
MIDWEST BONSAI CONNECTION

www.midwestbonsai.org

February 2021 Thoughts!

In the midst of a Pandemic the Board is working hard to help you stay connected to the world of Bonsai. We have obtained the rights to an Andy Smith video of a demonstration he did in September at Hidden gardens. Andy has been bringing his collected trees to our August Exhibition for years. In this video he styles a ponderosa pine he collected in the Black Hills and also demonstrates how to core a tree, to estimate age. You can find this video and others on our website from left-hand navigation bar on the Home Page by clicking on "About Bonsai" and then "Videos" or use this link <https://www.midwestbonsai.org/about-bonsai/videos>.

On February 1st, Victor Zurczak and Linda Camp will be hosting our first On-line General Meeting. We have been working for sometime to develop the technical infrastructure and content for this alternate way to engage our members. It will include a presentation on tools and tool care and we expect to be able to field and answer questions you may have. The meeting will be held on Webex which is Cisco's version of a ZOOM meeting. Keep an eye on your email as you will be receiving an invitation and instructions on how to participate.

It does not look like we will be able to hold an indoor

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May Exhibit at the Garden. We are checking with the Garden and other venues for the possibility of some type of outdoor event in late May. This could include local artists selling pots, trees, tools and supplies. We would also have some educational materials available. For August, we are hopeful that we may be able to hold our annual event at the Garden. We will proceed as if it is going to take place and keep you all posted as we progress with vaccine availability.

Don't forget that we have a help line response service that you can access by emailing us at MBSBonsai@yahoo.com One of our senior members will answer your questions and/or offer suggestions. We are coupling this with a new blog feature where we publish these questions and responses for all members to view. There is a direct link to the section from the left-hand navigation bar on our

website Home Page under "Blog". Here is link <https://www.midwestbonsai.org/blog/2021/1/16/ask-a-question-our-help-line>

We are also trying to tap into your experience, as to how to care and show trees, to share with other members in future newsletters or exhibits. This month, we are asking members to provide us with pictures and descriptions on how they successfully winter their trees and also to send in pictures from last year of your best trees. Your submittals for one or both of these requests will be appreciated. You will find more information later in this newsletter.

Please let us know if you have any suggestions for other things, we can be doing going forward to help our members enjoy this fascinating art form while maintaining social distancing.

—Larry Stephan

The Field Museum's "Field Guides"

As Chicago-area residents you've probably visited the Field Museum (pre-COVID) many times throughout your life. While the museum is the well-known home to SUE the T-Rex, the Fighting African Elephants and to the Egypt exhibit, the Field is also a thriving home to scientists and researchers

who study, catalog, and disseminate information about our natural world.

While the concept of a field guide is not particular to the Field Museum, the idea of creating "cheat sheet" style guides was pioneered by them. These are freely-available guides, some written by Field staff, some by other

organizations, that offer the public easy-to-digest information, pictures and details to help them understand the world around them, in guides ranging from one to two pages, or even up to dozens of pages.

As practitioners of the art of bonsai, a number of these guides are useful to us. In

all cases, navigate to <http://fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org> and simply enter the three or four digit number noted below into the search box in the upper right of the website to find the highlighted guide. On tablet or mobile devices, you may need to tap the button of three horizontal lines in the upper right corner to access the search box.

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Events Calendar

Please note: What we have shown below is a list of events scheduled as of January 20, 2021. Where we have information on cancellations due to COVID 19 we have included same. While local clubs are still not meeting in person there are some virtual meetings scheduled. In addition, BC Bonsai and Hidden Gardens are open and offering workshops. 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 February 1, 2021

MIDWEST BONSAI SOCIETY FEBRUARY MEETING – WEBEX MEETING DUE TO COVID 19

Next meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2021. We will send out an email with invitation/link to meeting and instructions for participating. 7:00 PM, Program: The World of Bonsai Tools presented by Victor Zurczak & Linda Camp. For more information or updates go to <http://www.midwestbonsai.org/meetings>

Tuesday February 2, 2020

MILWAUKEE BONSAI SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING

6:30PM, Zoom Meeting. Program: Mark Fields will discuss wiring and pulling needles on Black Pines. Followed by members Jasek, Rob, Erick and Callen discussions, time permitting. For more Information go to http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org/mbs_latest.html

Wednesday February 3, 2021

PRAIRIE STATE BONSAI SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING - CANCELED DUE TO COVID 19

Room TEC/1038b College of DuPage. For more information or updates go to <https://prairiestatebonsai.com/news-and-events/>

Saturday February 6, 13, 20, & 27, 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 or call 630-655-8283.

