



Founded January 1964

# JOURNAL



January 2016  
[www.torontobonsai.org](http://www.torontobonsai.org)

# Schedule of events

Meetings are held at the **TBG** ([Toronto Botanical Garden](#)), located at **777 Lawrence Avenue East** (at Leslie St.), Toronto, in the studio rooms upstairs. The first meeting is free for non-members.

## Bonsai 101: 7:00

Bonsai 101 is held in Studio #2 upstairs at the TBG. Beginners should read '[INTRODUCTION TO BONSAI](#)' (click on link), posted on the [TBS web site](#) prior to attending. This class was created for beginners to bonsai; experienced members are welcome but asked not to disrupt the proceedings.

**Jan. 11:** Lily Tsurulnikov will discuss the basics of growing tropical bonsai.

## General meetings: 7:45

**Jan. 11:** John Hoffman will be master of ceremonies at our first meeting of the calendar year. Greg Quinn will give a presentation on the technical aspects of growing tropical bonsai. Please bring in your tropical species bonsai for critique and display. After the meeting, there will be a tropical tree workshop, with 3 grewia and 1 pyracantha as subjects. The fee is \$25 - please contact Kem Shaw (back cover) to register. Make sure you also bring in boxes, blankets and plastic bags to protect your tropical trees from this winter weather!

**Feb. 8:** Silent auction – please bring in items to help the fund-raising effort for the club. Wine and beer will be served...

**Mar. 14:** Presentation: repotting Trident maple, with a follow-up discussion of soil mixes.

**Apr. 11:** Presentation: creating a larch forest.

**May 9:** t.b.a.

**June 13:** Martin Schmalenberg pays us a visit.

## Outside our club:

### **April 15-17: Mid-Atlantic Bonsai Societies Spring Festival**

Crown Plaza Cromwell, 100 Berlin Road, Cromwell, CT 06416. Featuring Kunio Kobayashi, Walter Pall, Bjorn Bjorholm, Jim Doyle, and Frank Mihalic. For details visit: <http://www.midatlanticbonsai.org/>

### **May 12: Joshua Roth New Talent competition**

Being held at **The Frederick Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, Grand Rapids, Michigan**, during the ***Bonsai in the Garden Learning Seminar***, this competition is an annual event to recognize and promote new bonsai talent in North America. First prize is \$1,000 toward an exclusive course of instruction with an approved bonsai teacher. The first stage of the competition is a judging of photographs of previously designed trees by the entrant. The second stage will be the production of a bonsai from raw material. Visit the ABS website to pre-register: [Joshua Roth New Talent Competition](#)

**On the cover:** Lily Tsurulnikov's olive (*Olea oleaster*) bonsai, from the 2015 fall show. Photo by Mike Pochwat.

# Presidents message

by Carlos Bras

## Happy 2016!

As we enter into a new year we are almost at the halfway point of our club's year. I am very excited about the remainder of our fiscal year as the executive has been working hard to bring you new programs that will appeal the new at bonsai and the more experienced.

We are extremely fortunate to have so many members who are active in maintaining a great culture of learning and experience sharing. Members like Angelo Dumitru, who not only takes on the huge task of maintaining our club website but also helps out in workshops and hosts us during our summer socials. I would like to thank Angelo for his excellent presentation on how to create custom containers at our December meeting. Angelo shared with us his techniques and craftsmanship, because not all collected trees are suitable for traditional containers. By creating a vessel that is tailored to the root system and compliments the tree design, the artist can create a stunning display.

Hopefully we can organize a weekend workshop along this line in the future. If anyone knows someone with, or has a workshop or studio that we can rent, please contact me so we can plan a workshop.

If you're new to the club you by now have figured out that the club is comprised of volunteers. We rely on the membership to come forward with requests that suit their interests. If you have ideas or have a talent that you are willing to share, please come forward and approach someone on the executive. Also, if you have questions or need help with one of your trees take the initiative and ask one of the more experienced members for help. If you don't know who you can approach, then speak to Kem or Sylvia from the membership team and they will point you in the right direction. So, although we collectively give support to our members, we also rely on you to approach us for specific help in these areas.

## Martin Schmalenberg

The Toronto Bonsai Society is proud to present a unique bonsai opportunity to participate in a workshop with Martin Schmalenberg. This will be a total immersion in design concepts, (maybe radical changes) to your trees!

