



The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

Volume 32 Number 8 Internet Edition

August 2003

August Meeting—Repotting Tropicals

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be held Wednesday, August 6, 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 August program will be repotting tropical bonsai. Club members are invited to bring tropical bonsai needing to be repotted. For those members who need it, there will be a limited amount of potting soil available for sale, first come, first served.

Longtime club members Buddy, Ray and Janel will repot three trees donated to the club by Sam. These trees will be auctioned or raffled at upcoming meetings.

This meeting will be an opportunity for you to work on your tropical(s) with lots of experienced members around to answer any questions you may have. This is the first program of this type that we've tried, so let the board members know what you think about this kind of event.

See you at the meeting!

--Ken

Saturday Study Group Aug. 16

Our study group will meet Saturday, August 16, at 9 a.m. at Bayland Center in Bayland Park, 6400 Bissonnet (Bissonnet at Hillcroft--south of 59 and east of Fondren). Everyone is welcome-- beginners and seasoned veterans. We all have a good time.

Wanted--Back Issues of Newsletter

Eldon has once again come to our rescue, this time by putting backup copies of our newsletters on a CD. The project started as a "bail-out-Dolores" project when our newsletter editor, began worrying about her computer crashing. Eldon volunteered to back up old copies of the newsletter on CD. He has expanded the effort and now plans to assemble as complete a set of the HBS newsletters as possible. Once he gets a complete set, or as near as possible, he will burn them to CDs for our club's records and the library.

He has a complete electronic set for 2000 through 2003, but is missing April, May, and July of 1999, all of 1998, and January, March and April of 1997. If you have an electronic copy of any of these, please E-mail them to Eldon at ELMO4635@aol.com.

If you do not have an electronic copy, do you have hard copies of 1997 and back? Eldon may be able to scan them to get electronic copies.

HBS Seeks Librarian

The HBS needs a librarian to take care of its library. If you are interested, contact Virgil at curtis.virgil@verizon.net.

Texas State Bonsai Exhibit, Inc.

As some of you are aware, for several years now, a group of Texas bonsai professionals and hobbyists have been attempting to set up a state bonsai exhibit. As a first step, certain members of the Austin club have set up the Texas State Bonsai Exhibit, Inc. (TSBE), a Texas corporation under IRS 501C3 rules.

Originally, TSBE had hoped a bonsai collection could be housed in Zilker Botanical Gardens in Austin. Once TSBE and the City of Austin reached a proposed agreement, however, the city lawyers reviewed the agreement and rejected it, citing problems with liability concerns, especially with having valuable private property on public lands.

Subsequently, the officers searched for alternative solutions. One solution was offered by a private Japanese company but had been temporarily on hold due the economy.

On Saturday, July 12, at the State convention in Austin, TSBE made a formal announcement that an agreement has been reached with Tokyo Electron America, which has leased to TSBE two acres of undeveloped land adjacent to their campus just off Riverside Drive east of I-35 in Austin.

Con't p. 41.

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 long summers, early springs, late falls, and erratic winters.

On to the more mundane tasks needed to be done during the hottest part of the year. For all except the tropics this is the most stressful time. Most native species can take the full sun on the foliage but cannot take heating of the roots.

Not only does the heat get to our plants but the low humidity causes the plants stress by evaporating the water from the leaves faster than the plant can move it upward. Any wind that is present multiplies the problem. *[Low humidity has definitely NOT been a problem this year in the Houston area, at least not for those of us south of town.--HBS ed.]* The sun shining on the pots will raise the soil temperature, causing the soil to dry out and damaging the plant roots. Therefore you may need to water more than once a day. If so, my preference is to water heavily in the evening, letting the plant recover during the cool night and then to water lightly in the morning, spraying the foliage also. Partial shade, 50% shade cloth or afternoon shade will be great. Mulch on the soil will help but does not keep the sides of the pot from getting hot. Even the morning sun can be too much on the pot in August. A cloth cover will work as will setting the pot in a good fitting box.

At the B-B-Q at the Smith's I observed that Howard and Sylvia use a white cloth around the pot together with an automated mist system. The cloth provides both shade and evaporative cooling after being wet by the mist system. As Bill Cody's detailed articles in the Austin newsletter show, there is no perfect solution outside of a climate controlled greenhouse (one for each species of bonsai) but every little aid helps our trees get through the summer.

Remember to water twice. Wait a few minutes after the first watering for the dry soil particles to absorb some of the water on their surface. Then the second watering gets the particle fully wet.

