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# The Bonsai News of Houston

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

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## April Meeting

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be held Wednesday, April 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 April program will have two parts. The first of those is one of our regular open workshops, so bring your tools and a plant to work on. As part of the open workshop, Alex has volunteered to work in a small group with anyone wanting to work on an azalea. Similarly, Buddy has offered to give me some advice on a black pine and talk about his annual cycle on black pines.

The second part of the program will be a cutting/small plant exchange. Bring your rooted cuttings, moss, accent plants or other small items to buy, sell and trade. It will be a good chance to clean off some space on your bench or to fill out a grove or try a type of plant you've not grown before. All that is asked is that you donate 10-20% of the material you bring to the club table.

--Pete

## Saturday Study Group

Our study group will meet Saturday April 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.

## Spring Bonsai Show Joins Japan Festival—April 3-4

The planners of the Japan Festival extended a very warm and cordial invitation to HBS requesting our participation in the Japan Festival. Both events, the Bonsai Show and the Japan Festival, are scheduled for the same weekend, April 3-4, 2004. We accepted the invitation and will hold our Bonsai Show in conjunction with the Japan Festival. Rather than holding an independent show in the Garden Center as we have usually done, we will have our show in the Japanese Gardens.

I have requested a large tent (approx. 20' x 40'), with tables for us to exhibit our trees. There will also be tables for vendors and for demonstrations. Our tent will be inside the Japanese Gardens, near the front of the gardens, along the path to the right of the entrance.

Several members have signed-up to display trees and/or to work the show. If you did not sign up and would like to display trees or work, you may simply come with your trees or for work. Setup and delivery of trees will be Saturday morning, April 3, between 8:00AM--9:30 AM. The show and festival runs 10 AM--5 PM on Saturday and Sunday.

Parking permits for members delivering trees and/or working the show will be available at the entrance to the staff parking lot—look for me or another HBS member at the entrance. Enter the parking lot at the main entrance to Hermann Park which is close to the fountain, off Main and Montrose streets, close to the Sam Houston Monument (i.e., the man on the horse). A golf cart will be available to transport trees from the parking lot or the path behind the gardens to the exhibit tent.

I am very excited about this opportunity to present our bonsai show as a part of the Japan Festival. We will be able to more broadly share our trees and our love of the bonsai art with the Houston community, perhaps interest/recruit members to HBS, and to advertise the **Bonsai on the Bayou Convention**—May 21-23, 2004.

--Donald

## 2004 State Convention May 21-23

As the convention gets closer, it's not too late to register early as the early registration stops on April 15. As you know, the Houston, Corpus Christi and the Lone Star Bonsai Federation (LSBF) will share in the proceeds from our convention. You can register as a walk-in at the convention at any time. It is time to bring your raffle items to the monthly meeting because Paula needs to catalog and store the items.

Now to the good part. There are still open workshops to be had-- spaces are available in

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

April is a good time to enjoy your bonsai. The mad season of repotting is over, the new flush of growth has slowed a bit and the weather is not so hot yet (usually).

Most trees will do good in the full sun at this time of year. However, if you have had them in partial shade, be careful about giving them full sun. They probably should be acclimated gradually.

The chores to be done now are trimming, feeding, trimming, check for insects, trimming, shows, trimming. You get the idea, trimming will occupy most of your time now. Trimming, that is the pinching, plucking or whatever of new growth, is the process that develops refinement on your tree but is also vital to keep it from losing that desired state. This is not pruning which is cutting of branches which should not be done when there is a strong sap flow which starts when the tree breaks dormancy and continues until after the leaves harden or later.

Trimming must be done often keeping the new growth short. Do not let the shoots get long. Done properly you will be working on a small percentage of the twigs in each session while the ones you did before are getting new growth started again.

