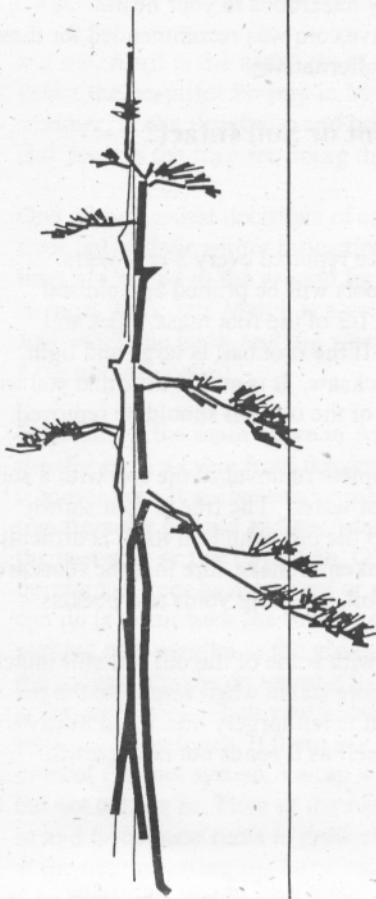


April, 2004

BONSAI NEWS



*Milwaukee
Bonsai Society*

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

*Information Line
414-299-9229*

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April Meeting – Group Slash

Hear ye! Hear ye! On Tuesday, the Fifth of April, in the year 2004, the much-respected and distinguished Milwaukee Bonsai Society will conduct its greatly anticipated annual Group Slash.

Innocent vegetation will be most viciously and artistically butchered by teams of fanatical gardeners! Join in the fun as teams collaborate and compete to create the most attractively deformed specimen. Prizes shall be awarded for the best efforts. At the conclusion of this debauchery, we shall auction the twisted remains of the once noble trees, victims of the night's massacre.

Come to our April meeting for a smashing, slashing good time!

May Activities – Jack Wikle

May will kick off with a workshop by Jack Wikle using small trees (Mame). Jack is an award winning bonsai artist and former ABS editor, and is noted for his bonsai grown indoors under artificial light. We will be having a "nursery crawl" to find trees to work on in the AM and have the workshop at the church in the PM. There still are 2 spots left for this workshop, so call Kris Ziemann (262-512-1228) ASAP to reserve your place!!

Silent observers are always welcome (\$5 at the door) Jack Wikle will also be doing a demonstration on Mame at our May meeting. If you won't have the chance to see him at the workshop, don't miss Tuesday's meeting. He'll also be giving some tips on what apartment dwellers can do with bonsai! Come and enjoy our May activities!

President's Message

Spring is here! Or maybe it's just on the way? At least it seems like it's time for it to be here. My taxes have been sent off to the accountant for their professional massage

before I write out the final check. The snow has melted. The willow twigs are turning bright yellow and many of the trees in the landscape are starting to show color in their buds. And the crocus's are up! In my greenhouse, many of the trees are just about ready to unfold this year's leaves. Nothing has actually opened its leaves yet, but then I haven't checked this morning. Using a greenhouse for winter storage forces me to start my repotting earlier than usual, since the trees start opening their buds earlier than outside. It also provides a controlled environment to keep them after they have been repotted until the weather is suitable for them to be outside. In effect the greenhouse lets me spread the spring repotting efforts out over several weeks rather than having to do them all in one short frantic period of time. All in all, it is a positive way to manage our collection over the winter ~~and~~ into spring.

As a matter of fact, just yesterday I finished repotting all of my deciduous trees that needed it this year. I'll start the conifers next week. I have a few of the more hardy trees already sitting out on their benches, even though they are predicting below freezing weather later in the week. If it really gets that cold I will have to put them away for a day or two.

Spring is a time of renewal in the world of nature that we all live in. The cold starts to go away and the trees, bushes and flowers start to come alive after the long cold winter. Since we are deeply connected to nature as part of our involvement in bonsai, it means that we have to be aware of the changing of the seasons and what that means to the physical world.

Stay involved with your trees. Take good care of them, because they depend upon you for their very lives. Set aside some time every day to enjoy them and their annual transformation from winter to spring to summer. All too soon it will be fall and then winter again. And the whole cycle will start all over again. Enjoy every minute of these wonderful and miraculous annual events.

SOAP solution!

