



The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

Volume 36 Number 1, Internet Edition

January 2007

Monthly Meeting

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be held Wednesday, January 3, 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 will have an open workshop, and Pete Parker will discuss collecting trees with any members who want to learn more about how to collect.

Club Dig, Saturday, January 13

Our annual HBS dig will be on Saturday, January 13 at the Addicks-Barker Reservoir area from 9:00 - 12:00 on January 21. To reach the meeting point from I-10 West, take the Eldridge exit and go north on Eldridge. Once you cross over the levee and into the reservoir, turn left into the first opening you see (next to a large pond). This is where we found the parsley hawthorns year before last.

See page 3, below, for tips on collecting trees for bonsai. I will also give a presentation at the regular monthly meeting for anyone who wants or needs additional help on collecting trees.

Saturday Study Group, January 20

Our study group will meet Saturday, January 20, 9:00 a.m., at 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 Cutola, Buddy Allen

New Officers; Board Members

At its December meeting, the HBS membership elected the following officers: Donald Green, president; Anthony Cutola, second vice president; JoAnn Droluk, Treasurer; and David Batey and Hurley Johnson, members at large. The officers also serve as board members.

Thanks to these members for agreeing to serve—or continue to serve—the HBS. Thanks also to out-going officers Janet Wilson, Michael McCluskey and Katherine Grazer. The willingness of member such as these to give up their time and energy makes our club possible.

Membership Fees Are Due

Your membership fees are due. 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.

Trip to Central Texas—February 17

Circle your calendars. We are planning a trip to visit vendors in Central Texas on February 17. This will replace the Saturday study group scheduled for that day. More information later.

25th LSBF Convention

by John Miller, Dallas

After a spat of hospitals, accidents, and other misfortunes, things are back on track here in Dallas for the 25th Lone Star Bonsai Federation convention.. The convention information is now on the web. Go to <http://www.bonsaisocietyofdallas.com/> and click on the convention.

The convention is in Dallas at the Holiday Inn Select, 3300 West Mockingbird, which is adjacent to Love Field and has a complimentary shuttle. To get the reduced rate of \$79, you should use the code BSO when making your reservation.

As it is a Silver Anniversary, we hope to make it a very enjoyable and educational event and have invited not just one, but three nationally and internationally known bonsai professionals - Marco Invernizzi, Boon Manakitivipart and Suthin Sukosolvisit. We also will be pleased to host

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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.

Time to get out and check your shovel, loppers, chain saw, and your other favorite collecting paraphernalia. Be ready to join the group when a dig is scheduled. That's the best way to get old material that will do well in your area. If you are lucky you may just find one that nature, machinery, or cows have done most of the styling for you.

Cold weather is here again. Be sure your trees are well watered before going through a deep freeze. They will be losing water to evaporation but will not be able to replenish it if the soil is frozen. Protection from high winds is also necessary so the tops will not dry out. Sunlight is not necessary on deciduous trees when they have lost their leaves. In fact, it can be bad for the tree because it will heat up the trunk and soil, which could make the tree come out of dormancy too early.

I advocate placing the hardy trees on a well-drained ground bed in a protected shady area. Then cover the pots with a shallow layer of mulch. You should know which trees have a greater need for water. If you put these trees together, it will be easier to check your need for watering while they are in the bed.

I would treat the evergreens in a similar manner but put them where they can get some sun.

Personally, I keep my outside-hardy trees on the benches until the temperature goes below 25 degrees. Then I set the deciduous and more tender evergreens on the ground below and between the benches until a temperature in the teens is expected. At that point, I will use old carpet and quilts to cover the benches. For the rest of the winter, I leave them there and lift the sides for air circulation of the deciduous trees and uncover fully the evergreens when the temperature rises. Sounds like a lot of work but I developed a routine that fits me, and it isn't as bad as watering in the summer.

Of course, the tender and semi-tender trees need more protection. The semi-tender (e.g., crape myrtle and pomegranate) get left out for some frost but no freezing. When freezing is expected they get put in a cool area. If they show growth again, they go to the greenhouse. It's not a big greenhouse and doesn't give optimum growing conditions but keeps things from freezing.

Tender or tropical trees that are kept indoors will be using more water to offset the lower humidity. Soil will also be losing water faster through its surface. Be sure to watch the indoor trees for insect problems. Most plant insects love a controlled atmosphere like the indoors. Spider mites seem to get the most attention here because they do great in a low humidity and the lack of foliage spraying. Scale can be an

easily overlooked source of trouble. There are usually more severe problems with plants that have been kept outdoors in summer, then brought in without any treatment. Indoor trees need to be fertilized regularly and will require periodic trimming as they continue to grow through the winter.

Greenhouses are much the same as indoors. However, most greenhouses are kept more humid. The higher humidity is to the liking of aphids and fungal diseases. It may also result in your keeping the soil too moist with associated root problems. Use your standard insect controls that you used last summer. I use my Garrett Juice mixture.

