



# BADGER BONSAI SOCIETY

Promoting and Enjoying the Ancient Art of Bonsai Since 1972

Badger News | A Publication of the Badger Bonsai Society | April 2012

## NEXT MEETING DATE: April 5, 2012

6:30–8:00 p.m.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

3330 Atwood Ave. Madison, WI

## MEETING AGENDA:

April will be a good month to review the different styles of bonsai. This will be somewhat of a general overview. The goal will be to understand how bonsai can represent “wild” trees.

## CLUB OFFICERS:

President and Interim Treasurer ..... Matthew  
Vice President ..... Beau  
Librarian ..... Greg  
Newsletter/Website ..... Devon  
Refreshments ..... Elaine  
Past President ..... Tim

## President's Message

By: Matthew

### Konichiwa,

Old man winter went on vacation this year. I hope every one is excited for the upcoming growing season because it seems that it is already well under way. That also means that a keen eye should be kept on your trees. Any deciduous trees that need repotting should be dealt with as or just before the leaf buds swell unless you are expecting spring flowers. Remember that flowers are a significant investment that the trees make and care should be taken not to stress a tree during its reproductive cycle. If you have a spring flowering tree that needs to be repotted, remove any flower buds so they don't rob resources from the roots as they heal and grow. Don't worry; the flowers will be back next year. Similarly, conifers should be repotted while they are still essentially dormant.

For the next two months we are going to focus on classic bonsai styles and presentation. It is not my intention to tell you what bonsai should look like. Bonsai is art; there is no cookie cutter format or wrong way to go about it. My goal is to simply provide inspiration and direction to some of our newer members while reviewing some foundational guidelines for those of us who have been doing this for a while. A great deal of thought has gone into how to simply describe the best way to style a bonsai tree. To attempt to do so in the terms of art or horticulture alone would fail to adequately encompass what bonsai style is.

Only when you consider the two together can you begin to envision the essence of the tree at hand. Applying philosophy to the equation gives that essence direction. Of course, all of this is built on the foundations of art and horticulture while philosophy is derived from experiential wisdom and an understanding that a good question can be better than a good answer. If all of this is clear, you are already a bonsai master and perhaps just need more experience.



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fact these styles are really just names given to different growth patterns observed in trees in nature, humans did not create them. Mother Nature is the best horticulturalist; the more we learn from the masters, the closer we come to becoming one ourselves. The goal of these styles is not to limit how one can train a tree to look, but rather to provide idealized models of growth forms exhibited in nature. Any bonsai that resembles its natural counterpart could be placed into a style category. John Naka said, "The object is not to make the tree look like a bonsai, but to make the bonsai look like a tree." The hallmarks of a good bonsai tree are that it appears old and looks as if it could be seen in a natural setting as a full size tree. This is where an understanding of the tree as a species is important. It is best not to simply impose your will upon the trees you work on. Rather, help the tree to become what it wants to become. Always work with your trees, not against them.

Bonsai "rules", or guidelines, on the other hand, have been defined by people. These have been put in place to establish a common artistic language. They exist to help us. These are guidelines that help to clearly present the trees best form. Reducing chaos and distraction makes a bonsai more appealing. Consider the baby and the centipede; if a

To begin to describe some of the principle foundations of bonsai styling, let me first make a distinction between styles and guidelines. In the context of this article, style refers to the tree as a whole. I consider this more on the side of horticulture. The species of tree often dictates what kind of style is best suited for that particular specimen. When I speak of guidelines, I am referring to the artistic components of the style. These are the rules we follow to refine the tree and accentuate its style. These rules are not arbitrary though. Over thousands of years humans have identified things that are typically interpreted as pleasing to look at and things that are not. For example, babies are generally regarded as cute while centipedes are seen as creepy. Perhaps more relevant is the golden ratio. It appears universally in all forms of art and has even been applied to many natural things including the human face. Studies have shown that those that best represent the golden ratio are generally more attractive. I will spend a little more time on this later. As far as philosophy is concerned, I leave that up to you. My only advice is that you spend some time in nature and ask yourself why a tree looks the way it does.

We as humans love to categorize things; it's in our nature. Trees are no exception. When we look around in the natural environment, we can see examples of all of what we call "bonsai styles". In







baby has a cute face but the legs of a centipede, it is not cute. For an image, 3-dimensional or otherwise, to convey an appealing appearance, it needs to be consistent. Again, these are principles derived from natural interpretation.

