

NEXT CLUB MEETING:
June 26th, 2019

John Wall to Present Eastern White Cedar Demo

On June 26, John will style a collected Eastern white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, and discuss care and training of this species at our next meeting of the Ann Arbor Bonsai Society.

John has been practicing bonsai since the age of ten, but really became serious about the art in 2003. A lover of wild collected trees, John has worked with everything from stunted evergreens from the western mountains, to deciduous trees from the southeast. John has an eye for design and loves dramatic and unusual trees. He has shown in several US Nationals and in the prestigious Artisans Cup in 2015. In spring of 2018 John won an American Bonsai Society John Naka award for his collected white cedar. Learn more at [John's Facebook page](#).



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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE:
Ron Milostan

June 2019

This year certainly has had a wet start. I have found that some of my plants were getting just too wet. I have always used a well-draining soil consisting only of Lava rock and Haydite. Recently I made a change to smaller pots and smaller trees. Since these tend to dry out faster, I have added other material such as Akadama soil.

This spring after the first flush of leaves some of my plants started to drop their leaves while still green and healthy. I removed about a half inch of top dressing and this seemed to help. It's still too early to tell for sure if this will solve the problem since it is still very wet and there hasn't been much sunshine. As I sit here writing this it's raining again and expected to last through two more days.

I am also using a fertilizer called Green Dream, which works really well, but I was spreading it over the total surface. This fertilizer breaks down into a mud and formed a layer covering the whole top and seemed to be another cause of poor drainage. I will now, as was suggested by Todd Schlafer in a recent workshop at The Flower Market and Bonsai Garden in Dundee, put my fertilizer on in small

piles spaced apart and put subsequent applications in small piles in different areas.

Full moss on the surface also worries me when it's this wet. I would like to see a discussion about this from members on our club's Facebook page.

Wow, yippy, today the rain stopped. Oops, North, North west wind... 40 degrees at night, 63 during day.... Ok, these are the days I really want to quit since I do not know what to do. I wish I had below ground storage, a large green house and someone else to take care of all of it and make the decisions. This Bonsai Master could bring my trees in or take them out when weather is good. They could report, clean, fertilize, feed and water. That's not asking too much is it? See you all at the next meeting where we can commiserate.

May Meeting Review

Chris Kehrig

First item mentioned was the 2 workshops approaching:

Collected White Cedar with John Wall on June 27th 5:30pm – 9pm

Bring Your Own Tree workshop with Michael Hagedorn on July 25th 5:30pm – 9pm

Carving with Bruce Baker 5/22/19

He saw his first bonsai in 1977 in Wilmington, DE and got hooked. Bruce joined the Ann Arbor club in 1979 under Jack Wikle.

Bruce found himself very attracted to the deadwood on trees. He mentioned the very old cedar trees found in South Manitou were an inspiration for his static tree example. It is a 100 year old Yew that came from Kurt Smith's yard. It took a solid 2 days of carving to achieve a look Bruce was happy with. The tree even has a hollow portion in the middle that a few fingers can fit through.

Carving reveals the character of the tree. Wood varies in density and will carve differently depending on layer. The sharper a tool is, the safer it is. Bruce started on the tree with a chainsaw. He suggested approaching slowly and allowing the tool to penetrate the wood. Next he used an

angle grinder and then a die grinder. The goal is to create something natural looking.

Wire brushes and rotary wire is good for removing the tooling marks. Sun, wind, and sand wear down the tree. Power tools are not always necessary, but very helpful for a large job such as the Yew.

The demo tree was a rather tall Cedar where he first found the front. Bruce mentioned you must start with a healthy tree which this one was. He lopped off the top of the tree leaving enough to work with on top since it can always be shortened more. A Cedar should have the branches hanging to show age which meant removing the lower branches to reveal more of the trunk. The small child trunk to the right side had the foliage removed on the inboard side to show separation. The top of the child trunk got stripped of bark and the majority of its branches. The top of the main trunk was also stripped of the bark and carved down. He mentioned that a healthy tree will strip its bark quite easily. Bruce didn't have time to complete the tree, but did show how much change can be created in a small amount of time.

Bruce mentioned that a bonsai should lean towards the viewer and branches curve in to give you a hug.

UP FOR DEBATE:

Aaron J. Binns

We're Growing Now

Spring has past us. We have successfully removed our trees from winter protection, repotted, fertilized and in general coaxed the healthiest growth we could possibly get out of each of our trees. And it's working! The trees are growing vigorously. This spring they have been pushed along even further by the ever present rain that we have experienced. This is simply wonderful... until you realize that all of the trees are growing rapidly... then you panic. Thoughts like, "I can't keep up!" and "Oh my, I don't have a bonsai I have a bush!" begin running through your mind. You quickly realize that keeping your trees in order isn't a matter of touching up a twig or two it is a matter of reconstituting an overgrown mess and that is intimidating.

Relax. First keep in mind that this is very healthy for your trees as long as you don't allow the situation to continue

too long. All trees benefit from being allowed to grow a bit. They invest by pouring their energy into new leaf growth and need to replenish their resources by being given enough time to recoup the investment in energy. Which means a little overgrowth is good. The issue arises when this condition is allowed to persist. The tree doesn't care about your design and will eventually start pouring more and more energy into several leaders. This will result in ungainly thickening of limbs you don't want thickened. Eventually the tree will need major restyling.

