



# Bonsai Notebook

*www.austinbonsaisociety.com*

*A Publication of the Austin Bonsai Society*

*March 2011 vol 3*

## **March 2011 Programs**

by Collin Murphy

We've all had the experience of buying a new bonsai tool and then using it for the first time. How sharp it is! It's so easy to use and makes clean cuts that heal nicely. It just feels "right." Then a few months or years later we're using the same tool and really fighting with it. It doesn't make clean cuts, is difficult to open and close, rips some tissue away from the tree when making a cut and is covered with rust and sap. It's frustrating to use and hard on the tree. Wouldn't it be nice for all your tools to have that new-tool feeling?

On March 9, Bill Boytim will give a presentation on sharpening and maintaining bonsai tools. Bill will also cover sharpening equipment that will give the basics for the next workshop and the later presentation and workshop on concave and knob cutters. Specifically, Bill will talk about maintaining and sharpening the cutting edge of scissors, knives, and carving tools using a variety of methods. There will be another presentation this summer about sharpening concave cutters and knob cutters. If you know Bill you know he is an expert on this subject matter and has a lot of knowledge to share.

We'll follow up with a tool sharpening workshop on Tuesday, March 15th. Bring your bonsai scissors, knives, and carving tools to the workshop and learn how to make them as sharp as they were when they were new!

## **Calendar of Events**

**March 9th ABS Monthly Meeting Reception**

**Hosts:**

**Zilker Garden Center 7:00 pm**

**March 9th ABS Monthly Meeting**

**Sharpening bonsai tools**

**with Bill Boytim**

**Zilker Garden Center 7:00 - 9:00 pm**

**March 15th ABS Board Meeting**

**Zilker Garden Center 7:00 - 7:30 pm**

**March 15th ABS Member's Workshop**

**Workshop - follow up on**

**Sharpening tools**

**Zilker Garden Center 7:30 - 9:00 pm**

Proper tool sharpening requires some additional items. These items will be available at the workshop for you to use, or you can purchase your own and bring them to the workshop. The following items will be used during this workshop :

600-900 grit wet stone

1200-1600 grit wet stone

6000 grit wet stone (for grafting knives)

Small magnifying loop

Small anvil

Ball peen hammer

## Austin Bonsai Society Board of Directors

**Mike Watson**  
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**Becki Drozd**  
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**Timmi Kuykendall**  
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The rate of advertising in "Bonsai Notebook" is \$6.00 per month or \$35.00 per year, for two column inches minimum. Additional space must be purchased in increments of two column inches. Two column inches measure approximately 3 1/2 inches wide by 2 inches high. All ads must be camera ready and prepaid. Changes to ads must be received 30 days prior to the month of the desired insertions. Other newsletter content is due on the last day of the month, in order to be published in the next month's newsletter.

John Muller is the editor of "Bonsai Notebook". He may be contacted at [jcm2austx@sprintmail.com](mailto:jcm2austx@sprintmail.com).

## Austin Bonsai on the Internet

Online discussions  
Picture and video sharing  
Questions and answers  
Upcoming events  
*NO SPAM*

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/austinbonsai/>  
or  
[jvmccoy@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jvmccoy@sbcglobal.net).

## President's Message by Mike Watson

Well, in last month's newsletter I predicted more cold weather. Maybe I missed my calling as a weather man! That cold snap was a hum-dinger and the ice and snow happened right on our meeting date. It was a tough call as to whether we would cancel the meeting or not but the possibility of dangerous road conditions was just too much. If anyone was inconvenienced by the cancellation then I sincerely apologize.

Ok, enough about the weather. I wanted to take a moment to remind everyone that it is imperative that you get your dues paid to Pat Ware. I don't need to tell you all that the dues are what pays for the visiting artists as well as other things we take for granted. Please contact Pat as soon as possible to get paid up.

It's repotting season! I hope you're getting more done than I am. If time has gotten away from you like it has for me then you may be scrambling for bonsai soil components. Don't forget that ready made soils are available from your local bonsai vendors. It's a real time saver and a great way to show them support.



