



The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

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Monthly HBS Meeting—Club Auction!!

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be Wednesday, September 7, 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.

Mary Miller Appearance Cancelled. Mary Miller, who was scheduled to critique member trees at the September meeting, has had to cancel her appearance. The HBS will have its annual auction as originally scheduled.

Auction. The annual auction is a major fund raiser for the HBS, and so your support is important. Proceeds from the auction support programs and other activities for our members. If you missed last year, you missed some great opportunities. Don't miss this year.

Bring donations of bonsai-related and non-bonsai-related items including styled trees, rough nursery stock, books, stands and pots, tools and aprons, logo pins and convention memorabilia, suiseki, gift certificates for goods or services and drawings or autographs from bonsai masters.

AND BRING YOUR MONEY! Cash or check book. Bid high and often!

Mike Hanson Series. We have arranged for Mike Hanson to lead a five-workshop series on black pines beginning later this year. I'm still waiting for Mike to make his travel arrangements for Japan for this fall before publishing dates. Should have that nailed down soon, so hope to be able to begin signing folks up at the September meeting. --Pete

Marc Noelander, Sept. 9-10

Marc Noelander will be in Houston, Friday and Saturday, September 9 and 10. There will be a lecture-demo on Friday night at the Garden Center (we will be in the side room on the west side of the auditorium). There will be a \$5.00 charge to observe and the tree will be

raffled at the end of the demonstration. There will be two workshops on Saturday (side room on the west side of the auditorium). The morning workshop will be from 8:30 a.m. to noon and the afternoon workshop, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. There is a \$35.00 workshop charge per person (only one tree per person) and a \$5.00 observation charge for the morning workshop and a \$5.00 charge for the afternoon workshop. The workshops are limited to eight people. At the present time, there are only a couple of workshop spaces available. We will have the sign-up sheets at the monthly meeting. In order to hold a workshop space, you must pay in advance.

--Buddy

Saturday Study Group, Sept. 17

Our study group will meet Saturday, September 17, 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

Texas State Bonsai Exhibit Cruise

The Texas State Bonsai Exhibit (TSBE) is raffling a cruise again this year. The drawing will be held on November 9 at the monthly meeting of the Austin Bonsai Society. This is a Caribbean cruise which will be stopping in Jamaica. It is a seven-day cruise for two which will depart from Galveston, TX on January 8, 2006. The tickets are \$10 each. We will be selling tickets at the September and the October club meetings.

The committee of the TSBE holds a garage sale every year. This year the garage sale will be held October 27. If anyone has any items they would like to donate, they should bring them to the October monthly meeting and I will get everything to Elaine when I go to the LSBF Meeting in October. They reported that tools, kitchen items, and children's things sold well last year, but they are not accepting clothes this year. --Buddy

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.

Check the trees you still have wire on. When the cooler days get here, some trees will expand their branches and get wire cuts rather quickly especially at the junction with the trunk. You need to check them periodically over the winter also. Winter growth will usually be pretty slow but can occur, especially on the evergreens. To remove the wire, I usually cut the wire off. You can easily break the branches trying to unwrap the wire and it's just not worth trying to save the wire. On the other hand, Kathy Shaner says to unwrap it so that you do not overlook a coil and ruin that branch. Whichever way you go, take care to do it methodically and to do it right. If you need to reapply some wire, take care. Remember that the branches will be more brittle when the sap is not flowing.

Watering now becomes harder. As trees slow their growth, they do not take as much water. Neither will they transpire as much on the cooler days. So check each one separately and water as often and as much as the individual tree requires. It is easy to keep the soil too wet and develop root problems.

Tips of the leaves turning brown are indications of a water stress problem. Look at the following areas.

- a. evaporation--too much sun, too windy,
- b. watering--gets too dry between waterings (the soil staying too wet may cause root problems which thus prevent uptake of moisture).
- c. soil or pots get too hot
- d. water too alkaline

There is probably nothing you can do about the foliage this time of year. Leaf pruning and growing new foliage could correct problems that occur earlier in the year. If you have these problems, determine the cause and try to correct for next year.

You should help the plant slow down and get ready for winter by not applying nitrogen fertilizer about 90 days before the first freeze. This would be the first part of September in the Dallas-Ft Worth area. Out here in the boonies, I will stop before Sept 1. The reason is that nitrogen causes new growth to occur and will not have time to mature before a freeze occurs. You may fertilize with one with a formulation like 0-10-10. The other two, phosphorous and potassium, help the general hardiness of the plant and can be applied now. Evergreens, both needled and broadleaf, and tropical species that will be kept growing through the winter will benefit from a low nitrogen fertilizer.

