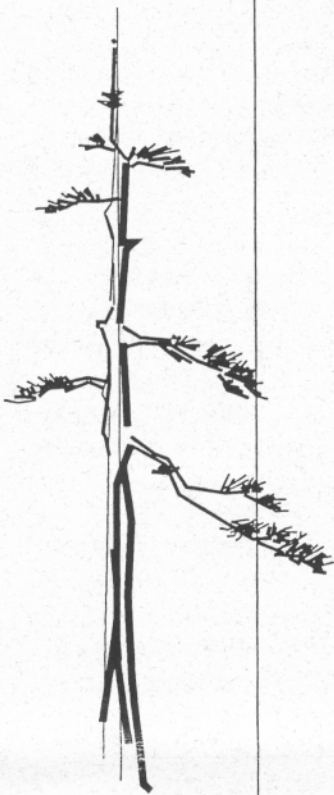


July, 2005

# Bonsai News



*Milwaukee  
Bonsai Society*

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

*Information Line  
414-299-9229*

## **JULY MEETING – Tropicals Demonstration by Martha Meehan**

At our club meeting on Tuesday, July 5, Martha Meehan will be performing a demonstration using a unique tropical called a Chinese Hat Tree (*Holmskioldia*).

Since 1976, Martha has been the proprietor of Meehan's Miniatures, a bonsai nursery located in central Maryland that specializes in tropicals and carries many rare and unusual bonsai materials. They are always the busiest vendor at the Chicago bonsai shows! She has given demonstrations for us twice in recent years, and her entertaining and informative style is always a big hit.

Her workshops are also a blast, featuring great material. Martha will be holding two workshops for us this year. Both will be held at the Grace Lutheran Church from 6pm-10pm. On Wed. night, July 6, the workshop will use pomegranates (provided by Martha). Thurs. night, July 7, will have a Bring Your Own Tree workshop. Silent Observers are welcome at both workshops (\$5 at the door).

## **2005 Club Events Calendar**

### **July**

Tuesday 5 - Martha Meehan / Tropical Demonstration  
Wed 6 - PM Workshop with Martha Meehan - pomegranates  
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!!!**

## **August Meeting – Nursery Stock Selection**

In August, one of our directors, Allen Koszarek, will give a presentation on "what to look for in nursery stock for particular bonsai styles". It will be very informative and help to develop better trees from your nursery stock.

### **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](mailto:mbs@asapnet.net) Look for us on the web at: <http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org>

## KRIS' KORNER

For this month's president's message, I have decided to present some words of inspiration from an internet message by Walter Pall about bonsai as art vs. craft. This was sent to me by Josh Rageth, and it says a lot about what we should be trying to achieve with our bonsai. Those who got the chance to see Walter when he was in our area last month will recognize his energy and passion!

"So why should I bother to read all this crap? Because it tells me whether bonsai is worth my while or not. It tells me whether I have to listen to people who tell me what's 'wrong or right' or whether I can call them bonsai fundamentalists. It tells me whether to take someone for serious as bonsai person or not.

This sort of discussion is VITAL. It makes all the difference for now and the future of bonsai in the western world. We are in the middle of a bonsai revolution and most have not noticed it. This sort of debate is a clear sign of it. We are about to emancipate from bonsai as craft and practise it as artform. In Europe this happened about ten years ago. And an explosion in quality and genuine artistry followed. I can see the same happening in America now. I look forward to see the progress and I wish a similar dramatic explosion of quality bonsai will happen as in Europe.

Italy was NOT on the bonsai map fifteen years ago. It was an underdeveloped country. Now the whole of Italian bonsai artists beat the whole of America. Easily, left-handedly! It took them fifteen years only. But what caused this explosion? They were the first ones to have discovered that bonsai can be an artform. Italy had NO history of bonsai, no burden of tradition, no masters who would clap on fingers for wrongdoing. They just did it.

This is good news. It can be done in a relatively short time span. Short enough for most of us. A debate like this is necessary to start moving. OK, so start moving. Start to create little trees that move your soul. Stop creating bonsai that look like everybody else's.