(From ABS Forum – Posted by Carl Rosner, submitted by Kris Ziemann)

I pour a solution of 1 to 2 tablespoon dishwashing detergent, 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil into a plastic gallon and slowly add water to fill the gallon jug. I fill this solution from the gallon bottle into a spray bottle and just before using I add 1 to 2 two caps full (from the rubbing alcohol bottle) of rubbing alcohol and spray immediately. If you do not use the full bottle of spray, I suggest the next time you are going to use the soap/alcohol solution add the same amount of rubbing alcohol again, since the alcohol will evaporate. I store this soap/oil solution in the gallon jug for months on end. It does not seem to go bad.

Spray on plants covering all leaf and stem surfaces. You may have to spray from three to four times with intervals of three days. I have eliminated almost any kind of pest that have attacked my trees, including scale.

I do not wash off the spray and have seen no adverse reaction to the trees from this mixture.

Bug Notes

(From the March MBS Meeting)

Here are some notes from the March discussion by Ron Fortmann and Jack Douthitt on insecticides.

Types of Bugs:

Sawflies – look like little worms. Their tail goes up in the air if you get near them (they pretend to be sticks). Ron says that these are the worst pest on pines. Remove with tweezers or spray with insecticidal soap.

Scale – Little insects that look like bumps on twigs. There are thousands of kinds. Horticultural oil will suffocate them, but only kills adults, not eggs. Need to repeat spraying every 10 to 14 days. Also must be sure to cover the soil as well as the tree.

Spider Mites – very small spiders. You usually don't see the spiders, but may see webs. If you suspect spider mites on your tree, hold a piece of paper under a branch and shake the branch. Mites will be visible as tiny black spots on paper. Hard to get rid of. They like dry conditions – often a problem indoors. Spray with insecticidal soap or insecticide.

Insecticides/Fungicides:

Jack recommends **Isotox**, a systemic insecticide (systemic means that it is absorbed by the plant and kills the bugs as they feed, as opposed to killing by contacting the bugs).

He also uses **Safer's insecticidal soap**, but cautions that you should be careful not to place a tree in the sunlight for 24 hours after spraying with Safers.

Daconil is a fungicide that is recommended for use with Isotox. These can be mixed, but always follow label instructions.

Neem oil is a natural insecticide that is made from the neem tree. It can be used alone, or mixed with insecticidal soap. It is important to keep trees out of the sun after spraying. Neem is reputed to be the only insecticide allowed for use indoors.

Many insecticides are very hazardous to your health. A website called GardensAlive.com was recommended for those wishing to find less toxic alternatives.

Repotting – Bare Root or Soil Intact?

By Joe Nemeec

Most bonsai trees should be repotted every 3 or 4 years. When a tree is repotted, roots will be pruned and old soil removed. Approximately 1/3 of the root mass, sides and bottom, will be removed. If the root ball is large and tight, this can be done with a hacksaw. It is at this time that you will have to decide how much of the old soil should be removed.

Many articles show a complete removal of the soil with a soil rake and a strong stream of water. The tree is then shown bare-rooted and wired into the pot, which in itself is difficult. Then great care must be taken to make sure that the roots are completely covered with soil, avoiding voids and pockets.

On the other hand, a tree with some of the old soil still intact around the roots will be more stable when reset into the pot. In addition, a root ball that is left largely intact and neatly pruned will re-establish itself as it sends out new growth.

Club Raffle

If you have any items that you would like to contribute to the club, bring them to one of the meetings for the raffle. Pots, trees, tools, magazines, vases, pictures, and all those kinds of things are enthusiastically welcomed. The proceeds of the raffle all go to the club and help us finance the club programs. On the other hand, buy some raffle tickets for that item in the raffle that you would like to add to your collection!

Check Out the Website!

We now have a new and improved website that is up and running. Check us out at www.milwaukeebonsai.org. Our schedule is posted, and it is a great way to plan ahead for club activities. Thanks to Pam Woythal, our webmaster for all her efforts. Check it out!

Sara Raynor Trip

Space may still be available for the club's trip to visit Sara Raynor's pottery studio in Red Wing, Minnesota on the weekend of April 24-25. We will leave from Milwaukee early Saturday morning, arrive in the afternoon, lodge overnight, then back by early afternoon on Sunday. Costs are just the hotel and a share of the gas (and any pots you buy!) If you are interested in coming along, contact Kris Ziemann at the April meeting.

