



# BADGER BONSAI SOCIETY

Promoting and Enjoying the Ancient Art of Bonsai Since 1972

Badger News | A Publication of the Badger Bonsai Society | September 2016

## NEXT MEETING:

September 8 | 6:30-8 p.m.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens  
3330 Atwood Ave., Madison, WI

## MEETING AGENDA:

Displaying bonsai outside/Simple bench construction

## CLUB OFFICERS:

President ..... Karl

Vice President ..... Brian

Treasurer ..... Gary

Librarian/Communications ..... Devon

Refreshments ..... Elaine



## September 8 meeting:

Our September 8 meeting will feature a talk on displaying bonsai in your yard by Devon. To fully appreciate bonsai they must be elevated.

A major mistake by beginners is to place their newly acquired bonsai directly on the deck, where it can be seen only from the top. So come hear Devon's thoughts constructing simple display benches in your yard.

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## Good Web Sites

Earlier this year we had a program about favorite sites on the internet for bonsai. I want to put a plug in for Wayne Schoech, former editor of Bonsai Today magazine, and now proprietor at [stonelantern.com](http://stonelantern.com). His Stone Lantern Newsletter

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has lots of advertising (he is in business, after all). But, he also always has an image, or two, of outstanding bonsai. You can skip the ads if you like and go right to the pictures. It always makes my day better to look at outstanding bonsai. Here are a couple of his recent photos:



On the top is a bougainvillea belonging to Salvatore Liporace. On the bottom is an azalea photographed in Japan on the 2014 Bill Valavanis tour. (The owner of the azalea was not specified). I especially like the rustic pot on the bottom. Now, didn't this make your day better?



## Coprosma 'tequila sunrise'

Being the cheapskate that I am, I am always on the lookout for a good deal. I was at Milaegers Nursery in Racine a week ago, and they had 75% off sale on a selection of indoor tropical plants. It was my first time at this particular nursery, and it was BIG. I think they said they had 90 greenhouses on the premise. Anyway, they had a plant – Coprosma 'tequila sunrise' - that I had never heard of, let alone seen. And, obviously, I had never seen it used as a bonsai. It had spectacular foliage, four-inch pot, and a non-woody 'trunk' perhaps pencil-sized. And the best part? One dollar – plus tax. I splurged and bought two. I'll bring one to the September meeting for you to see. My hope is that they will make decent indoor bonsai. After arriving home, an internet search revealed I may be too



optimistic about overwintering survival. But, we'll see. Here is what the Monrovia web site had to say about the plant:

USDA Hardiness Zone: 9 - 10 (definitely indoors for winter – ed.)



### Plant Description:

An exceptional shrub with foliage like colorful gemstones! New growth emerges emerald green edged in gold, gradually marbled with orange and gold hues. Color intensifies in winter to brilliant orange and red. Thrives in mild climates. A great container or garden accent. Stunning in mass plantings.

### History:

Across the South Pacific in Australia, New Zealand, and Borneo are about 60 species of this shiny leaf shrub. The genus was classified by the German, Johann Reinhold Forster in the late 18th century. Some species of *Coprosma* carry an unusual “catty” odor which led Forster to derive this genus name from the Greek for a fetid smell. One of the most famous collectors of *Coprosma* species was I. Bauer, who traveled New Zealand in 1804-1805.



### Fertilizing

CW – conventional wisdom – says you should switch to a low nitrogen, or nitrogen absent, fertilizer beginning in September. Using 0,10,10 or 0,20,20 is what has been CW fall fertilizer. The thinking behind this is that by eliminating the nitrogen the plant won't put out any new growth, while the phosphorus and potassium are beneficial for winter conditions.

More recently I heard that one should continue using nitrogen containing fertilizer right up to freeze up. (Did this come from Peter Tea, via Ron F???) Sorry I cannot remember the source.)

Like so many things in bonsai, there are differences in opinions. If you have found something that works, keep doing it.

### Tropical Bonsai

We are approaching that time of year when night time temperatures are very important to your tropical bonsai. For a while you will be doing the 'bonsai two-step', which has nothing to do with line dancing.

