



# BADGER BONSAI SOCIETY

Promoting and Enjoying the Ancient Art of Bonsai Since 1972

**BADGER NEWS | A PUBLICATION OF THE BADGER BONSAI SOCIETY | Sept. 2009**

**NEXT MEETING: September 10th, 2009 CLUB OFFICERS:**

6:30–8:00 pm

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

3330 Atwood Ave. Madison, WI

**President..... Ron**

**Vice President/**

**Librarian/Newsletter..... Greg**

**Secretary..... Duke**

**Treasurer..... Gary**

**Communications..... Devon**

**Refreshments..... Elaine**

**MEETING AGENDA:** Review two tree's responses to training undertaken 4 months ago.

Bring your own tree to work on during the meeting, get some help and/or tips on design.

BadgerBonsai.net

## September 2009 President's Message

Our next meeting is on Thursday, September 10<sup>th</sup> starting at 6:30 PM.

The focus of the night will be reviewing the progress of the two trees we started air-layers during our May meeting. If my memory serves me correctly Duke's tree is a Eugenia and the demo tree I used was a Japanese maple. Air-layering is a technique often used to start new bonsai and to use unwanted branches or areas of other trees. Hopefully at this point there will be enough roots to separate the starts from the host trees. We will discuss, what are the next steps for the sections that will be cut off, and what care should now be taken with the host tree.

This meeting would also be a good time to bring the trees that you worked on at our June meeting and we can discuss what has occurred since then and what steps should be considered for fall maintenance and future development.

If you did not work on a tree in June bring any tree that you would like to share with the group and get opinions on what you may want to do next.

Remember, September and October are like a mini second "spring" and a certain amount of styling work can be done and there is enough time for the tree to settle and be ready to go into winter dormancy. Trees often have some additional growth during this time as the nights get cooler. Don't forget to fertilize during September and get ready to switch to a 0-10-10 fertilizer in October to help build root strength and energy stores for the winter and next spring.

Those that made the trip to State Fair in August, hopefully enjoyed the display and saw how a judge reviews trees and decides to acknowledge their work with ribbons and how the Best of Show and Award of Merits are awarded. Hopefully in years to come members of Badger Bonsai will display trees and receive a judge's critique which is often helpful in letting you know what others think will improve your tree's appearance.

See you on the 10<sup>th</sup>  
Ron

## Bonsai Pot Fire-Sale! Bring your pocket change.

A former club member is having a bonsai pot fire-sale. \$.50–\$1.00. **That's right, fifty cents to one dollar!** It almost feels like one of those nutty, low-budget commercials. "Crazy Eddie's Pots, Everything must go. You'd be crazy to miss out on this sale. Go to Crazy Eddie's this Thursday at Olbrich Gardens – These prices are insane!"

*But seriously folks... With an overnight soak in some plain old white vinegar, a scrub with a "kitchen scrubbie" and rub down the outside with some plain mineral or baby oil, these things are literally **GOOD AS NEW!** The pottery ranges in size (2-12") and style (glazed, unglazed, frost proof and for tropical use). Some of these pots would be perfect for Mame or Shohin size Bonsai (under 10") or used with accent plants for your larger bonsai. Some are authentic Japanese make and some are hand made neo-American. So search your couch cushions, people. Bring \$.50 get a pot – bring \$5, leave with 5–10 pots! (just leave the lint and potato chips you find – no barter, please).*



See Tim at the next meeting to purchase these inexpensive pots.  
– Devon

## A Highlight from the 2009 Mid-America Bonsai Exhibit

Black Pine Demo | Saturday, 8.15.09 at 2 p.m.

**Q:** How do you make a five-trunk clump from a 40 year old informal upright?

**A:** Very carefully!



**The Artist:** Hiroyoshi Yamaji, Guest Master and Judge 2009 Mid-America Bonsai Exhibit

**The Material:** 30-40 year old black pine

**What Happened:** Mr. Yamaji took an already old and well established black pine and restyled it from an informal upright to a five-trunk clump

**What I Learned:** Never underestimate the merits of early training

This tree, as I'm sure you'll agree from the "before picture" was a good looking, healthy tree. Just waiting for a new home in a bonsai pot and a little TLC. However, according to Hiroyoshi Yamaji, long straight sections "never would've happened in Japan, this tree would've been trained to be a bonsai from the time it was a sapling." As he was describing the poor merits of the tree, I started to understand what he was saying. There is a huge negative space between the 1st and 2nd branches and the 4th and

## Before



## After

By the way, my daughter likes the trunks wrapped and said "oh, I like it. Too bad it's not hot pink."

5th branches have more girth than the 1st and 2nd. Still, at this point in my novice bonsai career, I would have just lived with what I had and never attempted what happened next. And what happened next was nothing short of spectacular. Words almost can't describe what I saw on Saturday the 15th of August at the demo, so I will use bullet points and photos. **Please note:** You CAN try this at home, but this tree was very healthy and this technique should only be attempted on healthy, vigorous trees.

