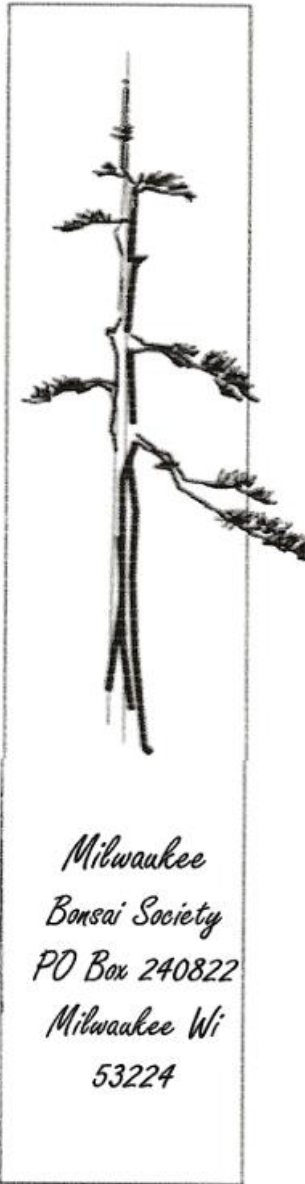


BONSAI NEWS

March 2023



Next Meeting
March 4, 2023
9 am
Boerner
Botanical

Upcoming Meeting

The first part of our meeting will have Rick Garcia talking to us about azaleas. Even if you don't have any azaleas this should be an interesting and informative morning.

Rick is one of the best azalea artists in the world and we are very lucky to have him here. Rick will be discussing spring care of azaleas and will bring a small selection of trees that have been imported from Japan, have been repotted and are ready for work.

The second part of the meeting will be for information on repotting:

If you're new to bonsai or would like a refresher on what you need to do prior to repotting your trees, the Novice section of the March meeting is something you should attend. After Rick Garcia gives his informative talk on Satsuki azaleas, Judy S will discuss what we need to have ready BEFORE you take your tree out of the pot. We will focus on soil and pot preparation as well as the tools you should have on hand.

Meeting Schedule

March

- March 4 – Guest Artist-Rick Garcia/Repot basics
- March 4 – Workshop-Azalea Critique & Discussion*
- March 5 – Workshop-Azalea Spring Maintenance*
- March 11 – Novice Class #2*
- March 18 – Workshop-Root-over-Rock*
- March 25 – Novice Class #3*
- March 25 – Skill Builder 101*
- March 26 – Skill Builder 201*

April

- April 1 – Watering, fertilization & pest mngt/bringing trees out of winter
- April 1 – Workshop – Yamadori Dig
- April 8 – Repotting Workshop Nightowl Bonsai
- April 15 – Skill Builder 101*
- April 16 – Skill Builder 201*

May

- May 6 – Air Layering/Repotting Tropicals

*Open to MBS members only

President's Message

Hello fellow bonsai enthusiasts!

Happy almost March! I can't wait to get going on my trees that need to be repotted. I'm already figuring out what tree is going into what pot and which trees need to stay in their current container. If you need help with deciding what to do with any of your trees, bring them to the next MBS membership meeting to get some feedback from your fellow members.

Speaking of the next meeting, we are pleased to welcome our friend and awesome azalea bonsai specialist Rick Garcia as our guest artist, speaker, and instructor. Rick will be presenting during the meeting then will be doing a critique of currently owned azaleas after the meeting followed by a workshop on Sunday. You can sign up for the critique as a participant or silent observer on the club web site. The Sunday workshop is full, but you can still sign up as a silent observer.

Even if you think azaleas aren't your thing, I encourage everyone to attend the meeting if you can and sign up for the critique or workshop as an observer. Rick is an extremely knowledgeable bonsai professional and a great teacher. I know that you will learn a lot just listening to him. Rick is the reason I purchased my first quality azalea last year. He will also be bringing some extra trees to sell and maybe some other surprises.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at the next meeting.

