



Bonsai Notebook



A Publication of the Austin Bonsai Society

February 2005

President's Message

by Pete Quisenberry

I would like to start off by thanking Dr. Bill Cody, for his excellent talk at the January meeting on collecting native trees, and Terry Ward, for conducting the fourth Wednesday members study group.

The study group for January was the creation of stone-clasping trident maples. Terry also provided the trees.

January and February are the coldest months of the year in Austin, and are the prime repotting time, for deciduous varieties. To assist members in this area, Chuck Ware is giving a talk on bonsai soils and repotting, at the February general club meeting.

We just received the sad news that Tyrone Sander's daughter, Tawnya, passed away. Our deepest sympathies and warmest regards go out to Tyrone and his family.



<http://www.main.org/bonsai/>

Calendar of Events



February

- 9th **Monthly Meeting at Zilker Garden Center**
7-7:30 pm **Socialize and "Ask A Member"**
- 7:30 pm **Monthly program with Chuck Ware on repotting**
- 16th **7:00 pm Monthly Board Meeting at Zilker Garden Center**
- 23rd **7:00 pm Repotting at the Members' Study Group**
- 19th **Shohin Society of Texas**
Persimmon Hill Bonsai 10:30am
Refinement How-to

May

- 13th-15th **LSBF Convention**
Fort Worth (see inside)
- 28th-31st **World Bonsai Convention**
Washington D.C.



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2004 balanced with a bit to spare. Interest keeps growing on the two CDs for the proposed joint convention with San Antonio, which has been cancelled in favor of Monaco as a sight (we wish).

Mike Hansen invited members to a lecture-demo by Hiro Yamaj on Jan. 30th at his studio.

Terry Ward introduced Dr. Bill Cody, who spoke on collecting native trees. He covered mostly ashe junipers.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30.



Austin Bonsai Society Board Meeting

The January 2005 meeting of the Board was called to order at 8:14 pm by President Carl Quisenberry. Present, in addition to the President, were Chuck and Pat Ware, Glenda Konopka, Terry Ward (past VP), Stephanie Quisenberry, Jim Trahan, Alisan Clarke, and Charlotte Cranberg.

Treasurer, Pat Ware, presented the end of year budget report and a comparison report with the previous year. This was audited by Alisan Clarke and Charlotte Cranberg.

After some discussion, it was decided to pay BCI only 1 year rather than 3 for renewal of membership and not to add a requested extra donation. There was annoyance expressed at the shabby and unethical treatment given the Austin and SanAntonio clubs over the planned, and subsequently cancelled, convention they were to sponsor.

The remainder of the meeting was spent setting up the programs for 2005. They were:

GENERAL MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm at the Austin Area Garden Center by President, Carl Quisenberry. Guests Mike Morgan, LSBF delegate from Longview, Dan Peters, and Gary Carlisle were introduced.

Hostesses Pat Ware and Alisan Clarke were thanked.

The minutes were accepted as published.

AAGC representative, Charlotte Cranberg, gave the garden center report.

Treasurer Pat Ware reported that the budget for



February - Soil and repotting with Chuck Ware



March - Pruning and shaping workshop with Terry Ward

April - Wiring workshop

May - LSBF artist, Marty Klajnowski, and preparation for our May show.

June - "New Trees from Old" roundtable with three senior members critiquing

July - Photo workshop with Jim Trahan

August - Tropical trees at the joint meeting with San Antonio in Austin.

September - Annual auction

October - possibly Kathy Shanner

November - Mike Hansen

December - annual Christmas Party

January - Nebari and digs



February Programs

by Jim Trahan

It's the perfect time of the year for repotting. Buds are beginning to swell and the temperatures are still cool enough that we can transplant

conifers with ease. That's why we have two complementary programs scheduled for February, and they are both about getting dirty.

For our **Monthly Meeting** Chuck Ware will elaborate on soil theory as it applies to particle size and pot dimensions. In addition Chuck will demonstrate the proper way to repot a bonsai, with considerations made for specific species. As always, Chuck will be available to answer your questions.

Rather than make a mess in your own home or garden come to the 3rd Wednesday **Study Group** on Febru-

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ary 23rd to do all of your repotting. There you will be able to apply your new found knowledge, make a mess, and perhaps have fun doing it. The only thing required is that you bring your own trees, tools, and soil. Senior members will be available for consultation.

This is an open **Study Group** which makes this is an excellent opportunity for us to rally around our trees, shake muddy hands, and get to know one another. I hope to see you there.



