



The Bonsai News of Houston

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

Volume 38 Number 4, Internet Edition

April 2009

Monthly Meeting, April 1

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

Displaying Bonsai. Alan will lead a discussion on "How to Prepare Your Bonsai for a Show." Please bring any tree you would like to offer to show in our exhibit in the convention and any tree stands, accent plants, viewing stones, scrolls or wall hangings that would enhance a tree's presentation.

Azaleas for Sale. Also at the April meeting, azaleas from Bennie Badgett's San Marcos Bonsai Nursery will be on sale to members only for \$30. They regularly sell for about \$70. If there are more interested members than trees, we will pull numbers from a "hat" to determine who will get the trees. The interested members will choose trees in numerical order.

No Saturday Study Group in April

We will have no Saturday Study Group in April. See you May 16 at 9 a.m. at Cabrera Farm Nursery.

Convention News

To encourage all of our members to purchase the 2009 Spirit of Bonsai navy blue polo shirt, we are offering the shirts at our cost, \$ 15. *We're hoping to see navy blue everywhere you look during the convention.*

Shirts will be available at the April club meeting. The purchase price for these shirts during the convention will be \$ 25.00. If you are unable to attend the April meeting and would like to purchase a shirt please contact me at (713) 914-9180 **before April 1.**

Shirt Description

Classic two-ply navy blue pima pique polo

Fabric style: Two-ply pique

Fabric content: 100% pima cotton

Product type: **Embroidered** with the 2009 Spirit Of Bonsai logo.

Features include a ribbed knit collar, fully banded neck, banded sleeves, and generous 3-inch side vents.

An Update on Workshops:

The following workshops are still open. The remaining spots are black *pine* (4), *boxwood* (4), *raintree* (6), *tiger ficus* (5), *small jasmine* (1) both *bring-your-own-tree workshops* (6).

If you haven't signed up to participate in a workshop, we'd like you to consider signing up now. We need to fill all the open spots to have a successful convention. Full registration is required to participate in the workshops.

Spring Show, Japan Festival, April 25-26

It's springtime and it's the time of year that we have our spring show in conjunction with the Japan festival. We all have such a great time at this event. The Japan festival will be on April 25 and 26, the weekend after the state convention. The festival and our show will be held in Hermann Park from 11:00 to 5:00 on Saturday and Sunday. Our area will be in the Japanese gardens with tables to display the trees and a cover to protect us from the sun and weather.

Cont'd page 22.

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.

Do the math! Bonsai is a study in mathematics. You start with triangles in the design of individual trees and forest plantings. You use the golden ratio or Fibonacci series to proportion the tree and pot. [See page 24, below for Fibonacci series. -ed.] Powers of two show you the multiplication of twigs in a very short time with proper trimming. Fortunately, you do not need to be a math whiz to do good bonsai, just follow the rules and it will look good without your having to know why.

Most trees will do good in the full sun at this time of year. However, if you have had them in partial shade, be careful about moving them directly to full sun. They should be acclimated gradually. Too much wind will cause the leaves to burn. Some damage may not show up until hot weather.

Repotting for most hardy bonsai has ended. Very late budding species like oaks may still be done, depending on your local climate. I also do dwarf yaupon and olives then. It's still too early for the tropics. They should usually be held until the night temperatures are in no danger of going below 60.

Going on now is trimming, feeding, trimming, checking for insects, trimming, shows, trimming. You get the idea. Trimming, that is, the pinching, plucking or whatever of new growth, is the process that both develops refinement on your tree but is also vital to keep it from losing that desired state. This is not pruning which is cutting of branches which should not be done when there is a strong sap flow which starts when the tree breaks dormancy and continues until after the leaves harden or later.

A good organic program takes care of both the feeding and the insect problems. I recommend the mixture of 1 tablespoon each of fish emulsion, liquid kelp, molasses and apple cider vinegar to a gallon of water. (A commercial product called Garret Juice which is to be used the same way uses compost tea, dried seaweed, water, molasses and vinegar. As a fertilizer this should act the same but I don't know about the dried seaweed versus liquid kelp as an insecticide.) I use the mixture as both a foliar spray and a soil drench fertilizer. As a weekly foliar spray it keeps aphids and mites under control as well as any other insect I've had. The prime requirement is to cover the entire plant, top and bottom of the leaves with a fine mist sprayer (no hose end stuff). I

try to drench soil twice a month partly because I don't think the plant can absorb all the minor elements it needs through the foliage.

Fungal diseases can show up with damp weather. Leaf spot can be serious on Catlin and Chinese elms and on hollies. Mildew shows up later with warmer weather. Organic fungicides are available. Two are potassium bicarbonate and baking soda (sodium bicarbonate). NOTE: do not mix these with the vinegar in the foliar spray. Check an organics nursery or publications for other items to use. A 1% solution of hydrogen peroxide (dilute the standard 3% store bought stuff 2 parts water to one part peroxide) is also recommended but it can injure very new foliage.

Be sure to check your soils each day for proper water content. It is too easy to assume that the soil has plenty of water when the days are cool or there has been some rain. It's also too easy for a tree with full leaves to shed water outside of the pot or a good sun and low humidity after a front to dry the soil. I suggest that you remove most of the moss so that you can see and feel the soil in order to determine how dry it is. (Moss growing on the trunk or roots will cause the bark to rot also.) An automatic watering system will be an aid but you should not rely on it to replace hand watering. Hand watering allows you to adjust the watering for each tree individually. Also most automatic systems use a drip system which only waters a small spot in shallow containers.

If you have early blooming azaleas, remove some buds. Most azaleas have too many buds to look good when they don't have room to open fully.

And last but surely as important as the rest, if you want to learn bonsai, get to the Lone Star Bonsai Federation convention being sponsored by Houston this year. If you haven't received any literature, look on their website www.houstonbonsai.com.



**PERSIMMON HILL BONSAI
STUDIO & NURSERY**

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

Spring Show, April 25-26, cont'd

To have a successful show we will need volunteers to bring trees and to do the set-up on Saturday morning at 8:30 a.m. Trees can be dropped off Saturday morning and should be picked up Sunday after 4:30. We will also need individuals to work the show on Saturday or Sunday or both and to assist with the take down after the festival is over Sunday. We will have sign up sheets and complete information at our April meeting.

Parking is a concern; we will have a drop off area for trees and limited reserve parking available for those who will be working the show. You will need to get there early to get a parking space.

The festival is a great time to experience ethnic foods and visit vendors selling novelty items and collectables. There will be performances with drums, music, singing, dancing. This activity is a treat for the mind and senses. We have a large number of people visiting our display and asking questions about the art of bonsai and the HBS.

--Michael

BCI Convention, New Orleans, Discount

Bonsai Clubs International will hold its International Bonsai Congress 2009 at the botanical gardens in New Orleans' City Park June 19, 20, 21.

Featured speakers are Peter Chan, Great Britain; Nacho Marin, Venezuela; Sandro Segneri and Massimo Bandera, Italy; Glenis and Lindsay Bebb, Australia; Tedy Boy, Indonesia; Jim and Linda Brant, Pennsylvania; Guy Guidry, Louisiana; Ed Trout, Florida; William N. Valavanis, New York; stone connoisseurs Willi Benz, Germany, and I.C. Su, Taiwan; ikebana artists Richard Cranford and Dora Ross, Louisiana.

If you plan to attend, consider waiting to register because we may be able to aggregate 10 or more registrants from HBS and get a 10% discount. If you are interested, contact me. If we get at least 10, I'll coordinate our registrations.

--Alan

Raffle Donations

Only one meeting before our convention!
Remember to bring your raffle donations.

Thank you to the members who have already made donations. So far we have received lots of

great items. Please continue to hunt through your closets, garage and work spaces for more raffle donations.

--JoAnn, Chair, Raffle Committee

Second Offering --Introduction to Bonsai

The first offering of the *Introduction to Bonsai* course was such a great success and we had such a great time that we are going to do it again. The educational material, methods and techniques will be covered over five Saturdays -- June 13 and 27 and July 11, 18, and 25 --from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Bayland Center in Bayland Park. Bayland Park is located at 6400 Bissonnet south of 59 and west of Hillcroft.

The information presented will cover a broad range of topics. If you are just getting started, this course covers what you need to know to be successful. If you have been in bonsai for awhile, the course can expand your existing knowledge.

The cost for the course is \$25 per person for HBS members and \$40 per person, which includes membership in HBS, for nonmembers.

The registration fee includes the course manual, instructions, and visual presentations. Payment should be made at time of registration. **The deadline for registration is June 3, 2009.**

For course information contact Hurley Johnson or Michael at the HBS monthly meetings or by e-mail. This is a great opportunity for anyone who is interested in bonsai whether just getting started or long time bonsaist. Make plans to attend and sign up early.

Enjoy – Learn – Share -- Education Committee

New Gardening Web Site

WikiGardens (www.wikigardens.com) is a new website for the landscape architect, the practiced gardener, the amateur plant nerd and anyone who falls between the three. It is primarily a site for plant research. The site features a 50,000-plant encyclopedia, a garden showcase, a forum, a members' journal, seasonal topics of interest, and listings of local garden groups.

What separates this site from other garden database websites is the "wiki" function which allows any member (membership is free) to contribute information about plants, successes and failures, helpful hints, post shots of their garden, etc. The

Cont'd next page.

information is vetted by other WikiGardens members to insure it is correct and trustworthy. The philosophy behind this is "many eyes make mistakes small"; therefore the more users, the more accurate the information.

Additionally, unique to WikiGardens is the absence of annoying pop up and sidebar ads. Vendors who choose to buy advertising on the site do so in the form of links back to their own website. This feature is useful because vendors are sorted by the zip code closest to the member. When searching for a particular plant to purchase, your choices will be closer to home.

Like any wiki site, it is only as robust and vigorous as the users who contribute to it. We invite any and all to visit WikiGardens, become a member and "dig" in the garden.

For more information, contact:

Michael
503-236-7574
admin@wikigardens.com
<<http://www.wikigardens.com>>

Vito Megna on Cedar Elms

This article is reprinted from the April 2001 issue of The Bonsai News of Houston and is a summary of a lecture-demonstration which Vito Megna gave to the HBS on March 7, 2001.

If you missed the March HBS meeting, you missed another good one. Vito Megna--who for fifteen years has owned and operated Vito's Bonsai Nursery in Leander, Texas, near Austin--gave a lecture-demonstration on cedar elms, a favorite Texas native. He brought two trees to style and recruited Butch Wilken to work on one while he worked on the other.

Collecting Cedar Elms. Vito's nursery is widely known for excellent collected cedar elms. It was not surprising therefore, that before too many minutes into his presentation, an inevitable question came: Where do you collect cedar elms?

In answer, Vito said that creek bottoms are not good places to collect. The soil is too good and the water too abundant. The trees will not undergo natural dwarfing and contortion under such circumstances.

"But," he said, "if the tree is growing on a rock, it will be starving. Rocky areas are good places to look.

"I found a likely area--one with a very rocky terrain--and put an ad in the local paper: 'Will purchase trees.' As a result of the ad, I got access to most of a 4,000-acre ranch and have collected over 800 trees in 5 years." The trees were starved by the poor soil and pruned by the cattle and deer.

"Depending upon circumstances," Vito said, "it takes me 45 minutes to an hour and a half to dig a tree."

Cedar elms are deciduous and therefore can be dug any time they are dormant--that is to say, anytime after the first frost--but the optimal time to dig them is just before the buds open.

A Texas Star. Cedar elms grow all over Texas. "It is one of the toughest trees around," noted Vito. Several years ago, one of Vito's customers had a problem with mistletoe in his cedar elm. Vito recommended using Round Up on the mistletoe. The customer must have thought that more is better because he used concentrated Round Up (rather than the diluted spray) and did not dilute the concentrate!

That spring, the new leaves were contorted and eventually all fell off. The man sent a branch to Texas A & M for analysis which showed that the whole tree was full of Round Up. But the tree eventually recovered and flourished!

"The cedar elm is the best tree for bonsai in Texas," Vito stated categorically.

Cultivation. Elms need full sun, otherwise they will have long internodes. Morning sun is important, especially in Houston. If a tree has morning sun, the moisture evaporates earlier in the day. The quicker the foliage dries the better. The chances of fungus are reduced and the leaves can transpire more effectively.

All bonsai must have a good draining mix to improve the exchange of oxygen. When you water, you are pushing out stagnant air. Fresh air comes in behind.

In mid May, you can pull all the leaves off a cedar elm. The tree will put out a new, smaller set of leaves.

When you prune, especially big branches, leave the collar. Removing the collar will delay healing.

The cedar elm blooms and makes seed in September. Some elms, for example, the cork bark elm, bloom and make seed in the spring. The cedar elm gets its scientific name, *Ulmus crassifolia*, from its rough leaves, which feel "like a cat's tongue," noted Vito. *Crassus* is Latin for rough or coarse grained.

Cont'd next page.

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. 1 Monthly meeting of the HBS. Displaying Bonsai. **Bring raffle items.**
- Apr. 4 Shohin Society of Texas meeting. Selection of trees for convention, critique of trees. Austin. Terry or Sheila, texshohin@sbcglobal.net

NO STUDY GROUP IN APRIL.

Apr. 17-19 State LSBF bonsai convention, Houston Marriott Westside. Boon Manikitivipart and Roy Nagatoshi, both from California, and Milagros Rauber Herrera from Venezuela.

Apr. 25-26 HBS spring bonsai show & Japan Festival, Japanese gardens, Hermann Park, 11-5 both days. Set up 8:30 a.m., Saturday.

May 6 Monthly meeting of the HBS.

