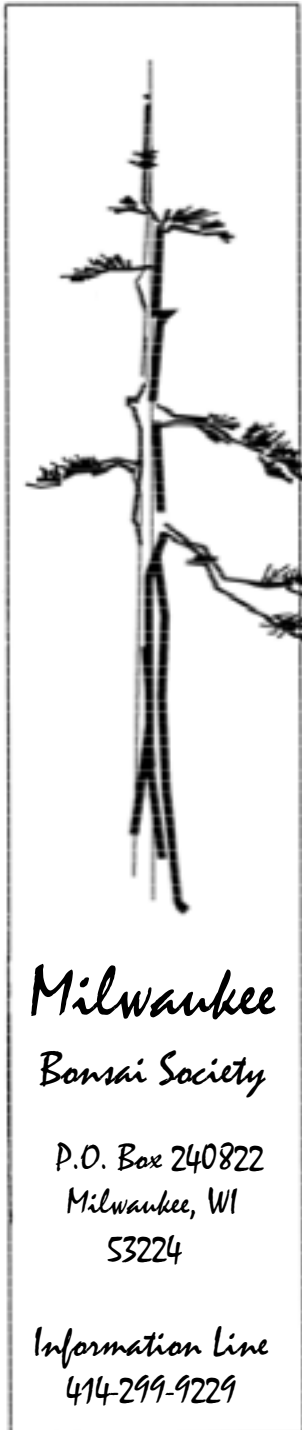


MAY 2013

# Bonsai News



## MAY MEETING

### What is blended bonsai?

Bonsai that are created by binding five or more very young trees together to create one bonsai. This method can create a mame or shohin bonsai in a fraction of the time it usually takes. It is excellent also for root over rock styles.

10 participants will be making a blended bonsai this evening. There are still a few openings left. If you would like to participate please contact [hagr8d@mac.com](mailto:hagr8d@mac.com). There is a form on page 3.

The link below will give you more information about blended trees and what you will be experiencing at our meeting.

[http://www.pfmbonsai.com/docs/BonsaiTypes/Blended tree close up.pdf](http://www.pfmbonsai.com/docs/BonsaiTypes/Blended%20tree%20close%20up.pdf)

## 2013 Events

### MAY

May 4 - Spring Public Workshop

May 4 - Novice Class #3

May 7 - Society Meeting  
Blended Tree Demo/Workshop

May 10 - National Public Gardens Day at Boerner Botanical Gardens

May 11 (Sat) - Forest workshop

May 18-19 - Bonsai Shows in Chicago and Madison

### JUNE

June 4 - Society Meeting  
New thinking in fertilizers

June 16 (Sun) - Boerner's Fathers Day in the park

June 22 (Sat) - Intermediate Class #1

### JULY

July 2 - NO SOCIETY MEETING

July 13 (Sat) - 1-4 Open workshop - repotting tropicals

July 13 (Sat) - 9-3 Intermediate Class #2

July 13 - Wauwatosa Garden Tour

July 21 (Sun) - MBS Picnic  
[www.milwaukeebonsai.org](http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org)

### NEXT MEETING

Tuesday May 7 - 6:00 pm  
Boerner Botanical Gardens

### REMEMBER

Come to the society meetings at 6:00 for social time and to get advice on trees you bring.

# President's Message

Greetings,

Has spring finally arrived? With the slow warm up I have been able to get almost all of my spring bonsai work done before attentions must be turned to the garden and the lawn. For this time of the year my trees are in the best shape they have ever been, I hope all of you can say the same.

We as a Society should reflect on the fantastic educational opportunities that are available to us. According to Ted Matson, the Milwaukee Society has one of the best if not the very best educational programs in the country especially when you consider value to the members. Just consider this year, we have already had visits by Colin Lewis and Ted Matson and are waiting on a visit by Kathy Shaner this fall, all three being headliner quality artists. One way for newer members, who have never participated in a guest artist workshop, to see what a workshop is really like is to attend one as a silent observer. It is amazing how much you can learn by just watching. You also learn about a variety of tree species that can be styled into bonsai.

