



# BADGER BONSAI SOCIETY

Promoting and Enjoying the Ancient Art of Bonsai Since 1972

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

## NEXT MEETING DATE: May 10, 2012

6:30–8:00 p.m.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

3330 Atwood Ave. Madison, WI

## MEETING AGENDA:

In preparation for the annual show, we will examine Bonsai judging and consider what makes a tree great. This will build off of the April's lecture on the styles and provide insight on how to refine a tree once it begins to take form.

## 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

### Greetings everyone,

May is here, believe it or not. It seems that the 80-degree weather in March was not necessarily a sign of things to come. I assume I am not alone in playing the bonsai shuffle most of this last month. I am referring to my tropical trees here; inside, outside, then back inside, only to go outside the next morning. I can kind of understand why not everyone gets excited about tropical trees.

Anyway, we have a show to put on this month. I hope we were able to get a lot of posters up. We have more copies if anyone would like to post some more. We will also be advertising in the Isthmus this year. It will be interesting to see some the regular show-attending trees this year. In general, a lot of the native plants around here are a couple weeks further into their seasonal growth than normal for this time.



Attendees of the 2010 BBS Annual Show

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The topic for this month's meeting is displaying and judging bonsai. My goal was to present the basics of bonsai style last month and follow this month with a lecture/discussion on the final touches and the things a judge might look for in a good bonsai specimen. Displaying and judg-

ing bonsai brings additional elements into the display as well. Stands, accent plants, and name cards are all part of a complete display. I've asked Ron F to share from his knowledge and experience. I will be nearing the end of finals week.

Just a reminder, we have a couple of workshops coming up in June and August during or regular meeting time. I've talked to Olbrich's rental coordinator and we will be allowed to use the same room from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. for no charge if we are cleaned up and out by 9. I think it would be appropriate to plan a nursery trip within the next month so every one has something to work on.

Don't forget, now is a good time to do pre-show trimming and cleaning. I hope to see everyone at the upcoming meeting.

-Matthew

The Following is from a newsletter I receive from Midwest Bonsai Society. I felt the article was great and would be inspirational to some. Enjoy

-Devon

 COLIN LEWIS *Bonsai Art*  
RAMBLINGS OF A BONSAI HERMIT

## Bonsai Obesity

Midwest Bonsai Society  
midwest.bonsai@yahoo.com

Those of us who have been growing bonsai for a few decades will have noticed a trend towards ever thicker and shorter trunks. In Japan many development nurseries have had to shorten and re-design their stock in order to appeal to current tastes.

There's nothing wrong with heavy, powerful trunks, mind you, but I confess that I do mourn

the passing of grace and elegance as familiar elements in bonsai design. This coincides with the decline of fine deciduous specimens being produced. Perhaps the two are linked: there is an inherent elegance in the branch structure of a deciduous masterpiece, and failure to consider this when planning and pruning leads to ugliness.



**Compare these two sketches, both from great bonsai visionaries: on the left by John Naka, 1980 and on the right, from Sandro Segneri, 2010.**

About a year ago (time flies) I was at an annual event in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with a great group of enthusiastic people who had mounted a darn good exhibition which I was to judge. I was instantly drawn to one tree - this lonely larch, the last tree remaining where a mighty forest once stood. Its simple elegance was most striking. I wanted so much to award this tree the 'Best in Show', but I knew my response to it was emotional, not objective in conventional bonsai terms. I agonized for most of the day but in the end the award went to a very good taxus. This was not after I had groveled to Dean Bull, the creator of this wonderful image, and explained myself.



Although, come to think of it, should the best tree be the one that satisfies the generally accepted bonsai criteria or the one that stops you in your tracks? The one that gives you the shivers, the one that makes you 'feel' you are with the tree, whatever its style? If bonsai is an art, shouldn't creativity and originality carry more weight than convention? But I digress... I'll leave you to ponder that.

### Back to the subject of elegance...

You've seen those short, fat, curly shimpaku that are all the rage, all between four and eight inches high, with lots of deadwood. But you don't see many bigger ones, right? At least, not on this side of the ocean. For decades people have been propagating shimpaku for bonsai, both commercially and as a hobby, but they all seem to have been in a bit of a rush to achieve the desired size. An eighteen inch tall tree with a trunk an inch thick at best, was okay back then.

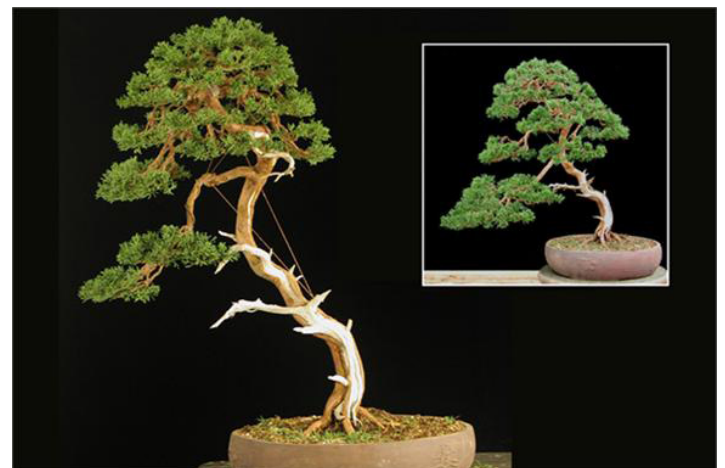
But shimpaku are slow to thicken at the best of times so we now have a legacy of trees whose bulk of foliage is far too great for the bulk of their trunks. On older specimens the trunks are typically endowed with fluid live veins and natural (or old) sharis, many of which would be sacrificed if the trunk was shortened or even if the upper branches were removed. So what is the answer? Elegance! The trunks are the major feature of such trees so their visual impact should be maximized. Rather than settle for a short fat trunk, the lower branches can be jinned and the upper foliage retained and

reduced in proportion to the bulk of the trunk.

Here are a couple of examples, both shimpakus. The first was once an established bonsai but had suffered some chemical damage whilst in Roy Nagatoshi's nursery in California, causing all the existing jins and sharis. The second was really little more than unprepared bonsai material with a sinuous trunk but little else in the way of character or appeal. The treatment was the same and the results an improvement in both cases.



**Although it's lost about fifty percent of its foliage, the general visual energy of the tree remains. The reduced foliage bulk emphasizes the strength of the trunk and nebari.**



**Ironically, having lost at least seventy percent of its foliage bulk, this tree now has to grow a little: the lower right hand branch needs to extend a tad, and it needs some foliage grown into the area just above the upper left hand jin. And a new pot, of course!**

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**WITH COLIN LEWIS**  
 Email [HoYoku@earthlink.net](mailto:HoYoku@earthlink.net) for more information.

# 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)