



The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

Volume 35 Number 3 Internet Edition

March 2006

March Meeting: Report from Japan

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be held Wednesday, March 1, at 7:30 p.m. at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, which is 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.

March Meeting. John and Ron recently traveled to Japan with Bill Valavanis. Their trip included a visit to the Kokufu-ten, the most prestigious bonsai show in Japan, as well as visits to Omiya Village and the studios of well known Japanese masters like Masahiko Kimura. John and Ron will share their impressions of the experience.

Mike Hansen. Just a quick reminder that the next two black pine workshops are scheduled for Feb. 25 and March 11 at the Garden Center. On the 25th we will continue styling our trees and on March 11 Mike Hansen will go over spring care for black pines. As always, observers are welcome for a small fee (\$10).

April 22, Yvonne Padilla. Yvonne Padilla will conduct a workshop on the art of saikei on the morning of April 22. Cost for the workshop will be \$15 and you can begin signing up at our March meeting. Observers are welcome to watch (\$5). You will need to provide the materials for your saikei. See the article by Yvonne below for information about saikei and what kind of trees and materials you will need. You need to get started on your muck now!
--Pete

S.S.O.T. Workshop Rescheduled

Because of weather conditions from north Texas to south of Austin, the meeting of the Shohin Society of Texas scheduled for February 18 was changed to Saturday, February 25. Other than the date change, everything else is the same as outlined in the SSOT newsletter and the February issue of this newsletter.

Saturday Study Group, March 18

Our study group will meet Saturday, March 18, at 9:00 a.m. at Cabrera Farm Nursery. Everyone is welcome--

beginners and seasoned veterans alike. Directions and a map to Cabrera Farm are at the end of this newsletter.

--Anthony, Buddy

Bonsai Tree and Pot Sale, April 1

The Houston Bonsai Society will hold a sale of bonsai trees and pots on Saturday, April 1, 2006, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon, in the Houston Garden Center of Hermann Park. The trees will range in price from \$40 to \$600. Pots are all in excellent condition in sizes from small to very large, with prices \$1 to \$300. Richard Frazier, Ramona Medina, Don Summers, and Sam and Mary donated this collection of trees and pots to our club. Proceeds from the sale will be used to enhance HBS programs, bring in more guest artists and sponsor our next State Convention in 2009.

Creating a Saikei

By Yvonne Padilla

Saikei is a miniature landscape planted in a shallow container or on a slab. It is considered the sister art of bonsai, using the same principles of design and balance. Since the idea is to create a living miniature landscape, trees with small leaves are the best to use.

Trees

Kingsville Boxwood	Azalea (small leaf)
Narrow Leaf Ficus	Fukien tea
Barbados Cherry	Pink Pixie Bougainvillea
Dwarf Yaupon Holly (Stokes)	Bahama Black Olive
Dwarf Brush Cherry	Chinese Box Orange
Texas Ebony	Japanese Boxwood
Catlin & Chinese Elm	Any of the small leaf ficus, Kiki, Curly leaf, etc.

A single variety of trees is almost always used. If using two or three different varieties, make sure they have the same horticultural requirements; e.g., two or three varieties of ficus. If any of the trees need wiring, it should be done before placing them in the container.

(cont. page 14, below.)

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.

By now you have probably repotted the early sprouting trees like the Chinese elms but may be waiting for repotting of cedar elms depending on where you live. You may continue repotting on deciduous species until you see a tiny bit of green on the tips of the swelling leaf bud. Be sure to keep the newly repotted tree out of the wind and late morning or afternoon sun.

Evergreen species will generally be okay to repot later on. Yaupon does better if you wait until it warms a bit more. Even though it gets quite warm now, we can expect a freeze in March so you may have to protect trees that have started growth and those that have been repotted this winter.

Bonsai will start growing in late February or March in this area, depending on your wintering techniques and on the species. After growth starts, some species can take a couple degrees of frost, but, unless you know what your particular tree can take, you should keep it from freezing. Also, newly growing roots are more tender. In this area, you should keep the new foliage out of the strong winds; however, they should have some breeze to help harden the new foliage and to help keep insects and fungal diseases at bay.

Keep your tweezers and shears handy so you can keep the new growth on your trees pruned. The shoots of species with alternate leaf growth (like elms) should grow only to 5-6 leaves and be pinched back to 2 or 3 (depending on which direction you wish the new growth to take). Shoots of trees with opposite leaf growth (maples) should have the new tip pinched (tweezers work better than scissors for this) as soon as you can see it. Doing this regularly is the only way to keep the leaves small and give you nice twiginess (also known as ramification).

