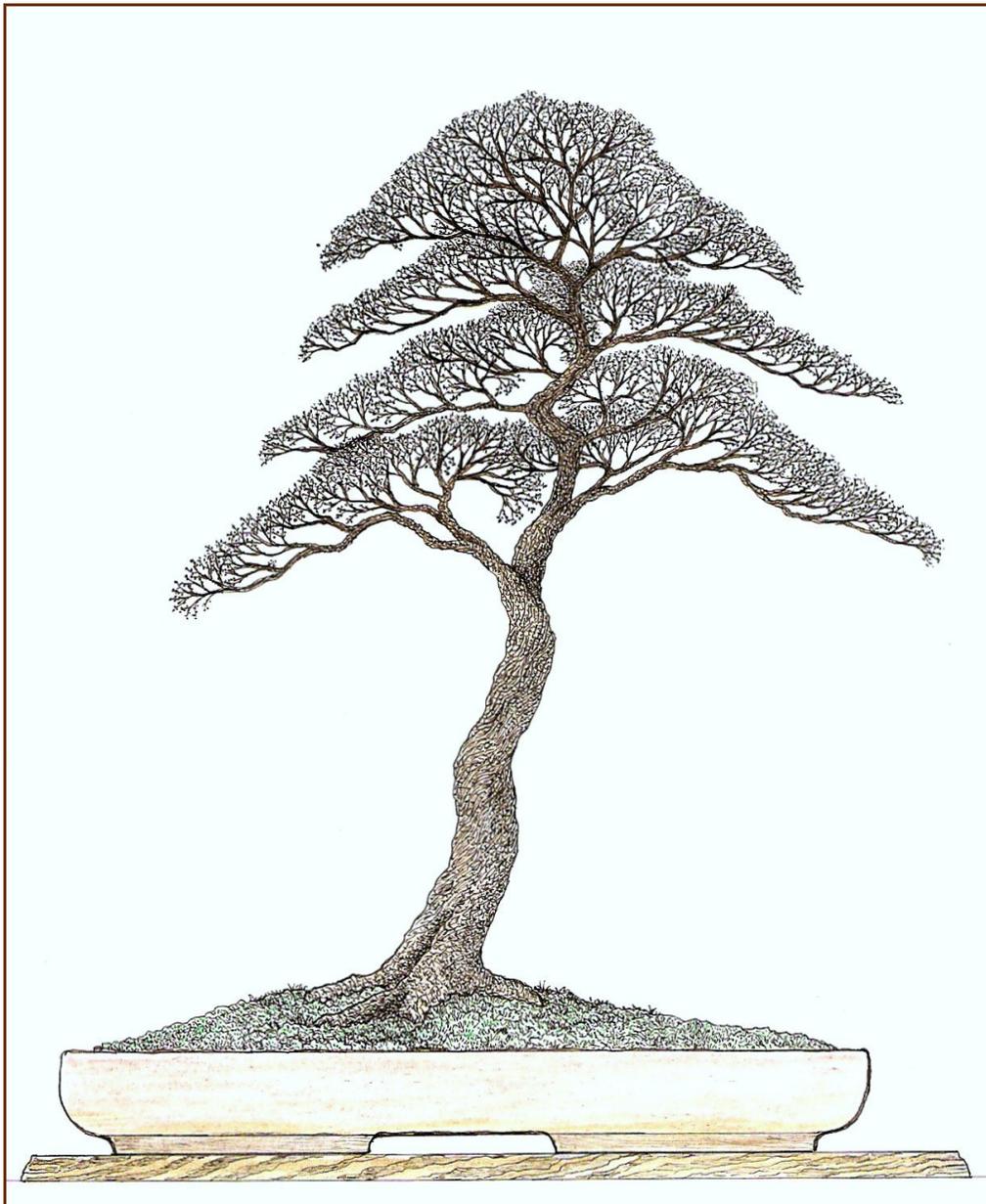




Founded January, 1964

# JOURNAL



**April 2017**

[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 – 7:30 Studio #2 upstairs**

Bonsai 101 is held in Studio #2 upstairs at the TBG, before the general meeting. 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.

