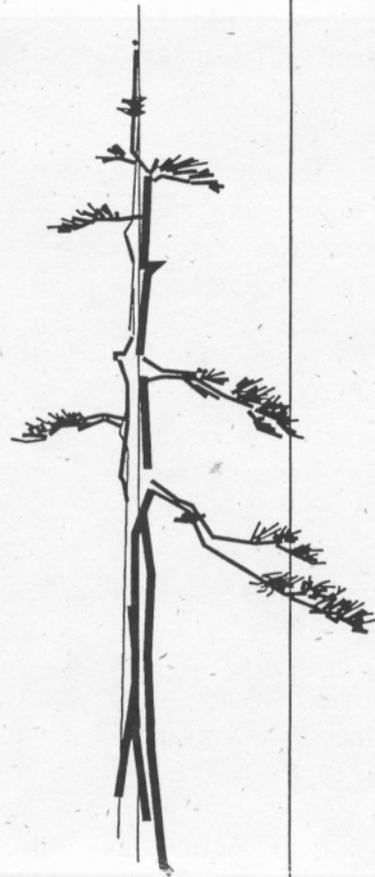


February 2005

# Bonsai News



*Milwaukee  
Bonsai Society*

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

*Information line  
414-299-9229*

## Kris' Korner

Happy New Year to all! Stretch your arms, have a good yawn and get ready for a great year of Bonsai!! We have an outstanding line-up of topics and artists set to go for 2005 (take a look at the calendar elsewhere in the newsletter).

In February, we'll give you some ideas of how you and your plants can slip out of dormancy. We'll also have a professional photographer, Donna Krischan, talk to us about photographing our trees. Donna is the official photographer for the Friends of Boerner Garden and the Garden-Photography lecturer for the UW-Madison's School of the Arts in Rhineland. Donna will also be at our June Club Show to photograph your trees (we'll have a sign-up sheet and prices as the Show nears).

March's topic will be hands-on. Besides talking about repotting (when, how, tricks, etc), we'll also be delving into the area of soil testing.

And now we ask for your HELP. It is an adventure putting together a newsletter. We would like for ours to be a wealth of information to our members. We would like to ask for your help. Please send in any articles or tips about potting, pots, pruning, wiring, etc that you may have (i.e. Ron Fortmann passed along a tip to use drywall tape instead of mesh in the bottom of

pots. It's sticky so not necessary to wire in). You don't need to be a "master" to give people tips. Many times great tips are passed along by word of mouth. Also if you happen to come upon an interesting article, please send that along too. Emailing your items to Houston Sanders (our revered newsletter editor) [bonsaidiot@earthlink.net](mailto:bonsaidiot@earthlink.net) would be greatly appreciated. That way he can copy the info and paste it right in to the newsletter. If you don't have email, see Houston for his address so that you can snail mail to him, or hand him your ideas, articles, tidbits at the meetings. We'd really appreciate all your help.

That's about it for now. Here's to a fantastic 2005.

*Kris*

## NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION PERSON NEEDED

We are in need of someone who will pick up the newsletters at the printer (Shorewood Press - in Shorewood), put tabs, labels and stamps on and get them out in the mail. If you would like to help, please email ([kziemmann@mtsd.k12.wi.us](mailto:kziemmann@mtsd.k12.wi.us)) or call (262-512-1228) Kris Ziemann. Thanks.

## Novice Class 2005

This is a tremendous opportunity for those folks fairly new (under 3 years) to bonsai. It's a 4-Saturday course plus a nursery crawl.

Saturdays 1 and 2 are classroom style lead by members of our club. You will receive a 99-page manual that is packed with information. Saturday 3 will be a chance for you to style, wire and pot a tree (usually a tropical). Then comes the nursery crawl. We congregate at a local garden center, get some help in finding "bonsai wanna-be's" and have a great time doing it (rain or shine). The last Saturday, bring some of your trees that were purchased at the crawl to get help in styling and wiring. No potting at that time. All in all, it's a pretty comprehensive course that's loads of fun. And all for \$70. Sign-up at the February or March meeting. Our first class is Saturday March 19.

