



The Bonsai News of Houston

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

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October 2008

Monthly Meeting— Forest Plantings

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be Wednesday, October 1, at 7:30 p.m. at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, located at 1500 Hermann Drive. Refreshments will be served at 7:00.

Hurricane Ike notwithstanding, our monthly meeting will go on as usual.

Yvonne Padilla with the Corpus Christi Bonsai Club will give a lecture-demonstration on forest plantings. Yvonne's presentations are always big hits. Her forest will be raffled.

--Hurley Johnson

Saturday Study Group October 18

Our study group meet will meet Saturday, October 18, 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. We all have a good time.

Free Kathy Shaner Workshop, Oct. 6

The Texas State Bonsai Exhibit (TTSBE) is sponsoring a free workshop with Kathy Shaner on October 6. Each person who has signed up to be a Foster Care Parent for one of the exhibit's trees-in-training is eligible for the free workshop specifically for his or her tree. Limit, eight participants.

Trees are still available for adoption, and open places remain in Kathy's workshop.

Fall Show, October 11-12

The HBS fall show will be held Saturday and Sunday, October 11 and 12 in the Houston Garden

Center in Hermann Park. Show times will be 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, and 10:00 am. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday.

We need more members to place trees in the exhibit. The sign-up sheets will be circulated at our October club meeting. We also still need volunteers to work at the exhibit. Working at the exhibit is always a lot of fun. It's an opportunity to enjoy the camaraderie of bonsai enthusiasts.

Set-up time will be Friday, October 10, at 6:00 p.m. We would like to ask all members to please leave their trees on exhibit until at least 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. Take-down will begin at 4:30 Sunday.

--Anthony Cutola

Michael Hagedorn's Visit Cancelled

Because of the aftermath of hurricane Ike, Michael Hagedorn's lecture and workshops, scheduled for September 19 and 20, were cancelled.

--Buddy Allen



**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.

A strange thing about my oaks this year. Last April they did their spring thing and grew a set of new leaves. Then they stopped growing. There was no growth until the middle of August. Now they are all growing again except the post oaks. It did not matter if I had repotted or not, they all did the same. I guess I will just have to watch for any early frosts. On another strange happening note, several of my gardening friends who normally have big tomato crops said that they (like me) had an extremely light fruit set this year.

Anyhow, now is the time to start your trees toward their winter siesta. If you wait until the temperature drops, you get too rushed and omit some of the little housekeeping duties.

When the leaves start turning the sap has quit for the year and you may check the branches and twigs to see if any need to be trimmed. Cutting back any protruding branches will keep them from snagging and possibly breaking other trees when you put them down. Don't cut the buds off the spring flowering plants unless absolutely necessary if you want flowers next spring.

If you have not checked your wiring yet this fall, you had better look at it also. The fall growth can make the tree swell up and get bad wire marks in a hurry. If the tree or limbs do not stay where you want them, then rewire, placing the new wire in a slightly different path or possibly wrap in the opposite direction.

Kathy Shaner (and Sylvia says it, too) has recommended that you remove the top 1/4 to 1/2 inch of soil and replace it with fresh soil. This will help eliminate weed seed that has blown in and may make watering easier.

Do you need to change the pot? Making notes at this time will give you 3-4 months to find the proper pot.

Winter quarters: Here in Texas more trees are lost in the winter due to drying out than to the cold. Of course that doesn't mean for you to leave the tropicals out or to let the roots freeze on southern trees like the crape myrtle. Even in a greenhouse or sunny window, the soil can dry out amazingly fast. The wind in winter has amazing drying powers, too. So while protecting the roots, be sure to give it a

wind screen but make sure that you can check the soil for watering needs. It helps here if you know which particular plants dry out faster and situate them together. Winter kill usually comes because the soil has frozen and the sun and/or wind is removing water from the tops. The roots cannot obtain water to replenish the loss and the top desiccates to the point of death.