Make sure that your tropicals are in good health and growing vigorously. That will help them withstand the change of climate when you bring them indoors.

Two things you can do now: prepare your winter quarters and study your evergreen trees to determine if you need to do any restyling later on this fall.

Check on the place you expect to winter your bonsai. Make sure that it is clean and that you will be able to check the water needs of the trees. It should be somewhat protected from winds but should have some air movement to help prevent molds from developing. Having it in a location where you can see the trees would allow you to enjoy the winter silhouette, i.e., the branch structure and twiginess, that is a great part of deciduous bonsai.

There is not too much to be done on deciduous trees at this time. Bugs and other problems are usually not a matter of concern since the foliage will be dropping soon. Evergreens and tropicals will still need to be watched for their insect problems, especially the spider mite which will be active into fall. Use the Garrett Juice formula to control them. Horticultural oil spray may also be used. If we should have a stretch of damp weather, you should be watching for fungal problems, leaf spot, mildew, etc. Treat fungal diseases with potassium bicarbonate. (Baking soda--sodium bicarbonate--will work about as well). I would be okay with using a 1% hydrogen peroxide solution at this time of the year for fungal control.

Pruning and trimming can be done any time that there is not a lot of sap flowing. Sap flow is indicated by the foliar activity of the plant like in the spring. If your tree went into summer dormancy which occurs during hot weather, then the cooler weather might result in a larger sap flow in late summer or early fall. If your plant gets a flush of new growth it would be advisable to postpone large pruning cuts for a while. Basically let your tree tell you when it is ok to operate. Pruning spring blooming plants (azalea) may remove buds that have already formed.

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In Memoriam

Ramona Medina

Long time HBS member Ramona Medina died early in July. She had been a member of the Houston Bonsai Society for almost 20 years and served as its president in 1995-1996. She worked tirelessly to promote bonsai in the Houston area. In 1996, she spearheaded a celebration for HBS's 25th anniversary and the incorporation of the HBS as a Texas corporation.

She will be remembered for her leadership, her friendship, and for her generosity in helping many of us when we were new to the hobby.

As of this writing, the time and place for her memorial service have not been announced. We will provide the information as soon as we have it.

Kathy Shaner Seminar in Austin

Noted bonsai master Kathy Shaner will be in Austin again this year, on October 8 and 9. A resident of California, Kathy has completed a 5-year apprenticeship in Japan and is the first non-Japanese citizen and first woman to be certified by the Japan Bonsai Association. She is an excellent teacher. Her qualifications are exceeded only by her personality which makes her a delight to listen to.

Her seminar this year is "It's All About Horticulture." As usual, it will be held at Persimmon Hill Bonsai, 12001 Red Hawk Cove, Austin, Texas 78739-5640. For information, contact Terry or Sheila Ward, 512-280-5575 or phbonsai@sbcglobal.net

How to Reduce the Size of Leaves

by Brent Walston

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Brent Walston, proprietor of Evergreen Gardenworks, is noted for his thorough and carefully thought out discussions of bonsai issues. To read other articles he has written, visit his web site, <http://www.EvergreenGardenworks.com>. You can obtain a free price list by mail at: Evergreen Gardenworks, P.O. Box 537, Kelseyville CA 95451

Introduction

Reducing the size of leaves and the distance between them (the internodes) is the primary focus of the final training of bonsai. This comes after years of developing the trunk, the nebari, and the branches. I have been studying this phenomenon for many years. This is what I have concluded thus far:

The size of leaves, the length of internodes, and the thickness of twigs are related to the:

- Balance of the canopy to the root mass,
- Age and density of the roots,
- Level of fertility,
- Presence or absence of hormones,
- Level of light.

Of these five factors the first and second have the greatest importance for bonsai, but the other three also play a role.

The Balance of the Canopy to the Root Mass

The roots and top growth are in constant cyclical motion to stay balanced. In spring, the roots pump most of their stored energy to produce a full canopy of new leaves, and then shoots for more leaves. In summer the process reverses and the leaves resupply the roots with food, and provide energy for increased top growth. In fall the leaves stop producing food, but food continues to move down the stem from tissues. The roots continue to grow until the soil temperature falls below 60 degrees, using some of their stored food to increase their mass, and yet retain enough reserves to start the process again in spring.

To manipulate growth in bonsai it is essential to be thoroughly familiar with this cycle and all of its ramifications.

If you top prune a tree while it is dormant, you remove outlets, that is buds, for receiving food in spring, the result is the over stimulation of the existing buds, that are released from apical dominance (no more 'stop' hormones from the now cut off terminal buds). This results in long internodes and huge leaves, gigantic whips on some plants like apples and plums.

