

May, 2005

Bonsai News



*Milwaukee
Bonsai Society*

*P.O. Box 198
Brookfield, Wisconsin
53208-0198*

*Information Line
414-299-9229*

MAY MEETING – Steve Pilacik Demonstration

Steve Pilacik is a special educator, bonsai nursery owner and bonsai teacher. He will be giving a presentation and styling demonstration on. You won't want to miss this one! Steve is the owner of Matsu Momiji Nursery in North Carolina, which specializes in field grown material. Steve has been involved in Bonsai since 1975 and is especially known for his work with Japanese Black Pines. He is the author of an acclaimed book on Japanese Black Pine, and has authored numerous articles in *Bonsai Today*, *International Bonsai*, *Bonsai Clubs International*, *American Bonsai Society* and other publications.

Even better, we plan to raffle off the demonstration tree at the end of the night. So it's a great chance to learn a lot and maybe bring home a terrific tree.

Water Testing

There was so much interest in the testing of water for pH and TDS that there will be a repeat performance. We don't want to interfere with our speaker but if you want to have your water tested, bring a sample to the May meeting. Jack will bring his tester and will test the samples while Steve is doing his demo.

LAST MINUTE OPENINGS FOR BLACK PINE WORKSHOP!!!

We looking for 2 people to take the workshop with Steve Pilacik. It is only \$150 for a beautiful black pine. The workshop is at the church 9-1, on Saturday, April 30. If interested call Darlene Shaginaw 414-445-1743.

MBS Meetings and Information Line:

The Milwaukee Bonsai Society meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church, 3030 W. Oklahoma Avenue. Call the MBS Voice Mail/Message System at (414) 299-9229 to learn about upcoming events and meeting times. To contact the club via email: mbs@asapnet.net Look for us on the web at: <http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org>

KRIS' KORNER

I hope you were able to make it to our April meeting and enjoyed the festivities of the group 'slash'! So much energy is created when folks are working on trees. If you were able to walk around the room and check out the artists at work, you know what I mean. Again, thanks to Al Durtka for judging again this year. If you would like to work with others in your area (i.e. Wauwatosa, North Shore, South Milwaukee, etc), we will have sign up sheets at the next meeting. That way, if you wish to participate, you can call others on the list and set times and locations for your 'study' group. I have always found that I enjoy working on my trees more when I'm with other people. It's a chance to share ideas and expertise. And it's a terrific opportunity for new members to learn a lot. If you're not able to make it to the meeting, but would like to participate in a study group, please email me (krisziemann@mac.com) or call 262-512-1228.

At our May meeting, Steve Pilacik, will be styling a black pine (which will then go up for raffle). I don't know too much about black pines (even though I have one), so I am looking forward to the information Steve will have for us all. 10 lucky people will already have participated in Steve's workshop on Saturday April 30 (at the church 9:00 - 1:00). If you have not gotten a spot, there are still 2 openings. The cost is \$150 for a beautiful black pine and a lot of expert help in styling it. See Page 1 for details on how to get in. But if you don't get a spot, you can always come as a silent observer and pay \$5 at the door.

Our June meeting is our Club Show. You will have the opportunity to view our members beautiful creations. This show is also a warm-up for our exhibit at State Fair. Comments from the judge in June are greatly appreciated, so that improvements can be made before the State Fair.

Also, Donna Krischan, the photographer who was at our February meeting, will be on hand to take pictures. We will have her prices in our next newsletter. AND having the trees right there, we will have a discussion on tree styles.

Of help to those of you who will be exhibiting at the State Fair, in the next newsletter will be the

evaluation form that the judges will be using. Something to think about as you are preparing your trees.

I'll wrap it up right now and wish that you are having a warm and wonderful spring day.

Kris

WAYWARD TREES

Last fall, I handed out some junipers for some club members to style. I have received all back but 2. Unfortunately I didn't write down everyone's name. If you have these 2 trees, please contact me.

