



The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

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July 2004

July Meeting

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be held Wednesday, July 7, at 7:30 p.m. at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, 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 program for July is an open workshop. This would be a good opportunity for members who have not defoliated their ficus in the past to come and learn how from one of the other members.

--Pete

Saturday Study Group

Our study group will meet Saturday July 17, 9:00 A.M. at Bayland Center in Bayland Park, 6400 Bissonnet (Bissonnet at Hillcroft--south of I-59 and east of Fondren). Everyone is welcome.

--Donald, Buddy

June 12, 2004 - LSBF Meeting

The LSBF meeting was called to order by the President, Steve. The minutes were approved as presented to the board.

Pat passed out the treasurer's report, which was approved as submitted.

Buddy reported that the Houston convention had 95 full registrants and gave a breakdown of attendees by each club. He reported that the raffle did well and that he would submit a full report at the October meeting.

Buddy also mentioned that we had forgotten to have the drawing both Friday and Saturday nights at the convention. We then drew for both nights. Todd won for the Friday night drawing and Joe won for the Saturday night drawing.

Gail reported that the convention next year would be in Fort Worth, May 13 through 15, 2005. More information will be available later on. She requested that each club commit to donate a styled tree or a pot for the raffle.

John talked about the Texas Speaker that will be doing the Texas Tour during the fall. The Texas Tour for 2005 was discussed. Dennis Corley will be coordinating the 2005 tour.

There was a discussion on how LSBF could support the clubs more. Several suggestions were left for further discussion. It was approved that LSBF would pay each club for the Texas Speaker \$75 for a demo, \$.31 cents a mile and \$10 per person for a 10-person workshop. The clubs can do this one time but it has to be done during the calendar year 2005. This is in addition to the one-time-a-year reimbursement for a Texas Speaker.

Dennis recapped what was happening with the web site. For more information on the website, please contact Buddy directly.

John was asked to represent LSBF at the BCI Convention in St. Louis.

Marty reported that San Antonio had been contacted by BCI about co-hosting a convention in 2008. San Antonio agreed that they would host the convention with BCI.

Meeting adjourned.

--Buddy, LSBF Representative

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By appointment, please.

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.

A learned professor of oriental studies went to visit a Zen master. As soon as he was invited in, he started talking about his favorite subject. He continued talking while the servant brought in the tea service. The master picked up the teapot and started pouring tea into the cup. As the professor continued talking, the master continued pouring tea, overflowing the teacup. At length the professor said, "Stop, stop, whatever are you doing?" The master replied, "I can offer you nothing. Just as the teacup cannot hold any more tea, neither can you receive anything from me because you are full of your own ideas."

I read this story shortly after another lecture/demo regarding soils, perched water tables and so on following one that recommended akadama which came after hearing about 'proper soils' at the convention. Since each person had good and sufficient reasons for using his particular type, many either misunderstood or dismissed the recommendations as not applying to 'our' situation. What we should be doing is listening to these recommendations and trying to understand why they are being given. Then adapt them to our backyard micro climates.

For instance, the soil experiment, while impressive and technically correct, did not address the real crux of the problem. It seemed to indicate that a soil in a shallow pot will hold more water than in a deep pot. What it failed to emphasize was that the retention was due to the so-called perched water table, the depth of saturated (no air spaces) soil is due to the interaction between the force of gravity and the force of capillary action. For a given soil in a pot with sufficient drainage this will be a fixed height regardless of the depth of the pot. The amount of water retained is then only due to the square inches of the bottom of the pot. When you tip a saturated shallow tray on one corner, you will have a very small bottom and the soil will then lose most of the retained water as was demonstrated.

What you need to know then is how to supply your bonsai roots with their required airspace for healthy growth. Take that knowledge from the lecture together with knowing how your backyard climate behaves, how often you can water, and how much water your bonsai needs each day, and try to develop a soil that will work. This is a very difficult task especially in Dallas where there will be extended periods of cool wet weather in the spring and long dry hot windy weather in August. Usually you meet one of the conditions (usually the worst) and then modify your care the rest of the time. Since a prolonged saturation is very bad,

you provide good drainage for the wet weather and give twice daily (or more) waterings in August.

The same type of arguments can be made for using akadama. If you know what the akadama is doing, you may develop a soil that does not use it that will work for you. One argument for using it is that many bonsai growers have found that it works best for them; therefore, you should not have to experiment too much.

