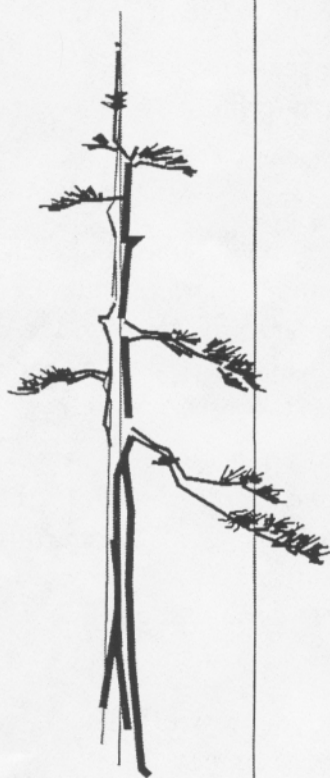


# BONSAI NEWS



*Milwaukee  
Bonsai Society*

P.O. Box 198  
Brookfield, Wisconsin  
53208-0198

Information Line  
414-299-9229

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## Highlights from Martha Meehan

*Yvonne Szatkowski, Editor*

Following are a few notes summarizing the main points in Martha Meehan's presentation of "root over rock" style from September.

Martha selected two varieties of ficus "burt davyii" because of their aggressive growth patterns. Most ficus are very forgiving, and can take a lot of "abuse" from a beginner. They are well known for dropping all of their leaves rather suddenly, however, this is very common, and the leaves will grow back a smaller size.

- Always begin with plants that have a strong, healthy root system already developed
- Choose an interesting rock with lots of character, fissures, cracks, pits, etc.
- Clean most of the soil off of the roots
- Position your tree on the rock, arrange the roots neatly, and have a friend help you wrap saran wrap around the roots and rock, holding them together
- Leave openings at the top and bottom of the plastic wrap. This allows for watering from above to penetrate the rock planting. The space at the bottom allows the feeder roots to extend down into the soil in the pot
- Bury a portion of the rock (approximately 1/3) into a pot of standard growing mix
- Remove a few of the top branches to

compensate for the trauma done to the roots

- Water the whole thing thoroughly and place in the shade for a few weeks to allow it to recover

This entire process is best done during the active growing season to give the tree the greatest chance of survival.

Most ficus like to be kept on the dry side, so be careful not to overwater. A simple toothpick placed in the pot can be used to monitor the moisture content in the soil, until you get a "feel" for the tree's requirements.

### *Time to unwrap*

In about 6 months to a year, the plastic wrap can be removed, and the rock planting can be repotted into a proper bonsai soil mix and suitable pot. Due to increased drainage and less organic matter, the bonsai soil mix will slow down the rapid growth of the tree, and help maintain the miniaturization of the foliage. Be careful to create a pleasing proportion between the rock and tree.

### *A few cautions*

- Never feed a freshly potted tree; doing so can easily burn roots
- Never wire a "wet" tree - the branches will be much more likely to break, instead of bending with the wire
- It's a good idea to reduce a tap root gradually, over a few growing seasons, instead of hacking it off all at once
- Some rocks to avoid with ficus are: granite, limestone, and quartz

## 2003 MBS Board - Nominees

Here is the list of names submitted for the election of officers for 2003 Milwaukee Bonsai Society's Board of Directors.

President	Jack Douthitt
1st VP	Houston Sanders
2nd VP	Jean Sher
Treasurer	Kris Ziemann
Secretary	Russell Wiess
Director	Sharon Schmidt
Director	Pam Woythal
Director	Dr. Erskine Tucker

Actual elections will take place at our October club meeting.

## Making Hypertufa (Artificial Stone, aka Tufa) Containers

submitted by Mary Turner

### Ingredient descriptions:

Cement	Dry Portland cement
Sand	Builder's sand, traction sand, "sand-box" sand; can have relatively large stone particles mixed in (in fact, this adds to the texture!)
Peat	Peat moss, sifted to remove larger lumps and foreign objects
Perlite	"Normal" garden-variety, sifted to remove larger lumps
Vermiculite	Be sure this is pure vermiculite, since many "seed starter" mixes have peat, compost, etc. mixed in
Fibermesh	"Shredded" fiberglass fibers (adds strength)
Concrete dye	An option. No idea where to get this stuff in small quantities... follow whatever directions are provided with the product.

