



# Pittsburgh Bonsai Society

...to disseminate knowledge, encourage others and create interest in the art of bonsai



## Nov. & Dec. 2011 Newsletter



### NEXT MEETING

**Winterizing  
Techniques for  
Beginners  
Plus Elections**

Wednesday, November 16, 2011 • 7pm • Phipps Garden Center

### NEXT EVENT

The Pittsburgh Bonsai Society's

**HOLIDAY DINNER!**

Details and Registration Form on Pages 5 and 6

**Remember, No January or February 2011 Meetings**

Please check our newly updated website: <http://pittsburghbonsai.org>



# The Pittsburgh Bonsai Society Newsletter

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Published periodically (10 issues a year) by PBS for members and other bonsai enthusiasts. It's our sixth decade of advancing the art of bonsai in the Tri-State area.

**Deadlines:**  
Generally two months prior to issue date.

**Submissions:**  
Please submit Photos or Artwork in JPG format and Copy in Microsoft Word.

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## A Note From Dave:

### More on Trash to Treasure...

September's meeting topic was Trash to Treasure, and members brought in trees and starter material that they had found in garden centers, big box stores and even neighbor's yards. It's not too late to keep on the treasure hunt. I recently found two lonely variegated Butterfly Japanese maples marked at 75% off, and I paid \$12.50 each for them. It still doesn't beat my best deal of last year: Sargent junipers from Lowe's for \$1.00 each, marked down from \$25.00. They are young trees with interesting trunks, so they went into the ground for further thickening.

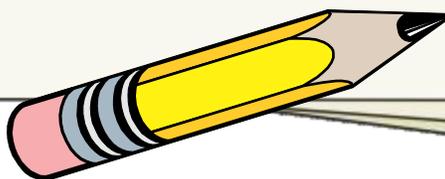


Photo by Cindie Bonomi

I've had calls from strangers asking what kind of tree they should start with, along with newer members looking for something that fits the classic bonsai style. Sure, everybody wants the beautiful Japanese bonsai pine they see in books and on websites, but you can learn so much about the art if you start with raw material and develop a great tree on your own.

A great article on the website "Art of Bonsai" deals with creating finished trees from garden material. Take a look: [http://www.artofbonsai.org/galleries/nursery\\_stock.php](http://www.artofbonsai.org/galleries/nursery_stock.php) While you are there, explore the rest of the website. There are galleries of different varieties of trees and profiles on some the best bonsai artists.

Dave Metzgar



For your Bonsai supplies support

the store that exists for the society



## Bonsai In The Burgh

724-348-4771

Pots, wire, tools, soil, plants

# Fingers and Needles

by Jay Miller

Some techniques come easily to some people; for us others, it's repetition squared, until suddenly there's a moment of understanding. It helps to have Dr. Bob Grealish explaining the technique pine needle reduction in the fall. At the October meeting he explained that, in the fall, you can combine needle reduction, wiring and styling on black, white and Scots Pines. Bob takes all three year needles and most two year needles, leaving this year's new growth. It should be done before mid-November's movement of trees into winter quarters. Debbie Brys and Dave Metzgar added their flying fingers to the needle reduction demonstration.

Cutting black pine candles in the spring encourages back-budding. The second flush of growth results in shorter needles. Scots pines are more active in the spring and don't require much effort in the fall. Check out Mark Berbach's pick for an informative blog in the Announcements section on page 7.



Dave Metzgar opens the meeting.



Mark Berbach reads the treasury report.



Bob Grealish leads the meeting explaining all different ways to pinch needles and candles and what the results will be.



Debbie Brys and Dave Metzgar help with the needle plucking demo.

Photography by Cindie Bonomi



Towards the end of the meeting people brought up their own trees for some helpful advice from Bob Grealish.

# Late Autumn and Early Winter in the Burgh

by Jay Miller

From the time we first become aware of Bonsai, then interested, we wanted to find out more! The fascination with these living works of art progressed to the "Hows" of creating our own. Then the reality of a Tri-State winter set in. Creativity took a back seat to "How" To Keep Them (the Bonsai) Alive and Growing. The "Hows" were followed by the "Whys" and then the "Whens".

November is "When" you have finished your fertilizing, including your last insecticide/fungicide/miticide for the year. Halloween 2011 saw high winds, snow and rain, which may have stripped the leaves from your deciduous bonsai. Remove any remaining leaves from your pots.

Protect your trees from heavy rainfall. Don't allow your trees to become waterlogged. Avoid root rot! Look carefully at your trees and think about the heavy pruning next spring.

November and December are wonderful times for walks, gaining inspiration and learning from trees growing in the wild. This hobby is all about making miniature versions of mature trees.

