



The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

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Monthly HBS Meeting

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be Wednesday, July 6, at 7:30 p.m. at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, which is located at 1500 Hermann Drive. Come early so you can visit with other members and have refreshments before the meeting begins.

At the July meeting, we will have an ugly tree swap. Bring a tree you don't know what to do with. We will swap trees and see what a fresh pair of eyes can do for those "ugly" trees.

If you don't want to participate in the ugly tree swap, just bring a tree for the workshop. *--Pete*

All Guy Guidry Workshops Cancelled

All of the Guy Guidry workshops have been cancelled. Please see Janet Wilson for a refund.

Saturday Study Group

Our study group will meet Saturday, July 16, 9:00 A.M. at the Bayland Center in Bayland Park, 6400 Bissonnet (Bissonnet at Hillcroft--south of I-59 and east of Fondren). Everyone is welcome--beginners and seasoned veterans alike. We all have a good time. *--Anthony, Buddy*

State Bonsai Convention for 2006

The annual state bonsai convention, which will be sponsored jointly by the Corpus Christi Bonsai Club and, as always, the Lone Star Bonsai Federation (LSBF), will be held July 14 through 16 at the Holiday Inn Airport, 5549 Leopard St., Corpus Christi, 361-289-5100. The theme will be "Wind - Waves - Bonsai." Guest Artists will be Bruce Baker, Ed Trout, and John Uchida. Chairmen are Versie and Yvonne. Registration chairman is Betty.

Additional information will be available later.

--Pam

Calendar of Events

The HBS meets the first Wednesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. in the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Drive, next to the rose garden.

July 6	Monthly HBS meeting, 7:30. Ugly Tree Swap
July 16	Study Group, Bayland Park
Aug 3	Monthly HBS meeting, 7:30. TBA. Phillip and Alex
Aug. 20	Study Group, Bayland Park
Sept. 7	Monthly HBS meeting, 7:30. Club Auction
Sept. 17	Study Group, Bayland Park
Sept. 17	SSOT. Critique; Business Meeting.
Oct. 5	Monthly HBS meeting, 7:30. Open workshop
Oct. 8-9	Fall Bonsai Show
Oct. 15	Study Group, Bayland Park
Nov. 2	Monthly HBS meeting, 7:30. TBA; nominations to the HBS board.
Nov. 19	Study Group, Cabrera Farm Nursery
Dec. 7	Monthly HBS meeting, 7:30. Elections to the HBS board; Holiday party.
Dec. 17	Study Group, Bayland Park
2006	
July 14- 16	State Bonsai Convention, Corpus Christi

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.

I've had several questions lately regarding plants looking sickly and pale even with a spray program to control insects. A few well placed questions usually lead to spider mites and maybe a scale buildup. The problem seems to be one of not understanding the ABCs of insect control. The fundamentals are the same whether you use a chemical spray or one of the organic controls. 1) You must apply the control several times. For spider mites, it is a minimum of three times on five-day intervals in order to get those you missed or that hatched from eggs. If you go too long you need to add more sprays. 2) You must thoroughly cover the plant, bottom of foliage and the bark as well as on the top of the foliage. Hose-end sprayers are very inefficient in this respect. They usually have too large of drops to cover properly, they cannot be directed properly, and they do not mix the chemical evenly. 3) You must read the label to determine if the control is proper for your need.

I prefer to use a pump-up tank sprayer. This unit has a short hose and a wand with the nozzle at a slight angle. Adjust the nozzle tip to give a fine spray, almost a mist, which comes out in a cone shape. This wand can be inserted into the foliage with the cone of spray covering both top and bottom of the leaf and also covering the twigs and limbs.

When checking the results on your plants after spraying, remember that the spray usually will not remove the "evidence" of problems. The webs will still be there after the mites are killed. The shells of the scale will be attached to the leaf or stem. These will have to be removed by hand, by a jet of water, or some other way.

A word of caution: some sprays will damage plants in hot weather and others will damage tender new growth. Read your label.

Trees have enough problems trying to supply water to the foliage during our summer without having to feed all those bugs.

Check your water practices. I prefer to water heavily in the evening. That gives the plant all night to renew itself without losing most of its water to evaporation. Then in the early morning, they get a quick foliage spray wetting the surface of the soil, which may have dried out overnight. This was what I did while working since the morning task only took 10 minutes or so. Now I still prefer to water heavily in the evening but the morning is now done more slowly and trees given a little more individual attention as some of them do not need water in the soil. Be sure to do the double watering bit--water

thoroughly and then, after a few minutes, water again so that the dry soil particles will get moistened.