### Special Announcement:

Our good friend, Len Wegryn, has decided it's time to "fold up the shop". After many years of providing us with quality items (books, pots, soil, tools, etc) at our meetings, Len needs to discontinue this aspect of his "bonsai life". So... with his remaining stock, Len will be offering a 40% - 60% discount on the items he brings to the meetings. Hopefully, if the weather is nice in February, you will all be able to enjoy the discounts that he is providing. Come prepared with some extra cash for some great buys! Thanks for all your efforts on our behalf, Len.

## 2005 Club Events Calendar

### February

Tuesday 1 - Club Meeting: Coming Out of Dormancy (people and plants)  
Presentation: Donna Krischan:  
Photographing Your Trees.

### March

Tuesday 3 - Club Meeting  
Repotting Bonsai, Soil Testing  
Saturday 19 - First Novice Class

### April

Saturday 2 - Novice Class #2  
Tuesday 5 - Group Slash  
Saturday 16-17 - Master's Class  
Saturday 23 - Novice Class #3  
Saturday 30 - Black pine workshop

### May

Tuesday 3 - Black Pine Demo - Steve Pilacik  
Saturday 7 - Novice Class Nursery Crawl  
Saturday 14 - Novice Class #4  
Fri 20 - Sun 22 - Chicago Show

### June

Tuesday 7 - Club Show, Styles, photography  
Friday 17 - Sunday 19 - Asian Moon Festival  
Sat 25 - Sun 26 - Master's Class

Programs and dates for other activities have yet to be finalized - STAY TUNED!

## Your #1 Milwaukee Bonsai Source!



### THE CITY GARDENER

Featuring  
Bonsai and bonsai accessories

- ◆ Indoor and outdoor bonsai ◆ Pre-bonsai
  - ◆ Pots ◆ Bonsai soil ◆ Wire ◆ Tools ◆ Books
  - ◆ Clay miniatures and more
- Plus We offer practical, easy-to-understand help in choosing and caring for your bonsai

1 Block  
North of Brady Street

1814 North Farwell Avenue  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202  
(414) 224-8224

## Gosh! What to do in January?

(Article from Dallas Bonsai Gardens, submitted by Kris Ziemann)

Well, this is a month that we just try to hold on. Your Indoor Bonsai are in a situation that is very stressful for them as they are getting virtually minimal light and desert atmosphere with your heating system.

Remember to water well - meaning keep the soil moist, but not soggy and wet. You should be checking daily to be sure your Bonsai has moist soil.

Give your Bonsai as much light as you can...either natural or artificial. Natural means natural sunlight. This can be from outdoor exposure if your outdoor temperature is warm enough for your Bonsai or on a windowsill if the temperatures don't get down to freezing this close to the outside with only a pane of glass between death from freezing and a cozy temperature.

The artificial light can be from an incandescent or fluorescent light source. If you use an incandescent light bulb keep it about 1 foot from your Bonsai and leave it on about 18 hours per day. A timer can assist you in this chore quite inexpensively. Remember that you can sunburn your Bonsai the first time you use your plant light if your Bonsai has had no light to speak of...so be careful.

Outdoor bonsai will take special care this month on into February or so. They are in a dormant state, but that doesn't mean that you can forget them. Again...they need to be checked at least twice a week or so to insure they have enough moisture in their soil, that the winds haven't knocked them out of their pot and let the roots dry out or that the critters that are out and about haven't eaten the roots or bark off your Bonsai.

We should say that this month we are in a holding pattern and happily anticipating the arrival of Spring.

So, do what many of our customers are now doing, namely: ordering soil, new pots and all things necessary for the Spring Potting Season which is just around the corner. Please don't procrastinate... These things creep up on us all faster than we realize. It's really stressful on our customer and us

when we have to ship out 50 pounds of potting medium via overnight express...whew! Basically, it's cheaper to be prepared. We hope that we can assist you in jump starting your hobby and increase your delight in all things pertaining to Bonsai.