If you root prune a dormant plant without top pruning, you remove part of the food supply for stimulating buds and new growth. The result is that released buds will form smaller leaves and drastically shorter internodes. Plants seem to know how many buds to stimulate and how much new growth can be supported by the roots. I don't know the physiology, but I have seen it enough times to know that it works. Root pruning succeeds in reducing top growth up to the point that so many roots are removed that water transport becomes critical. At this point, the plant cannot support any new growth and dies. This is called overdoing it.

If you top prune a tree that has just leafed out, you remove the food factory that has just been created with most of the stored energy of the roots. The roots will have to use whatever reserve is left to issue a new set of leaves. This severely taxes the roots, and the new growth will have shorter internodes and smaller leaves. We use this principle in defoliation, although some time is usually allowed to restock food in the roots first. Multiple defoliation will result in ever decreasing leaf size. Liquidambar can be defoliated three times a season if they are in good condition, and are in a region with a long enough growing season.

The manipulations based on this principle allow one to do all sorts of things to control the speed and character of growth. This is the basis for most of the pruning practices used in bonsai.

The Age and Density of the Roots

New roots growing in fresh medium easily absorb water and nutrients and increase their mass very quickly,

upsetting the balance in favor of larger leaves and longer internodes due to the excess food stored.

Roots confined in a space tend to get woody and begin to lose their ability to store food readily. One of the first symptoms of a root bound plant is chlorosis resulting from the inability of the aged root system to take up essential nutrients. As the plant stores less and less food relative to the amount of top growth that accumulates, the leaves get smaller and the internodes shorter. This is one reason why these trees are in tiny pots, aside from the aesthetic value.

The Level of Fertility

The level of fertility is somewhat obvious. Plants with good nutrition have normal size leaves and internodes. Virtually no one recommends not feeding bonsai to reduce the size of the leaves and the internodes. However, it is sometimes done to plants in training, particularly seedlings in the first year or two to get a series of close internodes low on the trunk.

Keeping a seedling a little on the hungry side and a little root bound can dramatically shorten the first internodes. This becomes valuable later on in the training process when the plant is trunk chopped to introduce a low curve on the trunk and attain taper. The places where the internodes formed will be dense with adventitious buds which will break easily on most deciduous plants. This is particularly important for the Maple genus, *Acer*. Most strongly affected by this phenomenon is Japanese Maple, *Acer palmatum*.

Of all the nutrients, the one affecting leaf and internode size the most dramatically is nitrogen, so it is best to keep the level of nitrogen balanced in the feeding program.

Presence of Absence of Hormones

Some hormones can affect leaf size and, particularly, internode length. The most important of these hormones is probably gibberellic acid, which can dramatically increase internode length. These affects have little importance for bonsai.

Light Levels

Plants with good nutrition growing in the maximum of light that they can easily tolerate will have the smallest leaves and the shortest internodes.

And finally

Spend some time reviewing the first two growth principles, and thinking about their ramifications. The answers to most questions about the timing of pruning, and the correct procedure to achieve design objectives can be deduced from analysis of these two principles.

For more information about manipulation of growth in bonsai see the companion article "Using Principles of Growth to Manipulate Plants for Bonsai".

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.

Sept. 7	Monthly HBS meeting, 7:30. Club Auction
Sept. 9	Marc Noelander, Lecture/demo, 7:p.m. Houston Garden Center, Hermann Park
Sept. 10	Marc Noelander, Workshops, 8:30-12 and 1:00-4:30. Houston Garden Center, Hermann Park
Sept. 17	Study Group, Bayland Park, 9:00 a.m.
Sept. 17	SSOT. Critique; Business Meeting. 12001 Red Hawk Cove, Austin. For information, Terry or Sheila Ward 512-280-5575 or texshohin@sbcglobal.net
Oct. 5	Monthly HBS meeting, 7:30. Open workshop
Oct. 8-9	Fall Bonsai Show
Oct. 8-9	Kathy Shaner in Austin "It's All About Horticulture" 12001 Red Hawk Cove, Austin. For information, Terry or Sheila Ward 512-280-5575 or phbonsai@sbcglobal.net
Oct. 15	Study Group, Bayland Park
Oct. 27	Garage Sale, Texas State Bonsai Exhibit
Nov. 2	Monthly HBS meeting, 7:30. TBA; nominations to the HBS board.
Nov. 9	Drawing for cruise, Texas State Bonsai Exhibit
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
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July 14- 16	State Bonsai Convention, Corpus Christi

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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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