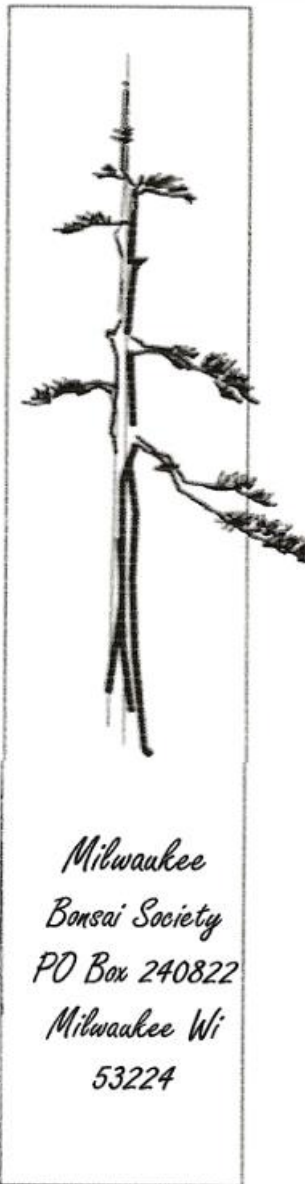


BONSAI NEWS

June 2024



Upcoming Meeting

This month's focus topic is preparing a thread graft for next spring. Steve C will show us this grafting technique that can be used to improve our trees.

The main topic of the meeting is reserved for members to bring a tree (or two) to the meeting for styling advice. Feel free to bring in your tree and have members offer their opinion on how to take your tree to the next level. This is a great opportunity to get advice prior to the Annual Exhibit.



Next Meeting

June 1, 2024
9 am
Boerner
Botanical

June

- June 1 – Preparing a thread graft/bring a tree for styling advice
- June 8-9 – 53rd Annual Exhibit
Boerner Botanical Garden
- June 15 – Bonsai Skills 101*
- June 16 – Bonsai Skills 201*
- June 22 – Grant Park Garden Tour
Exhibit

July

- July 13 – Show and tell-Pines/Hands-off, Puff ball stage, Dealing with Summer heat

August

- August 1-11 – State Fair Shows
- August 3 – Guest Artist: David Cutchin/
Wire
- August 4 – Tropical Workshop w/
David Cutchin*
- August 10 – Bonsai Skills 101*
- August 11 - Bonsai Skills 201*

September

- September 7 – Ryan's Style
Descriptions/Common
Conifers-Deciduous

*Open to MBS members only

President's Message

On Sunday afternoon—possibly the most beautiful early summer day I could imagine—I finished doing some maintenance work on a couple of trees, then took a break and sat on a bench with a refreshing adult beverage.

As I sat, I did an informal head count, and I have forty-two trees in bonsai pots or training pots, not counting three or four latecomers that I got too late to repot this year. Of the forty-two, I have only four that don't make flowers, all of them tropicals. In the remaining thirty-eight, twenty-six are azaleas. Fifteen of those are domestic varieties that started out as nursery material, and the final eleven are Japanese imported satsuki.

The domestic varieties bloom earlier than the satsuki. One or two have finished blooming, but as I sat I looked at a half-dozen or so that are in full bloom, with several more coming right behind. In front of me was an assortment of wonderful colors—the buttery white of 'Cascade', the delicate lavenders of 'Karen' and 'Herbert', the screaming scarlet of 'Girard's Hot Shot', the softer crimson of 'Stewartstonian', and the exquisite pink of 'Rosebud'. These follow, by the way, the flowering almond, sand cherry, apricot and chokecherry, whose blossoms have come and gone already.

I sat for a solid ten minutes, my gaze going from one to another, then back again. The feeling I experienced was mostly gratitude for being able to savor the incredible beauty in front of me, and how generous the trees are in the bargain we make with them.

Our trees don't ask much of us when you think about it. They ask for food and water, an appropriate amount of light, and that we protect them from the elements to the extent they need it. That's only slightly more demanding than a goldfish, and certainly less than a kid or a dog. In return they give us beauty, contemplation, hours of enjoyable work, and the chance to learn about them, and maybe learn a few things about ourselves.

