

December 2006

# Bonsai News

## December Holiday Party

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

Remember to bring a wrapped gift to the Holiday Party. It's always been a very festive finale to our season.

Also, the "Bonsai From the Wild" books have come in. We'll have them at the Holiday Party, so if you signed up for one, please remember to bring your \$23.

## The End of the Printed Newsletter

2007 will be the start of a new era!! If you have an email address, this will be the last print newsletter you will receive! And, beginning in 2007, we will be using our Milwaukeebonsai.org website to post the newsletter, rather than sending it directly to you (saving you space in your email account). We will send the password of the month for you to access the newsletter. Check out the website - there are already some of the 2006 newsletters available online. Other clubs have been doing this with great success. So, here we go...

## Announcing a new feature...

If you have any questions about your bonsai, be it wintering, pruning, potting, etc., Joe Herbert has signed on to be our resident

expert to answer your questions.

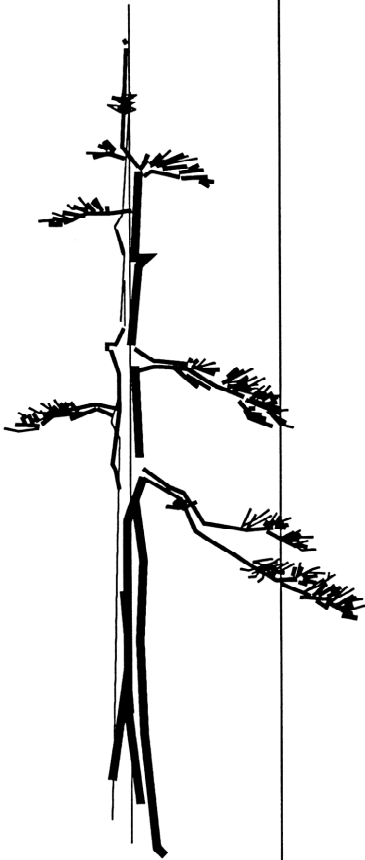
Email your questions to: [tree.stump@yahoo.com](mailto:tree.stump@yahoo.com). We'll put as many questions/answers in the newsletter as possible. Ask away!

## INTERMEDIATE CLASS UPDATE

By Jack Douthitt

It is not too late to get your application in for the new Intermediate Class. This class is designed to assist 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 requires 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 around \$150 per student per year. (Costs will vary depending upon a number of factors.) To reserve a place in this exciting class you must complete an application and submit that to Jack Douthitt with your deposit of \$50 before January 1, 2007. The remainder of the fee will be due before the first class. You can bring your application to the Christmas party or mail it to Jack at: [Jackbd@mindspring.com](mailto:Jackbd@mindspring.com). Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity!



*Milwaukee  
Bonsai Society*

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

Information Line  
414-299-9229

### 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>

## KRIS' KORNER

Well, Club, this is my last message to you as president. So, I think I'm going to do a little reminiscing...

I started coming to MBS meetings in late 2000. As, I'm sure, most newcomers feel, it was like stepping into a very "in" group. They talked about artists I'd never heard of. They had inside jokes that went over my head. But, I'm a persistent sort. I just kept coming, because there was an infectious enthusiasm that was also there. By listening, reading, coming to workshops and demos I got more into the bonsai society. I've been in a number of organizations, and have always felt that if a person wants to know what's going on, it's a good idea to be on the "inside" (Board). So, in 2002-2003, I put in some time as your treasurer. 2004, 1st VP. And for the past 2 years, I have served as your president. During my 5 years on the board, I was involved with and went to my first convention (ABS/MBS in 2002). I went to a MABA convention in Cincinnati, a world Convention in Washington, D.C and again was involved in our latest endeavor, the MABA/Milwaukee convention here this past summer.

Jeannie Sher and I started about the same time. We heard about the novice class, so we signed up. A few weeks before the class, we found out nothing had been done. So, take two determined teachers with a deadline... we put together a novice class (gee, I think Camrin LaFond and Jerry Niemec were in that one, too). We knew what we wanted to learn, so we asked knowledgeable people from the club to help us. We worked from a "textbook" that was available from the ABS, we worked on trees (a portulacaria, I believe). Had great treats. There were 8 of us. Jeannie and I re-worked a "lesson plan" that has been used in the Novice Classes ever since.

