



---

---

# The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE  
**Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.**

---

Volume 32 Number 10 Internet Edition

October 2003

---

## October Meeting—Open Workshop

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be held Wednesday, October 1 at 7:30 p.m. at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, which is located at 1500 Hermann Drive. Refreshments will be served at 7 p.m. Be sure to come early so you can visit with other members before the meeting begins.

The October program will be an open workshop, and I encourage everyone to bring tree(s) that you'd like to work on, or trees you purchased at the September club auction.

You may want to bring the tree that has been particularly challenging so that you can discuss styling ideas with other club members, and this may be the occasion to ask horticultural questions about your tree(s).

It's time to bring tools, trees and questions to the meeting where there will be ample time to share thoughts and explore possibilities. So bring that wonderful purchase from the auction and share your styling ideas with fellow club members.

See you at the meeting!

--Ken

## Roy Nagatoshi, Fri. -Sat., Sept. 26-27

Roy Nagatoshi, this year's Texas Tour Artist, will give a lecture/demo Friday night at 7:00 p.m. at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park. He will style a large Ashe juniper that Vito Megna collected. The tree will be raffled after the program. Admission will be \$5 per person.

Saturday, September 27, Roy will have bring-your-own-tree workshops beginning at 9 a.m., also at Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park. The cost of workshops will be \$25 per tree per participant and \$5 per observer.

For details and Roy's biographical sketch, see our September newsletter.

## Fall Bonsai Show October 11-12

The HBS fall show will be October 11 and 12 in the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Drive. The show times will be 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, and 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Sunday.

Several members have agreed to put trees in the exhibit. We need more members to enter trees. Take a look at your wonderful collection, and select one or more trees to put in the show and share with the Houston community.

We need additional members to conduct demonstrations and presentations on both Saturday and Sunday. The presentations are excellent ways to introduce visitors to bonsai, to de-mystify bonsai, and to demonstrate to visitors that bonsai is something they can do. Often visitors leave the demonstrations, go the vendors' areas, and buy plant material to begin their venture into bonsai. The sign-up sheets will be available at our October meeting.

Set-up time for the show will be Friday October 10, 6:30-8:00 p.m. Members may bring their trees on Friday or early Saturday morning. Friday night is the best time to bring trees so that you can be a part of the fun involved in setting up show. Your trees will be secure when left overnight at the Garden Center. We ask all members to please leave their trees on exhibit until at least 4:00 p.m. Sunday.

--Donald

## No Study Group in October

The Saturday study group will not meet this October. Bring your works-in-progress to the fall show. There will plenty of help for those who want or need it, and others can benefit from the experience.

PERSIMMON HILL BONSAI  
STUDIO and NURSERY

Your Quality Source

Bonsai Material, Tools, Soil, Wire,  
Supplies, Pots, Bonsai Services,  
Instruction, Club Programs & Seminars

Terry & Sheila Ward

512-280-5575

Austin, Texas 78739

E-Mail: PHBonsai@aol.com

## 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, with its early springs, long summers, late falls and erratic winters.*

The quilting magazine with an column by my favorite quilting writer, Lisa Boyer, came today. I could take almost any article she writes and use it in this column, changing the scenario from quilting to bonsai. She doesn't write on how-to but tackles attitudes and hang-ups that negate people's efforts. Of course the column is humorous or even goofy, but that keeps the readers' attention. Today's article deals with questions that quilt teachers always get asked, like, "How long does it take you to make a quilt?" Let's try, "How old is your tree?" ignoring the fact that age is not at all relevant, only that the tree has been well trained and maintained. Or my favorite, "How long does it take to grow a 50-year-old tree?" Duh! Let's concentrate on what makes that tree look old and what techniques the artist used to get there and how do I get myself to follow the necessary steps to achieve the same success.

Speaking of the necessary steps to achieve success, one is coming up this month. Roy Nagatoshi is the Lone Star Bonsai Federation tour artist this year and will be the featured artist at the Dallas club meeting. He will then do a workshop on Friday night and a demo and workshop in Ft. Worth Saturday. If you have schedule conflicts, try to go to one in the other city. Listen for any extra tips that he throws out, they may be on an entirely different species of tree than the demo. Try to pick up on the why of what he does which is more important to you than just the results at the end of the evening. If you understand the why, you can take that home and use it to improve your own trees.

If you have not checked wiring this fall, you had better look at it. The fall growth can make the tree swell up and get bad wire marks in a hurry. If the tree/limbs do not stay where you want, rewire placing the new wire in a slightly different path or possibly wrap in the opposite direction.

