



The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

Volume 35 Number 9 Internet Edition

September 2006

Monthly Meeting—Club Auction!!!

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be held Wednesday, September 6, 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.

At the September meeting we will hold our annual auction for the benefit of the HBS. This is one of our major fundraisers, and so your support is important. Last year we had a great auction with some really fine trees. Proceeds from the auction will help support programs and other activities for our members. If you missed last year, you missed some great opportunities. This year should be great, too. Bring donations of bonsai-related and non-bonsai-related items, including:

- Styled trees,
- Pre-bonsai material,
- Books,
- Stands and pots,
- Tools and aprons,
- Logo, pins and convention memorabilia,
- Stones, suiseki
- Gift certificates for goods and/or services,
- Drawings or autographs from bonsai masters.

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

Fall Show Cancelled

Because of a conflict with the L.S.B.F.-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. 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.

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.

To get the most out of the workshops, I would suggest that you bring a tree that has good trunk, low branches, and foliage to work with--the bigger the better. The species of tree doesn't matter. Sheryl works with all kinds of deciduous and conifers trees. Some of her work can be found on her website at <http://users.ez2.net/mannig/>.

If you want to reserve a space in the workshops, please sign up at one of the next two meetings or contact Buddy Allen or John Denton. There will be a sign up sheet at the September and October meetings. --Buddy

Saturday Study Group

Our study group will meet Saturday, September 16, 9:00 a.m. at the Bayland Center in Bayland Park, 6400 Bissonnet (Bissonnet at Hillcroft--south of I-59 and east of Fondren).

LSBF Silver Anniversary Convention

The Lone Star Bonsai Federation will have its 25th convention next year. It will be in Dallas on April 20-21-22 at the Holiday Inn Select, 3300 W. Mockingbird, across from Love Field airport.

Full particulars and registration information will be given to LSBF delegates in October.

We have amassed an impressive list of bonsai artists. They will be kept busy teaching you all the aspects of bonsai. They are, in no particular order, as follows.

Marco Invernizzi: Marco is a talented young bonsai artist who has become one of the most sought after artist in

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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.

The current heat wave can make for problems later on. Last year it lasted too long; so my trees did their fall growth into November. Then they did not have sufficient time to harden before the first (hard) freeze early in December. Consequently some received a little damage. Just keep your eye on the forecasts and protect your trees to the best of your ability. Remember that even a thin cloth over the tree on the ground can raise its temperature a few degrees.

I find that the trees respond to two waterings a day. One, a good soaking watering, in the evening (4 p.m.) to cool the soil, pot, and roots, with a reasonably strong foliage spray. This helps the plant get over the effects of 100+ temperature and the hot sun and gives it all night to recuperate. In the morning, I go through and touch up those that are a bit dry and give them another foliage spray. This works good on days of low humidity and/or brisk winds. If the humidity should be up (you don't need a gauge, you can feel it), do not spray the foliage in the evening so that it will be dry at night to prevent fungal problems. *[In most parts of the Houston area, low humidity is seldom a problem. -ed.]*

Check the trees you still have wire on. When the cooler days get here, some trees will expand their branches and get wire cuts quickly. You need to check them periodically over the winter also. Winter growth will usually be pretty slow but can occur, especially on the evergreens. 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. If you need to reapply some wire, take care.

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 usually 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 or diluted fertilizer.

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.

Two things you can do now. You should prepare your winter quarters, and you should 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.

- (1) Make sure that it is clean
- (2) That you can check the water needs of the trees.
- (3) It should be somewhat protected from winds but should have some air movement to prevent molds from developing.
- (4) Having it in a location where you can see the trees will 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. If we should have a stretch of damp weather, you should be watching for fungal problems, leaf spot, mildew, etc. Treat fungal 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 on it.

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SSOT Meeting, Scroll Painting

The September meeting of the Shohin Society of Texas will feature Alisan, a professional, multi-media artist, who will lead a scroll-painting workshop. Although there is no workshop limit, **you must sign up by September 9**. The cost is \$7 payable at the workshop. Also, instead of the usual hot dogs/sack lunch, there will be a potluck lunch. For information, contact Terry or Sheila.

Where's My Newsletter?

