



SPRINGFIELD BONSAI SOCIETY

Palmatum Press

February 2015

From the Editor's Desk

After a cold fall and winter I am looking forward to working on my trees and seeing the buds that tell me spring is on the way. Over Christmas I had the opportunity to visit Erik Wigert at his bonsai nursery in North Fort Myers, FL (<http://wigertsbonsai.com/>). As always lots of great plants. If you are visiting the Florida Gulf Coast stop by for a visit.

Our February meeting will include a discussion of soils, repotting, and a pot exchange/sale. If you need soil or special tools contact Milt at Cass Bonsai so he can bring them to the meeting. We have a very interesting year ahead of us. Check out the calendar for the year and put our meetings on your calendar.

A friendly reminder that dues for 2015 are payable at the February meeting. Still a bargain at \$20 for an individual or \$30 for a family membership.

We are looking for an alternative meeting place to Washington Park because the rent we pay the park district is costing us about \$1200 a year - money we could use to bring in a guest artist. We will discuss alternatives at the February Meeting.



Wigert's Bonsai Nursery - December 2014

Future Tense

February 9 - 7:00 pm - Springfield Bonsai Society Meeting at Washington Park Botanical Gardens.

February is the time to begin repotting some of our trees and this meeting will feature demonstrations of repotting and root pruning by Mike Sudholdt and a discussion of bonsai soils by

Milt Ciskowski. There will be time for members to work on their own trees. If you need a special pot or soil Milt from Cass Bonsai can bring them to the meeting. Cass Bonsai Gardens has the following soil components available. Please contact Milt at cassbonsai@empowering.com or 618-656-9087.

CASS GENERAL PURPOSE MIX \$20

IMPORTED SOILS

AKADAMA SMALL \$35

AKADAMA MEDIUM \$35

AKADAMA LARGE \$35

KANUMA MEDIUM \$35

AOKI BLENDED SOIL SMALL \$45

AOKI BLENDED SOIL MEDIUM \$45

HYUGA (PUMICE) SMALL \$35

HYUGA (PUMICE) MEDIUM \$35

HYUGA (PUMICE) LARGE \$35

KYRI OR FUGI SAND \$35

Our February meeting will also feature a pot swap meet. If you have extra or unwanted bonsai pots bring them for sale, donation, or exchange. This is a good way to expand your collection of pots. This is a great opportunity for new members to acquire bonsai pots at little or no cost.

Upcoming 2014 SBS Meetings

SBS meetings are held at 7:00 pm on the second Monday of the month, February through November, at the Washington Park Botanical Garden, 1740 W. Fayette, Springfield, IL 62704 [located near the corner of Fayette and Chatham Rd., next to the Carillon], unless otherwise noted in our newsletter. For SBS meetings, park in the lot off of the service road (red) and enter through the back door and go through the garage to the conservatory. We meet in the function room off of the conservatory. Special meeting locations are indicated below.*

Meeting Dates	Topics/Activities	Presenter
Monday, March 9 th 7:00 p.m.	Root over Rock Styling Root grafting/ air layering How to select slabs for April meeting	Dick Adorjan Manish Sumant Milt Ciskowski
Monday, April 13 th 7:00 p.m.	Bonsai Landscapes - Group plantings, Mother-daughter style, raft plantings How to select pre-bonsai plants from local nurseries and big box stores.	Roland Folse Gary Trammell Mike Sudholdt
*Wednesday, April 22nd. 6:00 - 8:00 pm	Beginners' Workshop U of I Extension Office	
Monday, May 11 th	Carving Deadwood	Scott Day

7:00 p.m.	Bonsai Tools - selection & care Show & Tell - flowering plants, candle pruning	
Monday, June 8 th 7:00 p.m.	Literati (Bunjin) Styling	Scott Day
Monday, July 13 th 7:00 p.m.	Tropical Plants as Bonsai	Gary Trammell
July - Date TBA	Garden Tour and Potluck	Gary Trammell & other SBS members
Monday, August 10 th 7:00 p.m.	Pest Control for Bonsai Fertilizer Cake Workshop	Phil Nixon Gary Trammell
Monday, September 14 th 7:00 p.m.	Preparation for October show	
Saturday, October 10	Fall Show and Sale Lincoln Memorial Garden Fall Festival	
Monday, October 12 th	NO MEETING - BUILDING CLOSED	
November 10 th 7:00 p.m.	Planning Meeting for 2015 Show and Tell - Winter Silhouettes	

Bonsai Events Around the Country 2014

Date	Event
February 7, 14, 28	Cass Bonsai Gardens (http://www.cassbonsaigardens.com) Spring Repotting and Open Shop
February 21	Cass Bonsai Gardens (http://www.cassbonsaigardens.com) Workshop with Gary Wood
March 7, 21	Cass Bonsai Gardens (http://www.cassbonsaigardens.com) Open Shop
March 28	Cass Bonsai Gardens (http://www.cassbonsaigardens.com) Basic Bonsai Workshop
April 4, 11, 25	Cass Bonsai Gardens (http://www.cassbonsaigardens.com) Open Shop