On elms and other trees with leaves appearing alternately down the shoot, do not let more than 5 new leaves appear. Cut back to 2 or 3 leaves, leaving the last leaf on the side that you want the new growth to appear. On maples and others with leaves coming in pairs on opposite sides of the twig, cut the center shoot as soon as you can determine it. Tweezers work best for this operation. Since the shoots do not all open at the same time, this could be a daily chore for the best results. As Kathy Shaner put it once, if you have a big trident maple, you will be sleeping with it. I don't find it that bad, but a well developed 3-foot trident has a lot of twigs.

A good organic program takes care of both the feeding and the insect problems. I recommend the mixture of 1 tablespoon each of fish emulsion, liquid kelp, molasses and apple cider vinegar to a gallon of water. (A commercial product called Garret Juice which is to be used the same way uses compost tea, dried seaweed, water, molasses and vinegar. As a fertilizer this should act the same but I don't know about the dried seaweed versus liquid kelp as an insecticide.) I use the mixture both as a foliar spray and as a soil drench fertilizer. As a weekly foliar spray it keeps aphids and mites under control. I also use it on cuttings but

can't vouch as to whether the results are from supplying nutrients that cannot be supplied due to the lack of roots or if it is from keeping insects away. I try to drench twice a month partly because I don't think the plant can absorb all the minor elements it needs through the foliage.

Fungal diseases develop during warm humid weather. Too much foliage misting can do it also if the leaves stay damp very long. One of the most prevalent fungus is leaf spot which will hit several kinds of plants especially elms, hollies, and roses. Control consists of spraying with baking soda. A 1% solution of Hydrogen Peroxide can be used except on very young foliage which may be sensitive to it.

Be sure to check your soils each day for proper water content. It is easy to assume that the soil has plenty of water when the days are cool or there has been some rain. It's too easy for a tree with full leaves to shed water outside of the pot or a good sun and low humidity after a front to dry the soil. I suggest that you remove most of the moss so that you can see and feel the soil in order to determine how dry it is. (Moss growing on the trunk or roots will cause the bark to rot also.) An automatic watering system will be an aid but you should not rely on it to replace hand watering. Hand watering allows you to adjust the watering for each tree individually.

One of the cheapest ways to learn bonsai is to be a part of the club exhibits. I learned a lot by following George Gray and Ted Guyger around and just listening to their comments about the different trees. Most were their own trees, but they did an honest critique anyway. If your club has an exhibit scheduled, plan to take part in it. Showing your tree is a big boost to your morale as well as encouraging the public to try it. Not every tree in the show has to be a top of the line bonsai. The important thing is that each member be a part, either displaying a tree or being a docent. The desired result is that the public see something that they can relate to and have someone to talk to. If you do want to show, give your tree its best chance by doing the above grooming, clean the pot, put some top dressing on the soil, get or borrow some kind of a stand (even a cork board sets the tree off).

Plan to use workshops at the convention or those provided for you by your officers. To get the most from a workshop, you should prepare the material well in advance. You can usually cut the top back some and try to grow some new lower foliage to have more for the master to work with. Again most of your active club members will be willing to give some advice.



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#### Convention (con'd)

the following workshops:

- Kingsville Boxwood - 9
- Black Pine - 4
- Azalea - 3
- Buttonwood - 4
- Ficus - 10
- Bald Cypress - 2
- Kusamono - 3

These spaces are available on a first come basis as you register. Please contact Janel to register. We still need workers to help setup the exhibit and vendor rooms on Thursday afternoon/evening. There are trees, raffle items, goodie bags (buckets) to be taken to the hotel and stored on Thursday afternoon. If you are available, please contact the chairperson that you would like to help.

- Artist Chair - Virgil
  - Registration/Goodie Bags - Janel
  - Exhibit - Yvonne
  - Vendors - John
  - Raffle - Paula
  - Publicity - Donald
- Buddy, Convention Chairman

#### Winners of the Windswept Contest

At HBS's March meeting the windswept junipers that had been sold at the February meeting were judged. Janel won "New Comer of the Year" award. Deborah had best overall tree and received the Sarah Rayner pot. Phillip won the drawing for the full registration to the LSBF convention but donated it back to the club because he already had a paid full registration.

