



# BADGER BONSAI SOCIETY

Promoting and Enjoying the Ancient Art of Bonsai Since 1972

Badger News | A Publication of the Badger Bonsai Society | June 2017

## NEXT MEETING:

June 8 | 6:30

Olbrich Botanical Gardens  
3330 Atwood Ave., Madison, WI

## MEETING AGENDA:

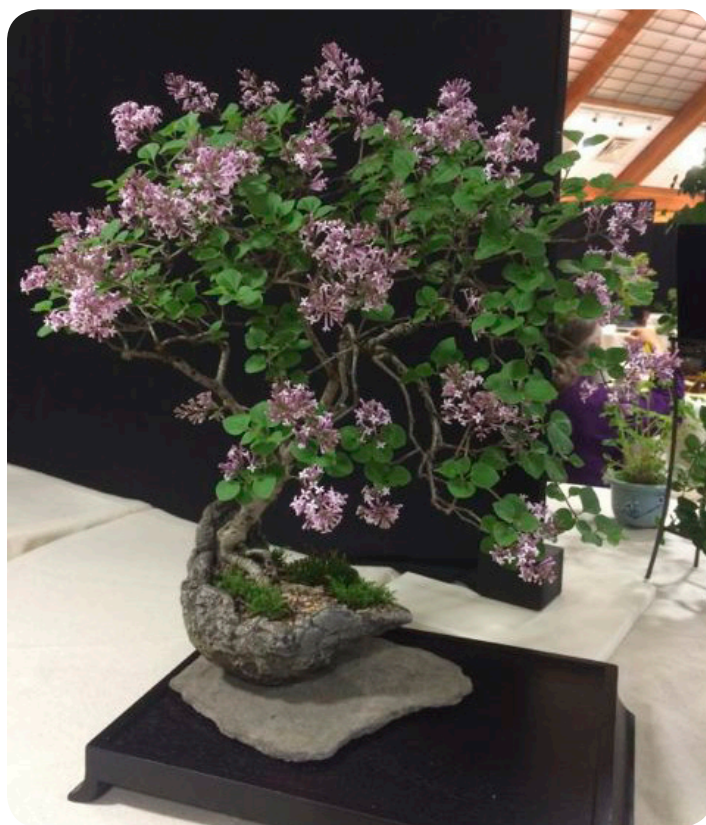
*Ficus nerifolia* - willow-leaf fig workshop.

## CLUB OFFICERS:

President ..... Karl  
Vice President ..... Mary  
Treasurer ..... Gary  
Communications ..... Devon  
Librarian ..... Derek  
Refreshments ..... Elaine

## President's Message

What a show!!! I say this every year, but I don't know how it could have gotten any better. Thank you to everyone who made this show such a success. Mary, show chairman, made sure everything got done that needed to get done; Gary and Duke directed the set-up and tear-down volunteers (we went from an empty room to everything fully draped and assembled, ready for the placement of the trees in one hour; and similarly for tear-down – one hour after the show ended everything was packed up, tables and chairs put away, and the floor swept.) – working to accomplish this were Mary, John, Molly, Roger, Barbara, Derek, Will, Bill; all four demonstrations played to standing-room only audiences, thanks to Mary, Tim, and Devon; Gene and Linda manned the front table nearly continuously with help from Bill, Will, Devon,



Barbara, Mary, Melba; Orion created the promotional flier; Melba gets public ambassador award – she spoke and interacted with more people than anyone, and brought home-made cookies and fruit salad so our volunteers didn't go hungry; all the members who brought trees – Brendan, Gene and Linda, Mary, Orion, Devon, John, Melba, Will, Gary, Barbara, and Derek.

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As an added bonus Matthew, our former BBS president, stopped by. Matthew donated several gallon-bags of his private recipe bonsai soil. His living arrangements have made it hard to keep his bonsai and orchids looking good, but we

hope he can display some of his great trees in the future. My sincere apologies if I've missed anyone's contributions!

One improvement might be to have someone at the front table with a clicker to monitor head count. We have a rough idea of attendance from the vote-for-your-favorite-tree ballots. But, so many people leave without casting a vote 'because it's too hard' to pick just one. My guess is that show attendance exceeded one thousand visitors.