### The Steps:

- Identify the "trunks"
- Take the largest branch cutter you can find and begin separating the branches and "trunks" from the main trunk, making sure there is enough cambium to sustain the life of the tree
- Use wooden v-shaped wedges and a hammer to completely separate the trunks
- Cover every bit of the separated trunk's wounds with wound sealant (Elmer's just won't do in this case)
- Brace the weak spots
- Wrap each trunk with "horse leg-wrap" or raffia
- Wire to shape and finish pre-styling
- Put in a mist house for the next six months and pray your new creation survives the drastic restyling
- Come spring, get the tree into the ground for the next 2 years

While watching the demo, I kept imagining that if Mountain Dew made commercials using bonsai artists instead of skateboarders, this is what it might look like. **BONSAI TO THE EXTREME, DUDE!**

I had no idea something like this was even possible and it just goes to show that trees want to live. Otherwise why would Mr. Yamaji, a master bonsai artist, attempt something so drastic? This demo really was awesome. I can't wait for next year.

– Devon



At our August meeting, at The Wisconsin State Fair, a few of our members met up with Ron where he shared the critiques of the participating trees with us. It was interesting to see what the judges saw in the trees and their ideas on how to improve the quality of the tree. In some cases it was as simple as to change the front of the tree. It was also interesting to see what a tree needed to have in order to be judged as Best of Show. We also met up with some of the members of the Milwaukee Club. As an extra I volunteered to tree sit for Friday morning. It was interesting to talk to the people and answer their questions about Bonsai. Most common were questions on wiring, watering, and how to keep their tree alive indoors. Similar to the questions at our show, just more people. It was also interesting to see the various types of people that were interested in Bonsai, from really young kids to really old kids.

What I found most unusual was the number of individuals of Asian decent who seemed to thumb their noses at the display, I believe I had one Chinese lady, who was from some city in China that had a very large Bonsai garden which she seemed very proud of, showing any interest at all. The wife seemed taken by the Orchid display next door and wants to go to the Mitchell Conservatories in two weeks to see their show, I have got to watch myself because it was orchids that got me out of bonsai 25 years ago while we lived in Florida. Actually I was enthralled by the Dahlias which were next to us also, I am making space for some in my garden for next year. Along with tree sitting came a few free tickets for entrance into the park, The wife also won four free tickets at the Green Co. Fair so we had plenty of tickets for the kids and their girlfriends. Don't think I would do it without the free tickets, with all the food and a few beers it got expensive quick.



Chocolate Covered Bacon On A Stick.  
Mmm, mmm, Good!



Even the CHOCOLATE COVERED BACON ON A STICK which my youngest just had to have. My oldest only wanted to share a GUINNESS on the upper level deck of an Irish Pub. Met him there at night. That was interesting, the freakizoids come out at night, kind of like State Street on steroids. All in all it was a good time and I might be interested to do this next year.

– Greg

## Japanese Black Pine...

Written by Andy Rutledge, of [Bonsai Village.com](http://BonsaiVillage.com).

Japanese black pine is the epitome of bonsai. Few trees can convey the stoic power or the subtle profundity of bonsai to the degree that a black pine can. Black pine is a tree that takes many years to achieve the mature look of a superior specimen bonsai.



For this reason, it is important that those who would choose to grow them be steadfast in their attentive and uncompromising care of the tree. Growing black pine for bonsai carries with it a healthy responsibility to prepare and maintain good material for future generations to work with.

Black pine is a strong tree that responds well to the techniques used in the creation of bonsai. Working with black pine is a balancing act and its growth characteristic is such that it needs ongoing and careful maintenance in order to stay in bonsai trim. Left on its own, a black pine will develop long, leggy branches that emerge in whorls from a leggy trunk. The branches will have lollypops of foliage at the branch tips. As pines are apically dominant (like most trees), the upper branches will get most of the tree's energy, leaving the lower branches weaker in comparison. All of these characteristics run counter to the bonsai aesthetic.

### **BONSAI CULTIVATION NOTES -**

**Soil :** Japanese black pines like a well-drained soil. A good mixture is akadama and pumice mixed 50/50. Younger trees may enjoy more grit and older ones more akadama. Akadama by itself is a good mixture as it drains well. A free-draining soil is essential to preventing root rot that can come from a waterlogged soil. An open mixture also allows oxygen to get to the roots.

**Watering :** Keep black pine evenly moist, but not damp. They like to be a little on the dry side and can endure a bit of a drought. If you have them in a free-draining soil, it will be hard to water too much. When you water, be sure to water thoroughly, two or more times to fully saturate the soil. This ensures that all of the soil gets wet and facilitates an atmosphere exchange in the pot - the air is refreshed with new oxygen. Make sure that your water is of a pH level between 5.5 and 6.5, as pines enjoy this range. They can tolerate other extremes, but thrive in this range.