Martin has been involved with bonsai and stone appreciation for over 40 years and has traveled extensively in Asia. He is known for collecting, researching and writing on Pitch Pine (native northeastern *Pinus rigida*). In 2007, Martin compiled and edited a book, **North American Bonsai**. Not surprisingly, Martin has been a featured artist at conventions throughout the U.S and Canada as well as the World Bonsai Convention in Puerto Rico in 2009, and has won numerous awards for bonsai design. Over the years, Martin has spent time in Japan with Hiroyoshi Yamaji and Mikio Oshima and studied Zen and Ikebana.

For the workshops, we will have two work groups with no more than 10 participants per group. Saturday, June 11, 12:00pm -5:30pm, and Sunday, June 12, 12:00pm -5:30pm. We will be posting workshop fees soon, sign up sheets will be made available, and we will be asking for deposits from participants; please attend either one of these dates!

Marty will be our guest of honour at our regular Monday meeting on June 13, and we will either have a tree and stone critique or a demo. Stay tuned for more info.

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## Do it yourself custom bonsai containers

By Greg Quinn

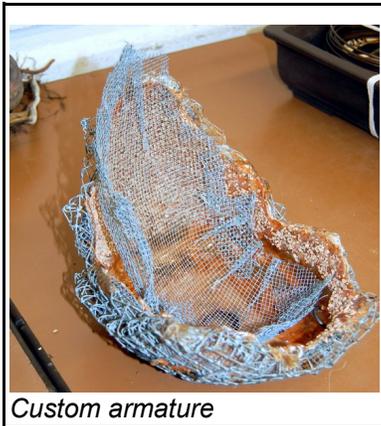
During our last, Christmas-themed, general meeting, we had a pretty thorough introduction to making our own custom bonsai containers by Angelo. At the TBS, we usually encourage members to build their own tree training boxes as containers for their newly collected and newly acquired trees, but Angelo went well beyond basic containerage, extending into pots that are refined enough to be used in bonsai display.

He got into this practice through his frustration at finding suitable containers for his collected trees, which are often rooted on cliff faces, resulting in a slanted root base. Ordinary training boxes and conventional bonsai-in-training containers could not satisfy this requirement, so he started building custom containers for each individual tree.



Angelo's 'eagle' cedar bonsai

Starting with an armature (metal structure), he applies fiberglass cloth over the extent, and coats it with epoxy liquid and hardener. Later, he adds another armature, and uses coloured cement, with some moulding accents to suggest the stone that the tree naturally grows in.



Custom armature



Layers...



I think this the beginning of a beautiful friendship...

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## Growing tropical bonsai indoors during the winter

by Greg Quinn

Although they are typically grown outdoors, bonsai are usually displayed indoors. This is the origin of the misconception that they are all indoor plants. In the case of tropical bonsai, they actually are indoors most of the year in Toronto.

Having said that, there is no such thing as an indoor bonsai or an indoor tree. All trees and all bonsai are naturally outdoor trees and are best grown outside. However, since tropical species can not tolerate temperatures below 12 Celsius, they must be brought inside during the period from September to May in Toronto. That means they must be grown inside your home for about 8 months of the year.

Not all trees are the same – each one has specific requirements to grow well. We classify trees, and all plants as either tropical, sub-tropical, or temperate to distinguish differing growing conditions by temperature. Beyond that, there are cultivars within each species that require slightly different care. For example, there are several [cold-hardy fig trees](#) that can be successfully grown in the ground in our area, given proper winterizing techniques.

The growth pattern of the plant can be a good indication of vigour. A lack of growth may indicate poor light conditions, but could also be a sign of other problems as well. A healthy plant under poor light may develop longer internodes (length of stem between leaves). Leaves may develop larger than normal on some plants (stretching to increase the amount of energy received). The color of many plants in poor light may be pale green, and lower leaves may yellow and drop. Supplemental grow lights are recommended, and needed to raise the light level.

Since tropical bonsai are best kept in a well-maintained greenhouse, one may learn the best cultivation techniques from the commercial indoor farmers.

### Light

Lack of adequate light intensity is the most common factor limiting the growth of plants in many areas of the home. Light provides the energy plants need to make the food required for them to grow and flower. Light levels indoors are very poor. Though imperceptible to the human eye, light levels drop rapidly the further you are from a natural source of light. It is said that light levels halve every 50cm further from a window you are. This means that for most tree species light levels are too low, even when stood on a bright window-sill. It needs to be understood that glass filters out many of the UV rays that plants require for the process of photosynthesis; many trees species can fail to receive enough light on a south-facing window sill, even though the heat of the sunlight is burning their leaves.

