



The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

Volume 35 Number 5 Internet edition

May 2006

May Meeting—Ficus on Slab

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be held Wednesday, May 3, 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.

The program this month will be the first part of a two-part workshop on planting trees on rock slabs. After a short introduction and demonstration of the techniques involved, members who enroll in the workshop will get their trees and rocks and begin work. The trees include three different species of ficus. Most have 1-2" trunks except for two groups of trees that will be planted as groves. The workshop costs only \$15 and covers tree(s), rock slab, materials to wire the tree to the slab, and muck. The second part of the workshop will be in August when you'll have a chance to bring in your finished work and show it off and see what others have done with theirs. So, bring your \$15, your tools and your wire and be one of the 20 folks who join in the fun.

--Pete

Houston Flower and Plant Expo-- May 5-7 Help Needed!

The Houston Bonsai Society has been invited to participate, at no cost to HBS, in the Houston Flower and Plant Expo at the George R. Brown Convention Center, May 5-7. We still need workers to sign up. The hours are longer than for our own bonsai show (the Expo is Fri - Sun), so we need as many people as we can get. We will have sign up sheets again at the May meeting, or contact one of us.

We can also earn money for our club. HBS will be paid 50% of tickets sold prior to the opening of the Expo, at presale prices. Admission to the event is \$7.50, but presale tickets will be \$4.99 and our club will make half. In addition our club will be paid 25% of rental fees paid by vendors that we refer to the Expo. See the following link for details <http://www.houstonflowershow.com/societies.asp>

--Donald, Anthony

Saturday Study Group, May 20

Our study group will meet Saturday, May 20, 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

Critiques by a Master

Have your tree critiqued by a Master! Do you want your trees to be ready to show in the 2007 exhibit? The Texas State Bonsai Exhibit (TTSBE) is offering a special critique limited to the first 12 to register. Bring a tree from home or from the exhibit.

Register with your club TTSBE representative, Buddy Allen. The cost is \$10.00 per tree. Time of critique: Friday, July 14 between 8:30 and 9:30 p.m.

--Buddy

Win a Free Night at Hotel for Convention

The Texas State Bonsai Exhibit is having a drawing for one free night at the hotel during the convention. The tickets are \$5.00 each. If you would like to purchase a ticket or tickets for a chance of winning a free night at the hotel, please see Buddy Allen. He will have tickets available at the May, June and July meeting.

--Buddy

Win a Free Registration to Convention

Wind~Waves~Bonsai is the theme for the Lone Star Bonsai Federation (LSBF) Convention 2006. The Corpus Christi Bonsai Society will host our State convention July 14-16, 2006 at the Holiday Inn Airport in Corpus Christi. The convention will feature guest artists John Uchida from California, Bruce Baker from Michigan and Ed Trout from Florida. Workshop participants will experience a variety of material consisting of tropicals, sub-tropicals and collected Texas natives. Of course there will be an excellent exhibit, many vendors and lots of raffles. This convention promises to offer loads of fun, great learning opportunities and is well worth attending.

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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.

In the Dallas area, May is the time you do the leaf-pruning job if you have to do it. If you have kept the new growth pinched properly, you have been getting the ramification usually attributed to leaf pruning. The only good reason for leaf pruning is to replace foliage that has been damaged by wind or insects. On some individual plants that have large foliage, the new foliage will usually be smaller. Leaf pruning should be done after the spring foliage has matured and supplied the tree with enough nutrients to produce a good crop of new foliage. It must be done well before the summer heat causes the plant growth to slow or stop. I consider the very latest time to be Memorial Day. Leaf pruning is done only on very healthy trees. The tree should be fertilized 7 - 10 days before the operation. Cut the stems of those leaves that have them (maples) or cutting across the leaf about 1/16 inch from the twig if leaves are attached direction on the twig (elms). It will not need as much water until the new foliage has developed.

When the azaleas finish blooming, remove all seedpods and do any reshaping that is necessary. You have 2-2 1/2 months (that is mid-July) to work on them. They will start setting buds for next years growth at that time.

When the nighttime temp stays above 60 degrees, it is time to start repotting the tropical material. Since there are so many different requirements for tropicals I will not try to cover their individual needs here. But in general, I like to put them in shade and mist them until the new growth starts.

