



BADGER BONSAI NEWS

June 2023

President's Message

By Ron Fortmann

First, I want to thank all of our members who helped or presented trees at our annual exhibit on May 20 and 21. You made this year's show a great success. For more on the show, see Another Successful Bonsai Show on Pg 2.

The June meeting is another extended meeting, lasting an additional hour of bonsai time. To maximize our time to work on trees there will be no Show & Tell this month. But we as a group must be out of the building by 9:00PM NO EXCEPTIONS.

The focus of this month's meeting will be on the things that you should be doing with your trees at this time of year. One of those tasks is to do a post flush pruning on our deciduous trees. So if you have a tree that you think needs pruning and are not sure of what to do, bring it in for some advice and guidance on how to proceed.

You could also bring in tropicals that need to be pruned now as it is a good time to build more ramification, change or refine the current style. So once again bring in your tree and appropriate tools to work on the tree (shears; concave cutters; wire if plan on moving branches). Remember, what you bring in you take home. All litter and debris is to be taken home and disposed of, it cannot be left at Olbrich.

See you at the meeting.



UPCOMING EVENTS

BBS June Meeting

Thursday, June 8, 6:30–9:00 pm
Olbrich Botanical Gardens, 3330 Atwood Ave., Madison

Agenda:

- Deciduous tree summer pruning—bring your trees for advice and guidance.
- Water testing. Bring your water samples!

Another Successful Bonsai Show...

and we have all of you who helped to thank for this. Attendance at our Annual Bonsai Show on May 20 and 21 was almost 2,300 people. That is simply incredible - we thought the construction would be a problem but were happy to be wrong about that! Some who attended said that they look forward to our show every year. Almost everyone was happy to vote for their favorite tree. Kids especially seem to like little trees and having their very own vote.

Special thanks to everyone who helped with setup and take down and/or was there during the show at

the front table or wandering around answering questions. Special thanks to Paolo for documenting the show with beautiful photos of each tree exhibited. By the way, Colin is our new BBS PR director due to his skillful ability to make everyone who walked into the exhibit really happy to be there. All four demonstrations by Tim, Ron, Zach and myself were well attended with many good questions and four BBS membership winners.

Thanks also to everyone who brought their trees to exhibit. There were 65 trees with a remarkable variety of species, ages, styles and sizes. Your displays and accents really added a lot. This wouldn't be a show at all without all these great bonsai for everyone to appreciate.

Well done, everyone - Mary

Top Ten Trees!

By Lisa

With a total of 1,948 votes overall and an estimated 15% of attendees not voting, we had approximately 2,240 people turning out to see our trees at this year's BBS Annual Show on May 21 and 22 at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. We consider that a huge success!

The general public by and large know little to nothing about the skill and care that goes into growing bonsai. So, when a particular tree that's not one of ours gets a lot of votes, we don't take it too personally. We know our bonsai friends will give our tree proper recognition for its greatness.

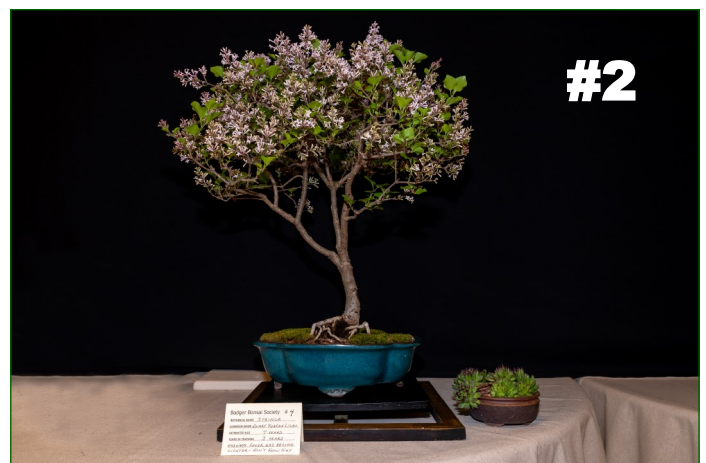
People have their own subjective reasons for choosing their favorite. Whether the vote is because of the animal figures that are part of the display, it was the littlest tree, the tree reminded them of the movie Karate Kid, or because the tree is a miniature version of the lilac at home, all votes are valid and appreciated.

All 65 trees were loved by at least one voter, and some were loved by many. Here are the top ten trees chosen by the public at the 2023 Badger Bonsai Society Annual Show.