The stress caused by the temperature will give any insects a chance to wreak havoc. Watch for the spider mites and scale especially this month. The morning spray will help knock some off. The Garret juice foliar spray will keep them down also. Gary Marchal uses the new horticultural oil sprays year around. (The old oil sprays were heavy and burned foliage so be sure to get the new type). Chemical sprays are available but most chemical reactions are accelerated by heat and may damage plants. Read the labels!

Any rainy spell can bring fungal problems, powdery mildew being one of them. That is why I use the foliar spray in the morning, so that the leaves will dry quickly. If you have a fungal problem, use potassium bicarbonate available

at most nurseries. One brand is named Remedy but that is also the name of a potent herbicide; please check all labels.

Be careful about applying fertilizer in hot weather. Even organic fertilizers create some chemical reactions and the above remarks apply here, too. By the end of the month the nitrogen applied to the tree should be reduced. A little may be put on into September but the tree needs to be allowed to stop growth to get ready for dormancy. Evergreen trees benefit from a low nitrogen fertilizer through the winter.

Look in nurseries for material for bonsai. Some nurseries reduce their stock and order new material for the fall season. For our purposes many plants with beat up tops work great and are sold at a reduced price. When appraising a potential purchase, roll your hand into a loose fist and look through it at the lower part of the plant. Ignore the top, observe the base trunk and lower branching. Ask yourself, Can I make a bonsai out of what I see? If the answer is not yes, look some more. This works in the field when on a dig, also.

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Comments from the State Convention

Once again I had a great time at the LSBF convention. The display was great. There were lots of really nice trees, of all sizes. And I really enjoyed the suiseki display. It was a good addition to the show. Ed Trout did something that I had never seen before. Someone sent him digital pictures of the trees. He then printed them out and created a hand sketch of what he thought the tree might look like in the future. It was a great idea! Then I did another workshop with Chuck Ware. Chuck is always a lot of fun, and provided some good guidance on what to do with the trident maples. Another good convention!

--Terry

* * *

I participated in the trident maple (Chuck Ware) and the Kingsville boxwood (Dr. Butch Wilken) workshops, and I am very pleased and satisfied with the experiences and the trees.

The quality of the pre-bonsai stock which was provided was far above what I have come to consider as "average" for symposia--big trunks, healthy trees, lots of branches for selection. Two extra trees were presented at each workshop, and participants were free to exchange the tree they drew, by a blind drawing, with either of the extras. Very few exchanges took place, attesting to the quality of the stock. And, when an infrequent exchange was effected, everyone had a new opportunity to upgrade! It was fun.

Chuck and Butch did excellent work, diligently soliciting questions, and then giving in-depth answers, gracefully and gently dealing with the repeated ones and (my) stupid ones.

But, maybe the most notable thing, to me, was that Chuck had cared for the workshop tridents and Butch had cared for the Kingsvilles for what seemed to be a long time prior to the workshop. This enabled them to speak with authority of the specific soil mixtures, watering procedures, pest control, fertilization, and sunlight that the trees had been receiving. What helpful information that was! It has happened to me, more times than I want to remember, that I bring home a tree and it immediately begins dying, because its prior treatment is unknown to the workshop master and is far different from what my bonsai garden offers.

LSBF 2003 was a resounding success for this grateful bonsai acolyte. --Phil

* * *

I only attended Sat from 8-1PM. I attended 1 Demo and dropped in on all the workshops. I really appreciated the stadium seating for the demo and the great acoustics.

The tree display was the best I have seen. I really appreciated the shoin table, and the suiseki table was great. There really are a lot of fine collections in the Texas clubs.

The sales area was a little cramped.

--Greg

* * *

As one of the co-chairs of the convention, I think that it was a huge success. The teachers were excellent; every one knew Ed Trout from Florida. Ed did the black olives and the buttonwoods. I came away with a great buttonwood. Ted Matson was a new teacher from California. He worked the tamarisk and did a bring-your-own-tree workshop which everyone enjoyed. Both Ed and Ted did an outstanding job presenting their lectures/demos.

The educational events were all well received, especially the Bonsai no Hacchi, the Art of the Container

presented by Warren Hubbard. You shouldn't have missed it.

The other workshops by the Texas artist were all sold out. There were some awesome material to work on. The food, raffles, tree exhibit were great. If you missed this one, please get ready for the one in Houston - 2004.