Enough of the soapbox. What are your problems for July? Usually trying to keep your trees from drying out and keeping the spider mites away from the dinner table. Sometimes wet conditions or foliage spraying will give you a fungal problem, mildew or black leaf spot.

Now that night temperatures are staying above 60 degrees you should think about repotting some of the tropicals. Most tropicals do well with an annual repotting. Keep the tropicals trimmed, because they will be growing like crazy. However, if you want flowers on those that produce on the end of the twigs, bougainvillea-pomegranate-crape myrtle, you will have to forego the bonsai shape to let them flower. These species should be pruned more drastically before the growing season starts so they can still be in a pretty good shape.

Pots out in the sun can get pretty hot. Not only does this dry out the soil very fast but the tree roots don't like a hot soil. A temperature I have heard given is 120 degrees that will kill roots on most plants. I cannot give you a precise to-do list since your backyard is different from mine, but you should be sure that the sun does not hit the pots directly. If you use a cover of any kind, be sure that the side of the pot is protected also. A loose weave cover that allows air flow is preferable to solid paper or foil. An article by Dr. Bill Cody suggests that his experiments show that an afternoon watering at 2PM will go a long way to keep the soil temperature in a desirable range while a box around the pot does little to protect it. In my opinion, the reason for this is that the sun still heats the soil and there is no air flow to cool it. A solid cover over the pot and box would create an oven type enclosure.

Also watch for signs of insect problems. The spider mite will always be near. Others to look for are scale of various forms, aphids, and mealy bugs. Preventative medicine is best. By the time you see signs, the damage is already done, especially with spider mites. I use the organic foliar feed (1 tablespoon each fish emulsion, liquid kelp, molasses and cider vinegar per gallon water) to control all these. Add a tablespoon of baking soda if you have mildew or other fungal problems. You can use some of the other organic controls or a chemical according to label directions. Read the label directions carefully and don't apply oil based chemicals to

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BONSAI SPOKEN HERE!

By appointment.

Monthly Bonsai Care *(con'd from page 31)*

buttonwoods. A hose end sprayer does not work very well. Drops are too large and you have little control over where it goes. Use a pump sprayer with a fine spray and cover both top and bottom of leaves.

You can fertilize with most organic type fertilizers without worrying about burning the roots in hot weather. Don't use hi-powered types like guano though? If you use chemical types, follow the label. If they don't specify any temperature restrictions, try using a weaker solution than normal. Without a lot of organic material in your soil, you should use a weaker solution but more often to provide a more even feeding. Most of us do not fertilize our bonsai enough anyway.

And finally, keep up the ramification pruning. As long as you keep the roots happy the plant will probably continue to grow. Tropicals will now be growing at their fastest.

New Book on Ficus

Jerry Meislik, who has created some incredible tropical bonsai--especially considering he lives in Montana--has a new book, *Ficus: The Exotic Bonsai*.

Jerry has written numerous articles over the last two decades and is a frequent purveyor of advice on the internet scene. Anyone interested can check his website for information at www.bonsaihunk.8m.com. He has a special introductory Internet offer of only \$32.25; \$36.95 with shipping. The price will go up August 31.

I've already got my copy and it is an excellent intermediate to advanced level book on ficus bonsai--particularly for indoor growers--I'll bring it to the next meeting. If interest is sufficient, I can order several and re-sell them to save folks the trouble of ordering. Folks can either email me or respond at the July meeting. I have no financial interest, just spreading the word!

--Jim

From the President

The convention was a vision realized. I am thankful for the people in our groups that could visualize what could be done. Then these same people reached out to others for support of this vision. I am very thankful that our groups have the kind of people who are willing to give of their

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President *(con'd from page 32)*

time, money, skills and selves so that so many could and did enjoy themselves. Each convention is and has been different, with different problems to overcome. Each time we have people who step forward to give of themselves so that the art of bonsai can carry on in new people and generations. The people that are introduced to bonsai today are the teachers, masters and convention planners of this and our next generation. The people who have stepped forward to put on conventions past and future will and have touched many lives. Each convention I learn more about bonsai, but I learn more about people and life as well. To those that missed the convention, you missed a great opportunity to learn more, to share and to meet some great artist. Time and opportunities cannot be replaced, rebuilt or regained. I am looking forward to next year's convention in Fort Worth and have my calendar marked.

