



the **TREE LINE**

the official monthly
publication of the

BONSAI SOCIETY of PORTLAND

Upcoming Events

December
2019

December 15 4:30 - 9pm **Holiday Party and Auction**, Milwaukie Center

January 5, 2020, 10am-1pm, **Mentorship 102**, Oregon Grape Room, Milwaukie Center

January 12, 2020, 10am-1pm, **Mentorship 101**, Oregon Grape Room, Milwaukie Cntr

January 28, 2020, 6pm-9pm, **BSOP Annual Meeting**, Milwaukie Center

Programming Report

In the Jan Culek demonstration, of all possible things that could go wrong, I never expected the building losing power to be one of them. Boy, was I relieved to learn the Milwaukie Center has emergency lighting circuits and backup power! Thank you to all of the attendees for your grace, patience, and remaining quiet enough that our un-amplified voices were reasonably audible.

Jan showed us how to take quality yamadori material and set its first styling on the path to bonsai. BSOP was lucky enough to obtain a ready-to-style Ponderosa Pine collected by Randy Knight at high altitude in Wyoming. The first step was a gutsy bend of a straight, upper trunk section to make it appear more rugged, aged, and valuable. The audience saw how careful saw cuts into a pine tree, when combined with guy wires and long lever arms, makes for a sustainable and reliable method of creating large bends.

We then saw the impressive work 4-gauge copper wire is able to do on large conifer branches. Jan stressed his goal was to introduce bends that mimic the natural impacts of weathering on these stunted, high alpine trees. He doesn't use raffia on pine trees because being able to see tiny tears and separations in the bark tissue is a critical indicator for where to stop while performing heavy bends.

In the compressed demonstration, Jan set the styling of two primary branches to define the style and continued these visual cues into a few secondary branches. To prepare this tree for eventual auction or raffle to BSOP members, Jan finished up his styling the next day.

Looking back at our 2019 schedule, I feel pleased with what we accomplished. I appreciate your trust to represent this organization, which has provided me with opportunities to grow in my leadership and organizing skills.

In 2020, I plan to expand upon these lessons learned. We will soon make available the listing of presenters and speakers we have planned.

See you soon! *Reid Parham*, VP, Programming

HOLIDAY PARTY AUCTIONS & RAFFLE

The Holiday Party will feature both silent and oral auctions. We are looking for good quality trees, including those with significant styling or those with excellent potential. The better trees will be selected for the oral auction. The Holiday Party auction differs somewhat from the monthly meeting silent auctions.

- The focus here is on quality. The Holiday Auction is a great way for new members to obtain good quality trees with some degree of styling and for more experienced members to move on to better quality stock.
- As with previous auctions, sellers receive 80% of the sale proceeds. BSOP will retain 20%. This is an excellent way to thin your collection while earning some extra holiday cash. Set a minimum bid on your tree. If it doesn't reach the minimum, you take it home.
- We also welcome outright donations to the club, with 100% of the proceeds going to the BSOP general fund. If you choose this option, we can provide you with a tax receipt so you can write off your donation.
- The raffle donations may be anything bonsai-related, including but not limited to seedlings, raw tree material, excess tools, training pots, etc. All attendees will receive one free raffle ticket.
- Please bring your auction items between 4:00pm and 5:30pm so we can get them registered. As always, make sure your trees and pots are clean and free of disease. (watch out for slugs and ants) If you anticipate bringing more than five items to auction, please notify Jan in advance, janhettick@comcast.net.

HELP WANTED

As with any event we need your help to make this successful. We need BSOP members to help with the following: Set up Tables, Raffle Ticket Sales, Auction Runners & Bid Spotters, and Clean Up.

Use the SignUpGenius button at Resources/Member Services on the BSOP website. <http://www.portlandbonsai.org/> or respond to the invitation email from SignUpGenius.

We look forward to seeing you at the party, ESPECIALLY NEW MEMBERS!

Your BSOP Executive Board: *Joe, Reid, Jan, Patty & Laura*

BSOP Library Policies

BSOP maintains a large lending library of over 1,250 items that are available to all members. The library subscribes to the Bonsai magazines including Bonsai Focus, Bonsai & Stone Appreciation (BCI), International Bonsai and the Journal of the American Bonsai Society.

- Materials may be checked out at regular Tuesday night meetings to be returned at the next regular Tuesday night meeting.
- Materials may be renewed by the borrower for one additional month.
- All overdue materials must be returned before checking out new ones.
- Lost items must be replaced by the borrower or a fine paid equivalent to replacement cost.

