



the **TREE LINE**

the official monthly publication of the **BONSAI SOCIETY of PORTLAND**

Upcoming Events

December
2016

January 15 10am-2pm **Mentorship 102** Milwaukie Center

January 22 10am-2pm **Mentorship 101A** Milwaukie Center

January 24 7pm **BSOP monthly meeting** Milwaukie Center, 5440 SE Kellogg Creek Dr

January 29 10am-2pm **Mentorship 101B** Milwaukie Center

Words From Your President

Well since the last time I wrote this letter the weather gods and goddesses finally decided to bring some Fall and Winter weather our way. And, as usual, it goes from moderate to very cold overnight. I woke to wet snow and rain of Monday and now, 3 days later, as I look out on Broadway Street downtown, there are flakes drifting down, but not many. Two days ago we finally got our first frost and it was a hard one.

BTW, if you have trees in your van on a frosty morning, you get frost on the inside of your windows as well at the outside; double your pleasure.

You will be reading this after our holiday party on the 11th and I hope y'all had a good and festive time. This club of ours sure has a lot to be thankful for; 328 members at last count. We are blessed for sure and I will be sharing some of that with you at our January meeting as we change out two of our board members and replace them with two new volunteers.

I will make this short and close with how much I appreciate all the volunteering that you do. Our club is considered to be the club to mentor from and be on the lookout for even more exciting things to come.

Happy Holidays and...as always, thank you for your trust, Lee

PS still looking out the same window but now it has become a winter wonderland, a virtual blizzard happening...has anyone seen my snow chains?

As always, thank you for your trust, *Lee*

Baby it's COLD Outside!

I hope that everyone was ready with their trees on the ground when the freeze finally hit. I always marvel at the beauty of glazed over trees when snow melts to ice but always with my fingers crossed that my bonsai will be OK. Guess I'll find out come spring.

I hope you all enjoyed Danny Coffey's program for November as he guided six of our members working on their trees at once. It was nice to have a fresh bonsai perspective, and give us insight on what it is like for a bonsai apprentice in Japan. Since the holiday party is this month that means no program for December. Next month in January we will have Josef Leibfried from Seattle with a presentation on history and selection of pots which is timely as we start the repotting season.

January is also my last meeting after two years as your VP of programs. I will save the sentiment on that for next month but I would like to inform you of what I will be doing going forward. I was hoping to have my new online store open by now but I'm still putting the final touches on it. My business name is now PORTLAND BONSAI SUPPLY, the web address is portlandbonsaisupply.com. I will be carrying a wide variety of bonsai supplies.... soil mixes & components, tools, wire, pots, and accessories. You will be able to shop through my catalog online and either pay online or at time of delivery, ordering instructions are on the site. If your order is picked up at a meeting or at my home, there are no shipping charges resulting in substantial savings. My store will provide a great opportunity for members of our ever-growing bonsai community to get their bonsai needs at great prices. If you have requests for certain items I will try to get it. Until the site is live, if you need Akadama, wire or something else, please email me at stevenleaming@gmail.com.

Happy Holidays! *Steve Leaming*, VP-Programs

I NEED YOUR HELP!!!!

We have some positions that need filling. Some are one time projects and one is for the general meetings. They are:

1. We need a raffle person.

In January, we are going to discontinue renting a space for our supplies. Instead, we have purchased a storage shed. The Milwaukie center is letting us have a spot to set it on, on the east side of the Center.

2. We need some workers to help us, appx mid-January:

Level a pad area and spread gravel for the new storage unit.

Install insulation and drywall on the inside of the new storage unit.

Build some shelving in the new storage unit.

Assist in moving the contents of the old storage unit to the new one and organize it.