Back to the outdoor trees. Any long warm spells during the month could activate some of the insect problems, but as a rule there are no special needs to look for in January. Spraying with a dormant oil spray will kill adults, nymphs, and eggs of any trying to over-winter on your trees. Some dormant sprays can be used on new growth but better results overall will be obtained if you do it before Valentines Day. A weak lime sulphur dormant spray will also get fungal spores and should be done before February 1 and not at all if any green is showing.

If you have your summer display and growing benches cleared, you could use a stronger solution lime sulphur to disinfect that area, too. The underside of the benches should be sprayed also. Might even eliminate spider mites next year.

Styling can be done at this time but no repotting unless you are going to keep the tree from freezing after that. Repotting initiates new root development which is usually not very hardy.

A better approach would be to study one or two trees thoroughly each day, making notes on what needs to be done. January is an excellent time to start any remodeling projects that may be necessary. While the trees are dormant, you have a better view of the branch structure. Do any need to be moved or removed? Do any coarse branches need to be cut back to a smaller side branch for refinement? Do any long straight branches need wiring to give them motion? Does the tree really need a drastic redesign? You can also trim the twigs back while you have them there.



**PERSIMMON HILL BONSAI
STUDIO & NURSERY**

Terry & Sheila Ward Austin, Texas
phbonsai@sbcglobal.net - By Appointment

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.

- Jan. 3 Monthly meeting of the HBS. Open workshop and Pete Parker on collecting trees for bonsai.
- Jan. 13 Saturday. Club dig at Addicks Reservoir.
- Jan. 20 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.
- Feb. 7 Monthly meeting of the HBS. Mike McCluskey on maples.
- Feb. 17 ~~Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.~~
CANCELLED.
- Feb. 17 Trip to Central Texas vendors
- Mar. 7 Monthly meeting of the HBS. Donald Green, root-over-rock trident maple.
- Mar. 17 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Cabrera Farm Nursery
- Apr. 20-22 25th LSBF State Bonsai Convention, Dallas. Holiday Inn Select, 3300 W. Mockingbird.
- Apr. 21 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.
- May 19 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.
- June 16 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Cabrera Farm Nursery
- June 21-24 American Bonsai Society (ABS) with Virginia Bonsai Society. 2007 Learning Seminars. Virginia Beach at the Cavalier Resort Hotel. For information www.absbonsai.org or email ABS@pfmbonsai.com
- July 4 **NO MONTHLY MEETING.**
- July 21 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.
- Aug. 18 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.
- Sept. 15 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.
- Oct. 13-14 Fall bonsai show, Houston Garden Center, Hermann Park
- Oct. 20 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.
- Nov. 17 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Cabrera Farm Nursery
- Dec. 15 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.

2008

June 19-22 Convention hosted jointly by San Antonio, Austin and the American Bonsai Society at the Tropicana Hotel on the river walk

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For special requests or questions related to *The Bonsai News of Houston*, 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.

LSBF Convention (con'd)

Michael Hagedorn on his American debut after his return from a three-year apprenticeship in Japan under Shinji Suzuki. Local talent also includes Shane Cary, Howard and Sylvia Smith, and John Miller.

We plan to put together a memorable, high quality semi-formal display, including a special bonsai pot section as well as suiseki.

Our bonsai display chairman always gives 110% and puts together a show that not only displays individual trees at their best but also as a whole flows together as one. Our headliners will be judging the trees and awards will be given. Also we want all clubs to participate in this. More on this next month. The three headliners will each be doing a lecture-demo after the evening dinner as was done in early conventions. All the workshops will be excellent opportunities to learn as well as creating good trees. (You should perhaps be informed that there will be no workshops at the 2008 convention. It will consist solely of a seminar type presentation, which will be great but no hands on.)

We are also expecting an unusually broad group of vendors that will tempt you to wreak havoc with your checkbook with fantastic trees (finished, collected, large field grown, etc.), as well as that tool you've been looking for, one of a kind pots, the perfect bonsai workstation turntables, supplies, and of course suiseki.

Collecting in Houston

By Pete Parker

Reprinted from The Bonsai News of Houston, January 2005.

In many of the bonsai books and magazines, they describe collecting bonsai material in terms of long hikes through picturesque mountain scenery on cool, bright, sunny days to find that perfect yamadori pine tree in a rock "bowl" with its root ball ready to be lifted from the earth and carried

gently back to your vehicle. While that's certainly a lovely mental image, it's not Houston.

Collecting here takes two forms, gathering of mature landscape material from homes, businesses, etc. and collecting from "the wild" which usually means a vacant lot or field on the outskirts of town. Both generally involve a certain amount of mud and mosquitoes, but also a healthy helping of camaraderie.