Make use of the plants physiology. Terminal shoots produce auxins which call for the plant foods to be delivered to them rather than to side shoots. Terminal shoots in the top of the tree usually produce more auxins than lower terminals causing the top to grow more vigorously than lower branches (known as apical dominance). By keeping the top terminals pinched, you strengthen the lower branches. Also if you need to fill in an area, let the terminals in that area grow and keep the others pinched closely. The larger flow of food will be to that area and will then develop it more.

Anytime there is new tender growth, the spring bugs like aphids will show up. If you have been doing a good organic program, the ladybugs will keep the aphids and other soft bodied insects in check. The praying mantis come along later on when the weather is warmer. I am seeing a lot of mantis eggs since I quit using chemical sprays. My

favorite control is the original Garret Juice formula for aphids, spider mites, bagworms, and even scale.

From time to time you will read about a new control for insects or fungal problems. I would suggest if you want to use them that you test the procedure on some unimportant plants first. An example, a few years ago I read to use a 1% solution of hydrogen peroxide to control fungus, especially black spot. The first time I used it, on mature foliage, it worked great. However when I used it on some new spring elm foliage, it caused considerable leaf burn.

Warm humid days favor the development of fungal diseases such as leaf spot on elms and yaupons. Again the organic program will work on them as well.

Fertilizing is necessary once the trees start to grow. Too many trees exhibited do not have a good dark green foliage. Since we are using soilless mixes for the most part, a different technique is required than used for most potted plants. Water-soluble chemical fertilizers should be used at half strength and more often than labeled since they will wash out with the next watering. The same is more or less true with liquid organic fertilizers. The best technique is to use solid organic fertilizers. Fertilizer cakes on the surface is the best way. They break down slowly and a small amount is carried into the root zone each time you water. Pelletized organic material can be spread on the surface also but they tend to crumble and create an undesirable surface. Some are now working the pelletized form into the top 1/4 inch of soil. This does work but if it dries out you may have a bit of trouble watering. Be sure that the material you use has a balanced formula and not high in nitrogen.

The original foliar feed formula given by Howard Garrett is one tablespoon each of liquid seaweed, fish emulsion, apple cider vinegar, and molasses in one gallon of water. Chelated iron and Epsom salts can be added at 1 tablespoon per gallon. A commercial mixture is sold under the name of "Garrett Juice"™ which you should be able to find at organic nurseries, but it doesn't seem to have the insect control capability that the original formula does. It is fine as a fertilizer though.

Azalea usually have too many buds for the flower to open properly. It is a good practice to remove enough buds so that there is an inch or so between flowers. This can be done at any time. Then be sure to remove the spent flower after blooming to prevent any energy being wasted in producing seeds.

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Membership Fees Due March 15

Your membership fees are due March 15. If we do not receive your payment by March 15, you will not receive the April newsletter. Renew now to be sure you do not miss a single newsletter or any information about up-coming events. An individual membership is \$25.00; a family membership, \$30.00. A membership form appears at the end of this newsletter.

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.

Feb. 25	Mike Hansen: Styling continued, special topics Garden Center Azalea Room, Hermann Park
Feb. 25	S.S.O.T. Trident maple Workshop--fused trunk style and/or stone claspings. Terry Ward, Austin, texshohin@sbcglobal.net
Mar. 1	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30, Ron and John, bonsai trip to Japan
Mar. 11	Mike Hansen: Springtime care Garden Center Azalea Room, Hermann Park
Mar. 15	Membership fees are due.
Mar. 18	Saturday Study Group, Cabrera Farm Nursery
Apr. 5	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Trident maple, root over rock, Donald Green
April	NO STUDY GROUP
Apr 8-9	Spring Bonsai Show w/ Japan Festival
Apr. 22	Yvonne Padilla, saikei workshop, Bayland Center
Apr. 22	S.S.O.T. Workshop, raft style by John Miller. Terry Ward, Austin, texshohin@sbcglobal.net
May 3	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30, Alex and Phillip, Azaleas
May 20	Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park
June 7	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Yvonne Padilla (Corpus Christi), forest plantings
June 17	Mike Hansen: Candle pruning and series wrap-up Garden Center Azalea Room, Hermann Park
June 17	S.S.O.T. Workshop, Steven, tropical shohin refinement and air layering. Shohin display for the CCBC/LSBF convention. Annual sale & swap meet.
June 24	Saturday Study Group, Cabrera Farm Nursery
July 5	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Open workshop
July 14- 16	State Bonsai Convention, Corpus Christi
July 15	Saturday Study Group, Bayland