The last monthly meeting was our first attempt to begin a little earlier with a "social" time before the regular meeting. We realize that there were some teething problems. Please bear with us as we work through them. I apologize to anyone who brought a tree to "work on" and was not able to. For the time being we will not be able to do much actual work on trees at the monthly meetings. But, if you have specific questions about your tree that you would like to discuss with someone with more experience by all means please bring it or your questions and don't forget, there will also be a display of items that are for sale.

I was happy to see that some members took advantage of our library collection at the last meeting. We will try to have the library open for each meeting. If you have MBS library materials that need to be returned you may do that during the social time also.

For the future, I am negotiating with Andy Smith to do one or more material provided workshops in Milwaukee in 2014 or 2015. For those of you that are not familiar with Andy Smith he has a business in Deadwood, SD called Golden Arrow Bonsai. He specializes in collecting old mountain conifers for sale and workshops. Check out [goldenarrowbonsai.com](http://goldenarrowbonsai.com) to see some of his trees.

Just as a reminder we have the Spring Public Workshop, a blended tree workshop/demo and a forest planting workshop in the near future. Check the schedule.

*Steve*



**An example of a blended tree by Pauline Muth. It is a kotohime maple about 13" tall. Over 10 years old.**

## TIDBITS FROM TED

### 5 Qualities of Bonsai Design

1. Movement
2. Taper
3. Segmentation
4. Compression
5. Ramification

## Blended tree workshop at the May 7 Society Meeting

How do you create a larger tree from multiple whips. Ron F and Kris Z will be instructing the participants while meeting attendees look on. We will start with 6 'whips' (dwarf flowering crab or hornbeam). By melding them together a larger trunk and branch placement may be accomplished in a shorter period of time. Once you understand how this is done, you can experiment on other varieties of trees. See the reservation form at the bottom of this page to reserve your spot. **There are still spots available. You may want to sign up twice to make two blended trees!**

### Blended tree workshop - Reservation form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Cost = \$22

check # \_\_\_\_\_ for \$22

Please email [hagr8d@mac.com](mailto:hagr8d@mac.com) or call Kris 262-512-1228  
Please bring your check and form to the May Meeting.

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR THE PUBLIC WORKSOP - MAY 4

If you are able to help with the public workshop on May 4 from 9:00 - 12:00, please email [hagr8d@mac.com](mailto:hagr8d@mac.com) or call Kris at 262-512-1228. Bring your tools and lets have fun!



The forest workshop is full, but do come as a silent observer on Saturday May 11 between 9:00 and 3:00. \$5 for morning, \$5 for afternoon. Pay at door.

Participants - please make sure you bring along a buddy to help you.



# Getting the Most from a Bonsai Workshop

By Michelle Zimmer

Workshops are always great fun and an anticipated event in our house. First, deciding to spend the money and making the time to go, then selecting one or two victims to "work on" during the brief time with the teacher.

Over the years, I've observed that people approach workshops in different ways. I'd like to describe an approach that maximizes the investment of time, money and material and really makes the workshop pay dividends on the investment.

## Preparation

First, prepare yourself. Get information on the artist about his or her area of expertise, perhaps read some articles written by the artist or get information from club members who may have taken a workshop or seen a demonstration. Plan what you'd like to learn. Taking a workshop assumes that you have the basic skills and tools discussed below. If you are not sure, perhaps visiting a workshop as a silent observer will help you gain confidence to "jump in". Learning by doing is the rule in this hobby and a first attempt at a new skill can be daunting, but success is exhilarating.

**Basic skills include:**

**Selecting suitable material.** Is it stable in the pot with plenty of its own root structure to tolerate the stress of pruning, wiring, bending branches? Is there a good tapering trunk line? Are there plenty of branches to choose from for styling? Is the tree healthy with no evidence of pests and a flush new growth - it should be in the "leaping" \* stage of growth.

\*Editor's note: refers to how perennials grow - 1st year sleeping, 2nd year creeping, 3rd year leaping



Colin Lewis with Susan L

**Prepare the material.** This includes finding the roots, cleaning out the debris, pinching the crotch growth, removing or shortening dead branches. All of this should be done before arrival at the workshop to maximize the value of personalized teacher contact time - usually 30 minutes or less.

