

# **An Approach to Documenting Bonsai Plant Changes**

**Blending Microsoft Word and Explorer with the Convenience of  
Digital Photography**

Rocky Lawton

# I. Overview

The following is written for bonsai enthusiasts that have a lot of plants and want to computerize their information. However, it is directed towards people who are very adept with the ubiquitous Microsoft Word, having a good understanding of how Microsoft Explorer works, and know how to use both digital cameras and some sort of photo digital editor. If you are unfamiliar with creating and formatting Word tables, you might find these steps difficult to follow. However, you knowledgeable about how to create master documents under the Outline View within Word, then these limited directions won't be an obstacle.

***Caveat emptor:*** While Word is a powerful word processor, it has many weaknesses when it is used for large complex multi-chapter documents. It seems that included Word files are prone to paragraph format corruption and/or duplication.

Since 2002, I have annually updated my bonsai log to the point that it has grown to over 125 pages. Normally, in June, I take pictures of bonsai that are new or have changed in some noticeable way. For new plants, I add a new sub-section. For the addition of another photo, I manipulate their photo table and page breaks.

In my organizational scheme, chapters are divided by plant species and each chapter has a separate Word file. When completed, each chapter is embedded into a Master document. Once incorporated into the master file, it is possible to generate a table of contents, cross-referencing, and indexing.

To make use of Word's Table of Contents generator, I made use of Word's Heading 1, Heading 2 and Heading 3 paragraph formats. Heading 1 is limited to the title of each species chapter. Heading 2 is used only for the sub headings of different sub-species. Heading 3 is used extensively as the sub-heading for every different bonsai. See sample below

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Within my bonsai log, Chapter One is devoted to junipers, Chapter Two spruces, Chapter Three pines, etc. For exotic species or one-of-a-kinds, I lumped them into Chapter 10 Miscellaneous. I also added a chapter on how we physically arranged the yard to accommodate our growing collection.

Within each chapter, I made use of Word tables to position pictures, their caption above and to establish a common mode of recording the evolution and growth of each bonsai (see example on page 5).

*Note:* When I am taking pictures for Word documents, I set my camera on to the *lowest resolution possible*. Most pictures will end up being about 2½x3”. Other than increasing file size and slowing down processing speed, nothing will be gained by shrinking a high resolution picture into a smaller space.

While updating the text log was simply a matter of adding more words, keeping track of new photos requires a more defined approach. Upon a plant’s initial potting, purchase, or collection, it is assigned a unique tracking code. The following page explains the logic of assigning a tracking code for both the plant and subsequent pictures. It is presumed that the reader will not be inconvenienced with having to rename all the photo files.

As long as you are comfortable with using Windows Explorer to rename files, create new folder (directories in Old Computer Speak) and are consistent in storing the appropriate files within them, it is easy to store, find, and retrieve both chapter files and pictures.

## II. Guidelines for Bonsai Tracking Code Names

When a plant is potted into a bonsai or training pot, it is assigned a unique code. This code is created by assembling three, or possibly four, sub-codes plus a six numeric date qualifier (mmddy). If more than one of the same type of plant and style are both potted on the same day, then the date suffix will be appended, in alphabetic order, with a letter. Photographic records are kept by appending the bonsai tracking code with an under bar and the date of the photo.

**Tracking Code = Main plant + Common qualifier + (2<sup>nd</sup> Common qualifier) + Style + Date**

*Caveat:* If the style of the plant changes, then the notes to reflect the change in status. The original plant code is its bonsai birth certificate. If there is a name change, then I rename all of the plant's photographic files.

### Examples

1. A Blue star Juniper potted on 06/10/01, in the style of Windswept, gets the code of “**JupBluWuP\_061001**”. A photo taken 7/4/03 would be **JupBluWuP\_061001\_070403**
2. A Japanese Black Pine that started training in the style of a Root over Rock in on May 30, 2003 would be labeled “**PinJpnBlkRvR\_053002**”.
3. A second Korean fir forest planted on the same day, would be labeled “**FirKrnFrnt\_082603B**”.