--Buddy

* * *

The symposium was great. The location was easy to get to, and the hotel people were friendly. The workshops had great material. The instructors took the time to talk to each person in the workshops. The information was well worth the going. The vendors were close to all areas of the convention. The storage area was close and handy, with plenty of room for all materials. The classrooms were close to each other, making it easy to go from one class to the other. The meals were great--hot, filling and displayed very well on the table. The waiters were friendly and responsive. The raffle included a mixture of interesting items. The cost of the registration was worth the meals. The materials in the classes (all of them) were worth the cost of the classes. **Connie's two cents.**

I had a wonderful time at this convention. It was a great experience for me because the instructors were very helpful in the knowledge of the plants in each workshop (Texas native-black cherry and the Kingsville boxwood). I am looking forward to our convention in May of 2004.

Virgil's two cents.

I got to reinforce old friendships and make some new friends. I got to meet someone from Mexico and made new friends from Arkansas. I visited with the vendors, who gave me some good information. I also learned that the vendors have to go through a lot of paper work to get the material and take care of the taxes. I saw first hand what it takes for vendors to supply the convention and the work it takes them.

The raffles are always fun, but I saw the amount of work it takes to just put out and manage the raffle items. I watched the artist work after the shows to make sure they were ready for the next workshop. I saw a small team of people work together to support, supply and make thing happen for the convention. I saw a great display of trees from individuals for people to enjoy and learn from. I got to visit with people and find out that Houston has a great thing going. I enjoyed the work of others that made my 3 days great. I enjoyed the worry-free weekend that others had prepared, that took months, if not a year to do. I enjoyed a year of hard work in one 3-day event. I saw people enjoying the show and I saw people

exhausted from putting on the show all at the same time. I have learned the only way to repay the work of the many people that have gone before me is to take part in the work. I learned that you enjoy the shows more because of the work you have put in to them and knowing others have done the same. I have learned that even a small team effort can make a large difference. I have learned that it takes all of US doing our part, small or large, to make a convention, club and friendship work.

--Virgil & Connie

Calendar of Events

Aug. 6	Monthly Meeting of HBS. 7:30, Hermann Park
Aug. 16	Saturday Study Group, 9:00, Bayland Park
Sept. 3	Monthly Meeting of HBS. CLUB AUCTION!
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

State Bonsai Exhibit (con't)

TSBE has three years to develop the plan and open. This is an ambitious undertaking.

TSBE is a statewide endeavor. Although currently all officers and directors of TSBE are members of the Austin club, it is hoped that all Lone Star Bonsai Federation (LSBF) members will be active and participate as officers, docents, and members in general. Current officers are: Elaine, Chairman; Michael, Vice-chairman; Alisan, secretary; J. R., Treasurer. Directors are Audrey, Terry, Candyce, and Shiela.

Several hobbyists have offered some of their best trees for permanent display, among them is George Gray's maple. More will follow as the plan is built.

Tasks ahead include surveying the site, clearing the brush and trimming the trees. TSBE will prepare and approve a plan, but before building can begin, funds must be raised, an estimated \$300,000 by July 2006 to complete construction. This is probably beyond the capabilities of bonsai artists alone but as we raise funds corporate contributions will follow.

Because the organization is chartered under IRS 501C3 rules, contributions may be tax deductible. All funds go to the construction of the exhibit: all of the officers and directors are volunteers and receive no remuneration.

For information, contact Elaine or Michael 512-244-3240, e-mail mjhansen@direcway.com; or your local LSBF representative.

Soil and Soil Amendments

By Paul Weishaar

President, Indianapolis Bonsai Club (IBC)

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Thanks to HBS-member Pedro Rodriguez for calling this article to my attention and obtaining permission to reprint. The article documents a two-part program that Mr. Weishaar presents to the IBC every three years. It is updated for each presentation. You may read the entire article on the Internet at <http://www.indybonsai.org/calendar02.html> <http://www.indybonsai.org/files/Bonsai%20soil%20presentation%20revised.PDF>. Please send me your comments, particularly those with a Conroe-Houston-Galveston slant.

What Strength. In my research for this program, I found numerous directives on the Internet and also in many Bonsai books that state liquid, inorganic fertilizers are to be applied at 1/2 the recommended strength. Nowhere could I find any documentation or reason why. Is this one of those infamous myths? After many fruitless calls and conversations, I finally talked to representatives of major manufacturer, whom package both fertilizers and soil mixes. I posed my question and they said they have heard and read this numerous times and know of no data to substantiate the myth. Their proportions are based upon what the plants need.