Many members are enjoying the speed and convenience of electronic versions of the monthly HBS newsletter. These files are available via download from the HBS website approximately 6 or 7 days before the monthly meeting. Electronic newsletters are easily stored and searchable for specific keywords in each document. As a special benefit of membership, however, the current month's files are hidden and can only be accessed if one knows the Internet address (called a "url").

The club sends a mass email to all requesting members when the newest newsletter has been posted. However, due to constantly changing spam filters at Internet provider companies, the mass emails may never make it to your mailbox. Due to the large number of people enjoying electronic newsletters, it would be impossible to send an individual email to each person when the download is ready.

If you are not receiving your monthly announcement email, but wish to download the new document, you can find it approximately one week before the meeting at...

[http://www.houstonbonsai.com/Newsletters/2006/8-](http://www.houstonbonsai.com/Newsletters/2006/8-August-06.pdf)

[August-06.pdf](http://www.houstonbonsai.com/Newsletters/2006/8-August-06.pdf)

Remember, however, that you will have to adjust the end of the url to reflect the desired month. For example, September's newsletter will be located at the address ending with **/9-September-06.pdf** and October's will end with **/10-October-06.pdf** and so on. After the first of the year, you will also need to change to 2007.

Anyone interested in being added to the announcement email list should send a message from the desired account to houstonbonsainews@houston.rr.com.

--Gary

Confessions of a Lazy Bonsai Enthusiasts, or How To Create an Automatic Watering System

By A . Gerald Marquez

Jerry Marquez has been a member of the HBS since about the fall of 2003. Thank you, Jerry, for a very thorough article. -ed.

There are times when I just cannot dependably be there to water my bonsai and a plant sitter just isn't practical or available. For example:

- 1) Sudden business trips,
- 2) In early to work / stay late at work,
- 3) Vacation,
- 4) Family emergencies,
- 5) Special occasions (date night),
- 6) Heat-of-the-day / midday cool-off,
- 7) Personal illness and
- 8) Memory lapses / senior moments.

For these and other reasons, I decided to install my own automatic bonsai watering system. It has a 2-year track record (2 summers and 2 winters) with no known failures and has required zero maintenance other than a battery change after the first 14 months. You could get by with as little as a timer and soaker hose. I chose to build the system

that follows. As with everything else in this hobby, whatever works – go with it. (The described system is in use in Houston, Texas, year-round.)

The components are listed in order of appearance, starting at the water faucet. Their function and justification will be described after the list.

- 1) A "1-female-to-2-male" garden hose "Y" splitter/adaptor,
- 2) Full size garden soaker hose flow-limiting-disk/washer,
- 3) Electronic programmable timer,
- 4) Water filter,
- 5) Pressure regulator (pre-set for 25 psi.),
- 6) Reducer/adaptor (female garden hose to ¼" polly tubing),
- 7) ¼" polly tubing, "T"ee, e"L"bow, and plug fittings,
- 8) Flow limiting drip-heads in ½, 1, and 4 gallons-per-hour flow rates,
- 9) ¼" polly soaker hose and
- 10) Granular lawn fertilizer (Scotts 13-13-13) sprinkled on the top of the bonsai soil.

Number 1) I don't have an abundance of faucets at home, so the loss of even one gets to be a challenge. By installing a splitter, I can leave the automatic stuff connected and activated and still have a full hose outlet available for household use.

Number 2) We've all heard horror stories of flowing water left running for days. The flow-limiting disk is sold for use with full size garden soaker hoses. It is a flexible disk with a calibrated tiny hole in it. The different colors in the package reflect the different flow rates available. By installing one of these flow-limiting disks in place of the garden hose washer, I was able to limit the maximum water flow possible in case of a hose rupture or puncture.



Electronic Timer

Cont'd next page

Number 3) I selected an electronic timer that has default cycles as well as the option for custom programs. This one operates on 2 AA cell batteries and has a digital 7-day clock, all in a weatherproof enclosure. It comes with a variety of default cycles. I only use 2 of the default programs – either every day once a day for one hour (in summer) or every other day once a day for an hour (fall-winter-spring). This timer also allows the program to be suspended and water stopped or turned on in an override manner. I had considered some of the simpler, less expensive timers, but they all had drawbacks such as lettering that is too hard to read, clock setting that took too many steps with too little assurance that the timer would actually work, or watering cycles that did not meet my needs (for bonsai).