**Study the material.** Whether one is styling a new tree from raw material remodeling older material, it helps to spend some time looking at the tree beforehand. Try to identify the faults that need to be corrected or minimized and review all of the possibilities in your mind that would show the tree to its best advantage. When you bring your own material, your teacher will often start by asking you what you see and it's off to a good start if it looks like you've done some homework. Of course this is not possible in a workshop where material is provided, but after you have received your

selected material, you can start the preparation steps outlined above, get a close look at the structure, and start the designing process in your mind.

Take a picture of the before material for reference and record-keeping - this turns out to be very educational and a good tool for improving trees.

**Bonsai skills.** If you have completed a novice course, even if your first tree died, you should have the basic skills to take a workshop. You should understand the basic principles of design, be able to use shears, concave cutters, and a wire cutter. You should have wired several trees and spent some time practicing so that you can select proper wire size, cut it to proper length, visualize the wiring pattern to accomplish your goal and execute the plan. You do not have to be fast or completely cross free, but when your wiring is complete, the job should be neat, anchored and allow the branches to be moved into position and remain in place.

**Bonsai tools.** The minimum tools for most workshops include: turntable, blocks or beanbags to adjust tree cant, shears, concave cutters, wire cutter (blunt nose is best), chopsticks, vinyl tubing, chalk or marking pen, pencil and paper, for sketching or diagramming, a selection of wire sizes, cut paste or wound sealer, pocket knife, alcohol wipes or camellia oil if working with sappy trees such as pines and a hand towel which comes in handy for visually blocking areas of the trees and cleaning up. Additional tools can be added as your skills and funds grow and include forceps, chisel / hammer or carving knife, nylon, brass and steel brushes for cleaning the trunk and branches, bamboo brush, honing stone, pot eraser, drop cloth, knob cutters, jin plier, wire plier, pruning saw, a wide variety of power Dremels and grinders and the kitchen sink.



Ted Matson with Bill G

## At the Workshop

Arrive early and help set up, set up your work area, greet your fellow classmates and meet the teacher. Each teacher has a particular method for rotating among the students, so

follow the guidelines. All is not lost if you are number 7 or 8, since you can spend time watching the artist evaluate and design your neighbors' trees and get a preview of his style and quirks. Since you've done the preparation work, you'll be ready when your turn comes.





Ted Matson at a workshop with the Mahone Middle School Bonsai Club.

Ted is showing a blind student what his classmates are working on.

Spend time completing the tasks that your teacher has assigned - at least do enough to move on to the next area of styling when he returns. Plan to observe him working with other students' trees, since all the pearls that fall in the workshop will not be in your lap. At the end, if you are clever and observant, you should have enough for a bracelet if not a necklace.

Since you are a participant, you are allowed to ask any questions you might have about any of the techniques or trees in the classroom. Remember, though, if you are a silent observer, you can't talk, but facial expressions and hand signals are allowed.

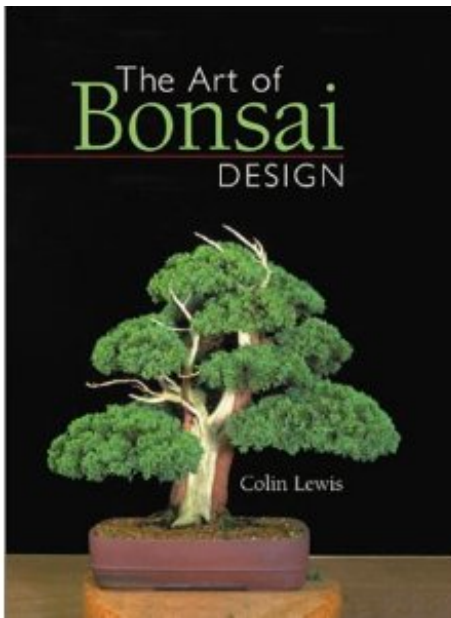
## After the Workshop

- Sometime during the workshop, usually when you can see the design well and have visualized the final tree, find out from the teacher important aftercare instructions. Clever artists will tell you that the tree did not die from what was done to it in the workshop, but from inadequate aftercare. So, ask questions about important horticultural requirements like sun, shade, watering, fertilizing, pest susceptibility, winter protection. Discuss transplanting and pot and soil requirements and timing. Get an opinion about the container that the artist visualizes for the tree if you are far enough along. Write it all down, your brain is usually so stuffed by this time, that important details may be overlooked. Take an "after" picture for your tree diary and enter the birth of a new bonsai, in your records.