**MAKE BONSAI THAT REMIND YOU OF BIG SUR, OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS, OF AMERICAN OAKS.**

"Three decades ago John Naka, speaking in California, said, "bonsai no longer belongs to the Japanese." What he meant was that people the world over have taken up the art in such numbers and with such vigor that they are no longer looking solely to the Japanese tradition. They are striking out on their own, emphasizing their native plant material, drawing inspiration from mountains, lakes, swamps and forests around them, and producing bonsai that reflect their cultural heritage."

"But most of all I want to thank my great silent teachers -

- the Sierra Nevada mountains, the Mojave Desert, the Monterey Coast, the Sequoia National Park here in California, and also the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, my birth place. They have offered a multitude of bonsai models for me. I was indeed fortunate to have such a golden opportunity to explore, observe and be influenced by those fantastic and diversified trees, such as the Bristlecone Pines, Limber Pines, Ponderosa Pines, California Junipers, the Cypress, the Giant Sequoias, the Oaks and many other species."  
John Naka, *Bonsai Techniques II*

Is it not time now to listen to this great man finally and start moving? To start standing on John Naka's shoulders and try to push the edge of the art of bonsai?"

*Kris*

## Fertilizing

(An internet message by Jack Douthitt – submitted by Kris Ziemann)

I have been a heavy feeder of my bonsai for a long time. My regimen used to be a schedule of feeding my trees every week during the growing season with full strength fertilizer. Either Peters 20-20-20, maybe some miracid for the acid loving trees or a bloom buster of some kind for the flowering trees. I did this for years.

Several horticulturalists warned me about a build-up of salts in the soil using this regimen but I figured that with the porous soil mixture that I use and the frequent watering that I would never have a problem. And I didn't.

Last year I tried using the Bio-Gold and I think that the trees grew better with it than with my previous feedings. This spring I bought a pH and a TDS (Total Dissolved Salts) tester and tested a lot of different soil mixtures and fertilizers. I found out one very important thing with the tester.

Almost without exception all of the soil mixtures and the fertilizers that I tested were easily within tolerances. EXCEPT when I dumped a handful of Bio-Gold into the funnel and poured distilled water over it. The TDS test result was extremely high in total dissolved salts! In fact, it was in the range of what you might expect when you test water from a water softener! The test was repeated several times with consistent results.



So a word of caution about fertilizers including the organics. Do not overdo it! Even some of the organics can and will damage your trees if it is overdone.

I believe that we need to expand our knowledge about the impact of fertilizers and water quality on some of the growing methods that we use. I also believe (obviously) that a pH and TDS tester will help us determine what methods work best in our own personal growing environment.

For what it is worth.

Jack Douthitt



### **Chinese Hat Plant**

*(Holmskioldia Sanguinea)*

Here's some preliminary information on the tree That Martha Meehan will be using for a demo at the July meeting. I have never heard of it until this demo, so the information is all from internet searches. The Chinese Hat Plant (or, if you prefer the original politically incorrect common name, "Coolie Cap"), gets its name from the resemblance of the flowers to the hats worn by 19th century Chinese immigrants. It is a fast-growing climbing vine native to the Himalayan lowlands. As a tree/shrub, it can grow to a height of about 6 meters. The narrow, trumpet-shaped flowers are crimson and orange, and appear for a long period from summer to early fall. The Chinese Hat Plant is hardy only to zone 10 (so it doesn't need a cold period), and requires medium to full sunlight. Which makes it perfect for indoor bonsai. There is minimal information on the use of this species for bonsai, but it appears to bloom well in bonsai cultivation. That's all the information available, so you'll have to attend the July meeting to find out more about this interesting species.

