



The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

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February 2003

Feb Meeting—Bonsai Importer's Quarantine

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society will be held Wednesday, February 5 at 7:30 p.m. at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park. Refreshments will be served beginning at 7 p.m. Be sure to come early so you can visit with other members before the meeting begins.

If you went on January's club dig, bring some fruits of your labor. We want to see the treasures you found.

The February program will be presented by Mike Hansen, owner of MBP Bonsai Studio in Pflugerville, Texas—near Austin.

Mike will brief us on all the latest changes in bonsai tree importation regulations, which are now in effect. He will discuss how these recent changes will impact our ability to acquire quality trees from Asia.

Mike will explain how MBP Bonsai Studio and numerous other U.S. bonsai importers have joined to present to USDA officials an alternate proposal to existing government regulations.

Come join your fellow club members and learn what's changed for bonsai importers and how these changes will influence how we will buy trees in the future. We all want to continue to have access to specimen bonsai from Asia.

Mike will also bring a few trees and some supplies -- wire, tools, etc. if anyone is interested.

See you at the meeting!

--Ken

Study Group: February 15

Our study group will meet Saturday, February 15, at 9 a.m. at Bayland Center in Bayland Park, Bissonet at Hillcroft (south of 59 and east of Fondren).

--Buddy, Donald

Dues Are Due

Membership dues for 2003 are due, \$25 for an individual, \$30 for a family. A renewal form appears at the end of this newsletter. The deadline for renewal is February 19. We must *receive* membership dues by that date. If we

do not *receive* dues by then, you will not get the March newsletter.

Shohin Workshop Saturday, February 15

We've got a super workshop to kick off our 2003 events! Creating shohin from large material is the primary theme. Trees can be of any size or height, deciduous or evergreen, and in any size container. The only limit to size is getting it into your car! (getting it back home will be no problem.) Ideally, the tree will have taper low down, low branches, small foliage and the ability to bud back on old wood. Elms, junipers, ficus, maples and a number of our native trees come to mind as prime candidates. We'll have a brief 'how-to' review.

This workshop is also for following up on previous workshops. Bring any past project you like for continued work....raft style, multi trunk, clump style, group and saikei, clinging to a rock, 'little plate' tridents or any other.

You'll need your trees, sharp tools, wire, turn-table (a lazy Susan will do), mister bottle and presoaked raffia if you think you might need it. Bring as many trees as you like, but plan on working on them one by one.

Bring a brown bag lunch or enjoy hot dogs and all the trimmings provided by our S.S.O.T. Kitty. Vegetarian alternatives will be available. New people are always welcome -- from just beginning to bonsai veterans. Bring a friend to share the learning and camaraderie. Our group is as unique as our bonsai!

Meetings are at Persimmon Hill Bonsai, 12001 Red Hawk Cove in Austin. Questions? E-mail Terry or Sheila at TexShohin@.com or call 512-280-5575. We usually break up about 2:30 P.M.

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Monthly Bonsai Care

by John Miller

John Miller, who writes a monthly column for the Bonsai Society of Dallas and the Fort Worth Bonsai Society, has agreed to share his column with us. We need to make adjustments for our warmer, damper climate.

What you do after you dig your tree will make a big difference in its chances for survival and how fast it recovers so that it can be turned into a bonsai. Removing as much of the excess top before digging will help in several ways. It reduces the amount of water loss both at the site and later at home. The smaller top reduces the amount of vibration transmitted into the root ball shaking the dirt loose. It also makes digging easier and the resulting tree and root ball easier to handle. The root ball should be protected from drying as much as possible. Either wrap it tightly with plastic wrap or put it in a growing container with good soil well packed around the root ball. Tie the tree securely to stabilize it. If the soil is dry you should have some water to dampen the rootball. Spray an anti-desiccant like cloud cover or wilt-pruf on the trunk and foliage to help retain moisture.

At home, keep the newly collected tree out of the sun and protected from winds until it shows some sign of growth. The roots should also be protected from freezing. Mulching will generally be sufficient to do this. Very little fertilizer will need to be applied the first year unless it shows very active growth.

One of the problems encountered in Texas comes from the heavy clay soils we usually find at our collecting sites. If these soils dry out (white clay or caliche especially but the black soils also to a lesser degree), they are very hard to get to take up water again. Water looks like it is entering the root mass but in fact it goes down to the clay and then runs off to the side and out of the pot leaving the root ball bone dry. I believe that this is one of the major causes of loosing the Ashe juniper. Elms that put new roots into the potting mix from the tips of the cut roots at the edge of the old root ball are not so touchy. A technique to help this is to drill a few small holes through the root ball and put good soil into them. The size of the holes is not important, just so they are large enough to get your mix into them allowing water to enter the center of the roots. This good soil will also provide a path to get oxygen into the root ball which also encourage new growth.

Early February is the end of the season for major pruning. You may be able to continue for a while on some late sprouting species such as the oaks. After the onset of sap flow, you should not try to make big cuts. Cut paste or pruning sealer cannot withstand the hydraulic pressure created by the urge to grow.

