting in the safest direction. Don't forget to moisten the roots. Take a cleaned small pebble, pea gravel is a good size, and wedge it into the cut. This separates the trunk at the base and gives you the desired taper, To avoid rotting of the wood, and introducing nasty little viruses and bacteria into your tree, the open wound needs to be sealed. In the past I have read of people using a car repair product called Bondo to fill the split, any non-shrinkable product will work, non-shrinkable being the key point here. Don't forget to moisten the roots! In the article they recommend using the product Hydraulic Cement, This product is made for use in basements for sealing cracks in walls to stop moisture from seeping in. This makes sense since the product is non-shrinking, it also will not break down in a moist environment over a number of years, being non organic will not react with the tree. Also the cement is not made with lime like our normal Portland Cement and will not effect the pH of the soil. Wedge the cement into the split in the tree making sure that there are no air pockets. Smooth the outside visible edges of the cement. Taking care re-pot the tree in your normal bonsai soil. If using wires to tie down the tree do so carefully so as not damage the still form-able cement.

Treat the tree as you would normally do after a re-potting, Start fertilizing as you would normally do. Remember this plant has been through an extremely stressful procedure, but trees are quite forgiving and as the tree grows it should start growing callouses around the cement. Depending on the tree variety, some trees grow callouses faster than others, over time this split should grow over giving your new bonsai a nice tapered trunk.

Good luck.
- Greg

WANTED

Dead or Alive



Wanted for wanton destruction to bonsai plants throughout the Greater Madison Metropolitan Area.

Considered to be armed to the teeth with nuts and should be approached with extreme caution.

Aliases Include: Mr. Squirrel and YOU LITTLE \$%#*@!