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Botanical: Acer Palmatum; Common: Japanese Maple
Est. age: 8 years; Years in training: 4
Style: Forest ; Artist: Jennifer



Botanical: Syringa; Common: Dwarf Korean Lilac
Est. age: 7 years; Years in training: 3
Style: Informal Upright ; Artist: Mary

Top Ten Trees continued



Botanical: *Malus domestica*
Common: Wild Apple
Est. age: 35 years; Years in training: 7
Style: Informal Upright ; Artist: Zach



Botanical: *Juniperus chinensis*
Common: "Shimpaku" Juniper
Est. age: Unknown; Years in training: <1
Style: Informal Upright ; Artist: Alex



Botanical: *Ginkgo biloba*
Common: Ginko
Est. age: 55; Years in training: 13
Style: Flame; Artist: Ron



Botanical: *Chamaecyparis obtusa*
Common: Hinoki cypress
Est. age: 7 years; Years in training: 1
Style: Informal Upright ; Artist: Skyler



Botanical: *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*
Common: Dawn Redwood
Est. age: 6 years; Years in training: 4
Style: Informal Upright ; Artist: Jennifer



Botanical: *Acer palmatum*
Common: Japanese maple "Orangeola"
Est. age: 5 years; Years in training: 2
Style: Informal Upright ; Artist: Jennifer



Botanical: *Psedocydonia sinensis*
Common: Chinese quince
Est. age: 33 years; Years in training: 17
Style: Informal Upright; Ron



Botanical: *Ginkgo biloba*
Common: Ginko "Spring Grove"
Est. age: Unknown; Years in training: 1
Style: Broom; Mary

Want to see
more show
trees?

Click [here](#) to see photos of all trees in the show.

We'll share a ranking of all votes later this month.

Bonsai Fundamentals Class

By Ron Fortmann

On May 13 we completed our last Bonsai Fundamentals class. The five-part series began last fall.

In our last session, students brought the tree they styled in the previous class and we reviewed its health and next steps as a group. Then we took a field trip to a local garden center where we looked at available trees and reviewed what one should be looking for before making a purchase of potential future bonsai material.

Students received a certificate of completion. Let me know if you were not at the last session and don't have yours.

Congratulations to the 18 members who completed the series:

Susan A	Theodore C	Dean C
Dean C	Skyler C	Jason D
Chris E	Lisa H	David H
Michael M	Jeffery M	Wayne P
Molly P	Amanda S	Bill S
Alex S	Christopher V	Paolo V

It was a pleasure watching these students grow in their knowledge of raising and growing bonsai.

Schefflera as Bonsai

By Karl

Schefflera, as bonsai, have many positives in their favor. They can be completely defoliated, and the new leaves will come back significantly smaller. They are nearly impossible to kill, so make a good choice for bonsai beginners. Cuttings, when immersed in water, will almost always strike roots. So, before you know it, you will have more schefflera than you know what to do with. You can give them away, make a schefflera forest planting, etc. What you cannot do is get the trunks to fuse.

One common technique that works well for ficus and maples is to take several young plants and bind them together at their base. Within a few years the trunks will fuse together, and you will have a clump-style bonsai with

a thicker trunk than would have occurred otherwise. However, this will NOT work for schefflera. The pictures show three schefflera that I have been trying to get to fuse for three years. No level of threat, incantations, or voo-



doo has made these trunks grow together. Had I researched this better three years ago, I would have found that nobody else has succeeded with this either. So, don't bother trying – it's not going to work.

How to lower the pH of your water to keep bonsai healthy

By Jonas Dupuich, Bonsai Tonight
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I found out that the pH of my water can get pretty high a long time ago. It's not too bad when it's in the lower ranges, but it definitely needs attention when it creeps into the higher ranges – which it did this summer.

pH is a measure of how acidic or basic water is. Because it can change from season to season and from year to year, I have to monitor it on a regular basis and treat the water when it gets too far out of whack.

Generally speaking, bonsai prefer slightly acidic water (pH below 7.0). Municipal water is commonly basic (pH above 7.0). The higher the pH, the harder it is to keep bonsai healthy.

There's no perfect pH for irrigation water as the optimal pH for a given nutrient is different from one nutrient to the next.

As noted in the last post, the fertilizers we use can affect the pH and help keep our trees green. The same is true for many bonsai soils as both akadama and kanuma have some ability to minimize the effect of basic (or acidic) water on our trees.