Trees that do not receive enough light will fail to grow strongly if at all. Any growth that is produced will tend to have long internodes and become 'leggy'. Leaves will be over-sized in an effort to catch maximum light.

Some tropical species are used to growing on the forest floor (figus/ serissa/ sageretia amongst others) in their natural habitat, where there is naturally little light and these will cope with lower light levels.

## **Growing tropical bonsai indoors during the winter (continued...)**

Trees grown indoors should be placed on sunny window-sills and/or provided with overhead fluorescent lamps. This should be sufficient for many tropical species. Ordinary fluorescent lamps or aquarium lights, kept about 2 inches above the tree for 12-16 hours a day, can be used to supplement or replace natural light levels. Do not place trees on window-sills that are closed behind curtains at night, the temperature in between the window and curtain can rapidly drop below room temperature during the night.

### **Dormancy**

Woody temperate-climate plants require a dormant period. This is a period of at least 42 days where temperatures are 10°C or lower. Most deciduous trees will lose their leaves at this time, while some others, such as Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*) may remain evergreen. Evergreen species, including conifers, also lose some of their foliage, and slow their growth rate considerably during the dormant season.

Tropical species do not have a dormant period as such, but do experience leaf loss, and slow their growth down during the period at the beginning of their winter indoors. Apart from that, they will continue to grow all year round, given adequate water, humidity, and light.

### **Air circulation and humidity**

Central heating systems radically reduce humidity in our homes to near desert levels. All bonsai need good humidity levels to grow well indoors and there are several ways to address this problem.

Firstly, never place your bonsai above a radiator or duct opening, where humidity levels are especially poor, and dry heat regularly comes blasting out. Radiators should be avoided as platforms for plant growing, since they also cause wild fluctuations in temperature to their the surrounding environment.

Secondly, while trees can be misted to create higher humidity levels, and also cleans the leaves of dust and dirt that would otherwise collect, don't do it everyday, since excessive misting can build up salt deposits on leaves and water runoff can result in over-wet bonsai compost. It is far more important that the surrounding area is kept humid and this is best provided by use of a humidity or gravel tray. This is a flat tray that holds water into which small stones or pebbles are placed. The bonsai is placed on top of the stones so none of the pot touches the water, as the water evaporates, it provides a continual humid atmosphere around the tree, so that the leaves don't dry out. It is important that the bonsai pot can still drain fully and it should sit high enough above the water in the humidity tray to be able to do so.

### **Pests and diseases**

Trees are just as likely to be attacked by pests and diseases inside as they are out. Bugs that would normally be killed outside during the cold of winter are able to thrive indoors year round.

Special attention should be paid to spider mites which positively enjoy the low humidity indoor environment. Spider mites cannot be seen with the naked eye but their presence can be noted by the appearance of very fine webbing between leaves. Since we no longer allow the sale of systemic insecticides, you must become adept at growing your indoor trees well and wash any bugs off as soon as they appear. Insecticidal soaps are available at most nurseries, but ordinary dish soap, mixed with hydrogen peroxide, can be used as a substitute.

Fungus gnats are very small fly-like bugs that can occasionally be found in and around the compost of bonsai, nearly always drawn to over-wet composts. If the compost of the bonsai is found to be too wet all the time, consider a change in your watering practices or use fine gravel as a mulch. Fungus gnats are nearly always brought indoors when moss growing on the surface of the compost is not removed beforehand.

Growing bonsai indoors successfully is not straightforward; many trees can continue to grow seemingly unaffected for anything up to 1 or 2 years before showing any outward signs of distress. However, after this time, trees tend to have lost so much health and vigor that they are very hard to keep alive. Do not assume that the tree you brought growing indoors at the garden centre or bonsai retailer will grow indoors on a permanent basis. Very often, outdoor species are sold in an indoor environment simply for the convenience of the retailer.

### **Display**

All bonsai should be displayed on some sort of stand (*dai*), even if the stand is no more than a reed mat. Think of the stand as comparable to the frame of a painting. Its purpose is to raise the bonsai to a proper viewing height and to give the bonsai a feeling of importance.

According to tradition, the stand is made of wood. However, some traditions call for the bonsai is to be displayed on slab of rock. If the bonsai is styled formally, then the stand should be one of a formal design; if informal, then the stand should be informal as well. And finally, the stand should never be smaller or the same size as the pot, and bamboo or reed mats should be used only with small or medium-sized bonsai or accents and never with the more powerful primary trees.

