



The Bonsai News of Houston

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

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November 2008

Monthly Meeting: Schley on Junipers

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be Wednesday, November 5, 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.

Lecture-Demo. Jason Schley of Holly Hill, Florida, a suburb of Daytona Beach, will give a lecture-demonstration, "Junipers in the South." The demonstration tree will be raffled at the conclusion. Jason's web site is www.schleysbonsai.com.

Nomination of Officers, Directors. At the November meeting of the HBS, the board will accept nominations for the positions of president, second-vice president, treasurer, and two members at large.

Qualifications and duties are set out in full on pages 59-60, below. The board of HBS is made up of the officers of the club; the new officers will automatically be on the board.

The board will present a slate of nominees chosen by the nominating committee, which is made up of Buddy Allen, John Denton and Donald Green. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor. The HBS bylaws provide that nominations from the floor can ONLY be made at the November meeting—no nominations in December.

Elections will be held in December, and the new officers will assume duties in January.

Saturday Study Group, Nov. 15

Our study group meet will meet Saturday, November 15, at 9 a.m. at Cabrera Farm Nursery, 3910 Cabrera Dr., Sugar Land, Texas 77479, 281-313 – 2000, <http://www.orchidsandbonsai.com/>.

Raffle Items Needed for Convention

We are collecting raffle items for the April 2009 Spirit of Bonsai Convention. Please bring your donations to the monthly meetings EXCEPT that I can only take TREES at the January, February, and March meetings. Or bring them directly to the hotel Thursday night when we're setting everything up.

The raffle is a major fund raiser for us. If everyone brings at least 5 (FIVE) nice items, we will have a good chance at success! Some suggestions:

- Do you make things for a hobby? If so, then donate something you've made
- Do you perform a service? If so, donate that as a gift certificate.
- Do you have friends, family, acquaintances who have talents? Approach them about donating talents or items to our raffle. We can give receipts for tax write-offs.
- Do you have household items you no longer want or need? Donate them.
- Do you frequent businesses, restaurants, grocery stores, favorite shops, a hair salon? If so, ask them if they will donate something.
- Do you have trees, pots, tools, books or other bonsai accessories you don't need anymore? Have you been thinking of paring down your collection? Then donate those items.
- Books (bonsai, general gardening, or general interest), CDs, DVDs.
- Jewelry

Anyone willing to help with the raffle contact Committee Chair JoAnn Batey.

We need everyone to participate in this effort to make it a success. Please give us a hand. Thanks.

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.

If you have doubts on how and why to use raffia or other branch protecting materials, be sure to read this fall's issue of *Texas Bonsai*. You can get it on line, or your LSBF representative has a few copies for those without Internet capability. This is the only article I have seen in this depth.

Fall and winter is the proper time to do wiring, styling, and plucking work on pines. Repotting is saved until growth starts in the spring, and candle pruning, until summer. Other conifers may also be worked on now.

Watch the weather so you can protect tender and semi-hardy plants. I prefer to keep them outside as long as possible, but you should remember that frost, which can damage tender leaves, can occur at temperatures in the upper thirties. I watch the dew point temperature which is when the moisture can condense out of the air. Also clear nights with no wind along with that low dew point really spell trouble.

Have your winter quarters clean and ready so that you can put your trees there quickly in the event a freeze is forecast. But don't put them there too soon as they are easier to care for on the bench. Some use an unheated garage. I prefer to set the pots on a gravel area on the ground. This utilizes the ground heat to keep the roots from freezing as hard. The pots can then be covered with a loose mulch for insulation. Do not cover the ground with plastic because it will hold puddles of water.

After moving the bonsai, it would be a good idea to spray the benches with lime-sulfur to kill insect eggs and mold spores. If you will be putting the trees back under them for the winter, move the trees away and spray them. It would be good to have enough cold to stop the insect activity on the trees so you will not re-infest the area when the trees go back to await cold weather.

Most important in winter is to keep the soil moisture at a proper level. This sometimes is hard to do because the trees do not use as much water as when they are growing. However the cold winds will dry out the tops quickly. I believe that most winter damage in Texas is due to lack of water rather than to low temperatures. Mulch helps keep the roots warm and retards evaporation but it makes for difficulty in

seeing if the soil is damp enough. Most soils with enough organic material to keep the tree happy in the summer will be too wet if watered daily in the winter and wet cold means root rot. Try to position them so you can check the soil. If you are not watching the soil in their pots, you may get root rot fungus or the tree may dry out. Either way--you have a finished (for you beginners that reads, "dead") bonsai. It is easier to care for if you have them under roof, that way you know you need to tend to watering.

When trees go dormant, which indicates a reduced sap flow, they may be pruned, that is, have major limbs removed. Trimming may also be done while the leaves are off the trees and you can see what you are doing. Evergreen types will probably still be active. Pruning them should be held until later.

The general wisdom is that dormant trees need no fertilizer. However, as long as the soil is not frozen, there will be some root activity. I do not add any fertilizer to dormant trees, but I will leave the organic fertilizer cakes on until spring in case they happen to get some good out of them. The organics will not break down much in cold weather anyway. Evergreen types (e.g., pines, junipers, yaupons, and live oaks), however, continue some activity and therefore can use a small amount of low nitrogen fertilizer.