### Proportions:

BASIC	1 part cement + 1 part sand + 2 parts peat
VARIATION 1	1 part cement + 1-1/2 parts sand + 1- 1/2 parts peat

VARIATION 2\* 1 part cement + 1 part peat +  
1 part perlite + 1 part Fibermesh

VARIATION 3 1 part cement + 1 part peat +  
1 part vermiculite

VARIATION 4 1 part cement + 1 part sand +  
1 part peat

You may want to make very small samples of each recipe, carving a letter or number into the mixture before curing and matching it to the recipe used. A little comparison will help you settle on the recipe you prefer and the one that takes the texture you add.

[\*This is the recipe that American Rock Garden Society uses for their alpine troughs. Takes texture treatments nicely and easily makes it through winter freeze/thaw cycles with no damage at all.]

### Directions

- Step 1 Prepare a mold for your tray or pot (possibilities described on next page)
- Step 2 Mix the dry ingredients well, using a clean 5-gallon bucket or "Odjob"
- Step 3 Slowly add warm water (helps the peat absorb moisture faster) to the dry ingredients, stirring with a wooden spoon or paddle until the entire mixture resembles very thick oatmeal. You should still be able to see the impression of your stirrer when you remove it. If you prefer to mix with your hands, wear rubber or latex gloves, since the mix is rather caustic.
- Step 4 Pack the mixture into your plastic-lined mold, forcing it into all the edges and corners so no air pockets remain. For pots, use a wooden dowel to puncture the bottom in several places to create drainage holes. Smooth down any square edges to soften the rim.
- Step 5 Wrap the excess plastic over the top of your mold and weight with a rock or brick. To help slow the curing process, you may add a wet towel (an old one!) over the top of your mold before securing the plastic around it. Store in a dry place, no colder than 50 degrees.

Step 6 After three days, peel away the plastic and proceed to "age" it, using a chisel, sandpaper, a rasp, wire brush, etc. to soften edges and create texture. If you used fibermesh, burn off the fuzzies with a blowtorch, lighter or match.

Step 7 Once this aging is done, wrap the piece in plastic again and store for another two to three days, until you can no longer make a mark with your fingernail in the material. Then unwrap and let dry for one more week.

Step 8 Add soil mixture and plant material!  
*Note:* the container will be quite base in ph, so you may want to soak it in a large container of water for a week, changing the water daily to remove the lime which will surface. This is a **necessity** if you are planting **acid-loving plants**.

Check the MBS library for a booklet on this. There may also be copies of articles on tufa.

### Molds

A mold for alpine troughs – or very rustic bonsai pots – can be prepared by using an old plastic dishpan and lining it with a large piece of plastic or a trash bag. Once the walls and bottom are packed in (nice rounded corners!), use a wood dowel to make drain holes in the bottom. A small cardboard box can also be used to shape the interior, making sure that the bottom and side walls are about two inches thick around it. Fill the smaller box with sand, center it on the bottom and then pack in the mixture on the sides. Leave this box in place to support the sides while the trough cures and then empty the sand from the box before removing it and proceeding with the "aging" process (Step 6, above). Before curing, pull the excess plastic or trash bag over the sides and top of the mold and tuck it into the sand, smoothing any square edges.

A free-form forest slab can be created by using a piece of plywood slightly larger than your finished slab. Place a large piece of plastic on the plywood and then add your wet mixture, shaping as you go. You may want to use some chicken wire to form a

strong base for a large slab and shape the wet mixture around it. Wet sand or bunched-up rags can also be used to prop up the sides and form a lip at the edge so the slab bottom is slightly convex, not concave. Holes may be added for drainage or wire, and you can also form a little bit of a fence inside the slab to help retain the soil mixture when you plant later. When you're happy with your design, pull the plastic up around the sides and top and cure as above.

Wet sand in a sandbox can also be used as a free-form mold for a slab for a forest. Sculpt your form in the sand, remembering that you are making a negative mold of the finished product, and the surface you make in the wet sand will be the top of your slab, and what you finish with will be the bottom of your slab. Line your sand mold with a large piece of plastic and shape the tufa gently into all the edges of your mold, finishing off the top (the bottom of your slab) with a flat surface so the slab does not teeter when planted. Pull the plastic over the sides and cover the top, curing as above.

Have fun with this project and, by all means, share your results with the rest of the club. We'd love to see what you've done!