Lastly, and to no one's surprise, the public voted Mary's lilac best of show. Tying for second place were Orion's tall schefflera and John's water/rock composition. John might have garnered a few more votes, but his 'koi' preferred hiding behind the rock and out of the public eye. One of our club pranksters, who shall remain unnamed, suggested that we swap the tiny goldfish with one about ten times larger after the show ended Saturday night. "Whoa, John! What have you been feeding that fish?!"





## June 8 Meeting:

I have secured 14 ficus nerifolia - willow-leaf fig - for our June meeting. Eleven are about thumb-sized in diameter; they all have excellent nebari. Three are smaller - about marker-size diameters, also with good nebari. The nursery has been cutting these back for several years just so they didn't take up so much space on the benches. I'm thinking the best way to style these is to air-layer

the top, or just cut the top off. The pruning was done without the intention of making them into bonsai. The large trees will sell for \$12.50 and the small ones for \$6.50. So, bring your tools, plastic to cover your workspace, turntable, etc. Bring a few pots and soil if you plan on potting your tree. If you don't want to do one of these ficus, BYO of whatever you wish.



## Club Officers

Mary has offered to serve as vice-president, and Derek will assume the librarian role. I heartily endorse both candidates, and in keeping with our by-laws we will put this up for a vote at the June meeting. Thank you both!

## April Seedlings

By now your seedlings from our April meeting should be leafed out. I think the purple beech and the green beech will make very nice bonsai in the years ahead. Remember that beech only get one set of leaves per year, so don't completely defoliate your tree. Treat them more like you would a conifer. The amur maple look nice, and offer a good alternative to trident maple. Lastly, the red-leaf Japanese maples, acer palmatum atropurpureum, are just gorgeous. As I said at the meeting these were the most expensive of the four tree types we ordered, and they were on the disappointing small size, but wow, when the buds started to open and the red leaves unfolded like red napkins, they were beautiful! I think all the trees that I ended up with have made it, except for perhaps eight. These were largely the dregs that were rejected by everyone else, and they were the runts of the litter – about spaghetti sized in diameter and only a few inches tall. Mary offered space in her yard for some of the trees, and she and I filled her available space. So we should have some larger trees at a future date. I hope that everyone has had a positive experience with their trees.

## Repressed growth

My office partner at MATC recently purchased some forested land in the Baraboo Hills. He contracted with a logger to log the acreage. The logger removed the trees that had economic value, and left a few mature trees to reseed the property and also left sugar maples that were too small in diameter to be worth harvesting. I would have thought that now that these trees are receiving much more sunlight, they would quickly increase in size. But, no – the state forester helping to manage this forest has ordered that these maples be cut and replaced by maple seedlings. This is because these maple trees are 'repressed' and their rate of growth will be very minimal, even

though they now receive much more light. Here is what is happening (I think). These maples, while small in diameter, are old age. Consider an elderly person in a nursing home. No matter how nutritious their food intake is, and no matter how much they exercise, they will never again look like Arnold Schwarzenegger. Their old cells don't respond like they would have in their younger days. So I believe that is what is happening with the maples. Anyone else have any insight into this? When the trees are cut, it will be interesting to count their growth rings.

## Haiku

A haiku is a special type of poem consisting of seventeen syllables, arranged with 5 syllables in the first line, 7 in the second, and 5 in the third. Usually, the lines don't rhyme, and usually the poem deals with some aspect of nature.

Here is a haiku of Basho Matsuo, the first great poet of haiku in the 1600s:

*An old silent pond...  
A frog jumps into the pond,  
splash! Silence again.*

If you send me some of your haiku creations, we'll publish them in the bonsai newsletter.





## Growing in the Ground

It is no secret that trees growing in the ground grow much faster than in a bonsai pot. If you have a tree that is not fat enough to be made into bonsai, consider planting it in the ground. Most of the large bonsai trees in Japan have been started this way. Tim and Denise have recently built a new house and Tim has been planting lots of trees on the property. Tim offered the following adage about planting trees in the ground that I just love. “The first year they sleep. The second year they creep. The third year they streak.” Translated – Don’t expect too much growth the first two years. But the third year, they take off.

So if you have space available on your property, and you don’t have a problem with rabbits, deer, rodents, etc. consider planting some young stock in the ground. You’ll be glad you did.