The Texas State Bonsai Exhibit, Inc.

We're having a Garage Sale!

Yes, again- in the Fall. We wanted you to know now, so that when you do your Spring house cleaning you don't throw out any old, good stuff that can make money for us. Many thanks, Elaine White



Tag it and save it until Fall, Please!

Texas is Nothing Like Colorado

I miss the cooler places. Here songbirds sound like Barking New Years toys.

Submitted by Jim Trahan



January Garden Council Report, 2004

by Charlotte Cranberg

There is a keen desire on the part of PARD and the city manager to invest more in Zilker Botanic Garden and bring us back to the former level of support that we had before the drain in recent years. They want to go even further and bring us up to the national financial level for gardens our size. Farhad Madroni, the Acting Asst Director for PARD spoke of a five year plan which is

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being drawn up this year for improvements in Zilker Gardens and the funding needed. There is a general feeling that Zilker is the jewel in the crown of Austin and needs to get top priority. The goal is to hire full time gardeners for the Hartman garden and the Oriental Garden. The area they are most concerned about is the Oriental Garden which I'm sure most of you have noticed has been sadly neglected. The Oriental Garden was the first garden and was created by Isamu Taniguchi and was quite lovely 20 years ago. The first step toward this will be a meeting on Friday January 28th with Henry Painter from the Ft Worth Botanic Garden and his Senior Gardener for their Japanese garden. It will start at 9AM with a presentation, including slides, from the Ft Worth people to be followed by a tour of our garden. There will then be workshops, of small groups, discussing different aspects of the Oriental Garden. They need guidance on what to do with the garden and hope to get input from the Oriental community and any other interested persons. Mr. Taniguchi



had his own vision and used local materials and adaptations to the Western climate. Please come to this if you are interested. Even if you don't want to make a contribution you will learn a lot about oriental gardens.

The gift shop (Chrysalis) reported a profit of \$35,996.58 for 2004. This was a profit increase of \$3,401.23 over 2003. Thanks for all of you who have supported Chrysalis and made it a top fund raiser for the Garden Center.

Discussion of the plant mobile was postponed to next month after discussions with the Wildflower Center are held.

If you have any articles, about shows or meetings, get them to Shaun Jordan by Jan.31st for publication on the AAGC web site newsletter.

Turn in your volunteer hours each meeting for the previous month. Pleeze, I need to hear from you all.

The big push now is for volunteers for the Zilker Garden Festival coming up April 2nd and 3rd. Call me or sign up at the next club meeting for work

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doing the following: collect tickets at gates, garden ranger, flower show hostess, gift shop sales, golf cart driver, holding area, information gazebo, kids corner,

water concession, or help Russell hang signs in the gardens (one day job for those not afraid of climbing a ladder). Sign up for a 1, 2 or 3 hour stint. Get a family member or friend to sign up. Golf cart drivers must be members. You will get a free parking pass and will have a lot of fun chatting with other gardeners and go away feeling great that you did something for your community and club.

Austin Herb society is presenting a program on "Health from the Rain forest" on Feb.12 from 9AM to 12:30PM. Featured speaker will be Leslie Taylor a naturopath. Exotic treats, a light breakfast, all about medicinal plants, displays of raw materials and handcrafts form the Amazon and books, plants and products to buy. Cost \$20 for all club members (that's us), \$30 for others. They put on a great program so come on out. You won't regret it.



THE RUDIMENTS OF REPOTTING

by Jean C. Smith

I have had great success the past few years in organizing my repotting on an assembly line basis! Last spring, just before it was time to repot, I gave a program for my club on some of the procedures and reasons for same, and they said it helped. I hope it will do the same for you. Much of the procedure you probably already know, but maybe something will prove to be a "hot tip".

I mix my soil ahead of time in a huge (30 gallon) trash container. I use 1/3 each potting soil, Turface, and sharp gravel, plus about two table-spoons of "Perk" for every four or five gallons of soil mix to give added trace elements. I also keep a bucket of sharp, small gravel (or very coarse sand) close by, as well as a bucket of Turface. Some plants require more sand (like pines), and some require more



moisture retention (like jaboticaba and azaleas), and the basic mix can be altered to suit at the moment of repotting. Mix for cascades should be very coarse.

Always let your plants to be repotted dry out for a few days before repotting, then choose a place out of the sun and wind. Loosen the root ball from the walls of the pot with a dull knife blade. Soften the root ball mass with your fingers, gently comb out the roots, shaking the old soil loose. Clean out and even gouge out the area directly below the trunk. Trim off old, heavy, or dead roots and cut back approximately one-third.