--Virgil, President, HBS

Last Words from the State Convention

I received these comments too late for the June newsletter. I may have lost one or two, because I am in the process of changing computers. Because these were the last bonsai-related files I received before the change, I had to transfer them manually, one-by-one. I don't think I "dropped" any, but if you sent a comment and it is not here, I'm sorry; the omission is not intentional. —ed.

We really enjoyed the convention, the people working the convention were without exception friendly and helpful, and the evening raffle was fun even if I did not win. The hotel was great and worked for the vendors as well as the guests; it is charming. Thanks for all your hard work.

--Sheila, Persimmon Hill
Bonsai Studio and Nursery

* * *

I enjoy conventions because of all the old friends I get to see and talk to again. This convention was held in a fabulous hotel, the food was outstanding, the workshops and raffle material was great. In all, a super convention. Kudo's to Houston and Corpus Christi.

--Elaine, Austin

* * *

We thought the convention was outstanding! We had a great time. The hotel was a great place, and all the action was close together so you did not have to walk a country mile to get from one event to the other. Everyone was so enthusiastic and all the workers so friendly. I heard nothing but good things from people in the club, people in other clubs and people off the street. The artists were thrilled with the caliber of trees we had for the workshops and the convention as a whole. Harvey and I are very proud to say that we are members of the Houston Bonsai Society!

--Janet and Harvey

* * *

These quotes from a luncheon table full of San Antonio club members:

"Unbelievable goodie bag, never seen anything like it."

"Hotel is fantastic. Can't touch anything this nice in San Antonio for less than \$179."

"Unbelievable workshop stock, best I've ever seen!"

--Phil

Errors?

I have had to change computers, meaning have had to export addresses. Consequently there may be errors in some addresses. If your name or address is not correct, please let me know. For that matter, if you see anything else amiss, let me know. Thank you for your patience.

--ed.

Calendar of Events

July 7	Monthly meeting of HBS, 7:30 p.m. Hermann Park
July 17	Study Group, Bayland Community Center
August 21	Study Group, Bayland Community Center
Sept. 18	Shohin Society Of Texas (SSOT). Business and panel critique.
Sept 18	Study Group, Bayland Community Center
Oct. 9-10	HBS Fall Bonsai Show
Nov. 13	Study Group, Cabrera Farms
May 13-15, 2005	State Convention, Fort Worth

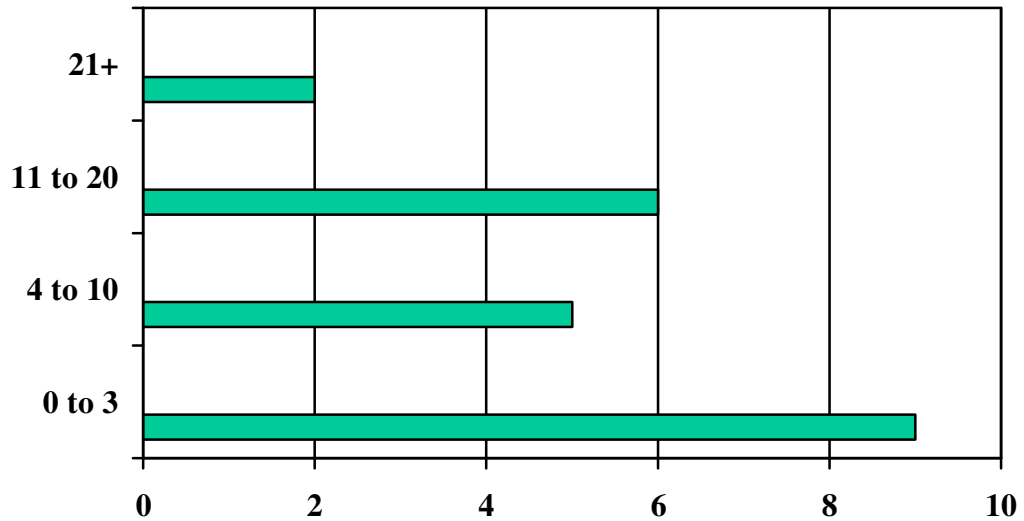
Survey Results

By Pete

At the June HBS meeting, we conducted a written survey to learn the interests of HBS members with regard to programs and visiting artists. Twenty-three of our members responded by completing and returning the survey. The following notes summarize the results of that survey.