For the beginners, plants like the cedar elm, oak, and maple that are hardy much further north can be set on a clean gravel bed. They do not need any sunlight until spring. When the real cold (26 degrees or lower) gets here, cover the pots with a fairly loose mulch to help retain the ground heat. Plants that grow south of Dallas, for example, crape myrtle, pyracantha, some azaleas, need to have root protection. I like to let them get frostbit but bring them in before freezing. Of course the tropicals need to be babied.

All this is basically talking about the broadleaf deciduous trees. Evergreens do not go fully dormant in winter. Some broadleaf types like boxwoods slow way down but still need sunlight. These broadleaf ones need the basic winter protection of deciduous trees but have a higher water and sunlight need.

Cut back on the watering now that the temperature is a little lower, but do not allow the trees to dry out. Trees require less water during the shorter days and lower temperatures. However you need to remember that the wind can still stress the trees and dry out the soil so water by checking the soil regularly and not following a set schedule.

Insects will continue to be present. Cooler (but not cold) days mean a resurgence of the aphids. Mites will also still be around. Scale also can be a problem. Evergreens and any deciduous trees whose foliage turns can be treated with an horticultural oil which will kill the adults and also wipe out the eggs and over-wintering pupae. Be sure to cover all the cracks in the bark to get to the eggs. The organic spray (one tablespoon each liquid kelp, fish emulsion, apple cider vinegar, and molasses in one gallon of water) will work on evergreens and will also give them some nutrients.

Feeding of deciduous trees should be discontinued for the winter. Evergreens and conifers will benefit from a low nitrogen feeding. One such mix might be 60% cottonseed meal and 40% bone meal. Being organic, this will breakdown into nutrients more slowly as the season gets cooler and the trees activity slows also. The organic spray given above can be used as a soil drench. Kelp is an

excellent source of the essential minor elements needed by plants.

As the trees lose their foliage, you can study their trunk lines and branch structure. Any faulty styling and the general design features can be observed more easily and corrections planned. Look for crossing branches. Cut vertical growing twigs both those growing up and those growing down. Reduce long internodes by cutting back and growing new extensions. Clean out heavy branch clusters that make the tree look too dense. Be particularly attentive to the formation of heavy branches in the top part of the tree where faster growth often occurs. Work can be done now or later during the winter at your leisure but it is too easy to forget about it when the tree is in winter storage.

Some may repot in the fall but I feel that it is counter-productive to do so. New roots are more prone to freeze damage if we get a bad winter. It has been stated that the key to safe repotting is to minimize root disturbance and to exclude severe root pruning. This seems to me to be a recipe for developing root problems, poor drainage leading to root rot and the inability of the soil to hold enough water to last all day. No heavy pruning will lead to the lack of refinement and a top heavy tree. I would recommend that you do the above paragraph this fall and repot at the proper time next spring.

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.

- Sept. 27 SSOT, Austin. Business meeting. Workshop, slabs from slate. Contact Terry and Sheila Ward, 512-280-5575 or texshohin@sbcglobal.net.
 - Oct. 1 Monthly meeting of the HBS, Yvonne Padilla, forest plantings.
 - Oct. 4-5 Kathy Shaner Workshop – Carving. Contact Terry or Sheila Ward, Austin, 512-280-5575 or phbonsai@sbcglobal.net
 - Oct. 6 TTSBE-sponsored workshop with Kathy Shaner in Austin.
 - Oct. 11-12 Fall bonsai show and sale, Houston Garden Center, Hermann Park.
 - Oct. 18 Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park.
 - Nov. 5 Monthly meeting of the HBS; nominations of officers and directors; Jason Schley on junipers; black pine needle plucking.
 - Dec. 3 Monthly meeting of the HBS, elections of officers and directors; pot luck supper; holiday party, gift exchange.
 - Dec. 20 Saturday Study Group, Bayland Park.
- 2009**
- Apr. 17-19 State LSBF bonsai convention, Houston Marriott Westside. Boon Manikitivipart and Roy Nagatoshi, both from California, and Milagros Rauber Herrera from Venezuela.
 - July 7-13 6th World Bonsai Convention, San Juan, PR, Condado Plaza Hotel & Casino
www.worldbonsaiconvention2009.com

Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

P. O. Box 540727, Houston, Texas 77254-0727 www.HoustonBonsai.com

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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.

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