



Saturday September 12, 2026. 1pm
SUNY Erie Community College North Campus
6205 Main St, Williamsville, NY 14221
STEM Building Room 102

President's Corner

Hello,

I hope everyone enjoyed the club picnic. Again thank you Ken for hosting, Our September meeting will be on creating dead wood.

REINSTEIN FALL FESTIVAL is Saturday September 19th from 10 to 4pm. Set up is 9am. We need a count of how many trees members have that were babysitting them for the event. Please let Christine know. Also consider volunteering some time to help kids create a bonsai tree. Sign up will be at the meeting.

What causes trees to go dormant? As summer turns to fall, the amount of light a tree receives changes. Trees are equipped with photoreceptors called phytochromes that sense light changes, triggering internal responses. When trees go dormant for winter, they essentially go into a low-energy "rest mode" to survive cold temperatures and limited sunlight.

Some trees like apple, mountain ash and others use a decrease in temperature to start the dormancy process. Before a tree goes dormant it starts producing compounds that

help prevent ice from damaging cells. These compounds act as an antifreeze lowering the freezing point and protecting cell membranes. This is why we fertilize into the fall, to provide basic elements so a tree can properly produce these compounds. Keep in mind trees like apple, mountain ash and pear to name a few.

However during dormancy the tree's roots are developing and thriving, keeping plants fed, protecting them with the antifreeze they produce. Evaporation is why they need to be replaced. The warmest temperature for dormancy is between 28 and 45 degrees Fahrenheit.

So the question becomes at what temperature does a branch die at and at what temperature will the tree die. That depends, was the tree healthy going into dormancy, was it able to produce enough compounds to prevent freezing? Did the roots dry out? Did the roots get too much water? Did it get so cold the tree could not resist it?

Remember trees of the same species as your bonsai that are not bonsai trees are bigger not just in size but have thicker bark, thicker cambium making it less fragile than its bonsai

equivalent and able to survive the cold better. This is why we need to protect bonsai trees from the winter cold and wind. Obviously extreme cold will cause a tree to freeze but why worry about the wind? The compounds that prevent freezing are a liquid that evaporate from the surface of the tree. Wind accelerates the evaporation process causing the tree to dry out. Does it matter what material the pot is for wintering a tree? No, not at all. Ceramic pots can break but this has nothing to do with extreme cold.

Water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit, when water freezes it expands. If there is enough water in the pot it will break the pot. If the ceramic pot broke it happened when the water initially froze. Plastic pots have the ability to expand with the freezing water and thus are less susceptible to breakage.

There is a myth that ceramic pots absorb cold and get colder than the ambient temperature. This is completely false. An object can only give off heat until it reaches the temperature of its environment (ambient temperature). When the ambient temperature increases so will the temperature of the object.

Think of it this way no matter what you put in your freezer it will only get as cold as the inside of the freezer. The moment you take it out it starts warming up. So why do some things thaw out faster than others? This has to do with density and the materials ability to transfer heat. This is why a piece of meat takes longer to thaw out than it does for an equal sized ice cube.

Ok but in the summer things get hotter than the air temperature. Yes, because the sun is heating it not the air. These are the things to

keep in mind when wintering your bonsai. Garages are a great place provided they are not heated.

They offer protection from the wind and if not left on the floor the chances of critters finding them are slim. It also allows you to check on them. Not to mention if there is an early thaw and the trees come out of dormancy then when the temperature drops you can heat the garage to prevent the cold from damaging the tree because it is now acting like it is spring.

You can keep your trees in a tool shed or build something like a cold frame. Both will offer protection from the wind but not the cold. Here you will need to insulate the pot. Some people use leaves from the fall but styrofoam popcorn, covering them with snow, there are many options.

Try to avoid anything that might lure critters. The last way is to leave it outside somewhere out of the wind and cover it with snow. Snow is an insulator. Keep in mind no matter which way you decide to winter your trees they will need water. What they will not need is sunlight, well not until they come out of dormancy in the spring. There is no best way to winter your bonsai.

Although I think an unheated garage is the safest, I also have trees that winter outside because I do not have room for all of my trees in the garage.

Scott Russo

2026 BBS Monthly Agenda:

September 12th Carving
September 19th Reinstein Fall Festival
October 10th Sean Smith
November 14th Suiseki
December Christmas party

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