Christmas is a great time to buy pots, soil, tools, wire. Bob Dietz at Bonsai in The Burgh will be happy to help you select the perfect things for the coming year.

## The Joys (and Pains) of Bamboo

Article and photography by Lynne Squilla

In 1998, a tornado ripped through Mt. Washington and knocked down all of the tall but weakened cherry trees that bordered our hillside yard. The result was shocking: suddenly our secluded forest enclave was laid wide open. Which meant that the sun could get to the scrubby, short bamboo patches that had been growing under those big trees, unnoticed. Only a year or so later, a forest of 20-foot-tall bamboo exploded onto the scene, growing uphill and threatening our property.

I used to have nightmares about the stuff taking over the yard and the house. It is "running" bamboo, which means it throws off rhizomes and shoots in every direction, just like giant grass (which it is). If you had the time, you could sit and watch the stuff grow shoots of 6 to 8 inches overnight. These would even push up bricks in my walkways. To tear out the rhizomes is nearly impossible; they cut your hands and grip the earth for dear life. I learned by experience that the best means of control is to break off the shoots when they first appear in early summer (at about 4 or 5 inches, when still soft) and only go after the rhizomes that are critical by digging around them and cutting them up with pruning shears, then prying them out, wearing gloves. You can also give them a dose of glyphosate (i.e. Roundup) in the fall when they're drawing down nutrients for the winter, but I don't like using those chemicals anywhere in my yard.

Once I stopped wringing my hands over the invasive behavior of my side yard intruder, I quickly learned to love and appreciate it. It is a lovely shade of green and stays green year-round. In the summer, it rustles soothingly in the breeze; in the winter, when dusted with snow, it perfectly complements my Japanese garden. It provides a beautiful screen against the noise and movement of the street below, and when deer and turkey move through it, the scene is just magical.

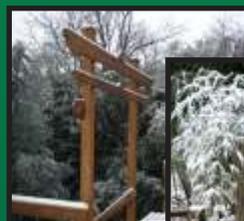
I was given two books about bamboo showing what the Japanese do with this remarkable plant. The fences, furniture and fountains they build are simply awesome. They also use it for utensils and in fabrics. I soon got a couple Japanese pull-saws (ryoba noko giri) and a high-carbon white steel froe bamboo splitter and decided to make a fence of my own. A week (and over 400 canes of bamboo) later, I had my fence. (See photo) My spouse has also used it to frame around a wall-mounted air conditioner and as crown molding in a room. Of course, we also use it for the more utilitarian staking of tomatoes and plants. Friends of ours have built entire outdoor enclosed growing areas using "our" bamboo.



Bamboo will last a long time, but probably should be treated with a sealant, just for added measure and to make it look better if you're using it decoratively. In our neck of the woods, bamboo is called an invasive species and I believe newer home deeds specifically prohibit the planting of it. But, overall, bamboo is enjoying a renewed reputation as a 'renewable resource.'

If one wants to plant a rhizome or two, the smart thing is to container-plant it or to insert 3-foot deep metal sheets around each rhizome to prevent it from running. Our bamboo stand has now filled out to a stasis point, but still requires a fair amount of vigilance and maintenance to keep it in check and looking good. Every season, I break off the shoots that are coming up in the wrong places and dig out a few errant rhizomes. If there's been a heavy snow, I get right in there and shake the canes free (they can be bent permanently if not released from the weight of snow and ice). Each summer, I thin out the stand, removing any damaged or ill-shaped canes, cutting, trimming off the branches and storing at least a dozen canes per year.

That said, we try to be generous with our stockpile, giving it to friends, neighbors and even a local hardware store. One friend of ours made flutes out of it. The offer is open to Bonsai Society friends, too: help yourselves to some of Pittsburgh's finest home-grown bamboo and see what you can do with it!



Please address inquiries to the Bonsai Barn page at [www.pittsburghbonsai.org](http://www.pittsburghbonsai.org)



CUT HERE



Membership Application  
or Renewal Form

# Pittsburgh Bonsai Society

Membership Year: January 1 to December 31 Your continuing support is greatly appreciated

**PLEASE PRINT NEATLY**

Name (One Letter or Number Per Box)

Address (Number and Street, Rural Route or Post Office Box)

City or Town State Zip

Phone

Individual Membership.....\$30.00

Family Membership.....\$40.00

E-Mail (Email address is used for membership database and member correspondence only. The Society will keep this info **CONFIDENTIAL**. (Please include!))