If you feel you can assist with any of these projects, please contact Lee Cheatle at 503-312-4921 or leecheatle@msn.com

Thanks and I hope I hear from you soon. *Lee*

Mentorship Program

Winter 2017 meeting dates

January 15	Mentorship 102
January 22	Mentorship 101A
January 29	Mentorship 101B
February 5	Mentorship 102
February 12	Mentorship 101A
February 19	Mentorship 101B
March 5	Mentorship 102
March 19	Mentorship 101A
March 26	Mentorship 101B

Iced branches by Steve Leaming



Winter Haiku
Silver thaw morning
The snow melts into music
Pine needles sparkling

Mentorship 102

Mentorship 102 met Sunday, December 4 in the Oregon Grape room at the Milwaukie Center. The group of approximately 25-30 focused on ramification. Our fearless leader, Lee explained and demonstrated fall deciduous trimming for ramification. We all brought several trees to work on. It was a lively, fun time!

Many thanks to these seasoned members who helped Lee with the large class: David Kidd, Andrew Robson, Ron Cascisa, Steve Wilcox, and Keith Wingfield. Your input is invaluable!

Come join the fun next time on January 15. Remember you can bring any tree you want to work on, you don't have to limit yourself to the topic of the day.

Thanks, *Elisabeth Hardy (Liz)*

Monthly Formal Display

This Fall we kicked off a new feature at our monthly meeting, the Member Formal Display. Each month one club member will share a formal display of his/her choosing. We will have a six foot long table with backdrop for these displays. The sky's the limit for creativity. You can choose to do a very formal, Japanese inspired display, or something altogether different.

We are striving for the highest level possible, with great trees, fine components, and a highly considered, deliberate display. Trees will need some sort of stand, and other components could be accent plants, stones, scrolls, paintings, figures, etc... You might even make up something special, just for this display.

This is open to all club members, but must be scheduled ahead of time. I will be coordinating each month's display and assisting wherever needed, so send me a note if you are interested. If you wish to display, but need help locating materials, just holler. *Scott Elser*
BonsaiElser@gmail.com

HERITAGE PROGRAM

I am writing this article to remind our seasoned members about the Heritage benefit of the BSOP and to introduce the Heritage Program to our newer members.

The BSOP adopted this program several years ago in order to give our members, in need, a safe way to care for their trees should they become unable to care for their trees themselves. This might include: illness, an accident or operation that disables and unfortunately, all too often, even death. Often this leads to trees being donated to the club which we handle also.

Whenever any of our members need Heritage help, all they need do is contact our chairperson, or any board member and explain the situation. The chairperson will then arrange with other members to care for the trees. Please see, on the BSOP webpage: “Groups” dropdown screen “Heritage” and once read, you can click on the “Heritage Group Guidelines” at the bottom of the article for the full set of guidelines.

One thing we are considering adding to the program is the need for watering that would include; vacations and any time away from your trees during the watering season.

So, there we have it, Heritage revisited and hopefully the first step to watering assistance for the summer of 2017.

If you have any questions or have a need for the services or want to offer to help when there is a need, please feel free to contact me as I am the current Heritage Chair.

Lee



Boon Manakitivipart with some of his work

From Bonsai Tonight

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.

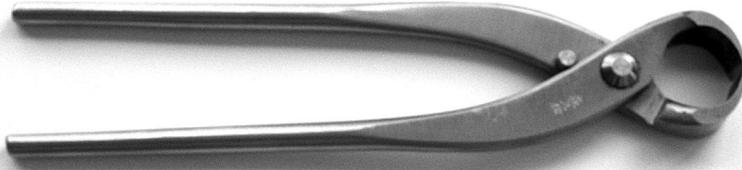
Their chief duty is pulling weeds and general clean up. Make sure to get a pair with not too narrow of a point. Otherwise, they just act like scissors and cut the weed in half rather than pulling it. This is especially important if you also get a straight pair. Here's the difference; Angled tweezers 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.

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. There 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 an 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.



