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# The Bonsai News of Houston

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

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## February Meeting--Design Contest

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be held Wednesday, February 4 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.

At the February and March monthly meetings, we will hold the first HBS Bonsai Design Contest, "Windswept Wonders." The schedule for the event is as follows:

### February 4

- 7:15 Sign up. Entry fee is \$10. Each participant will receive a 3-gallon juniper and a copy of the scoring sheet which will be used for judging the trees.  
7:45 – 8:15 Explanation of the contest and a short program on the windswept style.  
8:15 – 9:30 Begin work on the trees

### March 3

- 7:00 – 7:30 Set up trees  
7:45 – 8:15 Viewing and evaluation  
8:15 – 8:30 Break  
8:30 Awarding of prizes

Prizes include a free registration to the LSBF convention in May and two Sara Rayner pots. They will be awarded to the best overall tree, the best tree by someone with less than three years bonsai experience, and by random drawing among entrants who bring their tree on March 3.

So, bring your tools and your \$10 and join in on the fun.

--Pete

## From the Convention Chairs

**Correction to Registration Forms.** After the registration forms were mailed out, several people have made request to take some of the workshop(s) without being fully registered. It has always been a requirement that, to take a workshop, you must be fully registered. I would like for everyone to understand that to guarantee your place in a workshop you must fully register. If not, your name will be placed on a waiting list for the workshop(s). You will be

notified at a later date whether or not you have a place in the workshop. If the workshop is full, we will refund your money at the convention.

As of January 19, the bougainvillea workshop has five openings. I believe that all of the workshops will be sold out before the late registration begins. If you have any questions, please contact me or Janel at 713-839-7794 and we will explain the policy.

We regret any inconvenience this may have caused but are looking forward to seeing you at the convention.

--Buddy, Convention Chairman

**Convention Goodie Bags.** With this year's convention just around the corner I want everyone to know that the goodie bags this year are going to be outstanding. The goodie bag committee has worked diligently to ensure that you'll be receiving old favorites, as well as new innovative products on the market.

We even have donations from two of our local nurserymen. I personally want to thank **Ron Smith of The Ancient Bonsai Company** and **Phillip Drilling of Cabrera Farm Nursery** who have given generously to this year's goodie bags. When you see them, please take a moment to show your appreciation for their efforts.

--Janel, Registration Chairman

**Raffle.** OK everyone, let's start bringing those raffle items in so they can be cataloged. Everybody who brings raffle items to the February HBS meeting will get a free ticket for some nice door prizes . . . one ticket for each item!!

As you may know, the convention raffle is used to fund speakers and lower prices to club members for

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## Saturday Study Group

Our study group will meet Saturday, February 7, at 9 a.m. at Bayland Center in Bayland Park, 6400 Bissonnet (Bissonnet at Hillcroft--south of I-59 and east of Fondren). Everyone is welcome.

## 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.*

*Reprinted from The Bonsai News of Houston, February 2003*

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 root ball. 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 your 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).

*(con't next page)*

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BONSAI SPOKEN HERE!

*By appointment.*

### Monthly Bonsai (con't.)

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.

### Letter from the President

If you were not at the January meeting, you missed Chuck Ware's great presentation on soil and water retention. The presentation was a good, down-to-earth, discussion of how and why the soil and pot hold water. Chuck also put in good general terms what soil type is good for you. The answer is "what works for you," for your watering habits, life style and location. I enjoy Chuck, he always comes with a lot of energy. A lot of questions were asked and answered well, good interaction by all. I'm looking forward to the February meeting. See you there.

*--Virgil & Connie*

### Convention News--Raffle (cont'd)

workshops sponsored by HBS. Corpus has already started collecting raffle items, but HBS needs to show a good effort, too, because we will need at least 250 items.

We're planning four regular raffles (two each on Friday and Saturday), one silent auction (where about 10-15 larger, nicer items will be displayed) and a 5th raffle of demo trees on Sunday. If registrants spend \$10 on raffle tickets for each item, we'll only take in about \$2,500, so

we'd like to have some really enticing, attractive items that will make folks want to spend MORE on raffle tickets.

