

Bonsai Basics: Chrysanthemum Bonsai

Shape your own flowering bonsai in a single growing season.

The horticultural perfection of a bonsai does not have to take decades to accomplish. The chrysanthemum can be artfully shaped into a bonsai within one growing season. Register for a series of five chrysanthemum bonsai classes, beginning on Saturday, May 4th, 2024, and produce a styled, blooming chrysanthemum bonsai by November.

This **Bonsai Basics** is a course for beginners and intermediates, consisting of five classes beginning May 4 and ending November 2. A maximum of 40 students will meet all together for the first and last class for lectures and demonstrations. In between, students attend three, two-hour classes in small groups of 10 for more intensive teaching by curatorial staff of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.



Participants will learn the basics of watering, wiring, pinching, pruning, potting, and displaying chrysanthemum bonsai. While these principles also apply to bonsai that are traditional woody tree species, using the chrysanthemum allows students to see the results of their pruning, wiring, and other work, within only a few months instead of after years of training. When cared for correctly, these “gnome” species of chrysanthemums, bred for their small flower and leaf size, will bloom heavily in the fall, providing students with an opportunity to present their personally designed, flowering bonsai in an all-group display.

This course is offered in partnership with Potomac Bonsai Association and Old Dominion Chrysanthemum Society.

Program Requirements:

Participants must be at least 12 years old and have access to an outdoor growing area with at least 6 hours of direct sun daily.

Course Materials:

Participants will receive the following:

- Three chrysanthemum plants
- Growing containers

- One ceramic bonsai container for final display
- Aluminum wire for styling (1mm, 1.5mm, 2mm)
- Potting mix
- Drainage screens

Participants are expected to bring or provide their own:

- Box (at least 14 x 24") to transport materials to and from each class
- Pruning scissors - (any sharp scissors will work)
- Fertilizer for encouraging growth during the time between classes.

Course Fee: \$200 for all 5 classes

Registration: At registration, students will select from one of four small groups that meet on different dates and times. With no more than ten students in each, these groups allow for individualized attention from the instructors. All students will meet jointly for the first and last lessons. There is no variation in course content among the groups.

Group schedules are listed below. **Students may not switch small groups during the course.** If a group is not available when you register, that group is full. There is no waitlist for individual small groups, only for the course as a whole.

Group A

Saturday, May 4 (1pm – 4pm)
 Saturday, June 15 (10am – 12 pm)
 Saturday, August 3 (10am – 12 pm)
 Saturday, Sept 21 (10am – 12 pm)
 Saturday, November 2 (1pm – 4pm)

Group C

Saturday, May 4 (1pm – 4pm)
 Sunday, June 16 (10am – 12pm)
 Sunday, August 4 (10am – 12pm)
 Sunday, September 22 (10am – 12pm)
 Saturday, November 2 (1pm – 4pm)

Group B

Saturday, May 4 (1pm – 4pm)
 Saturday, June 15 (1 pm – 3 pm)
 Saturday, August 3 (1 pm – 3 pm)
 Saturday, September 21 (1 pm – 3 pm)
 Saturday, November 2 (1pm – 4pm)

Group D

Saturday, May 4 (1pm – 4pm)
 Sunday, June 16 (1pm – 3pm)
 Sunday, August 4 (1pm – 3pm)
 Sunday, September 22 (1pm – 3pm)
 Saturday, November 2 (1pm – 4pm)

Course Outline:

Lesson 1

Saturday, May 4

Lecture in USNA Auditorium: Introduction to the course, history of bonsai and bonsai chrysanthemums, introduction to bonsai styles, tour of National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, and distribution of course materials.

Lesson 2

Small-Group Instruction in the Bonsai Museum Lecture and Demonstration Center:
Finalize design selections, potting, wiring, and pinching to begin design.

Lesson 3

Small-Group Instruction in the Bonsai Museum Lecture and Demonstration Center:
Health check, hard pruning, wiring, and pinching to balance foliage density and encourage flowering.

Lesson 4

Small-Group Instruction in the Bonsai Museum Lecture and Demonstration Center:
Health check, repotting near-complete bonsai into ceramic bonsai pots, review of care to encourage optimal flowering and principles of bonsai display.

Lesson 5**Saturday, November 2**

Display critiques in Bonsai Museum Courtyard or USNA Auditorium:
Display set-up, viewing, and discussions of individual displays.