



Great Swamp Bonsai Society

Next meeting: to be determined

December 2020 Newsletter

Last month's Meeting: Winter Care

November's meeting was hosted once again at the home of Mark and Sheila Schmuck of Rockaway, NJ, on Saturday November 7th. Mark walked us through his bonsai collection and explained a variety of techniques for **protecting your bonsai over the winter months**. As you will see from the accompanying photos, it was a highly informative meeting and another great chance to safely socialize during our all-too-familiar quarantine situation. Around a dozen members turned out for the event, including departing club member **Brian O'Byrne** (see notice that follows), and in addition to trees, people brought a variety of snacks and beverages to enhance the event. It was a nice way to close out the season—thanks again, Mark & Sheila!



(left to right): Mark Sanders, John Michalski, Timothy Kuhlman, Rick Myers, Zach Bier, Monica Mosquera, Diego Pablos, Mark Schmuck, Joan Cho, and Brian O'Byrne.

More photos from the November meeting



John Berna (above, nearly hidden from view on right), considers design options on a *Juniper procumbens* 'nana' that was worked on later in the meeting.

(right) Zach Bier, Rick Myers, and Timothy Kuhlman discuss little trees in pots.



More photos from the November meeting



Long-time club member **Brian O'Byrne** (center, wearing hat) will be moving to Canada in the spring, and brought his bonsai collection in the hopes that his trees might find good homes among the membership. Several trees found new owners via a silent auction, and the remainder were purchased outright or donated to the club for future workshops.



Mark Schmuck demonstrates the cold frame he uses to winter his most precious bonsai.

More photos from the November meeting



Mark demonstrates how potted trees can be nestled into a bed of soft, friable milled peat moss. The moss insulates the pot against drastic temperature changes and helps retain even moisture.



For trees kept in glazed pots (which might spall and crack with repeated freezing and thawing), the tree can be lifted from the pot and the root mass nestled down into the milled peat moss like any other bonsai. The pot will be stored separately and kept out of the weather.

More photos from the November meeting



Rick Myers, Zach Bier, and Mark Sanders discuss bonsai surrounded by a small part of Mark Schmuck's outstanding collection. The raised bed on which they rest is also used to accommodate medium-sized bonsai that can be nestled down, pot and all, into the loosened soil contained within its mortared walls.



Zachary Bier shares some images of a winter storage "cage" he designed and built to protect his bonsai from winter rodent damage.

More photos from the November meeting



Joan Cho looks on as Diego Pablos, Mark Schmuck, and Timothy Kuhlman (?) perform an initial design on a *Juniper procumbens* 'nana.'

More photos from the November meeting

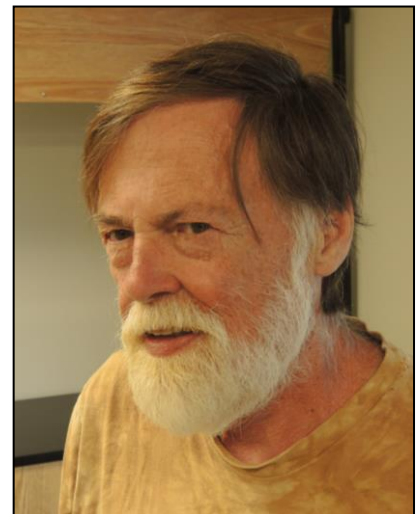


A late afternoon view of Mark & Sheila's garden—a wonderful venue for a bonsai gathering!

Farewell to a long-time member

We bid a fond farewell to founding club member **Brian O'Byrne**, who will be moving with his wife and grown children to Canada in the spring. Over the years Brian has been a fixture at GSBS meetings, in addition to, at various times, holding the office of club President and also President of the Mid Atlantic Bonsai Societies (MABS).

You will be missed, Brian, and we wish you and your family all the best on your new adventure.



Repeat: No Dues for 2020–2021 Season!

As we will not, any time soon, be meeting at the Arboretum, and as our club treasury is already ample to meet our meager needs, dues will be suspended until further notice. If you have already paid your dues for the coming season, you may request a refund, or have them applied to next year, at your discretion.

Repeat: GSBS Facebook Page / GSBS YouTube Channel

If you haven't yet checked out our club **Facebook Page**, **you're missing out on the fun**—particularly in these times when we cannot meet in person! This is a wonderful venue for anyone in the group to post photos, ask questions, or chime in with ideas and opinions about other people's work and accomplishments. To contribute to the discussion, all you have to do is go to the page and **request to join the group**—once your request has been accepted, you will be able to post photos, videos, and comments. (Don't worry, you won't get "friended" to death—this group is being run fairly tightly.)



We have also established a Great Swamp Bonsai Society **YouTube Channel**, which at the moment features only a few amateur video clips by yours truly (John Michalski), expounding or demonstrating simple maintenance techniques for different species used in bonsai. It shows promise as a venue for club members to share their knowledge, or their bonsai collection, with the membership. If you have something you'd like to upload, get in touch with me at huonia@aol.com. Thanks!

Plant Care Tips for December – protect against dehydration, repeated freezing & thawing, unusual warm spells, and rodents!

By now your deciduous bonsai have shed all but a few of their leaves or needles—you can literally strip any remaining leaves still clinging to your maples, plums, etc., but if your azaleas are hanging onto their foliage you can leave them as they are. Pine needles that have yellowed or browned off can be removed (they represent needles that sprouted two or three seasons ago), leaving (hopefully) a good crop of green needles near each growing tip. You can expect junipers, yews, and arborvitae to change somewhat in color, from their usual bright green to more subdued bronze-green and even slightly purplish. This is normal.