Number 4) If you use drip-head or spray-head water flow devices, they will have very small openings to limit the flow. It follows that, if you have any particles in the water supply, they will eventually plug the holes and affect or stop the water flow entirely. Unless your system is 100% soaker hose, I recommend an in-line water filter.

Number 5) All of the water flow-limiting devices I use are rated using a 25 psi water supply pressure. I put a gage on my household water faucet and found that the City of Houston provides me with 75 to 90 psi water. So I bought an in-line pressure reducer that is pre-set at 25 psi. When I tested my set-up prior to use, the drip-heads turned out to perform as marked (½ gallon per hour out of a head marked ½ gpm, etc.). These reducers are subject to easy vandalism in the store (internal parts come loose or fall out or get taken), so compare before buying.

Number 6) After all of the previous devices are assembled, programmed, and in place, you will need some way of getting garden hose water into the ¼" polly tubing. There is a simple plastic adaptor that reduces garden hose thread into ¼" polly output. (Yes, I know there is a screen built into the washer – but all it will keep out are rocks and small pebbles, not the tiny grit that will clog your system.) Be sure to push the tubing into the adaptor so that at least 1/8" to ¼" shows inside – split the difference on the inside between the screen and opening. NOTE: My application requires water to go to different areas, so I placed another garden hose “Y-splitter” here and used two adaptors to go in two different directions. This way both locations have equal access to the water supply.

Number 7) My garden has a three level plant stand, along with independently potted bonsai along the side of the house. My layout ran from the faucet assembly over to the plant stand where I inserted the first “T”-ee. The base of the “T”-ee then split off to the top of the stand. At the top of the stand I inserted two more “T”-ees and an “L”-bow.

Number 8) There are three plants on my top shelf, so I added three 12" lengths of polly and three ½ gph drip heads

(one on each end). To insure that the water actually drips on the intended plant, I loop the end of the tubing loosely around the trunk – ending in a “half-knot”. This drips a total



Plant Stand

of 1½ gallons cascading down the entire stand. The water from the top trees flows down the trees below them. Going back to the supply line, the polly is continued to the next tree in the circuit. Here another “T”-ee is inserted, and a line is run to the next tree.

Number 9) My next tree is a big one – a Bald Cypress in a 20-gallon container. I use a 4 gph drip head on this one



Bald Cypress

but, I didn't like all the water coming out in a single location so I added a "T"-ee on the end of the drip head and ran two loops of ¼" soaker hose around the trunk. This worked great. I tried using soaker hose without a drip head but was unable to control the total water delivered – so I only use soaker hose now after the water comes out of a drip head. The other remote trees are done the same way. The last one doesn't get a "T"-ee. The drip head just plugs in at the end of the line, supplies the soaker hose, and gets a ¼" plug at the end.

One of life's lessons that I have had to learn is "Trust-but-Verify". After I had connected my watering system and arranged all of the different flow-rated drip heads, I gathered a number of cat litter buckets and set one under each outlet. I then turned on the water, opened the timer manually, set my watch, and ran a real-time test. After an hour, I closed the timer and returned it to "Automatic" mode. I checked each bucket for accumulate water volume. It is here that I caught my own error. I had two drip heads in the wrong location – a ½ gallon swapped with a 1 gallon. After correcting the swap, as a final verification of the layout, I then slowly emptied each bucket into its target bonsai pot and verified that the volume of water through the plant and down through the subsequent remaining trees below it would be appropriate.

Number 10) As long as I can't be there to water, I might as well not be there to fertilize either. You can fertilize your trees as you would usually do (diluted into a solution and applied by pouring it into each plant individually), or you can set fertilizer solids on the surface of

the soil and let the rain and watering slowly dissolve it into the pot over time. I have tried different Scott's products and have settled on their 13-13-13 general lawn fertilizer granules at the dosage of ¼ teaspoon per quart of soil volume. I sprinkle the granules around the top of the plant container and the slow drip dissolves them and feeds the plant. I do this about every three to four weeks and so far nothing has died. Most of the plants seem to thrive. (My little forest includes mountain juniper, narrow leaf ficus, dwarf yaupon holly, red oak, elm, bald cypress, and a sago palm.)