Erich

Member's Corner

I attended the "How to show your tree" workshop a few weekends ago and wanted to let everyone know about my experience. First, I must mention that while we were waiting for the class to start the person next to me asked why I was there, don't I know a lot about bonsai already. At first, in my mind, I thought "Wow, this person thinks I know what I'm doing!" Then reality set in and I told the truth. I don't really know that much about showing trees and that there is always something new to learn with bonsai.

The class started and Kris proved to be very well prepared. She had everything thought out about how the day would go. First, we took the trees we brought and found some pots we thought they would look good in and snapped pictures so we could buy pots like the ones we just found. Next step, stands. That was a bit more daunting than it sounds. Stands can be anything from a plain bamboo mat to an elaborate carved wood platform. Gosh, the choices are endless! We talked quiet a while about stands but finally everyone seemed to have a basic understanding of them. Next lunch! Time to decompress and talk about bonsai.

The class started again with the judging evaluation form explained to us in-depth. I believe we all now know how the evaluation form reflects the judge's opinions. Just because your tree gets all 4's or 5's does not mean it will be best in show. The class then moved to us putting a display together for everyone to discuss. This class could easily have gone on for a few more hours, but by then it was time to wrap up. A great workshop. If it is offered again, I would highly recommend it!

Melissa J

One of the Best Azalea Artist in the world will be here at the March 2023 Meeting – Rick Garcia

by Pam W

Rick Garcia's exposure to traditional bonsai began in 1993. The opening of the El Dorado School of Satsuki Bonsai in 1997 marked the beginning of an intensive study focused specifically on Satsuki azaleas. Rick was a student in the inaugural class, graduated the three-year program becoming a certified Satsuki bonsai instructor. After completing that program, he continued his studies in Japan with the world-renowned Satsuki master, Suisho Nakayama, President of the Japanese Satsuki Association. Rick continues with studies to the present day and has been teaching Satsuki Bonsai for 23 years.

In 2012, Rick started a business, North American Satsuki Bonsai Center, focused on offering premium quality Satsuki-related products. In his words "we have given our entire focus to creating the best possible experience for you, the bonsai enthusiast."

Rick has spent many years working on his book "Satsuki Azalea Bonsai: A Fundamental Study" and it is filling a needed space in the Satsuki literature. When is the ideal time to repot? How often should I water? What is the best sun exposure? This is but a small sampling of the many questions enthusiasts ponders when considering proper care for their Satsuki bonsai. His book takes a unique approach and explores fundamental plant behaviors that are specific to Satsuki azaleas. By capitalizing on these innate characteristics, he establishes a solid foundation that merges time-tested, practical techniques with an intuitive approach in the care we provide. If you desire to elevate your knowledge of Satsuki azaleas, look no further than his book!

Be wowed as Rick discusses Spring Care of Azaleas at our March 4 general meeting at 9:00 AM. He will bring a small selection of trees imported from Japan and repotted ready for work.

Take advantage of more discussion after the meeting in the Azalea Critique and Discussion Workshop. Registered members can bring up to two azalea bonsai. Artist Rick Garcia will critique and set a clear design objective for your tree. Or just be a Silent Observer - [Register](#)

On Sunday take a day long workshop where Rick will, with a clear design objective mapping your actions, help you employ pruning techniques to stimulate new growth. This hands-on workshop for Satsuki Azalea techniques including making dramatic cuts safely, employ furujiku, aojiku, motobadome and other techniques. mentioned at the general meeting. Registered members can bring up to two azalea bonsai. Or purchase one he has brought from Japan. And as before, you take advantage of Rick's instructions as a Silent Observer - [Register](#)



Rick's Book *Satsuki Azalea Bonsai: A Fundamental Study*



Discussing Azaleas at the AE 2022



One of Rick's Satsuki Azalea Bonsai



Satsuki Azalea Blooms

Ancient Arts Bonsai

Bonsai Supplier Established
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Bonsai a Growing Hobby
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Services – Lessons, Consults, Repotting, Wiring, Boarding

See our updated Website: aabonsai.com
Email – aabonsai@charter.net
Phone – 262-490-8733

What's a Root Aphid and What's a Mycorrhiza?