MENTORSHIP 101 NEWSLETTER

December 2019

The Mentorship 101 registration for 2020 is complete and we are looking forward to our first class on January 12th from 10:00–1:00 in the Oregon Grape Room at the Milwaukie Community Center. Mentorship 101 is a program by volunteers to teach beginner, basic, “Best Practices” in bonsai to our long time members or new members. In six classes we will try to give the students enough knowledge to enter the wonderful world of bonsai with success.

Though the class is full, we invite members to sign up on the waiting list in the Sign Up Genius published on the BSOP website. In addition to filling any absences from the waiting list, each month we will send everyone on the list copies of the of the class documents on the art of Bonsai which might include species information, skills to work on, articles of interest and miscellaneous topics.

We welcome people on the waiting list and member drop-ins to attend our classes on a silent observer basis.

For our more experienced members, we would like to invite you to become part of our mentor team. Following the lecture and demonstration part of the class given by the leaders, as a volunteer, you would be assigned a group of students to guide. We will be teaching potting, wiring, pruning and styling skills. We can send you an outline of what you can expect at the classes. You may not know everything, but our leaders can help you. It is a rewarding job and one where you too can learn.

So, sign up, volunteer or just drop in to see what is going on, Contact Joanne Raiton through the BSOP website.

THE 101 MENTORSHIP TEAM

CALL FOR SPEAKERS

Welcome to Fall. This is my first call for Ambassador Speakers for BSOP. It is that time of the year when BSOP starts receiving request from gardening clubs, nurseries, schools, retirement communities and others with request for a presentation about Bonsai and an accompanying display of trees. Some of the nurseries ask for an instructional class on basis bonsai design and care.

The number of requests (we have 4 so far of which I have handled 2 already) is increasing as the reputation of BSOP and the public’s knowledge about us expands. I have been asked by the BSOP Board to coordinate this effort by developing a roster of BSOP members who are willing to undertake these presentations.

The requests are generally for a talk of 1 to 1 1/2 hours accompanied by a display of a few trees and a Q and A period of 15 to 30 minutes. If a request is for an instructional class, team presentations are always a consideration.

If you are willing to share your bonsai knowledge and display a few of your trees to help further BSOP's mission to educate and promote our art, please contact me at keithwingfield@aol.com, call me at 503-538-6118 or contact me at one of the club meetings or mentorship programs. This is a simple and fun activity that helps to promote the general public's knowledge of bonsai and extend BSOP's community outreach. Please let me hear from you.

Already this fall we have 2 requests for presentations. The first is for a Bonsai presentation talk and a small showing of some trees in early and advanced development and a question and answer period. The request by the **Lake Grove Garden Club** and is for a speaker / presenter on Thursday, March 19, 2020. I will put you in touch with the Garden Club coordinator so final details can be worked out closer to the date of the presentation. **Additional Information is now available on this request as follows: The Bonsai Presentation is requested for March 19th 2010, at 10:00 a.m. at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 15751 Quarry Road, Lake Oswego, Oregon 97035. The Bonsai Speaker is the first item on the agenda for the morning and they would like a talk of 45 minutes or so with Q & A to follow. Typically 35 to 40 members attend.**

The second request is for a presentation at the Westview High School. Details on this one is still being worked out and more information will be forth coming. But if you are interested, let me know and I will keep you in the loop as more details and information become available.

This is a great opportunity to help spread the knowledge of BSOP and the art of Bonsai through our state and help accomplish our educational outreach, so with this additional information, if you can undertake one of these requests, please contact me.

Happy Fall / Winter Bonsai Season, *Keith*

PETER'S 20-20-20 -- FOUND AGAIN!

Have you been wondering whatever happened to Peter's 20-20-20 fertilizer with trace elements? I was a dedicated user of the product for my Bonsai trees for many years. In the spring of 2010 I noticed that the products of the J.R. Peter's Company were becoming more and more difficult to find and finally, by that fall, were gone from the market. Well, this is a real tale of Mergers and Acquisitions 101 and market share capture and control. What happened was that the **Shultz** brand makers of fertilizer products acquired the **J.R. Peter's company** and all of its formulas and removed the line of products from the market, thereby eliminating the product competition.