### 1. Main Plant Grouping Codes

Azalea=**Azl**, Cotoneaster=**Cot**, Cypress=**Cyp**, Elm=**Elm**, Ficus=**Fic**, Fir=**Fir**, Ginkgo=**Gnk**, Juniper=**Jup**, Larch=**Lar**, Maple=**Map**, Miscellaneous=**Msc**, Pine=**Pin**, Rhodie=**Rhd**, Spruce=**Spr**

### 2. Common Qualifier Codes

Alberta= **Alb**, Black= **Blk**, Blue= **Blu**, Chinese= **Chn**, Common= **Com**, Cork= **Crk**, Dwarf= **Dwf**, Egl= Engleman, False= **Fal**, Golden= **Gld**, Garden= **Grd**, Green= **Grn**, Japanese= **Jpn**, Korean= **Krn**, Mugo= **Mgo**, Red= **Red**, Trident= **Tri**, White= **Wht**, Unknown= **XXX**, Yellow= **Yel**

### 3. Table on Style Codes



Style	Code
Broom	<b>Brm</b>
Cascade	<b>Cac</b>
Double Cascade	<b>Cad</b>
Semi-Cascade	<b>CaS</b>
Forest Raft	<b>Frr</b>
Forest	<b>Frnt</b>
Saikei	<b>Fsk</b>
Literati	<b>Lit</b>
Root on Rock	<b>RoR</b>

Root over Rock	<b>RvR</b>
Exposed Root	<b>Rxp</b>
Twin Trunk	<b>Twn</b>
Twisted Trunk	<b>TwT</b>
Driftwood	<b>Udw</b>
Formal Upright	<b>UpF</b>
Informal Upright	<b>UpI</b>
Slanting Upright	<b>UpS</b>
Windswept	<b>UpW</b>

### III. Sample Log Page

Below is a sample entry for a juniper. To illustrate that the photos are contained within a table, I exposed the border grid. Of course, it would look much better with the grid off. Incidentally, the picture under the caption “Start 04/18/04” is called “JunBluRug\_Cac\_041804\_B4”.