By Michael Hagedorn

It's not easy to tell the difference between them. Aphids are detrimental and Mycorrhiza are beneficial, so we have to get this right. Which is tricky, as they are doppelgängers.

I've seen lost branches from root aphids, and general weakening. They are usually found in greatest numbers right next to the pot wall. Mycorrhiza helps uptake of nutrients and water. Also easy to see next to the pot wall.

The following photos show a root mass of a Scots Pine we repotted last week. It shows BOTH Mycorrhiza and root aphids. And this is where it gets tricky.



A Scots Pine root mass. Old hands at bonsai will say, "Yup, that's Mycorrhiza." And you'd be correct. The milky, soft-looking, off-white patches are outlined in red



This side of the root ball also has Mycorrhiza, but if you looked quickly, you'd think it was all fungus. But only that outlined in red is Mycorrhiza. The rest—the bright white patches—are root aphids



This side also has mostly root aphids, with just a little Mycorrhiza showing—the tan colored patch outlined in red. Root aphids are known by their spotty white, mealy rather than webby, growths. The aphids themselves are almost impossible to see in the root mass



This shot shows two root aphids on the pot wall, cream-colored ovoid things, in the middle of the photo. Even with a 10x loupe these can be hard to see. (There are many root aphid species, and some don't make the white poofs we see in the soil.)

Root aphids aren't easy to ID. But if you do find them, consider control, or risk a weakened plant.

A systemic pesticidal drench is a start, like Safari or Bayer. Some have used drenches of pyrethrins, oils, and Zerotel. Beneficial nematodes may also offer control.

Multiple applications of controls may be required as root aphids are NOT easy to eradicate. (In one text exchange a friend had "root" autocorrected as "rude", which felt accurate.)

The “**Getting your tree ready for show**” was an educational experience. The participants and silent observers learned how to pick a pot, stand and accent for their tree... They also had an excellent presentation on how the judges look at the trees and the criteria used by the judges. Following are pix and comments from the participants:

What did you like best about the workshop?

- The amount of information given. How well everyone worked together.
- Sharing ideas, seeing actual examples. Working with great people
- The hands-on experience. Bringing my own trees and getting advice
- So much knowledge presented in a great way
- I loved the free exchange of ideas
- It was small enough to get to know everyone
- Different opinions / options / handouts
- I liked the encouragement of group participation. There were also a great variety of pots.
- Evaluating my tree with all the pots and stands available

Other comments:

- Really enjoyed the session. Helped with so many areas.
- This is a must-take class for everyone after the Basic Class
- Great class! I learned a lot
- This was fantastic! I got a lot out of it



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

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Q: What can I do in the winter to protect my plants during a warm snap?

### Protecting Plants During a Winter Warm Spell

A: My best advice is don't wait until a warm snap to care for your plants. Beyond that, there isn't much you can do. Once a plant breaks dormancy, it will not go back to dormancy, even if the temperatures return to normal. It also loses its ability to adjust to cold temperatures.

Two types of dormancy regulate plants. There's endo-dormancy, wherein a plant's internal clock dictates its state—not the weather. A plant in endo-dormancy is tracking chilling units, or hours of time when the temperature is above freezing (that's right, not below freezing, but above). Unseasonably warm weather will not jolt the plant out of dormancy, unless it has already met its chilling requirements. Eco-dormancy, meanwhile, is the state a plant enters after it counts enough chilling units. A plant in eco-dormancy can be affected by warmer temperatures; it will begin to grow when temps reach the mid-40s (F).

