

# pfm bonsai studio ramblings



November 2013 Volume I

Winter actually seems to be arriving after a very warm autumn. Here in the great northeast, winds are cold and mornings are frozen. All my delicate ( for us) trees are either in the storage vault or the greenhouse. This includes any species that are not Zone 4 hardy.



The growing season is really over out doors. It is time to clean up the growing areas and get the trees ready for winter.

The greenhouse is full to overflowing as usual. ( WHY did I do so much propagation this summer?)

I have just returned from Golden State Bonsai Federation's annual convention in Burbank California. What an inspiration to wander through their exhibition. I really

suggest that all of you go to their convention next year when they join forces with ABS. It will be in Sacramento, CA.

This winter I am looking forward to my favorite bonsai event...the California Shohin Society Seminars Feb 31. I will be giving one demo and two workshops plus vending and yet having so much fun.

This month Frank Mihalic returns to make wonderful bonsai for you all. Be sure to register soon. Detail on Page 7.

DROP IN TO SELECT A TREE OR TWO TO WORK...I REALLY NEED TO REDUCE THE STOCK BEFORE WINTER.

## Species of the Month: *Pinus mugo* var. *pumilio* Swiss Mountain Pine

By Pauline Muth

### Scientific classification

**Kingdom:** Plantae

**Sub kingdom:** Tracheobionta

**Super-division:** Spermatophyta

**Division:** Pinophyta / Coniferophyta

**Class:** Pinopsida

**Order:** Pinales

**Family:** Pinaceae

**Genus:** Pinus

**Subgenus:** Pinus

**Species:** *P. mugo*

**Variety:** *pumilio*



**Origin/History :** This pine originated in the Alps, Pyrenees and other mountainous regions of Europe in high altitudes. It was first introduced in the USA in 1779.



**Description:** In its natural state, it is multi-trunked. The needle like leaves are dark green and grow in pairs two to 3 cm long. The needles can remain on the plant for 5 years or more. The cones are dark glossy brown. Buds develop in whorls and are covered with reddish brown resinous scales.

The bark is grey and develops a scaly texture with age. When grown in a landscape, mugo develop a mound form spreading wide to 10 feet rather than height.



**Soils** Use a free flowing bonsai medium as mugo do not like wet roots. Soil pH - 4.0 to 7.5, but performs well at 7.8.

**Cold Hardiness:** Zones 2 through 7. Will tolerate freezing but roots need to be protected.

**Lighting:** Full sun. Turn the tree from time to time so that all parts of the foliage receive adequate light.

**Watering:** May dry out between waterings. Use fast draining soil to avoid root rot. Spray the foliage with water daily during the summer.

**Feeding:** Simon and Schuster's recommends feeding once a month in spring and autumn using a slow-acting organic fertilizer. If you prefer to feed using chemical fertilizers, feed the tree once every two weeks with a half-strength solution of a fertilizer meant for acid-loving plants, such as Miracid. Slow feeding for two months during the hot part of summer (July and August in the northern hemisphere). Do not feed if the tree is ailing or has been repotted recently (2-4 weeks).

## Pruning and wiring:

Initial styling: Fall into winter. Wiring: Fall into winter.

**Potting:** Spring....be careful to leave a healthy root system.

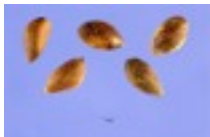
**Trimming:** Pinch two thirds of the lengths of the candles in the spring before the needles grow. This should be done in two stages. Cut the most vigorous ones one week before the weaker ones.

In the fall, reduce the number of buds on each branch to two to encourage ramification. Also in the fall, thin the needles by removing any needles that are too long or that are growing downward. Thin more needles at the apex of the tree and less as you work down the tree. This will allow light to reach the lower branches and will slow the growth of the apex.

With healthy trees, it is possible to remove all the new candles every other year, before they harden. The following fall, buds will appear where the candles were removed. This serves to shorten the internodes and encourage more dense foliage.

**Repotting:** Repot in early spring every 2-3 years for young specimens and every 3- 5 years for older ones. Pines need deep, well drained soil, so plant in a fairly deep container. Use a well draining mixture with more organics.

