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# The Bonsai News of Houston

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

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August 2006

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## August Meeting

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be held Wednesday, August 2, 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.

The August program will be the second part of our workshop on ficus on slabs. Please bring the trees you began working on at the meeting in May, and we'll have a discussion about how things turned out and what challenges you faced in styling your tree and planting it on the slab.

For those of you who attended the LSBF convention in Corpus Christi, please bring your workshop trees so that we can talk about the convention and show off our new trees.

## Pedro Morales Visit

Pedro Morales will be visiting with HBS on Friday, Aug. 4 and Saturday, Aug. 5. On Friday evening from 7 until 10, Pedro will be doing a lecture/demonstration at the Herman Park Garden Center. The subject of the demonstration will be a large *Ficus benjamina* that the club purchased at the LSBF convention. The tree is presently about six feet tall, has several trunks, and a base that is roughly 12 inches across above the root line. It also features a nice group of aerial roots. Admission for the lecture/demo will be \$5. The tree will be raffled after the demonstration.

On Saturday, Pedro will be doing either one or two workshops (depending on the number of people who sign up). The first will be from 9:00 - 12:00 and the second from 1:00 - 4:00, both in the Azalea Room of the Garden Center. These are bring-your-own-tree workshops and cost \$30 to participate. Observers are welcome for a \$5 fee. Pedro is a well known bonsai expert, particularly on tropicals. This is a great chance to gain insight into the design and care of tropical trees, so sign up with Pete Parker at the August meeting.

## Saturday Study Group

Our study group will meet Saturday, August 19, 9:00 A.M. at the Bayland Center in Bayland Park, 6400 Bissonnet (Bissonnet at Hillcroft--south of I-59 and east of Fondren).

## Wanda Allen

Wanda Allen, a long time member, former officer and supporter of the Houston Bonsai Society died on Sunday July 23, 2006. She will be remembered by all for her beautiful personality, warm friendship, willing to help others and optimistic spirit.

Memorial services will be at 11:00 AM Wednesday July 26th. Visitation will be 6:30-8:00 PM on Tuesday, July 25th. Both will be at the Forest Park Funeral Chapel, 12800 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77077.

## Greenhouse/Shade House

By Jim

*Jim is a long-time member of the HBS. This article first appeared in the December 2000 issue of our newsletter. Jim subsequently updated the article, in the February 2001 issue.*

Well, it happened! I'm out of space to protect my plants against the winter. What to do? Maybe a greenhouse and/or shade house.

When visiting with my friend, Jeff McMullan at the Hibiscus Society, he told me about a small, portable greenhouse he and his wife are using. They designed and built it from plastic tubing and fittings.



(con'd next page.)

## 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. This article appeared in the August 2004 newsletters for Fr. Worth and Dallas.*

Three weeks of rain and then four dry weeks, and you want me to tell you what soil mix to use. Well, if you grow your bonsai in a sheltered location, with a controlled light level, a programmable temperature control to ramp from 65 night to 85 afternoon, controlled air flow of maybe 5mph, and will water on a consistent schedule, then maybe I can devise the perfect soil mixture for you. In the real world, you make a mix for your average conditions and then tilt the pots on long wet spells and give an extra watering when hot and dry with some loose covering on the pot to shade it from the sun.

Not only the heat gets to our plants but the low humidity causes the plants stress by evaporating the water from the leaves faster than the plant can move it upward. Any wind that is present multiplies the problem. The sun shining on the pots will raise the soil temperature causing both the soil to dry out and damaging the plant roots. Therefore you may need to water more than once a day. If so, my preference is to water heavily in the evening, letting the plant recover during the cool night and then to water lightly in the morning, spraying the foliage also. Partial shade, 50% shade cloth or afternoon shade will be great. Mulch on the soil will help but does not keep the sides of the pot from getting hot. Even the morning sun can be too much on the pot in August. A loosely woven cloth cover will work as will setting the pot in a good fitting box but some air space between the soil and/or pot should be left to aid in lowering the temperature by evaporation.

Remember to water twice. Wait a few minutes after the first watering for the dry soil particles to absorb some of the water on their surface. Then with the surface tension reduced the second watering gets the particle wet.

The stress caused by the temperature will give any insects a chance to wreak havoc. Watch for the spider mites especially this month. The morning spray will help knock some off. The Garret juice foliar spray will keep them down also. Chemical sprays are available but most chemical reactions are accelerated by heat and may damage plants. Read the labels!

Any rainy spell can bring some fungal problems. Powdery mildew or black leaf spot are a couple of them. That is why I use the foliar spray in the morning, so that the leaves will dry quickly. The organic web sites say you can mix baking soda with the Garret Juice for fungal control. However I have decided to do separate sprayings. The GJ has an acid (vinegar) which would react with the baking soda thereby reducing the effectiveness of both. Anyhow all

your trees would benefit from the GJ but not all would have a fungal problem.

Be careful about applying fertilizer in hot weather.

Even organic fertilizers create some chemical reactions and the above remarks apply here, too. By the end of the month the nitrogen applied to the tree should be reduced. A little may be put on into September but the tree needs to be allowed to stop growth to get ready for dormancy. Evergreen trees benefit from a low nitrogen fertilizer through the winter.

Do not prune azaleas any more this year if you want flowers next spring. Buds have been set by now. If you are still developing your azalea, go ahead and prune. Some varieties will set a few buds anyway. In general, when pruning look for the cluster of twigs at the site of last springs bloom. Cut out all and leave two, usually the ones growing horizontally. Be sure to cut back strong growing shoots to a couple of leaves.

Since deciduous trees have slowed their growth you can do some pruning on them. However pruning will stimulate new growth that may not have time to harden before winter resulting in some dieback of the new growth. On these trees its better to wait until later. After leaves have fallen you can see where corrections need to be made more easily.

It's never too early to think about having your tree ready for a show. At the Ft Worth 4th Thursday open workshop night, one member brought a tree to discuss what improvements could be made so as to be shown at the convention next year. Bonsai is the ultimate plan ahead hobby.

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### Green House/ Shade House (con'd.)

After a little investigation, I modified their design to make my greenhouse larger. The greenhouse that I am building is 12 feet wide, 8½ feet tall and 18 feet long. One can modify the size as needed but the construction methods are the same. The structure is constructed of ¾-inch bell-end PVC electrical conduit, the gray tubing, and modified PVC fittings that I bought at Home Depot.



**Building the Greenhouse/Shade House.** The stretcher, which is one piece of the three-piece structure outline and lies on the ground, consists of one 10-foot piece of tubing plus another 2 feet to make the piece 12 feet long.

(con'd next page.)

The 90 degree bends are placed on each end looking up. When cutting and fitting the pipe and fittings, remember to take into account the overlap dimensions. The pipe and fittings of the stretcher should be permanently cemented. The stretchers can be omitted and the vertical pieces can be slipped into the 1-inch holes drilled in landscape timbers suitably spaced.



The two uprights are simply two pieces of the standard 3/4-inch by 10-foot conduit pushed into the 90-degree bends on each end of the stretcher, bell-end up, NO CEMENT.

The top fitting, 3/4 inch by 1 foot, 45-degree bend, makes the structure. The two uprights are now bent and the fitting is pushed into the bell-ends. NO CEMENT. The structure now takes the shape of a cathedral arch. By attaching several of these arches together, the greenhouse skeleton is completed.



The attachments that hold the arches together are very simple. The white 3/4-inch tees are modified by first drilling the shoulder out of the "run" of the tee. A 1/16-inch drill will do a great job or a 1-inch drill will work fine. Then the top of the "run" of the tee is sawed off leaving a piece slightly more than 180 degrees. The tee is now a fitting that will cement to a 3/4-inch pipe at the stem and snap over a 3/4-

inch pipe by the modified "run." These tees are cemented to each end of the spacers and determine the distance between the arches and the eventual length of the greenhouse.

The ridge fittings are made by drilling the shoulder out of the "run" of a tee, cutting the "run" pieces back almost to the stem, and then sawing a slot into the top wall of the tee. The "cross" fittings are made the same way as the tees. These fittings could be cemented to the 45-degree pieces after the entire structure is fit up.