Most tropical plants can't tolerate temperatures much below fifty degrees Fahrenheit. So, what does a bonsai grower do when the temperatures are going to be chilly at night? If the temperature is only going to be slightly below 50 F, put them on the ground and cover them with a tarp. Be sure to weigh-down the tarp at the edges. You don't want to awaken the next morning to find the tarp blew off at 11 p.m. The heat from the ground will keep your trees warm, and the tarp will minimize heat loss to the air. If the temperature is going to be colder still (I use about 45 F), then the trees have to be brought inside. I usually use the garage, but I have used my bomb shelter, and my van (less safe, but more convenient). Now, if you only have a few trees, this is not such a big deal. But, if you have dozens ...

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When you are finally going to bring the trees into your home for good, try to be as diligent as possible to not introduce mites, aphids, scale, etc. into your home. If you are using a pesticide, be sure to use it outside and follow all precautions on the label. Remember, your objective is to kill the bugs – not the hobbyist. If I am going to use a pesticide, I try to do it twice several days apart, and then wash the plants a few days later with a hose before bringing indoors.

## Pine Scale

Speaking of insects, my mugo pines have had more scale this year than in the past.

Most scale manifests itself as a reddish-brown scab on the leaves or branches. These are typically the size of a grain of rice, or couscous. The scale on mugos, however, is white. Here is a description from the University of Missouri web site:



Pine needle scale, *Chionaspis pinifoliae*, is a common insect pest of pines in Missouri. It is most frequently found on Mugo, Scotch (Scots), and Ponderosa pine but will also infest Austrian, red, or white pine and most spruces. Light infestations often go unnoticed and cause little damage. As the population increases, needles become covered with the white scale insects, which suck juices from the needles. A heavy infestation can cause whole branches to die, or in severe cases, kill the plants.

### Symptoms and Diagnosis

The scales are whitish and only 1/10 of an inch long with a yellow spot at one end. As numbers increase, the whole needle may be covered with scale. When pried off, the scales are hollow, and

depending on the time of year, they may contain eggs or feeding insects.

### Life Cycle

Reddish-colored eggs overwinter beneath the female scales. In May to June, young, called nymphs hatch and migrate to new locations by crawling or being blown by the wind. The nymphs settle, begin feeding, and produce a waxy, scale covering. During late July and early August, mating takes place, and eggs are laid under the scale for next year's generation. (In some locations, a second generation may occur in early fall.)

### Integrated Pest Management Strategies

**1. Prune and maintain vigor.** Mild infestations caught early can be controlled by pruning out infested branches. Water and fertilize plant to maintain plant vigor. Use of chemical pesticides will adversely affect populations of beneficial insects that help to control the pest.

**2. Properly timed dormant oil spray.** A very effective control is to use a dormant oil spray in late March or early April, before new growth begins. The oil coats the scales, preventing oxygen intake so the insects suffocate. Dormant oil sprays are nontoxic to humans, birds, and pets, but must be applied at the right time to be effective and prevent damage to the plant.

**3. Properly timed insecticidal sprays.** Pine needle scales are very resistant to pesticides when they are protected by their scales. However, they are very vulnerable when they are in the crawler state. In St. Louis, this is around the beginning of May. Examine infested plants with a magnifying glass for the crawlers. At the presence of crawlers, spray with an insecticidal soap, a summer oil spray, acephate (Orthene) or Neem oil. A fall application may also be made around the middle of August if a fall brood of crawlers is evident."

I use a toothbrush and rubbing alcohol. Effective, but very time consuming.



# Simple Bonsai Bench Examples

In a perfect world, bonsai should be displayed so that the center of the tree is roughly at eye level. That is not always possible or practical. There also needs to be enough surface area so the trees have room to spread out and not be too close together. They should also be placed outdoors in such a way that they will get proper sunlight for the specific species on display. If you have many varieties of bonsai, you may consider having multiple display locations throughout the yard to provide appropriate sunlight.

September's meeting will have a presentation on building basic bonsai benches. Using simple and inexpensive materials available at any home center, you can build a sturdy display area for your trees that can withstand our Wisconsin winter.

