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# MIDWEST BONSAI CONNECTION

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[www.midwestbonsai.org](http://www.midwestbonsai.org)

## 2021 April Thoughts

**Save a date, change a date, check out new information.**

**June Bonsai Event, Wheaton, IL, June 26th, 10 am. to 4 pm.** We have changed the date to move it out a few weeks. It will be held at the home of Matt Mazza in Wheaton. Vendors will include Linda Camp, BC Bonsai, Karen

Shuman Pottery, Jack Ken Matsumoto Scrolls. Victor Zurczak and others plan to sell some of their trees. BC Bonsai will hold a workshop. In addition we will be selling items from Ivan Watters tool sets and some memorabilia from his collections. Until further notice from the state we will plan on facemasks and social distancing.

**Midwest Bonsai Society Newsletter  
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**Ivan Watters Memorial Service will be held at the Kolssak Funeral Service, 189 So. Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling on April 24th from 12 to 2 pm.** The service will start at 12:30. Please do not send flowers. If you wish to make a donation please contribute to either the Ivan Watters Scholarship Fund (see below) or to the Midwest Bonsai Society. You are also invited to bring a small tree to display at the service. Time will be available during the service for anyone who wants to say a few words in memory of Ivan. Facemasks and social distancing are expected to be in effect. Ivan's cat Kiku has been moved to a new home in Elgin.

**Ivan Watters Scholarship Fund.** A member of the Midwest Bonsai Society has made a generous donation to open this fund. The Fund will work to support Bonsai Education and Studies to serious Bonsai students. It will be administered by the Midwest Bonsai Board or a special committee thereof.

**The August Bonsai Exhibit at the Chicago Botanic Garden if still on track to be held on August 20th - 22nd.** This year's Guest Judge will be Phil Malhiot. Vendors will occupy the courtyards and we expect to have the usual Bonsai Exhibit and Competition.

—Larry Stephan

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## April Meeting Focus – Virtual Meeting via Webex

The April meeting scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 5th, will again be conducted as a Webex meeting (similar to ZOOM). We will send out an email

with invitation/link to meeting and instructions for participating.

7:00 PM - No Bonsai 101 but this newsletter does include Victor Zurczak's

Bonsai 101 programs "Selecting a Pot" and "Pot Preparation". 7:00 PM - General program; Pots. Victor Zurczak will moderate and Linda Camp will present using

slide show prepared by Chris Baker. We will be able to ask questions during the meeting.

Hope you can join us for this event.

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## MBS Bonsai 101 Pot Preparation

Select a pot that will be sufficient for your bonsai tree. The size of the pot needs to be large enough to fit the main part of the tree's rootball in it, and for some extra soil to cover all the roots. If you have too small of a pot, the roots will not be able to hold any moisture, and will most likely die off quickly. Most bonsai pots come with

pre-drilled drainage holes. If yours did not, make sure you make some drainage holes in your pot. If it is a large pot, use about a 3/4" drill bit and make about 3-4 holes equally spaced along the bottom of the pot. If you are using a small pot, make 2 small holes about 1/3" equally spaced on the bottom of the pot.

It is a good idea to wire down some screen, or mesh over these holes after drilling them to prevent your soil, or rock from falling out. Be sure not to use a screen that is too fine preventing the pot from being able to drain easily. Good drainage is KEY for bonsai trees!

Insure that you have anchor holes in your pot to stabilize the tree in the pot. Sometimes the drainage holes can be used for this

purpose. If not, you can drill some anchor holes using a 1/8" masonry bit with a hammer drill.

The best time for repotting is at the end of the dormant season, just prior to the main growth period for the tree. For most plants, this means late winter or early spring, when the new buds are swelling but have not yet opened up into new growth. (For sub-tropicals it may be late spring to early summer).

# March Events Calendar

**Please note:** What we have shown below is a list of events scheduled as of March 20, 2021. Where we have information on cancellations due to COVID 19 we have included same. Good to see local clubs, while still not meeting in person, are getting some virtual meetings scheduled. In addition, BC Bonsai and Hidden Gardens are open and offering workshops and or services and supplies. Chris Baker from the Chicago Botanic Garden is offering Zoom workshops. Please check all events to insure they have not been canceled or changed.