## Pomegranate Bonsai

(by Houston Sanders)

For this year's newsletters, I have decided to write a little bit on different tree species. (So how about some monthly growing tips from others?) For most of these species, like pomegranates, there are far greater experts than me. Yet most articles discuss growing and training masterpieces outdoors in Japan. If you want to grow a modest indoor bonsai in Wisconsin, you're on your own. So this is a simple article on growing pomegranates. More detailed information is available in *International Bonsai* (Fall 1998).

If you have seen Japanese bonsai photos, you probably noticed the beautiful pomegranate trees, with dramatic gnarled shapes and twisting bark. Pomegranates have some wonderful properties for bonsai. First, they have bark that will quickly look very old. Second, they form flowers and fruit more easily than most other bonsai. The fruit will last many months. And finally, they are perfectly adapted to growing indoors in our winter.

I choose to write about pomegranates this month because they are my only bonsai that is active. My pomegranates stay outside until they lose their leaves in early November, then come indoors. And by mid-January new buds are beginning to open, providing much-needed assurance that spring really is coming. Note that the tree is leafless from mid-Nov. to mid-Jan. So it doesn't suffer much from the dry winter air in our centrally heated homes.

### Pomegranate cultivars

For best results, it is important to know what kind of pomegranate you're starting with. Most pomegranates sold for bonsai are propagated from cuttings or grafting, not from seeds. This produces genetically identical trees, with exactly the same flower forms, and growth characteristics as the original parent tree. The various parent forms of the tree are called cultivars. The botanical name for pomegranate is *Punica granatum*. A cultivar gets a

third name, for example *Punica granatum* "Nana". If you know the name of the pomegranate cultivar that you have, you can find exact information on how it grows

There are dozens of pomegranate cultivars grown in Japan. Some have dwarf characteristics, while many more are grown for their flowers. The "flowering" cultivars are rarely available in the US, and usually don't flower readily in our climate. However, the dwarf cultivars flower readily and often form fruit as well. They are easy to train as indoor bonsai.

The most commonly sold pomegranate cultivar is *Punica granatum* "Nana", usually called Dwarf Pomegranate. This is a slow growing tree with bright green leaves about an inch long. The maximum size appears to be about 1-2 ft in height. It has bright orange puffy flowers, which form easily from mid-summer to fall. The dwarf pomegranate will readily form round yellow-red fruit, about 2 inches in diameter. The bark of this cultivar stays rather smooth and gray, without the aged look that is valued in pomegranates.

In the past few years, relatively new dwarf cultivar, *Punica granatum* "Emperor" has been available. I like this one, and grow a lot of cuttings from it. The Emperor pomegranate is more vigorous than the "nana". It grows faster and produces more flowers. Even 1-year-old cuttings will often flower. The Emperor pomegranate is easily distinguished from the "nana" by its narrow leaves. The fruit is also smaller – about 1-inch diameter, and dark purple. To allow all of the fruits to stay on the tree will greatly weaken it, but with the Emperor you can leave 3 or 4 fruits on a healthy shohin-sized tree.

The most famous pomegranate cultivar is the Twisted Trunk Pomegranate, *Punica granatum* "Nejikan" or "Twisted Trunk". This is the one that is usually featured in Japanese photos. It is a full-sized tree and grows far faster than the dwarf cultivars, allowing a much thicker trunk to form. As the name implies, the trunk twists from left to right as the tree grows. Unfortunately, this doesn't become apparent for 15-20 years. Unless you can acquire an older specimen, you had better be patient with this cultivar.

The final type of pomegranate I will mention is the plain old seedling. I have several trees grown from pomegranate fruits from the grocery store. Surprisingly, they are very similar to the "Nana" leaf size, but have thicker bark and (with training) develop a more gnarled look. Unfortunately, I have yet to see flowers on my 7-year-old pomegranates from seed.

### Training

Note - this is an original section. Nobody else suggests any of this, but it works for me.

According to all available literature, pomegranates are known for their brittle branches. This is only true of the older branches. The *young* branches are among the most flexible of any tree. New growth on pomegranates is always straight (and boring!). Due to their flexibility, however, the young branches can be given extreme character by wiring. Don't wire in the growing season, though, or the wire is very likely to bite into the branch and spoil the appearance of the bark.