## Growing tropical bonsai indoors during the winter (continued...)

The right stand can add to the décor of a room and bring out the best in your bonsai this winter. For example, some handcrafted bonsai stands are made from Merbau, one of the world's most stable and attractive woods, and finished with a hand-applied stain for rich luster and a long-lasting finish.

Handcrafted by artisans, these stands will add character to a home while remaining firmly planted in Oriental custom.

Make certain your stand has a strong, long-lasting finish to protect the wood from moisture. Be sure the stand is made from a quality hardwood. And finally, consider choosing a traditional hand-crafted stand. It may produce minor differences in color and size, but that is what will make it unique, much like your bonsai, and offer a lifetime of pleasure.

Do not be restricted by the idea that all stands must be purchased – you can make one yourself:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IUvgF2ga4I>

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## Announcements

### Membership

If you still have not renewed your membership, please do so as soon as possible. For those of you who have already renewed, thank you.

### Workshops

Register for our club workshops. We hold workshops during Monday night meetings and in backyards on Saturdays during the summer. Contact any member of our club executive to indicate your interest, or check in at the **members' desk** before the meeting.

### Bonsai tools?

You need bonsai tools; we sell tools. Contact **Gim Retsinas** (see back cover) for special items or a full set. He is currently putting together an order with J-bonsai (<http://www.j-bonsai.com/>).

### Dick Morton Bonsai Award of Excellence

The TBS executive has decided to give out medals along with this award.

### TBS website

**Angelo** has been working very hard to update our club website ([www.torontobonsai.org](http://www.torontobonsai.org)) – take a look.

### Forms

The membership form, introduction to bonsai, bonsai record form, and the sales sheet form, are located under **'Documents'** (at the top right of the screen) on the **TBS website**: <http://torontobonsai.org/documents/>

### TBS on Facebook

Did you know that the TBS is on **Facebook**? (Click on this link, and like us today.)

### Library

Did you know that our TBS library has instructional DVDs for club members' use? Borrow them to develop your skill in bonsai. Please return all library materials at the next meeting, before start up, and during the coffee break.

### Bonsai Penjing Canada

At the December meeting, Joan Greenway announced that a new bonsai initiative has been created, to feature and promote all Canadian bonsai clubs. Visit and like [Bonsai Penjing Canada](#) on **Facebook**:

### February publishing deadline

**The publishing deadline for the February Journal is January 29.** Please forward all photos, articles, notifications and materials to [gquinn@hotmail.com](mailto:gquinn@hotmail.com) before then.

*"Our brains are like bonsai trees, growing around our private versions of reality."*

*Author: Sloane Crosley*

## Regular TBS meetings

Meetings take place on the second Monday of every month, except July and August, at the TBG (Toronto Botanical Gardens), located at 777 Lawrence Avenue East, at Leslie Street, in the studio rooms upstairs at 7:45 pm. The general meetings frequently include demonstrations of bonsai techniques, critiques of bonsai trees, and workshops, in which each participant styles a tree with the help of an experienced member. These meetings are preceded at 7:00 p.m. by the the Bonsai 101 beginner sessions.

A small fee is charged for workshops; a tree, wire and an instructor are provided. To participate in workshops it is necessary to register in advance of the meeting so that materials can be provided.

Members are encouraged to bring in bonsai to show and work on during the meetings. Wire is provided at no charge. Non-members may attend a meeting at no charge to see if the club is of interest to them.

## Library hours and policy

The library is open to members at the beginning of our regular meetings. Members may borrow books free of charge for one month. Late returns cost \$2 per month with a minimum charge of \$2. Please return all materials during the next meeting, and **especially** before the summer break.

## Membership desk

The membership desk will be open at all meetings. The opening time may be extended for the first fall meeting to assist with renewals. You may also register for workshops there.

## Tools & supplies

Tools and supplies are sold by the club at most meetings. It is a good idea to contact the 'Tools & Supplies' executive member in advance of the meeting for specific tools and supplies.

## TBS executive

### President

Carlos Bras  
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### Vice-President

- please talk to Carlos Bras

### Treasurer

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The Journal was founded in January 1964, is published monthly, and exists to further the study, practice, promulgation, and fellowship of bonsai.

Visit the Toronto Bonsai Society's web site, at:

[www.torontobonsai.org](http://www.torontobonsai.org)

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