**Monday April 5, 2021**

## **MIDWEST BONSAI SOCIETY APRIL MEETING - WEBEX MEETING DUE TO COVID 19**

7:00 PM, Program: Presentation on Pots prepared by Chris Baker. Victor Zurczak will moderate with Linda Camp presenting. For more information or updates go to <http://www.midwestbonsai.org/meetings>

**Tuesday April 6, 2020**

## **MILWAUKEE BONSAI SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING**

6:30 PM, Zoom Meeting. Program: Pauline Muth will make her first appearance as an artist in Milwaukee. She will be demonstrating Penjing. For more Information go to [http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org/mbs\\_schedule.html](http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org/mbs_schedule.html)

**Wednesday April 7, 2021**

## **PRAIRIE STATE BONSAI SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING - ZOOM MEETING DUE TO COVID 19**

7:00 PM, Program: European vs United States Bonsai styling presented by Jennifer Price-Svihla. For more information or updates go to <https://prairiestatebonsai.com/news-and-events/>

**Saturday April 3, 10, 17, & 24 2021**

## **SATURDAY MORNING BONSAI with Mark Karczewski**

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM, Hidden Gardens in Willowbrook, IL. Bring your own tree workshop. For further information go to [http://www.hidden.garden.net/bonsai\\_saturday\\_morning.html](http://www.hidden.garden.net/bonsai_saturday_morning.html) or call 630-655-8283.

**Saturday April 10 or 24, 2021**

## **JUNIPERS - OUT OF STORAGE STYLING WORKSHOP at BC Bonsai**

9:30 AM - 12:00 PM, bring your own tree workshop or purchase juniper at 2250 Durham Drive, Wheaton, IL. For further information or to register go to <http://www.bcbonsai.com> or call 630-386-1515.

**Sunday or Monday April 11, 12, 18 or 19, 2021**

## **TREE HARVESTING WORKSHOP at BC Bonsai**

1:00 PM - 3:30 PM, Bring your shovels and saws, at Nursery in Paw Paw, IL. For further information or to register go to <http://www.bcbonsai.com> or call 630-386-1515.

**Saturday April 17, 2021**

## **MAPLES AND DECIDUOUS TREES - OUT OF STORAGE STYLING WORKSHOP at BC Bonsai**

9:30 AM - 12:00 PM, bring your own tree workshop or purchase juniper at 2250 Durham Drive, Wheaton, IL. For further information or to register go to <http://www.bcbonsai.com> or call 630-386-1515.

**Wednesday, April 21, 2021**

## **AZALEA BONSAI CARE WORKSHOP: ONLINE with Chris Baker**

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM, Chicago Botanic Garden via ZOOM Meeting. Azaleas are among the most beautiful flowering **bonsai** around. Soil types, fertilizing, root pruning, and more will be covered in this fun and informative class. For more information

or to register for workshop go to [https://www.chicagobotanic.org/adult\\_education/horticulture/deciduous\\_bonsai\\_tree\\_workshop\\_online](https://www.chicagobotanic.org/adult_education/horticulture/deciduous_bonsai_tree_workshop_online)

**Saturday April 24, 2021**

## **FLOWERING JAPANESE APRICOT STYLING WORKSHOP at BC Bonsai**

9:30 AM - 12:00 PM, Tree is included at 2250 Durham Drive, Wheaton, IL. For further information or to register go to <http://www.bcbonsai.com> or call 630-386-1515.

**Monday May 3, 2021**

## **MIDWEST BONSAI SOCIETY MARCH MEETING - VIRTUAL MEETING DUE TO COVID 19.**

7:00 PM - Bonsai 101 Program TBD 7:30 PM - General program; TBD. For more information or updates go to <http://www.midwestbonsai.org/meetings/>

**Tuesday May 4, 2020**

## **MILWAUKEE BONSAI SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING**

6:30PM, Zoom Meeting. Program: Michael Hagedorn will make his first appearance as an artist in Milwaukee. He will be discussing his book "Bonsai Heresy" published in 2020. He uses Mark Twain's quote "Education consist mainly in what we have unlearned" to describe it. For more Information go to [http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org/mbs\\_schedule.html](http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org/mbs_schedule.html)

**Wednesday May 5, 2021**

## **PRAIRIE STATE BONSAI SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING - ZOOM MEETING DUE TO COVID 19.**

7:00 PM Air Layering Propagation presented by Linda Camp - For more information or updates go to <https://prairiestatebonsai.com/news-and-events/>

**Saturday May 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29, 2021**

## **SATURDAY MORNING BONSAI with Mark Karczewski**

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM, Hidden Gardens in Willowbrook, IL. Bring your own tree workshop. For further information go to [http://www.hidden.garden.net/bonsai\\_saturday\\_morning.html](http://www.hidden.garden.net/bonsai_saturday_morning.html) or call 630-655-8283.