They stated all fertilizer manufacturers do extensive testing of their products to provide optimum results under "normal" conditions over a specified time. All fertilizer containers provide two basic mix formulas: Outdoors [for planting in the ground] and Indoors [sometimes called container gardening]. Indoor formulas are based on using a "standard" potting soil available at garden centers. They gave me a lot of facts, data, numbers etc. and ultimately suggested it would do no harm to cut the strength in half as long as you realize that plant is only getting half the nutrients it needs. To compensate this shortfall you must fertilize twice as often.

The ingredients N, P, and K are listed on the label as 10-10-10, 18-6-12, etc. These numbers are basically the percentage, by weight, of the NPK in the package. Is 20-20-20 better than 10-10-10? No! The mixing or application instructions take the percentages into account, in other words you might use 1/2 as much 20-20-20 in a gallon of water as 10-10-10.

You have all heard the term "fertilizer burn", or heard someone say too much fertilizer will burn up the roots.

Damage can occur with too much inorganic fertilizer but not in the way most think. Plants absorb moisture and nutrients through the roots by means of osmosis. When too much of certain elements are applied, it actually reverses the osmosis process and sucks the moisture out of the plant. The soluble complete fertilizers are the one to be extra careful with (see fertilizer forms listed below). If you realize you have over-fertilized, water, water and water. Wash that fertilizer out.

Fertilizer Forms

Is any one kind or form of fertilizer best? Unfortunately there is no true answer all the time, in any situation. Each kind and form of fertilizer has its own advantages and disadvantages. Only you can ultimately decide which fertilizer works best for you in each situation.

There are five primary forms of fertilizer we normally use for bonsai. Each is listed with the advantages and disadvantages as well as any pertinent comments.

Simple or Single Use Fertilizers

Advantages:

--Because these fertilizers are relatively inexpensive, very concentrated and take little storage space, experienced gardeners find them most practical when a specific nutrient is needed.

Disadvantages:

--Because they are concentrated and often soluble, it's easier to damage plants by applying too much--especially nitrogen fertilizers.
 --Other nutrient needs can be easily overlooked.
 --You must be knowledgeable enough or have a soil test to positively identify the lacking nutrient.

Examples: Fertilizers such as blood meal (10-0-0), bone meal (0-10-0) and potash (0-0-55) are widely available examples. Almost always sold in powdered form.

Slow Release Fertilizers

Advantages:

--These are labor saving fertilizers. More can be applied at one time, reducing the frequency of feedings.
 --The feeding is gradual so plants are not shocked.
 --One application may last anywhere from three to nine months.

Disadvantages:

--Cost is a factor. Time release fertilizers are always more expensive.
 --Some are activated to release nutrients by water, others by warm temperatures, therefore the rate of nutrient release is not constant and somewhat unpredictable. This quite often may be too slow during periods of rapid growth.
 --Slow release fertilizers are very conservative and therefore quite often provide minimal nutrients. Growers often use this form of fertilizer when repotting as there is little to no chance of burning new or undeveloped roots.

Examples: Osmocote--available in two formulas: 14-14-14 lasts 3 months and 18-6-12 lasts 8 to 9 months. Activated by soil temperature and microbial activity.

Other examples are Dynamite (offered in two formulas), MegAmp, IBDU and Orthos Pot and Planter food.

Partially Soluble Complete Fertilizers

Advantages:

--These are the fertilizers most often used for general garden purposes.
 --Many formulations for specific groups of plants exist: rose food, lawn food, orchid food, house plant food, etc.
 --They supply in one application the mineral elements plants need most--nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.
 --Because of their partial insolubility they will supply some nutrients over a longer period of time than the soluble complete fertilizers do.
 --These fertilizers are available in many forms: Liquid, granules, powders, spikes, etc.

Disadvantages:

--Due to the partial insolubility some nutrients (copper, manganese, zinc and iron) may not be available immediately. These elements are chemically modified so their release is delayed to prevent root burn.
 --Have to be applied more often than other forms of fertilizers. Many are designed for application every two weeks. If you are applying at half strength this means application every week.
 --If not used with frequency recommended plants will starve between applications

Soluble Complete Fertilizers

Advantages:

--Because these fertilizers are 100% soluble in water, all the nutrients they contain are available immediately for use by the plant. The term "chelated" is the clue to identifying 100% solubility.
 --Available as dry crystals or concentrated solutions.
 --Nutrient availability is more dependent on moisture than temperature which means they can be used in early spring or late fall while the soils are cool.
 --The effects of application closely follow application.
 --Available in every conceivable combination of elements, including trace elements

Disadvantages:

--These are the fertilizers that can be misused. You must follow the instructions. A dose too strong can "burn" leaves and roots or even cause death.
 --If not used with frequency recommended, plants will starve between feedings.