**Exposure :** Black pines enjoy full sun all day long, but if you live in an area where the daily temps in summer are in excess of 100F, you should probably place them under shade cloth for the hot part of the day. If your trees get full exposure during the summer in hot locations, their color may tend toward yellow-green. If you keep them under shade cloth or in partial shade, their color will be a deeper green.

The heat of summer can bake the roots if the pot gets too hot. One solution is to cover the pot with a cover or sun-block of some sort. This helps to keep the temperature reasonable in the heat.

Pines that have been pruned drastically in the spring, like nursery stock that you have cut back, must be protected from harsh heat for their first summer. If you don't put them under shade cloth, the current year's needles can get sun scald and the tree will be weakened considerably.

**Fertilizing :** Pines don't usually use fertilizer quickly like deciduous trees. They enjoy organics like Hollytone or Bio Gold beginning in late March through September and will do well with an occasional supplement of vitamins and chelated iron.

**Pruning** : Branch pruning can be done in late fall or winter to reduce sap bleeding from the wound. After cutting off the branch, reduce the cut around the edges with a sharp knife or chisel and seal with a putty cut paste. Don't use the viscous kind as it does not react well with the sap. You might consider removing major branches in spring as the large wound will heal faster.

Pines should be reduced slowly, over a period of years. Drastic pruning is stressful and should only be performed on very strong and well-fed trees. Keep recently pruned trees out of temperature extremes and in partial shade for 2 to 4 weeks.

Rough nursery stock that is in good health can be pruned hard in the spring so that you can begin to define the shape. If you do this in early spring, go ahead and root-prune the tree and repot. If you do heavy pruning in late spring, don't repot until next spring and treat the tree with extra care during the growing season.

Shoot trimming is done in the growing season to force ramification. Pruning in the fall can be effective in forcing back buds - but only on strong, well-fed trees.

**Wiring** : Wiring of pines is probably best done in the late winter. It is more risky to wire any other time, as during the growing season, the cambium is full of sap and is literally floating on the xylem and can be easily damaged, killing the branch. There is, however, a school of thought that says that wiring in the growing season is best, as damage to the branch is more easily repaired.

Black pine is limber in comparison to many trees. Even large branches can be wired and trained into different shapes if care is taken. Don't wire a weak or otherwise stressed pine. It may be too weak to live through the inevitable damage of wiring. Don't let a wired pine freeze.

**Repotting** : Depending on where you live, pines can be repotted from December to March. Most information on black pine says to repot young trees every other year and older trees every 3 to 5 years. Some have found, however, that repotting every year can be useful for spurring the tree into more vigorous growth and for keeping tabs on the root zone. Keep in mind that if you do so every year, you cannot remove much of the roots.

Black pine do not generally appreciate too much root removal at repotting. Be conscious of the root feeder channels of the trunk when trimming roots. Don't drastically trim a root that feeds a large lower branch. The root structure will likely mirror the branch structure with large roots emerging under large branches. Also, keep in mind that feeder channels do not always go straight up the trunk as many trees' trunks are twisted.

Each time you repot, take time to arrange the roots carefully. Black pine, like most bonsai, need a good surface root structure as part of the necessary elements of quality and aesthetics. Use bent wire as staples to hold down bowed-up roots. Use chopsticks or stones to raise and separate roots that need to be positioned. In time, they will correct themselves just like a wired branch.

After repotting, place the tree in bright shade or dappled sunlight for a few weeks and protect from temperature extremes and wind. Don't let the new soil dry out completely.

**Pests** : The most problematic pest for black pine is the red spider mite. They usually attack trees that are weak or stressed for some reason, usually in late spring and summer. Get into the habit of checking for them on a weekly basis and observe your trees for signs of weakness. A pine infested with spider mites will have needles that appear speckled upon close inspection. The best way to check for them is to hold a piece of white paper under a branch and shake the branch. Look on the paper for needle-point sized specks that move. Although dangerous, they are easily killed with any miticide and even a strong spray of water can remove them. It can take a couple of treatments to rid a tree of them. Other common pests include aphids and mealy bugs. These are also easily controlled by common pesticides. Some advocate weekly spraying of insecticide for one's entire

collection, but this practice kills the beneficial organisms, too and can hamper your organic fertilizer program. As pests will usually attack only weak or stressed trees, keeping close tabs on them and keeping them well cared for will obviate most insect control. In winter, it can be useful to apply a treatment of lime-sulfur and water, mixed 1:30 and sprayed on the foliage and bark. This keeps fungus from getting a foothold in the damp, cool dormant period.

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