Monday March 1, 2021

MIDWEST BONSAI SOCIETY MARCH MEETING – VIRTUAL MEETING DUE TO COVID 19

Next meeting is scheduled for March 1, 2021. 7:00 PM, Program: TBD. For more information or updates go to <http://www.midwestbonsai.org/meetings>

Tuesday March 2, 2020

MILWAUKEE BONSAI SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING

6:30 PM, Zoom Meeting. Program: Mauro Stemberger will discuss wiring and pulling needles on Black Pines. Followed by Tasha F with a thoughtful analogy on resilience and perseverance. For more Information go to http://www.milwaukeebonsai.org/mbs_latest.html

Wednesday March 3, 2021

PRAIRIE STATE BONSAI SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING – ZOOM MEETING DUE TO COVID 19.

For more information or updates go to <https://prairiestatebonsai.com/news-and-events/>

Saturday March 6, 13, 20, & 27, 2021

SATURDAY WEST SUBURBAN MASTERCLASS

BONSAI WORKSHOPS with Ivan Watters - CANCELED DUE TO COVID 19 but one on one, bring your own tree workshops are available by reservation any day of the week not booked. For further information go to yasukunai@hotmail.com or call 847-917-0817.

Saturday March 6, 13, 20, & 27, 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 or call 630-655-8283.

Sunday March 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2021

SUNDAY NORTH SUBURBAN MASTERCLASS BONSAI WORKSHOPS with Ivan Watters CANCELED

DUE TO COVID 19 but one on one, bring your own tree workshops are available by reservation any day of the week not booked. For further information go to yasukunai@hotmail.com or call 847-917-0817.

Saturday or Sunday March 13 or 14, 2021

LARCH FOREST - WORKSHOP at BC Bonsai

1:00 PM - 3:30 PM, workshop includes trees, at 2250 Durham Drive, Wheaton, IL. For further information or to register go to <http://www.bcbonsai.com> or call 630-386-1515.

Saturday March 20, 2021

PINES – OUT OF STORAGE STYLING WORKSHOP at BC Bonsai

9:30 AM - 12:00 PM, bring your own tree workshop 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 March 20 or 21, 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.

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

SPRING BONSAI CARE WORKSHOP: ONLINE with Chris Baker

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM, Chicago Botanic Garden, Explore the seasonal care of deciduous, evergreen and tropical bonsai starting with the emergence of winter dormancy and through the growing season. Topics will include soil and repotting, spring growth, pest management and much more. For more information or to register for workshop go to https://www.chicagobotanic.org/adult_education/horticulture/deciduous_bonsai_tree_workshop_online

Saturday March 27, 2021

HARDY TREE REPOTTING WORKSHOP at BC Bonsai

10:00 AM - 5:00 PM, bring your own tree workshop at 2250 Durham Drive, Wheaton, IL. For further information or to register go to <http://www.bcbonsai.com> or call 630-386-1515.

We're Looking for a few Great Trees – Photos that is!



We're working tirelessly at your Midwest Bonsai Society to remain relevant to you our members. Indeed, we are planning new initiatives – virtual general meetings, an August bonsai show? new YouTube offerings, etc. – that we think will keep our bonsai “family” together. The pandemic has kept us apart, but we all still love bonsai! So, to stay connected, we'd like to see photos of your favorite trees this past growing season, with a short descriptive write-up. We'll publish your photos in a special identity protected “Photo Gallery” in an upcoming MBS newsletter, for all of our members to enjoy. Members can also send email votes and comments on the trees that they like, and a winner will receive a small prize from MBS! So, what could be better to keep us connected than viewing wonderful bonsai photos, coupled with a bit of competitive fun!

Send photos today to our Events Chairman Victor Zurczak (manofnature2002@yahoo.com) and cc our Newsletter Editor Dick Ruummele (dickruemmele@gmail.com).

We look forward to seeing your beautiful trees!

Monthly Care Report – February 2021

In our area, early February can be very severe weather-wise and late February can be the beginning of early spring. It is a bit too early to repot, but if you need to repot, be sure to be vigilant about not letting your repotted trees freeze, since a cold snap can be just around the corner. When there is a break in the weather, you can wire your deciduous trees while the buds are still small.

Get your tools ready by sharpening them. Consider your soil needs for repotting. If you need soil, contact BC Bonsai or Hidden Gardens to purchase some. You can begin to prune deciduous trees taking care to be sure that remaining branches and shoots are in good health. If in doubt as to whether buds on a particular branch or shoot are viable, then wait to prune until you see some bud-swell. Don't forget to sterilize your tools with alcohol before going on to another tree in order to avoid spreading diseases and/or pests.

If the ground has thawed it is also possible to lift

trees from the ground and do some undercutting. Leave evergreens until later. Branch pruning of deciduous and evergreen trees can be done (except Japanese maples and pines). Any major redesign and reshaping of trees can be done now. Can't wait to see what February has in store for us. Also, I stress for everyone to know and study each species of tree you have. Knowing their natural environment and growing conditions will enable you to take much better care of that tree.