Some growers spray an anti-desiccant such as Wilt-Pruf onto the foliage of certain evergreens, like yews, azaleas, etc. and this can help the trees retain healthy foliage into the coming spring. The sprays do no harm but the coating does sometimes develop a milky haze after several months exposed to sunshine—this fades or falls away over time and does no harm to the tree.

Though we've experienced some unseasonably mild weather, we have also had a taste of the cold weather to come, so get your trees into their winter quarters now! Your trees need a well-deserved rest, but you needn't go dormant yourselves! It's a great time of year to assess the design of your deciduous trees and wire your evergreen trees, to plan your repotting schedule, mix or purchase bonsai soil, clean up and sharpen your tools, read some good books and periodicals, and travel the countryside looking for suitable material from the field.

Watering remains a priority at this time of year—as long as we get regular amounts of precipitation (including snow), trees kept outdoors will be fine, but keep a sharp eye on any bonsai kept out of the weather. One of the most common causes of bonsai death is dehydration during the cold months, so make sure the soil is evenly moist before the big freezes come in. Any non-hardy trees should be inside by now, of course. No more fertilizer for your hardy (outdoor) trees, and you should be able to reduce your watering schedule soon. Remember, leafless trees need less water, but don't allow the soil to dry out completely! This holds true throughout the winter months. Your hardy trees are usually placed into winter protection by early December, so by the Holidays you definitely need to have them stored safely for the season.

If you keep trees in an unheated garage, shed, etc. keep an eye on the temperature, because unseasonably warm spells can cause your bonsai to break bud prematurely, which can result in spindly, weak growth and frozen tissue when the cold

returns. Enclosed storage areas can get considerably warmer than the outdoors, so you may have to move stored trees outdoors at such times, and bring them back in at night.

Remember, winter protection is chiefly concerned with: **a)** preventing the soil from repeatedly freezing and thawing; **b)** preventing wind from dehydrating the upper portion of the plant; and **c)** preventing the soil from drying out completely. You may also have to concern yourself with **rodents** that sometimes feed on the bark of dormant trees. Wiring may be performed on most conifers during the winter months, but deciduous trees are often too brittle to survive branch-bending, so postpone wiring on leafy trees until spring. [JM]

GSBS Sales Table – “Virtual” Sales Table

Whenever we eventually return to something like a normal schedule, we will continue with our recent addition of a “sales table” for any bonsai-related articles that club members wish to offer for sale at our regular meetings. You simply bring your wares and post the prices with them.

In the meantime, feel free to post announcements on our club **Facebook Page** if you have something to sell, or something you are seeking. **(Non-commercial sales only, please. This is not intended as advertising space for full-time professionals.)** This is a good way for members to move along those items they no longer wish to keep, while offering same to other people who might cherish them! So please feel free!

GSBS Swap Meet

Please feel free to bring any bonsai-related items that you wish to sell or swap to any of our meetings. We will give you a moment to announce what you have so that those present can approach you as they wish.

Save and Bring In Your Discarded Copper Bonsai Wire

Please remember to save and (eventually) bring in those wire clippings. **It helps if you cut your wire into short (3-6 inch) lengths, as it packs more easily for transport and sale.** About once a year we bring them to a scrap metal dealer and swap them for cash. It's usually about enough to equal one or two paid memberships, so it really does help keep the GSBS afloat.

Keep those Topic Suggestions Coming!

A reminder to feel free to send your ideas and topic suggestions to any of the Board Members listed at the back of this newsletter. GSBS is always looking for new and interesting topics that will appeal to the various educational needs of our diverse membership. The club exists for you, so don't be shy with your recommendations.

We especially welcome volunteers who wish to plan and lead presentations and workshops, so that the club may benefit from the wide array of experience contained within our membership.

Calendar of Events for 2020-2021

We have NO MEETINGS scheduled for the immediate future, but hope to resume “back yard” meetings as the weather warms up—hopefully in March. But keep those suggestions coming—we will be back on track sooner or later!

WATCH YOUR EMAIL FOR UPDATES.

December: ***NO MEETING*** (AS USUAL)

January: ***NO MEETING DUE TO HEALTH CONCERNS***

February: ***NO MEETING*** (AS USUAL)

March: **Repotting Workshop? Date and venue to be determined.**

April 16-18th: **Mid-Atlantic Bonsai Societies (MABS) Spring Festival
CANCELLED**

April: **Date, venue, and topic to be determined.**

May/June: **Date, venue, and topic to be determined.**

GSBS Contact Information:

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Vice President: Mark Sanders dealmakr@att.net

Secretary: Mark Schmuck lofty235@verizon.net

Treasurer: Rick Myers spruce80@verizon.net
80 Kenvil Ave
Succasunna N J
07876

Newsletter: John Michalski huonia@aol.com

Club Information

Location:

The Frelinghuysen Arboretum
353 East Hanover Ave,
Morristown, NJ 07962

Date:

Usually the second Tuesday of each
Month, (check our website for
special dates and locations)

Time: 6:30 – 9:30 pm

**Remember to check our website
(<http://www.arboretumfriends.org/gsbonsai/index.htm>) for
special events, dates, updates
and latest information.**

Great Swamp Bonsai Society

c/o John Michalski
223 Mount Kemble Ave., Morristown, NJ 07960

DUES SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Great Swamp Bonsai Society Membership Registration:

Send to:

GSBS c/o Rick Myers **New** **Renewal**
80 Kenvil Avenue
Succasunna, NJ 07876. **Individual (\$ N/A)** **Family (\$ N/A)**

Name(s): _____ **Email:** _____

Address: _____ **Phone:** (_____) _____

If Family Membership, please list other members:
