



THE BONSAI NEWS OF HOUSTON

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE HOUSTON BONSAI SOCIETY, INC.

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May 2010

Monthly Meeting

The next meeting of the Houston Bonsai Society (HBS) will be Wednesday, May 5, at 7:30 pm at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Drive. Refreshments and Curbside Consultation at 7:00pm.

This month is the right time to repot Bald Cypress trees. Hurley Johnson and Michael Mc Cluskey will lead this workshop. Bring your own tree, soil and tools. This dynamic duo will help you style and wire them.

Upcoming Events

May 1-2, 2010 - *Houston Chinese Bonsai Society Annual Bonsai Show* – Free Admission

May 1, 2010 Saturday 10am - 5pm

Bonsai Demonstration: 2 - 3pm

May 2, 2010 Sunday 10am - 3pm

Bonsai Demonstration: 11am - 12pm

Location: Houston Chinese Cultural Center
10303 Westoffice Dr., Houston, TX77042

Saturday, May 8, 2010 - *Annual Exhibit of the Bonsai Society of Acadiana* - 8am-6pm at the Festival des Fleurs at Blackham Coliseum on Johnston St. in Lafayette, LA.
<http://inhc.louisiana.edu/festival.html>

May 27-31, 2010 - *37th Annual BSF Convention hosted by Bonsai Society of Brevard* for the Bonsai Societies of Florida at Ramada Orlando Celebration Resort & Convention Center, featuring Robert Steven of Indonesia with Mike Cartrett, Alan Carver, Toby Diaz, Ernie Fernandez, Rob Kempinski, Reggie Perdue, Dorothy Schmitz, Ed Trout, Jim VanLandingham and Erik Wigert.
Details at <http://www.bonsai-bsf.com>.

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.

Does mycorrhiza work? Apparently all plants, not just pines, have a need for some form of mycorrhiza. The topic is too involved to be covered here. Go to the website www.fungi.com/mycogrow/amaranthus for a good article. If you have problems with that (as I did) go to www.fungi.com and click on the product Mycogrow. Then scroll to the bottom and click on their link to Dr. Amaranthus article. If you can't find their product in the local store get whichever one has the most species of good fungi.

Three new tasks present themselves this month, repotting tropicals, leaf pruning and keeping roots cool.

Leaf pruning is the cutting off of many or all of the leaves in order to induce a new flush of growth similar to the growth after breaking dormancy. This should only be done on very healthy trees and should not do it two years in a row. Sometimes the excuse is made that you get two seasons of growth. However if you do the proper trimming during the growth phase, the plant is continuing to produce the division of twigs necessary for ramification and the stress of leaf removal is unnecessary. The only real justification for leaf pruning is to replace old or damaged leaves with a newer set that will be prettier in a show or in the fall. The pruning must be done while there is still a month of good growing weather left, meaning before the end of May in the D-FW area. The tree should be fertilized a few days before pruning. When pruning, defoliate strong branches fully while leaving some leaves on weak branches. Usually interior branches will benefit

by having their foliage kept on. When the leaves are off, check the branches for undesirable characteristics. Cut vertical growing, hanging, or crossing branches. Leave any major work for next fall. After this work, watch your watering. The tree will not use nearly as much water as when in full leaf, so do not overwater. When growth starts, get your tweezers out and keep up with the trimming. Do not let the new shoots get long internodes.

When the night temperatures are consistently above 60 degrees, you can start thinking about repotting those tropicals. They need warmth for a good root growth. Remember that the warmer temperatures and spring winds will cause the roots to dry quickly, so have a spray bottle or some damp cloths handy. Keep them shaded until they recover.

The old methods were to repot azaleas after they finished blooming, thinking that the tree needed nutrients from the roots for their blossoms. The newer thoughts are that the plant has all the necessary nutrients available in the bud, so repot the azaleas in early spring while they are still dormant. If you repot after blooming, do not remove as much soil and keep them shaded until they recover. When the azaleas finish blooming, remove all seed pods 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 year's growth at that time.

The hot sun shining on the pot, especially the dark colored ones, can raise the temperature to the point of killing the roots. Especially sensitive are the nice growing tips at the edge of the root ball, next to the pot. If the pot feels hot to your hand, think about how the roots feel. After all they are living things, too. These temperatures can be kept lower by shading the pot with any porous material. Putting sphagnum on the surface is good. Do not use any solid material like newspaper on the surface of the soil as it will cause you watering problems. And speaking of watering problems, do not rely on rainfall to water for you, some plants shed the water to the outside & miss the pot. You must check them yourself.