### **So What Happened to Peter's 20-20-20?**

(submitted by Kris Ziemann)

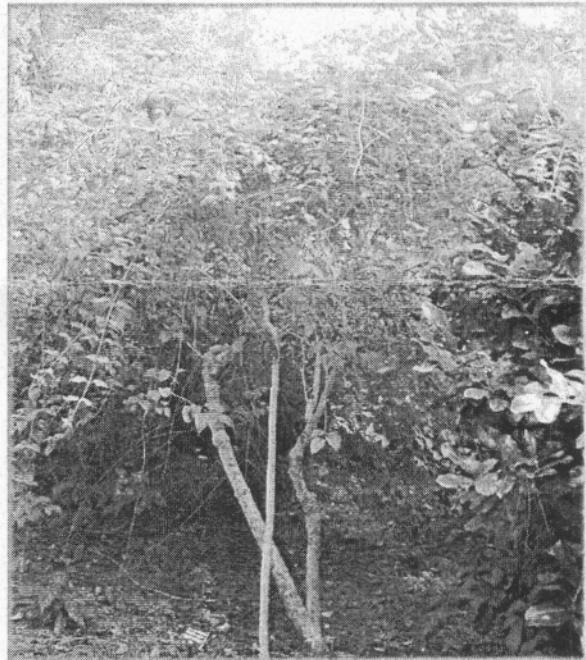
Be sure to look for our new name – Jack's Classic. We are still the Peters company owned and operated by the Peters family...just can't call it "Peters" anymore. Look for those familiar plastic tubs! You can read all about why we can't call it "Peters" anymore on our website

<http://www.jacksclassic.com>

Thank you for your inquiry.

Ed Meehan

Formerly Meehan's Bonsai



## Hot Weather Growing Tips

*(Ed. Note: Here are some timely tips that were taken from the newsletter of the Greater Cincinnati Bonsai Society, who swiped them from the Greater Louisville Bonsai Society (how come everyone else has a "greater" bonsai society?), who borrowed them from an internet site, [www.bonsai4me.com](http://www.bonsai4me.com). There was no author credited. Until this year, I have ignored all "hot weather" tips, since we have never had hot weather in the previous 6 or 7 years that I have grown bonsai. This year may be different...)*

During one of the hottest summers on record in the UK and Europe this year, much effort had to be made to keep our bonsai sufficiently shaded and watered, particularly as temperatures hit the upper 30 C (100 F) mark. In addition to the need to keep the soil in bonsai pots from drying out, are there any other possible effects of heat on bonsai? Is there a possibility of longer lasting damage than a few scorched leaves on our Japanese maples?

### Temperatures, Humidity and Transpiration

Trees have optimum growing temperatures according to species, varying from 20 to 30°C (70 to 86°F). Hotter temperatures can start to injure or even kill living tree systems. An upper temperature limit of around 45°C (113°F) exists above which thermal death can occur in a tree. The exact upper limit is dependent on factors such as the duration of hot temperatures, the highest temperature reached, tissue age, water content of the tree tissue and the ability of the tree to adjust to the temperature change. Tree temperature is usually around or slightly above the ambient air temperature. Trees can dissipate enormous heat loads if allowed to function normally and have adequate soil moisture provided to them. Heat is dissipated (lost or reduced) by release of heat into the air, or primarily through transpiration (water, and therefore heat, is released through the leaf tissues). Unfortunately, hot temperatures are also often associated with dry air/low humidity levels that cause the leaf stomata to close because of rapid water loss and this can greatly reduce transpirational cooling. When transpiration is limited by hot weather and bonsai are kept in low humidity areas (hard standing areas, patios, etc.) leaf temperatures may rise above the trees' thermal death threshold.

### Watering Problems During Hot Periods

An additional problem associated with rapid water loss and temperature increases in leaves is the delay in water uptake by the root system. Leaves can lose water/transpire much faster than roots can absorb water. This time difference can greatly amplify the effects of heat. Water shortages during the day are normally corrected by additional water uptake at night (assuming the soil is holding sufficient quantities of moisture). Night temperatures can therefore be critical for enabling the tree to rehydrate itself and recover from the daytime temperatures; however, if night time temperatures remain too high and a high transpiration rate continues, the tree is unable to replace all lost moisture. This can then be fatal if high temperatures are repeated the following day. Wilting is the first major symptom of excessive water loss in the leaves. Leaves under heavy heat load may enter their dormancy cycle early (as though it were autumn), browning and falling from branches. This affects the inner and lower leaves first and can be witnessed on field-growing trees such as birch and hawthorn after hot, dry summers.

