

# BADGER NEWS

## A PUBLICATION OF THE BADGER BONSAI SOCIETY

### MEETING - JUNE 11th 2009

6:30pm -8:00pm

Olbrich Gardens

3330 Atwood Ave. Madison

### MEETING AGENDA:

This meeting will be a workshop using purchased Shimpaku Juniper, and or Boxwood. Ron has a few left so check in the President's message for more information.

### President's Message June 2009

Our club show in May, in my opinion was very successful. We had two days of reasonable weather and the crowds seemed larger than I have seen in years past. At the demonstrations there were large groups watching and asking questions. I would like to thank a few members for their help in setting up, manning the show and tear down, Devon, Gary, Greg, Tim, and Bob. Also special thanks to Karl and Bob for presenting demonstrations for the public. As usual the public has a fun time voting for their favorite tree, Devon has the results of that poll on our website. The general interest in bonsai by the public shows that we should really pursue some type of public workshop with the garden to cultivate new members. I would like to move forward and work with the garden personnel to look into getting on their calendar if not this year certainly next year.

For our June meeting we will have a workshop for members to work on either Shimpaku junipers (there is only 1 left the other 5 have been claimed) or boxwoods which many had indicated they were interested in this type of tree. Look at our website [Basdgerbonsai.net](http://Basdgerbonsai.net) to see pictures of the trees that are available, price of either tree is \$80.00. This is a great price as the same boxwood from Brussels Bonsai is listed at \$97 + you would pay a packing and shipping charge usually equal to 20% of the price and you would get the first tree they picked up, not a hand selected from the roughly 125 trees they had on hand.

Very important to those participating in the workshop, Please bring a drop cloth or plastic for your work area to contain the mess somewhat. Also if you need wire, raffia, soil or any tools to work on your tree bring them along as there are NO supplies provided by the club. If you are in the need for any supplies I will have wire on hand and can bring soil if you have the need, just give me a call so that I can bring whatever you may need.

We need to discuss at our June meeting what our plans are for July. We typically have a pot-luck picnic, we need to find a place to hold that picnic and agree on a time and date.

And for our August meeting we have discussed taking a road trip to view the bonsai display at State Fair. I have requested permission from the Milwaukee club that organizes the display and at this moment I am waiting for their response. But if all goes as planned those interested in going would likely meet at some point and carpool to the State Fair grounds. Meet at the Horticulture building and view and critique the trees on display that would have been judged earlier that day. Our club would also provide the “tree-sitters” for the display that evening and possibly earlier in the day for those who could be available to do this. Also many of our members should consider which of their trees they would like to display at State Fair. As a member of a Wisconsin bonsai club you can enter a tree or trees to be judged. There are three sessions of trees displayed and judged at the fair and all you need to do is inform the Milwaukee club of your intention to display a tree and they will do what they can to help you get your tree into the show. Contact me if you are interested and I will get you the details necessary to enter.

See you on June 11<sup>th</sup>.  
Ron



## Newsletter News:

### **FLASH**

Sooner or later in the next few months we will be stopping the mailing of hard copies of this newsletter opting to install the newsletter in the website only. The option will still be there to get a hard copy mailed to you if for some reason you cannot get the website, please let me know so I can make arrangements so that you will continue receiving this monthly, hopefully informative, if not entertaining newsletter.

Thanks  
Greg

Note: I copied this from last month's newsletter, so far I have received input from one member who would still prefer to receive a mailed copy of the newsletter I included this in case there are other members out there who would still want to receive a mailing. Please let me know if you still want one also.

I will also bring some magazines and books from **YOUR** library to the meeting. You can check them out at the meeting. If you have any preferences please let me know and I will bring it along.

Here is a story from a fellow bonsaiist. Got a good laugh because on my nightly watering rounds some of my trees are on a ledge with an 8' drop off into the neighbor's back yard. My own theft protection system!

### **OCTOBER MOONS**

Maybe if I'd just stayed in the house on that cold, clear October night things would have worked out differently maybe I'd still have that old, twisted Oak bonsai, maybe my neighbors wouldn't be shaking their heads and whispering words about the crazy man next door whenever they see me. Maybe I'd still have my growing bed full of trees.

It was a normal night, the moon was full, Halloween was just a few days off, the air was crisp and cool and I decided to wander out back and check on my bonsai. Due to the extended hours I have been working, checking and watering my bonsai after dark had become a ritual. I took a flashlight and grabbed the watering wand, started a small fire in the patio fire pit and made my usual rounds, first to the growing beds and then to the benches

I was halfway down my second bench when I heard a rustling noise behind me, the noise was strange, unlike anything I have ever heard in my backyard before, like dry canvas being scraped against concrete. I whipped my flashlight around to my growing bed where the noise seemed to come from and thought I'd seen something move, but searching further with the beam of the flashlight revealed nothing so I continued watering.