Insects are waiting for a chance to get hold of some well fed and very tasty snacks. If you give them half a chance, they will move into your bonsai almost overnight and are usually hard to spot until damage shows up. The most prevalent ones are aphids, spider mites, and scale. Leaf miners and various caterpillars will sneak in too. I use the organic foliar spray (1 tablespoon each of liquid kelp, fish emulsion, molasses and apple cider vinegar in 1 gallon of water) to control all these. Horticultural oil spray can be used year around. Note that this oil spray is a more refined and lighter version of the old dormant oil spray that could only be used in the dormant season. Do not use oils on species such as the buttonwood, for they have

sensitivity to oil. If in doubt, please read the label on the product you wish to use.

Treat for fungal problems: Leaf spot, mildew and such can be treated by using potassium bicarbonate obtainable from any nursery. A substitute would be sodium bicarbonate (baking soda). Use 1 tablespoon per gallon as a spray and be sure to cover both sides of the leaf. I would not use these products together with the foliar spray because they react with the acid vinegar. I would just as soon use them separately because only a few things (elms and hollies) at my place need the fungicide treatment.

If you are not on a regular organic foliar/drench feed schedule, be sure to use fertilizer cakes and liquid fertilizer supplemental feeding 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 organic fertilizers in pellet or cake form on the market or you can make your own. These feed a tiny bit each time you water.

It's time to consider becoming more proficient at your hobby. The LSBF convention in Ft Worth this year is a great way to start. You can learn all the rules, but without practice, you will not be able to perform. You need practice (workshops) to learn to recognize the line of the raw material you are working with. You can also get this practice and experience by taking part in your club's 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 attempts to teach.

It Was Soooo Hot... Well, How Hot Was It? *by Mark A. Bynum, FWBS*

It was so hot that you could fry eggs on that bonsai pot! I recently completed the construction of a 3-tier bonsai display table in the sunniest part of my yard. This is the new home for my sun loving, better junipers, but within days of placing them, the air temperature jumped up to 104°F. Not wanting to lose any of my best trees, I purchased a laser/ infrared thermometer* to see just how hot the pots were getting. I was shocked at what I learned. In the 103°F temperature the next day, I was getting pot readings of 145-150°F! Needless to say, I immediately went out and purchased a patio cover framework and placed shade cloth over my precious little trees. The new information was so revealing that I thought I would do further investigation and share it with my fellow bonsai enthusiasts.

The following statistics were taken on a still and sunny day of 95°F:

Pot, unglazed ceramic in sun	123
after watering	109
With white terry-cloth pot skirt	106
after watering	89
Pot, under skirt	106
after watering	100
Pot, dark glazed on wood bench	129
white glazed on wood bench	125
Pot, dark unglazed, under shade cloth,	105
dappled shade	98
dark unglazed on ground, dappled shade	85-90
Pot common clay training	102
Pot black plastic nursery	143
Soil, bonsai aggregates only,	
in ceramic pot, surface	130
1" down, moist	110
Tree, bark in sun	131
in shade	104
foliage in sun	95-98
Bench, new wood	131
weathered wood	138
Clay tile, on ground	111
on top of 2' post	112

Interesting, yes? Now think of how hot bonsai tree pots and benches get when the temperature is 100+ degrees! Here are some conclusions that I have formulated from this data:

- As generally accepted, if pot temperatures of 120°F or higher can damage tree roots, then at 95°F ambient temperature roots, close to the edge of glazed or unglazed ceramic pots in the sun are being destroyed and the trees will suffer.
- Pot skirts are a considerable deterrent to heat. Better to have skirts in place as the temperature begins to reach 90°F consistently.
- Wood benches are extremely hot. After the shock of learning how hot pots can get, this was the second biggest surprise. We must find a way to insulate the pot from the bench or just move the trees to the ground. Stone or clay tile surfaces are cooler than wood surfaces. Pots on moist earth are much cooler.
- Shade frames and shade cloth should be in place before the temperature reaches 95°F.
- Move trees to dappled shade or under the bench on the ground before 95°F.
- Do not leave prospective bonsai trees in their nursery pots! Transplant into clay training pots or bonsai pots as soon as possible. The highest

temperature reading in the stats above is the black plastic nursery pot.

- Some kind of misting of the bench and tree pots will greatly reduce the heat.

You may, of course, draw your own conclusions from this data, or better yet, make a laser thermometer part of your bonsai tool set. Take pertinent readings from your own bonsai environment. You will be surprised with your results and a better bonsai horticulturist for your efforts.