### Additional Stresses

Since nitrogen is ordinarily physiologically demanding, even mild concentrations of nitrogen fertilizer can damage trees that are under large heat loads. The normal processing of nitrogen by a tree requires stored resources to be used. If no new food is being produced by the tree due to high temperatures and accelerating transpiration, nitrogen feed should be withdrawn to avoid excessive use of the stored foods in the root system. Heat stress problems also make trees more susceptible to pests and fungal attack. The loss of leaves and twigs, sunburn on branches and trunks, and root/shoot growth inhibition causes a loss of defensive capabilities and the opportunity for pests to effectively attack bonsai.



### Root Problems Caused By Overheating

The surface of the soil can be both a reflecting and an absorbing layer. In full sunlight, ground soils can reach temperatures of up to 60°C (150°F). Within the confines of a relatively small bonsai container or black plastic nursery pot, this heat can easily cause enormous heat loading onto the roots and base of a bonsai. This heat can cause lesions on areas of the nebari and the base of the trunk, but more importantly can cause the death of the fine or even major roots within the root system. The death of parts of the root system then exacerbates the effects of heat on the upper areas of the tree above soil level. Areas of burnt roots are easy prey to root-rotting pathogens. It is more that feasible to say that some cases of root rot could be found to originate from summer heat damage rather than over-watering.

### Protecting Bonsai Against High Temperatures

There are a number of simple measures that can be taken to protect bonsai against high temperatures and heat during the summer. These precautions are worth taking when temperatures exceed 30°C (90°F). Place bonsai in a shaded position out of direct sunlight; alternatively make use of shade netting. Avoid placing trees on surfaces that will radiate excessive heat such as stone or cement flags. Keep air around bonsai humid to reduce transpiration. Mist both bonsai and wet ground around them. Ensure that additional watering is carried out so that the bonsai soil does not dry out. A heavy watering during the late morning will ensure that the soil is still moist at the end of the hottest part of the day. It will also ensure that the tree is loaded with moisture in preparation for the increased transpiration during the hottest part of the day. Midday watering will also help keep the pots and roots cooler. Ensure that bonsai pots are completely shaded, if necessary by crowding trees together; this will also increase local humidity levels. Avoid using high/medium nitrogen fertilizers during prolonged periods of high temperatures.

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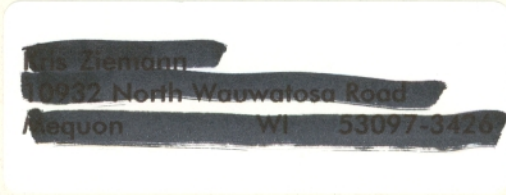
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**RETURN SERVICE  
REQUESTED**

Next Meeting of MBS  
7PM, Tuesday, July 5  
Grace Lutheran Church  
3030 W. Oklahoma

53097+3426 30



**MBS Board, 2005**

- Kris Ziemann – President
- Scott Hurula – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President
- Darlene Shaginaw – 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President
- Karen Kleineider – Treasurer
- Sharon Schmidt – Secretary
- Dr. Erskine Tucker – Board Member
- Joe Herbert – Board Member
- Allen Koszarek – Board Member
- Ron Fortmann – MABA Representative
- Jack Douthitt – Past President

- Other Club Functions:
- Houston Sanders – Newsletter Editor
  - Melba Stockhausen - Distribution
  - Pam Woythal – Webmaster
  - Joe Nemecek - Librarian
  - Mary Turner - membership chairperson
  - Jean Sher - telephone response



*The wind's soft fingers  
caress the yellowing grass  
and pat silent trees.*

- Mary Turner