There are many books that lay out styles and styling guidelines. I strongly recommend spending some time paging through some bonsai literature. Learn what defines the styles and try to understand how the rules make them more comprehensive. We will discuss some of these specifically during our upcoming meetings. Once again, this is a website that I really like because of the way it explains bonsai rules from the artistic viewpoint. Check it out. <http://andyrutledge.com/book/index.html>

This is an overview of what I believe to be the foundational concepts that bonsai style is derived

from. Once again, you are the ultimate judge of your bonsai. If your tree is artistically appealing to you, it is well done. On the other hand, a fine tree could be made in the absence of art if the technical rules are followed, but it may lack character and/or any kind of emotional response. During our upcoming meeting we will look at some techniques used to develop different styles of bonsai and some general tips that can help a young tree look old.

I hope to see you all on April 5.

-Matthew



# Bonsai Announcements



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

Midwest Bonsai Society

Spring Bonsai Show & Sale

May 19-20

**The Midwest Bonsai Society Spring Bonsai Show & Sale is from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 19-20.**

Visit [www.midwestbonsai.org](http://www.midwestbonsai.org) for more information.

Admission to the Chicago Botanic Garden is free.

Select event fees apply. Parking is \$20 per car; free for

Garden members. For information about Garden

programs and events, call (847) 835-5440, or visit

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

## JOSHUA ROTH NEW TALENT CONTEST

**Bonsai enthusiasts with fewer than 10 year's experience can apply for participation in the 11th annual Joshua Roth New Talent Competition in Denver, CO.**

Visions of the American West, sponsored by ABS and BCI, will be held in Denver from June 21-24, 2012. Information about the contest is available online at [absbonsai.org](http://absbonsai.org) or they can contact me directly at [natureetours@gmail.com](mailto:natureetours@gmail.com) Information about the general Denver convention is available at: [bonsai2012.org](http://bonsai2012.org)

## Vendor News

**Ancient Arts Bonsai now accepting major credit cards for purchases. Call or email before a meeting if there are certain plants or products you may need.**

**Ancient Arts Bonsai**

Ron F

email: [aabonsai@charter.net](mailto:aabonsai@charter.net)

phone: 262.490.8733



## Four Ways to Connect:

**E-mail:** [info.badgerbonsai.net](mailto:info.badgerbonsai.net)

**Web site:** [badgerbonsai.net](http://badgerbonsai.net)

**Twitter:** [twitter.com/BadgerBonsai](https://twitter.com/BadgerBonsai)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/BadgerBonsai](https://facebook.com/BadgerBonsai)



**Facebook**

**Twitter**

**Web/RSS**

**E-mail**





# Badger Bonsai

**Annual Show**

**May 19 - 20, 2012**

**Sat - Sun 9 am - 4 pm**

**FREE**

**FREE**



**Daily Demonstration**

at  
**2 pm**

**Olbrich Gardens**

**3330 Atwood Ave.**

**Madison WI**

For more information please visit [www.BadgerBonsai.net](http://www.BadgerBonsai.net) or email [info@BadgerBonsai.net](mailto:info@BadgerBonsai.net)

Own a Bonsai Tree of your own

Work with members of the Badger Bonsai Society, to create a bonsai of your own.

Materials provided:

- A tree suitable for bonsai design
- Bonsai soil and pot
- Wire necessary to shape tree
- Care guidelines for your new tree
- 2012 Badger Bonsai Society Membership to build and expand your bonsai experience

WHEN: May 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
11:00AM-2:00PM

WHERE: Olbrich Gardens  
3330 Atwood Ave.  
Madison, WI



Sessions during the Annual Badger Bonsai Society Show at Olbrich Gardens

Two workshop sessions available for 20 individuals at each session, spots are limited  
So sign up soon as sessions are filled on a first registered first reserved basis.

COST: \$65.00 Prepayment must be made to reserve your space in the workshop of your choice\*

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

Session you would like to participate in May 19<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ May 20<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

Send this portion of the form with payment by March 31, 2012 to:

Badger Bonsai Workshop  
address removed  
address removed

\* all reservations are final and no cash refunds offered, if workshops are full your check will be  
retuned by April 20<sup>th</sup> or sooner.

\*\*picture of tree is a representation of species that you will receive only, shapes will vary