The best time to repot any tree is when the new growth activity is just getting started. For deciduous trees this is evidenced when the buds are just starting to swell. Having your soil mixes (it takes more than one type) ready before

the season starts lets you spend you time getting them done at the best time. Sometimes your work will prevent you from being able to pot when you would like. In these cases, repotting should be done earlier in the month, never after new foliage has broken.

Azaleas are better repotted at this time than after they bloom. The energy for blooming is already in the buds. They will have time to get new roots started before blooming. There will be much less stress on the tree than trying to repot in the heat of the late spring. Azaleas and most flowering plants produce many more buds than will look good when they are all open. Remove all but two of the buds on each small branch.

Amongst the repotting, you will have to be doing the twig pinching of the early growing species. Japanese maples will be growing furiously while the tridents need repotting. Maples and other species with opposite-growing leaves should be pinched as soon as the new tip can be discerned. Sometimes this requires you to separate the newly formed leaves to find the tip. This tip should be plucked with tweezers in order to get it before it get long enough to cut with scissors. Do not let these trees grow out to 4-6 leaves before pinching.

Alternately growing species, for example, elms and oaks, are handled a little differently. Let them grow out to 4-5 leaves and pinch back to 2-3 leaves, selecting the new bud according to which direction you want the new shoot to take. You will notice that the first leaves are smaller than the succeeding ones so by pinching regularly you will develop twigging with small leaves. More twigs divide the energy coming out the branch so that the later leaves will also be smaller (one of the 'secrets' of making a good shohin).

Along with new growth on your trees will come a new crop of bugs, molds, and other assorted critters. Foliar feeding once a week with the Garret Juice formula will not only make your trees nice and green but will keep all the bugs in check. Adding potassium bicarbonate or baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) will add a fungicide to the mix to control black spot and other fungal diseases.

Garrett Juice is 1 tablespoon each of Fish emulsion, liquid kelp, molasses, and apple cider vinegar to a gallon of water. This may be used as a foliar spray or an organic soil fertilizer. I prefer to go easy on the soil application until the new growth slows down. Using organic fertilizer cakes on top of the soil is a better way to fertilize. You may make your own or buy one of the commercial versions from your local bonsai vendor.

To enjoy your bonsai more, check your local calendar and plan to have at least one displayed in your show. Pick out a couple of your best trees. Keep them nicely groomed. Look for some sort of 'stand' to display it on. Even a cork slab or a bamboo mat will give it a space of its own on the show table. Kokofu-ten might be able to be very selective, but we want all our members to participate and have the thrill of someone stopping in front of their tree.

Calendar of Events

2003

- Feb. 5 Monthly meeting of HBS, 7:30
- Feb. 15 Saturday Study Group, 9:00, Bayland Park
- Feb. 15 Shohin Society of Texas, Reduction & Selection
- Mar. 1 WaterSmart Landscaping Workshop, UHCL
281-333-5067 or <http://www.watersmart.cc>.
- Mar. 15 Saturday Study Group, 9:00, Bayland Park
- Mar. 15-16 Kathy Shaner in Austin, *Deciduous Bonsai*
- Apr. 5-6 HBS Spring Show
- Apr. 12 Saturday Study Group, 9:00, Bayland Park
- Apr. 12 Shohin Society of Texas, Critique & Refinement
- May 17 Saturday Study Group, 9:00, Bayland Park
- June 14 Saturday Study Group, 9:00, Bayland Park
- June 21 Shohin Society of Texas, Exhibit Trees; Sale & Swap
- July 11-13 LSBF Symposium, Austin. Ted Matson and Ed Trout. Tex. Talent: Hansen, Holmes, Hubbard, Klajnowski, Padilla, Setter, Ware, Wilken. 817-283-5985, www.wimberley-tx.com/~bonsaijg/2003.html
- Aug. 16 Saturday Study Group, 9:00, Bayland Park
- Sept. 13 Saturday Study Group, 9:00, Bayland Park
- Sept 20 Shohin Society of Texas, Carving & Follow Up
- Oct. 11-12 HBS Fall Show
- Nov. 15 Saturday Study Group, 9:00, Bayland Park
- ### 2004
- Feb. 6-8 Shohin Seminar, Ramada Inn (1-209-826-4444), Santa Nella, CA
- May 21-23 LSBF State Convention, Houston.
Kathy Shaner, Guy Guidry, Mary Miller

Letters to the Editor

I would to thank Pete Parker for setting up the dig recently. It was a good morning to go out in the woods. I was quite surprised to see what was growing out there. Must have been seeded by birds (you know how that works!) But anyway, thanks, Pete.

--Terry

Thanks, Pete, for setting up a great dig. Were Douglas and I the only ones who got into the poison ivy?

--Dolores

Letter from the President

The dig was great. If you missed it, you missed an opportunity. Thanks go to Pete for taking the time to set the dig up and sharing with the rest of us. I am envious of Jim Stone and the tree he dug up. Hopefully Jim will bring the tree to the meeting to show. I myself dug up six trees and fit them all into my car trunk. There was a very good showing of people, I think about 10. The area was easy to get to and had hard paving to park on.