I've gone on some memorable "field trips". One to northern Michigan for a collecting trip. We went primarily for larch, but had a terrific time searching for hop hornbeams (ironwood), which Houston Sanders discovered. And the field trip to Sara Rayner's pottery studio in Red Wing, Minnesota. Pots, pots and more pots... and probably the best dinner I have ever eaten.



So, just a few more parting comments... Really, to get the most from YOUR club, get involved in some way. Tree-sit, help at functions, etc. Maybe you just want to come to meetings. That's great. All I can say, you'll get more out of the MBS if you're willing to put something into it!!

Ta ta for now. Have a joyous holiday season. See you at the Holiday Party.

*Kris*

### THE CITY GARDENER



-Specializing in-  
Bonsai and Bonsai Accessories

Go to - [www.citygardener.biz](http://www.citygardener.biz) for more info

Alene Krieger  
Owner

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



## FOLK FAIR 2006

Many thanks to all who worked at November's FOLK FAIR 2006.

### 1 Buddy Buck

Elli Wilder, Jerry Niemiec, Gen Molling, Susan Coleman, Pat Basich, Kris Ziemann, Laura Larrabee, Yvonne Szatkowski, Steve Carini, Delores Day, Marilyn McKnight, Allen Kosarek, Jorge Rossette, Rocio Saybe

### 3 Buddy Bucks

Jack Douthitt, Tony Plicka, John Moore

5 Buddy Bucks: Jean Sher

## Lost Glasses?

HAVE YOU LOST a pair of black wire-rimmed glasses? They were left behind at the Public Workshop September 16. Please contact Kris at 262-512-1228 or hagr8d@mac.com.



## **Wiring vs. Pruning** By Dave Bogan, Greater Evansville Bonsai Society

How often do you wire your trees? Once a year, or maybe not? So many feel that after the initial wiring they are done. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Now many could debate this, or claim they grow Bonsai through the “clip & grow” method. I would accept this if they really did practice clip and grow. This technique is not simply a minor pruning every spring. To actually see real results, most trees will need to be pruned back fairly hard every spring for a few years. The success, or maybe I should say desired result, of “clip & grow” is short internodes and growth in the correct direction.

To get the desired results, I say we should practice both techniques.

### **Initial designing of a tree:**

Prune hard!! During the first or initial pruning, you must be willing to prune back to the basic branch structure. If you fail to start with a proper balance of branches (which also includes size as well as location) you will fight the design from now on and ultimately remove branches later on. Now with this said, the branches remaining after this initial pruning will probably need a little wiring. Wiring of these branches typically amounts to movement up and down. Remember that branches in the lower part of a tree pointing upwards will always look immature. Typically the first 3 or so branches will need to have a downward bend, which makes them look older and mature. Since we have pruned hard, most of the first branches will be thick and require a good deal of force to move them downward. Generally here I utilize more guy wires instead of wrapping the branch with wire. Sometimes, though, it may take both guy wires and wrapped wire. In this case, you may also consider leaving the branch slightly long to give you a little more leverage in moving it. Remember though, if left long you will need to prune them back again.



### **Second pruning:**

Here is where many go wrong. You have allowed the tree to grow new branches all year. You are reluctant to remove most of this new growth. But you need to again hard prune these back. Typically, you will prune these back to about 1” long. Again, remember short internodes. In the second hard pruning you will need to do more wiring. Shape and direction now become even more important. In the initial hard pruning, you only had to deal with 2 or so limbs on each branch. Now you should have at least twice as many limbs on each branch. Moving them into their correct future positions generally can’t be achieved with guy wires. The movement you now require is more side-to-side and pulling in down won’t help.

### **Continuing the annual pruning:**

The term hard pruning becomes less applicable each year. You are now pruning third year branches. Each year the branches should be progressively getting smaller in diameter (taper) but your objective is still to increase the quantity and taper of limbs on each branch.