Warm humid days are favorable for fungal growth. Watch for mildew, black leaf spot on elms and yaupons, among others. As an organic control you can use baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) or better Potassium bicarbonate that you can get at a nursery. Hydrogen peroxide in a 1% solution (mix 1 part of the normal 3% commercial product with 2 parts water) can be used on mature foliage. It may burn tender foliage but its only by-product is water.

If you have insect problems you will need to apply your control, whatever you use, several times. For example, spider mites may go thru the cycle from egg to adult to egg in as little as 5 days. Therefore you should spray 4 times 5 days apart. Other insects will have a different cycle but that schedule should take care of almost everything.

Aphids, spider mites, and scale continue to be the most prevalent insects. The foliar feeding of fish emulsion, liquid kelp, molasses, and apple cider vinegar (1 tablespoon each per gallon of water) is all the control I use for them. Scale is the most difficult because it is usually covered with a waxy coating (the scale). You may need to use a horticultural oil mixed as directed on the label. Be sure that the direction you read is for summer use as some have two dosages given,

one for dormancy (usually the first and strongest) and one for summer. Do not use oil on buttonwood or any other plant not included on the label. Please note: the commercial variation sold as Garret Juice does not do the same as the above mixture.

If you see damage to the foliage or the plant is not doing well, look for other problems and if you don't recognize the culprit ask you favorite nurseryman for help.

Start checking your pots to see if the sun is heating them up. Our summer sun shining on dark pots can make the soil temperature soar and kill the roots. Try putting your hand on the pot. Roots are living organisms and cannot take high temperatures any more than you can. Heating also dries out the soil making you water more often. Any number of ways of keeping the pots cool will work, the requirement being to prevent the sun from getting to them. I do not care for the aluminum foil methods because I don't care to have the light reflected into my eyes. A simple cloth with a slit to go around the trunk works fine.

Remember all the work that you did in the spring? Keep the new growth trimmed so that you haven't wasted your time. While trimming or watering, check the wiring periodically and remove it before it damages the branch. If the branch springs back some, rewire it.

If you are not on a regular organic foliar/drench feed schedule, be sure to use fertilizer cakes with supplemental feeding with a good liquid fertilizer, one that includes the minor elements. Most bonsai I see are malnourished. The liquid water-soluble fertilizer gets washed out with the next watering and the tree starves until the next infrequent feeding. There are a number of fertilizers in pellet or cake form on the market or you can make your own.

Time to consider becoming more proficient at your hobby. You can learn all the rules but without practice you will not be able to perform. You need practice to learn to recognize the line of the raw material you are starting with. You get this practice and experience by taking part in your clubs various study groups, beginners classes, and workshops. If you are not a beginner, try teaching some beginners. The teacher always learns as much as his students by trying to verbalize what he is attempting to teach. Visit conventions especially the local state convention and discuss trees with others who share your like for a particular style or species.

Soil components--For those who asked about the source of the bark in my soil mix. The Calloway mix that I used last year has been completely reformulated and is no longer a good thing. I did not find anything at Calloway's to use this year. After trying three different mixes Home Depot, finally got some Scotchman's Choice Landscaper Mix. I had used this once before. I bought two bags and sifted it out. It all went thru the half-inch screen. 24% stayed on the 1/4 screen, 41% stayed on the 1/8 screen, 17% stayed on the 1/16 screen, and 17% was fines. Not too bad for \$3 per bag.

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Win a Free Registration *(con'd from page 22)*

To support the LSBF convention and to encourage our attendance, the Houston Bonsai Society will reimburse the early full registration fees of ten (10) members, \$110 each. A drawing will be used to select the ten members for fee reimbursements. To be entered in the drawing, members must show receipt of paid Full Registration by June 1, 2006. This is the deadline for early registration. If you have not registered yet, please do so soon to be eligible for the drawing and fee reimbursement. Convention registration packets will be available again at our May meeting or you may download the materials from the convention website--
<http://www.corpuschristibonsaiclub.com/>

--Donald

Spring Bonsai Show a Success

The spring bonsai show held in conjunction with the Japan Festival in the Japanese gardens in Hermann Park on April 8 and 9 was a huge success.

