

April  
2010



Springfield  
Bonsai Society

SPRINGFIELD BONSAI SOCIETY

# Palmatum Press

## Future Tense April Meeting

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Feels like spring, smells like spring (achoo...) must be spring! I'm sure you have been busy repotting your bonsai. The April 12th meeting will focus on styling and repotting so please bring one tree to style / repot to the meeting. Per the calendar the tree of the month is Maple. I have written a small article on Maples for bonsai based on some internet research.

On April 17th we have a workshop with guest artist Michael Persiano. Michael is a great teacher so feel free to bring a nice size tree and he will help you style it. If you do not have a suitable tree you can contact Milt from Cass Bonsai @ 618-656-9087.

On May 1st SBS will have a small bonsai exhibit in conjunction with an art exhibit at Hoogland Center for the Arts. The setup will be at around 3pm on Friday April 30th. The number of trees that can be displayed is limited so if you would like to display a tree please contact Gary Trammell ([gary.trammell@uis.edu](mailto:gary.trammell@uis.edu)).

Every year Gary conducts a beginners bonsai workshop offered through LLCC Community Education workshops. This year the workshops will be on May 3rd and May 17th at WPBG. Volunteers are needed to help the students style their trees.

Nurseries, Plant Societies and Garden Centers are having their plant sales right now! Sometimes you can find some good bonsai starters there. Look under Upcoming Events in this newsletter or in the newspaper.

## Past Tense March Meeting

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Dr. Folse did a demo of the approach graft and branch grafting technique. Approach grafting has a better rate of survival as both the stock and the scion have a root system support.



Milt brought in some junipers for sale so we could practice the technique. Milt started teaching the basics of repotting but we ran out of time! We hope to continue repotting pointers in the April meeting.

U of I Extension's Sangamon-Menard unit had a "Gardener's Day" on Saturday March 20th. Dick Adorjan had put up some of our Brochures / Calendars on display there. I attended a couple of the talks on gardening there. Very informative! Janine had a presentation on Prairie and Native Plants.

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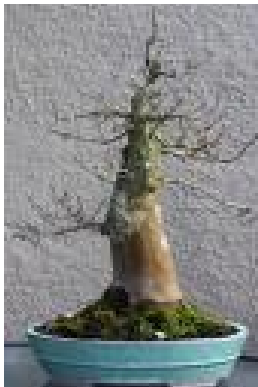
## Maples for Bonsai

First and foremost *Acer Palmatum* – Japanese Maple is the most loved maple for bonsai. Fine small leaves, vivid color spring through fall. 400 different varieties with different leaf styles and colors.



Other qualities of Japanese maple. Unfortunately some Japanese maples are slow growers and are quite often found grafted on other maples.

There are of course many other maples that can be used for bonsai –



The trident maple (*Acer Buergerianum*) is known for its large trunk and fused roots that when the tree matures gives it a great nebari. The leaves are not small and three pronged as opposed to the many interesting leaf forms of Japanese maples. Tridentes are fast growers so wiring should be avoided in spring and summer. Cuts heal fast but still they should be covered with wound sealant.



Trident roots hold a lot of water and so they are sensitive to freeze damage in winter. Care should be taken not to let these go below freezing while overwintering.

Amur maple available readily around here is a good substitute to trident maple and is hardy to our climate. It also provides some very good fall color.



Hedge maple (*Acer campestre*) also makes a very good bonsai.



We had a workshop with Montpellier Maples (*Acer Monspessulanum*) in April '03. The Forest/grove in 15" trays turned out quite fine! If anyone has one of these still around please bring them to a meeting. An excerpt from our April newsletter "It has much potential, however, because of its three-lobed, obtuse leaves which are naturally small, and easily reduced even further. It can also withstand climates too hot or dry for most maples. Its major drawback is that it lacks the spreading growth of most maples, forming instead a narrow pyramid. With patience, the tree can be developed into a fuller shape, but I kind of like this maple's ginkgoesque looks!" - Sabrina Caine for IBC on BCI website.

The next page includes a write up on Japanese maples borrowed from Brent Walston of Evergreen Gardenworks. Brent sells bonsai stock from his nursery in California but he is also a knowledgeable writer. The full article can be found at <http://www.evergreengardenworks.com/japmaple.htm>

## Japanese Maples for Bonsai by Brent Walston

### Introduction

Recently on the internet I was asked what is the best Japanese Maple, *Acer palmatum*, cultivar for bonsai? This is a really tough one to answer. The short answer is that they are all good candidates, choose what you like. The more complete answer is that there are specific cultivars more appropriate for the size and style of bonsai you desire.

I will avoid for the most part specific cultivars since the list runs into the hundreds but rather talk about the types or groups as they apply to bonsai. You should use Vertree's book *Japanese Maples* for descriptions and culture of the many cultivars.