Pines and other conifers grow in association with a symbiotic fungus which grows in the root ball of the tree. If this fungus is not present, the tree may die. For this reason, pines and other conifers should never be bare-rooted, unless steps are taken to re-introduce the fungus to the repotted plant, such as making a slurry (thin mud) of the old soil and pouring it over the newly potted soil or by adding in spores when planting and during the growing season.



**Propagation:** By seeds.

**Pests and diseases:** **Pests:** Mugo Pine is a favored host for Pine sawfly and Pine needle scale. Some adelgids will appear as white cottony growths on the bark. All types produce honeydew which may support sooty mold. European Pine shoot moth causes young shoots to fall over. Infested shoots may exude resin. The insects can be found in the shoots during May. Pesticides are only effective when caterpillars are moving from over wintering sites to new shoots. This occurs in mid to late April or when needle growth is about half developed.

Bark beetles bore into trunks making small holes scattered up and down the trunk. Stressed trees are more susceptible to attack. The holes look like shot holes. Keep trees healthy.

Sawfly larvae caterpillars are variously colored but generally feed in groups on the needles. Some sawfly larvae will flex or rear back in unison when disturbed. Sawflies can cause rapid defoliation of branches if left unchecked.

Pine needle miner larvae feed inside needles causing them to turn yellow and dry up.

Pine needle scale is a white, elongated scale found on the needles. Pine tortoise scale is brown and found on twigs. Depending on the scale, horticultural oil may control over wintering stages.

The pine spittle bug lives and hides in a foamy mass.

Spruce mites cause damage to older needles, and are usually active in the spring and fall. Mites cause older needles to become yellowed or stippled.

Zimmerman Pine moth larvae bore into the trunk. The only outward symptoms may be death of parts of the tree or masses of hardened pitch on the branches.

The larvae of Pine weevils feed on the sapwood of the leaders. The leader is killed and the shoots replacing it are distorted. First symptoms are pearl white drops of resin on the leaders. The leaders die when the shoot is girdled as adults emerge in August. Prune out and burn infested terminals before July 15.

Pine wilt nematode can kill trees

**Diseases:** Diplodia tip blight is a common problem and Mugo Pine is very sensitive. This pine is susceptible to rusts. Canker diseases may rarely cause dieback of landscape Pines. Keep trees healthy and prune out the infected branches. Needle cast is common on small trees and plantation or forest trees. Infected needles yellow and fall off.





# *Wintering Bonsai in the Great Northeast..Zones 4 and 5*

By Pauline Muth

When temperatures can drop into the -20s and -30s F or below, bonsai needs special protection.

I use several methods here in Zone 4: Here protection is needed from mid December until April. The frost last from September until the end of May,

1. Tender bonsai is put into my greenhouse. As you can see in the picture, my glass and aluminum greenhouse is covered in plastic for the winter. Artificial lighting inside the greenhouse allows the growing of light hungry non-hardy bonsai. In the north east I include all tropicals plus maples, azaleas, mame sizes and exposed root styles in the non-hardy category. Tropicals are green-housed from early September until the end of May. Semi hardy types are put in during November and remain until the end of May, as they will have budded out and need spring frost protection. Maples are kept under the benches until they begin to bud out.



2. Zone 4/5 Very Hardy Bonsai are put into large above ground storage we create in my bonsai work area. Bonsai is placed on the pea gravel covered ground and then surrounded by plywood and topped with boards. It is covered after the first real snow fall. I must use mothballs, Decon and electronic devices to prevent rodent damage. The bonsai kept here are at ambient outdoor temperature which can be as low as -40 degrees F.

3. Extremely hardy larch are simply placed under my mature spruce grove on the ground.
4. I also have a concrete building designed especially for bonsai storage. It is under the ramp leading up to my studio and so far has maintained a winter low temperature of 29 degrees F. This is perfect. I use a small fan to circulate the damp air in the building.
5. The best method in our region is an underground vault with good drainage and a leaky top made of hardware cloth and covered with straw. If dug in an area that does not have a high water table, this provides the best protection during severe winters. Again, care must be taken to protect from rodent damage.



**For those with a few bonsai to protect,** an unheated garage or shed works best. Put the bonsai into an unused cooler and put it in the garage for winter. Check for drying out periodically. A handful of snow on the soil works wonders. The cooler is for rodent protection.

Frozen bonsai only need protection from wind. If a thaw occurs, water may be needed. Do not store them away too early...the storage must stay cold. Of course I am only speaking about trees that are hardy in our area.

**BEST WISHES OUT GUESSING MOTHER NATURE THIS WINTER.  
MAY ALL YOUR TREES SURVIVE IN GREAT CONDITION!**

# What is Happening in the Bonsai World?



[http://  
www.internationalbonsai.com  
/store/1708315/uploaded/  
national\\_exhibition/  
index.html](http://www.internationalbonsai.com/store/1708315/uploaded/national_exhibition/index.html)

The **4th US National Bonsai Exhibition** will continue with the presentation of some of the finest bonsai masterpieces in the United States.

## Shohin in California

1/31-2/2 2014

## Santa Nella

this is my favorite event

<http://www.calshohin.org>



## MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies

The 31st annual Spring Festival of the MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies will commence Friday evening, April 25, 2014 and through Sunday afternoon, April 27, at the Ramada Hotel in East Hanover, NJ.

[http://  
midatlanticbonsai.freesevers.com](http://midatlanticbonsai.freesevers.com)



<http://goldcoast2014.bonsai-bci.com>



**ABS/GSBF  
October 31, 2014  
Sacramento, CA  
Save the Date  
Details coming soon.**

# November EVENTS

AT PFM BONSAI STUDIO. Also Available MOST weekdays...call to check before coming out  
CALL OR EMAIL TO REGISTER FOR ANY OF THESE 518 882 1039



## **Monday Bonsai Study Group 6 PM or so**

Come and play and learn with our Monday study group. There is no charge for this group. We come together and work on a project. Or we simply bring some of our trees to work on. Some join in a shared meal before beginning. We chip in for the food. Bring materials to work on and join in the fun.

**IF YOU HAVE SIGNED UP FOR NOVEMBER EVENTS PLEASE CHECK BELOW, I HAVE NEEDED TO MAKE SOME DATE CHANGES DUE TO LAST MINUTE BONSAI TRAVELS. WORKSHOPS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER AND ELIMINATED WILL BE RESCHEDULED THIS WINTER.**

**NOV 8-10 STUDIO CLOSED**...Pauline is traveling to Baltimore to help with planning ABS 2015....sorry for the changes.

**NOV 16-17 10 AM - 5 PM FRANK IS BACK BY YOUR REQUEST!!**



**FRANK MIHALIC OPEN WORKSHOP.** Bring trees or buy trees, have fun with the assistance of bonsai master Frank Mihalic. He is the master of design who can work from virtually any piece of material. Come and give him some challenges. Fee is \$ 85 per day to work with him ( This includes the transportation costs to bring him here from Ohio). Register for one or two days. Bring trees, lunch, tools and wire. Trees available for purchase if desired. **YOU MUST REGISTER BY NOVEMBER 12 SO WE CAN DETERMINE IF THERE ARE ENOUGH PEOPLE FOR A FRANK WEEKEND.**

**NOV 23 STUDIO CLOSED**

**NOV 24 MOHAWK HUDSON BONSAI SOCIETY MEETING AT NOON.** TOPIC OF DISCUSSION: WINTER CARE OF BONSAI....HOW TO STORE YOUR TREES FOR WINTER. Non members always welcome...come and join us.

## **pfm bonsai studio supports**

Mohawk Hudson Bonsai Society <http://mohawkhudsonbonsai.org>

MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies - [www.midatlanticbonsai.freesevers.com](http://www.midatlanticbonsai.freesevers.com)

American Bonsai Society - [www.absbonsai.org](http://www.absbonsai.org)

Bonsai Clubs International - [www.bonsai-bci.com](http://www.bonsai-bci.com)

National Bonsai Foundation - [www.bonsai-nbf.org](http://www.bonsai-nbf.org)

**please visit [www.pfmbonsai.com](http://www.pfmbonsai.com) for current happenings at the studio**

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