



# CHINA TRADE BONSAI SOCIETY

<http://www.chinatradebonsaisociety.org/>

Monthly Meetings: 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month, March-November 6-8pm at the Connecticut College Arboretum, New London Hall. Visitors Welcome! For further information contact Tom Lee (President) at [twcl@comcast.net](mailto:twcl@comcast.net)

December 2005

## China Trade Bonsai Society

### Officers:

President – Tom Lee  
Vice-President – Steve Tomicheck  
Secretary – Joe Purtill  
Treasurer – Alice Kuo

### Points of Contact:

Programs – Tom Lee  
Publicity – Susan Carucci  
Operations – Steve Tomicheck  
Webmaster – David Bridges / Robert Sant  
Photography and Newsletter – David Bridges / Robert Sant  
Hospitality – Carol Gazso  
Connecticut College Liaison – Jeff Smith

## Bonsai Tool Usage and Care

with Tom Lee

Confucius said, "...the mechanic that would perfect his work must first sharpen his tools." Bonsai, like any craft, has its selection of special tools, and improper use or failure to properly care for them will have less than perfect results.

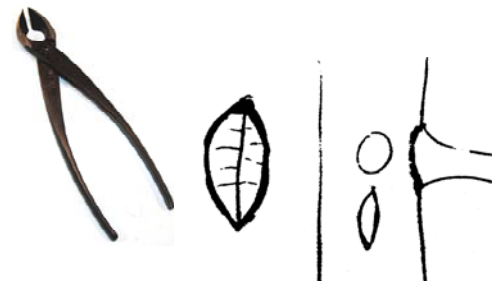
Tom is the first to admit that he is a tool fanatic. He is always looking for new tools, purchasing many of them Online through [Dallas Bonsai](#). For November's meeting, Tom discussed some of the tools available for the bonsai artist, their care and his personal preferences.



Tom Lee with Trunk Splitters

to very large. Properly used, the shape of the cut promotes better, faster healing of wounds with less knobby scar tissue. Tom classifies this tool a "Must Have".

Concave Cutter – The first and probably most important tool for the bonsai enthusiast. It comes in various sizes, from very small



Concave Cutter and Cut Examples



Knob Cutter and Closeup

Knob Cutter – A first cousin to the concave cutter. This is a specialized tool that is great for removing protrusions such as old scar tissue from trunks and branches.

Root Cutters – Similar in appearance to Concave and Knob cutters with the distinction of making a straight cut vice concave incision. This type of cut allows for better healing following a root pruning.

Trunk Splitters – Used primarily for jin/shari techniques, also for bending/twisting larger branches and trunks. Although not a "Must Have" for beginners, they are very nice for some advanced techniques.



Assorted Bonsai Scissors

Scissors/Shears – Assorted sizes and functions varying from general pruning to leaf removal. At least one good pair of scissors is considered as a "Must Have".

Pliers – Another one of the "Must Haves". Extremely useful for everything from wiring to stripping bark.



Trunk Splitter



Root Hook

Root Hook / Root Rake – Similar in function, remove dirt and untangle roots. However, the root hook is more versatile and less cumbersome. Between the two, it is the recommended tool. Also considered a "Must Have".

Chop Sticks – A great tool and a "Must Have". Pick dirt from roots; assist with repotting, mark the front of the tree etc. Limited by imagination.



Jin Pliers

And the list goes on... Among the other tools discussed by Tom were wire cutters, knives, saws, tweezers, brushes, soil scoops and screens, wedges and turntables as well as specialized tools such as root sickles, branch benders.

He finished his presentation with a discussion on tool cleaning and care. For lubricating and cleaning, he recommends Camelia Oil and Wintergreen Oil, or for something less expensive but quite effective, WD-40. A sharpening stone/steel is nice to have to keep your tools sharp. Remember, dull pruners crush and tear, taking longer for the wound to heal.

**Tom Lee's List of "Must Have" Tools**

Concave Cutters	Chop Sticks
Scissors/Shears	Root Hook
Wire Cutters	Turn Table
Pliers	Wound Sealant
Tweezers	Wire

**This Month**

The Annual CTBS Holiday party is Dec 7! Members and family please bring a treat and an item (approx. \$10. value) for Yankee swap.

We will also initiate informal discussions for next year's CTBS activities. Official planning is held at the January and February meetings.