Cut back on the watering now that the temperature is a little lower, but do not allow the trees to dry out. Trees require less water during the shorter days and lower temperatures. However you need to remember that the wind can still stress the trees and dry out the soil; so water by checking the soil and not just on a given schedule.

Insects will continue to be present. Cooler (but not cold) days mean a resurgence of aphids. Mites will also still be around. Scale also can be a problem. Evergreens and any deciduous trees whose foliage turns can be treated with an horticultural oil which will kill the adults and also wipe out the eggs and over-wintering pupae. Be sure to cover all the cracks in the bark to get to the eggs. The organic spray (one tablespoon each liquid kelp, fish emulsion, apple cider

vinegar, and molasses in one gallon of water) will work on evergreens and will also give them some nutrients.

Feeding of deciduous trees should be discontinued for the winter. Evergreens and conifers will benefit from a low nitrogen feeding. One such mix might be 70% cottonseed meal and 30% bone meal. Being organic, this will breakdown into nutrients more slowly as the season gets cooler and the trees activity slows also. The organic spray given above can be used as a soil drench. Kelp is an excellent source of the essential minor elements plants need.

As the trees loose their foliage, you can study their trunk lines and branch structure. Any faulty styling and the general design features can be observed more easily and corrections planned. Look for crossing branches. Cut vertical growing twigs both growing up and those growing down. Reduce long internodes by cutting back and growing new extensions. Clean out heavy branch clusters the make the tree look too dense. Be particularly attentive to the formation of heavy branches in the top part of the tree where faster growth often occurs. Work can be done now or later during the winter at your leisure, but it is too easy to forget about it when the tree is in winter storage.

Some may repot in the fall, but I feel that it is counter-productive to do so. New roots are more prone to freeze damage if we get a bad winter. It has been stated that the key to safe repotting is to minimize root disturbance and to exclude severe root pruning. This seems to me to be a recipe for developing root problems, poor drainage leading to root rot and the inability of the soil to hold enough water to last all day. No heavy pruning will lead to the lack of refinement and a top heavy tree. I would recommend that you do the above paragraph this fall and repot at the proper time next spring.

Then sit back and enjoy your little fellows in the house when the winter set in.

\* \* \*

## Letter from the President

Last month, we forgot to thank **Richard** for the donation of pots the prior month! A belated thanks, Richard. We appreciate the support.

We have a new librarian, **Mark**. Thanks, Mark. Thanks, also, to **Lisa and David** for their work as librarians for the past couple of years.

Our new web master, **Janel**, is doing a great job and put in a lot of extra time and work setting up the web site. Thanks to **Brian** for his past work on the web site.

If you have an interest in being a member at large or any other office, please contact Buddy, Paula, Donald or myself.

I will not be at the next meeting, the plant is shut down and we are working 7 days, 13 hours until it is back up. The shut down is going to last until Nov. Ken will be running the next meeting. I will be back for the November meeting.

Have a safe and happy week.

--Virgil, President

### Calendar of Events

Fri, Sept. 26	Nagatoshi Lecture-Demo, 7:00 p.m. \$5.00 Houston Garden Center, Hermann Park
Sat. Sept. 27	Nagatoshi workshops, \$5 to observe, \$25 to participate. Hermann Park.
Oct. 1	Monthly meeting of HBS, 7:30 Hermann Park. Open workshop
	NO STUDY GROUP IN OCTOBER.
Oct. 11-12	HBS Fall Show, Houston Garden Center, Hermann Park. Fri. set up, 6:30-8:00. Sat. 10:00-5:00, Sun. 10:00-4:30
Nov. 5	HBS monthly meeting. Nominations for secretary, 1 <sup>st</sup> vice president and 2 members at large.
Nov. 15	Saturday Study Group, 9:00, Bayland Park
Dec. 3	HBS monthly meeting, 7:30 p.m. Hermann Park. Election of officers. Holiday party: Covered dish buffet and "gift exchange."
<b>2004</b>	
Feb. 6-8	Shohin Seminar, Ramada Inn (1-209-826-4444), Santa Nella, California. For forms and map, Terry Ward, 512-280-5575 or <a href="mailto:TexShohin@aol.com">TexShohin@aol.com</a>
Feb. 21	Shohin Society Of Texas (SSOT)
Apr. 3-4	HBS Spring Bonsai Show
Apr. 17	Shohin Society Of Texas (SSOT)
May 21-23	LSBF State Convention, Houston. Kathy Shaner, Guy Guidry, Mary Miller
June 26	Shohin Society Of Texas (SSOT)
Sept. 18	Shohin Society Of Texas (SSOT)
Oct. 9-10	HBS Fall Bonsai Show