Sometime in late 2011, **Scott's Brands** acquired the rights to the Peter's brand name and the Peter's formulas to add to the Scott's line of Professional Lawn Care products. While Scott's acquired the Peter's 20-20-20 formula, they chose not to produce or market this particular product. In late 2011, Scott's Professional products was acquired by the **Everris** chemical and fertilizer group. Subsequently, the J.R. Peter's family was able to repurchase all of the Peter's brand formulas for a price, but were not able to negotiate the repurchase of the Peter's brand name. After reacquiring the original formulas, the family set about reintroducing the previous Peter's line of fertilizer product back into the market.

However, the original formulas and products are now sold under the brand name of **Jack's Classic**. So there you have it, an old friend has returned, just under a new name. Whoever would have thought that growing Bonsai trees for fun would require an introduction the high finance world of Wall Street.

For your convenience, Jack's products can be purchased online through Amazon and A.M. Leonard and at many local garden centers throughout the Portland area such as **George's Garden Center** in Clackamas, **Margie's Farm & Garden** in Aurora, **Ross Nursery** in Canby, **St Helen's Nursery** in St. Helens, and **Tony's Garden Centers** in Portland, Happy Valley and Damascus.

Keith Wingfield



Chasmanthium laxum
(Slender woodoats)
Solidago canadensis
(Canada goldenrod)
Selaginella (spikemoss)
Kusamono: Young Choe
Pot: Auer Othmar

Painting by Ron Yasenchak

December Haiku

High above grey sky
Dark clouds dancing on the wind
Snowflake passes by

Ron Yasenchak



Scott's BRANCH TIPS

BONSAI TECHNIQUE & PHILOSOPHY

Six Essential Tools for Bonsai

Since we have so many folks that are new to bonsai, I thought I would talk about the tools that are essential for your success. I also thought you might print the article out to read and then casually leave it in a conspicuous place for your spouse to discover, who might need some holiday gift giving suggestions ;-) These six tools that I am covering are the ones that I use over and over, almost every time I touch a tree, whether it be conifer or deciduous, large or small. I'll cover what to look for and in some instances, what might make a good substitute.

I would rarely buy a bonsai tool online. Only when I am familiar with the quality and consistency of a brand would I do that. There are many great tool makers out there, like Joshua Roth, Futaba, Kaneshin, Fujiyama, and a new upstart, American Bonsai, which are all American made. American's tools are very consistent and I would check them out. I am trying them myself. Because the markings are often in Japanese, I have a hard time tracking which brand of tool I actually have.

One of my own limitations to some tools are my relatively large hands, so I always have to check and make sure that they actually fits in my big mitts. That pertains mostly to scissors. Then I open and close the tool to see if it is too loose or tight. A tool should barely fall open when you hold it horizontally. If it's too loose, you can give the rivet a tap. But a word of caution, there is no way I know of to loosen a tight tool except by using it over and over. My next test is to hold cutting tools up to the light to see how the edges meet and if there is a gap letting light through. Root cutters, concave pruners, and knob cutters all work in a bypass cutting fashion. That means that the edges slightly overlap each other. They do not meet perfectly. So they have to close far enough for the cutting edges to pass, but not have a gap when they do. Stainless steel as a material is often nice, but not needed. Most of my tools are not. Now on to the tools themselves.

Number 6 – Angled tweezers This is easily going to be the cheapest tool to acquire of the lot, but it does come in quite a few grades. A good pair of tweezers is a godsend and a bad one is just frustrating. We are talking here about the type with a bent or angled tip. These often come with a small spatula on the end and the cheaper models are just spot-welded together. But really, you don't need much more than that. Oh, I do have a really nice pair that I love, but my original pair is still a workhorse. If you use them in repotting like I do, in place of chopsticks, you can wear them down over time.

Their chief duty is pulling weeds and general clean up. Make sure to get a pair with not too narrow of a point. Otherwise, they just act like scissors and cut the weed in half rather than pulling it. This is especially important if you also get a straight pair. Here's the difference; Angled tweezers are great for pulling weeds, repotting, and general work. The straight tweezers are better for pulling needles and leaves. The elbow of an angled pair will accidentally grab onto adjacent foliage, which can be quite hazardous.

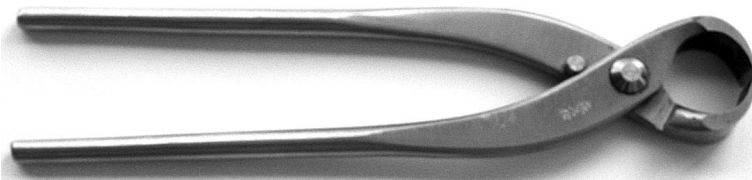
Reprinted from December 2016. Ideas for bonsai Christmas presents.