There is no such thing as a perfect bonsai, and the only tree that is finished is one that is dead. No matter what species, what size, or what state of development, every tree means something special to its owner. Each bend in trunk or branch, each flower, leaf or needle is part of a story of the relationship between the owner and the tree, and is something to be celebrated. Our annual exhibition is almost upon us, and I am hopeful that it is in this spirit that our members will approach the display of their trees. Yes, ribbons and plaques are nice, especially when they give us a degree of validation for the effort we've put in, and the risks we've taken. I submit, though, that competition, taken by itself, misses the whole point of what bonsai should be about.

The AE is one of a tiny handful of times each year when we come together to share our trees with each other and with the public. It's easy for us to lose perspective, if we look at our tree and see only the things that we wish we could improve (I almost said something about the forest for the

trees right there, but I caught myself.) The ‘civilians’ who come to see them see the tree as a whole, marvel at their beauty, and never care about that straight section with no taper, or the leaves that are still a little too big. I would wager that most people in attendance would have no idea why a particular tree got a ribbon, they just know they enjoy looking at them. To that point, how often do ‘Best of Show’ and ‘People’s Choice’ go to the same tree?

Of course, we want to display our best, and we want to show how beautiful bonsai can be. I would suggest, however, that if what pot with which stand and what am I going to do for an accent plant has you on the edge of a panic attack, it’s time to step back, take a deep breath, and remember that this is but one part of a long journey of discovery. I would once again cite the words of that great philosopher, Erich the Inscrutable: “If it’s not fun, it isn’t bonsai.”

Rick W.

Have you ever wondered what causes Root Rots?

Bryan L asked Brian Hudelson from the Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic at the University of Wisconsin-Madison....

Root rots are caused by fungi and fungi-like organisms called water molds (technically known as oomycetes). In general, wet soils are more favorable for root pathogens to be active, and water molds tend to like cooler soil temperatures (they reproduce in a particular way that is stimulated by cooler temperatures). You can also see root damage due to just overly wet soils as well, if the soils become waterlogged. Flooding prevents oxygen from percolating from the air to the roots (which it normally does), and this will directly kill roots.

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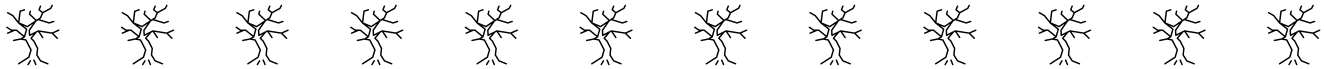
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THE SHOP NOW HAS REGULAR HOURS IN THE SPRING, SUMMER AND FALL. HOURS ARE UPDATED WEEKLY ON MY GOOGLE INFO SITE. OR, TO BE THE AMONG FIRST TO KNOW ABOUT ALL THE WORKSHOPS AND OTHER FUN GOING DOWN AT WISCO BONSAI, JUST SHOOT AN EMAIL AND I WILL ADD YOU TO THE EMAIL LIST.

"BONSAI IS THE ART OF NATURE, GUIDED AND NURTURED BY HUMAN HANDS" - KAIIS



Raffle Donations Needed

The Annual Exhibit is being held June 8-9, 2024 this year instead of the usual August and the event is quickly approaching. The raffles are a big fund-raising activity for MBS at the Exhibit. Members enjoy the bonsai items and the public appreciate the non-bonsai items. Without your help the raffles cannot be successful. If you have anything bonsai related you would like to donate, please contact Melissa J (missyuc2@yahoo.com or 414-350-5924 – call or text). Arrangements can be made to pick up items.



Annual Exhibit Call for Trees and Education Opportunities

By Pam W

The MBS Education Committee has identified three categories of bonsai skills that all bonsai enthusiasts should learn. Becoming proficient in these skills will give you the confidence to grow and maintain your trees.

Horticulture Skills - watering, fertilizing, seasonal care, repotting (Keeping my trees alive)

Styling Skills - Growing out trunks and branches, cutting back, pruning, building ramification, placing wire on a tree (Making the tree look good)

Presentation Skills - Pot selection, stand selection, accent piece selection and overall composition (pulling it all together and creating a great picture).