May 9-10	Bonsai Society of Greater St. Louis Show
May 16-17	11th Annual Spring Bonsai Show Midwest Bonsai Society Chicago Botanical Garden (http://www.midwestbonsai.org/mayshow.html)
June 11-14	Capital Collections: ABS Learning Symposium Ellicott City, Maryland (http://www.absbonsai.org/2015-abs-learning-symposium)
July 10-12	Mid-America Bonsai Alliance Convention Clarion Hotel Waterfront Plaza & Conference Center Indianapolis, IN (http://www.maba2015.com/)
August 14-16	38th Mid-America Bonsai Society Show and Sale Chicago Botanical Garden (http://www.chicagobotanic.org/calendar/event/mid_america_bonsai_society_show_sale)
September 5-7	Japanese Festival Missouri Botanical Garden St. Louis, MO
September 26-28	American Bonsai: Reforged & Refined Artisans Cup of Portland Bonsai Exhibition Portland, OR (http://www.theartisanscup.com/)
November 7-8	10th Annual Open House Wigert Bonsai North Ft. Myers, FL (http://wigertsbonsai.com/event/10th-annual-open-house-event/)

Bonsai Soil Basics

When I started my bonsai collection I began making my soil from roughly equal amounts of pine bark, oil dry, and turkey grit. This mixture has worked pretty well but recent discussions in bonsai magazines and at our club meetings have led me to rethink the best mix for my trees. In a recent issue of *Bonsai* magazine, several bonsai artists commented on soil and each had a different recipe. In preparation for a discussion on soils at our February meeting I wanted to present some background on bonsai soils to give you something to think about when selecting soil additives.

An ideal bonsai soil should:

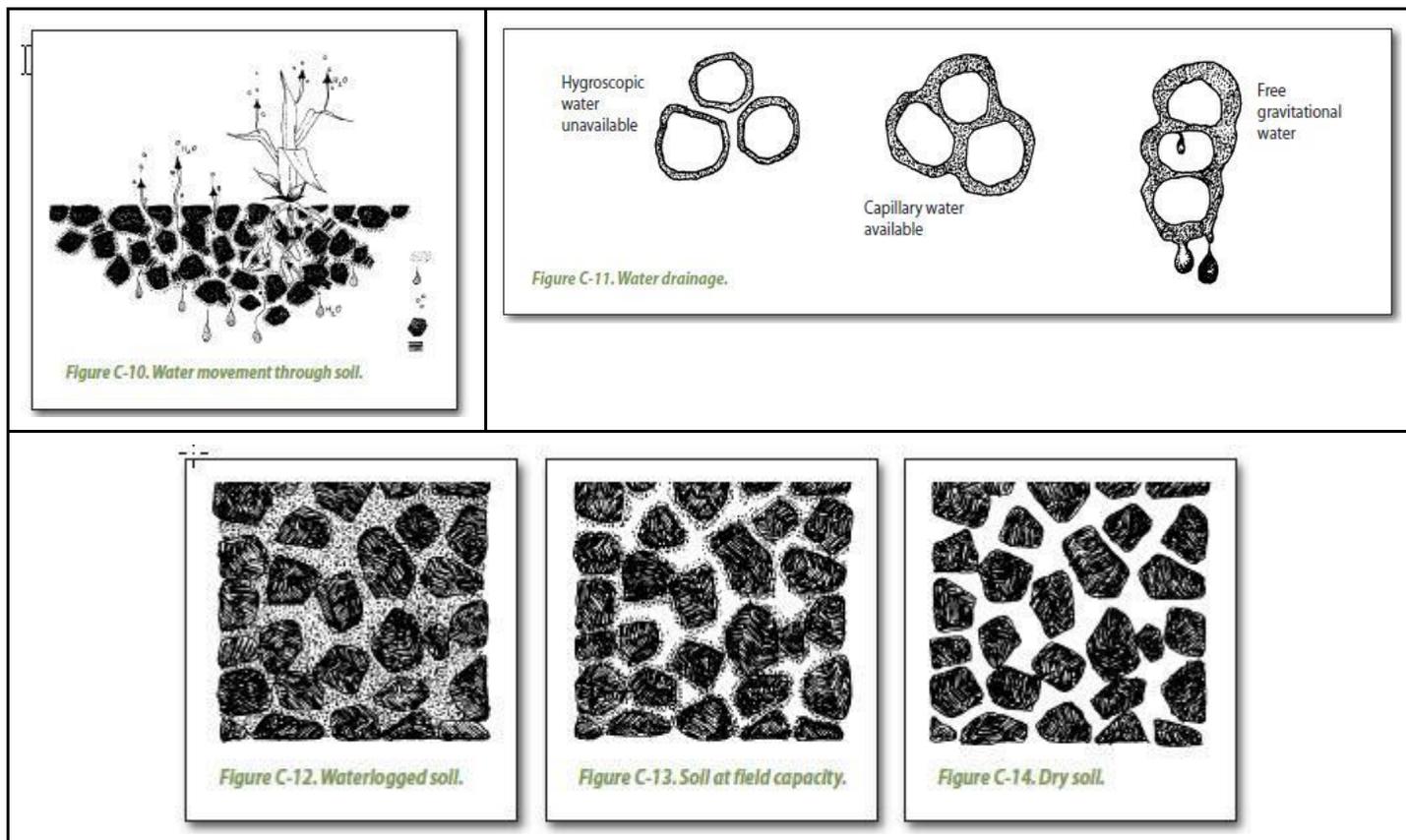
- support the plant
- retain water
- provide space to allow air to reach the roots
- encourage growth of fine root structure
- retain nutrients and microorganisms