Here are two photographs of Japanese Maple ‘Bloodgood’ that I bought almost 30 years ago. One was planted in the ground, and the other left in its nursery pot (with occasional root pruning). The differences are phenomenal. The tree in the ground is about 10 inches in diameter; the potted tree perhaps 2 inches at best.



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## Watering 101:

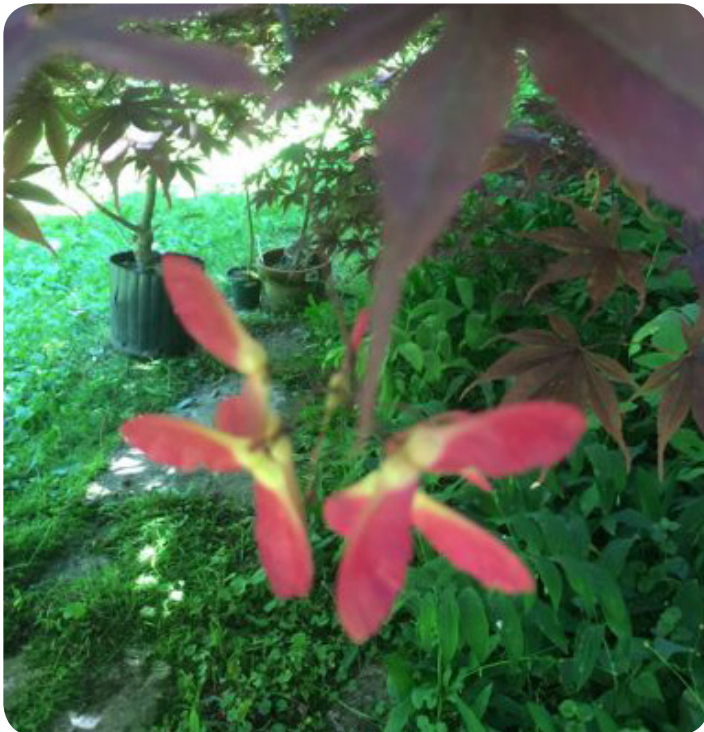
Proper watering is essential for the health and survival of your bonsai. Poor watering practice has probably caused more bonsai to die than all the other problems combined, especially for the beginner. Most trees tolerate a little bit of drought much better than being constantly too wet. But,

it is the Goldilocks principle: not too dry, not too wet, but just right. Beginners often ask, “how often should I water?” and unfortunately, it is hard to give a good answer for it depends on so many variables – time of year, is the tree active or dormant, temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, sunny or overcast, tree species, etc. etc. One good strategy is to take a wooden chopstick,

or skewer, and insert it into the soil and leave it there. Tomorrow, pull the stick out. If it is damp, replace it and wait until tomorrow and check again. If it is dry, water. When you water, add enough water to complete saturate the soil. As it drains out the bottom, it will draw air into the soil from above. This air exchange is necessary for healthy roots. If the water runs into the soil very slowly, it is a sign that the roots have filled the available space, or the soil structure has broken down. The tree should be repotted at the next appropriate time.

## Seeds

Any seeds that ripen in the spring can be planted immediately. Seeds that ripen in the fall almost always require stratification. Here is a picture of the seeds from my Bloodgood. Not only is the foliage beautiful, and the form of the tree graceful and delicate, the seeds are equally gorgeous. Seeds, however, will not produce a tree identical to the tree they are from because they arise from sexual reproduction - just as children never look exactly like their parents. If you want an exact copy of the tree, you have to reproduce it asexually via grafting, or air layering, or cuttings.



## July 22 Picnic

Thank you to Roger and Julie for offering to host this year's July picnic.

### Here are the details:

**What:** BBS Annual Potluck Picnic  
**When:** July 22 starting around 11:00  
**Where:** Rodger & Julie's

**Provided:** Sloppy Joe and Potato Salad  
**Bring:** A chair, your favorite beverage and a dish to pass

Contact Roger with any questions: .....

As in years past, we'll include a white elephant sale. So if you have stuff you want to sell, trade, swap, or just give it away, bring it along. Be sure to tag your items, or segregate them, so we know what belongs to who.