By the 5<sup>th</sup> year you should start to see lots of ramification - multiple limbs on each branch. Ideally through all this pruning, none of your tree's limbs should be over 1" long before they split into two limbs and so on. At this stage, around year 5, you may want to consider wiring at least twice a year. Yes, it will be tedious and you will have a lot of branches to wire, but I promise you will love the results.



On the subject of wiring, there is always the question of how tight to wrap the wire or how long to leave the wire on. First - wire tightness. Your wire should always be snug (no gaps) against the branch. It must support the bends. You don't need to wrap so tightly that you scar the branches, but it should always be in contact with the bark in all areas. Loosely wrapped wire does not offer the support required, and may result in branch breakage and less than desirable results. Many will say that if it's wrapped tight, it will cut in too quickly. Wrong! If wrapped correctly, when it does start to cut in, it's time to remove it.

Those who wrap loosely are not watching their trees closely enough to know when to remove wire. Granted, you may need to re-wire certain branches after removing wire. This is all part of the process. In fact, most branches will require several wirings before they are set in place. Some, like ficus for example, you may continue to wire for several years. Ficus have a tendency for branches to always bend upwards. Only when they are mature will the branches set in place. Briefly, we all know how to judge proper wire size. Take the chosen wire size, with the end try to push the branch requiring wire. If the wire will move the branch without bending, it will support it.

Now, copper vs. aluminum. I probably use about 90% aluminum. Generally because of its ease of use and removal. I only use copper on trees (example pines) that seem to take forever for the branch to set and also that the branches actually enlarge only slightly - thus wire can stay on longer. I do use the smallest size of copper for all my fine wiring. It is actually slightly smaller than the smallest size of aluminum.



In closing, prune with diligence, and prune back all branches every time. Wire as required. If you follow this routine, I can promise that you will love the results.



## Early Winter Bonsai Calendar:

You should have all of your trees in their winter storage locations by the end of November.

Some ideas:

- 1) If you have hardy trees that are in training, you can winter them in the ground. Don't do this with bonsai that have nice fine twigs – there can be minor damage from snow or from rabbits eating the twigs. Bury the tree in soil to the depth of the pot. Cover the surface with at least an inch of shredded cedar mulch or other insulation. And watch for mice and squirrels!
- 2) If any of your trees are still outside and unprotected at this time of year, they are at risk from freezing rain. You can leave a larch, amur maple, yew or ponderosa pine outside unprotected if its growing in a big container. But cover the soil surface with some plastic. Even the hardiest tree can be killed if a combination of poor drainage plus freezing rain turns its soil into an ice cube. (Now how do I know that? Bet you would never guess...)
- 3) All trees will appreciate protection from winter winds. You can provide protection by covering your bonsai bench with plastic. Either staple the plastic down, or just use rocks to weigh it down.



- 4) Spray your trees with dormant oil or fungicide before placing them in winter storage. Dormant oil is a nice, environmentally friendly pest killer. It is just a suspension of oil in water that eliminates insects and their eggs by coating and suffocating them.

November is a good time for wiring. You can wire small branches well after the leaves have fallen. But pick a warm day. By December it is getting pretty late for any wiring. It is best not to do much trimming at this time of year. Trees don't like to be cut during the dormant season, since there is no new growth to "heal" the cuts. If you do trim branches, seal the cuts! Branch removal should be delayed until the tree awakens in late winter or early spring. And it also provides a great benefit to delay making styling decisions until the locations of new buds are clearly visible.

If you are growing tropicals, establish a watering cycle for your indoor trees. You should know exactly how long it should take for the soil to dry out. If you leave home for a few days over the holidays, there are numerous tricks to keep your indoor trees from drying out. My favorite trick over Christmas is to place the fast-drying trees in clear garbage bags (with a few holes for air). This delays their drying out just long enough for me to take a 4-day holiday.

Whatever you do, whatever you grow, keep it alive and happy, and we will see you again at the next club meeting in February!





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

Next Meeting of MBS  
Holiday Party  
7PM, Tuesday, Dec 5  
74<sup>th</sup> and Forest Home

### **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



*All winter long it  
snows and rains and rains and snows.  
We long for sunshine  
-Anonymous*