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# The Bonsai News of Houston

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

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Volume 36 Number 12, Internet Edition

December 2007

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### Monthly Meeting

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be held Wednesday, December 5, at 7:30 p.m. at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, located at 1500 Hermann Drive.

**Election of Officers and Delegates.** At the December meeting we will elect officers for 2008. Under our bylaws, no nominations can be accepted at the December meeting. Officers also serve as directors.

**Pot Luck Supper and Gift Exchange.** The December program will be our annual potluck dinner and gift exchange. This meeting is one of the most entertaining club events of the entire year. The gift exchange rules are explained on page 68, below.

Before the gift exchange, we will have a covered dish supper. HBS will provide the meat, drinks and plates, napkins, forks, knives and such. Each member will bring a side dish, bread or a dessert.

### Saturday Study Group

Our study group will meet Saturday, December 15, at 9 a.m. at Bayland Center in Bayland Park, 6400 Bissonet (Bissonet at Hillcroft--south of 59 and east of Fondren). Everyone is welcome-- beginners and seasoned veterans alike.

### Membership Fees Are Due in January

Membership fees are due. Beat the rush. Pay now. Still the same low price—unaffected by inflation or the skyrocketing price of oil—just \$25 for an individual, \$35 for a family. A bargain at twice the price. We accept checks, money orders, and cold cash. Membership Form attached at the end of this newsletter.

### Program Suggestions for 2008?

I am setting up the program schedule for next year. Are there any specific programs you would be interested in having in 2008? So far I have suggestions of azaleas, phoenix grafts, raft style workshop, and preparing trees for display. If any of these would interest you—or NOT interest you--let me know. Is there a program you would like to present? Send comments to [hurley@all-tex.net](mailto:hurley@all-tex.net) or talk with me at the December meeting.

### Pattern for Yvonne's Soil Scoop

Copies of the pattern for Yvonne Padilla's "double holed soil scoop" will be available at the December meeting. The scoop has a small hole at the bottom which allows you to put soil in the tight spaces in a saikei or other group planting.

### \$1,800 Tool Set To Be Ruffled

The American Bonsai Society (ABS) is raffling a 17-piece set of Masakuni tools, series 8000, with a silver-color finish and in a denim roll case. The set, worth an estimated \$1,800, was donated by Pedro Morales of Puerto Rico. Proceeds will be used as seed money for the ABS-LSBF convention in 2008. Tickets, which cost \$10 each, 3 for \$20, or 15 for \$100, will be available at the December meeting.

*cont'd next page.*

Because the drawing will be held on January 10, we won't be able to sell tickets at the January meeting; but you can also purchase tickets online at the ABS web site, <http://www.absbonsai.org/>. Just look for "Special Notices" and click on "Raffle – Masakuni Tool Set".

### Update on the 2008 Convention

We have a couple of updates on the ABS-LSBF convention, June 19-22.

**Workshops? Yes.** Initial reports that there would be no workshops at the convention have proven incorrect. There will be workshops; however, the format will be different from that of the usual LSBF convention. Each participant will attend a full day class with a lecture-demonstration in the morning and a related workshop in the afternoon. For details, see the convention web site <http://absbonsai.org/seminars/ABS2008/main2008.html>.

**ABS membership? No.** The ABS has waived the requirement that attendees belong to the ABS to register for the convention. You do not have to join ABS to attend the convention.

**But ABS Membership at Half Price.** The HBS, as a club, belongs to ABS and strongly encourages its members to join ABS individually. As an incentive, Ron Smith will pay one-half the \$40 annual membership fee for all HBS members who join ABS in the next three months. That means **you get a full year's membership in ABS-- including its magazine, *Bonsai*—for only \$20.**

Our sincere thanks go to **Ron Smith**, long-time HBS member, member of the ABS board of directors, owner-operator of Ancient Bonsai Nursery in Santa Fe, and a person who is dedicated to bonsai art.

### Certificates of Appreciation

HBS will recognize several members for outstanding service to the organization at the annual Christmas dinner. A Certificate of Appreciation and a \$50 gift card will be presented to:

**Phillip Drilling**—who transports props to and from our bonsai shows, assists in show setup, serves as vendor at the shows, serves on the publicity committee, and hosts study groups at his Cabrera Farms Nursery in Sugar Land.

**C. J. Everson**—who heads the refreshment committee and is often the only person to arrange for and present refreshments at our monthly club

meetings. For three years, she has traveled from Katy to arrange our refreshments.

