

# Bonsai News

## November Meeting

Is it warm, is it cold? How are your trees adjusting to this strange weather? If you have any questions about what to do with your trees over the winter, please bring them to be answered at the November meeting. Expect lots of excitement at this meeting. We will be demonstrating different ways of doing jin and shari (if you don't know what that is, this is the meeting for you). Power tools large and small will be used (die grinders, dremels)... as well as nice, quiet hand tools.

\*\*If you have a tree that you would like some help with or information about either jin or shari, please bring it to the meeting. We will have a help station for you. \*\*

We will also have an "Ask the Experts" table for OTHER questions or challenges you are having with your trees. Bring in your tree, or questions about your tree(s). Our panel of experts will help you out.

\*\*\* Also, if you have a phoenix graft, please bring it for our featured display. \*\*\*

## Exciting News

At the last executive board meeting, a motion was passed to have the Milwaukee Bonsai Society be the official sponsors of the Mahone Middle School Bonsai Club in Kenosha, WI. At present they have over 30 members!! We would like to support them any way possible.

If you have any gently used tools, pots, bonsai supplies, trees, seedlings, etc that you would like to donate, please bring them to any meeting or contact Jean Sher (their advisor) [jsher@wi.rr.com](mailto:jsher@wi.rr.com). Thanks to all who have been helping support this lively group thus far!  
- Kris Ziemann

## December Holiday Party

Please see the information / reservation page elsewhere in the newsletter. Bring your reservation form with your check / cash to the November meeting. Remember, even if you have a complimentary dinner, YOU MUST STILL FILL OUT A RESERVATION FORM. If you can't make it to the Nov. meeting, please contact Kris at [krisziemann@mac.com](mailto:krisziemann@mac.com) for alternative arrangements

## Bonsai from the Wild

After a long wait, the Nick Lenz book is now available.

### Bonsai from the Wild

by Nick Lenz

New completely revised and expanded on collecting, styling and caring for bonsai.

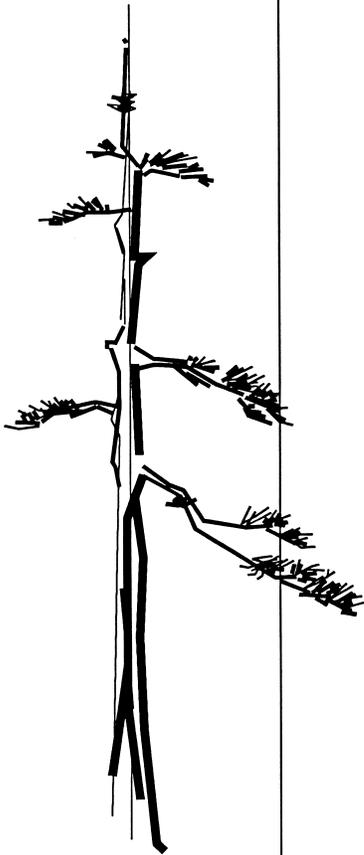
Softcover 10.75" x 8.75"

192 pages, over 200 color photos

Retails for \$29.95, we can get them for \$21. A great Christmas gift!

If you are interested, sign up at the November meeting or email:

[hagr8d@mac.com](mailto:hagr8d@mac.com)



*Milwaukee  
Bonsai Society*

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

Information Line  
414-299-9229

## KRIS' KORNER

Greetings, all. How are you and your trees coping with this odd weather? I have so many projects around the house... a few more days without rain would be nice.

Our November meeting is sure to be a terrific wrap-up to 2006. Remember, that we do not have a December meeting, rather, the Holiday Party at Meyer's Restaurant at 76th and Forest Home. As in past years, please try to bring a wrapped gift or two for the door prizes. We have had such fun with these gifts over the years... and they don't have to be bonsai related.

REMEMBER... even if you have a complementary dinner due to Buddy Bucks, you still must fill out a reservation form.

See you in November...

*Kris*

## Holiday Folk Fair 2006

The 2006 Holiday Folk Fair is coming up on Friday November 16th through Sunday November 18th. This will be our fourth year to participate in this annual extravaganza. It is an annual affair sponsored by the International Institute of Wisconsin, and is a showcase for the many cultures that have a home in Wisconsin.

During the day on Friday, attendance is primarily young people of school age who are brought to the event from all over Wisconsin and northern Illinois. Several tree sitters will be needed on Friday so that we are not overwhelmed by the visitors. Saturday and Sunday are not quite so hectic. Sign up sheets for trees and for tree sitters will be available at the November meeting. If you cannot be at the meeting but want to participate please call Jack at 414/228-9628 and let him know.

This is an excellent opportunity to share your enthusiasm with young people. And to see the excitement in their eyes when they realize what it is that they are seeing. Some are seeing bonsai for the very first time. Come and have some fun with us!!!

