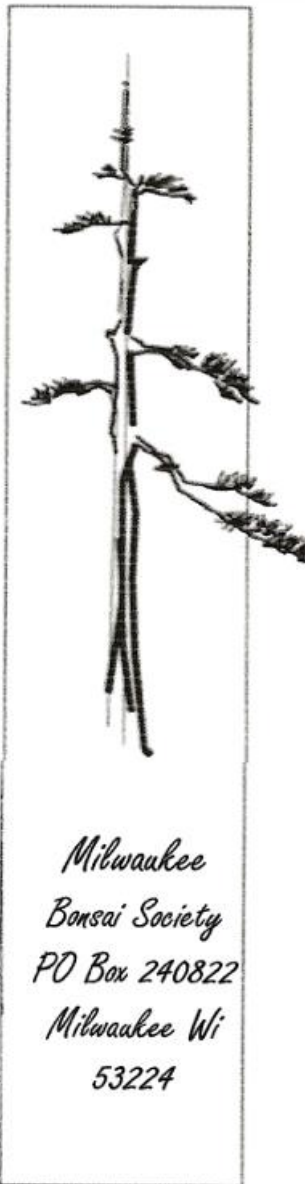


# BONSAI NEWS

February 2025



## Upcoming Meeting

Part of the February meeting will offer insights on root work. Steve and Brian will give us details that we can take back and use on our trees to help them be healthy and happy.

The main topic will be explaining Juniper styles in preparation for hands on styling at our March meeting.

Steve and Brian will talk about running and clumping styles of Junipers which should be very interesting indeed.

Make sure to bring plenty of questions!

**Next Meeting**  
February 1, 2025  
9 am  
Boerner  
Botanical



## February

February 1 – General Meeting: Root Work/Explaining Juniper Styles

February 15 – Workshop: How do I Start to Show My Trees?\*

February 22 – Class: Fundamentals\*

February 23 – Silhouette Show  
Milw. Domes

## March

March 1 – General Meeting: Juniper Work/Guest Artist:  
Andy Smith-Collecting

March 1 – Workshop: Andy Smith\*

March 2 – Workshop: Bring your own Tree with Andy Smith\*

March 8 – Class: Fundamentals\*

March 22 – Class: Fundamentals\*

March 22 – Workshop: Root over Rock Follow-up\*

## April

April 5 – General Meeting:  
Pinching/Mugo Pine Work

April 19 – Class: Fundamentals\*

\*Open to MBS members only

## President's Message

As I write this, the Midwest is experiencing the coldest temperatures in a long time, and in my neighborhood, we have hit ten degrees below zero. After our talks at meetings about overwintering your trees, this will certainly test whether your particular setup is working.

We are also in that time that I regard as the trough of winter. When the skies are gray on so many days, it is difficult to appreciate that the days have been getting longer since the winter solstice on December 21, and it won't be all that long until the vernal equinox in March. In my greenhouse, I have a Japanese flowering apricot, whose flower buds are beginning to swell. It will probably bloom in mid-February, producing blossoms smaller than a dime, with a beautiful fragrance that will perfume the entire house, if only for a few days. The apricot is particularly appreciated in Japan, where its flowering is regarded as a signal that winter is nearly over.

I have written previously about the importance of what is happening to your trees in the context of their growth cycle and at a particular time of year. I have found it helpful to view this in terms of the solar calendar. The metabolic and physiological changes that take place in trees, and plants generally, throughout the year are precipitated most by changes in the length of the light interval each day. The major secondary factor is temperature, in the air but more importantly in the soil. [Morel hunters, for example, will tell you that it's pointless to look for them until the surface soil temperature is above fifty degrees.] It is, in fact, the seasonal variance in temperature that will determine whether those changes take place a few days before or after the "normal" time.

Throughout history and around the globe, virtually every major culture has recognized and observed the importance of the solar cycle. In the Americas, the Mayans, Aztecs, and Inca all developed their own calendars based on the cycle, and erected temples to that end. Important occasions, such as planting crops, were often accompanied by major religious rituals, some involving animal or human sacrifice. Fortunately, human sacrifice is seldom necessary in bonsai.

Right now our deciduous trees are at rest, but in the next few weeks they will begin to awaken in response to the lengthening day. Not surprisingly, they will be fully awake and producing new leaves by around mid- to late March, the vernal equinox. This is why we emphasize constantly that once this process is underway, you have effectively missed the window to safely repot them.