My tropical trees seem to know that the days are getting longer as I can see a little more growth and some need a little pruning. My thermometer in the basement ranges from the low 50s to the mid 60s this time of year. So far, I have not seen any pests on my plants, but I remain vigilant in checking under leaves and along stems.

—Ed Hake. Fort Wayne Bonsai Club. Reprinted by Permission. Compiled from several web articles and adapted to our area.

Field Guides

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Looking to collect a Chicago-area tree to train as bonsai, but don't know how to discern different trees when not in leaf? Try “Chicago Region Trees in Winter” (885). Is the tree actively growing and now you have leaves to help identify it? Maybe “Common Trees of the Chicago Region” (1247) will help you identify it.

Does one of your prized trees have a growing gall, and you're not clear what type of insect is causing it (so you can figure out the right means of taking care of it)? “Common Galls of the Chicago Region” (1170) might be of interest.

Are you collecting, cultivating and otherwise growing a number of mosses, but not clear what type they are? “Common Mosses and Liverworts of Chicago

Region” (865) may help you identify them.

While the Field Guides focus primarily on Chicagoland and Tropical regions (due to the Field's areas of study), the site does have some other temperate-region guides that might also be of interest. “Common Lichens of North Carolina” (343) might interest you if your well-established tree has become host to some lichen. “Common Native Species of Walworth

County, WI” (1185) could be of interest if you find a flower that might make for a good accent (with appropriate permissions to collect it from non-protected lands).

With over 1100 guides, you might find others that help you craft your art, or your home garden. Let us know if you find any others of interest at midwest.bonsai@yahoo.com.

—Matthew Corpolongo

Bonsai 101 - Watering Your Trees

Watering is the basic requirement for survival. We really need to understand watering as a tool for growing bonsai. It is vital to water your trees correctly. Over watering and under watering can damage growth in a cool or temperate climate. Both are less of a problem in tropical climates, but even then, correct watering is important.

Incorrect watering is one of the biggest killers of bonsai. Here are some tips drawn from many years of experience:

- Too little or too much water may cause the roots to dry out or to rot.
- A free-draining soil will assist in the transition of water through the pot. Compacted soil is easy to spot as water will collect on the surface. Ideally, when you water bonsai, the water should flow freely through the soil.
- Keep the soil moist in the summer, but water less in winter. In winter, just keep the soil damp and do not let it dry out. A bonsai is not a cactus; it needs a damp soil to keep the roots alive through its dormant period.
- In most cool-to-temperate climates, watering once a day during the growing period is usually enough, but check your soil. In hotter months, watering will need to be done up to three times a day. In a hot country, leave the trees in some shade for part of the day to keep them cooler.

Also, hot winds can damage the tree by drying it out very quickly.

- If your soil's surface is looking a bit light in color, it is probably dry. However, check just under the surface.

Your bonsai will appreciate being sprayed or misted once a day in the spring and autumn months, and up to twice a day in the summer period. If you have a hothouse, greenhouse or glasshouse and store your trees there in the winter, a weekly spray is acceptable. However, you will need to make sure that the structure of the glasshouse allows adequate ventilation.

- In winter storage, outdoor bonsai require a weekly check, but if the soil is damp, leave it alone as the tree will not take up more water.
- Indoor bonsai require watering once a day in warmer months, but every two to three days in winter and spring. If you have central heating or an air conditioner running, the soil will dry out faster. Keep the soil slightly damp, but not soggy.
- Succulents need little water for the three months of colder weather in temperate or colder climates, so bear in mind if you keep *Portulacaria*, *Crassula* or money or jade-tree bonsai. They are succulents and need to be watered once a month in winter. Larger specimens may need more frequent watering. If you

are in a warm climate, water once a week. It is best to speak to your local specialist if you are unsure.

- Spring, in colder climates, means that you need to start regular watering again. But it is only necessary if the bonsai requires it.

How to water your bonsai.

- Automatic watering systems.

Use computer timers, multiple-hose distributors. There are some drawbacks to auto systems: drip feeds can clog, battery systems are less reliable than mains-powered systems, softening of hoses on a hot day may cause junctions in the piping to suddenly come apart when pressured up and auto systems continue to water during rain spells when the tree does not need more water.

There are more expensive systems with a sensor that determines moisture levels in the soil. However, even these are not completely satisfactory because one tree's water needs may be radically different from another's.

Despite these drawbacks, automatic watering systems are not a great problem and can be a benefit if you are off on vacation.

Using a hose.

- Most growers' normal method of watering.

- Adjustable trigger to control intensity of water delivery.
- Can be used with feeder units (make sure you do not overfeed).
- Selectable spray heads (shower, mist, etc.).