Soil particles take up only part of the space in a pot. Part of the volume of our soil is made of void spaces which contain water and air. Without air, plant roots cannot grow, take up minerals, or even absorb water. We know that water is vital for plants but not all water in the soil is available to plants. Water moves through the soil by three forces: capillary, hygroscopic, and gravitational. Capillary water is available to plants. It is attached to soil particles and moves from particle to particle. Hygroscopic water is bound tightly to soil particles and is not available to the plant. Gravitational water flows downward through the soil and in a bonsai pot drains out the hole(s) at the bottom of the pot. These illustrations from the *Illinois Master Gardener Manual* illustrate the way water moves in soil. The particles in dry soil have empty spaces between them. If all of the space is filled with water we have waterlogged soil with no air space. If no water is available to our plants they wilt. We want our soil to have capillary water available to plants and air space for the roots. Soil scientists define field capacity as the maximum amount of water that a soil can hold after gravitational drainage (this leaves some air space). Good gardening soil has a field capacity of about 50%. If the soil is made up of large particles more water drains out of the pot by gravitational drainage. Very fine particles retain too much water. This is why we sieve our bonsai soil. The usual recommendation is to remove particles less than 1/8 inch.

Bonsai soil must retain nutrients for plant growth. Many of these nutrients are positively charged ions (cations) such as calcium (Ca^{2+}), magnesium (Mg^{2+}), potassium (K^+), ammonium (NH_4^+), and iron (Fe^{2+}). Since clay particles and organic matter have negative charges they hold these nutrient ions. Soil scientists define a cation exchange capacity (CEC) as the capacity of a soil to hold onto these cations. Many discussions of soil additives reference CEC. Additives with low CECs need more frequent fertilization. While clay particles have a negative charge and hold these ions, sand (or grit) particles have no charge and do not hold nutrients. The purpose is to take up space.

For a good discussion of soil additives I recommend the articles by Colin Lewis and Michael Hagedorn cited below.

Please come to the February meeting to learn more about soil to optimize the growth of our trees and to share your experience.



References:

Regional Bonsai Care: The Search for the Perfect Bonsai Soil - Part 1. Cheryl Sykova. *Bonsai: The Journal of the American Bonsai Society*. pp 6-16. **48**(4) 2014.

Water Retention and Drainage in Bonsai Soil. Brian Heltsley. *Bonsai: The Journal of the American Bonsai Society*. pp 6-16. **48**(4) 2014.

Bonsai Soils Part 1: Organic Ingredients

<http://www.colinlewisbonsai.com/Reading/soils1.html>

Bonsai Soils Part 2: Mineral Components

<http://www.colinlewisbonsai.com/Reading/soils2.html>

Bonsai Soils Part 3: Particle Size and Related Issues

<http://www.colinlewisbonsai.com/Reading/soils3.html>

Life without Turface. Michael Hagedorn

<http://crataegus.com/2013/11/24/life-without-turface/>

University of Illinois Master Gardener Manual. University of Illinois 2015.

Bonsai Care Tips

The Columbus Bonsai Society (Ohio) has a [calendar](#) for bonsai care for USDA Hardiness Zones 5 and 6. These are their recommendations.

January - Mid Winter - 36/20

- Only water when soil is almost dry. Soil may stay damp for many weeks without the need for water.
- Heavy pruning of deciduous trees can be completed in winter, while the tree is dormant. It may be best to wait until early spring, when dead branches from winter are more noticeable.
- Start deciding which trees will be repotted in spring. Make a list of available pots, and which trees will work with them. Having a battle plan is very useful once the chaos of spring arrives. Order repotting supplies such as new pots, soil, wire, drainage mesh, etc.
- Protect your trees from direct winter sun and wind as it will cause freeze dry damage.
- You may place mothballs in the mulch around your trees to prevent mouse damage.
- Extra mulch or protection is needed if the temps fall below 20, especially for elms, maples and other fleshy rooted plants.

February - Late Winter - 39/22

- Wire conifers now through early summer.
- This is the best month for repotting conifers.
- Use a dormant pest spray to keep pests away in early spring.
- All tips from January apply in February.

Administrivia

Your 2013 Officers are:

President	– Ken Schaal
Vice President	– Mike Sudholdt
Treasurer	– Tom Applebee
Webmaster	- Manish Sumant
Newsletter editor	– Gary Trammell (217-741-4849) (trammell.gary@uis.edu)

Annual membership is \$20 (family \$30).

To receive our newsletter you may sign up by email (BonsaiSBS@gmail.com) or visit our website at <http://www.BonsaiSBS.com/>.