



Milwaukee  
Bonsai  
Society

# BONSAI NEWS

February, 2002

## President's Message

Dear Bonsai Enthusiasts,

Welcome to our 2002 presentation. Because you asked for it, we have a program styled to engage your interest this year. We have Root Over Rock Bonsai with Martha Mehan, Advanced Azalea Bonsai Care and Design with Dave Kreutz, Arboreal Humor with Michael Yanni, Bonsai Plant Pot Genderfication with Karl Bethke and much, much more for each general meeting. Our very own, Jack Douthitt, will provide a program for sharing specialized State Fair Bonsai Preparation in July.

Without doubt, the highlighted honor and opportunity of our year is to host and participate in the June, American Bonsai Society Symposium. This event has engaged many of you and is scheduled to be an exceptional Bonsai experience.

Of course, many other opportunities are here for you; Bonsai Novice Class (including nursery crawl), Public Workshops, Asian Moon Festival, House & Garden Show, State Fair Exhibition, Club Show and more.

Please Remember, we have a wealth of bonsai experience in our membership; if you have an interest or question, just ask.

Your effort, interest and love of Bonsai nurtures our Society. In Wisconsin, Together we grow Forward!

Dr. Brian Palevac, President

## Editor's Note:

The following article on Acacias was submitted by Houston Sanders. The information was provided to him by Ms. Jessie Edwards of South Africa in response to an inquiry about this species over the internet. It is reprinted here with her permission. I found it very interesting, because I have a spirea that I styled in this flat-topped manner...before I even knew such a style was "legitimate." Personally, I think it's a very charming silhouette for a variety of trees.

## Acacia Bonsai in South Africa

Acacias are thorny flowering shrubs and small trees, mostly from Australia, though we have many in Africa and there are southern North American species. Fossils indicate a North American origin. There are over 1000 species, mostly from dry areas, and not particularly hardy. They are good in dry tropical or subtropical climates, and are especially recommended for the greenhouse because of their mid-winter flowering time. They also make good houseplants, but require a lot of sunlight. They are fast growing, very drought resistant, and also nitrogen-fixing, so you don't need too much chemical fertilizer.

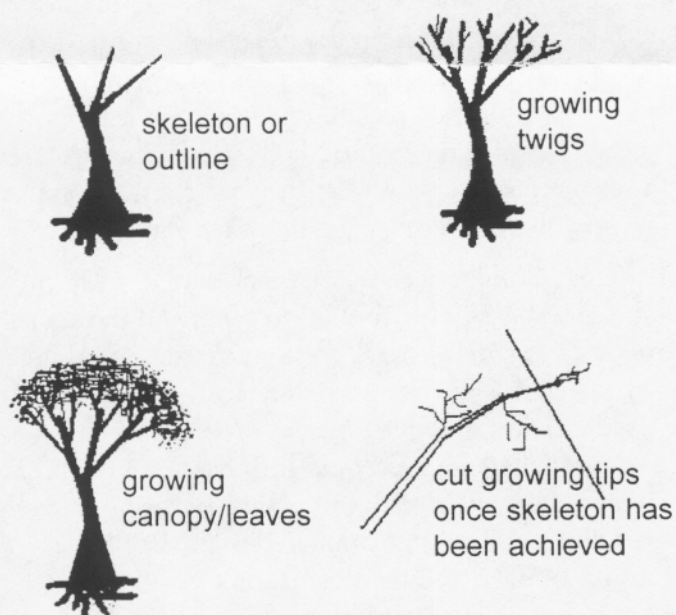
In South Africa, the most popular acacias are Black Monkey Thorn (*Acacia burkii*) and *Acacia galpinii*. I wouldn't recommend the Camel thorn (*Acacia karoo*) as this species seems to suffer from a lot of die back. I have been growing acacias for approximately 30 years and for most of this time lived in Durban (South Africa) which has a subtropical climate. Two years ago we moved up to Johannesburg and in the winter we sometimes have what they call a "black frost" which doesn't do your trees much good. I lost branches on my baobab, a bouganvillea, a ficus *burt-davyii* and the tips of some of my acacia branches. What I have now done is to place my large acacias under my benches, which I have covered with nursery cloth which I let down every night and roll up every day - this definitely helps and I am glad to report that I had no losses this last winter. We don't go down much further than about 3 degrees C, but we have a wind factor which makes it much colder - we don't get snow but do get hail from time

## What's Inside?

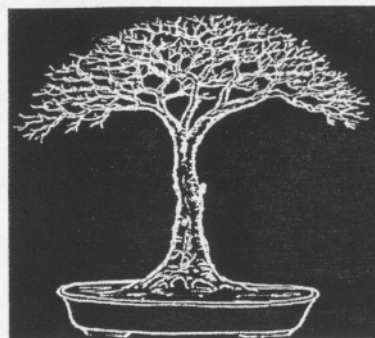
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to time. Some of the acacias growing along the streets – planted as “street” trees don’t seem to get frost bitten, but in big trees it is hard to notice. All the acacias lose their leaves in winter, and as soon as they start sprouting it is the time to repot. My best tree is an *Acacia galpinii* which I have grown for over twenty years very successfully. I use a 50% mix of sharp river stones (small pebbles) and 50% of chicken manure (very well matured) or mushroom compost which I find does very well. Acacias need repotting every 2-3 years.

As far as training goes, we try and grow our acacias into “flatcrown styles” which one of our members, namely Charles Ceronio, has developed. This style is modeled after the picturesque, flat-topped tree silhouettes on South African savannas. I don’t know if you have heard of the artist, J.H. Pierneef, who painted acacias in this particular style, but we try and develop ours into this type of African style. I will try and draw something for you.