Date

Signature

I am a New Member

I am Renewing my Membership

Make your dues check payable to the Pittsburgh Bonsai Society and send it to:

Mark Berbach

Email:

markberbach@yahoo.com

1031 Windance Drive  
McDonald Pa 15057  
Phone: 724 492-1318

Membership Year:  
January 1 to December 31

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## The Pittsburgh Bonsai Society's

# HOLIDAY DINNER!

The Holiday Dinner will be held at the Phipps Garden Center on Wed. December 7 at 6:30 pm. The event will be catered so that everyone can enjoy the evening with no work.

The menu this year will consist of roasted tomato lemon chicken, delmonico steak with onions & mushrooms and Tilapia stuffed with crab meat. You can sample all of them buffet style, along with a tossed salad, roasted red skinned potatoes, penne pasta with garlic cream sauce, rolls and butter.

A cake complements of Dorothy Suatoni and cookies will be served to satisfy the sweet tooth.

We will also have the traditional White Elephant Exchange where you bring an item from your home that you no longer wish to see around the house. Wrap or disguise it so some lucky person will be surprised when they pick it.

Please send your reservation in with a check for \$12.00 per person by December 5.

Make checks payable and mail to:



Photograph and Photo Manipulation  
by Cindie Bonomi



Cindie Bonomi  
335 Newburn Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15216

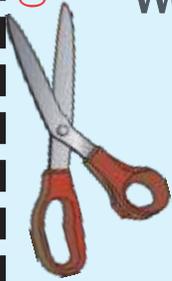
Phone: 412 561-2057

Reservation Form On Page 6

# Member Survey

Please take a moment and help us with your comments.  
We want to make your membership year as productive as possible

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How did you originally learn of The Pittsburgh Bonsai Society?

- from a friend
- newspaper article
- PBS website
- the Internet
- Bonsai Classes at Phipps
- a flyer
- from a Garden Center

Would you like to receive your newsletters electronically?  yes  no

If yes, Name  E-mail Address

Are your bonsai skills:  beginner  intermediate  advanced

Please tell us what programs you'd prefer:

- lectures
- workshops with your trees
- demonstration & workshops
- Bonsai Basics

Questions: .....

# BONSAI HOLIDAY DINNER!

Reservation Form

## \$12 Per Person

Name ..... Number Attending .....



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# TOTAL

\$

# Pittsburgh Bonsai Society 2011 Calendar of Events

- Nov 16.....Wed 7pm ..... Split Meeting: Winterizing  
for Beginners plus  
Elections
- Dec 7.....Wed 6:00pm ..... Annual Holiday Party  
2012 ..... January & February..... No Meetings
- Mar 21.....Wed 7pm.....TBA
- Jun 1-3..... Sat/Sun ..... Spring Show 2012

All events, unless otherwise noted, will be held at the Phipps Garden Center, starting at 7:00pm Phipps Garden Center is located at the edge of Mellon Park in the Shadyside section of Pittsburgh. At the Phipps Garden Center sign on Shady Avenue, just south of the intersection of Fifth and Shady Avenues, turn into the cobblestone driveway. Park in the metered lot. Walk 50 yards farther down the cobblestone lane. The Garden Center is the red brick building on your left.

## Severe Weather & Emergency Information:

PBS Meetings and Special Events at Phipps Garden Center will take place as scheduled except in the event of severe weather or emergency. Unsure? Call their Emergency Phone Number: 412 441-4442 for updates.



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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Coming Events:

April (Date TBA) 2012 Harrisburg Area PA MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies 29th Annual Spring Festival Harrisburg Hershey Holiday Inn, Grantville PA Questions?

<http://midatlanticbonsai.freeservers.com>

June 9-10, 2012 Rochester, NY 3rd U.S. National Bonsai Exhibition Questions? [WNV@internationalbonsai.com](mailto:WNV@internationalbonsai.com)

## A Recommended Blog:

Mark Berbach recommends this blog of an American bonsai apprentice in Japan, which contains good pine material. <http://peterteabonsai.worldpress.com>. fascinating look at bonsai in Japan!

## Newsletter Information:

It's easy to make an announcement or contribute to the PBS Newsletter. If it is text only, call or email Jay Miller at: 412 481-4540, [suisekifan@yahoo.com](mailto:suisekifan@yahoo.com) If it is a sketch or photo, email Cindie Bonomi at: [cindiebonomi@yahoo.com](mailto:cindiebonomi@yahoo.com)

## March 2012 Issue Deadline:

Submissions for the March Newsletter are due no later than February 15, 2012.

## Bob Grealish

Will have more on the late Dr. Nam Lam, check the website.

Compiled by Jay Miller  
[suisekifan@yahoo.com](mailto:suisekifan@yahoo.com)



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