Spring Bonsai Calendar:

For me, April is the highlight of the bonsai year. Some may prefer the beautiful flowers in May, the lush growth thru the summer, or the ripe fruits and bright fall colors in October. But April is the time for doing the work!

One of the hardest decisions of early spring is when to take trees out of their winter protection. Many of my developing trees are buried in the ground for the winter, still in their pots. In most years, late March is a great time to dig out these trees. Just watch the buds, and dig when the buds are swollen but have not yet opened.

Repotting is the main chore in April. Many of my trees usually go in a cycle from the ground to a box or plastic pot to a bonsai pot. It is always a new learning revelation to take a tree from the ground and see what happened to the roots over the past year or two of growth. Often these days, I find that my developing trees have twisted or one-sided roots. The best I can do is to cut back the twisted side or the overgrown side, making cuts parallel to the ground, then put the tree back in the ground (maybe on top of a flat rock to force the roots to grow outwards). Then wait another year or two to see how it worked. Sometimes, if there is a very large root comprising most of the root system, I wrap a wire around the root, tightly but not cutting in. Then as the root grows, the wire starts to cut in and forces new roots to grow closer to the trunk. With luck, at the next repotting the large root can be removed.

If grown in the ground, most trees can't (or shouldn't) go directly to a bonsai pot. Once your tree has grown in the ground to the trunk thickness you want, then it is time to move the tree to a growing pot. A year or two of growth in a large container allows the tree to adapt to granular, bonsai-type soil, and develop a system of fine roots. Growing in a pot also allows the tree to have preliminary trimming and wiring while developing a good root system for eventual transfer to a bonsai pot.

One of the most satisfying experiences of spring is to place a tree in a bonsai pot for the first time. An amazing transformation takes place when a tree moves from its ugly, but useful, black plastic pot, and is placed in an appropriate bonsai pot (even a cheap one)! All of a sudden, you notice the TREE. The features that were hard to appreciate in a large container – bark texture, root spread, taper, silhouette – all are immediately highlighted by the new relationship of tree-to-pot.

Fertilization in spring is important. For trees that have not been repotted, I provide a dose of balanced fertilizer (20-20-20 or similar at half the recommended strength) in mid-April, but NOT for spring-flowering trees. Feeding high-nitrogen fertilizer to flowering trees may disrupt their flowering, so I wait until after the flowers have dropped or been removed. For trees that have been repotted, I wait at least a month before using any chemical fertilizer. All of my trees get a few chunks of organic fertilizer, even the repotted ones. Unlike chemical fertilizer, the organic fertilizer does not contain salts that can harm the roots but decomposes slowly into usable

food for the trees. Honestly, I have no idea what kind of organic fertilizer I use or what's in it – the label's all in Japanese! But the trees seem to like it. (Stay tuned next month for Joe Nemeč's expert advice on fertilizer).

And remember: You have to kill a few trees to get good at it!

- The editor (and expert tree-killer)



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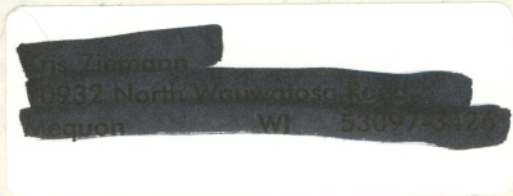
1 Block
North of Brady Street

MBS Meetings and Information Line:

The Milwaukee Bonsai Society meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church, 3030 W. Oklahoma Avenue. 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 Look for us on the web at: <http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org>



GREETINGS
FROM
Far Far Away

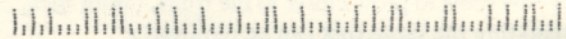


P.O. Box 198
Brookfield, WI 53008-0198

RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED

Next Meeting of MBS
7PM, Tuesday, April 6
Grace Lutheran Church
27th and Oklahoma

53097+3426



MBS Board, 2004

- Jack Douthitt – President
- Kris Ziemann – 1st Vice President
- Jean Sher – 2nd Vice President
- Karen Kleineider – Treasurer
- Darlene Shaginaw – Secretary
- Sharon Schmidt – Board Member
- Dr. Erskine Tucker – Board Member
- Joe Herbert – Board Member
- Ron Fortmann – MABA Representative
- Houston Sanders – Newsletter Editor
- Pam Woythal - Webmaster



A dew laden web
Gray skies – a chill misty day
A spider sneezes.

- Joe Nemeec