## INTERMEDIATE CLASS PROPOSED

by Jack Douthitt

The Milwaukee Bonsai Society is proposing the start of an Intermediate Bonsai Class. The club has had a Novice Class for many years. This class has been instrumental in starting many of our club members on their bonsai journey. Two years ago, a Master Class was started to expand the knowledge and the skills of some of our more advanced members. Both of these classes have improved the skill levels of the participants greatly.

The Intermediate Class is designed to assist additional members of the Milwaukee Bonsai Society in improving their bonsai skills. It is for those members who have completed the Novice Class, or have experience equal to the class, but have felt unprepared to participate in a Master Class. The Intermediate Class will be taught by members of the Master Class.

Participation in the Intermediate Class will require a one year commitment. The Intermediate Class will consist of four workshops per year. Each workshop will last eight hours. Class size will be limited to ten (10) students. The cost is estimated to be between \$150 and \$180 per student per year. Costs may vary depending upon a number of factors. More information about the Intermediate Class will be available at an informational meeting that will be held at our usual meeting place on Tuesday November 7th. The Intermediate Class meeting will start at 6:30 p.m. (one half hour prior to our regular meeting)

## Electronic Newsletter

How did you like the email newsletter? Did it arrive before the print newsletter? We are hoping that this method of receiving your newsletter will bring you more information, sooner, and in color. If you didn't receive the email version, perhaps you're correct address is not on file. Please update it ASAP so you won't miss out on future issues. Email your current address to: hagr8d@mac.com

## COMPANION PLANTS AND OTHER IMPULSES TOWARD A "THIS IS IT!" PRESENTATION

By Ivan Hanthorn, retired book conservator, student of bonsai, and trout bum. From the Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter.

I grew up in the 1950s, the son of a young energetic florist who thought that I should be just as excited by floral design schools as she was, and so I tagged along, learned about the magic of asymmetric balance that was a dominant "new" theme in that otherwise stale decade of McCarthy's witch hunts and Eisenhower's mediocre golfing. I also acquired a liking for that accent object that seemed to be such a common part of floral display at the time. What I did not fully comprehend in my youth was that floral design was only one aspect of popular culture that was then heavily influenced by our impressions of Japanese culture, as we the victors did a little cultural borrowing (as have all the great victors in warfare). Ikebana and bonsai were truly only "discovered" by US popular culture in the decade following WWII, although well known to a much smaller audience for well over half a century preceding WWII. Occupying armies bring home lots of impressions, some good, some far reaching, and cultural transmission and change grinds on.

When decades later I began to seriously explore ikebana and then bonsai, a few things felt familiar. There was that old familiar isosoles triangle; and there was also the accompanying object--be it plant, viewing stone, or small precious object. I felt as though I finally had a better understanding of the protagonist in Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East*, in which the narrator relates the feeling of eventual rediscovery that he had once been on a path, and that he had stumbled onto it again, as it seemed familiar, and that he perhaps had never left it.

Last spring I decided to really indulge my proclivities for potting up small companion plants for bonsai. The purpose of the accompanying plant, or *kusumono*, is with an abstracted subtlety to establish the mood, the time, even the meaning (if you believe such is possible) of the bonsai display. However, I am inclined to simply play. So I wanted to be sure that I was working generally within a design tradition. Discussion of accompanying plants and other such ancillary display objects is in the literature, although not necessarily well covered. I decided to return to the central text, the scripture, if you will, for North American bonsai: John Naka's *Bonsai Techniques II*, section 14, paragraphs 1-3. This is the essential lesson. All else is commentary. The text reads as follows.

The addition of complimentary plants to a bonsai display adds more of nature to the composition. Wherever there is a tree growing there is grass, flowers and even stones nearby. This is the concept that a bonsai display must bring to its viewers. Bonsai is the primary object, but a plant or stone will support it as the secondary object. Rarely is the complimentary object used as the main subject.

This complimentary plant can be a common weed or grass, a wildflower, something simple and plain that will give a feeling of naturalness. Some hybrid plants are too formal, and never use an artificial plant. If a season is the focus of the display, a plant that normally blooms in that particular season must be used. Ordinarily a chrysanthemum would not be used in a spring display.

*Suiseki*, a natural viewing stone, or *okimono*, *sue-mono*, art goods, such as incense burners, wood carvings, or an interesting driftwood may also be used if it harmonizes with the main composition. *Kake-mono*, scrolls, are used when the display is in the home.

I set out to use as many of Naka's suggestions as possible, particularly of the grasses. My ever increasing collection of kusumono came to include among others: mondo grass, black mondo grass, *acorus gramineus*, miniature horsetail, *miscanthus sinensis zebrinus*, blood-grass, purple fountain grass, and various rushes and sedges. My favorite, however, following John Naka's suggestion, was *tanpopo*, a dandelion. Perhaps as well as any other possible accompanying material, the common dandelion declares one of the great lessons of bonsai to the obstinately obtuse, and that is that there is beauty in the commonplace.