Tom Lee will also provide a pictorial presentation of his two trips this year:

- Washington, DC at the 5<sup>th</sup> World Bonsai Convention and National Bonsai and Penjing Museum at the U.S. National Arboretum.
- Hong Kong, China where he met with the late Yee-Sun Wu's associates and was invited to Mr. Wu's home and Hong Kong Baptist University to discuss Lingnan Penjing techniques, and to see Mr. Wu's Man Lung Penjing collections (meaning Art of Literate Farmer.)

**Club Elections**

CTBS Elections were conducted during the November meeting. It was proposed, seconded and unanimously voted to maintain the current President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary for the 2006 Calendar year.

**Auction**

November's meeting also consisted of the annual Member's Auction. This allowed for CTBS member's to buy and sell bonsai related items with 20% of the proceeds going to the club for future events.



*Old Man Winter is finally showing his colors...photo from Steve following our first snowfall this year!*



**Winter Care** with Tom Lee

The following was originally printed in last December's Newsletter. However, as winter rolls in, it contains information, which may be useful in the coming months. -Rob

Two questions people ask when starting bonsai... "How do I keep it alive", and "How do I get mine to look like yours?"

For November's meeting, Tom Lee presented a brief lecture followed by group discussion addressing part of the first, keeping bonsai alive and healthy throughout a New England Winter.

The majority of Connecticut, Rhode land and Massachusetts fall into the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Hardiness Zones 4 and 5. This means expected low temperatures between -10 and -30 F, or just plain downright cold.



*Tom Lee discusses the fundamentals of bonsai winter care*

**Winter Care** (cont. from pg. 2)

Tom broke down the major concerns into eight categories and discussed each briefly. The categories of concern are 1) Temperature, 2) Light, 3) Water, 4) Humidity, 5) Pests, 6) Fertilizer 7) Repotting and 8) Pruning.

**Temperature:** The health of the tree is always the first concern, and protecting the roots is most important. Roots need to be insulated from freezing temperatures that can kill. The table on the following page is an abstract of some numbers published in the Fall 2004 ABS Journal regarding root-killing temperatures for various species common to bonsai. Most deciduous bonsai and conifers require a dormant period with temperatures less than 40°F for around three months, whereas tropical bonsai need to be maintained above 50°F. Hardy bonsai can be maintained outdoors provided the roots are protected. It is also recommended to protect them from drying winds. A cold frame or unheated garage works well in both aspects.

**Light:** Dormant trees require little or no light as their growth has all but stopped during the winter season. Tropical bonsai however, need as much light as possible, which can sometimes be a problem. Avoid placing them near heaters or drafty windows.

**Water:** In general, water less frequently, and never water a frozen bonsai. If wintering your hardy bonsai outdoors, nature should take care of most watering needs. If placed in an unheated garage or cold frame, do not allow the roots to dry out. Water tropical bonsai as required gauging by soil dampness.

**Humidity:** This is of primary concern for tropical bonsai, as the winter months tend to have much lower humidity. One way to help is to place a humidity tray beneath the pot, using a thin layer of gravel and water, ensuring roots are not in standing water. For outdoor bonsai, protect from wind to prevent desiccation.

**Pests:** Inspect both tropical and hardy bonsai for pests when preparing for winter storage. Watch for scale and mealy bugs on indoor trees, since they are frequently placed in much closer proximity than outdoors, allowing these pests to spread.

**Fertilizer:** None for dormant trees. Prior to winter storage (months of August through October) feed with low Nitrogen, high Phosphorous / Potassium. For indoor bonsai, reduce fertilization to less than half normal levels.

**Repotting:** For hardy bonsai, repotting should only be done during the winter when it is an issue of survival. If repotting must be done, repot in a larger pot without pruning any roots. When preparing for winter, consider removing (without pruning roots) from glazed pots (transplant into ground or larger pot) to protect the pot. Most non-glazed pots can be buried to protect roots from freezing temperatures since they are porous.

**Pruning:** Some pruning and wiring may be done, remember that branches are more brittle this time of year and do not bend very well.

Good luck, and here's hoping for a healthy, quiet winter followed by a burgeoning spring!

Species	Killing Temperatures	
	Young	Mature
Trident Maple	25	20
Japanese Maple	23	18
Chinese Elm	19	10
Japanese Apricot	26	21
Flowering Cherry	16	10
Shimpaku	19	12
Japanese White Pine	19	0
Japanese Black Pine	22	10
Scotts Pine	16	0
Satsuki Azalea	20	8
Bald Cypress	24	10