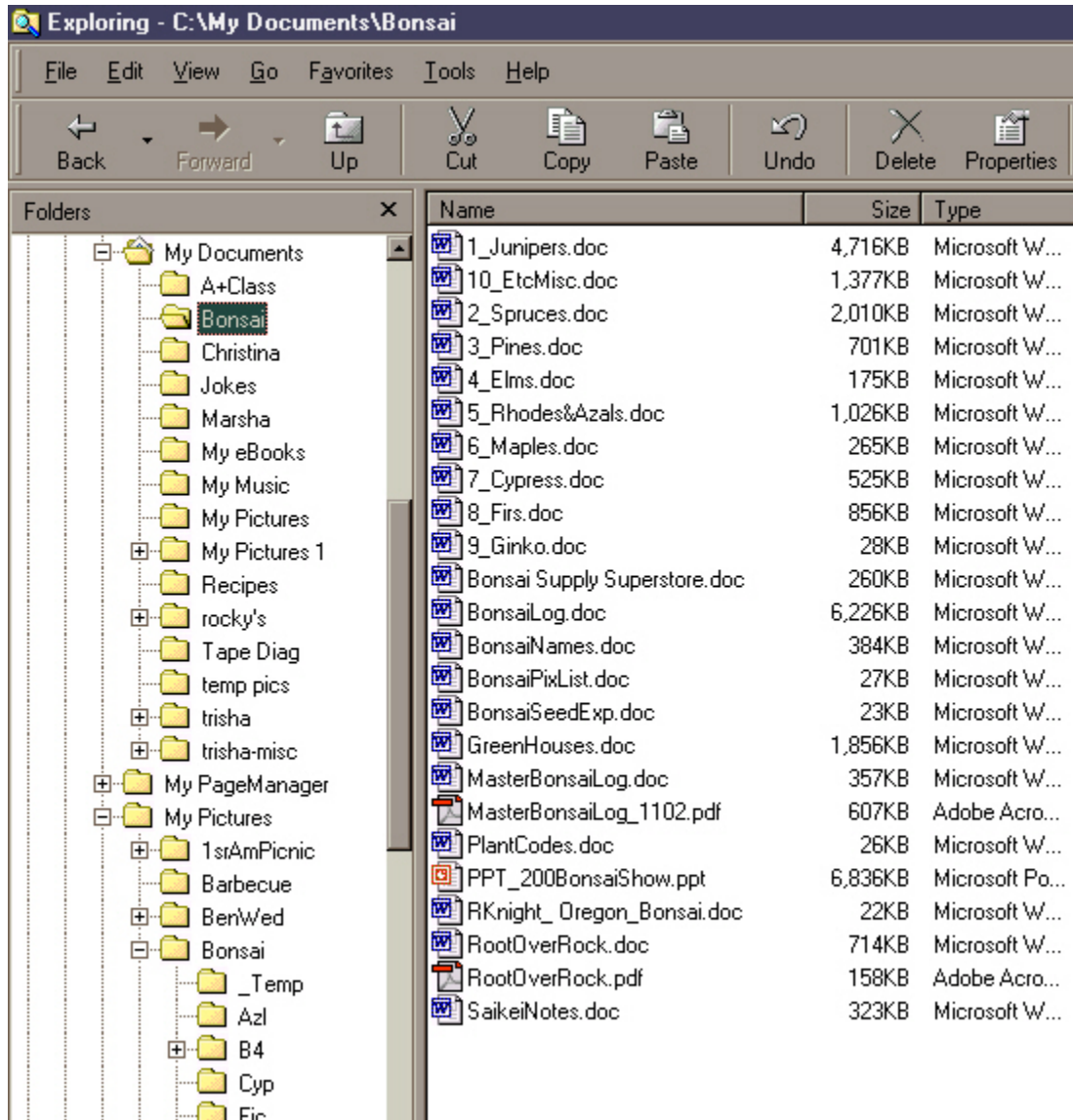
#### 04/18/04 Juniper Blue Rug *Wiltoni*

Start 04/18/04	June 2004
	
<b>Type</b>	Blue Rug Juniper, Creeping Juniper <i>Juniperus horizontalis</i> ‘Wiltonii’.
<b>Characteristic</b>	Natural state – Under 6 inches in height; spreads to 6-8 feet Sun exposure - Full to partial sun Water needs – water regularly but <i>don’t over water</i> Zone 3-8
<b>Style</b>	Cascade
<b>Tracking Code</b>	JunBluRug_Cac_041804
<b>Purchased</b>	Purchased for Club exercise in wiring at Max & Hildy’s for \$7. The plastic training pot cost \$2 at a yard sale
<b>Potting Info</b>	<p><b>04/18/04 Initial Potting</b> 65 % of the roots and 60% of the limbs were removed. Soil – Pacific Rim bonsai soil plus a cup of course sand Initial pot – plastic training pot</p> <p><b>04/25/07 Repotting</b> 50% of the roots and 10% of the limbs were removed; also removed circular training loop. Soil – Used 75% BSOP mixture and 25% potting soil Pot – Reused plastic training pot</p>

## IV. Using Windows Explorer to Establish Order

### Storing Bonsai Word Files

Below is a screen print showing how I arranged my bonsai log Word documents.



## Corresponding Digital Photo Folders

I store my digital photos under the **My Pictures** directory in the **Bonsai** directory. As it can be seen in the screen shot below, the photos are separated into plant species sub-directories. There is also an overkill sub-directory called “**B4**”, which as the name suggest, contains the starting point photos of the bonsai. It too is sub-divided by plant species.