I was almost done with the next tree when I heard the noise again, this time louder and coupled with I can only describe as a wailing half moan, half scream. I swung the beam of the flashlight toward the sound again and searched every shadow for the source of the noise to no avail.

I was a little spooked but wrote it off as imagination and turned halfway back toward my bonsai only to come face to face with a ghostly image standing 7 foot tall and staring at me with the biggest, darkest, soul-piercing eyes I have ever seen.

I immediately took a few involuntary steps backwards only to feel something like a claw grab my back and my neck. I turned quickly and the claw clamped down and I could feel the weight trying to rip my jacket off me.

I spun again; trying to shake the grip of whatever was clawing me and felt a release of weight at the same time, out of the corner of my eye, I caught my prized Oak bonsai sailing towards the patio. Before I could even curse, the Oak arced up in a graceful curve and plopped right dead center into the fire pit, sending up a shower of smoke.

Forgetting all about the creature, realizing that it was my Oak that I backed into and that its branches had somehow caught my jacket, I panicked at the sight of it beginning to catch fire. I ran over, grabbed a protruding branch, which I quickly found to be now scalding hot causing me to drop it back into the fire. I grabbed it again, but this time gave it a quick forceful toss out of the pit and to my dismay, right into my freshly pine needle mulched growing bed.

You'd think I mulched that bed with gasoline soaked rags the way it burst into flames. My neighbors, attracted by my loud cursing, now started shouting to me to get the darned hose before the whole neighborhood catches fire. I ran for the hose that I had left by the benches, right toward that ghostly face still staring at me. I was ready to tear this demon apart to get to my hose, gritted my teeth, pulled back my right hand preparing for a stiff jab, and the demon flapped it's wings, lifted off from the fence it was perched on and flew a slow graceful half circle around my burning grow bed before disappearing into the night. It was a darned owl! A darned owl! It was nothing but a rodent eating, hooting, Common Barn Owl.

Screaming with frustration, I grabbed the hose, quickly unscrewed the wand and ran full speed toward my growing bed. I almost made it; I would have too if not for the small fact that the hose I use on the benches does not quite reach all the way to the beds. I remember my arm being yanked backwards at the same time my feet shot forward. I remember lying flat on my back gasping for air. I remember the sounds of laughter from my neighbors raining over my body, my ears, and my burning trees.

With the smell of burning pine around me, the smoke from the needles itching at my eyes, and the sound of my neighbors jeering me on, I stumbled to the other hose and proceeded to soak the growing bed, killing the flames that were determined to devour everything in their path.

Once the bed was put out and I was standing there surveying the damage in my bathrobe, That I decided for some unknown reason would be perfectly fine to wear out for a few minutes tonight while watering when a fire truck and a police car came screaming up the driveway, alerted no doubt by my neighbors.

I suppose that if I had simply accepted the ticket for having an open fire inside the city limits, the night would have ended up better. Maybe if I hadn't torn the ticket they gave me for having an open fire in the city limits in half. Maybe if I would have cursed a little less.

In my defence, I was upset over the loss of all my growing bed stock and besides who would have guessed a sudden gust of wind would have come out of nowhere just as I bent over to pick up the pieces of the ticket to avoid a littering ticket as well.

The next day, when they released me, I heard one of the officers comment on how strange it gets when there is a full moon. I think I heard his partner say that this was especially true when there are two.

Will H  
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# Ginkgo biloba

by Heather H

**Scientific Name:** Ginkgo biloba

**Common Names:** ginkgo, ginkgo biloba, fossil tree, maidenhair tree, Japanese silver apricot, baiguo, baiguo ye, yin gou, kew tree, yinhsing (yin-hsing), ichou, ginnan

**Cultivars:** 'Aurea' Yellow leaves in summer.

'Autumn Gold' Male cultivar with a broad, symmetrical growth and intense autumn colour.

'Chichi Ichou' desirable cultivar, has smaller leaves and a textured trunk.

'Fastigiata' narrow, pyramid habit.

'Laciniata' deeply divided leaves.

'Pendula' a cultivar with nodding branches.

'Princeton Sentry' Male cultivar with an upright tapered form.

'Variegata' Variegated cultivar with strong white-yellow stripes on the leaves.

**History:** Ginkgo biloba is a living fossil, dating back over 250 million years, the last surviving member of its family. For that matter, the last surviving member of its division. The ginkgo is classified in its own division, the Ginkgophyta, comprising the single class Ginkgoopsida, order Ginkgoales, family Ginkgoaceae. They flourished across the Northern Hemisphere, from the Mediterranean to the Arctic Circle, from North America to China. There were once many species in the genus, but around the Pliocene era, Ginkgo fossils disappeared from the fossil record around the world, and it was thought that this family of plants had gone extinct, out competed by their conifer cousins and the more newly evolved angiosperms (flowering plants, with seeds that are protected by an ovary wall).