### Shohin Update

*This arrived too late for me to include the registration form and map. For information, contact Terry or Sheila Ward at 512-280-5575 or [TexShohin@aol.com](mailto:TexShohin@aol.com).*

Information on the Shohin seminar and our own Shohin Society Of Texas (SSOT) '04 programs and workshops follows:

#### California Shohin Society Seminar

Registration forms for the 2004 Shohin Seminar in Santa Nella, CA, February 6-8 came in Saturday afternoon's mail. A PDF copy of the registration form and map showing how to get Santa Nella are available. Contact me for the forms, by PDF file or regular mail. The Shohin seminar is a major event which offers bonsai people a wonderful experience. It's informal and casual at all times. If there is any way you can attend, please do so. You won't regret it.

There is no air service into Santa Nella. Oakland and San Jose airports are most convenient. Fresno, Sacramento and San Francisco airports are also good alternates. Rental cars are available all the airports.

Registration is \$80.00 per person and includes all lectures, demos, Sat. buffet lunch, Sat. banquet, Sun. buffet breakfast, exhibit, bazaar and hospitality suite. There are twenty-three workshops ranging in price from \$5.00 to \$130.00.

The seminar is held at the Ramada Inn, Mission De Oro Conference Ctr. For reservations call the Ramada at 209-826-4444. Do not delay making reservations. The Ramada fills up very quickly. There are at least three other motels very near by in case the Ramada is fully booked.

#### Shohin Society Of Texas

Our SSOT programs and dates for 2004 meetings were set at last Saturday's meeting. All dates are on a Saturday. Meetings start at 10:30 am at Persimmon Hill Bonsai in Austin. Here's the schedule.

**February 21: Propagation Program and Workshop.** (Five members will discuss everything you ever wanted to know about propagation via seeds, cuttings, thread grafting, root cuttings, regular grafting and air layering.)

**April 17: Selection of Convention Exhibit, Shohin Accent Plant Program and Sale & Swap.** (Wow! This is going to be a nonstop, fun-filled event. We'll just have to make time for the chili dogs somehow.)

**June 26: Bougainvillea Workshop.** (Bogie's up to 3" in diameter, maybe larger, can be ordered in advance for this workshop or you can bring your own. Details later.)

**September 18th: Annual Business Meeting and Panel Critique.** (Back by popular demand--the three person panel critique. One of our all time favorite programs.)

We have a super line up of programs and events for '04. Please mark your calendars to reserve the meeting dates.

--Terry, Austin

## Bonsai from Nursery Stock

By Ron Martin

© Ronald L. Martin. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

*Ronald L. Martin, who began studying bonsai in 1985, is the proprietor of Tokonoma Bonsai in Summerville, South Carolina. He has conducted demonstrations from South Florida to New Jersey and as far west as Texas. He is also a regular speaker in the Summerville area. Thanks, Ron, for sending us this article.*

### Selecting Something to Start with.

So where do I start? I have read almost all the books. Looked at a zillion pictures. Just what kind of pre-bonsai do I need to create a masterpiece? If I want to create a beautiful bonsai, can I start off with just anything?

A maple after all is just a maple. So all I need to do is get one and, presto, a few whacks and a bit of wire later, one has, or should have, a masterpiece. Sounds simple.

What happened? I did have all the piece-parts to do the job, but somehow it just did not work out. How could this happen? Wish there was a simple answer to this. None comes to mind but I do hope that the following helps a bit.

First, let me say that all trees are pre-bonsai. Every nursery has lots of pre-bonsai lined up in all those plastic nursery containers. A walk in the woods will yield plenty of pre-bonsai that can be dug up. They are easy to find. Pre-bonsai are everywhere. They just need a little work to become at least something.

Problem is sorting through all those pre-bonsai's and finding the potential bonsai among them. Lots to choose from but very few correct choices to make. A bit of time spent in the selecting process goes a long way.

Just what turns a "pre-bonsai" into a bonsai? More important, what makes some not a good selection? How do we find the potential bonsai among all those possibilities?

Lots of answers to this question. None of them are all that easy to give in a few short paragraphs. Whole books could be written on the subject and still not cover it completely. It might be easier to tell you what to stay away from than to tell you what is good.