Happy styling to all,

Mark

**The laser/infrared thermometer is an instrument developed by the space program to quickly gauge the temperature of items that may be hard to reach. Shaped much like a tazer, simply point and shoot and the digital readout will give you an accurate reading from -50 to 650°F. Made by Ryobi, this tool is available at Home Depot for \$30. It is most often used to locate leaks in window seams but has a wide variety of other uses and is well worth the money. It is also a lot of fun to play with!*

This article is reprinted from the September 2009 Dallas Bonsai Society newsletter.

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Dear HBS members and friends,

Thank you for your constant support over the last almost 10 years (May 1999 - March 2010). I can honestly say you always, without exception, provided any and all help I needed. A special thanks to Gary Teeter. If Gary had not taken over the electronic distribution of the newsletter in April 2005, I definitely wouldn't have lasted this long.

As I have told you many times, I have enjoyed doing the newsletter, but in the last year or so, I think I have just burned out! I can't bring enthusiasm to the job anymore. So it's definitely time to move on!

I know that Shawn will do an excellent job and will bring fresh, new ideas to rejuvenate the newsletter. We're over due for new blood! I am confident you will give her the same support and encouragement you have given me.

Thank you all and best of luck, Shawn.

Dolores

New Editor's Note

Change is good, but it's not always easy. For those of you who missed the April newsletter, I regret any inconvenience that was caused by the computer and technology conversion glitch, as well as the missed beat in communication. Truth be told, during the passing of the baton, the April newsletter fell through the crack. Luckily, Dolores and I carved out a full day to sit down with our computers to resolve all obstacles and get the show on the road. Thank you Dolores for being such a saint!

I realize that it's time for extraordinary transition not only for me, from a carefree member to newsletter editor, but also for all of us at HBS. My challenge isn't just adapting to a new task and responsibilities, but also to invite fun and fresh innovations from all bonsai lovers.

Besides the usual articles, breaking news, current events and seasonal bonsai care, there will be a Members' Corner in the next issues, where members can share their bonsai experiences, new products, shopping spots, techniques, design ideas and the latest happenings in our thousand year old art of bonsai. I'll start bringing my digital camera to each meeting and all members, please bring your "Pride and Joy of the Month" trees to be photographed. Digital photos of your trees can be sent to me as well. Please attach tree name (if exotic and rare), approximate age and brief history for accurate captions. The artist's name would be omitted for privacy and safety reasons. These photographs will be added to HBS Gallery available for viewing on our website.

Let me hear from all HBS members' bright ideas, new or old, regardless of years in bonsai, backgrounds, age groups and professions. We can always learn from each others' experiences, share our success and passion. Unleash your creativity and together, I believe we'll create a timeless newsletter that talks to us all.

Shawn Nguyen, Your New Editor
Email me your ideas at hbs.news@yahoo.com

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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. Refresh-ments and Curbside Consultation at 7:00 p.m.

- May 1- 2 Chinese Bonsai Society show, Chinese Cultural Center, 10303 Westoffice Dr, Houston, TX.
10 -5 Saturday and 10-3 Sunday
- May 5 Monthly meeting: Bald Cypress – Bring your own tree . Hurley Johnson and Michael McCluskey will lead the workshop.
- May 7,8,9 Open 3 days only, Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection
33663 Weyerhaeuser Way South, Federal Way,
WA 98003, www.weyerhaeuser.com/bonsai or
call 253-924-5206
- May 22-24 Rendez-vous, Brussel's Bonsai Nursery, Olive Branch, MS, Memorial weekend, May 22, 23, 24.
For information, call 800-582-2593 or
www.brusselsbonsai.com/about_us/rendezvous09.shtml.
- Jun 2 Monthly meeting: To be announced
- Jun 11-13 LSBF Convention, Fort Worth. Peter Warren, Guy Guidry, Matt Ouwinga, Estella Flather and Alisan Clarke,**
www.fwbonsai.com
- Jun 12-13 2nd U. S. National Bonsai Exhibition, Rochester, NY. contact Bill Valavanis at 585-334-2595 or
WNV@internationalbonsai.com or visit
<http://www.internationalbonsai.com/>
- Jul 7 Monthly meeting: Yvonne Padilla will create an Emerald Green Ficus in Cascade style.
- Aug 4 Monthly meeting: To be announced
- Sep 1 Monthly meeting: Annual Auction
- Oct 6 Monthly meeting: To be announced
- Sep 30 to Oct 12 BCI China tour and convention,
www.bonsaibci.com/BCI_2010/China_10.html
- Nov 3 Monthly meeting: Mike Hansen will speak about Japanese Black Pine, particularly needle plucking in the fall.
- Dec 1 Monthly meeting: Christmas Party