2005 Club Events Calendar

April

Saturday 30 - Black pine workshop

May

Tuesday 3 - Black Pine Demo - Steve Pilacik

Saturday 7 - Novice Class Nursery Crawl

Saturday 14 - Novice Class #4

Fri 20 - Sun 22 - Chicago Show

June

Tuesday 7 - Club Show, Styles, photography

Friday 17 - Sunday 19 - Asian Moon Festival

Sat 25 - Sun 26 - Master's Class

July

Tuesday 5 - Martha Meehan / Tropical Demonstration

Wed 6 - PM Workshop with Martha Meehan - one species

Thur 7 - PM Workshop with Martha Meehan - Bring your own tree

Sat 9 - Wauwatosa Show

August

Tues 2 - Styles: What to look for in nursery stock for a particular style

Thur 4 - Sun 14 Wisconsin State Fair

Fri 19 - Sun 21 - Chicago Summer Show

AND MORE EVENTS TO COME!!!

Collecting Trip

Milt Mandelin, who moved to the northern part of the state last year has been able to get permission for us to collect from some of the government property up where he lives, which is around Hurley. When I talked to him last week, he said that here was still snow in the woods! My thought would be to drive up on a Saturday, collect on Sunday AM and return Sunday afternoon and evening. However, we have to wait for the weather to cooperate, so the date of the trip is not clear. Probably some time in May. If you are interested call Jack at 414/228-9628 and let him know.

(The following is stolen from "The Florida Bonsai Magazine" who stole it from "Bonsai News & Notes" the official newsletter of Fort Walton Beach Bonsai Society, Inc., who stole it from "Tiny Tree Talk" the official newsletter of the South Georgia Bonsai Club, written by Denicia Ellis-Clarit. Submitted by Kris Ziemann)

Bonsai Prime Directives and Universal Truths

Rule #1 – The expression "Root easily from a cutting" is a term which applies to everyone but you.

Rule #2 – In a workshop situation, your wire becomes community property.

Rule #3 – Rule 2 also applies to your tools. Amendment to Rule #3 - wire is the first thing that anyone who borrows your new \$75 stainless steel concave cutter will attempt to sever. If the

individual has no wire available, they will either borrow some (see Rule #2) or attempt to cut rocks in the soil mass.

Rule #4 – Fertilizing a bonsai has the same exact effect upon local weather conditions as washing your car.

Rule #5 – Wisteria, mume, crab apple and crepe myrtle will bloom easily and in profusion for everyone. (This statement does not apply to you.)

Rule #6 – If two trees are collected side by side on the same day and given identical care, one will eventually live and one will die. The tree that dies will not only be the best of the two specimens from a design standpoint, but will also be the one which had the best root system.

Rule #7 – If the tree you choose to collect from the wild has no root system, you will become aware of this fact only after having lugged a 50 pound "root ball" at least one mile cross-country through extensive patches of thorn bushes, muck and loose rock.

Rule #8 – When wiring a bonsai, if you carefully measure the length of a branch and then allow about a third more wire, you will always wind up either: a. two inches too short, or b. four inches too long.

Rule #9 – Borers and bugs consider bonsai to be "home cooking."

Rule #10 – Automatic watering systems will always work perfectly until you leave the house.

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**PHOTOS – Group Slash and
Ted Matson Class**



This bonsai styling is Serious Business



A happy new bonsai owner!



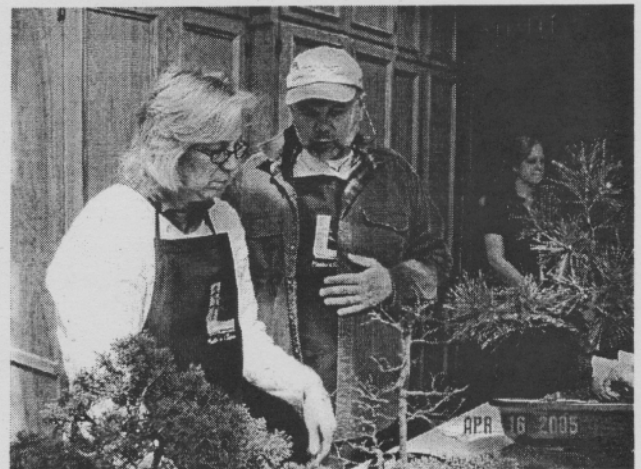
Charlie Brown's
Christmas Tree?