**Greenhouse Use.** For the winter season, 6-mil clear plastic sheeting will cover the greenhouse and the ends. It will, hopefully, be attached to the structure with Duct Tape on the inside.

**Shade House.** As spring and summer approach, shade cloth will be permanently attached to the structure, connection ideas invited. Access is obtained by pulling a piece of plastic back on the ends and taping it back as you leave.

All to do now are to load the plants that require protection, add an area heater and maybe a fan and you're in business.

**Some Thoughts.** Wind and cross bracing can be added using clothesline wire and turnbuckles to make the structure less flexible.

Some concrete blocks should be placed on the stretchers to weigh it down.

The gray PVC electrical conduit is UV protected and heavy wall for greater strength than the white stuff.

A couple of electrical heaters with thermostats should be put in the greenhouse to keep it warm.

Blowers and/or fans can be used to circulate air in the greenhouse.

This structure is entirely portable and can be dismantled into a round bundle about 12 feet long and stored away if desired.

*(con'd next page.)*

**PERSIMMON HILL BONSAI  
AKADAMA / KANUMA / PUMICE  
LAVA / GRANITE**

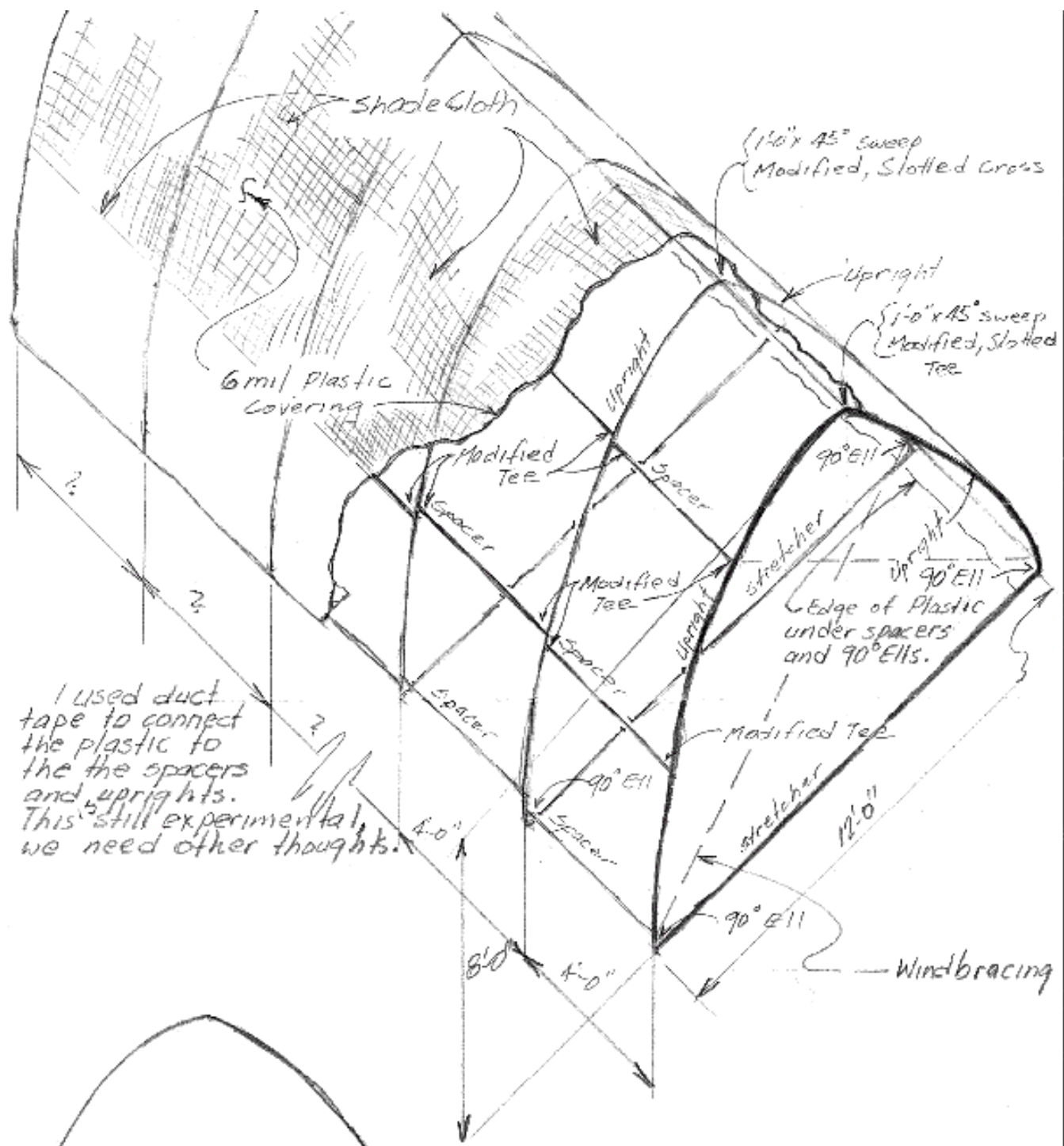
**Premium Plant Fertilizers  
Quality Material, Tools, Potting Mix's, Wire, Pots,  
Supplies, Bonsai Services, Instruction, Seminars**