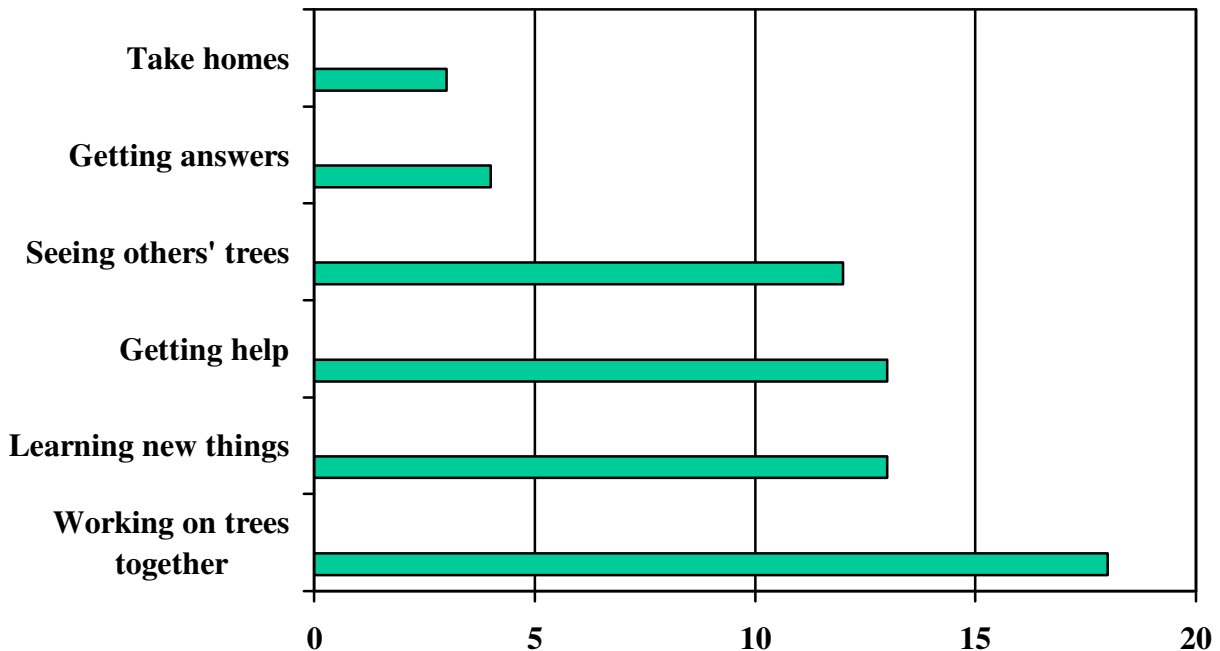
This first graph simply shows the years of bonsai experience reported by the survey respondents. The primary item of note here is that large response in the 0-3 range.