The above system has kept me from loosing my trees many times over. This includes a month overseas, weeks out of town, and long holidays in high heat. I warn you – it isn't cheap. Nor is it casual. I started this as a cheap and casual effort and ended up with the above at an outlay of about \$130.00 – all of which is less than the cost of replacing any of the better specimens in the collection. All of my components came from The Home Depot, but Lowes or the Internet is just as likely to provide a source of material.



Forest Planting

I tried using spray heads instead of drip heads (so that I could cool and wash and water all at the same time), but found that wind blew the spray away from the plants, and birds and squirrels loved the bathing opportunities (it didn't bother them at all that they were knocking over my plants). If heat is an issue for your plants, consider a second independent timer setup just for spray cooling. You could then water-to-soak at night or early in the morning and have

an independent timer to issue cooling spray in the heat of the afternoon.

Be ware of timers that measure in total gallons rather than elapsed time. These actually measure water flow (with a little paddle wheel) and are unsuitable for our bonsai application--400 gallons at a time is typically the least they will measure. These timers are intended to water the lawn not a potted plant.

Now if I can figure out a way to automatically wire and trim. . . .

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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.

L.S.B.F Convention *(cont'd from page 43)*

the western world. He started in Italy under Salvatore Liporace and later took a 3-year apprenticeship in Japan under the renowned Masahiko Kimura. His articles and photos of his bonsai work have been published in many periodicals.

Boon Manakitivipart: Boon is from California where he is sensai of Bay Island Bonsai and has a bonsai nursery and teaching studio. He was awarded the Golden State Federations Teacher Development Scholarship and studied in Japan under Yasuo Mitsuya. In April 2000 Boon, the only non-Japanese entered, won the Grand Prize in the Kindai Bonsai Styling Contest.

Suthin Sukosolvisit: Suthin (Su tin) has been doing bonsai since 1970 and is the owner of Royal Bonsai Gardens in Stoughton, MA. He is most admired for his remarkable shohin designs and is a regular teacher at the California Shohin Convention in Santa Nella. He lectures all around the world as well as the biggest convention here in the USA.

Shane Cary: Shane is our home grown star, born in northwestern Louisiana and has been a member of LSBF since about 1990. Shane received the American Bonsai Society Rising Star of Bonsai Award in 1995 for his demo at the LSBF convention. He has been in bonsai full time since 1992. He has worked with Atsushi Fukushima and has won two Chase Rosade Excellence in Design awards.

Mike Hagedorn: Mike has just returned from a three year apprenticeship in Japan with Shinji Suzuki. He is also one of the premier American bonsai potters and has written instructional articles for *Bonsai Today*. In Japan his trees were displayed (and won) in the Talkan-san, Sakufu, and Kokufu master exhibits.

Howard and Sylvia Smith: Howard and Sylvia are the owners of Bonsaismiths, a bonsai nursery in Dallas. They both have completed the three year intensive course with Boon Manakitivipart. Howard received the best in show award at the BIB show in Hayward CA. They have both served and president of the Bonsai Society of Dallas.

John Miller: John has been active in Texas bonsai since 1972. He is one of the founding members of LSBF and has worked with almost all the societies in Texas. Currently he is Director Emeritus of the Dallas club and V-P of LSBF and has a monthly column in three club newsletters.

--John Miller, Dallas-Fort Worth

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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| 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. 6 | Sheryl Manning, Lecture/demo 7 p.m. |
| Oct. 7 | Sheryl Manning Workshops, 9 a.m. & 1 p.m. |
| Oct. 7-8 | Fall Bonsai Show CANCELLED. |
| Oct. 21 | Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park |
| Oct. 28-29 | Kathy Shaner in Austin, Persimmon Hill.
Terry or Sheila Ward, 512-280-5575 or
phbonsai@sbcglobal.net |
| Nov. 1 | Monthly meeting of HBS—Jim,
Demonstration—building shade/greenhouse. |
| Nov. 11 | Saturday Study Group, Cabrera Farm Nursery |
| Dec. 16 | Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park |