When the humidity is low, I mist my junipers in the evening. I believe the story that in the wild junipers open their stomata in the cool of the evening absorbing any dew that may occur and close in the heat of the day to conserve moisture. Other species may get misted in the morning.

Many bonsai would do just fine in the full sun all summer long. However none of them like their feet scorched which is what happens when the sun heats the pot (and thereby the soil) to temperatures over 120 degrees. Dappled shade would do nicely because the sun will not shine on one spot very long, but partial shade (such as morning sun and afternoon shade) will not suffice when the morning sun is as hot as it is here in Texas. When you put some kind of sunscreen on remember to shade the pot as well as the soil. A light mulch on top of the soil works great. Covering a pot with foil or putting it in a box made to fit will help but there should be room for air to flow around it. Old rags work fine also if they don't blow off.

Since the trees are in stress because of the heat, they are particularly sensitive to insect problems. The organic people say that bugs are attracted to plants that are in stress and will head there first. That may be true or it maybe that the healthy plant's natural defenses keep them in check and you see the bugs on the stressed tree first. Whatever, watch for any signs of damage and treat for them. Sometimes the tree is almost dead before you notice the damage (e.g., spider mite damage on junipers). That is why I like the organic approach of using Garrett Juice. It is not only a foliar feed but will kill the spider mites, scale and most other small insects including bagworms.

The humidity in summer varies quite a bit but, when it sticks around for a few days, look for fungal problems to appear, mildew being the most prevalent. Foliage spraying in the morning will not be a problem because it dries pretty quickly. Treat with potassium carbonate, which you can find at any nursery with a decent organic section. There are several chemical sprays available, too.

I am feeding this year with a dry granular plant food worked into the top layer of the soil. I felt that the fertilizer balls did not stay wet long enough to break down and properly feed the tree. So far I am better satisfied. Most recommendations are to feed the trees with fertilizer balls. Many are available commercially or you can make your own, depends on how many bonsai you have. Even with the fertilizer balls, I like to give a feeding with a liquid fertilizer every other week also. Chemical fertilizers may burn roots if soil temperatures (remember the sun factor) get too warm, probably like upper nineties or more. Be sure to read the label for guidance. The change to a winterizing fertilizer will not take place until September.

You still need to visit the barbershop or beauty salon and get your top worked on during the summer. Your trees too keep growing and need their periodic beauty

treatment. Keep the ends trimmed and the stray shoots cut out. It's not that bad when you can sit in the shade with a big lemonade and really enjoy being with your bonsai. That way you will have your tree ready for the fall show or you will be ready to enjoy it when the change of season gives it pretty colors.

Tree Rats

Lately the squirrels have been getting into my work area. Doing the usual damage. Digging holes and generally messing things up. The wife won't let me shoot the little buggers and poison is out of the question because of my dogs.

In desperation I bought one of those fake owls that Wal-Mart sells. The head is on a spring and it bobs up and down and spins around with the slightest breeze. Sort of like those dogs that just about everyone had in the back window of their car years ago.



It worked. Scared the heck out of the squirrels. They left the area pretty quick. Problem is that they are darn smart. Did not take them long to figure out it was a fake owl. Before the day was out, they were back.

Another \$20 wasted in the war against the tree rats.

I was just about to give up on the darn thing and chuck it in the trash when an old gentleman stopped by. He got a chuckle out of my plastic owl. I told him my tale of woe and he looked at me like I was crazy.

He spent some time explaining to me the nature of squirrels. They have a good sense of smell to go with that good eyesight of theirs. Plastic is not a scary smell. He then grabbed the owl and rubbed it all over one of my dogs. The dog wasn't all that pleased. "Now," he said, "it

looks like an owl and smells like a dog. It will scare the heck out of them."

I thought he was crazy but didn't want to hurt the old man's feelings so I just said thanks. Funny thing is, that was about a week ago. Guess what I haven't seen in my yard lately. No holes dug into my bonsai soil either. Maybe that old guy wasn't all that crazy.

Now every morning, when I water my trees, I grab that owl and rub it on the dog. She still doesn't like it all that much so most of the time I have to chase her into a corner to do the deed.

For the past couple of days I have been moving the owl to different spots on the tables after I water. Figured that might help the illusion a bit.

Not sure how long this will continue to work. Maybe it doesn't. Those squirrels could be messing with me. They could be hiding up there in the trees laughing their butts off at the joke they are pulling on me. They are sneaky little devils.

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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 address above.

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