**Wednesday, May 12, 2021**

## **BONSAI DESIGN WORKSHOP: ONLINE with Chris Baker**

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM, Chicago Botanic Garden via ZOOM. There are many different types and styles of bonsai design. Learn about your tree's "attitude", if it has tension or balance, the ins and outs of negative space, and traditional vs. natural styles. For more information or to register for workshop go to [https://www.chicagobotanic.org/adult\\_education/horticulture/bonsai\\_design\\_online](https://www.chicagobotanic.org/adult_education/horticulture/bonsai_design_online)

**Saturday, Sunday or Thursday May 15, 16 or 20, 2021**

## **START DATE - 6 WEEK BEYOND BASICS BONSAI**

### **COURSE at BC Bonsai**

Each week A different tree will be covered in detail: care, styling, advanced wiring/bending techniques and more at 2250 Durham Drive, Wheaton, IL. For further information or to register go to <http://www.bcbonsai.com> or call 630-386-1515.

**Saturday May 22, 2021**

## **BRING YOUR OWN TREE WORKSHOP at BC Bonsai**

9:30 AM - 12:00 PM, at 2250 Durham Drive, Wheaton, IL. For further information or to register go to <http://www.bcbonsai.com> or call 630-386-1515.

**Saturday May 29, 2021**

## **TROPICAL TREE REPOTTING WORKSHOP at BC Bonsai**

9:30 AM - 5:00 PM, Bring your own tree workshop. Timing is flexible. Plan at least 45 minutes per tree at 2250 Durham Drive, Wheaton, IL. For further information or to register go to <http://www.bcbonsai.com> or call 630-386-1515.

# Monthly Care Report - What to do in April

When the temperature is consistently 65 degrees and sunny you can bring your trees out of their winter storage area. According to current weather forecasts for a warmer than normal spring will allow us to take trees out of storage April 1. Get started repotting your deciduous trees.

Junipers are OK to do, and pines can be started any time during the month. Continue to provide good after-care, by protecting repotted trees from frosts, which will still happen in April.

Begin your feeding, pinching, watering, and prun-

ing schedules in earnest. Of course, be mindful of potential cold snaps, and be ready to protect vulnerable plants. You can begin fertilizing trees repotted in April. Keep your initial fertilizer mix on the light side for those first couple doses of fertilizer. April is still a decent month for root-pruning, and for digging trees from yard or field.

Tropical trees will be showing new growth, even

under lights. Cuttings will be easier to root now that the days are lengthening. Use a rooting hormone as an aid. As always, keep a close watch for insects, which may show up fast as the weather warms. In April you may want to start some plants from seeds.

—Ed Hake • Fort Wayne Bonsai Club • Reprinted by Permission. Compiled from several Web articles with adaptation to our area

## Bonsai 101

### Selecting a Pot

In styling bonsai, you will naturally be giving much attention to initial shaping of the tree and the grooming that helps to refine the design over the years. It is important not to neglect the question of a suitable container for the tree. This is an equal part of the bonsai design, and selection of the right container to create a harmonious relationship with the tree completes the overall effect of the bonsai.

There are practical points to be considered, but these are straight forwardly resolved. The aesthetic value of the bonsai pot is a more difficult consideration, because it depends both upon the individual species of the tree that you are potting and the way you have styled it and, to some extent, on your own subjective sense of what makes a good design. The following are some basic guidelines that may help in your selection. Experience in both creating and appreciating bonsai will also help you to develop a good instinct for the types of container possibly suited to a particular style and species of the tree.

**Size, shape and finish**  
The size and proportion

of the pot in relation to the tree are among the first things to consider. The container must first be in scale with the tree, in practical terms forming an adequate reservoir for soil and water, but in design terms enhancing the balance of the tree's height and spread. For an individual specimen, the tree should not appear to be floating in an over-large pot, nor cramped into a tiny container that appears to form an unstable base for the size of the tree. As an approximate guideline, for a tree with mainly vertical emphasis, the measurement across the container could be between 2/3 and 3/4 of the tree's height, whereas for a tree with a strong horizontal spread, these proportions can apply to the relationship between pot length and the overall width of the tree. (With initial potting of a newly styled deciduous tree, it is important to allow for the larger spread and mass that it will have when it comes into leaf.) Traditionally, bonsai containers are shallow in relation to length and width. There are aesthetic reasons for sometimes choosing deeper pots for certain types and styles of trees.