**Ask your nursery for trees and shrubs that break dormancy later in the season, regardless of temperatures.** Some are that way naturally while others have been bred for the trait. Plants that are native to the middle of the continent (as opposed to the far north or south) tend to have large chilling requirements to meet before they exit endo-dormancy. They've evolved to withstand cycles of chilling and thawing, unlike far north plants, which are most often subject to long winters consistently below freezing, and southern plants, which are used to short, mild winters. Therefore you might choose plants native to that middle area. (Reprinted from hortmag.com)

- JENNIFER SMITH UPDATED: FEB 24, 2020, ORIGINAL: FEB 28, 2017



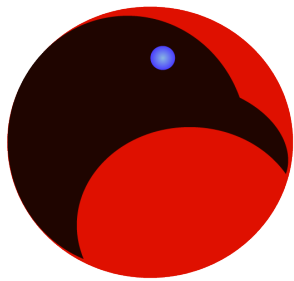
## February 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting

The February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting started with Houston S talking about Root-over-Rock masterpieces. Something very interesting that I learned during the demonstration is that Houston's secret weapon for creating root-over-rock bonsai is using party hose to hold the tree to the rock. The party hose allows water and air to get to the roots and still hold the tree to the rock. Gosh, you never know what you will learn at a meeting (a great reason to attend each month).



The second part of the meeting brought Ron F to talk about the 10 basic tools everyone should have in their bonsai toolbox. The list includes:

- Concave Cutters
- Wire Cutters Shears
- Turntable
- Chopsticks
- Pliers Saw
- Knife
- Water can/wand
- Soil Sieve



# Tools for Beginning Bonsai

*Quiet Crow Bonsai is a collection of articles, essays, and views for bonsai artist, devotees and supporters. [www.QuietCrowBonsai.com](http://www.QuietCrowBonsai.com).*

One of the first things people attending their first bonsai demonstration notice is that we seem to use a lot of tools. Last month Milwaukee Bonsai Society had a presentation for novice practitioners on basic tools needed and how to properly use them. Putting your mind at ease, you don't need a lot of tools to begin in bonsai. Let's revisit Ron's discussion.

## Getting Started

**Chopsticks** are used for a lot of bonsai-related tasks, but initially you'll just be using it to check the soil moisture. To do this you insert the chopstick near the edge of the pot (but in the actual soil) about 3/4" deep. Then withdraw it and look at the chopstick and feel it. If you can feel and see moisture then you don't need to water yet. If you're not certain, water. While over-watering will cause roots to rot and die, that takes a lot longer than if you forget to water!

Bamboo chopsticks are better than wood ones. They don't have as many splinters and they last longer. If you don't get enough thru your favorite Chinese restaurant you can buy them from Ancient Arts Bonsai and cost less than five dollars.

**Bonsai Shears**, also known as Ikebana Scissors or shears, are the most frequently used bonsai tool. You can spend a lot of money on this tool but the cheaper ones are just fine, especially to begin with. Look for shears that are 7-8" in length to get into the tree as shorter ones don't work as well. At the lowest price point most will have hard plastic handles. These are usually very comfortable, but each maker's design is slightly different so try them out if you can. These can be found at most big box stores and nurseries.

## Basic Set

Once you start taking classes, you'll need a few more tools. You'll begin using copper or aluminum wire to shape tree branches. This means a few more tools

**Concave cutters** are used to cut branches that are larger than scissors can handle. Cheaply made versions of this tool are awful. Rather than making a good cut they can smash and leave a jagged edge which won't heal well. You may have an ugly scar once the bark heals over. There are many sizes and brands available.

**Wire cutters** with a blunt end that can cut heavier gauge wire and not hurt the bark when removing wire from a branch. You're probably wondering "Why can't I use pliers and wire cutters I already have in my toolbox?" Initially you might be able to, as long as the wire you're using is small wire. But bigger trees require heavier gauge (thicker) wire to hold a branch you want to bend.



Steel Bonsai Shears on Amazon

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00W1Y6JVK?th=1>



Basic Set of Tools.



Look for deep serrations for good gripping in both pliers and tweezers.



Tools for Repotting.

Unfortunately, household wire cutters just can't cut wire that may be 3-6mm in diameter. And household pliers often slip on bare wire.

**Jin pliers** that can solidly grip wire for or applying or removing wire from trunks and branches. . As you progress in your practice, Jin pliers can also be used to create an aging or deadwood effect on a bonsai tree by stripping the bark of the tree to create a Jin or Shari. Another useful tool is using it to bend thick branches. By using two pliers to grab the wire, you can twist and maneuver a branch much more easily than with your bare hands.

