



The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

Volume 36 Number 7, Internet Edition

July 2007

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.

- 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. 10:30 Persimmon Hill, Austin, Terry or Sheila Ward, texshohin@sbcglobal.net or 512-280-5575.
- 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, Nomination of officers-directors, Open workshop
- Nov. 17 Saturday Study Group, 9 a.m., Cabrera Farm Nursery
- 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
- 2009**
State LSBF bonsai convention in Houston.

No Monthly Meeting in July

This year, the July meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) falls on July Fourth, so we will have no meeting in July.

Have a great Independence Day!

Study Group, Saturday, July 21

Our study group will meet Saturday, July 21, 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. It's a great time to work on your tropicals.

Your Help Needed

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department has removed the drink machine from the garden center in Hermann Park. It might help to get a replacement machine if HBS members called the Parks Director and requested a replacement. Call Joe Turner, Director of Parks, 713-845-1000.



**PERSIMMON HILL BONSAI
STUDIO & NURSERY**

Terry & Sheila Ward Austin, Texas
512-280-5575 - phbonsai@sbcglobal.net - By Appointment

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.

What a difference a year can make. This time last year was hot (15 days over 97) and dry. This year only one day pushed to 97 and I haven't watered in over a week. Of course I check each tree every day to be sure they are not shedding the water outside the pot. Trees seem to love it. My semi-tropical live oaks are growing fast, need to be clipped every couple days. Of course the elms do better in cooler weather.

When you repotted your trees in the legume family, Texas ebony is one, did you see nodules on the roots and thought they were root knot nematodes? Do not remove those nodules. Legumes, which include beans and alfalfa among others, have the ability to take nitrogen from the air and fix it for use in the soil. These nodules are the result so are perfectly normal and natural. Leave them alone.

The temperate, humid conditions may mean that the plants can keep up with damage done by certain insects so that you do not see the stress. You should check them to see if there may be scale on the twigs and leaf stalks or along the leaf center rib. Spider mites are almost certain to be developing. You should treat for problems before the weather decides to turn dry and hot.

When checking the results on your plants after spraying, remember that the spray usually will not remove the "evidence" of problems. The webs will still be there after the mites are killed. The shells of the scale will be attached to the leaf or stem. These will have to be removed by hand, by a jet of water, or some other way. A soft toothbrush works good on the scale shells.

A word of caution: some sprays will damage plants in hot weather and others will damage tender new growth. Always read your label.

Check your water practices. I prefer to water heavily in the evening (in normal weather). That gives the plant all night to renew itself without losing most of its water to evaporation. Then in the early morning, they get a quick foliage spray, wetting the surface of the soil which may have dried out overnight. This was what I did while working since the morning task only took 10 minutes or so. Now I still prefer to water heavily in the evening but the morning is more done more slowly and trees given a little more individual attention as some of them do not need water in the soil. Be sure to do the double watering bit--water thoroughly and then after a few minutes water again so that the dry soil particles will get moistened.

When humidity is low, I mist junipers in the evening. I believe the story that in the wild junipers open their stomata in the cool of the evening absorbing any dew that may occur and close in the heat of the day to conserve moisture. The other species may get a foliage spray in the morning.

Many of our bonsai would do just fine in full sun all summer long. However none of them like their feet scorched which is what happens when the sun heats the pot (and thereby the soil) to temperatures over 120 degrees. Dappled shade would do nicely because the sun will not shine on one spot very long, but partial shade (such as morning sun and afternoon shade) will not suffice when morning sun is as hot as it is in Texas. When you put some kind of sun screen on, remember to shade the sides of the pot as well as the soil. A light mulch on top of the soil will work great. Covering the pot with foil or putting it in a box made to fit will help, but there should be room for air to flow around it. Old rags work fine also if they do not blow off. Try to find a cover that will let you monitor watering easily.

When the trees are in stress because of the heat, they are particularly sensitive to insect problems. The organic people say that bugs are attracted to plants that are in stress and will head there first. That may be true or it maybe that the healthy plants' natural defenses keep bugs in check and you see the bugs on the stressed tree first. Whatever, watch for any signs of damage and treat for them. Sometimes the tree is almost dead before you notice the damage (e.g., spider mite damage on junipers). That is why I like the organic approach of using Garrett Juice regularly. It is not only a foliar feed but will kill the spider mites, scale and most other small insects including bagworms.

The humidity in summer varies quite a bit but when it sticks around for a few days look for fungal problems to appear, mildew being the most prevalent. Foliage spraying in the morning will not be a problem because it dries pretty quickly. Treat with potassium carbonate which you can find at any nursery with a decent organic section. There are several chemical sprays available, too.

As a rule we do not feed our trees enough. Since the soil mix we use has very little nutrient value, we must make up with our fertilizer practice. The best "rule" I have heard was given at the Ft Worth June program by Matt Ouwinga who primarily grows trident maples. Matt's rule:

- A. Apply organic fertilizer balls each 6 weeks. Discard old balls.
- B. Apply fish emulsion every two weeks.
- C. Apply liquid plant food on alternate weeks

石头

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Roy Nagatoshi on Shimpaku Juniper

On Friday evening, June 8, Roy Nagatoshi, from Sylmar, California, gave a lecture-demonstration for the Houston Bonsai Society. The workshop tree was a sargentii juniper, *Juniperus chinensis 'sargentii,'* called shimpaku juniper in Japan. “The shimpaku juniper is one of my favorite trees,” Roy said. “Once a shimpaku is styled, you can easily maintain its beautiful shape.”

