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# The Bonsai News of Houston

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

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## Monthly Meeting—Jim

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

We have had a change in the program. Jim will demonstrate the construction of the shadehouse-greenhouse which he described in a newsletter article last August.

With winter approaching, it's not too soon to think about how you will protect your tropical bonsai. Jim's design is easy to assemble and disassemble, light-weight and easy to move. It just may be the answer to your needs.

Pete will give his presentation, "Growing Bonsai from Seed and Cuttings," at the November meeting.

## Fall Show Cancelled

Because of a conflict with the LSBF-sponsored speaker, the HBS will not hold its fall show this year. See the following article for details regarding the speaker.

## LSBF Visiting Artist

### Sheryl Manning Demo and Workshops

Sheryl Manning of California, the Lone Star Bonsai Federation's visiting artist this year, will be in Houston October 6 and 7. She will hold a lecture/demo on Friday night and two "bring-your-own-tree" workshops on Saturday morning and afternoon. The lecture/demo will start at 7:00 o'clock, Friday, October 6. We have a very nice juniper from Sam Yeager's collection that Sheryl will work on.

**Cost.** The cost of the lecture/demo will be \$5.00. The bring-your-own-tree workshops on Oct 7 will start at 9:00 in the morning and 1:00 in the afternoon. The cost of the workshops will be \$25.00 per session, one tree per session. Both the lecture and the workshops will be in the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park.

**Background.** Sheryl started studying bonsai in California and was part of John Naka's masters study group. She studied in Japan under Mr. Yasuo Mitsuya, the same

teacher as Boon Manakitivipart and Katy Shaner. Sheryl is well versed in all the aspects of bonsai.

**What Kind of Plant Material To Bring.** At the September HBS meeting, we talked about what kind of trees would be best for the workshops. I usually say that, to get the most out of a workshop, bring a tree that has a good trunk, a lot of branches, including low branches, and a lot of foliage to work with--the bigger and fuller the better. If you bring a tree like that to a workshop, you will probably leave the workshop very happy--and with a good start on a great specimen tree.

But after I got home, I thought about this a little more and decided that refinement of a tree is just as important as the initial styling. It's just as important to refine the bonsai that you have invested time and money in as it is to start a new bonsai. I have seen trees that are styled and put on a shelf and never touched again. This is the time that you can get the help to make a "tree" an outstanding tree. This is an ideal time to bring those trees that received an initial styling but haven't been kept up for whatever reason.

Also, for someone who needs help or is undecided about what to do with a problem tree, this is a chance to seek that kind of help.

The species of tree doesn't matter. Sheryl works with all kinds of deciduous and conifer trees. Some of her work can be found on her website at <http://users.ez2.net/mannig/>.

**Sign up!** As of last week, the morning workshop is full and there are only limited spaces left in the afternoon. Sign up early and don't be left out. If there are any questions; please call Buddy. I have reserved spaces for the workshops over the phone. You can also sign up at the October meeting. There will be a sign up sheet.

--Buddy, LSBF Delegate

## Saturday Study Group

Our study group will meet Saturday, October 21, 9:00 a.m. at the Bayland Center in Bayland Park, 6400 Bissonnet (Bissonnet at Hillcroft--south of I-59 and east of Fondren). **See map at the end of this newsletter.**

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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.*

Now is the time to start your trees toward their winter siesta. If you wait until the temperature drops, you get too rushed and omit some of the little housekeeping duties.

**Trimming.** When the leaves start turning, the sap has quit for the year, and you may check the branches and twigs to see if any need to be trimmed. Cutting back any protruding branches will keep them from snagging and possibly breaking other trees when you put them down. Don't cut the buds off the spring flowering plants unless absolutely necessary if you want flowers next spring.

As the trees lose their foliage, you can study their trunk lines and branch structure. Any faulty styling and the general design features can be observed more easily and corrections planned. Look for crossing branches. Cut vertical growing twigs, both those growing up and those growing down. Reduce long internodes by cutting back and growing new extensions. Clean out heavy branch clusters that make the tree look too dense. Be particularly attentive to the formation of heavy branches in the top part of the tree where faster growth often occurs. Work can be done now or later during the winter at your leisure, but it is too easy to forget about it when the tree is in winter storage.

**Repotting.** Do you need to change the pot? Making notes at this time will give you 3 to 4 months to find the proper pot.

Some may repot in the fall but I feel that it is counter-productive to do so. New roots are more prone to freeze damage if we get a bad winter. It has been stated that the key to safe repotting is to minimize root disturbance and to exclude severe root pruning. This seems to me to be a recipe for developing root problems, poor drainage leading to root rot and the inability of the soil to hold enough water to last all day. Failure to prune heavily will lead to the lack of refinement and a top-heavy tree. I would recommend that you do the above trimming this fall and repot at the proper time next spring.

**Wire.** If you have not checked your wiring yet this fall, you had better look at it. The fall growth can make the tree swell up and get bad wire marks in a hurry. If the tree/limbs do not stay where you want them, then rewire, placing the new wire on a slightly different path or possibly wrapping in the opposite direction.

**Winter Quarters; Watering; Sunlight.** Cut back on the watering now that the temperature is a little lower, but do not allow the trees to dry out. Trees require less water during the shorter days and lower temperatures; however, you need to remember that the wind can still stress the trees and dry out the soil; so water by checking the soil and not just on a given schedule.

Here in Texas more trees are lost in the winter due to drying out than to the cold. Of course that doesn't mean for you to leave the tropicals out or to let the roots freeze on southern trees like the crape myrtle.

Even in a greenhouse or sunny window, the soil can dry out amazingly fast. The wind in winter has amazing drying powers, too. So while protecting the roots, be sure to give the tree a wind screen, but make sure that you can check the soil for watering needs. It helps if you know which particular plants dry out faster, and situate them together. Winter kill usually comes because the soil has frozen and the sun and/or wind is removing water from the tops. The roots cannot obtain water to replenish the loss and the top desiccates to the point of death.

For the beginners, plants like the cedar elm, oak, and maple that are hardy much further north can be set on a clean gravel bed. They do not need any sunlight until spring. When the real cold (26 or lower) gets here, cover the pots with fairly loose mulch. Plants that grow south of Dallas--crape myrtle, pyracantha, some azaleas--need to have root protection. I like to let them get frostbit but bring them in before freezing. Of course the tropicals need to be babied.

All this is basically talking about the broadleaf deciduous trees. Evergreens do not go fully dormant in winter. Some broadleaf evergreens, like boxwoods and yaupons, slow way down but still need sunlight. These broadleaf trees need the basic winter protection of deciduous trees but have higher water and sunlight needs.

**Pests.** Pests on deciduous trees are not usually of much concern in the fall since the leaves are about to fall anyway. Scale must be taken care of with an horticultural oil spray.

On evergreen plants, most problems are also done for the year. Mites can be a problem if we get a few warm days in a row. Cooler (but not cold) days may mean a resurgence of the aphids.

Evergreens and any deciduous trees whose foliage turns can be treated with horticultural oil which will kill the adults and also wipe out the eggs and over-wintering pupae. Be sure to cover all the cracks in the bark to get to the eggs. The organic spray (one tablespoon each of liquid kelp, fish emulsion, apple cider vinegar, and molasses in one gallon of water) will work on evergreens and will also give them some nutrients.

**Fertilizer.** Feeding of deciduous trees should be discontinued for the winter. Evergreens and conifers will benefit from a low nitrogen feeding. One such mix might be 60% cottonseed meal and 40% bone meal. Being organic, this will breakdown into nutrients more slowly as the season gets cooler and the trees activity slows also. The organic spray given above can be used as a soil drench. Kelp is an excellent source of the essential minor elements needed by plants.

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phbonsai@sbcglobal.net  
Austin, Texas 78739      By appointment please**

## Bougainvilleas

By H. Johnson

*Hurley Johnson has been a member of the HBS for two or three years. Thank you for an informative, much needed article on a popular bonsai material on Gulf Coast. —ed.*

The bougainvillea is a tropical plant that is well suited to bonsai in this area. It was named by the French naturalist Philibert Commerson who was sailing on a ship commanded by de Bougainville, when he discovered it in the jungles near Rio de Janeiro.

The bougainvillea is a spiny shrub, vine or small tree which can be trained to grow as a hedge, vine, ornamental plant or bonsai. The flowers of the bougainvillea are really insignificant. It is the colored bracts that surround the tiny flower that make it the beautiful bloomer. The bract is a modified colored leaf. The bracts are normally three per "bloom," but there are now cultivars that have double bracts. These bracts come in almost all colors except a true blue, and there are varieties that are bi-colored. Many varieties change color from the initial emergence of the bract to its full maturity, often giving the effect of different colors on the same tree.

There are basically only three species, but there are many cultivars and hybrids. Most species have green leaves but there are variegated varieties. One of the most common bougainvilleas grown locally is the hybrid "Pink Pixie." Its small leaves, small bracts and compact growth make it ideal for bonsai.

The bougainvillea is a great plant for bonsai in the Houston area. It will grow well in various conditions, but prefers good drainage, lots of sun, plenty of fertilizer, and adequate water. I plant mine in the typical mix of half Hadite and half pine bark. I put them in full sun, water daily, and fertilize monthly with a 14-14-14 mix. I water mine daily because they are in **full sun, all day**.

Bougainvilleas will tolerate "drastic" pruning and repotting in the summer. But, after repotting, take them out of the sun for about a week or two and cut the water back. Bougainvilleas are great for bonsai because they are

relatively free of pests and diseases. They are a tropical, therefore will not tolerate frosts or freezes.

Although they can be wired to form the desired shape, most bougainvilleas resist being forced into the rigid, routine, normal bonsai shapes. Wire them loosely because they grow quickly, and nobody likes those ugly scars. The new growth is where the bracts occur, so keeping the bougainvillea trimmed will not produce the beautiful colors on most species.

Bougainvilleas are easy to propagate by cuttings and air layering. I understand that they can be grafted, but have not tried this yet. I have seen two colored bracts growing from the same rootstock, by grafting a whole branch on.

Good luck!

## 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.*

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| Oct. 4     | Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30<br>Jim, Demonstration—building a<br>shade/greenhouse.   |
| Oct. 6     | Sheryl Manning, Lecture/demo 7 p.m.  |
| Oct. 7     | Sheryl Manning Workshops, 9 a.m. & 1 p.m.  |
| Oct. 7-8   | <del>Fall Bonsai Show</del> <b>CANCELLED.</b>  |
| Oct. 21    | Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park   |
| Oct. 28-29 | Kathy Shaner in Austin, Persimmon Hill.<br>Terry or Sheila Ward, 512-280-5575 or<br><a href="mailto:phbonsai@sbcglobal.net">phbonsai@sbcglobal.net</a>   |
| Nov. 1     | Monthly meeting of HBS— 7:30 Pete,<br>Growing Bonsai from Seed & Cuttings  |
| Nov. 11    | Saturday Study Group, Cabrera Farm Nursery   |
| Dec. 16    | Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park   |
| Apr. 20-22 | 25 <sup>th</sup> LSBF State Bonsai Convention, Dallas.<br>Holiday Inn Select, 3300 W. Mockingbird.<br>Marco Invernizzi, Boon Manakitivipart, Suthin<br>Sukosolvisit, Shane Cary, Mike Hagedorn,<br>Howard and Sylvia Smith, John Miller. |