### Choose a Cultivar Appropriate for the Size of Your Bonsai

Nearly all (if not all) *Acer palmatum* exhibit juvenile and adult characteristics. In landscape trees the adult characteristics of small leaves and close internodes seems to occur at 20 to 40 years, but this will vary by cultivar and environment. Under bonsai conditions, plants may begin to attain these characteristics in as little as five years or less. One should plan the bonsai based on mature leaf and internode size. I don't think there is a single bad cultivar or seedling type for bonsai. The trick is to pick the suitable ones for your design. The larger leaf, more aggressive ones are suitable for larger two to four foot bonsai. For this size, a four inch or larger trunk would be best for most styles. This involves growing the tree in the ground or container to get the trunk size needed first. One or two trunk chops will be necessary to get the taper and apex. It will take ten to twenty years to get to this stage. From the finished trunk it will take another five years to get good ramified branches. I hope no one is put off by this time line, you can grow other trees at the same time so you have something to play with in the interim. At fifty I am still starting projects like this.

### Types for Small Bonsai

There are many small leaf, short internode types that make good smaller bonsai, from mame to shohin and larger. These 'Yatsubusa' types have different characteristics, some are painfully slow, others are actually quite aggressive even though they are small in stature. The dwarf cultivars really should be grown from cuttings for bonsai or grafted very low. Even the low grafts may present problems down the road. Cutting grown ones will give you a very nice thick radial root pattern that will swell into a broad crown and excellent nebari. The uneven growth rate between the scion and the understock in dwarfs will give a necked down appearance in grafted plants after a few years. This problem gets worse, not better with age. A very low grafted plant minimizes this problem.

### Dissectum Types for Bonsai

The highly prized dissectums present the biggest challenge for bonsai in my opinion. Not many of these can be grown from cuttings, and must be grafted. Since most of these are cascading or weeping habit trees, many plants are grafted high, or onto standards for landscape use. Very few nurseries are grafting low for bonsai. Mountain Maples is one, Del's is another. Understock/scion matching is also very important here. The slower cultivars should be grafted to small leaf, small seed understock, and there should be some attempt to match bark color for bonsai.

### Rough Bark Types for Bonsai

The textured bark cultivars must be cutting grown for bonsai use. Unless a plant is low grafted and the graft union is BURIED (risky business with this species), or air layered there will be a distinct line at the graft union marking the smooth understock and the beginning of the corky scion. Cutting grown plants will even exhibit corky surface roots as well as trunks. Fortunately, the rough bark cultivars all seem to be quite easy to grow from cuttings and several are readily available. Most of these cultivars will not begin to show the bark characteristics until about five years, and good corking will not be apparent all along the trunk until about ten years. These trees will fall into an intermediate category of medium to large size bonsai with a time line of ten to twenty years for a decent tree.

.... contd. on <http://www.evergreengardenworks.com/japmaple.htm>

## April Bonsai Care Tips

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Disclaimer: This is a general guide. Times can vary as much as a month depending on the weather trends. Some species of trees do not follow the general category guidelines of deciduous, evergreen or tropicals. Know your trees!

- Continue pruning deciduous trees as buds are opening. Remove dead branches and twigs.
- Continue repotting junipers and spruce. Repot pines toward end of month. Leave for next year to repot any deciduous trees that have buds opening unless tree is root-bound.
- Do not prune spruce and pines due to resin bleeding.
- Wire spruce, juniper and pines, taking care not to wire too tightly, as branches will thicken quickly. Do not wire deciduous at this time.
- Check wiring done last month.
- Keep an eye on watering. Check daily and water only trees that are dry.
- Do not feed newly repotted trees. Feed trees repotted last month if growth has started.
- Check for pests as you water.



SPRINGFIELD BONSAI SOCIETY

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## Upcoming Events

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**April 10, 11** Lincoln Memorial Garden – 2010 Spring Wildflower and Tree Sale, at Garden's Nature Center 9 am to 4 pm on Saturday, and 1 pm to 4 pm on Sunday.

**May 1 – Illinois Native Plant Society Sale at WPBG** 9 am to 2 pm Purchase native IL prairie and woodland plants at bargain prices

**May 3rd and 8th - SBS Beginner Bonsai workshop at WPBG** 6 to 8 pm Register through LLCC Community Education workshop. SBS Members.

**May 8 - Guest Artist Workshop w/ Erik Wigert @ Cass Bonsai** Saturday, two sessions. 9am and 1pm email [gary.trammell@uis.edu](mailto:gary.trammell@uis.edu) to register.

**May 10 – SBS Meeting. De-budding Pines, Insects in Bonsai** Roland Folse and Phil Nixon presenting.

**May 15 - 16 - Midwest Bonsai Society Spring Show** Chicago Botanic Garden, Exhibition, Workshops, Vendors.

**May 28- 30 Brussel's Rendezvous**, Olive Branch, MS. A long drive but great trees and great workshops.

**June 25-27, MABA Convention**, Grand Rapids Michigan [www.wmbonsai.org](http://www.wmbonsai.org). Another long drive but some more Bonsai workshops, demos, exhibit and vendors. Kathy Shaner, headliner.

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## Administrivia

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Your 2010 Officers are:

President – Gary Trammell 217-741-4849 (M)  
Vice President – David Kerwin  
Treasurer – Tom Applebee  
Secretary – Manish Sumant 217-652-9619 (M)  
& newsletter editor

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

Email [msumant1@netscape.net](mailto:msumant1@netscape.net) to sign up or visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BonsaiSBS/>