**Tweezer** with good serrations at the tip for arranging moss and picking unnecessary small buds. You can buy tweezers from bonsai companies but unfortunately the good ones are outrageously expensive and the cheap ones are often badly made. I've found that medical supply tweezers (called Forceps) are good quality and inexpensive because so many are produced. There are a lot of specialized styles of forceps available, making it tough for a non-doctor to decipher. I use these 8" Dressing Tweezer <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01N7MCQUW> from Amazon.

## Repotting Tools

**Root hooks** to comb-out and untangle roots. Sometimes have very sharp points on the end. It's good idea to use a file and "round over" the tip so you don't stab yourself! Make sure the point isn't jagged, which can catch on the roots and tear them, instead of separating them from the soil.

**Root shears** cut off excess roots. These can be another copy of your regular bonsai shears. When you're cutting roots, you're also cutting soil that contain sand, pumice, lava, etc. that can really dull the blade quickly. The shears you use to cut leaves and branches should always be very sharp, so using a separate one for roots is just good practice.

**Edge saw** is used to loosen the edge of the root ball from the pot. This tool isn't really needed until you start using pots that are at least a couple of inches deep". It's also useful when you have to remove roots from a pot that has an edge that curves over the top of the root ball called a bellied pot.

## Carbon Vs. Stainless Steel

Many beginners are often in a dilemma when it comes time to decide between carbon steel (black) tools or the usually more expensive shiny stainless-steel tools.

Most maintain that it is better and more economical to buy higher quality carbon steel tools than equally or more expensive stainless tools. But the debate will always rage on.

Carbon is added to steel to increase its hardness. Adding as little as 0.5% carbon can make a huge difference in the hardness of the steel. However, the increased hardness comes with a disadvantage -it is much less ductile or yielding. Careful control of the heat treatment allows one to control the trade-off between hardness and ductility - but if you make a mistake you can end up with a blade that won't hold an edge or one that shatters if you drop it.

Stainless Steel does not contain much carbon to make sure that it remains stainless. What is the result? Well carbon is responsible for making steels hard so they hold a really nice cutting edge. Therefore, SS is stainless-steel not very hard and makes lousy cutting tools. Well not really. Metallurgists figured that a metal that was both stainless and held a decent cutting edge would be great so they developed some

In summary, good bonsai tools are expensive because they are difficult to make.

## Buying

If you've gotten to the point of considering anything other than chopsticks and shears, buy some real bonsai tools. As with kitchen and mechanic tools you'll discover that you can spend a lot of money for a tool, or very little. Often the cheapest versions will fail and you'll realize you wasted your money. Better made tools are more expensive and as you progress in this hobby you may find yourself wanting better tools.

That doesn't mean you have to buy the most expensive tools initially. There are a variety of suppliers of medium grade tools I can recommend. Joshua Roth brand is good quality and carried by many online stores. Masakuni has been manufacturing bonsai tools for over 70 years, known for their exceptional sharpness and durability. They are considered the world's finest Bonsai tools.

**American Bonsai Tool & Supply** <https://www.americanbonsai.com/> has a line of tools that come with a Lifetime warranty

**Ancient Art Bonsai** - <https://aabonsai.com/> carries Joshua Roth and other brands and can be purchased at meetings.

**California Bonsai Studio** - <https://www.californiabonsai.com/> carries Masakuni

**Wisco Bonsai** <https://www.wiscobonsai.com/> has a novice line of selected tools and can be purchased locally



PO Box 240822  
Milwaukee, WI 53224  
[www.milwaukeebonsai.org](http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org)

Next MBS meeting will be  
March 4, 2023 @ 9am  
Boerner Botanical Gardens

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#### **Other Club Functions**

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Green attire swishes  
Fast feet, giddy crowds sip ale  
Leprechauns walk by

By **Pearl Popiak** (Syracuse 2011)