There's got to be a
bonsai in here
somewhere... →



NOOOO! Don't
Cut It THERE



"Don't make your tree look like a bonsai, make your
bonsai look like a tree."

Wisteria – “De Vine Bonsai”

By Houston Sanders, with shameless use of material stolen blatantly from multiple internet sites

Wisteria bonsai look great in May – if you can get them to flower! For all the rest of the year, they look pretty humble. In fact, you need to find a hiding place for it. And, as a bonsai, wisteria is not very hardy to cold and has to be kept above -5°C . But the beauty and fragrance of the May flowers make it worthwhile to grow wisteria for the rest of the year. I have often heard people complain that their wisterias do not flower. The internet is full of conflicting advice on how to best get flowers from your wisteria. I would like to share a bit of the experience that I have had. Although this could be entirely coincidence, it's worked for me.

Wisteria actually isn't a tree, it is a vine. Therefore it has a soft, gnarled woody base that can be trained to look like a trunk. And each branch wants to find something to climb, so that it can grow rapidly. Wisteria will never get any fine branch structure, so don't bother trying – just try to get a couple of branches that will show off the cascading flowers. In general, the leaves are large and compound, and will inevitably look unkempt. Stick it somewhere out of the way for most of the year, then display it as a highlight in May!

Species

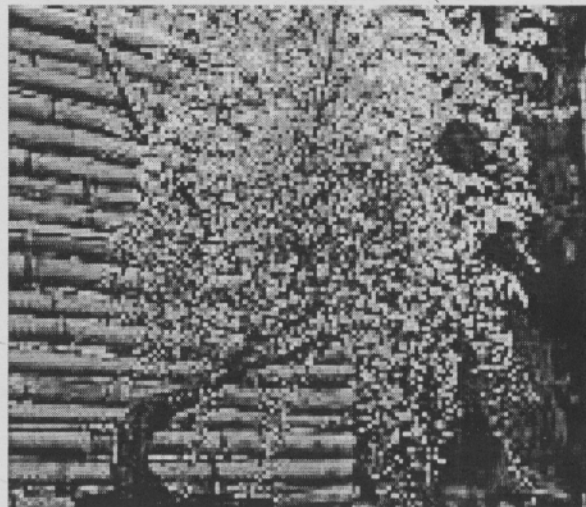
There are two species of wisteria that are used in bonsai: the Japanese wisteria *Wisteria floribunda* and the Chinese wisteria, *Wisteria sinensis*. A major difference between the two is that the Chinese species does its flowering before the leaves emerge, while you get leaves and flowers at the same time with the Japanese species. I haven't grown Japanese wisteria, so all the advice herein may not work for them. But I read that both species have very similar growth habits. There are many cultivars of each species, selected mostly for their different types of flowers, which can be anywhere from white to pink to purple. There is even a dwarf cultivar, *W. sinensis* “Kofuji” with fine branch structure and tiny compound leaves with leaflets the size of miniature elm leaves. I read that it doesn't flower well, but I have only been growing this one for a year so it's too early to tell.

Growing Conditions

Growing conditions for wisteria are different from other bonsai. Wisteria are very strong growers, and if you provide them with good growing conditions (good bonsai soil, normal watering, fertilization and room for root growth) they will respond by producing rapid growth and no flowers. So, according to experts, you must provide some stress, such as restricted roots, soggy soil, and heavy pruning. These conditions encourage the formation of flower buds in late summer for blooming the next spring.