I also had the opportunity to go to the LSBF meeting in Austin on the 18th. I learned a little more of where our money goes and what it does. I also learned the meeting is open to all. I go to see some old friends and make some new friends. The LSBF convention this July will be needing raffle items from each organization. The money raised from this year's convention will go to LSBF to be used for speakers for all Texas organizations. This convention will benefit our club by helping to defray the cost of speakers. We will be needing to get raffle items from each willing member.

The raffle items can be just about anything you want, even Christmas items. So start thinking of what you can donate to the raffle, what have you not used in a while.

We will be looking for your ideas of what are the meeting workshops, special workshops and /or general interest needs of members. What do you want to see, hear, work on to increase your interest and knowledge? Put your ideas on a piece of paper and hand it to me at the meetings. We will do our best to work on the club member needs to increase knowledge, friendship and FUN. I can do nothing without your help, input and support. See you at the meeting.

--Virgil, President, HBS

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Crabapples (Part 1)

By Dolores

Because so many of us are the new keepers of crabapples, I thought something on crabapples might be useful. Of course, this article is the result of research of the literature, not experience. I would appreciate comments, suggestions and criticism from any of you who have had experience with crabapples.

Crabapples belong to the family *rosaceae* and the genus *malus*. About 40 original species exist, but, because crabapples readily hybridize, cultivars and natural hybrids number in the thousands. *M. domestica* alone has about a thousand varieties. In a landscape setting most crabapples reach about 25 feet in height and width--like a big basketball--and tend to have dense foliage. In the landscape, many varieties tend to send out sucker shoots which need to be pruned regularly if the tree's shape is to be maintained.

Crabapples are particularly cold hardy. As bonsai, only the roots need protecting in the event of a hard freeze. They grow vigorously and relatively problem-free in temperature zones 4 through 8A--but most of the Houston area is in the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 9a. The Katy Freeway is sometimes considered a demarcation between two of our climate zones, with tropical landscape plants such as oleanders struggling north of the Katy. We certainly know, however, the varieties collected in January were flourishing in the Highway 6 and Richmond area.

Crabapples are grown primarily for their flowers, which tend to be in dense masses.

Watering. Crabapples normally require a moderate amount of water but a lot of water when fruiting. Some authors recommend a heavier soil to ease the summer watering routine. Crabapples must not be allowed to dry out, but if the flowers get wet, the tree may not set fruit and if trees are misted, they may get mildew.

Soil. In nature, crabapples are not fussy about their soil, and even as bonsai they tolerate a wide range of well draining soil. According to Craine, they need a slightly alkaline soil, but San Antonio says they do best in an acidic soil (pH 5). Generally a heavier soil is recommended: 70% black loam, 10% Kanuma, 20% coarse sand;¹ 70% organic, 30% grit;² 70% soil, 10% peat, 20% coarse sand or equivalent.³

Wintering. Crabapples are exceptionally cold hardy and withstand temperatures of 15 degrees F., but they need to have their roots protected. In fact, they need a period of chill to set fruit, but, according to Walston, this is not a problem except maybe in the deep south. Again, we know

that the varieties we collected in January were definitely setting fruit in west Houston!

To be continued in March. Send your comments and corrections. Reference list will be provided at the end.

Haiku

Four more haiku for your edification:

*Yesterday it worked.
Today it is not working.
Windows is like that.*

#

*Your file was so big.
It might be very useful.
But now it is gone.*

#

*Stay the patient course.
Of little worth is your ire.
The network is down.*

#

*A crash reduces
Your expensive computer
To a simple stone.*

#

Renew your HBS membership now; don't miss a single haiku!

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For special requests or questions related to *The Bonsai News of Houston*, contact the Editor or the **Houston Bonsai Society, Inc., P. O. Box 540727, Houston, Texas 77254-0727, www.HoustonBonsai.com.**

The deadline for submission of articles is 8:00 p.m. the Wednesday 2 weeks before the monthly meeting. *The Bonsai News of Houston* is available by e-mail. To receive a copy by e-mail instead of regular mail, contact the editor at the address above.

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¹ Murata, 107, 113;

² Lewis, 112.

³ Jahn, 58 & 59.

HOUSTON BONSAI SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Please fill out and mail in or bring to a meeting)

Today's Date _____

Membership Type: (Select one) _____ Individual (\$25.00) _____ Family (\$30.00)

Membership Classification: (Select one)

____ Local member ____ Out of town member ____ Vendor ____ Bonsai club

NAME: _____ **STREET:** _____

CITY: _____ **STATE:** _____ **ZIP CODE:** _____

HOME PHONE: () _____ **WORK PHONE:** () _____ **E-MAIL** _____

_____ *Do not publish my address to general membership* _____ *Call here ONLY if absolutely necessary*

Payment Amount Enclosed: \$ _____ **Paying with:** _____ Check _____ Cash

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