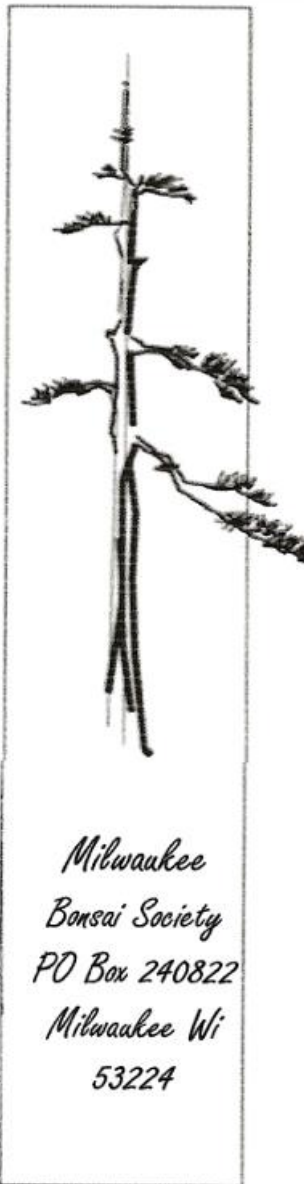


BONSAI NEWS

January 2025



Upcoming Meeting

The first meeting of 2025 will include the how's and why's of soil sifting. Ron F will enlighten us about this topic.

Ron F, Brian S, Scott D and Steve C will also help us to understand the styling of trees. This complex topic will be explained in detail with many subjects presented such as how to pick the front of a tree.

Have you ever purchased a tree because you "kind of liked it", but didn't know what to do with it? The group of experienced teachers will go over many areas of styling to help with deciding what to do with that tree.

This is a valuable subject that you don't want to miss!



Next Meeting
January 4, 2025
9 am
Boerner
Botanical

January

January 4 – General Meeting: Soil Sifting/Bonsai Styles

January 5 – Workshop: Make a Bonsai Pot*

February

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

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

February 23 – Silhouette Show
Milw. Domes

March

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

March 1 – Workshop: Pondersosa Pine Critique and Discussion*

March 2 – Workshop: Bring your own Tree*

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

April

April 5 – General Meeting:
Pinching/Mugo Pine Work

*Open to MBS members only

President's Message

I can claim only a very few personal accomplishments, but one of which I am proud is the fact that I have never failed to watch "A Charlie Brown Christmas"—not even once, from when it first aired in 1965 through today. For those interested in arithmetic, that's fifty-nine years. It's my second-longest successful relationship, outpointed only by my surviving younger brother, who narrowly beats it by way of being born in 1960. My boys grew up knowing that Christmas season in our house didn't begin until the second Tuesday in December, when the program traditionally aired. To this day, Linus's speech about the Annunciation to the shepherds makes me cry, every year.

For anyone not familiar, the story is one of Charlie Brown's depression about the upcoming Christmas holiday. He bemoans being surrounded by gluttonous demand for material things and the associated commercializing of the holiday. In an effort to lift his spirits, he selects a spindly, weak little evergreen as the centerpiece of the school Christmas play—a tree which promptly drops most of its needles and droops over. Linus later famously says, "I never thought it was a bad little tree.....maybe it just needs a little love."

Especially during my early involvement with bonsai, numerous trees came home with me because of exactly that rationale. I believed that some neglected, overlooked nursery trees were not "bad little trees" and that with some love and attention, they could realize their potential, however limited. Needless to say, most of those projects didn't work out well. Many ended up dying, perhaps mercifully so. Some became homely little mutants that will never be good bonsai, but which I nevertheless feel obligated to keep alive. There are three or four, though, who repaid that investment of faith and effort, and are now pretty nice shohin azaleas, and they bring me a great deal of joy and satisfaction.

Few of us will ever possess or create truly great bonsai. The simple fact is that great material in this country is hard to come by, and to achieve even "good" bonsai, one pays in either of two ways: a substantial dollar investment in a tree already at least partly developed, or a similarly substantial investment of time in a starter tree that will take years, if not decades, to refine. Broadly speaking, our younger, newer members need to begin with more affordable, less substantial trees because they have limited financial resources. Our older members, on the other hand, may have the money, but not the remaining time.

The Dalai Lama said that one of the keys to happiness is realistic expectations. If high quality, developed trees with eye-watering price tags are not feasible for us, there is much to be said for embracing the "lesser", more accessible tree. By giving it the benefit of the doubt, and investing some faith and effort in its progress, we may not end up with an exhibition tree, but we will still be rewarded in many ways. And in my experience, you don't really need the blue blanket around the base to make it something special.