A horticultural oil spray should be applied during the winter to control scale. It will also get any overwinter insects or eggs that may be trying to get through the winter on your plant. This was the original purpose for lime-sulphur, and some Japanese still use it this way, but the oil is safer on bonsai and may be used on evergreens where the lime-sulphur should not be used. Again, do not use oil-based spray on buttonwoods.

By this time any tropicals you have should be under cover. Most do not like the temperatures below 50 degrees. All tropicals should be checked and treated for any insect problems since any insects will multiply fast when they get into warmer quarters. Spider mites and scale can be especially damaging if the plant is moved in the house where the humidity is low.

The semi-tropical plants like crape myrtle pomegranate and pyracantha need to go dormant to stay healthy over a long time but they cannot take much cold on the roots. They will be killed by temperatures somewhere between 25 and 30 degrees. These I set down on the ground and mulch for light freezes and then bring into a protected area for the

Cont'd next page.

colder winter. Sometimes I will let them go dormant for a month and then take into the greenhouse to start early and I can enjoy their new foliage in January.

Take advantage of the slowdown in bonsai care to determine your repotting needs. Do you need a different pot? Do you need to get more soil components? How about mixing some potting soils for your needs? Be sure to label the use of each type of mix so you don't forget what is what.

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Planting a Bonsai Forest

We had the pleasure of welcoming Ms. Yvonne Padilla, President of the Corpus Christi Bonsai Club, to our meeting on October 1. Ms. Padilla's presentation about how to create bonsai forests is paraphrased in this article.

Preliminary Guidelines. Forests can be made with trees of the same species, trees of similar species, or trees of different species that have the same horticultural needs. In this case, Ms. Padilla's forest was made from narrow leaf ficus trees. She recommends this species as it is very forgiving when its branches and roots are clipped heavily.

Forests can be of all style types: literati, wind-swept, formal upright or informal upright. However, all the trees in the forest should be of the same style.

There are basically two types of forests: Near ones, where the trees to the front are smaller, and distant ones, where the trees to the back are smaller.

The forest can be placed on one side of the container, or split with a little path down the middle. It is important to pre-work the trees (months or even a year in advance) by pruning branches and roots before they are needed for the forest.

Container for forest. A flat tray, a slab, a piece of slate or flagstone or a shallow wooden box can be used. It is often difficult to find an appropriate container that will be large enough for a forest.

Getting started. First, attach multiple anchoring wires (using Mighty Putty) to the bottom of the pot or base that will be used.

Decide roughly on the number of that you want in the forest. Always have extra trees on hand in case you change your mind about which ones to use.

Ugly trees that don't work as "sand-alone" trees work well in forests. If there is a bare sided on a tree, the roots below that side can be pruned heavily.

Ms. Padilla noted that she has used many trees started from cuttings.

Always use an odd number of trees unless planting more than 17—after that, who's counting?

As trees are placed in the container, one should leave the same distance from each side of the container. However, the spacing between the trees should be different, sometimes clumping several trees into small groups. In the demonstration, Ms. Padilla grouped the smallest three trees very closely. She used wire to anchor some trees next to each other to create the effect she desired.

Trees should also be placed at different heights in the container to allow for an uneven soil line as this too adds authenticity to the scene.

Muck (made from clay soil and sphagnum moss) was used to hold trees in place until their position has been decided.

Once all trees were placed in the forest, they were wired to the bottom of the pot. Branches were then wired and/or clipped to form tree canopies in distinct layers which replicate natural forests. Ms. Padilla's forest had 3 distinct canopy layers.

Stepping back. Once Ms. Padilla had created her forest, she inspected it more deliberately, noting that, "As you look into the forest, you should be able to see every tree. Remember, a tiny forest is being made." She also quoted Cliff Pottberg, whom she had heard at the 1986 Florida State Bonsai convention saying, "Birds should be able to fly through it, but an elephant should not be able to jump through it."

The final touch. Accent plants such as creeping elfentine and mondo grass were then added. Next, she sprinkled Osmacote fertilizer, and then sprayed the root clumps with Amway L.O.C. (liquid organic cleaner) to increase the drainage of the soil. She covered the roots with bonsai soil containing 3 parts sifted landscape soil conditioner, 2 parts Hadite (from Cabrera Farm Nursery in Sugar Land) and 1 part coarse sand. After assuring that the soil was properly placed, she again sprayed the surface with Amway L.O.C.

Future care of the forest. When repotting the forest, it can be split into groups or clumps of trees that can be re-arranged in a different order, or the entire forest integrity can be maintained, removing the forest from the container only to clip its roots.

A final thought. Ms. Padilla stressed that in working with bonsai, there are guidelines, not hard, fast rules. One should feel free to create a forest that feels right, even if that means ignoring some guidelines.

We thank Ms. Padilla for her beautiful presentation, the fruit of which was kindly donated to the Houston Bonsai Society and raffled off at the conclusion of the meeting.

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TTSBE-Shaner Workshop a Success

The Foster Care Workshop with Kathy Shaner was quite a success. As always Kathy was -- Brilliant! There are two trees yet to be fostered. Kathy will be returning on a regular basis to Lakeview Bonsai to continue her guidance. If there are questions, Alan Raymond is the TTSBE representative and can help with any inquiries about the Foster Care Program.



Kathy Shaner works on a cedar elm, *Ulmus crassifolia*.

Duties of HBS Officers

At the November meeting we will nominate candidates for the offices of president, second vice president, and treasurer and for two members-at-large. Following are the duties of each position.

PRESIDENT

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

The President shall preside at all meetings, appoint committees and perform all other duties pertaining to the Chief Executive of an organization.

TERM OF OFFICE

Two years. No Officer may serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

BONSAI EXPERIENCE

Must have a minimum of three years experience with Bonsai, and at least one year as active member of HBS or an organized Bonsai club.

JOB QUALIFICATIONS

1. Must be organized and thorough. Must be willing and able to speak in front of an audience.
3. Needs to be creative in the planning for the future of the HBS.
4. Must be able to build consensus, delegate duties, pick the proper persons for the right positions. Needs general knowledge of parliamentary procedures.

JOB DESCRIPTION

1. Preside at all meetings of HBS and the HBS Executive Board.
2. Create committees as needed by picking a chairman and committee members, or by picking a chairman and the chairman picking or asking for volunteers to serve as members of the committee. The number of committee members shall be commensurate with the job to be accomplished and agreement between the committee chairman and the President of HBS.
3. To build membership in HBS by providing interesting programs, education, and increasing awareness of Bonsai and HBS in the Houston community. Attracting new members adds vitality and enthusiasm to HBS while retaining old members provides a foundation of experience, artistry, and education for HBS to build on.
4. To build the quality of Bonsai in HBS and the notoriety of HBS members as leaders and Bonsai artists both in the State of Texas and nationally.
5. Provide long range goals and plans for the future of HBS.
6. Identify and promote HBS members as future officers of HBS.
7. Provide leadership to involve as many HBS members as possible to contribute time, effort, knowledge and experience to the betterment of HBS.

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

The Second Vice President shall assume the duties of the First Vice President if the latter is unable to preside and shall have the responsibility of Chairman for any exhibit in which the Society may participate.

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PERSIMMON HILL BONSAI STUDIO & NURSERY

Terry & Sheila Ward Austin, Texas
512-280-5575 - 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.

- Nov. 5 Monthly meeting of the HBS; nominations of officers and directors; Jason Schley on junipers.
- Nov. 15 Saturday Study Group, Cabrera Farm Nursery
- 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 Milagos Rauber Herrera from Venezuela.
- July 7-13 6th World Bonsai Convention, San Juan, PR, Condado Plaza Hotel & Casino
www.worldbonsaiconvention2009.com

Second Vice President, *cont'd.*

This officer also shall be responsible for planning, set-up, and arrangements for speaker, whether local or from other cities and all other educational activities.

TERM OF OFFICE

Two years. No Officer may serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

BONSAI EXPERIENCE

Must have a minimum of three years of Bonsai experience, and at least one year as active member of HBS or an organized Bonsai club.

JOB QUALIFICATIONS

1. Assume the duties of the First Vice President if the First Vice President is unable to preside.
2. Must be organized and reliable.
3. Chair any exhibit in which HBS participates.
4. Plan, set-up, and arrange for speakers or Bonsai artists. This includes making or having others make arrangements for the dates the speaker will be available. Make arrangements for the speaker to get to Houston, for transportation while in town, if

necessary; for transportation to their next destination; arrangements for payment of fees and reimbursement for transportation and accommodations; publicity for the event; registration for the event; a location for the event to be held; provide supplies required for set-up and workers for the event. Dates, times, location and speaker are approved by the Executive Board.

5. Keep an inventory of all club owned equipment used for events and where it is stored. Make sure that all club equipment is in presentable condition for its intended purpose and that it is properly stored so that it will not be damaged.

6. Keep an up-to-date list of names, addresses and telephone numbers and a short biography, if available, of Bonsai artists used either by HBS in the past for lectures and/or demonstrations, or by other Bonsai clubs. Add new artists as they progress in talent and experience.

7. Keep an Event Book that has the name of the event, the location, approximate time of year the event is held, what the show sponsor provides, usual schedule for the event the HBS setup and the number of working staff required (see attached example).

MEMBER-AT-LARGE

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

It shall be the duty of the two Members-at-Large to attend meeting and bring forth any pertinent information from the members. They are charged with the responsibility of greeting guests and new members at each of the Society's functions.

TERM OF OFFICE

One year. No member-at-large may serve two consecutive terms.

BONSAI EXPERIENCE

At least one year active experience with HBS.

JOB QUALIFICATIONS

1. Attend monthly meetings.
2. Attend Executive Board Meetings.

JOB DESCRIPTION

1. Meet members and guests at the door and welcome them to the meeting.

Receive ideas concerning the meetings or activities of HBS and present them at the Executive Board meetings.

Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

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For special requests or questions related to *The Bonsai News of Houston*, contact the editor 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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