Pot shapes vary quite widely and many styles are available in a range of sizes. The most basic shapes are rectangular, oval and round; the sides of the pot may be straight and vertical, curving, or slightly flared. There are also basically rectangular pots with angled or sculptured corners, varying the overall impression of the shape. Some pots have minimal, unobtrusive "feet" while others have distinctive, ornate "feet". Likewise the rim of the pot may be plainly finished in line with the direction of the sides, or may be turned inward or outward.

Most pots have an unglazed finish and the color is the color of the clay after firing. In general, subdued or subtle earth colors are considered more appropriate to bonsai than light or brightly colored glazes. A smooth, undecorated surface is quite common, but there are pots with embossed or impressed designs or bands of relief decoration.

#### **The character of the design**

When matching the pot to the tree, you should take into account not only matters of size and proportion, but the overall character of the design. This is influenced both by the style of the bonsai, which may be formal or informal, and the character of the tree—such

as whether it is delicately branching or heavily massed, slender or rugged, features only foliage or also bears flowers or fruits, is green-leaved throughout the growing season or has a range of color variation through the year.

A rugged forest tree demands an unfussy, earthy style of pot. A pine or larch, for example, is best suited in a subdued brown, gray or black container in a simple uncluttered shape—oval or rectangular with discreet feet. An ornamented pot with highly colored glaze, painted decoration or elaborately sculptured feet would be quite wrong for a forest tree. Trees with a heavy mass of foliage, solid trunk and textured bark may also need to be matched to the deeper bonsai pot that can balance their visual weight. Depth is an important consideration in selecting the container for a fruiting tree. A tree in fruit may create a heavy visual mass that needs to be balanced by a relatively deep container, which also provides the reservoir of moisture required to swell the fruits.

A light, graceful tree with seasons of brilliant foliage color, such as a maple, requires a shallower,

*(Continued on Page 4)*

## Chicago Bonsai Club

Our next regularly scheduled meeting, in April, has been cancelled due to closure of the Garfield Park Conservatory, because of COVID-19. Hopefully, we will be able to find an alternative space for future meetings. Please watch for more information in the MBS newsletter.

Please note that our MBS General meeting is virtual on April 5 at 7:00 PM - General program; Pots. This presentation was prepared by Chris Baker, Curator of Bonsai at Chicago Botanic Garden. Chicago Chapter members can join without the need to drive to the garden. See "April Meeting Focus" announcement.

If you would like further information about or to join the club, please contact: Susan at sukazu17@gmail.com or call 773-235-9479. Susan can also provide you with invitation/link and instruction for joining the general meeting.

## Updates to the March Soil Essay by Matt Mazza

Since the essay in last month's newsletter about soil was released, Victor Zurzacak offered a correction with respect to the pH of Kanuma soil. Upon further research, we had the wrong value and the range is roughly between 4.5 and 6.0, with an average pH of approximately 5.2. This is why acid loving plants, like Azaleas, prefer Kanuma soil.

In regard to Sphagnum moss, we will differentiate from sphagnum peat moss. Sphagnum peat moss may be appropriate for tropical trees that prefer more acidic soil. However, the point of using modern bonsai soil is to be able to reasonably control how much water your tree is getting. Being that peat moss retains water, it becomes difficult to know when it is or isn't time to water.

Sphagnum moss can be used as referenced in the original essay.

## Selecting a Pot (Continued from Page 3)

daintier pot. A pale color or brighter, more decorative glaze may be more appropriate here. The vivid reds and oranges of a maple's autumn foliage appear particularly intense against a white or cream glazed pot, and a shallow oval shape offsets the slender elegance of the maple. In choosing the style and

color of the pot, you should take into account the different features and colors of the tree in different seasons – flowers, fruits and changing leaf colors.

In general terms, a rectangular pot with sharp corners and straight sides is very formal, an oval less formal. Oval and round pots suit trees with a rounded mass. A delicate tree requires an elegantly

shaped pot that reflects its delicacy, while a tree with a strong, forceful shape and texture needs a pot with an emphatic, powerful shape. A tree with very angular movement might be better presented in an angular pot with distinct edges to the shape, rather than a smoothly curved oval pot.

The best way to become aware of the nuances in

the relationship between tree and container is to study many examples of quality bonsai, both live specimens and in photographs, and apply a critical analysis to the various aspects of the design. Consider the size, shape, style, texture and color of the tree, and try to identify the links that have led the grower to choose a particular pot for a particular tree.

## Membership Request

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Midwest Bonsai Connection**

### Library Resources

MBS has a fine collection of Bonsai books and journals which are available for loan. Please contact the Librarian for information.

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