Conifers, pines, all evergreens usually need repotting every two to four years. Deciduous trees need it more often, usually annually; it is impossible to be exact. Each tree is different, and you must learn to look for telltale signs. Let the condition of the bonsai be your guide.

If leaf color fades, lower leaves wither, the root ball swells, pushes up out of the pot and hardens, or the root ball does not absorb water well, it is certainly time to slip the plant out of the pot and examine its condition. If, on the other hand, it does not seem to be in any trouble, do not repot. Repotting sometimes causes problems like new shoots and juvenile foliage, and trunks can even lose their ancient appearance. When you are repotting you are given an opportunity to study the condition of the roots, bugs, root rot, and other things to correct.

Transplanting is best done in the fall and the spring. Be more careful in the fall. Repot around the equinox both times. The proper time varies, of course, but is in the spring as buds are swelling but not yet sprouting. A rule of thumb for the priority is: fast growers first, slower (conifers) later.

Use sharp scissors when cutting off the roots since dull scissors can cause root rot. Cut roots off where they start to hang downward, about 1" to 1 1/2" below the new soil level. Apply tree seal to

any large cuts. Cut the roots directly below the trunk at right angles, then spray the root ball with a heavy Super Thrive solution and place in a plastic bag or in a basin of 40 to 50 drops of Super Thrive per gallon of solution.

Clean the pot well, replace the screen if necessary and put long, fine wires through the holes to tie the root ball in the pot. Place medium gravel in the bottom of the pot (unless it is a very shallow tray), then a layer of coarse soil mix mounded at the spot where the cleaned root



ball will be placed. Push, with a twist, the root ball into the mounded soil. Spread the roots out straight in a radial pattern. Shake dry soil mix in, using a chopstick. Watch out for air pockets! The soil must stay loose so that oxygen may circulate. Make it firmer for conifers. Stabilize the tree now with your tie down wires . . . not too tight . . . allow for expansion. Tap on the pot to settle the soil. It should stay below the pot edge so that soil won't wash out. If the pot is extremely shallow, mound if necessary to keep the base of the trunk higher than the top of the pot. The mound should be the same height or a little higher than the depth of the pot.

Trim the tree, hopefully, the same amount as the root ball was trimmed. Place in the shade out of the wind for three or four days, then bring gradually into morning sun, but still out of the wind. Spray the foliage during this period. Check for drying, but do not water the root ball unless it get dry on top. Newly trimmed roots will not require as much water, and overwatering can cause root rot.

'Do not replace wire for about ten days after repotting, and do not fertilize for at least 30 days. In fall repotting, it helps considerably if you give a good fertilization about two weeks ahead.



Repotting time comes rather like Christmas. It is a year away, and then suddenly it is here! Take this opportunity to prepare your soil mix, wires, and a good comfortable spot. Mark your trees for repotting, and, when the time comes, just line them up in order and get busy. It is amazing how many you can repot in just a little while if you have it organized. Be sure to fix up a sink or basin close at hand with Super Thrive solution, and when you have repotted a tree, place it in the solution to let it soak up well from the bottom.

Florida Bonsai editor's note: A suitable substitute for potting soil is sieved pine bark or redwood bark. We now use ground, washed, sieved flower rock in place of sharp gravel.

Reprinted from *FLORIDA BONSAI*, Vol. XXII, No. 1, 1992, pp. 28-30.



BASIC SOIL MIXES

by Hud Nordin hud@NETCOM.COM

QUESTION: I am interested in getting into bonsai. I see references to a "basic mix". Could someone tell me what goes into a basic mix?

RESPONSE: Oh sure. Try to start a religious war. There are as many, no probably more, recipes for bonsai soil as there are bonsaiists, and each and every one is cherished and defended, and many are even promoted. Before you accept anyone's recipe as gospel, realize 1) it probably works for

them in their climate and with their skills, 2) next week, said anyone may well be touting a different recipe. One would be wise to be suspicious of any recipe, but open-minded, too. If you are curious, try it for a season or two. If it works for you, great. If not, there are plenty of other recipes to try.

I'll try to describe a "basic mix" without stepping on too many toes; forgive my wishywashiness. No. Oh, heck, let me turn to Dorothy Young's *Bonsai: The Art and Technique* for a definition. If anyone is upset with it, tell HER. She spends a chapter describing several basic mixes. Each is designed to provide the basics of what all bonsai need, mainly: support, moisture retention, and aeration. Much research has pointed to required ratios in potting soils of roughly 50 percent solids, 25 percent water, and 25 percent air.