The time has come to get control of your trees. And I know that you are feeling overwhelmed and don't know how to tackle the tangled mess that was your bonsai. That's why I'm going to give you a battle plan. That's right, rules to live by... or better yet rules that you should be willing to bend at a moment's notice. (I'm usually not a big believer in rules.) You do need to know how to get started and when I'm faced with a mess of new growth I go about remedying the problem in a relatively systematic way. Here is my thought process:

- 1) First, relax and have fun. This is your hobby and your tree. If you do something wrong, well, that's part of life.
- 2) Always thing simplification when trimming your tree. Most people never fully realize the power of open spaces in their designs and leave entirely too much tree on their trees.
- 3) Go grab a reference guide and make sure you know any safety rules about the variety of tree you are working on. Most trees are up for anything this time of year but some, like pines don't like major limbs removed. Make sure you know if you are just tidying up or if you have the option to do more significant branch removal.
- 4) Before you make a cut remember that wire is a powerful thing and can correct many wrongs but you should always help yourself by cutting in the right place. Most trees will push out new shoots between a leaf and the stem at the furthest leaf out on the stem. So when you cut back look to cut back to a leaf that will push growth out in a direction that is helpful. Example: don't cut back to a leaf that will send growth directly up. It's already hard enough to bring branches down without encouraging the problem.

- 5) After you grab the scissors start with the outline. Take the tree back to its original size by removing new growth, down to something on the order of 1, 2, or 3 new leafs. Don't remove all of the new growth just yet. Even if this means violating the outline of the tree you had originally established.
- 6) After step 4 you will have already gained some confidence and your tree will already be looking much better. Now remove the "gunk" that is growing the wrong way. Shoots growing down from the bottom of main limbs... no thought needed, cut them off. Shoots growing backwards are also no brainers.
- 7) Note: the rest of the steps take thought if you are going to keep your tree in good health and looking its best. At this point you should have done enough of the no brainers that the rest doesn't seem as large a task.
- 8) Simplify. Two shoots from any one location along a limb is just about all you ever need. You can and should leave stubs on the top side of limbs to make your foliage pads full. More than a couple of branches coming from any one point on a limb will cause that location to thicken over time and that can be ugly. Also, if the tree is too dense it blocks air and light. This allows disease to take hold quickly and prevents dormant buds from enlarging and becoming new growth further back in the tree.
- 9) Look for opportunities to open up empty space. You have one foliage pad now but can you arrange each of the offshoots of a main branch into its own pad with space between its branch buddies?
- 10) Ask yourself, "Can I cut back to younger growth." Remember in step 5 I said leave some new growth even if it violates the trees outline? That's going to happen. Eventually, if you keep a tree neat enough new growth will appear further into the tree. You will need to look for opportunities to remove the old tips and cut back to that new growth. This is how you re-establish/keep the initial size/outline of the tree. I hope that makes sense. If it doesn't, start having conversations

with experienced growers. If you don't get this bonsai will be a struggle.

- 11) Don't be afraid of wire. I realize there is a lot of advice out there about not wiring certain trees at certain times of year. You don't want to damage buds. No kidding. Obvious advice. You don't want an ugly tree either. Just be careful. A little wire can move one branch up a touch and another down... voila, open space. Also, don't be afraid of getting into the tree. Move things around. If you are afraid to touch the tree you won't dig deep enough into it to understand the structure and you will cut the wrong thing. I have heard people say that your hands are bulky and will damage a tree if you reach too far in... bunk. You can feel your fingers so you have more control than reaching in with pliers in many cases. My favorite tool is my hands not my pliers or cutters.

That's it. If you get through step 8 you are ahead of most. If you can finish through step 11 given a few years your tree should be something to be proud of. Don't underestimate how much time this takes. Keep in mind this is your hobby, you should enjoy it enough to want to do it. Good luck!

Ads in the Newsletter: All members can offer for sale any bonsai and bonsai related materials in the newsletter or at the monthly meeting with no sales fee. AABS Society Members' ads are free to publish in the Newsletter. Deadline for submissions to the Newsletter is the 5th of the month.

Prizes for the Raffle: We are soliciting donations suitable for prizes to be raffled during each general meeting, and, for the Annual Bonsai Show Raffle. If you have a tree, bonsai pot, tool or anything else bonsai related, that you do not use anymore and is still in good condition, consider donating it to the Society. Please see Bill Struhar at any meeting, email Bill at wm.struhar@mail.com or call (586) 468-7169.

Club Logo Now Available: we will embroider the club logo on your garment for \$12 (plus modest additional charge for lined garments). The logo comes in two forms; light green tree on dark green background, or dark green tree on light green background,

with a border on both combinations and AABS lettering and Chinese characters with appropriate contrasting color depending upon the garment color.

Bring your garment in a clear plastic bag to a meeting, select your colors, pre-pay Bill Struhar, and your garment will be ready one or two meetings later. (The vendor may require a minimum of five garments per order)

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The AABS President is an ex-officio member of all committees with the exception of the Nomination Committee.

Fund Raising: William Struhar

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Annual Auction: Paul Kulesa

Membership dues are \$25. Please pay by check, written to Ann Arbor Bonsai Society or bring your credit card to the meeting and pay! AABS now accepts credit cards for membership fees and other AABS activities. Please talk with the Treasurer at the next meeting.

Tamara Milostan – Treasurer AABS
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The Ann Arbor Bonsai Society is affiliated with the
American Bonsai Society: <http://absbonsai.org> and the
Mid-American Bonsai Alliance: <http://mababonsai.org>



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Visit us on the Web:

<http://www.annarborbonsaisociety.org>

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Hours: Wed., Thurs. & Fri.: 11:00 am to 6:00 pm Sat., 1:30pm to 5:00pm
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