**Dolores Plaisted**—who has served as editor of our newsletter for many years. She continues to publish a high quality newsletter that has received state-wide recognition.

**Gary Teeter**—who is our Web Master. He maintains and updates our web site, making it an effective means for informing and communicating with the general public as well as club members.

### Happy Holidays from The Texas State Bonsai Exhibit

As you make out your giving list this year, please remember The Texas State Bonsai Exhibit. Your gift to TTSBE is your gift to preserving Texas bonsai for generations to come. Don't forget, there is still time to join the Pioneer Society and be among the special group who help develop the new site.

The following nominees were elected to the board of directors on the evening of November 14. They will take office January 1, 2008.

Please join me in wishing them the best of luck and our support in the New Year.

This will be my last article to you as Chairman of The Texas State Bonsai Society. I am retiring from the Board at the end of this year. Please accept my thanks to each of you for the many courtesies you extended to me during my term. The TTSBE has just been through a very exciting year and you have been a part of it.



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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 program last month fleshed out words with actual hands-on application with demos on maple, elm, pine, and juniper. You got to see what the words meant to do. An excellent winter program.

The needle plucking on pines is not such a mysterious operation. It closely follows what happens with deciduous trees. All evergreens replace their foliage on a regular basis just as the deciduous trees do. Some, like the live oaks, do it just as the new foliage is coming out; others, on a longer schedule. The needles of the pine do almost all their work the first year but hang on for a year or two longer. Removing the older needles accomplishes a couple of things. First, it improves the overall look of the tree by getting rid of the ratty fading foliage. More important, it opens the interior of the tree to the sunlight which stimulates growth of dormant buds. These dormant buds are what you need to replace branches that are too large or too long later on.

After opening up the pine, late fall or early winter is the proper time to do pruning and/or styling. That also applies to junipers. I prefer to do broadleaf evergreens closer to their growing season.

Work on the deciduous trees is much easier when they are devoid of leaves. You can readily see crossing branches, branches that have gotten too heavy, vertical growing twigs, and even if the tree really needs a different style. There will be no sap flow to contend with.

Not too much has to be done outside right now. That is, if you prepared last month and you have no tropicals inside to care for. The big thing is to know what temperatures your trees can withstand and to remember that water is important in the winter time.

Because the trees are not using as much water during dormancy, it is easy to overlook checking on them. The low humidity usually found during winter helps dry the soil. Winter sun can be pretty hot and if it shines directly on the pot it will hasten the drying process. Winter will usually also be windier. Therefore, however you bed down the trees, you need to check the dryness often. The same trees that needed more water last summer will also need to be checked more often during the winter. I think that more trees are lost during the winter to having the soil dry out than from the actual cold.

Deciduous trees should not be placed where they receive winter sun. After a period of dormancy, the heating of the tree could cause it to break dormancy prematurely. If that happened you would need to keep it above freezing the rest of the winter. After they go dormant they have no need for any sunshine.

Evergreen types especially and deciduous trees to a lesser extent should not have the root ball subjected to alternate freezing and thawing. That process tends to tear and damage the roots. Placing the trees on the ground and using a mulch will minimize the problem.

Plants have different degrees of hardiness for their top growth and their roots because the ground acts as large reservoir of heat; and, here in Texas, the soil seldom freezes more than an inch or two down. Therefore, plants like the pomegranate and crepe myrtle which are at the northern extent of their range will not be hardy to freezing in pots. Any plant that you are unsure of should be protected from freezing. This can be a problem because if they are not kept cool after they go dormant they will break dormancy and start to grow too soon. Growing without sufficient light will cause long spindly growth which you cannot control. My best solution for this when I lived in town was to have a long platform with two wheels that I pulled into the garage on nights where freezing was forecast and kept outside at all other times.

The cold weather will keep any insect problems under control outside. In winter you should use a dormant oil spray to kill over-wintering insects and their eggs. You can also use lime-sulfur in a dormant spray solution which will also help with fungal problems. Be sure to follow the label directions when mixing and using the lime sulfur. It can be dangerous stuff if misused. You should watch for damage from rodent types--rabbits, squirrels, and rats. They will prune branches and strip bark quickly.

Bonsai in greenhouses or indoor bonsai will need to be watched for the normal indoor problems. Low humidity, spider mites and scales are the biggest problems here. Aphids can also show up. Try to keep the humidity up by placing your trees on a humidity tray, but do not let the pot touch the water. That can give you some soil problems, root rot or some other fungal disease. I use the same insect controls in the greenhouse that I use outside all year.