To train a pomegranate, first let the trunk grow a few years until the thickness is acceptable. For dwarf pomegranates, you won't get much more than a half-inch trunk in 3-4 years. Once the trunk is big enough, and basic branches are in place, I pinch all of the new growth from January through June. For most branches, each time that six leaves form I pinch back to two. After five months of this pinching, the new branches are very well ramified. From June through August, you must let the branches grow so that flowers will form at the tips. You can still trim back the most vigorous branches to avoid ruining the tree's profile. In fall, wire the one-year old growth. When wiring, try applying the wire loosely from left to right, and twisting the branches counter-clockwise about a half twist per loop of wire. You end up with an extremely gnarled tree, like the "twisted trunk" cultivar but without the 15-20 year wait! The wiring should be removed the following spring.

### Feeding and transplanting

Pomegranates, like all fruiting bonsai, prefer a deeper pot. Full sun is best throughout the summer, but be careful when moving the tree from indoors, or the leaves will be scorched. With good drainage, you should water pomegranates daily in spring and summer. Indoors, watering can be cut to once or

twice a week. To keep your tree strong, feed it every 2 weeks in the spring and summer with a balanced fertilizer, then cut back on nitrogen in the fall. Pomegranates are hungry trees! I use the Japanese organic fertilizer cakes, as well as the biweekly chemical fertilizer. With this feeding regimen, transplanting is needed every 1-2 years.

Transplanting is best done in January, just before the new buds open. If you transplant at that time, you can remove at least half of the root mass. Unfortunately, you must remove any remaining fruit when transplanting. I have read other pomegranate species guides that suggest transplanting in spring. This is OK, but only if you wait until all of the new growth has hardened to a dark green color (mid-April to May).

In summary, pomegranates are a poor choice for those of you looking for an imposing 8-inch thick specimen, but they are a great choice for an easy-to-grow indoor/outdoor tree. They will reward you for your efforts with beautiful color and an interesting display throughout the year.

**MBS Meetings and Information Line:**

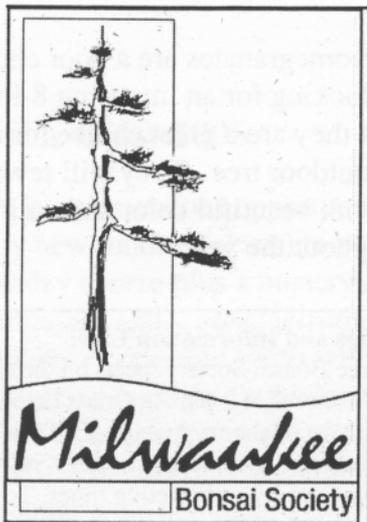
The Milwaukee Bonsai Society meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church, 3030 W. Oklahoma Avenue. Call the MBS Voice Mail/Message System at (414) 299-9229 to learn about upcoming events and meeting times. To contact the club via email: [mbs@asapnet.net](mailto:mbs@asapnet.net) Look for us on the web at: <http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org>



Mountain Ash Forest – The Black Spur, Victoria, Australia

Just couldn't resist throwing that photo in. I am told that these trees are mere saplings, not a single one over 100 m tall. 100 years ago, felled specimens of Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) over 400 ft long were reported from this same region.

- Editor



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

RETURN SERVICE  
REQUESTED

Next Meeting of MBS  
7PM, Tuesday, Feb. 1  
Grace Lutheran Church  
27<sup>th</sup> and Oklahoma

### **MBS Board, 2005**

Kris Ziemann – President  
Scott Hurula – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Darlene Shaginaw – 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Karen Kleineider – Treasurer  
Sharon Schmidt – Secretary  
Dr. Erskine Tucker – Board Member  
Joe Herbert – Board Member  
Allen Koszarek – Board Member  
Ron Fortmann – MABA Representative  
Jack Douthitt – Past President

### Other Club Functions:

Houston Sanders – Newsletter Editor  
Yvonne Szatkowski - Distribution  
Pam Woythal – Webmaster  
Joe Nemeč - Librarian



*Sunbeams through the clouds -  
someone's cautious prayers, or  
just sunlight at rest*

*Reprinted from San Antonio's Snips 'n Clips, December, 2000*