Secrets of Success

- The root ball should always feel damp-not soaking wet or bone dry.
- Allow the soil to dry out slightly between each watering, but do not let it dry out completely.
- During the summer, err on the side of caution and water your deciduous trees at least once a day. Don't let the soil stay bone dry for more than a couple of hours. Leaves shrivel very easily in hot, sunny weather.
- In ordinary weather, watering once a day in the morning is sufficient. If you have to water twice a day, then morning and evening watering is ideal. In very hot weather, water in the afternoon as well.
- Don't water in the midday sun. If you have no choice, water the soil only and not the foliage.
- If you have to water more than once a day, let the soil dry before watering again.
- Don't water continuously throughout the day.
- Don't rely on rain to water your bonsai. It is rarely enough.
- There isn't much advan-

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Watering

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tage in using rainwater on your bonsai; tap water is perfectly acceptably.

- Don't use a fierce jet of water on the soil—it will wash away both fertilizer and soil. Water with either a watering can or a hose with a fine rose.
- Automatic watering

systems can be useful, but check regularly to see that the system works properly. There is no substitute for hand watering: it is more accurate and not as wasteful.

- Water each tree for about 10 seconds, leave it for a couple of minutes and return twice more, repeating the watering for 10 seconds each time.
- Let the water fall gently

on the entire tree.

- Concentrate the water on the soil so that the roots get most of the water.
- Don't water flowers when they are in bloom. Water only the soil.
- Check that the water has drained through the pot.
- Don't stand a tree in water permanently or the roots will rot.
- If you have to leave

your trees for more than a day, make sure someone waters them for you. Give them clear instructions on how to water.

- If you have to go away on vacation, arrange for bonsai-sitter to take care of your trees. Some nurseries offer a vacation-care service. It isn't a good idea to rely on rain to do the watering—there may not be any.

—Victor Zurczak

43rd Annual Mid-America Bonsai Exhibit Chicago

*The largest Bonsai
Exhibit in the Midwest*

**August 20 • 21 • 22 •
2021** **Parking Fees Apply**

Please visit www.midwestbonsai.org for more information.



© 2019 Tree by Mark Fields - 1st Place Professional Class
2019 MBS August Exhibit, Photo by Jeng Fonseca.

Chicago Bonsai Club

There are normally no meetings of the Chicago Bonsai Club, a chapter of the Midwest Bonsai Society, in February. Our next regularly scheduled meeting is in March but due to the COVID-19 closures, this meeting has been cancelled at the Garfield Park Conservatory. Hopefully, we will be able to find an alternative space. Please watch for further information in the MBS newsletter.

Please note that our MBS General meeting is virtual on February 1st so Chicago Chapter members can join without the need to drive to the garden.

If you would like further information about or to join the club, please contact: Susan at sukazoo17@gmail.com or call 773-235-9479.

February Meeting Focus – Our First Virtual Meeting

The February meeting scheduled at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, February 1st, will 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 note we have included a Bonsai 101 Watering article in the newsletter. 7:00 PM - General program; The World of Bonsai Tools presented by Victor Zurczak & Linda Camp.

Please join us for our first online meeting.

WANTED: Details of your Over-Wintering Setup

One of the most concerning areas for new bonsai practitioners is how to keep trees alive over our cold winter months. Are you keeping your trees in an unheated garage? Do your trees stay healthy outside all winter? Do you make use of a root cellar or a temperature-controlled greenhouse? Are your trees in a dedicated room in your home with LED grow lights? Do you check your trees daily, or weekly, or hardly at all?

With so many different ways to take care of our trees during the winter months, the Society is planning ahead to next fall, looking to create an overview of what works for our members to keep trees alive and healthy all winter long in the Chicagoland region.

Send an email to midwest.bonsai@yahoo.com including pictures of your setup, with a brief description of key attributes that make it work for you! Temperate and Tropical tree setups are both welcomed. All personal details will be removed, and text edited before publishing, either as part of our newsletter, or as an upcoming meeting topic.

We really hope to help old and new members alike learn something new to help them protect their trees in the winter of 2021-2022.

Membership Request

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

Date _____

Email _____

Please make check payable to: **Midwest Bonsai Society**

Please Check If Renewal

Send to: Midwest Bonsai Society
P.O. Box 1373
Highland Park, Illinois
60035-7373

\$35 Electronic Newsletter **OR** **\$45** Newsletter by Mail

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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Membership Information: To become a member of the Midwest Bonsai Society or renew your current membership, fill out the "Membership Request" form provided on this page of this newsletter, and mail it in with your check. Or to join online, go to: <http://www.midwestbonsai.org/membership/join-renew/> Membership dues keep the Society running and cover costs such as producing our 2 annual shows, inviting guest lecturers to various meetings, and newsletter printing and postage.