**Apr 10: John Biel will answer your beginner spring preparation bonsai questions**

### **General meetings: 7:45 – 10:00 Studio rooms upstairs**

#### **Apr 10: presentation on collecting trees for bonsai**

Angelo Dumitru will give a slide show presentation on tree collecting.

Pumice for repotting will be available again, in bags for \$25 each.

After the coffee break, there will be an open workshop on repotting bonsai. Please bring in a tree to repot, and other necessary supplies. Senior members will present to assist.

#### **May 08: pines workshop**

5 trees available. Contact Kem (back cover) to register.

### **Spring show: Saturday, May 27 – Sunday, May 28**

**TBG Floral hall 8 am:** bring in your bonsai, bonsai stands, shitakusa, suiseki, and scrolls for display. Volunteers are needed for set up, take down. **Open to public 12 - 5 pm.**

**Social/Critique:** Saturday evening. **Bjorn Bjorholm**, international bonsai expert, will lead the discussion.

**Sales area:** also in the Floral hall. Trees, bonsai soil, tools, wire, books, and other materials are available for purchase. If you are selling items, you must volunteer to help, and fill out the [sales forms](#) (click on link).

### **Outside our club:**

#### **April 7 – 9: MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies Spring Festival (MABS)**

Radison Cromwell, Cromwell, Connecticut, U.S.A. If you want to see Boon Manakavitivipart this spring, register [here](#).

#### **April 28-30: 8th World Bonsai Convention (WBC)**

The convention will be held in Omiya, Saitama City (north of Tokyo), Japan. Visit the WBFF website for more details.

**On the cover: Norman Haddrick's 'spring buds' bonsai drawing.**

# Presidents message

by Carlos Bras

I want to thank David and Gim for their wonderful presentations on fertilizing and making bonsai soil mix last month. If you want a copy of these, or want to simply read these presentations again, they are now on our TBS website.

Our next meeting will be this Monday April 10, and we will again be distributing pumice orders to members. As you may recall, Gim recommended pumice as a component in bonsai soil, to improve drainage. We sold it to you in buckets during the March meeting, but this time our supplier didn't have buckets, so they are now in 20 lb bags. Please make sure when you get your purchase to take to your car.

After the announcements, Angelo will share some of his experiences collecting trees from the wild. After the coffee break, we will have open workshop focusing on repotting. All members are encouraged to bring in a tree to repot and if members require assistance there will be senior members present to offer a helping hand and advice. The club will have wire available, but members should bring their own soil.

On Sunday, April 23, we will be having a club organized collecting trip to the same location as last year. There are still lots of apple trees and other species around worth collecting. For those of who didn't come with last year, the location is about 1.5 hour drive east of Toronto, and there are rules that we need to follow as requested by the land owner. All participants must fill out a waiver form (on page 8 or this Journal) and give it to Kevin Yates before the trip. No soil can be removed from the Moraine or the landowner could be fined. The gates must be locked once we enter and after we leave. We can collect any trees, sizes, but all holes we dig must be filled in after removing the tree. Discarded branches must be piled onto the larger pile sites located in the fields, or removed completely from the site. No garbage can be left behind.

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## Two March bonsai presentations

by Zeb Tate

### Feeding bonsai, with David Johnson

David started off the evening with his presentation on bonsai fertilizers, which covered both fundamental issues and practical advice. Because bonsai are in pots, any fertilizer used will be leached from the container with watering. This makes fertilizing a necessity for bonsai, since they won't get the nutrients they need if you don't apply them.

The first dealt with the key chemicals included in plant fertilizers—nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium—along with the typical proportions, listed in percentages on the package, used with evergreen (30-10-10) and deciduous (20-20-20) trees. Alternatives to these basic fertilizers were also discussed, such as the available organic types: fish emulsion (good for all types of trees, but can sometimes attract bonsai-hostile wildlife); fertilizer pellets, which is from hen manure (typically 4-6-2, very popular in Japan), and liquid kelp (0-0-4). Other alternatives included were synthetic Schultz All Purpose Liquid Plant Food (10-15-10), recommended for use with indoor bonsai. These are all available at local nurseries.