My wisteria was started from a 1-gallon plant in 1998. I put it in a large pot and allowed it to twine up the old TV antenna tower in my backyard. For a few years, it just grew but did not produce flowers. This was not my intent, but it allowed the trunk to thicken well. Then I came across a list of suggestions from John Naka on how to get wisteria to flower. He suggests to place the wisteria in a shallow tray filled with

water and refill the water when it dries out (don't



keep it in standing water). The wisteria branches should be cut back to one or two buds each year in fall. Naka also points out that the wisteria flowers best when it is potbound, and suggests that you should only repot it every 5 years! He suggests that you should grow wisteria bonsai in heavier soil than normal, with more organic and fine textured material. And finally, if none of that works for you, it just may take time. Wisterias do not flower until at least 5 years old, and likely for many more years. Either because of these suggestions, or just blind luck, my wisteria has flowered since 2003.

Watering

After the spring flowers have fallen away, the wisteria is placed in a shallow container of water. The water level should only cover the lower portion of the pot, not the whole thing! The excess water should dry up in a day or two before you water again. This rots away fine roots and limits the growth of the roots. Some suggest that wisteria bonsai should be trimmed constantly during the growing season. It has been my experience that the strongest branches are the best flower producers, so I suggest pruning during the growing season only if needed to encourage growth of weaker branches. Then cut every branch back to 1 or 2 buds in October.

Fertilization

To minimize the tendency for excessive growth, wisteria should be fed with fertilizer formula that has low nitrogen, such as the “super blooming” formulas for flowers. Japanese fertilizer cakes are also recommended. The wisteria is a member of the pea family (*Leguminosae*) and have nodules in their roots that are able to convert nitrogen from the air into usable form. That is the air *within the soil* of course. Just a random thought, but this may further explain the reason for soaking the roots. Roots soaked in water have reduced access to air, and can't manufacture as much nitrogen - this inhibits growth and encourages flowering.

Wintering

According to literature, wisteria bonsai are not hardy to heavy frost. This is not something I've ever tested with my wisteria! I leave it outside until the first hard frosts in late October or early November, then move it to a frost-free greenhouse.

Before I had a greenhouse, however, it was placed in my basement window for the winter and survived OK.

Pest Control

Wisteria are resistant to pests and diseases, and don't seem to need pesticide or fungicide application. Many growers still spray them occasionally with mild insecticide/fungicide during the growing season as part of a general pest prevention program. If I am spraying everything else, might as well get this one too...

Some sources for additional info on wisteria bonsai:
International Bonsai, 1990 #1
International Bonsai, 2004 #1
Peter Adams: The Art of Flowering Bonsai (in our library)

Short Articles Editor's note: Per readers' request, here are some short articles. As you probably realize, I don't do short. Please send me more short articles so that we can continue this feature! These are from our friends in other clubs.

How Often to Repot and When?

By Jim Hagen

Stolen from the Bonsai Society of Greater Cincinnati newsletter

There is no simple way to say "Repot every x years". The answer depends on the age and species of your tree, the size of the pot and, most importantly, the health and vigor of the tree. But, as a guide, younger bonsai are usually repotted every one to two years and older bonsai less frequently.

The ideal time to repot is when the tree is awakening from dormancy. The optimum time is when the new buds are swelling. This is when the tree has the most vigor. The reserves it built up during the previous year are being brought into action for the new season's growth. When repotting, you usually remove one quarter to one third of the current root ball. Dead roots, thick roots and damaged ones are also removed. Something blunt and non-metallic (such as chopsticks) is good for untangling root balls. Be gentle. Use sharp tools when cutting roots.

After repotting the tree, water it well. Place it where it is protected from frost and has a good airflow. Don't water again until the soil begins to dry - which indicates that the roots are active. Don't fertilize until the tree is actively growing again. Once all is well, the tree can be put back in

its normal display position. Then water and fertilize as usual.