Each MBS member should reflect on the skill categories and self-determine at which level of proficiency their skills are at. The following describes these levels.

Open: You feel confident and reasonable proficient in performing these skills: Horticulture, Styling and Presentation.

Intermediate: You are becoming more confident/comfortable in performing these skills but you still are learning and refining these skills.

Novice: You are learning these skills and do not feel comfortable or proficient with all of these skills at this point in time.

CALL FOR TREES

We have had over a year of general meeting presentations to help level up our skills and enjoy doing it! We have had more than one meeting on the display aspect of presentation and preparation of your tree for show. We had a day long workshop last year to help set up your tree and selection process for exhibiting your tree. NOW is the time to up our presentation skills! This year's judge is Rick Garcia. Have him help you reach a new level. Exhibit participation includes:

- An assessment of your presentation so you can improve it for a future exhibit.
- An assessment of your tree that shows horticulture needs that you can address.
- An assessment of specific styling areas you can concentrate on improving over this next year.

By listening and taking the evaluation from our judge Rick Garcia you can build on next year's goal for the tree. Additionally, MBS Executive Committee with the Education Committee will use the evaluation to help you reach that next level. We will be planning great quality general meetings around areas that are identified as needing improvement. Your exhibit participation is critical to setting the tone for 2025 education.

Sign up to exhibit your tree at

[53rd Annual Exhibit-Displays Tickets, Fri, Jun 7, 2024 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)

Workshops are Sunday June 9 Sign up online at:

[Sunday workshops with Rick Garcia Tickets, Sun, Jun 9, 2024 at 9:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)

Volunteer at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/53rd-annual-exhibit-volunteers-tickets-771842761477>

The **demonstration Saturday afternoon is free** and starts at 1:00. MBS has a very nice azalea bonsai picked out by Rick Garcia and has been acclimated to our climate for this event. Everyone is welcome to watch this amazing refinement and transformation.

MBS Grant Park Bonsai Show

June 22nd 9AM to 4PM

The South Milwaukee Garden Club & Historical Society is holding their Annual Garden Tour June 22 from 9am - 4pm; MBS is a featured stop at Grant Park's Area 5A. This is a great opportunity to promote our club and the great hobby of bonsai to the public. This is a casual show, just to show off to the community; no judging.

All MBS members and friends are welcome to bring trees. There will be eight 8-foot tables being supplied by the Friends of Grant Park for use, but if you have a table and chair, it would be a good idea for you to bring them. There are picnic tables that can be used also. Bring your own food and drinks.

Bryan L will be bringing many of his trees for this show but needs help to fill this expansive pavilion. Please bring your trees to show to the public or to work on. Visitors will be eager to see trees in training that are being worked on. Stop by even if you cannot stay the entire day.

There is easy access to parking and a paved trail leading to the shelter.

Set up will start at 8AM and we will clean up at 4PM.

The show will be at [Grant Park Area 5A "The Brown Pavilion"](#).



By Bryan L and Melissa J

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See our updated Website: aabonsai.com
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If you have any plastic or silk flowers or greenery gathering dust, please bring them to the June 1 MBS meeting. Kris Z is working on an outdoor project which requires lots of the above. She will include a picture when the project is done...



The Daylily Society of Southeast WI is holding its Annual Daylily Sale on the 1st Saturday in June 7:30 AM – Noon at The Brookfield Farmers Market, 16900 W Gebhardt Rd, Brookfield in Front of Brookfield Central High School. Over 200 Cultivars for Sale. Pictures and descriptions are available at the sale and online: www.dssew.org.



Looking for mini hosta to use as accent plants? There'll be plenty to choose from at the next MBS meeting on Saturday June 1 - just in time for the MBS Annual Exhibit the next weekend! \$5 - \$10.