David then provided some basic tips on fertilization: always water with plain water first before fertilizing; don't apply fertilizer within 1 month of repotting a bonsai, with the exception of high phosphorous fertilizer specifically designed for newly transplanted trees; use Miracid for acid-loving plants, such as azaleas; and change fertilizer manufacturers regularly, to get a better range of secondary (calcium, magnesium, sulfur) and micronutrients (iron, copper, zinc, manganese, boron, and molybdenum). While you do not have to measure these proportionally, they should be listed on the package.

The presentation was followed by a Q&A on topics ranging from chicken guano fertilizer, with which some members have had great success, to the best place to get high quality fertilizers - check your local hydroponics shop.

Overall, the presentation was a great introduction to a very complex subject, and it highlighted the diverse methods of fertilization that are used successfully by members to grow their bonsai.

## Making bonsai soil, with Gim Retsinas

The second presentation of the night was given by Gim, who provided an introduction to making your own bonsai soil, as an alternative to purchasing high-priced mixes.

He went over 3 basic soil components (organic, porous inorganic, and non-porous inorganic material) in order to achieve the 3 basic goals of good water retention, good drainage, and good aeration. This was followed by a more detailed discussion of specific components, such as **large perlite**, to lighten the overall weight of large bonsai, **activated charcoal**, which is used to improve drainage, absorb excess minerals in our hard tap water, and retain nutrients in the soil, and finally some soil recipes (for one example, see **Boon Bonsai Soil Mix**, listed in **The Journal, March, 2017**). Gim finished his presentation by leading a Q&A on bonsai soil. One major theme that came out is that it can be very difficult to find good soil components locally, and so members should take advantage of opportunities, such as the recent black lava and pumice sale at the club.

Another way to manage scarce components is to recycle as much bonsai soil as possible, either by washing off organic material and leaving it in a black plastic bag in the hot sun for several weeks, or, for the more adventurous, sterilizing it in a propane barbecue grill. Loaded into a pan on the grill, and cooked at over 170 degrees F. for several hours, the soil will be sterile afterwards, and ready for reuse. One note about sterilizing bonsai soil is that you will be killing the good microbes with the bad, which includes **mycorrhiza** - a beneficial fungus that helps tree roots take up nutrients.

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## Collecting trees from nature

by Norman Haddrick

Bonsai has its origins in those trees exposed to the rigours of harsh environments, on cliffs and mountainsides. Trees contained by the limits of available light, water, and nutrient, shaped by the wind, ice, snow and rain. Or, trees gently browsed by cattle and wildlife, which can be carefully gathered, and nurtured in containers for generations.

It is correct to say that the most prized bonsai are those that have been gathered from wild and rugged places. These are trees, which exhibit the characteristics of their struggle to survive against the elements. For those of us who can reach the locations where such trees are available, the knowledge required to collect potential trees starts with the ability to recognise the structures in the scrub and undergrowth, or on the cliffs and in crevices. Then, to prune away the superfluous and unwanted, dead branches, before deciding to dig, and to remove a tree.

The initial clean-up pruning will allow you to review the all-important basic structure, to decide upon its future potential. It is always better to leave an unsuitable tree in the ground, where it will survive and benefit from the pruning you gave it, than to indiscriminately collect, then discard it later as unsuitable.

The first rule of collecting trees for bonsai is to respect the property rights of others, and to get the permission of landowners before you venture onto property. Also, be aware of the native people's land rights, in areas around reservations. Let common sense prevail.

Experience dictates that the best possible time for collecting trees from the wild is early springtime, when the first swell of the bud is evident. The timing will vary greatly depending upon your region, therefore careful observations must be made of each of the subjects, to judge the best timing for the tree. Too many fine specimens have been lost because the time was more suitable to the collector than to the specimen! Preparation and planning is essential for the removal of any tree from the ground. This experience will be the most critical in the life of your selected specimen. Having survived for decades, or even a hundred years in these arduous conditions, one thoughtless unplanned act can cause the loss of a venerable tree.