Soil and fertilizer, however, can only do so much. Which brings us to the first step for making improvements: getting an accurate measure of the water's pH.

The most common ways to measure pH are with a freshwater test kit, test strips, or a pH meter. Paper test strips are easy to use but not very accurate so I don't recommend them for testing irrigation systems. Both freshwater test kits and pH meters make it easy to get an accurate reading.

Depending on how high your pH is and how much trouble you have keeping your bonsai healthy, it might be time to make a change. Here are some basic options for growers with



Of
Interest
on the Web

A few of our suggestions for further study on what's happening this month in the world of bonsai.

[Bonsai as Fine Art](#)—Stone Lantern (Article)

[Sharpening Knives and Scissors](#)—Nebari Bonsai (Blog Post)

[Developing Maple Bonsai](#)—Bonsai Tonight (Video)

[How to Start with Bonsai—A Beginners Guide](#)—Bonsai Talk (Video)

[Badger Bonsai Society Member Group](#)

BBS members only platform for sharing tips, advice, and inspiration between monthly meetings



high pH water.

- Collect rainwater. Rainwater is commonly more acidic than municipal or well water and can be a great option for watering bonsai.
- Add vinegar (or other acids) to the water in your watering can. This approach is good for smaller collections but doesn't work as well when you have lots of trees.
- Use a siphon mixer. A siphon system like the Hozon Brass Siphon Mixer can draw an acidic solution from a reservoir (a 5-gallon bucket can work) and automatically mix it with the water coming from the spigot. This is the most simple and cost effective approach to acidifying your water. (For details about this approach, see Michael Hagedorn's post on the topic [here](#) and check out the results a friend of his achieved [here](#).)
- Use an injection system. Injection systems like the Dosatron use a pump mechanism to add a precise amount of acid (or fertilizer) to your water. These systems are more expensive and require more set-up than the above approaches but offer accuracy and flexibility. (A big, and seriously delayed, thank you to Matthiew Quinn of Montréal for suggesting I get one back in 2013.)
- Use a reverse osmosis system. Reverse osmosis

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or “RO” systems take a brute force approach to purifying water. They can be great when water quality is low but aren’t the best approach when the only issue is high pH.

With the exception of reverse osmosis systems, the above options are fairly straightforward to set up. The main thing is to choose an approach that works for your garden and to test regularly to ensure the system is doing what you expect it to.

The next step is to select an acid to add to the water. The most common choices are acetic acid (vinegar), citric acid, phosphoric acid, muriatic acid (aka hydrochloric acid), nitric acid, and sulfuric acid. Products like pH Down use both phosphoric and citric acid; muriatic acid can be found in home centers alongside other solvents and cleaners.

I have yet to try all of the different acids but I have become a fan of using acetic acid. 30% vinegar is easily available and makes a good starting point for acidifying water. Were I to try another acid I’d try citric acid which is commonly available in powder form. All acids should be treated with caution and handled with care – and adequate safety equipment.

My plan is to add either fertilizer or acid to my water every time I water my trees. My goal in doing this is to see how healthy I can get my trees before winter to help them grow better next spring.

[Link](#) to article on Bonsai Tonight website.

Links to other articles on this topic from Bonsai Tonight.

[The effect of fertilizer on water pH](#)

[Insights from using a chemical injector to acidify the water for one year](#)



Follow [Badger Bonsai Society on Facebook](#) for the latest news, meeting agendas, upcoming events, and inspiring shares from the world of bonsai.

2023 BBS Calendar

Meetings are on the second Thursday of the month unless noted.

July 13—Monthly Meeting. Wound work and wiring

August 10—Monthly Meeting. Late summer work

September 14—Monthly Meeting. Wiring and styling

October 12—Monthly Meeting. Fall preparation

November 9—Monthly Meeting. Winter preparation

December 14—Monthly Meeting. Holiday get-together, Suiseki viewing stones

Potential Workshops in 2023

July—Pruning, wiring, partial defoliation

September—Wiring, styling



BADGER BONSAI
Society

Promoting and enjoying the
ancient art of bonsai since 1972.

CLUB OFFICERS AND ROLES

President	Ron
Vice President	Mary
Secretary	Lisa
Treasurer	Ken
Web Admin	Jason
Newsletter	Lisa
Librarian	Alex

*Badger Bonsai News is a monthly
publication of the Badger Bonsai Society.*

<https://badgerbonsai.net>