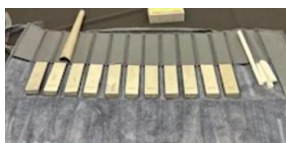
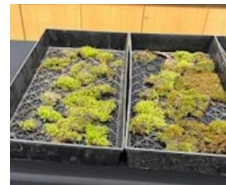


American Bonsai Society (ABS) Learning Seminars - by Melissa J

Well, it was recently time for the annual ABS learning seminars again. This year we travelled to Grand Rapids Michigan for a weekend of Bonsai fun. Some people drove around the Lake, but I took the Lake Ferry Express across from Milwaukee to Muskegon, MI. The trip only took 2-1/2 hours, and I got all the diet coke I could drink (not too shabby for having to board at 5:30am-I know, my husband wasn't happy either). This year the event took place at the Fredrick Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park.



My seminars started Friday morning learning more about moss. Why we need it, how to care for it and where to find it. Ted Bentley was a real "moss geek"; I've never met someone who was so excited about moss before.



Next, I moved on to learning about Tool Care. We spend a lot of money on our tools so knowing how to care for them is very important. A sharp tool, although dangerous to fingers, really does better for our trees. Tim Priest did a very good job showing everyone how to clean and sharpen the tools we all have.

My afternoon was spent with Mark Fields in a workshop where we received a tree, drew a plan for the tree and then executed that plan on the tree. The tree we received was a juniper. Yes people, I now own a non-tropical tree! Also, look who I found at this workshop, Cameron and Johnny! Fellow MBS members at ABS! Mark did mention Junipers don't usually get the "poodle" treatment, but really, what does he know??



The next day brought another tree workshop. This time a Little Gem Dwarf Spruce....I know, another non-tropical tree!!! This workshop was led by Bill Valavanis and taught me a lot about spruce. I had fun working on this small tree and look forward to seeing its progression. Hopefully I can keep these 2 trees alive!



My afternoon was spent at a seminar on wiring, but I didn't take any pictures at that. The information was good and well presented.

My ABS experience wrapped up with the annual banquet. We had a delicious meal, watched the awards presentations and then the auctions.

I even ran into more MBS members, Judy and Val (pictured right) and Kevin S, Jack D and Michelle Z (not pictured) were there as well.



All in all, it was a great weekend, and I can't wait for next year!

May Meeting

The May meeting was a group slash. If you missed the meeting, you missed out on a great time. We split up into a few groups and worked on nursery stock trees as groups. Every group had a different idea for their tree and each tree took a different path. One group actually found 3 trees within the original tree. From first glance there was no way to tell there were 3 trees in that 3-gallon pot! This exercise shows that you never know what you have until you start looking under the surface.





Restoring Bonsai Tools

By Pam W



Pruning saw blade with hard-to-remove tree sap.



Wire brush can get in the narrow gaps between the saw teeth to remove anything stuck there.

Precision tools, like shears can be disassembled for cleaning.



Rusty tools;
Photo by Nichigo Bonsai.

Quick Cleaning and Removing Rust

Cleaning Pine pitch from blades. If your restoration project involves an old blade covered in a lot of Pine pitch, clean it in a mixture of boiling water and baking soda. Otherwise, using dish soap, water, and an abrasive pad, try to get as much of the loose dirt off as possible. Next, soak the tool in a mixture of 2 T. of citric acid to every 3 C. of water, or straight white vinegar. When using citric acid, you will notice a chemical reaction when you immerse the tool. Tiny bubbles will begin to float to the top indicating the acid is working on the rust. Do not leave in the acid for longer than 48 hours. (Ask me how I know.) Every few hours check the tool to see how much of the rust is gone. When you are satisfied with the work the acid has done finish removing any remaining spots of rust with a nylon abrasive pad. Rinse and dry them well with paper towels. Then **immediately** coat with oil, such as mineral (cheapest) Jojoba or Camellia oil to stop them from beginning to "flash rust". Rust can develop literally within minutes after the tool is exposed to oxygen.

Precision tool Care

If your goal is to bring your tool back to a point where they look and function as if they had been properly cared for over the years. anti-rust dips, vinegar, or citric acid while working well, leaves the metal with a dull and lifeless grey phosphate coating (or worse if you leave them in too long.)