Years of Bonsai Experience

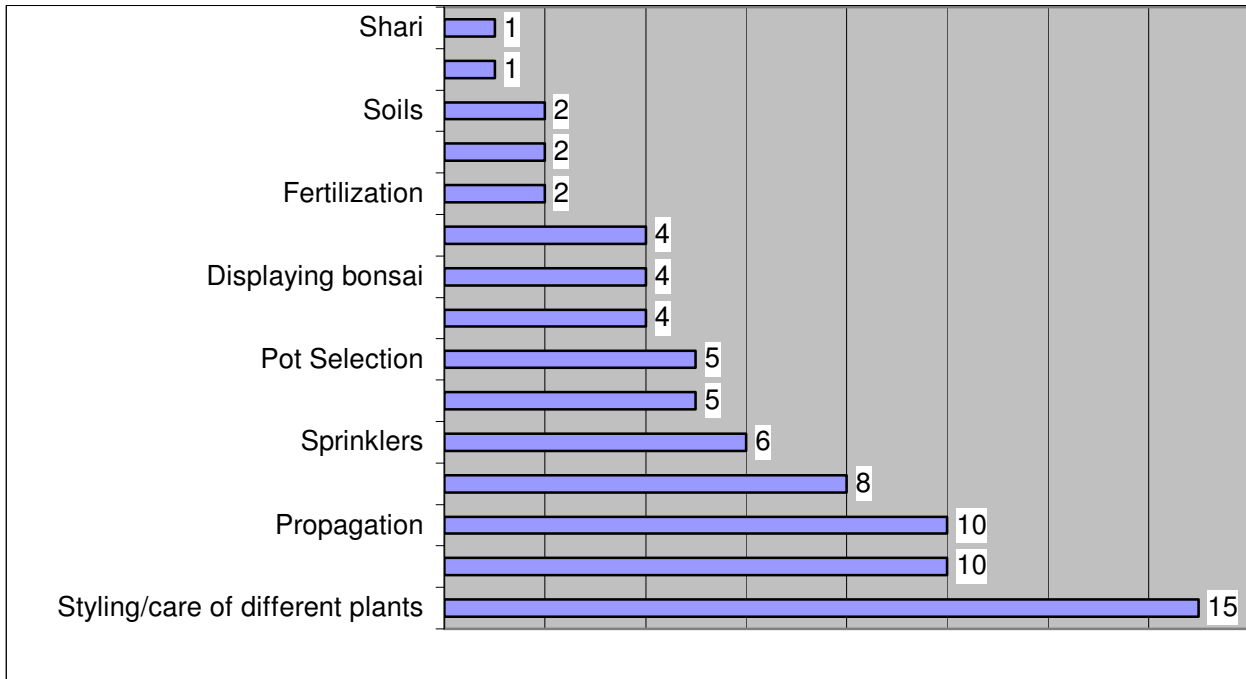


The following results came in response to a question about what types of things made meetings enjoyable:

What Makes Meetings Enjoyable?



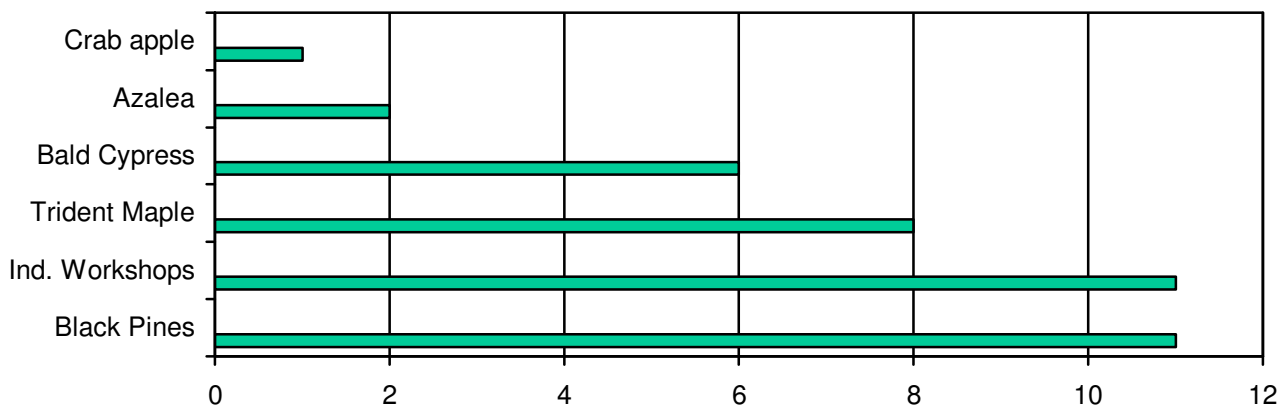
Responses about topics for monthly meetings are summarized in the next chart.



Overall these results match the programs planned for 2004 -2005. However, a few changes are being made on the basis of this input. For instance, the program planned on wiring will be done sooner than originally planned (Jan '05 rather than Nov '05), we will look at integrating a broad program on propagation into the schedule, and a program on sprinkler systems will be planned for late 2005. With those changes we can cover each subject with 5 or more requests before the end of 2005.

The section on visiting instructors indicated strong interest in a black pine series and individual workshops as shown below. Secondary interest was in a trident maple workshop series and one on bald cypress. Data collected regarding the preferred price of materials for workshops was split almost evenly between the <\$100 and \$100 - \$200 categories. Discussions with prospective visiting instructors will reflect this input.

Visiting Instructor Series



I want to thank everyone who responded to the survey. Your input will be invaluable in planning our activities in a way which is more tuned to the needs of the membership.

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