The growth habit of the acacia is in three compound leaves. Once you have your branch the length you need it, you should nip out the growing tip, thus forcing the tree to make new growth further back on the branch. You should cut off any side branches that you can’t wire upwards until you have three, four or five branches growing upwards. A 45-degree angle is required between the branches of the upgrowing



skeleton. In other words they should be “V” shaped from the main trunk, and if not, should be wired to this shape – this makes for a much nicer skeleton (and also applies to the

twigs). When you have your basic outline or skeleton of the tree to your satisfaction, you must be careful not to let the branches grow too lanky. Once shape is achieved, it is very important to control the growth of the internodal distances as this definitely affects the size of the leaves. Then you start developing the side branches that will support your umbrella or flatcrown style. Once you have your outline, you just have to develop the crown – which are your short side branches.

I hope this helps. I find acacias a lot of fun to grow although our members (when doing a demonstration) always say they need an apprentice to “bleed” for them when doing any necessary wiring.

We are holding an international convention in Pretoria in November 2002 and there will be lots of acacias for sale and demonstrations done on them as well – if anyone wants more information on this, please let me know and I will send a programme.

## MABA Board Meeting to be Held at the ABS 2002 Symposium

by Jack Douthitt

The Milwaukee Bonsai Society is pleased that Mid-America Bonsai Alliance (MABA) has accepted our invitation to hold their 2002 Board Meeting at the ABS-2002 Symposium. The Symposium will be held at the Four Points Sheraton in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on June 27-30. It will feature John Biel (collected White Cedar), Cheryl Manning (driftwood style Junipers), Gary Marchal (large collected Bald Cypress), Larry Ragle (shohin Juniper), David Rowe (collected Mountain Hemlock) and Harold Sasaki (collected Ponderosa Pines). Each of them

will perform an all-day round-robin demonstration and two workshops using the same species of material.

Each artist is furnishing all of the material for his or her demonstration and workshops. This ensures that each event will feature material with outstanding bonsai potential! The schedule has been established so that all demonstrations come before the workshops. That way everyone can watch an artist perform a demonstration before taking one of his or her workshops. In addition every full registrant will have "silent observer" status to every workshop. The schedule will allow every registrant to participate in a workshop (actually you could participate in two workshops each day) and still see the beginning, the middle, and the end of every demonstration.

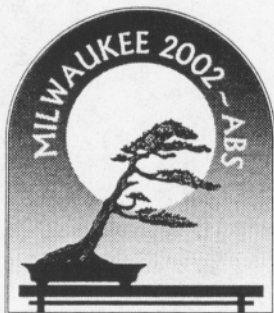
## Congratulations to Ron Fortmann

*Yvonne Szatkowski, Editor*

Ron Fortmann, former President of our club, has been elected Secretary of MABA. He has forwarded information from MABA's newsletter with a roster of bonsai-related events around the mid-west. Due to space restrictions, I won't print all of the listings here, however if you might be interested in knowing more, speak up at a meeting and I will get the information to you. The events are items such as lectures, demonstrations or workshops at clubs such as the Bonsai Society of Greater Cincinnati or Quad City Bonsai Club in Moline, Illinois.

## Items Needed

The date of the ABS-2002 National Symposium (June 27-30) is getting closer. Up until this time the Symposium Committee has handled all of the Symposium details. As the event



### MBS Meetings and Information Line:

The Milwaukee Bonsai Society meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Wehr Nature Center, 9701 W. College Avenue, Franklin, WI 53232. The phone number there is (414) 425-8550; Fax (414) 425-6992. Call the MBS Voice Mail/Message System at (414) 299-9229 to learn about upcoming events and meeting times. To contact the club via email: [mbs@asapnet.net](mailto:mbs@asapnet.net) Look for us on the web at: <http://www.asapnet.net/milwaukee-bonsai/index.html>



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approaches, we will need more and more help from club members. During the Symposium itself, many volunteers will be needed. There will be many jobs that need to be done, and the more hands that we have, the less each person must do.

The first thing that we ask you to do is to start saving coffee tins, with lids, for raffle items. We can also use the larger plastic ice cream tubs, also with lids. Please bring them to the club meetings and give to Rita Luedke or Jack Douthitt.

Jack will give a verbal report on the status of the Symposium at the February meeting. Registration forms will also be available.

## Keep Them Small

*Joe Nemeč*

The size of a bonsai tree is controlled by branch and twig pruning, not by root pruning. The function of the roots is to anchor and stabilize the tree, and to supply nutrients throughout the tree.

Healthy, pruned roots will develop new rootlets with tiny root hairs. It is through these root hairs on the new root growth that nutrients are absorbed from the soil.



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Return Service Requested



Individual                      Paid 2002  
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1932 North Wauwatosa Road  
Mequon                      WI    53097-3426

*Next Meeting of MBS  
February 5, 2002  
7 p.m. at Wehr Nature Center*

**Dues are due for 2002!**  
**Have you remembered  
to pay your dues?**

Individual: \$22  
Family: \$30

**MBS Board - 2002**

- Brain Palevac, *President*
- Darlene Shaginaw, *First Vice President*
- Houston Sanders, *Second Vice President*
- Russell Weiss, *Secretary*
- Kris Ziemann, *Treasurer*
- Scott Hurula, *Officer*
- Nicky Metza, *Officer*



*A snowfall's magic  
lets sterile, frozen ground bare  
prints of passing ghosts.*

~ Cindy Dries