May 16 Sat. study group, 9 a.m. Cabrera Farm Nursery

May 22-24 HBS club trip to Brussel's Rendezvous, Olive Branch, Mississippi.

June 3 Monthly meeting of the HBS. Mike Hansen on black pines.

June 6 Shohin Society of Texas meeting. Bring your own tree workshop; Sale & Swap. Austin.

June 13 Class – *Intro to Bonsai*, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.

June 19-21 BCI's International Bonsai Congress 2009, New Orleans. <http://www.bonsai-bci.com/index2.html>

June 20 Saturday study group, Bayland Park

June 26 Jason Schley, Florida, on grafting. Lecture-demo.

June 27 Jason Schley, workshops.

June 27 Class – *Intro to Bonsai*, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.

July 1 Monthly meeting of the HBS, John Miller of Dallas on shohin

July 11 Class – *Intro to Bonsai*, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.

July 7-13 6th World Bonsai Convention, San Juan, PR, Condado Plaza Hotel & Casino www.worldbonsaiconvention2009.com

July 18 Class – *Intro to Bonsai*, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.

July 27 Class – *Intro to Bonsai*, 9 a.m., Bayland Park.

Sept. 19 Shohin Society of Texas meeting. Business;

Styling. An elm is not a pine; therefore, it should not have a pointed apex. The top of an elm should be rounded. If the top is pointed, the tree looks young.

Vito prefers to use copper wire but does not recommend it for beginners. Copper wire hardens quickly and you can't unwind it and rewire if you make a mistake. Beginners should use aluminum wire, even though it may not hold the branch as well.

Butch at Work. In the meantime, Butch had pruned his tree down to the trunk! Not a branch was left!

"As I said," explained Vito, "the cedar elm is a tough tree--you can cut off every branch and in three weeks, it will put out new buds!"

Vito went on to say that when you have a tree like the one Butch had been working on, a tree with branches in the wrong place or branches too thick or so on, with a cedar elm, you have the option to cut off all the branches and start over.

"In 3 weeks this tree will be full of buds--all around each collar" said Vito. "Then you can determine where **you** want a branch." Let the new branches get 2 to 3 inches long before you choose. Pick a dominant one. Rub off the rest. When that branch hardens (at 5 to 6 inches long) wire it out and down.

You can determine the size of the branch. You should have thicker branches at the bottom, thinner ones at the top.

Start at the bottom. Do not cut the bottom branch that will be your first branch. Leave it alone. Let the branch grow and fatten for one year. The second year you can cut it where you want for ramification. Remember that you want taper in the branch just as in the trunk.

You can do some wiring in May and June and begin to put some movement in the branch. As you go up the trunk, do the same thing in reverse. Keep top small. Otherwise you will lose the taper.

In answer to a question, Vito said, "If you are going to remove the branches, you must remove them all. Do not be faint of heart. If you are, this procedure will not work."

Fibonacci Series

A Fibonacci series, named for the thirteenth century Italian mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci, is a series of numbers in which every number after the

Cont'd next page.

Houston Bonsai Society, Inc.

P. O. Box 540727, Houston, Texas 77254-0727

www.HoustonBonsai.com

The Bonsai News of Houston is a monthly publication of the Houston Bonsai Society, Inc. Copyright © 2009. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without the consent of the editor or a member of the board of directors. Exceptions exist, however, for other not-for-profit and non-profit bonsai organizations or associated bonsai and bonsai nursery newsletters. HBS participates fully with reciprocation of contents and materials between other LSBF member organizations and others. Authors who submit articles for this newsletter thereby give permission to such organization to reprint, unless they expressly reserve all rights.

For special requests or questions related to *The Bonsai News of Houston*, contact the editor (address and phone number above) 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.

Space for advertising in *The Bonsai News of Houston* can be requested by contacting the editor at the address above or at www.HoustonBonsai.com. 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.

Fibonacci Series, cont'd.

first is the sum of the preceding two numbers: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, etc.

David De Groot on page 16 of his book, *Basic Bonsai Design* (citing *The Divine Proportion – A Study in Mathematical Beauty* by H.E. Huntley), says,

“The proportion (Phi) expressed by this series is called the ‘golden ratio’ or the ‘divine proportion.’”

De Groot goes on to say:

“It is intriguing in that it occurs repeatedly in the natural architecture of both the plant and animal kingdoms – in the 21:32 opposing spirals of seed in a sunflower, for instance, or in the increasing size of a “nautilus” shell as it spirals away from the center. In human arts, this proportion underlines much of what is universally considered beautiful, such as the musical interval of a major sixth (8:5) or the architectural perfection of the Parthenon’s façade (2:3 height to width).

“If the proportions of the sequence are used to design a bonsai, it will have an unfailingly pleasing effect.”