Natural Organic Fertilizers

Advantages:

- Improves soil structure with arrival of microbes necessary to convert nutrients into form plant can absorb
- Slow release of nutrients reduces the danger of over fertilizing and when provided in cake form provides a constant steady flow of nutrients.
- When applied in solid form (cakes or pellets) the application can last for weeks and in many instances months.
- If you make your own solid units, you can create whatever mix of elements your trees need
- Available in both solid and liquid forms in many mixes of elements

Disadvantages:

- Microorganisms do not become active and convert nutrients to a form the plant can use until the soil temperature reaches about 60 degrees.
- Liquid applications are not very efficient as many of the elements will leach out before the microbes have time convert the nutrients into a form the plant can absorb.
- Most premade solid cakes and pellets are imported from Japan and are quite expensive.
- Rape seed pellets, one of the popular imported fertilizers, has been found to leave high concentrations of insoluble salts in the soil.
- Hachi Dama , another popular Japanese imported fertilizer cake, along with most other cakes and pellets are presently banned from import into the US as they contain animal by-products. (mad cow disease)
- Organic fertilizers are notorious for smelling and attracting insects
- Results are not available immediately as it takes time for microbes to convert nutrients. This is only significant on first application.
- Cakes and pellets will kill vegetation upon contact. Do not use with ground covers or moss.

My Personal Soil Amendment Choices

As there is only one fertilizer available that contains all 16 required elements (DynaGro 7-9-5), I interchange sources throughout the growing season.

Soluble complete fertilizers are used exclusively in the spring and fall.

During the summer partial soluble and liquid organic fertilizers are utilized. On older trees where growth is not a factor and there is no ground vegetation, organic pellets or cakes are used.

I also add gypsum, Superthrive and mycorrhiza to the soils.

Some Simple Rules on Fertilizing

DO! DO! DO!

- Do fertilize during the active growing season.
- Do fertilize while the soil is moist to prevent root burn and to promote even distribution of fertilizer.

DON'T DON'T DON'T

- Don't fertilize after transplanting. Wait until new growth appears.
- Don't fertilize in hot, midsummer.
- Don't fertilize in winter.
- Don't fertilize a weak or sick plant unless weakness is due to lack of nutrition; then feed very gradually.

General Comments

- No fertilizer is better than too much.
- Conifers generally do not need as much fertilizer as deciduous trees.
- Older, more mature trees do not need as much fertilizer as young, vigorous trees
- Alternate brands of fertilizer throughout the season to provide a broad spectrum of nutrients.
- Flowering trees should be fertilized before and after the blooming season, but not while in bloom. *Con't next page.*

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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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Plant Types

	Acid Loving	Flowering	Conifers	Deciduous
Specific Plants	Azalea Rhododendron Gardenia Camellia Hemlock Hibiscus Jaboticaba Citrus Jasmine Ferns	Quince Crab Apple Pomegranate Cotoneaster Pyracantha Wisteria Serissa	Pine Needle evergreen Juniper Hinoki Spruce	Maple Hawthorn Elm Sweetgum Zelkova Hornbeam Beech Ginko Evergreen: Fig Boxwood Catlin elm
April, May, June	A	B and C	A and B	B
Sept. , Oct.	A	C	C	C

Fertilizer Groups

A	B	C
Acid (High N)	All Purpose (Equal N-P-K)	High (P-K)
Sterns Miracid 30-10-10 Peters Acid Green 17-6-6 Meijer Acid 30-10-30 Super K Gro Acid 30-10-10 Hyponex Acid 30-10-10 Rapid Gro Acid 32-10-10 Blood Meal 10-0-0 Cottonseed Meal 6-2-1 Fish Emulsion 5-1-1	Rapid Gro 23-19-17 Peters All Purpose 20-20-20 Dyna Gro 7-9-5 Time Release Osmocote 14-14-14 Hyponex 14-14-14	Miracle Gro 15-50-15 Plant Marvel 12-31-14 Super K Gro 15-30-15 Peters 5-50-17 Alaska Mor Bloom 0-10-10 Schultz Bloom Plus 10-60-10 Bone Meal 0-11-0 Potash 0-0-35

N = Nitrogen

P = Phosphorus

K = Potassium