Bonsai is a time consuming art form. One makes a few cuts then waits for the tree to catch up. Then we use some wire and wait some more. Try as we may that tree will not be forced to grow faster than it wants to.

Styling a tree does damage the tree. Hopefully this is constructive, well thought out, but it is still damage to the tree. Cuts take time and energy to heal. What we do to the little bugger does slow down the growth process. Anything else that also slows down this process should be avoided at all costs. At least during the styling process.

Sick plants are bad. They slow down the growth process more than anything. Time must be spent getting them healthy before we can start. Working on a sick plant usually means disaster. If you do find that the sick thing in front of you has potential, then make sure it has enough to

make the time spent in getting it back to health is worth the effort. Something to think about when you are tempted to save that half dead poor thing in one of those chain stores.

Sloppy pruning cuts, wire marks, poor graft unions and large amounts of dead wood are all good indicators of a bad choice. They all take time to correct and heal. Poor graft unions are one thing that you will be stuck with forever. Poor pruning cuts, etc., can be fixed. But again that takes extra time.

Time is a valuable commodity, only the young can afford to waste it, and even their supply is limited. Don't waste it on a sick or poorly formed tree. Get something healthy. You will do enough to the tree to slow down the process all by yourself. You don't need any extra help.

But what makes for a good choice?

### Trunk.

Most important, and what takes the longest to grow, is the trunk. Does it have good taper? Does the shape suit your needs? Is it pleasing to look at? Growing a nicely shaped trunk takes time and, unless you are growing from seedlings, a poorly formed trunk will always be a poorly formed trunk. Basically, if the trunk is small enough to bend with wire then it is going to be a long-range project. Do you want to wait that long? Look closely and make sound decisions based on realistic goals.

### Root Spread or Nabari.

Is there one and does it match the trunk? Big questions. Sometimes you have a great nabari and a great trunk but each goes in a different direction. Not easy to correct.

### Branches.

It is better to have too many. You can always take off what is not needed. That is easier than putting them on. Heavy branches at the top and thin branches at the bottom are always a problem. So look closely.

### Growth Habit of the Plant.

Know the growth habit of the tree. One that wants to grow prostrate will not make a good formal upright and one that wants to grow upright will not make a good cascade. You will always be fighting to make the tree do something it doesn't want to do. Use its natural growth pattern. It is a lot easier that way.

Domestic trees are always better than imported ones. Dwarf varieties are always preferable to standard ones. Just a short note here, by imported trees, I don't just mean trees that have come from Japan, Korea, etc. Trees that have been brought in from a climate different than your own fall into the same category. Trees do not know borders, just climates.

Fruits and flowers will not reduce in size, colors will not change. Look hard at these things, you are stuck with them.

Look at the size of the plant. A six-six inch plant will take years to make into a three-foot masterpiece. Taller, however, can be cut down to size, the offending scars hidden and a nice piece completed in a shorter time.

When you think about it, the choices are not all that hard. The stock you start off with, to a great extent, will make the bonsai. Bad will get you bad and good will get you better. You just have to think about what you are doing. Spend some time, a lot of time, in the initial selection of your material. Look closely and study it hard. If you can't see the tree in it, then DON'T BUY IT.

Continue looking until you find that perfect specimen. Pass up the pre-bonsai and go for the potential bonsai. Don't waste your time, use it wisely.

Decide what you want the finished product to look like, then go in search of raw stock that will give you a chance of achieving these goals.

*You can contact Ron Martin at Tokonoma Bonsai, 87 Old Trolley Rd., Summerville SC 29485, [www.tokonoma.com](http://www.tokonoma.com), [rmartin@dycon.com](mailto:rmartin@dycon.com), Phone 843-875-6567, Fax 843-832-3870.*

*The Bonsai News of Houston* is a monthly publication of the Houston Bonsai Society, Inc. Copyright © 2003. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without the consent of the editor or a member of the board of directors. Exceptions exist, however, for other not-for-profit and non-profit bonsai organizations or associated bonsai and bonsai nursery newsletters. HBS participates fully with reciprocation of contents and materials between other LSBF member organizations and others. Authors who submit articles for this newsletter thereby give permission to such organization to reprint.

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](http://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.

Space for advertising in *The Bonsai News of Houston* can be requested by contacting the editor. Advertising rates for a business-card-sized ad (approx. 3 1/2" x 2") are \$6 per month, \$30 for 6 months and \$50 per year (12 issues). A full-page ad is \$25 per month. Rates are subject to change without notice. 3 1/2" x 2" classified ads are run free of charge for one month once per 12-month period, for noncommercial members.