Finish any of the tasks which could not be done in class, such as jin carving, application of lime sulfur, foliage pruning and arrangement, bark cleaning, scar modification and wound sealing. Relax and enjoy the new work of art that you are in the process of creating.

# THE ART OF BONSAI DESIGN

by Colin Lewis



The result of years of dedication to the craft of bonsai design, this fascinating volume profiles 15 of the author's own plants, accompanied by full-color photographs taken over time. Along with enjoyable stories of how each elm, juniper, pine, and larch was shaped, there's valuable advice on styling, pruning, care, and common mistakes. Beginners will be delighted to see how first attempts can eventually become exquisite bonsai.

## BOOK REVIEW: By Dave Bockmann

Beginning with Peter Adams, the United Kingdom has since the early 1960s produced a steady stream of notable bonsai artists and authors. To this collection of talent one must surely include Colin Lewis, author of nine books on the subject of bonsai, *The Art of Bonsai Design* being his most recent and most enjoyable effort.

Of the books in English that purport to be comprehensive tomes on the subject of bonsai, scant few are actually worthy of that label. Realistically, no single book could ever cover every aspect of such a complex art. Rather than fall short of that impossible task, the author instead addresses four of the most popular temperate climate species used in bonsai--elm, juniper, pine, and larch. Each of these species is discussed from the general to the specific, always using the author's trees as visual case histories showing the entire refinement process. Included are numerous sidebars discussing peripheral topics related to the species at hand. Framing these chapters are essays on bonsai as an art form in the West and other tangential subjects; information Mr. Lewis has gleaned during his decades of experience. For our benefit and without guile, Mr. Lewis has written a highly informative, entertaining and valuable book.

What makes this book unique is the author's unflinching--some might say even cheerful--examination of his mistakes and misfortunes as he describes the theory and practice of bonsai refinement, using his own trees as visual examples. It is really quite heartening to see how time, careful attention, and of course the artist's eye can raise the level of quality in the trees pictured from their humble beginnings as mere average quality cuttings and collected stock to such high levels of refinement and understated beauty. Herein lies the charm of Mr. Lewis' book: Almost without exception the trees are his from inception to present. Of course, when the author gets his hands on more highly refined trees and stock, the results are equally pleasing.

Throughout the book Mr. Lewis drops amusing anecdotes, hints and insights, and perceptive observations about his travails as a bonsai beginner, his techniques to speed the refinement process, and bonsai's unique position straddling horticulture and art. His grasp of bonsai as expressed through the vernacular of Western art makes for clear, easy to understand instructions and advice. Mr. Lewis has what this reviewer would label an 'international' design style that transcends the classical Japanese mode in favor of respecting a bonsai's origin and potential for refinement. Overall, this reviewer found him to be self-effacing yet eminently qualified to share his wealth of information on the subject of bonsai.

*The Art of Bonsai Design* is probably not the best book for a rank beginner, as the most basic information is absent in favor of more advanced styling ideas, projects, and techniques. For those bonsai enthusiasts with a good working knowledge of the fundamentals of bonsai, *The Art of Bonsai Design* will prove to be a valuable and oft-referenced addition to their libraries.



P.O. Box 240822  
Milwaukee, WI 53224  
[www.milwaukeebonsai.org](http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org)  
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Next Meeting of MBS  
Tuesday May 7, 2013  
Boerner Botanical Gardens  
9400 Boerner Dr  
Hales Corners, WI 53130

## 2013 MBS OFFICERS

President	Steve Con.
First VP	Judy S
Second VP	Kris Z
Secretary	Ron F
Treasurer	Susan L
Director	John M
Director	Barbara S
Director	Allen K
Past Pres.	Pam W

### Other Club Functions:

Newsletter - Kris Z  
Webmaster - Pam W  
PAB Board - Rob P, Anna S & Houston S



*Ah, lilacs in bloom.....*