Roy noted that the workshop tree was shedding needles rather badly. “This is a normal process,” he said. All junipers shed once a year and then put on new growth. Shedding is nature’s way of renewing foliage.

In the Houston area with its mild winters, any time of year is ok for working on shimpaku. In areas with cold winters, you have to be more careful.

As for pests, spider mites are a problem for all junipers. “Every juniper tree must have a spider mite factory!” If a tree has spider mites, the foliage turns gray or dull green. To test for the mites, put a sheet of white paper under the branch and tap or shake the branch hard enough to knock spider mites on the paper. The spider mites will appear as tiny, black moving dots. They are so small, they are difficult to see. If you squash them, they will leave a mark on the paper.

It’s important to treat spider mites right away. They can spread over the whole tree in one week. Treat them with an oil based solution such as, UltraFine or Ortho Volck Oil. Roy mixes the oil with Malathion. Read the directions carefully because dormant oils cannot be used in warm or hot weather. Saturate the tree, from both the top of the branches and the underside of the branches. You must kill the eggs, the larva and the adults.

Another pest is the juniper girdler, a moth, therefore nocturnal. They love junipers. At night the mother finds the densest area of the tree and lays eggs. When the larva hatches, it eats the bark and girdles the branch. The branch dies. They are active in late spring.

“Because this tree looks young—eight to ten years old—but has a large trunk, it was probably field grown,” said Roy.



Shimpaku Juniper Before Styling

To test the rootage, shake the tree in its nursery container. If it is wobbly, it probably has poor rootage. Junipers seldom have striking rootage but they should have strong roots.

Check the branches on the material. Does the tree have thin branches? Every component of the tree should be in proportion. Sometimes you see material with large branches, sometimes almost as thick as the trunk itself. If the material has no small branches, look for other material. This tree has plenty of small branches that can be used.

“The taper of the trunk is important. This tree does not have dramatic taper, but it has nice, gradual taper. Because of this gradual taper, I will style it as a type of bun jin.”

First, Roy removed the unnecessary branches. Rather than cut the branches off, he broke them. For large branches, he first made a cut on the top of the branch with root cutters. Then he broke the branch. As it broke, he pulled it down so that the bark peeled down the trunk, leaving a natural look.



Roy Nagatoshi Working on the Tree

In answer to a question, Roy said that jin and shari are appropriate on junipers, pines, conifers even podocarpus, olives, most hard wood trees and any material with hard wood or resin to keep the wood from rotting.

Next Roy cleaned up the foliage on the juniper. “On strong branches,” Roy said, “remove all the foliage from the underside of the branch, leaving only the side and top growth. But on weak branches, rip off all dark, discolored foliage and all weak foliage.” Rip it back toward the trunk,

not toward the growing tip of the branch. Rip it; don't cut it unless it's too big to rip. By ripping it, you remove the "bump" where the foliage emerges. By removing this weak, dying foliage, you strengthen the healthy growth on the branch.

In answer to a question, Roy said that, once the weak foliage, which Roy calls "garbage," is removed and light can get into the tree, you will frequently get back budding.

Watch for the development of suckers, aggressive, fast-growing branches. These often emerge from the junction of two branches. Cut them right away unless you plan to use them to replace an existing branch. Suckers rob the surrounding branches of vigor.

In the workshop Saturday morning, a number of participants had junipers. Roy elaborated on the notion of "cleaning up the garbage." For most junipers, the only way to clean up the foliage is to pull it by hand. Some books tell you to fan out the foliage and pull the tips. This is not a good thing to do. For most junipers, use the method described at the lecture demo for the shimpaku, rip off all weak, grey foliage. Pull it back toward the trunk. Only cut the weak foliage if it's too big to rip off. Then, if necessary, pinch out the strong, growing tips that remain on the branch.

An exception is the San Jose juniper, *J. chinensis* 'San Jose.' Roy said that, to get compact growth on San Jose junipers, you MUST shear it. That is the only way. Not only must it be sheared, but all the foliage on every branch must be sheared. He proceeded to demonstrate, cutting all the foliage on every branch leaving only two or three sets of green needles on each piece of foliage and pulling dead foliage as he went. You must NOT shear procumbens or sargentii Roy stressed again. They must be plucked by hand.

Returning to Friday night's lecture demo, Roy said to remove any bark you want to remove now. At this time of year, lots of sap is moving. If you wait until winter, it will be almost impossible to remove the bark on jin and shari.

This tree is female. We can tell because it has berries, Roy noted. Generally female junipers have better quality foliage than males.

Always wire the heaviest branches first, then the smaller and smaller. Wire the smallest last. "I said this at Brussel's and I say it at every club I visit. Most of you use wire that is too small to for successful wiring." You must use a wire big enough to do the job.

Roy finished the tree and observed that there would probably be some discussion of this tree as bun jin.

In answer to a question regarding the large, crossing branch, Roy said that this is an example of ochi-eda, a broken or fallen branch. Ochi-eda can be used for balance or certain other effects.

Roy said to place this tree in full sun right away. In answer to a question, he suggested a small pot because of the small trunk (two inches or less in diameter), perhaps in a drum style.

John Denton won the raffle. Congratulations, John!



Finished Shimpaku: Above: Front View. Below: Side View



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