

Ceramic Container Repair

Brian Heltsley

Ryan Neil's Mirai Live website recently featured a short video on bonsai ceramic repair. The ideas there boil down to use of ceramic drill bits and saws to create attachment holes and grooves followed by insertion of decapitated metal screws or copper bridging pieces or "staples" embedded in epoxy. The example case was a very large, thick, and valuable Japanese ceramic container that initially showed serious cracks that opened up completely during the repair itself. The thick ceramic lent itself well to the screw and staple approach.

I had a small Sara Rayner pot with a chip and associated cracks that were about to bring the entire pot apart, so I decided to see what I could do to strengthen it. This pot is thin, only about 3/16" thick on the bottom, so I was nervous about drilling through it completely for a staple insertion. Instead I opted for reinforcing pieces of copper embedded in grooves made with a Dremel tool, one on the underside of the pot and one on the inner surface just below the chip location. Time will tell if these repairs hold well enough to allow a new tree to arrive in residence without damage.

The epoxy in question is Oatey Fix-It Stick (available at Lowes, among other locations), a two-part mixture with the consistency of putty and a drying time of about ten minutes (it continues to harden after that but cannot easily be manipulated). I also covered the chipped spot and may try to sand it down with a sanding attachment to the Dremel tool, and then perhaps even paint it. Fortunately the chip is located in the center of a longer side of the oval and can sit in the rear of a composition.





After grinding, sanding,
and buffing with the
Dremel tool.