There are lots of occupations and hobbies that use tweezers, so you might be able to find something that you already have, but they really do need to be eight or so inches long for reaching under the tree. Ideally, they only open about 1/4-3/8 inch, otherwise you have to keep applying the pressure to get in between other leaves and such, which just tires your fingers. Also, the metal needs to be stout enough to apply some good pressure when pulling needles. With cheaper tweezers, I sometimes squeeze hard enough to touch the sides together. If so, I just bend them out farther.



Angled Tweezers

Number 5 - Root Cutters Though I have a smaller pair of root cutters, I use my large pair almost exclusively for root work and any large pruning short of using a saw. They really are very versatile. Use them to cut taproots flush, as well as any other large roots. This tool is essential for creating a great root base and enables you to get your trees into shallow bonsai pots. Even though I regularly cut through pumice, lava, and the like, I have never had to sharpen mine. That's not bragging, it just means that they are very durable and can take the punishment, but mine probably could use a touch up.



Root Cutters

Number 4 - Wire pliers I use wire on every single one of my trees, so this tool can become very important. You can use just about any small pair around the house, but in my book, nothing really compares to a bonsai designed pliers. The type that I have pictured work excellently at a fair price. The rounded tip allows you to apply power with pinpoint accuracy and without getting a part of the branch stuck in there. The tapered/rounded handle allows you to twirl the tool in your hand easily when tightening a guy wire or removing wire. Almost all of the inexpensive models have straight handles and are hard to use. Their tips also are not very strong and they become hard to use. At workshops, I have picked up pliers from students that were nearly worthless. Be picky here with the real deal, or just get a sturdy pair of Stanley's and save your money.



Wire Pliers

Number 3 - Wire cutters There are quite a few different designs for wire cutters. Pictured are my favorites for small work, but every other pair I have tried works. There really is no other tool for the job out there. Bonsai cutters are made to cut right up next to the branch without damaging it. Plus, they concentrate the power out on the tip for that same reason, instead of needing to cut in the crotch of the tool, like many electrical dikes.



Wire Cutter medium

Number 2 – Concave Pruners You really have two choices here; regular concave pruners or spherical cutters. The difference being that regular concaves are curved on a single axis and spherical cutters are curved on two axes making a truly round cut. The difference between a concave pruner and the root cutter or knob cutter is that you can cut from the side of the branch. This is your workhorse pruner. Invest wisely and note the suggestions at the beginning of this article on how to choose one that works well. The is one thing that you need to keep in mind for any pruners. You are only going to be able to cut a branch about half the diameter of the actual blade. This also depends greatly on whether you are working with conifers or deciduous trees. I can cut twice the diameter of a pine as I can a crabapple or maple.



Concave Pruner

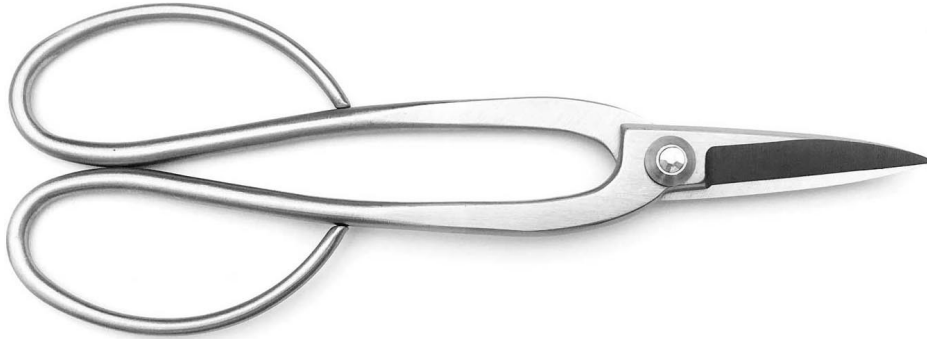


Concave pruner side view



Spherical pruner side view

Number 1 – Scissors Did you guess this one already? This is not the pair that you have in your junk drawer in the kitchen. This is the tool that will make thousands of cuts each season and vital for your bonsai success. Choose wisely. There are lots of variations in shapes, but make sure you get one that fits your hand, and can make hardy cuts. The smaller and narrower versions are for bud cutting only and should be considered as a alternate pair in your kit, not the primary one. Great scissors abound at decent prices, so finding one should not be too hard. With your main pair you want to be able to do light pruning, maybe up to a quarter inch branch at times. You also need a narrow point to get in between tight spaces. That’s why you need dedicated bonsai scissors.