Some of my complimentary plants were at the Iowa Bonsai Association Fall Show earlier that month, where I placed them at a club information table to spark interest and discussion. The general public seemed to find the dandelion interesting but challenging to their expectations. The zebra grass seemed to get quite a bit of attention from club members. *Miscanthus sinensis zebrinus* in the ground can be several feet high, but confined to a suiban mine was approximately 16" in height. At that size it would in all likelihood be presented as the main element in a formal composition, a kusumono-bonsai. Yet there are appropriate objects of great size that even tall accompanying plants can compliment. Shortly after the IBA Fall Show I acquired a viewing stone from Indonesia that is truly a cosmic mountain in form; it also happens to be approximately 30 inches tall. So the zebra grass could indeed accompany an object of that size in a classical composition.

If I were to hazard being a bit reflective on the appeal of the accompanying accoutrement of bonsai I would probably have to admit that they one and all provide on one level toys for adults while at the same time providing symbolic objects with which we can engage in sophisticated metaphor. Accompanying plants can certainly become as addictive as bonsai themselves, providing endless pleasure and occasional glimpses of profound beauty. For those who want to read more about kusumono there are two books which need be mentioned: *The Four Seasons of Bonsai* by Kyuzo Murata, and *Bonsai Kusumono Suiseki* by Willi Benz.



## ABS Forum Discussion: BONSAI AGE

Submitted by Jean Sher

To: [ABSForum@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ABSForum@yahoogroups.com)  
Subject: [ABSForum] Bonsai Age

How is the age of a bonsai determined? I know you can count the growth rings, but doesn't this require cutting into the trunk? There would be no correlation between trunk size and age, the very fact we have bonsai proves this. A branch may be much newer than the tree itself, so I don't see how cutting a branch can tell you the age.



Similarly:

If I buy a bonsai marketed as 50 years old, how can I confirm its age? How can I prove the age of my bonsai other than keeping pictures for 50 years?

2nd age question:

Assume I have 100 yr old bonsai. It has a branch that is 50 years old on it. I air layer this branch and create a new tree from it.. How old is this new bonsai? 0 years or 50 years?

> Joey

Reply-To: [ABSForum@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ABSForum@yahoogroups.com)

Joey

At our bonsai shows and in my garden we get this question so often we post this:

### HOW OLD IS THAT BONSAI?

This is the most frequently asked question at a bonsai show. And it is the one least likely to get an honest answer.

Bonsai is an art of illusion. Bonsai artists work to make a tree look as old as possible. A tree may only be a few years old or may have started as a tree collected from nature that was already hundreds of years old. A bonsai artist starts with the age of the grown stock and works his or her training from that point. Often the artist does not know the true age of the tree.

So the correct question would be "How many years has that bonsai been in training?" A good comment to make to an artist is "That bonsai looks really old."

We are obsessed with age...especially in our relatively young country. Most age statements are guesstimates based on experience. Make your bonsai look as old as possible and enjoy.

Pauline Muth....just my opinion

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Bonsai and Bonsai Accessories

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Alene Krieger  
Owner

P.O. Box 341575  
Milwaukee, WI 53234-1575

# HOLIDAY PARTY 2006

Our annual Holiday party will again be at Meyer's restaurant at 74th and Forest Home. It's a festive occasion and folks always have a great time (family style dinner). In the spirit of the holidays, please bring a wrapped gift for our door prizes. Please fill out the reservation form below and bring it with a check to the November meeting or send to our mailbox: MBS P.O. Box 198, Brookfield, WI 53008-0198.

Date: Tuesday December 5, 2006  
Time: 6:00-7:00 cash bar  
7:00 Family Style Dinner  
Place: Meyer's Restaurant  
74th and Forest Home  
Price: \$15 per person

REMEMBER: EVEN IF YOU RECEIVE A COMPLIMENTARY DINNER, YOU MUST FILL OUT A RESERVATION FORM!!!

.....  
**HOLIDAY PARTY Reservation Form**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone # (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Number of dinners \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$15 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- Buddy Bucks \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$3 each = - ( \$ \_\_\_\_\_ )

Check # \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to Milwaukee Bonsai Society (MBS). Bring check to November meeting or send to the P.O. Box 198, Brookfield, WI 53008.

