

# Brandywine Bonsai Society

Promoting the art and horticulture of bonsai since 1967

**There was NO MABS.**

**There will be NO BBS**

Stay at home. Work on your trees whenever you like

Pre-meeting coffee and tree counseling will not be available. **No refreshments served.**

**Fix your own coffee, or better yet, have a drink.**

**Jin that tree with a gin and a grin.**

## May, 2020. COVID-19 Edition II

### Dues are still Due!

We will still take your money. A registration form is available online if you so desire.

[http://gobbs.org/index.htm\\_files/1-%202020%20BBS%20Dues.pdf](http://gobbs.org/index.htm_files/1-%202020%20BBS%20Dues.pdf)

**Greg Kanaskie**

**133 North Wawaset Rd.**

**West Chester, PA 19382**

You continue to get these wonderful newsletters instead of meetings.

### Brooklyn Botanical Garden Bus Trip

**This trip is off.**

### May Meeting

**This meeting is off.** We will keep you informed about future meetings. Maybe meetings in a park with masks and social distancing.

### Bonsai and Haikus

Some oldies but goodies from the past. Do the older members remember when we did these?

*Haikus by Nancy Klabunde*

*Brush snow from shed door*

*See gnarled arms pierce the gloom*

*I saw a tree dance!*

*Clean and oil my tools*

*Sort pots, straighten wire, check soil*

*Look for patience jar.*

*Haikus by Charlotte Smith*

*Returning at dusk,*

*the geese wing through winter skies,*

*gladdening my heart.*

*Standing still, the deer  
is invisible amid  
bare trunks and dry leaves*



Steve Ittel's front yard, January about 10 years ago.

A more recent and timely contribution from Greg Kanaskie

*Sentient plants muse  
Can we avoid the virus  
Social distancing*

### The Subject of Moss

Moss on bonsai is never good health-wise and the trees at the National Arboretum and other major collections are always on display so there is no "brief show-time" period when moss would be tolerated. In Japan, the trees in the growing areas have no moss, weeds, or little animals on them. The 'soil' surface looks pristine. However, they do apply moss for major shows. The moss goes away the day the show ends.

The only long-term exceptions are the satsuki azaleas which often have a layer of sphagnum moss on them which is necessary because the kanuma substrate is inherently soft and easily broken down on the surface by watering. I don't know if you have used kanuma but it is amazing, given how soft it is, how well it maintains its granular integrity in the absence of mechanical abuse. That's why the fine satsuki roots love it so much - they can penetrate the particles and draw much more sustenance than if they were just inhabiting the interstitial spaces around more impervious soil particles like akadama, pumice, or gravel .

If you want to share ideas on this subject, contact the newsletter, [BrandywineBonsai@comcast.net](mailto:BrandywineBonsai@comcast.net) .



## Maintaining Your Bonsai. WATER

Occasionally, we will bring you some tips on maintaining your bonsai. Watering is an essential step in the maintenance of bonsai, but proper watering is more than pulling out the garden hose and spraying everything. .

Watering is not a matter of simply drawing water; it is knowing how to see; how to touch, and how to wait.

Watering is the cardinal point of basic care. The health of your trees depends on this task.

Although you may know that when the soil dries out you need to water, in reality watering is not so simple since each pot dries out in a different way.

To know when you have to water, look at the surface of the soil and see if it is dry, and taking on a pale color. It is difficult to know precisely when to water especially in summer when the heat dries the surface of the soil rapidly; one way of finding out is to simply pinch small amount of soil in the corner of the

pot. On smaller trees, just pick up the pot and sense the weight.

Another method is to insert a chopstick into the root ball. On a daily basis, remove the chopstick and determine the water content by touching the portion that was below the soil mix. When the chopstick is on the dry side (but not completely dry), it is time to water.

When you water, always check the drainage; if water is not leaving the surface of the soil, prick it with a chopstick in order to facilitate the penetration of the water.

After watering, note whether the water runs freely through the holes in the pot. It is also good to then tip the pots in order to help the water run out.

As the water that filled the pores is absorbed by the roots, fresh air is drawn into the mix. By watering, you not only provide water for the plant's roots but also aerate the soil.

When a tree needs water, be patient. Water it several times in succession to ensure that water is well distributed throughout the pot. Make sure that water exits freely through the drainage holes.

## Maintaining Your Bonsai. SOIL MIX

Though the time for preparing soil and repotting is late, here is something to think about: Selection of the Type of Soil Depends on the Level of Attention You Can Provide.

In the soil in which bonsai live, it is essential to have not only water, but also to have air. Root-rot is the silent killer of the trees of many beginners. If the soil is always saturated with water, the roots cannot breathe, and end up rotting. For that reason, it is necessary that the soil retain water, but also that it drain well. A good soil mix ought to meet these two conditions.

What is the best soil mix for your trees?

It depends not only on the locale, the species, condition and maturity of the tree, but also it depends on the amount of attention that fits in with your lifestyle.

Naturally, if you are always at home and can water several times a day, use a mix that drains rapidly – a) higher levels of Hadite or lava; b) larger particles.

If you are very busy and cannot water with the necessary frequency, a soil mix that retains more water should be used. To achieve this, use a) smaller particles; and/or b) pumice.

For a soil to drain well, use a fine granulated soil; for it to drain even more rapidly, use coarse grained soil. By combining coarse and fine granules, you can regulate drainage and aeration.

Smaller or more shallow pots dry out more quickly. If you have small trees and cannot water frequently, you should consider placing them over water trays (Not touching the water, but enjoying the enhanced humidity). Better yet, place the small pots on large trays of bonsai mix with the bottom of the pot in contact with the mix. This has the advantage of making a small pot (or a number of small pots) seem like a larger pot. The disadvantage is that many times, the roots will penetrate the drainage hole of the small pot, even blocking it. To prevent this problem, the pots need to be picked up and moved every week and if roots are penetrating the hole, cut them off. This has the benefit that all of your trees ought to be moved or at least turned every week to make sure the tree is getting the best sun exposure.

**Stay apart. Stay happy. Stay healthy.**