On a more somber note, it was just a bit over a year ago that we were reeling from the sudden passing of our dear friend, Clif Orphal. There are few things harder to bear than losing a loved one during the holidays, and second to that is the next holiday season without them. I would encourage you to give a moment's consideration to people around you who may be in such circumstances and let them know that they are in your thoughts during what is for them a difficult time. It's a small gesture that can have a big impact, perhaps making someone's day a little less painful, and a little more bearable. Few of us will ever have an opportunity to do something momentous and change "The World", but it is in the small gestures and moments that we change the world immediately around us and touch the lives of the people in it.

Happy holidays, and best wishes for the new year.
Rick



JANUARY MEETING FOCUS SUBJECT: SOIL SIFTING

As we embark on a new year, the months of January & February are a good time to prepare for the upcoming Repotting Season. One task that can certainly be done now is getting your soils prepared and ready for use. The major thing that needs to be done is the sifting of your soil components. We will go over the Why's; How's of this essential task at the January meeting.



Year-End Password Changes

By Pam W

Ensure we have your correct email address at the Jan 4 Meeting

Soon you will be getting a new password to have access to all Members Only pages including all videos. **Watch your email on January 1 for the new password.** If you are not receiving emails make sure we have your correct email address. A list will be available for checking at the Jan 4, 2025 meeting.

All members who have not renewed will no longer have access to the Members Only pages which includes all videos. Make sure to renew!

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
Email – aabonsai@charter.net
Phone – 262-490-8733

January Meeting Main Subject: BONSAI DESIGN

Presented by Brian S, Ron F, Scott D, and Steve C

There are many different aspects to consider when we style a bonsai tree.

First, we need to understand the horticultural needs of the particular tree we are working on. Are we giving it the proper amount of water, light, fertilizer and heat. Is it potted in the right sized pot for the stage of development it is in. If we do these things correctly, our tree begins to look very healthy, and it will show signs of thriving. We can see this when the tree begins to look a deep green color and shows growth extensions throughout.

If all this happens, NOW we can think about styling our tree.

If all this does not happen and we choose to style our tree anyway, **it will not be happy** and will likely reward us with failure.

Styling a tree is the part of bonsai that can create stress and anxiety for many bonsai hobbyists... not just those who are new to the hobby.

Brian, Ron and Steve have taught classes for MBS for many years, and they oftentimes have members bring in a tree, set it down on the table in front of them and say that they bought this tree because, **"I kind of liked it... but I don't really know what to do with it"**

Come to the First MBS meeting of 2025 on January 4th and we will begin a very interesting and valuable journey presented by 4 experienced bonsai hobbyists from our club. They will present:

How to choose the viewing angle of a tree...

there is a traditional way to decide this

and there are 3 parts to this process taught by Bonsai Master Ryan Neil.

What are the traditional styles for a tree?

Where do branches usually come from on the tree?

What is the direction of the tree?

What is an apex?

What is a defining branch?

What are some names that Ryan Neil assigns to his styles?

Brian, Ron, Scott and Steve will present this topic and will make it as simple or as advanced as you direct the conversation.

HOW DO I BEGIN TO SHOW MY TREES?

When we go to a bonsai exhibit it's hard not to marvel on how beautiful the displays are. But how do they get that way? That information is what our upcoming workshop on Saturday February 15 will provide. This is not a workshop for you to design your tree. We will help you take your tree and get you started on the appropriate display for that tree.

To be covered:

- ~How do I choose the correct pot for my tree.
- ~What are accents for?
- ~Types of accents and placement in the display
- ~What stand is right for my tree/pot?
- ~What do the items on the evaluation sheet mean?
- ~Feminine / masculine trees and pots
- ~Why is moss used?
- ~Size / color / type

THE WORKSHOP

Saturday February 15 - 9:00am - 2:30pm

Lower level at Boerner - Multipurpose room

Bring one or two trees (in nursery or bonsai pots) with which to work

Cost - \$30 (includes lunch)

Participants - limited to 12 - No silent observers, please.

Go to Eventbrite to register, link will be live in January.

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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 414-248-3827 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" - KENS

WISCO BONSAI
www.WiscoBonsai.com

Collecting with Andy Smith – King of Yamadori

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.

Andy is a contract forester in South Dakota's Black Hills. He became fascinated in bonsai in about 1994 while collecting core specimens from very ancient pines to use in past climate studies. Andy has been a vendor in every convention that Milwaukee has hosted. He enjoys learning about this beautiful and extraordinary art and meeting with other enthusiasts around the country.

Collecting Tips

Andy will share some tips on collecting at the March Meeting. April and May are his favorite times to collect. He often has to wait until snow is out of areas before he can get in, but he feels that this is the time for best survival. The first key is to find a tree that you can get as much of the root pad as you can, as undisturbed as possible. After 1000's of trees you learn which trees will choose to be relocated and which ones will say; I'll stay right here, thank you very much.