In planning at the site, several points have to be addressed:

- 1) Can the specimen be removed from the location?
- 2) Can sufficient hair roots, (feeder roots), be gathered within the root-ball?
- 3) Does the trunk have an interesting shape, form and proportion? "Knee high and arm's thickness" is one idea of scale!
- 4) Look for "untypical" tree forms, which are unique and aged by their environment in such a way that they have taken on an unusual form, worthy of being collected.
- 5) Is the specimen, and its root-ball, transportable? The best way to begin your appreciation for a bonsai with which you plan to spend many years, is when you have to carry it for a few miles, over rough country!

## Collecting techniques

The location of the tree and the terrain will dictate the techniques employed in removing the tree from the ground, and preparation for its journey. Many different conditions can be encountered, and not simply the vagaries of the Canadian late-winter/early spring weather, but the geographical and physical difficulties, and how far you wandered from transportation in the search. No collecting trip is easy! The best you can expect, if you are very lucky, is a few hours of hard labour over a cattle browsed specimen, in a meadow within 100 yards of your car.

More realistically, you will climb, clamber, trudge and stumble over rough, rocky terrain for several hours, before seeing any tree worth collecting. Then, its roots will be locked solidly into rock crevices, requiring many hours of backbreaking labour, with hammer and chisel, to free it. To begin with, examine the roots. If excessively long, thick roots extend from the trunk, often their removal will kill the tree. Whenever possible, seek finer hair roots emanating from the base of the trunk. Even if only a few hair roots can be gathered, proper pruning, to reduce the top structure and foliage to a minimum, will increase the chance for the survival of many specimens.

Very old trees may have only a segment of live cambium growing up on the sheltered side of the tree, and this may be the only source of water and nutrients supporting the foliage on the plant. For this reason, it is extremely important not to damage the cambium layer, while digging and removing the tree. Even more important, make no disturbance of the roots at the base of this cambium layer. The objective is to collect, undisturbed, as much of the root system as possible and in an open meadow situation, you will be able to dig a trench around the original foliage drip-line to surround the tree. The depth of the root system can now be estimated and undercut.

The freed root mass must now be securely wrapped in wet burlap, tightly tied around with string or rope, to prevent further disturbance during transportation, and wrapped in black, plastic bags, to keep the moisture in and the light out. Securing the root system this way will help reduce or eliminate the chance of shaking up the root ball and breaking off those critical, fine rootlets during handling back to the car, and on the drive home. Hopefully, the bulk and weight of the root mass can permit the tree to be carried comfortably back to the car, and if not, then judgment must be made in removing more of the soil, to reduce the weight.

Due to the rocky terrain of Canada, naturally dwarfed specimens of trees can often be found in windblown areas, where sparse soils cover the rocks in shallow layers. Here the roots will extend for long distances, seeking nourishment while securely anchoring the tree.

Depending upon the species, there are two favoured methods of removing a tree from these locations:

- 1) Determine whether there is a supply of feeder roots in the soil below the trunk, and in its immediate vicinity. If so, there may be enough to sustain the tree in its relocation given the proper aftercare. Carefully cut away all the major roots not supporting the adjacent feeder roots and securely wrap the root ball to prevent extra, unnecessary disturbance during transportation.
- 2) In some cases it may be necessary to retain a few feet of the elongated root system to contain enough feeder roots to sustain the tree after collection. These long roots can be coiled under the trunk, after carving the underside and treating with hormones, for planting into the temporary pot. These can be removed later, after the development of a satisfactory feeder root system.
- 3) There is one other method, if the specimen is located in an area easily accessible to you for subsequent visits. That is, to clear away the soil from immediately below the trunk, hopefully to locate a small bunch of fine, feeder rootlets there. These can be carefully wrapped in wet sphagnum moss, treated with a mild solution of Superthrive, and then completely encased in wet burlap and black plastic bags. This provides a warm, hospitable environment in which the rootlets can grow. In the course of a few weeks you can return to collect the prize, and by cutting away the original heavy roots, the tree will now be sustained by the packet of strong roots growing into the moss. Without disturbing these new roots, the tree can now be replanted into a training box.