There are three rules you should always follow when collecting:

- **Always get permission from the landowner before going.** In the case of a house or business, you can easily find the owner and ask permission. And, for this type of collecting, you usually propose it when you become aware they are tearing out the landscaping for some reason or the other anyway. For undeveloped land you can often find who owns a particular piece of land by asking around. Government agencies are often quite willing to give you permission to dig trees. For example, we will be collecting in the Addicks-Barker Reservoir area of West Houston. Our permission to do that comes from the Army Corps of Engineers who manage that land. Similarly, in National Forests (not National Parks or Monuments) you can get a permit to collect small numbers of trees simply by visiting with the local forest ranger.
- **Take the time to be safe.** In Houston that means wearing the appropriate clothing (boots, long pants, work gloves and long sleeved shirts) and taking precautions against our known nuisances (mosquito repellent and watching out for snakes in the warm months). It is also a good idea to wear safety glasses or goggles when digging and pruning trees simply because there are a lot of pointed broken branches moving around, sometimes unexpectedly. I decided to make safety glasses a personal policy a couple of years ago after digging a fairly large tree with another HBS member. During that exercise, both of us had near misses and wound up with scratches within a few inches of an eye.
- **Backfill the holes you create when digging a tree.** Take the time to backfill holes so that people and animals that come behind do not step in the hole and get hurt and so the landowner will allow you to return some other time.

December and January tend to be slow months for bonsai in Houston, so those are my preferred months for collecting. It also helps that it's nice and cool while you're outside working your tail off and it allows me to avoid sifting soil components, which is my least favorite bonsai activity. However, you're generally good collecting anytime from when the plants begin to go dormant

(October/November) until it gets really hot the next spring (June).

I use the following checklist when loading up to go collecting:

Collecting Checklist

1. Mattock
2. Spade or shovel
3. Bucket
 - a. Compound loppers
 - b. Folding pruning saw
 - c. Twine
 - d. Contractor quality plastic garbage bags
 - e. Misting bottle – full
 - f. Leather gloves
 - g. Pocket knife
 - h. Root rake
 - i. Safety glasses
 - j. Water/Gatorade
 - k. First aid kit
 - l. Bug spray
4. Method to transport tree back to vehicle

If close to vehicle add:

1. Axe
2. Bow saw
3. Texas tree identification books

For rocky areas add:

1. Pry bar (Yeah, like we really have rocky areas in Houston).

When you get to the designated collection area, take a walk around and look for good material instead of digging up the first tree that looks OK to you. Look for a respectable trunk with taper down low and movement. Scrape away the top layer of soil and locate the first layer of roots. Many trees in Houston develop good surface roots, so you should have 4-6 at roughly the same level spreading out in all directions. Look for varieties that are known to respond well to cultivation as bonsai.

Once you've picked out your target tree, it's time to get it out of the ground. Prune it back to something manageable with your loppers and saw(s) before attempting to dig. This will allow you to get in closer to the tree without getting poked by the branches.

After Pruning, it's time to dig. For trunks up to 2-3 inches in diameter, I just undercut the root ball with a spade. I start 15 inches or so from the trunk and angle the spade down and under the trunk. Go around the trunk repeating this. When you find roots that are too big to cut with the spade, cut them with your loppers. After making a full pass, test to see if the trunk is loose (unlikely, but you can always hope). It usually takes a couple of passes and may require you to wiggle the trunk back and forth to find that uncut root that is holding you back before it comes loose.

For larger trees, start by digging a trench around the base of the tree. I will usually make two passes around a large tree before attempting to undercut the root ball with the

spade or the mattock. As you near the end, use the spade to gently rock the root ball back and forth to locate those hidden roots so you can cut them.

Once the tree is free, lift it out of the hole (be careful of your back). Spend some time now reducing the root ball to a size that can you easily and safely transport back to your vehicle. When you are satisfied with the size of the root ball, put it in one of the garbage bags, mist it to keep the roots moist, and then tie with the twine if the root ball is showing a tendency to fall apart. Now, backfill your hole and haul your find back to the vehicle. Repeat until pleasantly tired.

At this point, I've settled on simply carrying the trees over my shoulder back to my pickup as my method of transport. The club has seen a variety of devices for transport, but the most effective in my mind is a plastic

gallon drum which was cut in half and had a couple of pulling ropes attached to it. It slides easily across essentially all terrain, and will hold most any tree you would care to dig along with your tools so you only need to make one trip.

When you arrive home, take a chopstick and/or a hose and bare root your find. Prune the roots to fit the training pot you are using and seal the cuts on the roots. Plant it in a soil mix appropriate for the species and use twine or wire to stabilize the tree if it is unstable in the pot. Water thoroughly and put the tree in a shady area for a couple of weeks. Water only if needed during this time.

After the first few weeks, go ahead and move the tree to an appropriate location for the species and begin treating as you would one of your established trees.