You can take advantage of the winter slowdown by getting pots ready for spring, cleaning and sharpening your tools, studying what changes you would like to make on your trees and so forth.

### *From the Bonsai Muse*

*"Bonsai Muse" is the pen name of a long-time HBS member.*

Well, as I sat in my back yard thinking about my trees, and how much work I have to do, I began day dreaming about an article I read recently. The article was about the "soul of a bonsai."

We have studied the rules that are supposed to produce a bonsai and we have applied these techniques to the bonsai. Let me say, that for my part, I sometimes fall way short of my mental image for the tree's design when I look at the tree staring back at me.

I have seen many examples where someone has applied all the rules with excellent results; these people are truly talented. They have a special eye, and I marvel at their ability. Occasionally, these same people will bring in a collected tree and their talent is still clearly evident.

Although, sometimes there is something is different! And the article I read brought the difference into focus for me. The collected tree shows its "soul." I know no other way to describe what I see at that moment. The tree's nebari, trunk and branches' twigging may be slightly out of place from what the "rules" prescribe, but what I see is magic.

The artist has worked the tree as best he could, although branches might not have bent as easily as fifty years ago. The tree has a presence—a history. Careful study will allow a glimpse into this history. Trees which are developed for bonsai from a seedling have a beauty that cannot be denied. Many people have played a part in the history of that tree by trimming branches, repotting, and shaping the tree with "the rules" as a guide. Think of all the people that have passed through this tree's life; some will have been good care takers—some will have been true artists. If the tree is old enough and has been cared for well—its soul will be there. You just have to look for it.

The "soul of a bonsai" is a concept I thought of before I read this article; I'd never put a name to what I was seeing in my trees. Look at your trees— think about where they have come from. This long, studied contemplation of your tree will make you a better designer and just possibly may give you a glimpse into the soul of your tree.

P.S.

Nov. 4, 2007—As I walk out my door into my backyard, it's early and I am greeted by B.G. (I will have to write later and tell you about B.G.) and a sound which brought not only joy to my heart but

also a flood of childhood memories. As I craned my head skyward—there they are! The geese are flying! They are about 1000 feet above me, in that unmistakable wedge, making their wonderful little chatter. Talking to one another, "Follow me I know where I am going." I gave them loud applause and an, "Atta boy" from my back yard. I struggle for the words to convey my feelings about this annual rite—but alas I fall short. As I sit in my backyard contemplating my trees - that's all for now.

--BM

### 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.*

Dec. 5 Monthly meeting of HBS, election of officers-directors, holiday party—potluck supper, gift exchange.

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. For info <http://absbonsai.org/seminars/ABS2008/main2008.html>.

#### 2009

State LSBF bonsai convention in Houston.

July 7-13 6<sup>th</sup> World Bonsai Convention, San Juan, Puerto Rico,

Condado Plaza Hotel & Casino  
[www.worldbonsaiconvention2009.com](http://www.worldbonsaiconvention2009.com)

# 石头

*Seki Bonsai*

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### Gift Exchange Rules

The rules for the HBS holiday party gift exchange are:

1. Everyone wraps and brings a gift with a value of about \$25, not necessarily bonsai related.
2. Everyone draws a number.
3. The person with #1 ("Alphie") picks a gift.
4. The second person ("Betty") can either pick a new gift or take Alphie's gift.
5. The third person ("Garret") can either pick a new gift or take Alphie's or Betty's gift. A person whose gift was taken either picks a new gift or takes someone else's gift (but not the gift just taken from him).
6. And so on.
7. Once a gift has been taken two times, it cannot be taken again. It is "frozen."

After everyone has a gift, the person with #1 gets to pick from all other gifts, EVEN the "frozen" gifts, because he or she did not have that choice in the beginning. If the person with #1 takes a gift, they simply swap with the person they are stealing from.



**Buttonwood, Fall Show 2007 by EB**

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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.

Space for advertising in *The Bonsai News of Houston* can be requested by contacting the editor. Advertising rates for a business-card-sized ad (approx. 3 1/2" x 2") are \$6 per month, \$30 for 6 months and \$50 per year (12 issues). A full-page ad is \$25 per month. Rates are subject to change without notice. 3 1/2" x 2" classified ads are run free of charge for one month once per 12-month period, for noncommercial members.