## All important – aftercare

Finding suitable specimens to collect is one problem, collecting that specimen is another. Then, having collected, there remains the all too critical question of aftercare.

After finding and collecting your specimen it is necessary to containerize it as soon as possible, (or to plant and stake it into the garden.) It is a good idea to have prepared large, wooden boxes, and a supply of very granular growing medium in advance. Horticultural sand is a good, neutral medium, or a substitute like Haydite, which allows the future development of fine, fibrous roots.

When the tree is potted up into the box, and tied in, examine the foliage and remove any remaining excessive growth. There must be a balance between the available roots and the number of buds or amount of foliage on the tree, so do not be afraid to prune. If the tree has very little viable root hair then, after cutting away unnecessary buds and foliage, carefully wrap the bark with moist sphagnum moss around the trunk, to prevent excessive loss of moisture from the main structure. Place the box containing the tree into the shade and out of the wind for at least a month. Do not be tempted to over water at this stage, as root-rot may occur.

After one month of protection, gradually move the tree into partial sun over the next three or four weeks.

Do not fertilise for at least one year.

Do not wire branches for at least one year.

Do only necessary, and minor, branch trimming.

If your tree makes it through the first year, then its chances of survival are very good. The only cause for loss then will be either total neglect, or over watering.

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## Bonsai from nursery stock – reduction building

by Norman Haddrick

Everyone is not able to make the sometimes arduous, but always satisfying, journeys into the wild country in search of naturally shaped, dwarfed tree specimens for their bonsai collection. The most practical alternative for most bonsai enthusiasts is a visit to a local nursery or garden centre, where a browse through the available stock will likely reveal a suitable tree from which the basic structure of bonsai can be sculpted.

The biggest single benefit of such a visit is the variety of stock from which to choose, and the selected tree provides the buyer with a few hours of design study and pruning practice, which can result in an attractive "bonsai-in-training".

The first considerations, before choosing a subject tree:

- 1) Is it for outdoor culture, with hardiness for the area in which you reside?
- 2) Do you seek a species suitable for indoor culture over the winter?

Whatever you decide, select a variety that has short inter-nodes, (the distance between one leaf node and the next), as well as small leaves or short needles, to be proportionate to the size of the bonsai.

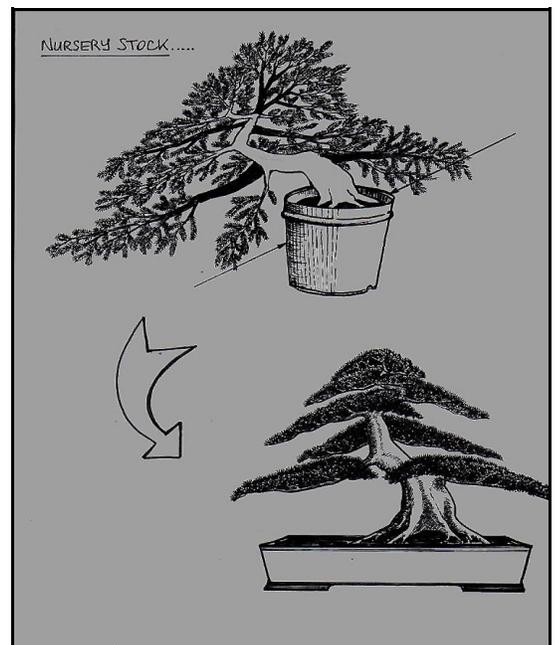
Major considerations related to the desirable features of bonsai design are the base of the trunk and the radiating root system. From these, a thick trunk rises, with good taper. These features are an immediate benefit, showing stability and age, and are not always easy to develop when growing in a bonsai pot.