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# State Fair Awards - 2002

## Milwaukee Club Only:

### Advanced Class

Ken Krueger	Ficus Benjamina	root over rock/tropical	red
	Ficus Nerifolia	clump	blue
	Green mound alpine currant	informal upright	white
Ken Hahn	Amur maple	forest	white
Joe Nemeč	Ficus Wiandi	informal upright	white
	Sabina juniper	grove	white
Michelle Zimmer	Chinese elm	informal upright	blue
	Trident maple	informal upright	Best of Show
	Japanese cork bark maple	slant	red
Milt Mandelin	Schefflera	slant	white
	Drunkard's dream on rock	twin trunk/mame	red
	Drunkard's dream	slant/mame	white
	Chinese juniper	slant	blue

### Intermediate Class

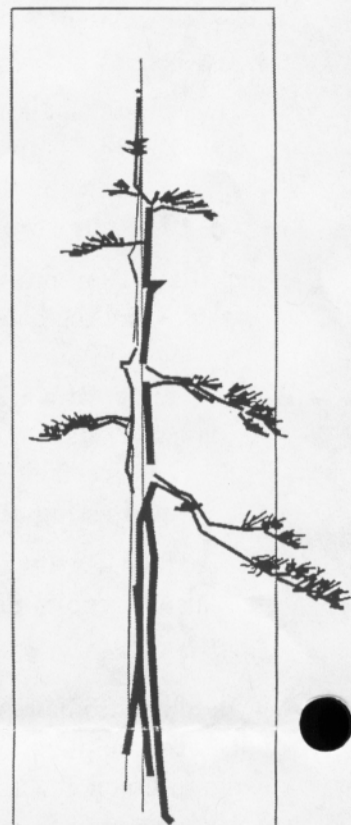
Barb Nickel	Schefflera	windswept	white
	Chinese elm	informal upright	white
	Tsukumo cypress	sakei	blue & Award of Merit
	Green mound juniper	rock planting	red
Jim Toepfer	Bougainvillea	inf. upright/tropical	blue
	Red cedar	phoenix graft	red
Scott Hurula	Korean hornbeam	informal upright	red
	Procumbins juniper	windswept	blue
	Procumbins juniper	informal upright	Award of Merit
Pam Woythal	San Jose juniper	informal upright	red
Rita Luedke	Dwarf lilac	windswept	red
	Miniature ivy	cascade/mame	red
	Miniature veratans rosa	informal upright	white
Houston Sanders	Korean boxwood	informal upright	red
	Chinese juniper	twin trunk	red
	Desert	informal upright	blue

### Novice Class

Roger Hein	Common juniper	informal upright	red
Brian Palevac	Japanese juniper		white

### 4-H Class

Amber Stone	Ficus nerifolia	informal upright	red
Marty Hubmann	Ficus nerifolia	informal upright	white



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### **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>

BONSAI EVALUATION FORM			
Tree # _____		Date: _____	
Judges Score	Weight	Score	Description
1 2 3 4 5	2		Health
1 2 3 4 5	2		Trained to stated style
1 2 3 4 5	2		Branch placement appropriate
1 2 3 4 5	1		Branch structure - ramification
1 2 3 4 5	2		Trunk: Shape, taper, thickness
1 2 3 4 5	4		Artistic quality - presentation, training
1 2 3 4 5	1		Pot selection, appropriateness, balance
1 2 3 4 5	2		Rootage - nebari
1 2 3 4 5	1		Foliage - color, size
1 2 3 4 5	1		Surface treatment
1 2 3 4 5	2		Appearance of Age
			Total Score: 100 Possible
<b>Comments:</b>			

Above is the Judge's Evaluation Form or "scorecard" used during the State Fair Show.

A BIG THANK YOU to the following members for helping out at the Boerner Show!


- Tony Plicka (set-up, tear down, trees, and tree-sitting)
- Milt and Audrey Baas, Erv and Dorothy Schenzel (tree-sitters) *(Sat after)*
- Joe Nemec, Milt Mandelin, and Jim Toepfer (trees) *TONY*

*sun afternoon*

*Sat morn*

*Sunday afternoon*

*327 0015*



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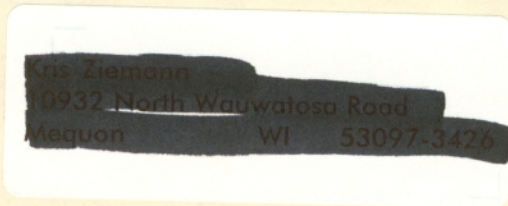
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*Next Meeting of MBS  
October 1, 2002  
7 p.m. at Wehr Nature Center*

**MBS Board - 2002**

- Brian Palevac, *President*
- Houston Sanders, *First Vice President*
- Vacant, *Second Vice President*
- Russell Weiss, *Secretary*
- Kris Ziemann, *Treasurer*
- Scott Hurula, *Officer*
- Nicky Metza, *Officer*
- Ken Hahn, *Past President*