**Bastrop dig**  
*David (left), James (center) and Becki (right)  
and all their new Bonsai treasures. Looks like  
they had a great time!*

## ABS December General Meeting Minutes

by Nan Jenkins, Secretary

The meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather.

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## ABS December Board Meeting Minutes

by Nan Jenkins, Secretary

February 15, 2011

Present: Pat Ware, Timmi Kuykendall, Collin Murphy, Becky Drozd, Nan Jenkins, and Mike Watson. Visitors: Charlotte Cranberg and Joey McCoy.

Call to Order: 7:10 pm

The minutes were approved as published in the newsletter.

Pat gave the treasurer's report. January income: \$814.03, expenses: \$540.85. There are still several people who have not paid their dues for 2011.

We need more refreshment volunteers for the months of August, October and November.

The Texas state convention registration packets are available on line and they will be available at the March meeting. Registration fees are \$130 before 4/23 and \$150 after that. There will be an emerging talent competition at the convention for those who have been doing bonsai for three years or less.

Charlotte reported from the Austin Area Garden Clubs meeting. Joey will write an article about bonsai for "Down the Garden Path," the AAGC newsletter.

The Zilker Festival is March 26-27, and ABS needs to provide volunteers for our booth as well as to help the Zilker Festival itself. We are all members and get free

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tickets and parking for our time when we are working.

The ABS exhibit will be May 28-29. Charlotte is checking on the situation for vendors for that.

Collin distributed the list of programs for the club for 2011.

The planning for the 2013 state convention is in process. We should have more information for our next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted.

## JADE GARDENS

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Chuck & Pat Ware

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e-mail: bonsaijg@gmail.com

web page: <http://www.bonsaiehibittexas.com>

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(512) 847-2514

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## Bonsai Calendar

LSBF Convention

Corpus Christi

May 14 - 15, 2011

St Louis Shohin Seminar

Collinsville, IL

May 20 - 22, 2011

<http://www.stlbonsai.org/events.htm>

Austin Bonsai Society Annual Show

May 28 - 29, 2011

Know of an upcoming Bonsai event of interest to club members? Send the details to [jcm2austx@sprintmail.com](mailto:jcm2austx@sprintmail.com)

## RULE OF 20's

By Mark Bynum

*Mark Bynum is a 35 year veteran of the landscaping and nursery business. He is a member of the Lone Star Bonsai Federation, the Bonsai Society of Dallas, and is currently president of the Fort Worth Bonsai Society in Texas.*

Horticultural maintenance of our precious bonsai trees can be an overwhelming burden. The difference in maintaining patio plants in large pots such as a hibiscus or a poodle waxleaf ligustrum compared to maintaining a trident maple bonsai in a small pot is profound. Watering a plant in a large clay pot is simple due to the large root zone. The large volume of soil does not dry so quickly, so you do not have to water as frequently. The root zone is more insulated against the rigors of the hot and cold seasons, so you do not have to protect them as much. The smaller the root zone, the higher your watchfulness must be.

When I began my journey into the bonsai art world, I was always hearing “do this in March” and “do this in August”, etc. The problem here is that our seasons do not start and stop at the same time every year. It seemed to me that using the average ambient temperature to trigger an essential action was a smarter route to follow. I managed a wholesale landscape nursery for a time with acres of plants to care for. At 28° F. we covered all the tender plants. If we did not, we knew it within a week. At 95° we made sure the shade clothes were already up and the sprinkler system was operational. In the bonsai world this temperature regulated maintenance system works too. In an article I wrote on bonsai pot temperatures several years ago I found that it was time to begin protecting the root zone at 90° ambient temperature. Also at 70°, horticultural maintenance items need to be considered. Again at 50° for tropical bonsai, and, as mentioned above, 28° (let's just round this up to 30° to be safe) are key temperatures to initiate some kind of action with our bonsai trees. So now we must take some kind of action at 90°, 70°, 50°, and 30°F. concerning the root zone of bonsai trees. You will quickly notice that these are 20° apart, and thus the very simple memory aid I call the Rule of 20's.