Having decided upon a species, it is wise to seek a variety with an abundance of branches. Preference to those with a heavy branch about one-third of the way up the trunk, and with thinner branches as they reach the top of the tree. The more branches to begin with, the greater the chance of finding branches where you need them in the bonsai design.

Do not be over-ambitious in your first choice. Select a tree less than 18 inches tall. This should give you a beginning bonsai of about 12 inches or so after pruning and proportioning. From the mass of available branches and twigs the bonsai student sculpts the tree, removing the unnecessary limbs to leave the structure of the future bonsai. This initial hard pruning, subsequent re-growth and shaping, is often called "reduction-building".

The tree will help the bonsai student by suggesting ideas for the best structure. This, from a combination of knowledge, basic bonsai styling "rules", viewing trees in nature, plus the artist's imagination, will produce acceptable results.

**(Editor's note: some nurseries to consider for beginning bonsai are [Sheridan Nurseries](#), [Plant World](#), [Valleyview Gardens](#), [Vineland Nurseries](#), [Connon Nurseries](#), [Belgian Nursery](#))**



## Announcements

### New club vice-president

Please welcome Gim Retsinas to the role of vice-president!

### Bjorn Bjorholm workshops

Bjorn is arriving in Toronto on Friday, May 26. He will hold workshops on Saturday, May 27 and Sunday, May 28, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.. with 10 participants each, at a **cost of \$80 for members**, and \$100 for non-members. Unfortunately these workshops are already full, but if you want your name on the waiting list, contact **Kem Shaw** by email (see back cover). If you have already signed up, you must pay in full, or you may lose your spot.

### TBS website search function connected to original website

Angelo has made an upgrade to the existing TBS website, connecting the search function to the original TBS website (in the top right corner). So now you can search for articles, journals, etc. from times of old... Angelo has also loaded the recent bonsai fertilizer and bonsai soil mix presentations onto the website as well, for your reference.

### Pumice – again!

Pumice will be available again at our April meeting, for your bonsai repotting - \$25 per bag. Please try to have the exact amount.

### TBS elections - June

Our club elections are upcoming in June. In keeping with process, we will be organizing a nomination committee for candidates. In June we will be in need of a new vice-president, librarian, tool & supplies person, and treasurer.

### ArthurSkolnik's trees & pots sale

On May 6 there will be a sale of Arthur Skolnik's trees and pots at his former home. Time and location to be announced.

### Collecting trip

Kevin Yates has arranged for the club to return on **April 23** to last year's site, which is an apple orchard 1.5 hours east of Toronto. There are still plenty of apple trees and other species to collect. Please be sure to fill out the **waiver & release form**, on page 8 of this Journal and on our website.

### Journal

Please welcome **Zeb Tate** to **The Journal**! Please feel free to contact him (on back cover) with any club info., etc.

### Coffee & refreshments volunteers

We need volunteers to help with coffee preparation at meetings. With a few volunteers we could take turns and share the job, making it lighter work for everyone involved. If several people volunteer now, we can enjoy coffee and refreshments at each meeting: some to prepare, some to clean up, etc. Please contact **Sylvia Le Roy** (on back cover) if you are willing to help.

### Miniature gardening

Struggling to find an attractive display area for your shohin bonsai? Try creating a [miniature garden](#).

### Tools?

You need bonsai tools; we sell bonsai tools and other supplies. Contact **Gim Retsinas** (see back cover) to order.

### Workshops

Workshops are held during our monthly Monday night meetings, on weekends, and in backyards on Saturdays during the summer. To register, contact **Kem Shaw** by email (on back cover) or see the membership table at our monthly meetings.

### Forms

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

### Nick Lenz bonsai

Looking for inspiration? Check out the bonsai art of Nick Lenz: <http://www.artofbonsai.org/galleries/lenz.php>.

## Announcements (cont.)

### Bonsai Penjing Canada

[Bonsai Penjing Canada](#) is a page on Facebook that promotes Canadian bonsai clubs. Featured this month is bonsai pot maker Claude Savard, located in Quebec.