To remove the rust while leaving the patina intact, slowly and carefully begin scraping the rust off the surface using a glass scraper or razor blade. Once all the rust is removed, the metal surface will be dusty and dirty, and you may see some micro-scratches from the scraper. Using a cleaner/degreaser, gently buff the surface with very fine steel wool (000 or 0000). You want to clean the metal, smoothing out and blending in any scratches in the patina without removing it. Go slow. Follow up with the cleaner/degreaser on a paper towel or rag until it's completely clean. Once clean and dry, I wipe it down with something to help protect and preserve it like Camellia oil. Camellia oil, by the way, is really good stuff for protecting tools and knives, and is food safe. What you should be left with now is a clean surface free of rust, but retaining that beautiful patina.

Restore Tool to Functional Use

First, oil up the moving parts of the tool using 3 in 1 or your favorite oil (mine is Camellia oil. Move to sharpening the blades. Using even pressure on a diamond plate or your stone, rub the blade back and forth until an even scratch pattern can be seen across the entire back of the blade where the bevel meets it at the tip. Move up through the stones until the blade back has a mirror polish. You could see your reflection when you are finished.

For more details on Tools for Sharpening check out in the June 2016 article.

<https://www.milwaukeebonsai.org/Newsletters/MBS201605news.pdf>



Beginner Grafting Notes

By Pam W

Common terms

Scion. A piece of detached twig or shoot. The scion usually contains two or three buds, although it may contain more. When the scion is only a single bud, the form of grafting is known as budding.

Rootstock (also stock or understock). This is a term applied to the part of the graft that produces the root system of the grafted plant.

Interstock (also interstem). This is a piece of plant (usually to form trunk or a portion of it) grafted between the scion and understock.

Cultivar. This is a term now used in place of variety. It means cultivated variety and differentiates a plant from a botanical or natural variety.

Cambium. This is a single layer of cells between the wood and bark of a tree or shrub that produces new cells. In graftage, the cambium of the scion must line up as closely as possible with the cambium of the stock for a good union.

What is Grafting?

Grafting is a horticultural technique of joining two plants together so they continue their growth together. The upper part of the graft (the scion) becomes the top of the plant, the lower portion is called the understock. The success of this joining requires that the vascular tissues grow together. Although grafting usually refers to joining only two plants, it may be a combination of several

Why Graft Bonsai?

In Bonsai much grafting is done for a variety of reasons: to place branches in strategic places to enhance the design of the tree., to replace foliage with a more delicate variety, to add roots to improve the root flare.

What are the Limitations?

You will find several pre-bonsai material that is grafted using a hardier root system. Japanese White Pines are commonly grafted onto Japanese Black Pine stock for this reason. Traditional 'graft' markers are no big deal in nursery trees. A 'graft' mark on a bonsai is a deterrent because it 'pulls the eye' away from the desired form of the tree. Worse is when the scion grows faster resulting in reverse taper.

When is the Time to Graft?

Most grafting is done in late winter or early spring before new growth begins. The best time is after the chance of severe cold has passed but well before hot weather arrives. This timing applies to both thread- and scion grafting. Approach grafting (attaching a donor plant with the roots still intact to the receiving plant) should be performed in summer however

Why does a Graft Fail?

The most common cause of failure is the cambiums were not meeting properly. Another common problem is with the scion such as scions were upside down, dried out, injured by cold or not healthy or simply not dormant. Technique issues include improper timing, not properly covered with grafting film. Uncontrollable forces also ruin success such as the scion was displaced by storm, birds or other mean, the graft was shaded too much by other growth or was attacked by insects or disease.

More Information

In 2017 Steve and I did some grafting work with Peter Tea. We found the process straight forward: create a flap in the stock, insert a scion, and ensure the cambiums are lined up.

You can read about the process in the article *Grafting: A Valuable Skill* complete with great pictures in the [April 2017 MBS Newsletter](#).



PO Box 240822
Milwaukee, WI 53224
www.milwaukeebonsai.org

Next MBS meeting will be
June 1, 2024 @ 9am

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*Nature's music is never over,
Her silences are pauses,
Not conclusions.*

~Mary Webb