The intense burst of new foliage will form between that equinox [when day and night are of equal length] and mid-June [the summer solstice, when the daylight interval is longest]. During this growth period, the trees are maximizing their foliage to take full advantage of the days with the greatest amount of sunlight. After all, photosynthesis is essentially the process of converting sunlight into biomass.

As summer progresses into fall, the addition of new foliage stops, and the metabolism of the tree begins to slow. It is becoming less efficient as the days begin to grow shorter, and it is most important for the tree to be storing food resources for the following spring. Ultimately, in fall the tree will decide

for itself when the party is over, and it will stop the flow of water to the leaves until they drop. This shut-down process corresponds to the autumnal equinox in September, and metabolic activity slows to a virtual stop around the time of the solstice in December.

So.....what does this all mean? By more fully understanding what is happening and when, we can better prepare ourselves to do those necessary things as the seasons progress. [In case anyone has been sleeping, this seasonality also pervades the sequence of classes developed by the education committee.]. For bonsai folk, March Madness has nothing to do with basketball, and now is the time to be identifying your plans for repotting. You should be thinking in terms of which pot, prepping them with wire and screen, and rationalizing buying more pots if you don't have just what you need. You will do no serious harm by repotting a few days early, but being too late means waiting another year.

In Wisconsin, we realistically only have about seven or eight months a year when we can really "do" bonsai. The beginning of that fun period is coming soon, and as we prepare for spring, we can be looking forward to being more timely, purposeful and intentional with what we do through the rest of the seasons. In the words of philosopher Curtis Mayfield, "People, get ready!"

Rick

## **Ancient Arts Bonsai**

**Bonsai Supplier Established  
in 2005**

Bonsai a Growing Hobby  
Wisconsin's Leading Full Line Bonsai Supplier

Tools, Wire – Aluminum & Copper, Pots, Fertilizers  
Soils – Akadama, Lava, Pumice, Kanuma, Blends  
Trees – Tropical, Deciduous, Conifers, Evergreens  
Services – Lessons, Consults, Repotting, Wiring, Boarding

See our updated Website: [aabonsai.com](http://aabonsai.com)  
Email – [aabonsai@charter.net](mailto:aabonsai@charter.net)  
Phone – 262-490-8733

**TIME IS RUNNING OUT** to sign up for the “How do I begin to show my Trees” workshop.

There are some spots left...

Whether you intend to show your trees this year or not, this is a great opportunity to bring two trees (in nursery or bonsai pots) and see which pot they would look best in. When you find an appropriate pot, place your tree in the pot on a stand to see which would best complete the picture. Accent plants and mossing will also be discussed.

You'll find out more about pots, stands and how the trees are judged.

All this plus lunch for \$30!

Get this on your calendar for Saturday February 15 - 9:00 - 2:30-ish. No silent observers.

Sign up on [Eventbrite](#)

Here are some comments from the participants in the last workshop:

I liked best:

- 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
- It was small enough to get to know everyone
- Different opinions / options / handouts

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

# Artist Workshops with Andy Smith

by PAM W

**Andy Smith** (So. Dakota) commonly acknowledged “king” of yamadori in this country, transplants 300-400 trees per year for bonsai and has supplied demo and workshop trees for many of the world's best bonsai artists.

We have an exciting opportunity to work with Andy at two workshops on March 1 and 2 after Andy speaks on his experiences in collecting and growing trees during the early part of the meeting on Saturday. MBS is excited as Andy has agreed to bring a number of trees for purchase. He also is providing us a way to select trees from his collection. Provide a 50% deposit and he will bring them with him, saving us shipping fees.

**ARTIST WORKSHOP**

**MAR. 1**  
10:30 AM

**MAR. 2**  
8:30 AM

**Artist:**  
Andy Smith

Perfect for beginners and seasoned bonsai artists alike. Join our upcoming hands-on workshops and discover the secrets behind creating captivating bonsai. Learn more: [www.milwaukeebonsai.org](http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org)

You can view these trees on his website [Golden Arrow Bonsai](#). Contact him with your requested tree, pay him, and he will deliver the tree March 1.

For the Saturday workshop, you must purchase a tree from Andy and then have him guide you into the early stages of creating a stunning bonsai. The prices and types of trees will vary and are paid directly to Andy on Saturday. This workshop is 4 hours starting at 10:30 AM and includes lunch. [Register on Eventbrite for the Saturday workshop](#)

On Sunday, you can bring any tree. Many of us have already purchased trees from Andy and you can bring it or any tree for his artistic help. This workshop is 6 hours and starts at 8:30 AM. [Register for the Sunday workshop on Eventbrite](#).