**Terry & Sheila Ward 512-280-5575**

**phbonsai@sbcglobal.net**

**Austin, Texas 78739**

**By appointment please**



I used duct tape to connect the plastic to the the spacers and uprights. This is still experimental, we need other thoughts.

GREENHOUSE / SHADEHOUSE

Jim Forder 11/2000



### Greenhouse/Shade House: Update

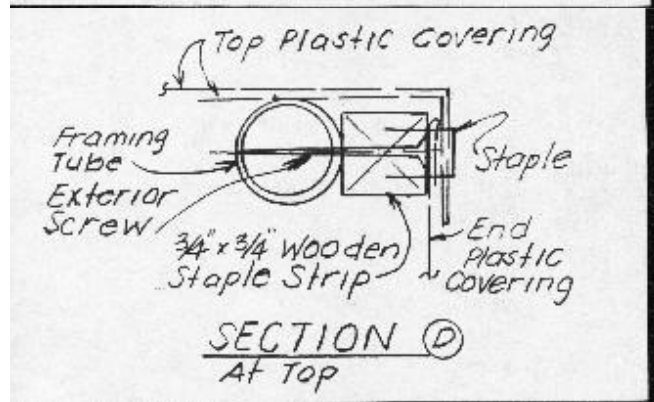
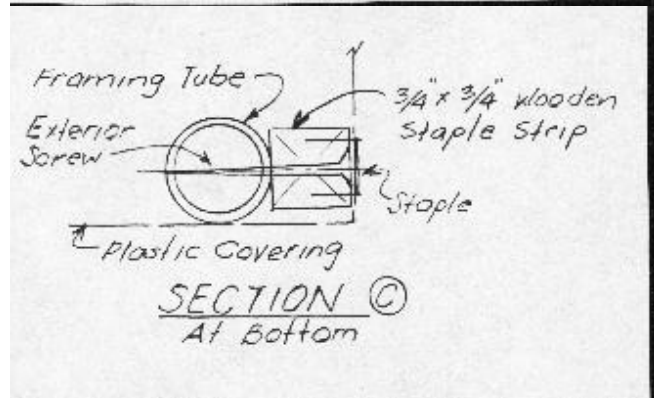
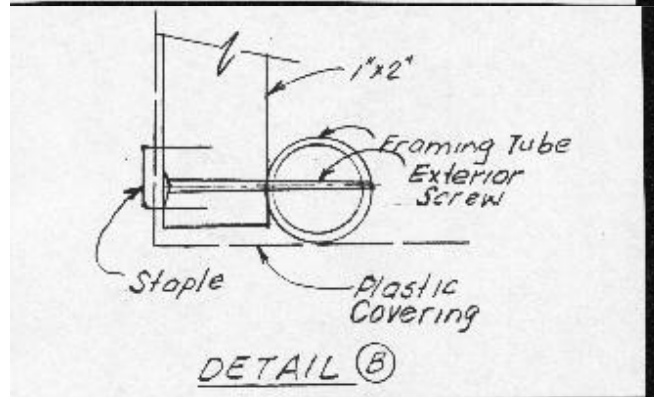
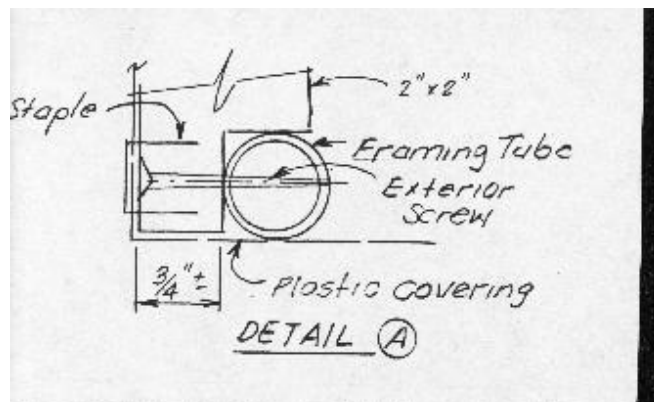
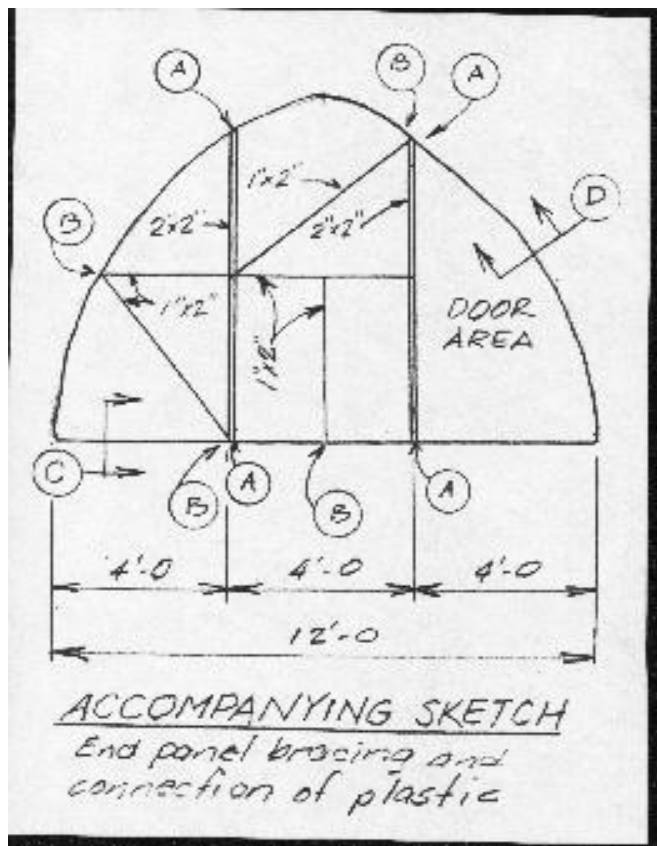
By Jim

The development of the Greenhouse/Shade house, reported in the December newsletter, has been on going. Most of the details have been worked out and testing has been successfully completed. This report is to review the details used to complete the structure.

#### Wind Bracing

The wind bracing that was suggested in the December newsletter of clothesline wire and turnbuckles turned out to be less than acceptable. Additionally, I still had to devise a way to connect the plastic to the end panels. The two-birds-with-one-stone theory took over, and I used wood bracing to stiffen the structure.

The end panels were stiffened by two 2" x 2" weather-treated pieces vertically notched to fit the plastic tubing and connected with exterior screws. Additional bracing, 1" x 2" treated board, was added, see Accompanying Sketch and Detail A & B.