They are *basic* mixes in that they serve a wide variety of trees as is and are also easily amendable to provide needs for specific trees that might, for instance, require a little more or a little less moisture retention. A basic mix can be generated in bulk and then fine-tuned for individual applications. Too, a basic mix is not a universal, but can be tuned, for instance, to a climate or a grower's style. In a hot, dry climate one may want to bias the basic mix toward more water retention, and then fine tune the result for individual trees. Often portions of the mix recipes are composed of substitutable parts due to their ease or difficulty of acquisition from local sources.

Young provides a useful table of common (to bonsai soils in the U.S.) ingredients versus function:

Weight: Coarse sand and gravel screenings, crushed granite or shale, basic slag and slag by-products

Water Retention: Sphagnum peat moss, Michigan peat, humus, soil, prepackaged soilless mix



3) Michigan peat or sphagnum moss 40%,
crushed granite 60%.

4) Prepackaged mix and aggregates in equal
parts.

Each gets much discussion, and possible
substitutes are suggested. Besides the common in-
gredients in the table above, other potential ingredi-
ents are: fir bark (water retention; I like it), poultry
grit (weight and aeration; where it is NOT crushed
shells or limestone), expanded slag (for weight and
aeration; like hadite), crushed clay brick (weight and
aeration), fired calcined clays (all functions; like
Turface™).

Now, *if* I were smart, I would have just sent
you to the web for a search that might discover such
as: Brent Walston's excellent essay at [http://
www.pacific.net/~bonsai/soils.htm](http://www.pacific.net/~bonsai/soils.htm) But, I'm not.
Good luck in your quest for the perfect soil. As soon
as you find it, let us all know. :-)

(Many thanks to Alan Walker for forwarding this piece
from his archives)

New Item for Members:

The Notebook is making space available for a
"Wanted/ Will Swap/Selling/Giving Away" column for
members-only (this is not a commercial enterprise for
our club, simply a convenient way to get in touch with
other members).

If you have any unwanted, never-used, duplicative, or
'I simply will never have a need for this' bonsai-related
items, i.e., trees, pots, tools, aprons, bags, pins, soil,
turntables, books and magazines (remember, our
library always needs additions!), or free Spurs tickets
(just kidding), that you want to swap for something
else, give away, or sell, this is the place to post it. If
you're looking for something bonsai you can't find
anywhere else and suspect it might be lurking in the
corner of someone's potting shed, this is the place to
post that, too. We're hoping this will be a fun venue,
so send us your "stuff" to post!

The Editor and/or ABS Board reserve the right to
discuss any "ad" with the submitting member prior to
publication.



From Pat Ware: This is the last newsletter you will
receive unless dues are paid at the February
monthly meeting or mailed to me in time to arrive
prior to February 20th; the new directories will be
distributed at the March meeting to paid members.



Thanks to Jim Trahan



On behalf of the Austin Herb Society:

You are invited!! Please share this information with your club members.

All AAGC members, their friends, and family are invited to attend the Austin Herb Society February 12 seminar at the \$20 rate.

Don't miss this fabulous event featuring Leslie Taylor, ND. We will focus on "Health from the Rainforest." We are offering:

- A stimulating presentation about medicinal plants from the rainforest of South America
- Includes a light breakfast and exotic treats of fruits, nuts, chocolate, teas and juices of South America
- Displays of raw materials and handcrafts from the Amazon
- Books, plants and products will be available

Please print and complete below.

Enclosed is a check/money order for \$_____ for _____ (#) to attend the AHS Seminar, Health from the Rainforest, featuring Leslie Taylor. Registration is also being taken on-site.

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For more information email abc@herbalgram.org

For those Austin Bonsai Society members renewing their membership by mail, please complete and mail the following with your payment to Pat Ware:

Name(s): _____

Mailing address: _____

Best contact phone number: (source) _____ Number: _____ Best time to call: AM/PM

E-mail address: _____

Would you prefer the Notebook to be sent to you via e-mail, hard-copy, or both? (please circle one)

Y N hard-copy both ways

The Austin Bonsai Society is a non-profit 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 7:30PM. 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 nominal, presently only \$25.00 for an individual and \$30.00 for a family membership.



Please contact the Austin Bonsai Society at P. O. Box 340474, Austin, Tx. 78734 for more information.

<http://www.main.org/bonsai/>

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