



Saturday February 14, 2026. 1pm
SUNY Erie Community College North Campus
6205 Main St, Williamsville, NY 14221
STEM Building Room 102

President's Corner

Hello,

Hope everyone is doing well. It seems like our Christmas party was so long ago but was enjoyed by those who could make it.

February's meeting will be on selecting a pot, a stand and how to set up a display.

Pretty soon we will be working on our trees and looking at managing energy, a very abstract thing and we as humans do not do well with abstract concepts on average and why some people are disappointed in the results. Now let's try to look at this mathematically using numbers to illustrate. You have a tree with 10 branches and each branch produces 2 units of energy. You remove a branch freeing up 2 units of energy. You now have .22 units of energy to distribute to the remaining 9 branches. Not exactly a huge amount. Granted a larger branch will free up more energy but it is going to be distributed through out the whole tree. There is no technique in bonsai that is going to yield an extreme result. Results develop over time and with proper care. Your expectations have to be realistic and you have to consider the genetics of a tree.

Broad leaf trees depending on where the tree is, is the tree in development or refinement. Trees in development you should allow a new bud/ shoot to grow out and harden off before cutting it back. In the spring you should look at new buds or shoots and visualize it growing out. Does it fit with the design of the tree or is it needed because the trees development at this time is still all about overall growth? If the tree is at a point where you can start refining the design you can start removing

that which does not contribute to the design. A tree in refinement you are going to pinch off the terminal bud. There is more to it than just that as latter you will have to come back and thin things out to allow for growth but not set the tree back. However, be it development or refinement you do not want to be trimming every time you see new growth. You have to give the tree a chance to grow before trimming/ pinching back otherwise you will weaken the tree.

I mention this because the fullness of a tree is not defined by how many primary branches a tree has rather the secondary and tertiary branches. While a tree may look full with extra primary branches you have to have the courage and faith to remove that which is unnecessary to all for new growth tomorrow and a better looking tree. Dormancy is the best time to evaluate the structure of your tree without having the foliage to hide things. A full canopy is not always indicative of a good structure. Ideally the trunk has taper. As you get to the top does the taper become consistent in diameter? Maybe you can cut that top back to some point and use something else for the apex and have a progressive taper from bottom to top. Or maybe a top branch is too heavy compared to the branches around it. Do you have too many primary branches, can some be removed? Using a different branch to fill in by spreading out the secondary and tertiary branches. Is it time to thin out some of the secondary or tertiary branches? Maybe now the tree has reached the point where you can have a branch on the left then on the right, repeating as you move out. These are some examples of things you could be looking at during the winter months. Granted some of these are going to set your tree back in appearance as it will take time to fill in again, but if you do this correctly it will allow for a better tree. For those having tropical tree's you can have the same visual opportunity when you defoliate the tree to reduce your leaf size.

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You may be thinking about all the comments of cutting growing tips off, cutting branches back to encourage back budding. Correct, but at some point, there will be too much and editing or thinning out will need to occur. When you are cutting back you are encouraging back budding to develop branches. Cutting just the growing tip encourages more leaves. When developing a tree, the emphasis should be on the structure, developing and moving branches to create the canopy.

Another benefit of this time of year and during the winter is being able to study tree's outside with the leaves being gone. Make bonsai's out of them, seriously. Look at what elements work well as a bonsai and what you would need to remove. What looks good as far as movement and what looks exaggerated. Look at the flow of the tree. This may sound a bit goofy but it can help. I am sure one of the things you will notice are secondary branches growing straight up from a primary branch and how odd they look.

Scott

2026 BBS Monthly Agenda:

February 14th Setting up a display
 March 14th Styling and refining
 April 11th Bring your own tree workshop
 May 9th Terry Monroe spring trimming
 June 6-7th Club Show
 June 13th Intro to Bonsai
 July 11th John Wiessinger Bonsai tips and Tricks
 August 8th Picnic/Auction
 September 12th TBD
 October 10th Sean Smith
 November 14th Suiseki
 December Christmas party

Bonsai Society of Upstate New York

February 24 Toby Ziegler on air layering
 March 24 Bill Valavanis TBD
 April 28 7 Andrew Robson
 May 16 & 17 TBD times, Club Show

2026 Board Members

Scott Russo- President
Paul Pearson- Treasurer
Bill Barker- Board
Sandy McDougal- Board
Jerry Rucker- Board
Christine Wilkolaski - Board
716-662-9429 membership