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 maple 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

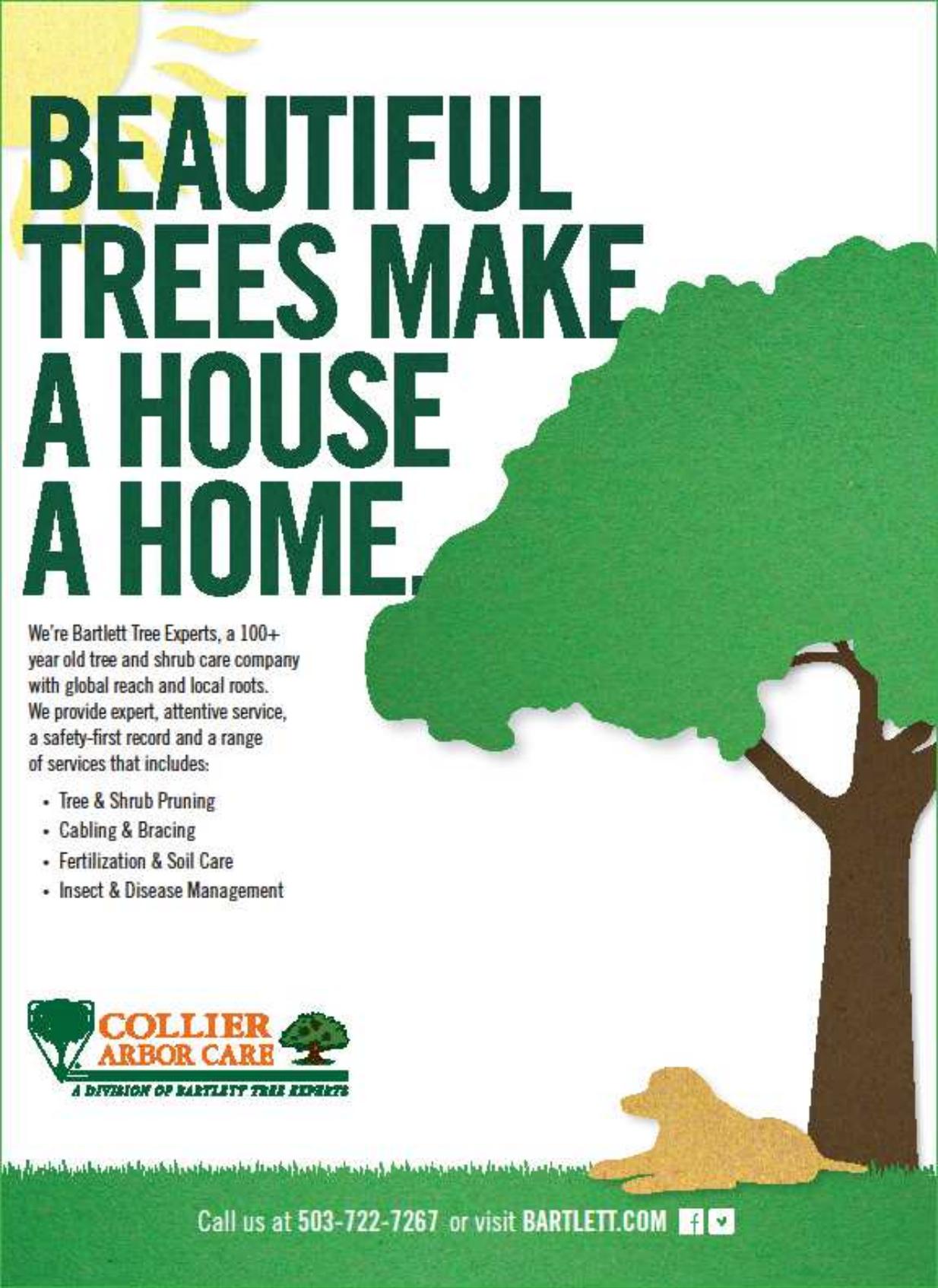


2. Knob cutter. I almost put this as my seventh choice for a tool. I use it mostly on deciduous trees, and it really gets a workout to clean up all my cuts so that things heal over nice and smoothly. Look for a pair where the two cutting edges meet to form a nice, smooth curve. I have not used them, 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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Enter parking lot from Rusk Road

Visitors are always welcome!

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