Hard Water Stains

By Dave Bogan - Evansville, IN

Notice a lot of white stains on your roots, especially on trees which were sheltered indoors for the winter? Indoor watering seems to cause some excess mineral buildup on our plant's roots. Or some of you simply have hard water and notice this stain year round. Try some vinegar and a toothbrush. Brush firmly and then rinse with water. Rinse a couple times to rinse any remaining vinegar out of the soil. Vinegar will not harm the plant if it is washed out of the soil. The only worry is a temporary pH change due to the high acidity of vinegar.

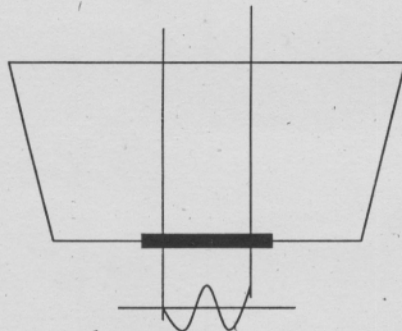
Seasonal Bonsai Tips

By Manish Sumant, Springfield Bonsai Society

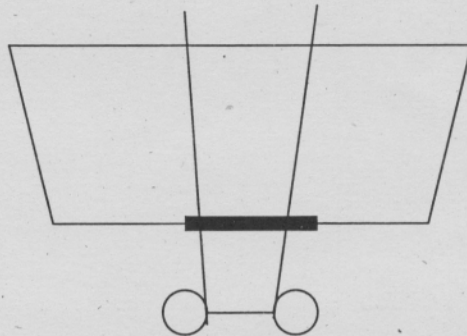
- Continue pruning deciduous trees as buds are opening. Remove dead branches and twigs.
- Continue repotting junipers and spruce. Repot pines toward the end of the month
- Leave for next year to repot any deciduous trees that have opened their buds, unless the tree is root-bound.
- Do not prune pines due to resin bleeding.
- Wire spruce, juniper and pine, taking care not to wire too tightly, as branches will thicken quickly. Do not wire deciduous trees at this time.
- Check wiring done last month.
- Keep an eye on watering. Check daily and water only trees that are dry.
- Do not feed newly repotted trees. Feed trees repotted last month if new growth has started.
- Check for pests as you water.

A better way to anchor trees in pots with a single drainage hole:

By Houston Sanders



Conventional method: Loop tie wire around a length of straight wire



Improved method: Twist tie wire to form loops that extend beyond each side of the drainage hole

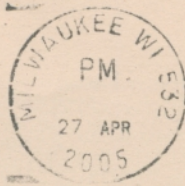
The standard method that is given in all the books for wiring a tree into a single-holed pot leaves much to be desired. The straight length of wire never stays straight, and often falls out within a very short time. The alternative method suggested provides a much more stable anchor point.

Guy Wire Anchor

By Dave Bogan - Evansville, IN

I have found as time goes on, I utilize more guy wires to bring branches into position. But, on trees which are already potted, it can be a tedious process of threading a wire up through the drain holes and into the location you need the guy wire. Other times, you might loop the wire around an exposed root, or even insert a small screw into the trunk as an anchor point. These all work, but I have found an additional way of handling the anchor point. Especially on trees which have a well developed root system. Go to the local hunting and fishing supply store. Buy yourself some "catch & release" fishhooks. Hooks with no barb on the point. These come in several sizes and gauges. Simply run the hook down into the roots and then bring it up again hooking the pointed end through some roots below the soil surface. The other good point is the hook already has an eye on it to tie off your guy wire. It works as long as you don't need to place a lot of pressure on the guy wire. Easily removed & reusable once you are finished.

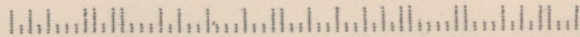




Kris Ziemann
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**RETURN SERVICE
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Next Meeting of MBS
7PM, Tuesday, May 3
Grace Lutheran Church
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*Spring morning marvel –
Lovely nameless little hill
Within a sea of mist*

- Basho