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### Connecting the Covering

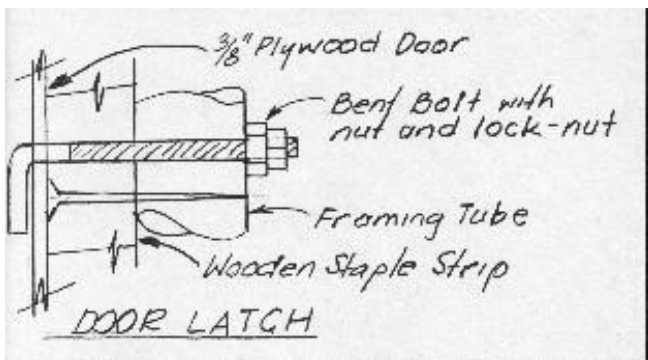
The plastic covering was connected using staples into the wooden wind bracing and staple-strips around the exterior frame of the end panels, Detail D & C. The plastic interior to the ends in the 18' direction was not fastened. The plastic has been wrapped around the structure lengthwise and tucked under for 1' to 1 1/2'.

### Anchoring

After the plastic was all stapled and wrapped, the structure was moved to its semi-permanent site and anchored. The anchoring consists of one cinder block placed on each end of the crossing members (stretchers) and one paving block on the plastic between the stretchers.

### Doorway

The space for the doorway is shown in the Accompanying Sketch and fits very nicely into the wind-bracing configuration. The door is simply a piece of 3/8" thick weather-treated plywood cut to shape, covered with plastic and fastened to the vertical 2"x2" with two 3" galvanized hinges. The door latch is a long bolt bent 90 degrees and fastened through the frame tubing.



### OK--So How Has It Performed?

#### Wind

The middle of December winds of 30 mph with gusts to 40 mph were recorded about one mile away. The greenhouse flapped and ruffled but stood there just like it was supposed to.

#### What about hurricane season?

During hurricane season, the structure will be in the shade house mode and fairly wide open so very little concern.

#### Temperature

Three 1500-watt electrical heaters have been used with one internal fan. Several nights the outdoor thermometer has registered a minimum of 30 to 35 degrees F. The indoor thermometer registered a minimum of 55 to 57 degrees F. I will soon get courageous enough to use two 1500-watt heaters to see if they will hold the minimum temperatures at 50-55 degrees F. Using three heaters during the cold month of December was very expensive.

When the sun comes on the structure, the inside temperature quickly rises to 80 degrees F. The structure is

sealed tightly so there is no ventilation, a problem that needs a solution. (A side note: A source for cheap fans and blowers is an Air Conditioning-Heating service company. They replace the blower when they replace the furnace.)

### Problems Encountered

Like most greenhouses, the environment is warm and damp and bugs and diseases spread. Aphids have been the biggest problem so far; Orthene has been the solution. As always, the facility is too small for the number of items to be protected; so the plants are crowded--again, allowing bugs and disease to spread.

Air circulation may help reduce the bugs and diseases. A small, oscillating fan was placed in the greenhouse and the population of gnats and small flies was reduced. However, in the cramped quarters the moving air dried the near-by plants. Perhaps setting the fan on a shelf above the plants will work better.

### Cost

The big interest to everyone is, "How much did it cost for the 12'w x 8'h x 1 8'1" structure?" The total cost to date, December 31, 2000, is \$182.19, plus an indoor/outdoor recording thermometer, plus one fingertip. This includes enough 6-mil plastic to cover it two more times. The shade cloth hasn't been purchased yet.

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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.

Aug. 2	Monthly meeting of the HBS, 7:30 Ficus on a slab, Pt. 2, Pete Parker.
Aug. 4	Pedro Morales from Puerto Rico. Lecture demo at 7:00 p.m., Hermann Park. Cost: \$5.00.
Aug. 5	Pedro Morales. Two 3-hour workshops: 9 a.m.-12 noon and 1p.m.-4 p.m., Hermann Park. Cost: \$30.00. Bring your own tree.
Aug. 19	Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park
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
Oct. 28-29	Kathy Shaner in Austin, Persimmon Hill. Terry or Sheila, 512-280-5575 or phbonsai@sbcglobal.net
Nov. 11	Saturday Study Group, Cabrera Farm Nursery
Dec. 16	Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park

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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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