Aug. 2	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Ficus Fair
Aug. 19	Saturday Study Group, Bayland
Sept. 6	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Club Auction
Sept. 16	Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park
Sept. 16	S.S.O.T. Panel critique. Annual business meeting. Workshop, Alisan, Japanese style scroll.
Oct. 4	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Pete, Growing Bonsai from Seed & Cuttings
Oct. 7-8	Fall Bonsai Show
Oct. 21	Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park
Nov. 11	Saturday Study Group, Cabrera Farm Nursery
Dec. 16	Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park

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By appointment please

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For special requests or questions related to *The Bonsai News of Houston*, contact the editor or the **Houston Bonsai Society, Inc., P. O. Box 540727, Houston, Texas 77254-0727, www.HoustonBonsai.com.**

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.

Creating a Saikei (cont. from p. 11, above.)

Containers

The larger the container, the more dramatic the finished saikei will be. Just be careful, the finished product can be heavy. Shallow trays may be oval, rectangle, round or square. Man made slabs, pieces of slate, flagstone or sandstone can also be used. Chose a container color that will compliment the leaves, fruit or flowers on the trees. The focal point is the landscape not the container.

Stones

Use interesting stones. Lightweight are best, but are sometimes hard to find. They should all be alike. When using different color stones it is very distracting to the eye. If possible use stones with crevices with character. Stones are the skeleton or bones of the landscape. They should harmonize with the trees and container. Use an odd number of stones. Have more on hand than you plan to use; e.g. If planning to use 5 stones be sure and have extras, sometimes some of the stones will not fit in the scene. The stones may be tall with small trees or tall trees with smaller stones.

Soil

Soil should be porous to allow drainage. However a more dense soil can be used for saikei as it holds the stones and trees in place better.

Sand

If creating a river bed or walking path, use sand that compliments the scene and stones.

Accent Plants

Small grasses, ferns succulents, and baby tears can add a finishing touch to the scene. Moss can also be laid on top of the finished scene.

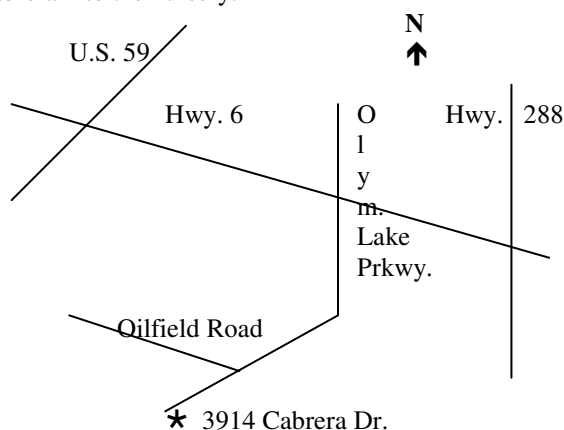
Muck

If using a slab then muck is recommended. It holds the outer edge of the soil in place. Muck is a combination of heavy clay and equal parts of Sphagnum moss. (Cut moss

with scissors) Add enough water to make mixture a bit "soupy". Mix well and let stand about a month, stirring every few days. Don't let it dry out. When it gets to the consistency that will hold together in a ball, make into balls and store in a zip lock bag. It will keep for up to two years when sealed.

Directions to Cabrera Farm Nursery

From Houston take Hwy. 59 south towards Sugar Land. Exit at Hwy. 6 and go under the freeway. Go several miles to Lake Olympia Parkway and turn right. The street name changes to Oilfield Road. Proceed approximately 0.9 miles. Oilfield Road will make a sharp turn to the left (a 90 degree turn). Continue on Oilfield Road another 1.6 miles. When Oilfield Road makes a sharp turn to the right, continue straight. You will then be on Cabrera Drive. Follow Cabrera into the nursery.



For another map, see www.orchidsandbonsai.com or call 281-313-2000.

HOUSTON BONSAI SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Please fill out and mail in or bring to a meeting)

Today's Date _____

Membership Type: (Select one) _____ Individual (\$25.00) _____ Family (\$30.00)

Membership Classification: (Select one)

____ Local member ____ Out of town member ____ Vendor ____ Bonsai club

NAME: _____ **STREET:** _____

CITY: _____ **STATE:** _____ **ZIP CODE:** _____

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____ *Do not publish my address to general membership* ____ *Call here ONLY if absolutely necessary*

Payment Amount Enclosed: \$ _____ **Paying with:** ____ Check ____ Cash

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