### Membership renewal

Your TBS membership comes due in September at the beginning of the club calendar year. If you plan to participate in any club activities, such as our twice-yearly shows, you must renew your membership. Please send an email to **Sylvia Le Roy** (on back cover) and she will confirm your membership. You are welcome to use e-transfer or you can mail a cheque to the address included in the online [membership form](#).

### Publishing deadline

The publishing deadline for the May Journal is April 30. Please forward all photos, articles, notifications and materials to [gquinn@hotmail.com](mailto:gquinn@hotmail.com) or [zebtate@gmail.com](mailto:zebtate@gmail.com) before then.

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## Links to local bonsai clubs

Bonsai society at the RBG: <http://www.BonsaiSocietyatRBG.com>

Matsuyama bonsai society: <http://www.informdurham.com/record/OSH1103>

Misseto bonsai club: <http://www.missetobonsai.org/>

Kitchener-Waterloo bonsai society: <https://www.facebook.com/kwbonsaisociety/>

Buffalo bonsai society: <http://www.buffalobonsaisociety.com/>

Ottawa bonsai society: [http:// www.ottawabonsai.org](http://www.ottawabonsai.org)

Societe de bonsai et de penjing de Montreal: <http://bonsaimontreal.com>

Bonsai Society of Upstate New York: <http://www.bonsaisocietyofupstateny.org/>

Landscape Ontario: <https://landscapeontario.com/bonsai>



Toronto Bonsai Society

## Release Of Liability

In consideration of my participation in a collecting trip on the April 23, 2017, I here by release the Toronto Bonsai Society, its officers and the property owner from any liability for injuries, loss or damage to personal property which may occur while participating in this event.

I understand the risk of participation which may include but not limited to: lifting, digging, using sharp tools, hiking long distances, and general physical exertion.

I understand that my participation is strictly voluntary.

**Participant's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Participants below 18 years

**Parent/Guardian name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Regular TBS meetings

Meetings take place on the second Monday of every month, except in 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 Bonsai 101 beginner sessions.

A small fee is charged for workshops; a tree, wire and an instructor are provided. It is necessary to register in advance of the meetings to participate in workshops, 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 before the summer break.

## 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 (see below) in advance of the meetings for specific tools and supplies.

## TBS executive

### President

Carlos Bras  
[carlos@offthebench.ca](mailto:carlos@offthebench.ca)

### Vice-President

Jim Retsinas  
[gretsinas@sympatico.ca](mailto:gretsinas@sympatico.ca)

### Treasurer

John Hoffman  
[hoffman.john@sympatico.ca](mailto:hoffman.john@sympatico.ca)

### Recording Secretary

Kelvin Lo  
[kelvin.mba@gmail.com](mailto:kelvin.mba@gmail.com)

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### Journal

Greg Quinn  
[gquinn@hotmail.com](mailto:gquinn@hotmail.com)

Zeb Tate  
[zebtate@gmail.com](mailto:zebtate@gmail.com)

### Membership Secretary

Sylvia Le Roy  
[sylvialeroy@sympatico.ca](mailto:sylvialeroy@sympatico.ca)

### New Member secretary

Kem Shaw  
[kemshaw@rogers.com](mailto:kemshaw@rogers.com)

### Bonsai 101 coordinator

Karen Brankley  
[kayeb29@hotmail.com](mailto:kayeb29@hotmail.com)

### Tools & Supplies

Jim Retsinas  
[gretsinas@sympatico.ca](mailto:gretsinas@sympatico.ca)

### Librarian

Nathalie Vacaresse  
[n.vacaresse@rogers.com](mailto:n.vacaresse@rogers.com)

### Members at large

Sylvia Le Roy  
[sylvialeroy@sympatico.ca](mailto:sylvialeroy@sympatico.ca)

Otmar Sauer  
[otmar.sauer@bell.net](mailto:otmar.sauer@bell.net)



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)

Toronto Bonsai Society  
c/o Kem Shaw  
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Markham, ON.