When he is collecting, he likes to use burlap and mulch to wrap the roots in. Sometimes he will leave the trees in this package in the greenhouse over the winter until he sees signs of growth. Then he brings them into the hoop house to keep the humidity level and temperature up and consistent during this delicate period. Over the years of collecting, he has learned a lot from both successes and failures. He has experimented with different soil mixtures as well as supplements and fertilizers.

He likes to use a transplant fertilizer and as the temperature reaches the 55-degree point (55-70 degrees is the best temperature for root growth) he starts to give the trees a mild Miracle Grow type of fertilizer. He feels it is important that you should not work with the trees, especially the roots until this temperature. Andy has found that after he collects in the spring, he starts to see root growth after about 6 weeks, near the end of July usually. Not all trees like to be moved, Common junipers, with their dramatic, twisty, contorted limbs and dead wood are especially finicky.

Attend the March Meeting where the Focus Topic will be Collecting Tips from Andy. Also plan to attend one of 2 workshops. Andy is bringing collected material to purchase. First choice goes to the 6 people attending the Saturday 10:30- 2:30 workshop. He will also be doing a 6-hour workshop on Sunday after the meeting. Bring one of the trees you have or plan to purchase a tree from Andy on Saturday.

Take advantage of his offer to purchase a tree from his website and he will deliver it at the March meeting!



Andy Smith beside the large pine that he collected in his How to collect Wild Trees DVD.



Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) that was collected by Andy Smith

*Pick out a tree
from his website
and Andy will
deliver it at the
March Meeting.*

<https://www.goldenarrowbonsai.com/>

Your Bonsai and Pests

By Ben H

A couple of years ago I moved into a new house and out of an apartment for the first time. I had been interested in bonsai for many years and looking out at my new yard I felt excited that I could finally pursue this amazing hobby. This was not the first time I had tried to do bonsai, but all my previous attempts were foiled. I had been living in apartments and moving every couple of years and I did not have the right conditions for plants to really thrive. I had one juniper stolen from a patio, several pines died because I could not provide adequate light, and the Jacaranda Mimosifolia that I had grown from one of the bonsai seed kits was still alive but very sad looking. I was thrilled to finally have a yard with plenty of sun where I could really grow little trees in the environment that they wanted. So that winter I made some preparations and planted a bunch of Chinese Elm. By the spring I had way too many young Chinese Elm seedlings, and I was thrilled. The seedlings grew fast, and I started to wire a couple up to get movement in the young trunks.

By late June, early July they were several feet tall, so you can imagine my horror when one morning I went out to check on them only to find them crawling with Japanese beetles. Almost all the leaves were turned to lace, and I thought my trees were goners. Thankfully the Japanese beetles moved onto my grape vines and rose bushes after decimating my Chinese Elm, and the little seedlings were able to recover. (By the way I know I made just about every beginner mistake possible while trying to get into bonsai – I had not yet discovered the Milwaukee Bonsai Society. Don't judge me too harshly please). I have since treated my yard with milky spores and that has helped.



Hopefully insects and pests are something that we never have to worry about – but there is a chance at some point we might have to, so how do we protect our trees?

The first line of defense is to keep your plants healthy. Healthy trees and healthy bonsai can fight off insect infestations – while sick or stressed plants actually end up attracting menacing plant munchers. Get the watering right (still something I am working to master). Make sure that the bonsai is placed in a spot where it can get the appropriate amount of sunlight. Don't overcrowd your trees. Make sure the trees are getting the right amount of fertilizer. Don't overwork your trees.

Once the tree is healthy the chance of it turning into bug lunch goes down – but is there anything else that can be done? Talking to people and trying to understand how to deal with infuriating insects, I have come across two lines of thought; prevention and integrated pest management. Do I know which one is right? No. So let me present both and the reader can decide what makes the most sense.



Prevention: The thought process here is that all the troublesome tree eaters should be killed before they can do any major damage. Essentially treat the tree with a systematic pesticide regularly. This pesticide is absorbed into the tree sap and when a hungry bug eats the tree it gets a fatal dose and dies. On the plus side this is easy. Get a good systematic insecticide, follow the directions. Done. Are there any issues with this approach? Yes. Systematic pesticides are not 100% effective, this can be expensive, repeated use can affect the effectiveness when pesticides are truly needed and there are legitimate concerns about what it might do to the nice biome in the soil that is so beneficial to plants. However, done correctly this can keep plants looking great throughout the year.

Integrated Pest Management: Sometimes referred to as IPM. There is a lot that could be said about Integrated Pest Management, but to simplify things for bonsai purposes it comes down to the following. First monitor the trees for signs of insects. If pests are seen, then they are identified, and a plan of action is developed. The most important part of this approach is that the least invasive way to deal with the pest is implemented and then the plant is monitored to see how effective the treatment was.