Thanks to everyone who worked at the show, brought trees to show and supported the effort in any way. A special thanks to Anthony Cutola who, once again, organized and coordinated the effort.

Los Ebanos - *pithecellobium flexicaule*

by Chuck Ware

Chuck Ware owns Jade Gardens in Wimberly, Texas. He prepared this article to help promote the state convention in 2000. The article appeared in the October 1999 Bonsai News of Houston and is reprinted here with permission.

The Texas ebony is a true gem in the vast array of bonsai material. It has gained in popularity as artists have seen the potential in its small leaves and tight growth. This tree is not a true ebony even though the wood is dark and hard. There is only one true member of the ebony family in North America; that is the persimmon which includes our very own Texas persimmon. The Texas ebony is a legume, closely related to the Brazilian raintree. Another name for the Texas ebony is the ebony blackbead or the ebony ape's earring.

Both names come from the bean pod, which can be used as a coffee substitute, and the seeds which can be boiled or roasted and then eaten.

The ebony grows in the southern tip of Texas, Rio Grande Valley and Mexico. The tree can grow 30 to 40 feet tall. Many of the larger trees have died off because of the occasional hard freeze that can dip deep into Mexico.

In the bonsai culture, they are a very forgiving tree; they like plenty of water and grow well in a loose soil. However, they will withstand drying out - going bone dry for a short period will cause defoliation; but watering will return them to good spirits. They will handle alkaline soils but do even better in our slightly acidic bonsai mixes.

In the Rio Grande Valley they are dug in the early spring and early fall, when the temperatures are between 70 and 85 degrees. For more temperate regions, that temperature is maintained in June and July, so this is the best time to repot. They are vigorous root growers in loose soils, so repot every one to two years.

They are not generally bothered by insects if they are in good health. You can find twig girdlers down South, white fly as you go North, and scale anywhere; none them seem to be a serious problem. This tropical tree needs protection in cold temperatures.

The Texas ebony develops its beauty as it matures. As the ebony ages, it develops deep, coarse, fissured bark. Most people only see the smooth bark because they work with young trees. Whether growing in the wild or in a container, the ebony seems to begin to develop coarse bark at the base of the trunk and works up slowly. There seems to be a certain age when this begins--regardless of its environment.

Branch ramification is easily developed. The ebony loves the sun but will adapt to shade or an indoor environment. If the light is too low, the shoots grow long. On dark days or at night, the leaves will fold up.

Don't let those thorns keep you away from the enjoyment of working with the ebony! Shedding a little blood just creates a tighter bond.

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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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| May 3 | Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30,
Ficus on a slab workshop, Pt. 1, Pete |
| May 5-7 | Houston Flower and Plant Expo
George R. Brown Convention Center |
| May 20 | Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park |

June 1	Deadline for early registration for state convention and for eligibility for free registration from HBS	Aug. 19	Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park
June 7	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Yvonne Padilla (Corpus Christi), forest plantings	Sept. 6	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Club Auction
June 17	Mike Hansen: Candle pruning and series wrap-up Garden Center Azalea Room, Hermann Park	Sept. 16	Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park
June 17	S.S.O.T. Workshop, Steven, tropical shohin refinement and air layering. Shohin display for the state convention. Annual sale & swap meet. Terry Ward, Austin, texshohin@sbcglobal.net	Sept. 16	S.S.O.T. Panel critique. Annual business meeting. Workshop, Alisan, Japanese style scroll.
June 24	Saturday Study Group, Cabrera Farm Nursery	Oct. 4	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Pete, Growing Bonsai from Seed & Cuttings
July 5	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Open workshop	Oct. 7-8	Fall Bonsai Show
July 14- 16	State Bonsai Convention, Corpus Christi	Oct. 21	Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park
July 14	Critique by a Master, 8:30-9:30 p.m.	Oct. 28-29	Kathy Shaner in Austin, Persimmon Hill. Terry or Sheila Ward, phbonsai@sbcglobal.net
July 15	Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park	Nov. 11	Saturday Study Group, Cabrera Farm Nursery
Aug. 2	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Ficus on a slab, Pt. 2, Pete Parker.	Dec. 16	Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park
Aug 4 & 5	Pedro Morales, details tba.		

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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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