You may not realize that we will be splitting raffle proceeds 3 ways: HBS, Corpus Christi Bonsai (our co-sponsor) & Lone Star Bonsai Federation (LSBF). It would be a lot more fun splitting \$6,000 three ways than splitting \$2,500. WE CAN DO THIS!!!!

Please approach anyone you routinely do business with like grocery stores, hair salons, book stores, Walmart, plant nurseries, Academy, clothing stores, restaurants, online businesses (bonsai related or not), massage therapists (. . . yes), or anyone else you can think of who might have interesting items or services. Don't just stick to bonsai items because non-bonsai folks will be there, too, so let's make it interesting for everyone. If you approach some of the bigger stores early in the month, I'm told, there's a better getting donations. Don't forget to ask friends, relatives and neighbors for ideas, too, because you never know when someone knows someone who knows someone . . . you get the picture.

If you need receipts to give to your folks who donate, let me know and we'll get some sent to you. Thanks for your efforts.

Now go get 'em, Houston! and let's make this the BIGGEST and BEST CONVENTION RAFFLE EVER IN TEXAS!!!  
--Paula, Raffle Chairman

### Shohin Society Of Texas Meeting

The Shohin Society Of Texas (SSOT) will discuss propagation techniques at its meeting 10:30 a.m., Saturday, February 21 at Persimmon Hill in Austin.

Speakers include Alisan on thread grafting, John Miller on root cuttings, Ron Smith on grafting, Bob on seeds and cuttings, and Terry Ward on air layering. There will be a workshop as time allows. Bring trees, tools, wire, turntable, etc.

For information or the SSOT newsletter, contact Terry or Sheila Ward at 512-280-5575 or [TexShohin@aol.com](mailto:TexShohin@aol.com).

### Kathy Shaner Seminar, Austin

The ninth annual Kathy Shaner Seminar will be held Saturday and Sunday, March 20 and 21 at Persimmon Hill Bonsai, Austin, Texas 78739. The topic this year will be "Challenging Styles," formal upright, cascade and semi cascade.

Kathy Shaner was the first non-Japanese citizen and first woman to be certified by the Japan Bonasi Association upon completion of a 5-year apprenticeship in 1994. Beside being a consummate artist, she is also an excellent teacher.  
(Con't next page.)

### Calendar of Events

Jan. 31	Club dig (re-scheduled) Addicks Reservoir area. See Jan. newsletter for details. Contact: Pete
Feb. 4	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Hermann Park. Windswept Design Contest.
Feb. 6-8	Shohin Seminar, Ramada Inn (1-209-826-4444), Santa Nella, CA.
Feb. 7	Study Group, Bayland Community Center
Feb. 14	Club dig (boxwoods), 9:00 a.m. Eldridge & 290.
Feb. 21	Shohin Society Of Texas (SSOT): Propagation. 10:30 a.m. in Austin.
Mar. 13	Study Group, Cabrera Farm
Mar. 20-21	Kathy Shaner, at Persimmon Hill Bonsai, Austin Challenging Styles.
Apr. 3-4	HBS Spring Bonsai Show
Apr. 17	Shohin Society Of Texas (SSOT). Convention exhibit; accent plant program; sale & swap
Apr. 17	Study Group, Bayland Community Center
May 15	Study Group, Bayland Community Center
<b>May 21-23</b>	<b>LSBF State Convention, Houston. Kathy Shaner, Guy Guidry, Mary Miller</b>
June 12	Study Group, Cabrera Farm
June 26	Shohin Society Of Texas (SSOT). Bougainvilleas.
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 Farm

**Kathy Shaner (con't.)**

Saturday and Sunday morning will be the seminar (bring your own tree, styled or not). Sunday afternoon Kathy will conduct an optional workshop, open to any tree or any style. Registration for the seminar includes observing the workshop. Registration also includes dinner Saturday night, guaranteed to be great.

**Club Dig, Boxwoods, February 14**

We have the opportunity to dig seven boxwoods from a home in the Eldridge and Hwy 290 area at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 14. The boxwoods are quite old, but I cannot vouch for the quality of the trunks or nebari. If you would like to participate, contact me at [bonsainews@ev1.net](mailto:bonsainews@ev1.net). I will give you directions.

--Dolores

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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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