Maybe picking a caterpillar off is all it takes or spraying a few aphids off with a jet of water will resolve the issue. But maybe soapy water is needed or something stronger (pesticides). This approach is much more difficult to do – and insects have the potential to do a lot of damage while one is trying to figure out the most effective approach, but it is less expensive and can be friendlier to the biome in your soil, the overall environment and beneficial insects.



So, what do I do? I do a bit of both. If there is a plant that I know is susceptible to a specific pest – then I go preventative and treat the tree to keep it from occurring. I use milky spores in my yard because I know that Japanese beetles are a problem. I also might treat a tree if I know that it is weakened. Maybe I just collected it or had to do major root work – that might be a reason to be a bit more proactive. When I bring in my topicals for the winter, I am going to spray them down with soapy water at least. However, I do not treat all my trees with systematic pesticide all of the time. Instead, I monitor them and deal with any pests that come up when they do. Is this the right approach? I think that depends on you, the types of trees that you have, your specific values, and the risks that you are willing to take.

Dormancy-My Style

by Bryan L.

There are two main reasons to find a good place to put your trees for their dormancy period.

1. They need to be consistently cool to cold, 40° to 20° or less.
2. You need to keep the wind and bright sun from drying out an evergreen tree. A frozen rootball will not get water to the branches.

Most people use their garage. I use my garage for large trees that are still in their wooden boxes. All of my trees in pots fit into a cold frame (I hope) that I dug a few years ago. I keep my trees outside until it seems like that it will get to and stay below 20°.

In the garage, I just put them on the floor. It helps to keep them at a moderate temperature. It may help to warm them when it gets really cold and cool them a little when the garage warms up. This is an important thing for trees. If they get cold and then warm up, above 40°, repeatedly, their stored energy will be wasted. I spend some time in Kansas every year; in Kansas they can get warm wind from Texas and New Mexico. It can switch and get cold air from Nebraska and South Dakota. They have fewer deciduous trees there because of this temperature change.

Because of the warm times in a garage, above 40°, you will have to put a light above your trees or have them in a window. This will help them if they go into a growing mode. Use your doors in the garage to aid in controlling the temperature inside.

My cold frame is about two feet below the soil line and is up against the house. It has some clear sides to let some light in but not enough that the sun warms it up. The sun warming each day can be bad for your trees. I also have a thermostat and 2 heating mats to warm the roots when needed. The roots are more tender than the branches. I put the thermostat probe in the soil of one of the pots so the heat is added when the soil gets too cold. I will be setting it to go on at about 25°. You could use this to warm the trees on a garage floor if you want to also.

You will need to check on the trees for water whenever it gets above 32° in their winter home. Don't forget about them!

This is just my style; you can be you.

December Meeting-Holiday Social

The December meeting was a Holiday Social, potluck, for all members to gather and socialize before the busy holiday season was fully underway. It was a packed house, and food was plentiful with everyone bringing a favorite treat to share.





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

Next MBS meeting will be
January 4, 2025 @ 9am

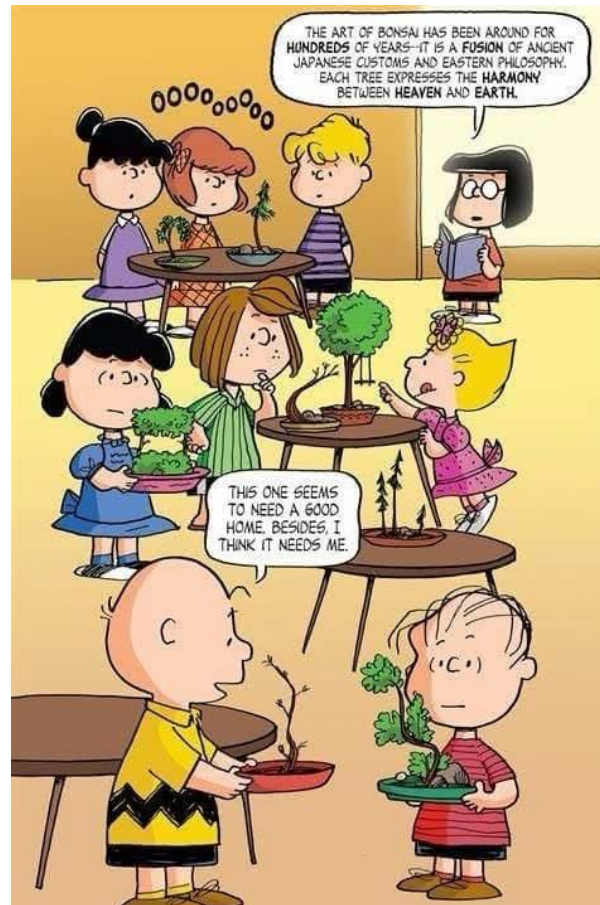
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PAB Board-Ron F, Houston S & Judy S



Charlie Brown sums up pretty well why some of us have so many trees.....