As the temperature rises (↑), there is a certain set of maintenance tasks to perform. As the temperature falls (↓) the opposite action is needed. Keep in mind that these actions are to be taken when the temperatures are consistently reached. For examples,

when the temperature consistently reaches 90° then it is time to water twice a day. When the temperature consistently dips below 50°, tropical plants need protection. The exception to this is the 30° mark.

90° ↑ -set up shade cloth for sun protection or move trees to a shadier location  
-implement other pot temperature controls such as skirting, misting, humidity trays, etc.  
-begin consideration of watering twice a day

↓ -remove shade cloth, skirting, etc.  
-ease up on the watering

70° ↑ -consider watering once a day  
-step up fertilization practices  
-all tropical trees can be moved outside  
-when night temperatures are consistently above 70°, water twice per day

↓ -ease up on watering  
-cut back on fertilization practices  
-begin moving tropical trees into greenhouse or protected area  
-night temperatures below 70°, cut back on watering

50° ↑ -most tropical trees and sub-tropicals can begin to be moved outside  
-remove mulch from around winterized pots and set on benches

↓ -all tropical trees and sub-tropicals should be in greenhouse or protected area  
-begin winterization techniques such as setting pots on ground and mulching

30° (Take these actions every time)

↑ -remove protective coverings

↓ -cover tender trees  
-water

Of course, use common sense when implementing any guide such as this. What is “consistently” where temperatures are involved? Watch out for warm snaps in winter and cold snaps in the fall. Just because it reaches 70° one or two days in a row does not necessarily mean to start watering every day. Temper

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your decisions to fit your environment, however, I think that 70° in Fort Worth will be much the same as 70° around the country! For my feeble mind a memory aid such as the Rule of 20's is a great help in this complex world of bonsai. I hope it will be a great help to you too.

Happy styling,  
Mark Bynum



**February Workshop**  
*(Photos by Joey McCoy)*

## March Bonsai by John Miller

*Editor's Note: 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, climate, with its early springs, long summers, late falls and erratic winters.*

Some tasks being performed this month are repotting, trimming new growth, and watching for the spring flush of insects. Usually you will be going back and forth between all three. An article like this can only tell you what to do not give much in the way of when to do it. Those in the south and even across the metroplex will have a different timetable but the sequence will usually be similar.

The optimum time to repot most outdoor trees is when they are just beginning to grow again as evidenced by the buds starting to swell. As a rule, the elms will be first, maples next, and oaks later. There will always be those exceptions. Cedar elm will hang back and open in the middle of maples. My tridents are usually late. Other species will depend a lot on your own backyard environment. Pines will usually show candles before you can see juniper growth. Things like pomegranate and crape myrtle really depend upon your care. If you are able to take them in and out depending on the weather you may be able to make the start growth early and beat the rush as I do my shohin. I try to do the broadleaf evergreens, yaupons and other hollies, a little later maybe into April.

After repotting you must protect the new roots from freezing. Setting them on the ground with some mulch over the pot will offer several degrees of freeze protection, especially if the late freeze doesn't last more than 1-2 days. A light weight row cover (do not use plastic sheeting) will help protect from a light freeze or a frost that you might get especially on a clear night.

Do not fertilize after repotting until the new growth show some hardening. Then you may apply some organic balls, sparingly at first and then go to a full schedule as the tree slows down.

You should work on your pines accordingly to the method your own teacher taught you. The different techniques all work but you should not mix two techniques, it confuses the plant.

For bonsai that have the required branches and you are developing twigs or maintaining ramification, whether repotted or not, when the new growth starts you should grab your tweezers or scissors. Ones with a rounded point work best. The technique is different for alternate leafed species (als) (elm) than for opposite leafed species (ols) (maple).