The West "rediscovered" the tree in China, Korea and Japan (much to their general amusement... after all, they hadn't "lost" the tree to begin with!), though it was first encountered in Japan by the German botanist Engelbert Kaempfer in Temple gardens in 1690. The trees in Korea and Japan had been brought there from China, naming practices of the species seeming to point to the Kamakura period of Japan or earlier. The genetic uniformity suggests that even these still growing, naturalized in China were planted and preserved over 1000 years ago, rather than naturally occurring populations. Though the Ginkgo has been spread through cultivation all over the world, there is little case, and no findings, for naturally occurring populations that have survived.

**Foliage:** Light to medium green, fan-shaped leaves, borne both on new shoots (alternate and spaced out), and on shorter growth spurs (where they will be clustered at the tips) They resemble the Maidenhair fern, Adiantum, hence one of the common names. They have characteristic parallel veins that radiate out from the leaf blade- two veins enter the leaf blade at the base and fork repeatedly in two (known as dichotomous venation). The leaves are usually 5-10 cm (2-4 inches), but sometimes up to 15 cm (6 inches) long. Leaves of longer shoots will often be lobed, while the leaves occurring on shorter, stubbier growth will be smoother and more rounded.

Leaves change to golden in autumn, but individual trees can be very independent in their turning habits. A single ginkgo forest can include completely golden trees, completely green trees, and mottled specimens showing both colours and others completely bare. Autumn colour is short lived however, as once individual trees start to drop their leaves, all will have fallen in the span of a few days.

**Stems and Trunk:** Bark is pale grey, often appearing slightly reflective in larger, landscape trees. It is very easily bruised and damaged. From leaf axils, growth spurs (also known as short shoots, and spur shoots) will develop on second year growth. These spurs have shorter internodes and slower growth, and the leaves that occur on them will often be unlobed. They are short and knobby, arranged regularly on branches of two years and older. Because of such short internodes, the leaves appear clustered at the tips of the spurs. Flowers and catkins will only occur at the tips of these spurs, not on new growth. Due to the nature of the short shoots and long shoots changing, seemingly at random over any number of years, to the other, Ginkgo seem to have an erratic growth habit, with only a few centimeters of growth occurring over several years and then suddenly growing very swiftly, or vice versa.

**Fruits:** "Fruit" (the sarcotesta) occurs on the female trees, singly or in pairs, and is yellow green to orange brown when ripe, containing a single seed each. The fleshy growth is not a true fruit, rather a simple protective covering. The fruit-like outer covering gives off an unpleasant, downright nasty scent, due to butanoic acid (the chemical that gives rancid butter its unpleasant smell). Bonsai ginkgo rarely fruit, though if this is a concern, seek out male plants, as that will avoid the problem.

**Other Features:** Very old ginkgo can begin to put off aerial roots that form on the underside of branches

and grow downwards, called chichi (meaning nipple or breast) in Japanese, zhong-ru (meaning stalactite) in Chinese. Usually a tree will not begin to produce these growths until they are over a hundred years old, and it can take hundreds of more years before they reach the ground. For some reason, female trees that have produced larger aerial roots frequently stop producing seeds. These rarely occur on bonsai growth from seed or grafted. The most reliable way to have this effect is to do an air-layer on one of the roots already growing. An airlayer directly from one of those roots is more likely to continue to make the aerial roots, as opposed to waiting hundreds of years for them, as ginkgo rarely grow chichi in bonsai cultivation. Good luck, however, finding one of these trees outside of China or Japan, and getting permission, as many of the most ancient are protected by law.

**Hardiness:** Zone 3 in the landscape. Zones 5-8 with winter protection in bonsai cultivation. Take careful notice of roots, and keep them from freezing for prolonged periods. Keep in an insulated garage or shed for the winter, or a cold frame that stays above freezing.

**Light:** Full sun to partial shade. Maximum light for mature trees will help ensure the best autumn colouring, while younger trees will benefit from some protection in the hottest part of the summer during the middle of the day.

**Soil:** Will grow in almost any soil in nature. Use a standard bonsai mix suited to your area.

**Watering:** Water well in growing season. Lessen in winter, keeping roots barely moist, just enough to keep it from drying out completely.

**Fertilizer:** Balanced feed through the growing season, twice a month. No special needs.

**Pests and Diseases:** Largely pest free. Tolerate pollution well, and are often used in city landscaping for that tolerance.

**Repotting:** One to five years, depending on the age and growth rate of the tree. Repot in spring, before new growth begins, and be sure to give extra protection from late frosts. Root prune lightly, as they have a lower tolerance for serious root reduction.

