



The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

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May 2007

Monthly Meeting

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be held Wednesday, May 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 May and June programs will be a two-month set of workshops on cascade style natal plums. For those of you not familiar with natal plums, they are a common landscaping shrub in the southern Gulf Coast of Texas. They have a natural growth habit that makes them a favored subject for cascade and semi-cascade bonsai in our climate. The plants produce fragrant white flowers and 1-2" plums, and the leaves reduce nicely under bonsai culture. The workshop material is 3-gallon nursery stock that was purchased last fall and has been pruned once. As an added twist, we are asking the workshop leaders to work with each individual to produce a sketch of the future bonsai. Cost of the workshop will be \$10, so pack up your tools and wire and join the fun.

—Pete Parker

Study Group, Saturday, May 19

Our study group will meet Saturday, May 19, 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.

Roy Nagatoshi Visit, June 8 and 9

Roy Nagatoshi was born in the United States but spent his early years in Japan. He returned to the United States in 1957 as he was about to enter high school. He learned bonsai initially at the side of his father, Shigeru, and later studied under John Naka. His father opened Fuji Bonsai Nursery in Sylmar, California in 1965 and Roy and Shigeru teach classes there to this day.

Roy received a B.S. degree in ornamental horticulture from California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) in 1975. He has been teaching bonsai since 1976 and has been

featured by most of the major bonsai organizations in the U.S. as well as at any number of international events. He is a past president of the California Bonsai Society and developed the bonsai for the movie, Karate Kid III.

Roy will be doing a lecture/demonstration on Friday, June 8, at 7:00 at the Garden Center in Hermann Park. The entrance fee is \$5, and the demonstration tree will be raffled off at the end of the demonstration.

On Saturday, June 9, Roy will lead two, ½ day workshops in the Azalea Room of the Garden Center in Hermann Park. The first workshop will run from 9:00 – 12:00 and the second from 1:00 – 4:00. These are bring-your-own-tree workshops and cost \$30 apiece. Roy has experience with a wide variety of tree species, so any good bonsai material is appropriate.

—Pete Parker

San Antonio, April 27-28

If you will be in San Antonio for Fiesta on April 27 or 28, check out The Texas State Bonsai Exhibit's *bier garden* in the Sculptural Designs Atelier of San Antonio, located on the parade route of two fiesta parades. TTSBE is selling beer to raise funds for the exhibit. For information, contact: Donna Dobberfuh, two2views@yahoo.com.

Houston, April 28-29

If you will be in Houston, April 28 or 29, check out the bonsai exhibit given by the Chinese Bonsai Society at 10303 West Office Drive, just inside Beltway 8 between West Park Dr. and Harwin, from 10-5 Saturday and 10 -2 Sunday.

Correction

In the article, "Update: The Texas State Bonsai Exhibit," in the April issue of *The Bonsai News of Houston*, we erroneously reported that Ken Credeur is an architect. Ken is currently a project designer in an architectural firm in Houston and is working toward certification as an architect. We regret the error.

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 is reprinted from the May 2006 issue of The Bonsai News of Houston.

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 cut across the leaf about 1/16 inch from the twig if leaves are attached directly 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 through 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 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 through 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.

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.

- Apr. 27-28 TTSBE fund raiser in San Antonio.
- Apr. 28-29 Bonsai exhibit, Chinese Bonsai society, 10303 West Office Drive
- May 2 Monthly meeting of HBS, cascade Natal plum I
- May 19 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.
- June 6 Monthly meeting of HBS, cascade Natal plum II
- 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
- June 23 SSOT. Follow-up workshop: "Developing Exhibit Quality Shohin Bonsai." 10:30, Persimmon Hill, Austin, Terry or Sheila Ward, 512-280-5575 or texshohin@sbcglobal.net
- July 4 **NO MONTHLY MEETING.**
- July 21 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.
- Aug. 1 Monthly meeting of HBS, Ficus Fair
- Aug. 18 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.
- Sept. 5 Monthly meeting of HBS, Annual Auction
- Sept. 15 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.
- Sept. 15 SSOT, business meeting and "Pot Making Workshop for Accent Plants and Kusamono," Sheila Ward and Bob Swindle.
- Oct. 3 Monthly meeting of HBS, shohin bonsai, Terry Ward
- Oct. 13-14 Fall bonsai show, Houston Garden Center, Hermann Park
- Oct. 20 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.
- Nov. 7 Monthly meeting of HBS, Open workshop
- 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

2009

State LSBF bonsai convention in Houston.

From the LSBF-Dallas Convention

This was the BEST state convention I have attended since 1988 which was BCI (Bonsai Clubs International) in San Antonio--four of the best headliners in the USA.

My thanks go out to George Straw, John Miller,

Howard Smith and, last but not least, Sylvia Smith who I'm sure went above and beyond the call of duty to make it all happen.

Thanks for a great convention.

--Ron Smith, HBS

Did You Know??

by Marty Klajnowski

Reprinted from the June 2003 issue of Snips 'N Clips, the newsletter of the San Antonio Bonsai Society, by permission of the author.

Marty is an active member of the San Antonio Bonsai Society and a frequent contributor to Snips 'N Clips.

One of the many misnomers, in nature, is the name we give to the mountain laurel. This bush/tree is a member of the legume (bean) family and not the laurel family. Its binomial and its scientific name is *Sophora secundiflora*.

Many of us appreciate this hardy, native evergreen with its clusters of usually lavender and occasionally white flowers. The lovely spring flowers are very aromatic, reminiscent of "grape Kool-Aid," and are attractive to bees and wasps.

The Texas mountain laurel has other colorful names such as mescal bean, coral bean, big drunk bean and frijollito. Although lovely in appearance, it can be deadly. The hard, red seeds ground into powder and mixed with mescal liquor were used by ancient native Texans to induce visions in ritual ceremonies, as far back as 800 b.c. These same red seeds were also used as trade items and worn as amulets with supposed magical properties. It is said the leader of the Native American Church wears a laurel bean necklace as a symbol of authority.

Regarding mountain laurel as bonsai, until a few years ago those planted from seed or collected could only be "up-potted" and the roots never disturbed. Thus as the tree grew the pot holding it could only get larger and larger so its bonsai life was short lived because of its overall size. Now with the advent of "tissue culture," laurels can be grown and handled as other bonsai.¹

I grew a tissue culture laurel for eight years into a windswept bonsai style and then gave it as a gift to a friend. I'm happy to report the tree continues to thrive. On the funny side, a few years ago, during the Christmas holidays, I was driving in the neighborhood, and noted this lovely, interesting bush, with elongated, brilliant red seedpods. I stopped and got out of the car to examine this beauty only to find that the owner had hand-painted each laurel seed pod red as a Christmas decoration.

¹"Tissue culture" refers to the micropropagation of plants, i.e., the cloning of plants from small pieces of tissue grown in a sterile culture. See <http://www.accessexcellence.org/LC/ST/st2bgplant.html>, <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/tisscult/pltissue/pltissue.html>, or do an Internet search using "plant tissue culture." -ed.

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For special requests or questions related to *The Bonsai News of Houston*, contact the Editor, Dolores Plaisted, Phone 281-338-5010, e-mail bonsainewshouston@yahoo.com or 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.

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