While some feel collecting wild trees is unethical, Andy makes it a practice to collect trees with care and under forestry license. He has been successfully collecting for over 30 years. He has a great success rate. He often tells stories of returning to an area that has been hit by fire or cleared. Andy is careful, respectful and ethical.



**WISCO BONSAI NOW HAS THE AREA'S LARGEST SELECTION OF ARTISIAN, HANDMADE BONSAI POTTERY, MUCH OF WHICH CONSISTS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL ARTISTS.**

**WE ALSO NOW CARRY A LINE OF TOOLS GEARED TOWARD THE BEGINNER AND NOVICE AMONG US, ALONG WITH ALL MANNER OF BONSAI SUNDRIES, SUCH AS, COPPER & ALUMINUM WIRE, JIN SEAL, WOUND PUTTY, ETC.**

**AND OF COURSE THERES THE SUBSTRATE, WISCO GOLD... THE BEST NON-JAPANESE MIX AROUND WE ALSO OCCASIONALLY HAVE OTHER RAW SUBSTRATE COMPONENTS AVAILABLE (PUMICE, LAVA, ETC).**

**SEVERAL SIZES OF KANUMA NOW AVAILABLE !!!**  
**GOT ORCHIDS ? WE HAVE A SUBSTRATE FOR THOSE TOO !!!**

**[WiscoBonsai@gmail.com](mailto:WiscoBonsai@gmail.com) 414-248-3827 [www.WiscoBonsai.com](http://www.WiscoBonsai.com)**  
 INSTAGRAM @wisco.bonsai

**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" - KATS**

## January 2025 Bonsai Pot Workshop

This was the third pottery workshop that MBS hosted. There were 8 students this time. Two of them had taken the workshop before. Val and Greg helped and that made the class easier to teach.

We were allowed by the studio, who will be firing the pots, to make 15" pots. The students were given a link to a series of videos that were made 2 years ago to help teach the class. They all watched the videos ahead of time and then applied what they learned in the videos to the class. The teacher and helpers just had to check their work as they went through the process.

The process isn't easy. There are many places where you can make a mistake and then the pot will crack. I know because I have made all of the mistakes. This is art that is not even as forgiving as growing a tree. It takes some determination. We hope to have another class soon. I hope you will join us.

Please see the pictures of the 2025 class. <https://photos.app.goo.gl/hBk7bReLDySyo5DEA>



# To Seal or Not To Seal

By Ben H

I have been thinking a lot about sealing pruning scars this month. I started down a bit of a rabbit hole while watching Bonsai Zone on Youtube. I noticed that Nigel Saunders uses rubber cement to seal the cuts that he makes. This got me questioning: What exactly does a cutting sealer or cut paste do? Are there properties we should look for in a cut paste or a cutting sealer? Does rubber cement work? What about duct seal? What about all of those nasty online recipes for making your own cut paste (the ones with resin and cinnamon that look like they absolutely destroy a pan and kill a few brain cells in the process)?

I tried to search the internet hoping to find good answers and I definitely found ... stuff - but I am not sure if I found good answers. I did, however, find what one person dubbed “the Great Bonsai Nut Debate of 2009.” It took me a while, but I found it (Bonsai Nut is an online forum for bonsai) and then proceeded to entertain myself and waste several hours reading this online argument (Online debates are one of my guilty pleasures). You can look it up if you want, but I can save you some time: some people think that you should not use cut sealers and others do. So, who is right?

Let me start by going over what I know, after many internet searches and reading too many scientific papers, on how trees deal with cuts. Then I will go over what cut paste is supposed to do. After that maybe some conclusions can be drawn.

## How a tree deals with wounds

First of all, a tree does not “heal” a wound like we would think of healing a wound. When we, as animals, get a wound we scab over and new tissue is grown to replace the damaged tissue. Foreign bodies are removed, and infections must be eliminated. A tree however does not do this. It only seals off the damaged area and grows around it. A model for this was developed in the 70’s by Dr. Alex Shigo. This model is called CODIT (Compartmentalization of Decay in Trees). The basic idea is that there are 4 “walls” or barriers in trees that allow them to quickly compartmentalize off the affected or infected area and keep it from spreading throughout the tree. I have spent more time than I would care to admit trying to understand this model, and to be honest I still feel like I don’t. However, there are three points I think are relevant to this discussion:



- 1) When a tree gets injured it creates a reaction zone that it pumps with antimicrobial and antifungal chemicals - this causes a discoloration of the wood, but attempts to keep any fungus or pathogen from expanding further into the tree's vascular system. Unfortunately, these chemicals are also toxic to the living cells and will cause cell death, a sacrifice that the tree is willing to make to keep the disease from spreading.
- 2) The tree quickly tries to dry out the exposed wood that has been sealed off from the rest of the tree. This is because most wood eating fungus and other bacteria thrive in a moist environment and have a harder time surviving in a dry environment.
- 3) Dr. Shigo found that using something (sealants, paints or tar) to close a wound on forest trees did more harm than good and professional arborists today do not use anything to seal a wound after removing a branch.

## What are cut pastes and putties supposed to do

I asked AI to tell me what cut paste does and I got the following answer:



“In Bonsai, ‘cut paste’ is a specialized paste applied to pruning wounds on a tree to help seal them, prevent infection, and promote faster healing by protecting the cut from drying out excessively: essentially acting as a protective barrier over the wound while the tree naturally forms a callus to close it up.”

While I do not trust AI completely, this seems to summarize the reason for cut paste correctly. I have read that cut pastes and cut sealers (the ones covered in Japanese writing) are supposed to have antifungal properties along with growth hormones and acids that fight off infections and promote healing on trees. However, I was not able to completely confirm that as true.

Unfortunately, bonsai as an industry does not create enough money to justify large scientific studies. I really wish it did. One can find studies that are conducted for arborists on forest development. There are studies on plants used for crops. There are very few scientific studies on Bonsai themselves. This makes it hard to gather any “hard scientific” evidence.

## Some conclusions (or lack thereof)

So is cut paste really helpful in healing the wounds on bonsai. At first glance, the evidence I present here (and I am trying not to omit any evidence - this is really the most I could find) would say that using anything to seal the cuts made on bonsai is counterproductive and the wounds should be left to heal naturally. The tree already has systems for fighting infection and sealing off the exposed wood, so any cut paste applied would not be providing any additional benefit. Additionally, the paste or sealer applied could actually trap in moisture which could give more favorable conditions for fungal growth.

But then there are the counter arguments that I have read as well. Some claim that Dr. Shigo’s studies on trees does not scale well to bonsai. It is one thing to say that a sealer can be counterproductive on a 50 foot tree and a 10 inch in diameter wound, that will never completely callus over. However, he did not study bonsai with the 2 or 3 inch cut that will heal completely, given several years. I personally do not find this very convincing. However, there are countless anecdotal arguments that ring truer for me. Pictures shared of wounds healing better with cut paste than without. And then there is my own experience. I have felt that cut paste has proven effective for my trees.

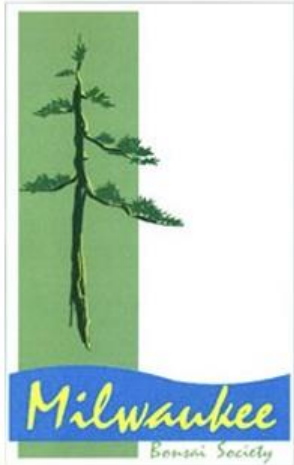
In the end I am not sure. Is it better to seal off bonsai cuts, or is it better to let them compartmentalize naturally? Most bonsai professionals still advocate for sealing wounds, especially larger ones. However, Walter Pall does not. He has written an article in his blog explaining why (<https://walter-pall-bonsai.blogspot.com/2009/01/about-sealing-wounds-on-trees.html>). There is a lot that we do in bonsai because it is tradition, and it is the way the professionals have always done it. Is that enough of a reason?



# January Meeting

The January meeting topics were soil sifting and common conifer and deciduous bonsai styles.





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

Next MBS meeting will be  
February 1, 2025 @ 9am

#### **2025 MBS OFFICERS**

President [Rick W](#)  
1<sup>st</sup> VP [Valerie S](#)  
2<sup>nd</sup> VP [Rob S](#)  
Secretary [Greg R](#)  
Treasurer [John N](#)  
Director [Joe T](#)  
Director [John R](#)  
Director [Mike B](#)  
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Webmaster [Pam W](#)  
Librarian [Greg R](#)  
Social media [Jenna W](#)

PAB Board-Ron F, Houston S & Judy S



*Glorious blue sky  
on a cold abnormal day  
Lightening my mood*

*~Jocelyn C.*