**Reservations must be RECEIVED by NOVEMBER 21, 2006**

**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>

# Late Fall Bonsai Calendar

by Houston Sanders

OK, I don't know if November is really "late fall" or "early winter" around here. But it is the month for getting your trees into their safe and protected winter homes. Just about all bonsai, no matter how hardy the species, will benefit from some winter protection. Often small branches die back in winter. As the winter winds dry the branches out, the tree cannot move water through its frozen root system to keep the branches alive. So wind protection is desirable, especially for more developed trees with fine branches. This can be provided via a shelter such as a coldframe or garage, or just a sheltered location alongside a house or behind other trees.

Compared to trees growing in the ground, bonsai root systems have a small volume and are much more exposed to temperature fluctuations. Repeated freezing and thawing can damage the roots and weaken the tree. Therefore, you should find a way to insulate the roots of your bonsai. This can be as simple as digging a shallow hole in your garden and burying the bonsai pot, leaving the trunk and branches above ground. If your tree needs repotting in the spring, it is also acceptable to remove the tree from its pot before burying it.

Another way to protect trees from wind and temperature fluctuation is to make a shelter. This can be as easy as moving the trees underneath a table or bench, then covering the bench with a sheet of plastic. There are many places to find instructions to build other simple shelters or "coldframes" (do an internet search for coldframe). Many people already have a shed or garage that can provide even better shelter. An unheated shelter provides protection from wind, but not much protection from cold temperatures. With this type of shelter, it is best to insulate the roots of your trees with a layer of porous mulch such as shredded cedar.

I divide my trees into four groups based on hardiness, and give each group different winter care.

- 1) The first group, tropicals, includes ficus, bougainvillea, cactus/succulent, eugenia and guava fit into this category (I don't grow many in this group). They are sensitive to temperatures below 50°C and need to be moved indoors by early October. Watering is especially important for indoor trees since indoor winter air is extremely dry.
- 2) The second group, sub-tropicals, includes pomegranate, citrus, olive, and anything from South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, or South America. I also include with this group any trees that are grown in very small pots (> 4 inch). These sub-tropical trees benefit from a period of cold-but-not-freezing temperatures, and are left outdoors until mid-November or until the first prolonged frost. When the pomegranates lose their leaves, these trees go in. These trees grow especially well indoors under artificial light for the winter.
- 3) The third group includes anything not quite hardy in our climate. Trident maples, Japanese maples or hornbeams, hinoki cypress, Chinese quince (*Pseudocydonia*), azalea, redwood and sequoia, live oak, pyracantha and miniature Chinese elms fit into this category. These will need protection from cold wind and the most extreme cold temperatures. Some club members box up these trees and store them in their unheated garages for the winter, or place them in window wells. I have found that they will survive our winters in a well-built shelter that offers complete protection from wind, with a layer of mulch to insulate the roots. Before building a greenhouse, I would take trident maples in to my basement for the coldest part of the winter in January/February, then put them back outside when the temperatures warmed up to stay above 20°.
- 4) Finally, there are the easy ones – hardy to anything. Pines, larch, juniper, Amur maple, boxwood, hawthorn, apple, yew, etc. It is likely that these trees can be left outside in pots all winter with no attention at all, and they would survive. But it is better for the tree to provide insulation for roots and protection from wind. November is a great time to buy junipers at 75% off from the garden centers and bury them, with the pots, in the garden for the winter. They will be ready to work on in the spring. If your bonsai has good branch details, however, it is best to protect it from snow, wind and animal damage by placing it in a shelter.

If you don't know which group your tree fits into, you need to do some reading! The more you know about the tree and the climate it comes from, the better you can do at creating the conditions that will keep it healthy and happy.



P.O. Box 198  
Brookfield, WI 53008-0198  
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

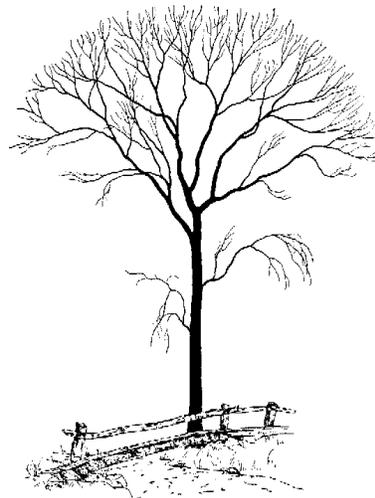
Next Meeting of MBS  
7PM, Tuesday, Nov. 6  
Grace Lutheran Church  
3030 W. Oklahoma

### **MBS Board, 2006**

Kris Ziemann – President  
Scott Hurula – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Darlene Shaginaw – 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Mary Turner – Treasurer  
Sharon Schmidt – Secretary  
John Moore – 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  
Pam Woythal – Webmaster  
Josh Rabeth – Librarian  
Jean Sher - Distribution / Telephone  
response  
Mary Turner - Membership Chairperson



*Embers fall softly  
Sparks scatter upward and die  
A cat curls in sleep  
-Joe Nemec*