On als let the growth go to 5 new leaves. Then pinch (with the tweezers) back to 2 or 3 leaves depending on the desired direction of the new growth. This controls the length of the internodes and diameter of the twig and could give you up to 64 twigs in a year. More twigs divide up the energy flow and mean smaller leaves.

The procedure on ols is more critical. When the two new leaves open you will see the new growing tip between them. If this tip is allowed to grow, the first internode (from the old twig to the new leaves) will also continue to elongate. You must pluck the new tip immediately. On some trees you may have to manually open the new pair of leaves to get the new tip in time. This procedure makes you work on maples every day in order to have good short internodes and perfect ramification. I also sometimes need to manually open the oak leaf (an als) also.

On bonsai that you are still developing the branches, you will need to let them elongate to develop thickness. The cut them back to 2 nodes. When they resprout they will have a direction change and be developing taper.

The worst spring insect seems to be the aphids. The best control is the ladybug which also shows up early. But when they finish their job they have no food so they fly off. I use my organic spray for all insects all summer long. It controls mites, scale, bagworms, anything. Spider mites will also be showing up with warm weather. There can be

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some caterpillars or small worms also. You must keep a sharp eye while you are watering.

My organic spray is 1 tablespoon each of liquid seaweed, fish emulsion, molasses, and 5% apple cider vinegar in one gallon water. Spray both top and bottom of the leaves and also the trunk. When using on the tender first growth, cut the vinegar in half. This spray is most effective when used on a regular basis. I try to spray weekly since the life cycle of mites can be as short as 5 days. If you use something else read the label and follow it. Any insecticide should be applied with a sprayer that makes a fine spray which will coat the leaf evenly. Hose end sprayers are not appropriate for bonsai.

Azaleas should be repotted now also. Do not prune if you want the flowers. If there are a lot of buds on the plant you should pluck some of the so that the remaining buds have space to open fully. Flowering plants that flower on new growth (wisteria and crape myrtle) should be selectively pruned before growth starts to help control the size of the flowering plant.

On those that have not been repotted, apply fertilizer somewhat sparingly at first. You must balance the plants need for fertilizer for healthy growth with its desire to produce a rampant spring growth. After the initial flush slows apply more fertilizer until you get the proper amount for good healthy growth. Again, organic fertilizers feed the plant at a more constant rate.

With all this going on don't forget to plan for obtaining more knowledge about bonsai. Make plans to do hands on things like workshops. Watching the demos and workshops will give you some knowledge but it is the 'hands on effort' that instills it in your head so that it will be there when your little tree calls for you.

A real good place to go is the LSBF convention in Corpus Christi May 13-15. Go to [www.corpuschristibonsaiclub.org](http://www.corpuschristibonsaiclub.org) for info. Also be sure to take advantage of the hard work your officers have done to provide many opportunities locally.

## REMEMBER

**Yearly dues are due in January. The membership rates are :**

**\$30.00 for an individual membership**

**\$35.00 for a family membership**

**\$15.00 for a student membership**

*Only club members who have paid the current year's membership dues receive newsletters, are listed in the Membership Directory and can participate in the monthly workshops.*

***Please sign-up for Refreshments!***

# Bonsai Notebook

Austin Bonsai Society  
P.O. Box 340474  
Austin, Texas 78734



The Austin Bonsai Society is a nonprofit organization which exists to help in providing guidance and education for individuals in their desire to learn and expand their knowledge and skill in the arts of bonsai.

The Society holds regular meetings, twelve months a year, on the second Wednesday of each month. Our social period begins at 7:00 PM, followed by our program at 7:30 PM. Normally, unless announced otherwise, these meetings are held in the Zilker Garden Center building, located on Barton Springs Road in Zilker Park, Austin, Texas. We offer a monthly program of interest to the general membership.

The cost of membership is presently only \$30.00 for an individual and \$35.00 for a family membership.

For additional information, please contact the Austin Bonsai Society at P.O. Box 340474, Austin, Texas 78734