**Pruning and Styling:** It is best to style Ginkgo based on their natural inclinations toward a column, or flame shaped tree. Ginkgo can resent pruning, and as a result, many ginkgo bonsai have a similar look, due to the nature of how they show their dislike. Pruned branches are prone to dieback even further either shortly after being pruned or the following winter. This can result in a heavy trunk with relatively few, slightly upward facing branches. Twigs will grow in clusters from the branches. As the growth and replacement of branches is repeated over the years, it can result in interesting, gnarled areas on the trunk. Fortunately, not *\*all\** shoots will dieback, but predicting which ones will and which ones won't is nearly impossible.

Pruning wounds do not heal over with ginkgo as they do with most other species. Do not make concave cuts, or even cut flush to the trunk. Instead leave short stubs of old branches, and remove them gently a year or so later as they dry out.

Prune back to two or three leaves from new growth, which will leave a little extra leeway for dieback. New branches will grow in the direction of the last leaf on the branch, so keep that in mind when pruning, typically leaving the last leaf pointing out. Remove branches that died over the winter in early spring, as swelling buds will inform you of what has made it through the winter.

**Wiring:** Avoid wiring unless strictly necessary, as the bark is very easily damaged, and will not heal well. Wrap branches in raffia if wiring is required and check the tree regularly to keep the wire from biting in.

**Leaf Reduction:** Ginkgo leaves do not reduce well, so by necessity, bonsai are usually medium sized and larger. Good light and controlled watering combined with being confined to a pot will reduce them slightly, but not significantly. There have been mixed reports on utilizing defoliation techniques.

**Special:** Girdling the trunk of a Ginkgo seedling with wire or bark ringing might be able to stimulate the forming of a chichi-like (aerial root) structure above the girdle.

**Propagation:**

**Cuttings:** This is the best way to ensure the sex of the tree. Soft, or semi-ripe cuttings, about 15 cm long in spring to mid summer. Hardwood cuttings can also be taken from current years growth in winter.

**Grafting:** Often used by nurseries to ensure gender, by grafting male branches onto rootstock. Also used to graft male branches to female trees to increase fertilization. Vegetative propagated Ginkgos seldom have a dominant central leader, as a lateral branch (rooted or grafted) will continue growing in the direction it had when still attached on the parent trunk. Nurseries stimulate the production of vertical shoots by cutting back the trees once growing vigorously.

**Seeds:** No way to control gender. Harvest seeds in autumn, after 'fruits' have dropped from the trees (wear gloves, as the butanoic acid can give some people a rash). Remove pulpy outer layer by putting the fruits in warm water, crushing the coat and removing the seeds by hand (still wearing your gloves, right?), then rinse the seeds a few times in clean water. Floating seeds will not germinate, so discard them. The seeds should be very clean, with no trace of the fruit, or you'll end up with a very stinky storage area. Scarification can help increase germination. Seeds can also be dipped in a bleach mixture (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) for about ten minutes to kill fungus, and then rinsed thoroughly again. Dry gently with a paper towel, then keep them in a mixture of moist (but not soaking) sphagnum moss and sand or perlite in a cool place that will remain above freezing (refrigerator works well) for two months. Germination is between 30-60 days, and seeds will occasionally germinate during stratification, especially if scarred, so time accordingly so germination will coincide with your spring. Stratification is not necessary, but will improve germination. Plant in a mixture of sand and peat and keep at room temperature for 2-3 weeks. To sow outdoors, sow in fall if you have a cold frame that will not go below freezing. Or sow in spring, after threat of frost.

**Airlayering:** In spring.

**Styles and Forms:** Broom, formal and informal upright, clump, forest.

**Other Information and Trivia:**

-The tenacity and survival abilities of Ginkgos are illustrated no where as clearly as in Hiroshima, Japan. Four ginkgo trees were growing less than two kilometers from the atomic bomb explosion, and were some of the few living things in the area to survive the blast. Though charred and damaged at the time, they survived and continued their ponderous growth. The trees are still alive.

-Ginkgo seeds ('nuts') are edible, once the fruit-like outer covering has been removed, and are frequently roasted and eaten. An extract of the leaves is also used to improve memory and circulation in herbal medicines.

-The name, Ginkgo, is actually a mistake. The Japanese characters for the tree, normally pronounced *ginnan* could also be mistakenly pronounced *ginkyo*. When Kaempfer first encountered the tree, he wrote down the incorrect version, and his 'y' was eventually mistaken for a 'g'. As it was published in his *Amoenitates Exoticae* in 1712, the misspelling stuck.

Check this website out it has more funny stories as well as extremely informative bonsai knowledge free for the taking. [www.knowkedgeofbonsai.org](http://www.knowkedgeofbonsai.org)