Congratulations to the winners and thanks to all who participated.

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512-280-5575 Austin, Texas 78739  
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By appointment, please.

## From the President

After this March meeting with the windswept competition, I know we have some talented people in the club. It has reinforced in me that bonsai is a living art-- a living art that conveys a thought, feeling, vision and future hope for the created art. Each artist has a different concept or mental image. Each artist sees something different in each tree and then applies skillful hands to the living canvas.

I saw a lot of skilled and semi-skilled artist at the last meeting. I was one of the semi-skill persons, but I came away with a better appreciation for the art and artist. Now that you have shown your skills and abilities, we need your input and assistance with meetings, shows, ideas, workshops.

It takes many ideas, eyes, hands, experience and different skills to make / maintain / encourage and keep growth in our club. The question is what do you need to keep growing in this art? Like each one of you the board members are just members who have stepped up to help. Like your bonsai art, the club is yours to form, grow, improve or let die from neglect. So bring your voices, talent, ideas and input.

Thanks, Pete, for the good work and the idea for the meeting. Thanks to the judges for putting their necks on the line and doing the judging. A big thanks to all who took the time to get involved. See you at the next meeting. --Virgil, President, HBS

## Wire

By Ron Martin

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*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.*

Over the years I have styled many trees. some good, some bad, some indifferent. Most have pleased me if no one else. I have always hesitated in using too much wire. Lazy, I guess--always have to check that stuff and make sure it isn't cutting in. Lots of work there.

Most of my teachers have gotten onto me about this. I kept my mouth shut and muttered under my breath that they must have stock in some wire company or the other.

The latest of these to get onto me was my old friend Colin Lewis. I watched a few of his demos and heard him preach that the first thing one must do is get control of the tree. Place everything where you want it, then build from there.

## Calendar of Events

Apr. 3-4	HBS Spring Bonsai Show & Japan Festival
Apr. 7	Monthly meeting of HBS, 7:30, Hermann Park Open workshops
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.</b> <b>Kathy Shaner, Guy Guidry, Mary Miller</b>
June 12	Study Group, Cabrera Farms
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

Anyway I got to thinking about it and the other day I sat down with two junipers that I had setting around the shop. Not great stock but available. . . .

Six hours later I was done. Every branch had wire. Even the smallest one. I carefully placed each branch into what I thought was a good position. Stepping back I was astounded. I might be the only one to say this but each tree was perfect. They looked ancient. They have a long way to go and I guess many more pounds of wire but to me they are gorgeous.

What surprised me the most was how much 1.0 mm wire I used--a lot more than any other size. I do think that I have a new hero. That lowly piece of 1.0 mm wire. We shall do a lot together.

One would have figured that, after 30 some years in bonsai, I would have learned this lesson long ago.

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### New Talent Bonsai Competition

Joshua Roth is again sponsoring the annual New Talent Bonsai Competition. First prize is a round trip ticket to Japan. The first stage of the competition is a judging of photographs of previously designed trees. The second stage will be the actual creation of a bonsai during the BCI 2004 Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, at the Renaissance Hotel, June 17-20, 2004. For details see the web site [www.stlbonsai.org/BCI/bci.htm](http://www.stlbonsai.org/BCI/bci.htm).

Participants must live in North American, have been involved with the art of bonsai for less than 10 years, and must submit photographs of at least three bonsai that he or she has personally styled. More than one picture of each bonsai is preferred. The photographs do not have to be of

publication quality; however, they should show the talent of the artist to the best advantage.

All photographs must be enclosed in a single presentation folder with the photos enclosed in clear plastic sleeves. A brief description and history of each bonsai shall also be enclosed. Taped to the back inside cover of the folder shall be an envelope with the completed application form. There must be no identification on the photos or on the outside of the enclosed envelope. Mail all entries to Jack Douthitt, Competition Chairman, P. O. Box 170445, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53217.

First stage submissions must be received before May 1, 2004. Contestants selected for Stage Two will be notified before June 1, 2004.

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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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