Scissors

What you don't need Now that we have gone through all of those essentials, how about the things that you don't need? There are lots of tools out there, but some of them are not very practical, or rarely used, so I am here to help you keep a little more money in your wallet for better trees, or better tools. So, here are the tools that you don't need.

1. Bending clamps. I bought several of these and even used some once or twice. It took my male ten years to recover from the experience. There are better ways to bend a branch. I have never seen a pro use one.

2. Branch splitters. These are similar to root cutters, but with narrower and longer blades. I bought one twenty years ago and never used it. If I did need one, I can make the root cutters do the work. Come to think of it, in all that time, I have only heard of someone actually splitting a branch once or twice.

3. Bending jacks. These can be of use in larger sizes, and many pros use them this way. Most often they make it so that you can get the work done with one person. But the smaller ones are really unneeded.



Branch Splitter



Bending Clamp

4. Jin pliers. These are similar to the regular straight pliers mentioned above but these have a canted head. That means I can't use them to twist wire, but I can use my wiring pliers to make jins. That means these are redundant.



Jin Pliers

And last but not least, if you do large bonsai or are getting more advanced, here is what you might need to add to your assortment.

1. Compound wire cutters. You can buy larger, more expensive bonsai wire cutters, but why when these guys are a fraction of the price. It will cut 4 gauge hardened copper wire and won't be damaged by steel wire. Buy the Knipex brand. I bought a cheaper \$20 version and they hurt my hand and were trashed by steel wire.



Compound Wire Cutter

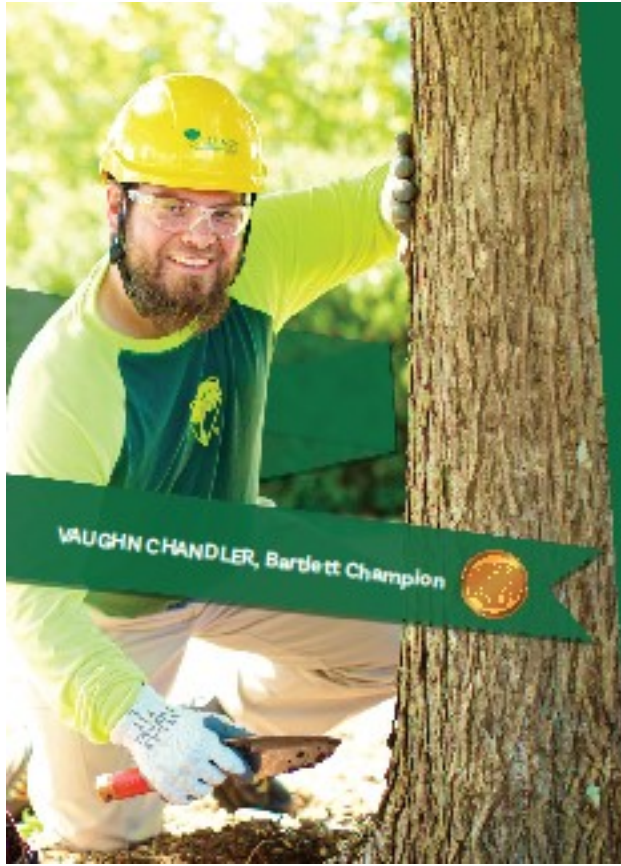


2. Knob cutter. I almost put this as my seventh choice for a tool. I use it mostly on deciduous trees, and it really gets a workout to clean up all my cuts so that things heal over nice and smoothly. Look for a pair where the two cutting edges meet to form a nice, smooth curve. I have not used them, but too many I see these days meet at an angle and I can't see how they will make the kind of smooth cut I need.

Knob Cutter

3. Saw. Many, many types here. A narrower body allows you to get between branches, but can buckle easily. So some have a thicker blade and teeth. This one is my first choice. I have a large folding landscape saw that I use on larger cuts, and several models in between.

Scott



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The Bonsai Society of Portland meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

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5440 SE Kellogg Creek Drive, Milwaukie OR 97222

Enter parking lot from Rusk Road

Visitors are always welcome!

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Contact information is on the BSOP website www.portlandbonsai.org under Resources/Member Services/Membership Directory