



Bonsai Notebook

www.austinbonsaisociety.com

A Publication of the Austin Bonsai Society

February 2019 vol 100

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Calendar of Events

- **Wed February 13**
6:30pm - 9:00pm
Yamadori and containers
- **Tues February 19**
7:00pm - 9:00pm
Member's workshop - BYOT
Board meeting

2019 Board of Directors

Brandon Baldauf
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Mike Garza
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Roland Lopez
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Treasurer

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Volunteers

Ruby Chaing
Pat Ware
Food

Gloria Norberg
Trees

President's Message

By Brandon Baldauf

Greetings Austin Bonsai Society,

It was fantastic to see everyone last month during our January meeting. Special thanks to Chuck for his thought provoking presentation demonstrating the magic of soil and water tables. I've shared a few pictures and concepts he shared on our Austin Bonsai Society Instagram account.

For the month of February, Mike Garza and I are going to co-demonstrate the methodology for collecting Yamadori, frugally building containers, and the basics of repotting a tree. Some of the items we build will be available for raffle including a collected tree. Hope to see you there.

We have some upcoming events for your enjoyment, please reach out if you need more information:

- 2/19 - ABS Tuesday Workshop | Club Repotting
Members can bring in 1 small-medium tree, soil will be provided; bring any other supplies you might need!
- 2/24 - Burton Ranch Club Dig (email Brandon with interest)
- 3/2 & 3/3 - S. Texas Club Dig (email webmaster.austinbonsaisociety@gmail.com for a digital copy of the information. Return signed waiver form and confirm headcount no later than 2/19)

The board has met for the first time in 2019 and we will be publishing our full annual calendar in the membership directory. It looks to be a fun year with a wide variety of presentations. Thank you for your support and as always we're open to any feedback or ideas you might have!

Cheers,
Brandon

Reminder for club membership

2019 DUES are DUE!!

Individual	\$30
Family	\$35
Newsletter monthly advertisements:	\$35
Directory advertisement:	\$10

Come to the meeting and pay by cash/check/credit card or send your payment to Gloria Norberg, 7413 Lady Suzanne's Court, Austin TX 78729.

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Vice President's Message

By Mike Garza

Hello my fellow Bonsai friends. I hope y'all had a great January. First off I would like to thank Chuck for that amazing and in depth presentation on soils. I found it really helpful on understanding what is going on in our pots. He really did a great job on the visual demonstration with the sponges.

January has ended and February has come and I am excited for winter to be over. Although spring can get really hectic and busy for us there is nothing I look forward to more. The buds start swelling and the trees start waking up from dormancy.

As winter comes to an end and spring starts it is a really busy time for us Bonsai enthusiasts. Besides repotting, repotting, and more repotting, it is time to start collecting. Last year was a incredibly busy digging season for us and I don't see it trending any other way. With that being said, most of us struggle with finding pots in the right size for our collected yamadori. So, for our February meeting Brandon and I will be giving our presentation on different types of pots and custom lumber pots that are inexpensive yet effective. We look forward to seeing y'all soon.

January Meeting

Mystery of Soil



Photos by May Lau

January Meeting

Photos by May Lau



February Bonsai

By John Miller

What happens when you miss a turn in removing wire from your bonsai? You get a large swelling in the branch that destroys the smooth taper you are working for. The only rule for removing wire is to start with the end of the wire and work down the wire completely to the other end, no jumping from wire to wire. To do this you have a choice--you can untwist the wire or you can cut each loop. If you cut it is very easy to miss a loop. The only sure way is to develop a routine. Hold the tip with pliers while you cut the next loop, remove the cut loop, lay it aside keeping your eye on the cut end, hold the new cut tip and repeat. Do not get distracted and do something else. Following a routine keeps you on the one job.

February is the start of the active cycle for bonsai, first the repotting when new growth is first evident, then the refinement process starts as soon as the green comes, all the while tending to the tasks of watering, feeding, and watching for insects. Spring is a long drawn out affair and each species has its own time table in dealing with it. To be really successful in bonsai, then, you must know what each species you have will need and how it responds to **'YOUR'** backyard climate. If you have kept your trees from freezing they will want to start growing much earlier than those kept outside all winter. Typically, in my collection which stays outside, the elms will be first, foliage showing about the end of February or the first of March depending on the winter, along with the earliest maples. Then later in March, the rest of the maples and most of the others. The deciduous oaks will come

out around April 1. Out here in the country I am 2 or 3 weeks later than I was in town, 30 miles away. The timetable has to be your own set by watching the trees themselves. All bonsai functions should be done when your tree tells you that the timing is right.

Repotting 'can' be done at any time during the dormancy but new roots are susceptible to freezing so you have to have some place to protect them after repotting. If not repotting this year, you can help weed control by removing the top ¼" of soil and replace it with new soil. The best time to repot the deciduous temperate zone trees is when the buds are just beginning to swell but before green is showing. Generally this will be before the last of the freezing weather. Trees that leaf out early, maples and elms, can withstand a few degrees of frost but if repotted you should protect the newly growing roots. Sometimes this just means setting them on the ground. Some species such as the oaks and willows are naturally programmed to wait much later so that there is very little chance to get nipped.

The newer wisdom on azaleas is that you also repot them at this time. The roots will be reestablished by blooming time. This is much easier on the tree than waiting until after bloom when the temperature will be hot. Before blooming starts you will be removing a lot of excess buds anyway which will reduce the stress on the tree at that time. Remove enough buds to allow the remaining flowers to have room to fully open. This should be done in late February or early March on the early blooming species (Karume) but may go

later in March for the Satsuki types.

Refinement is the process that makes a well styled tree look great developing fine ramification and obtaining smaller leaves. Part of the refinement starts as soon as new growth appears. Keep it pinched so you keep the internodes short and develop a compact set of twigs with small leaves on the branches. On alternate leaved species (e.g. elms) pinch when the shoot gets 4 or 5 leaves. Fingernails or shears can be used. If the twig gets too long it will be tough and you have to use shears. On opposite leaved trees (maples) pinch the central shoot as soon as it can be distinguished from the two leaves. To do this really right you need to use tweezers with a dull point.

Development pruning is difficult for beginners in that to develop thickness you need to let the new branch grow wild which destroys the look of your 'bonsai'. You also will have long internodes which will not produce buds at the right places especially on the opposite leaved species. You need to do refinement pruning the first couple of times to get some short internodes and then let the tips go wild.

Spring flowering plants will have their buds set on last years growth so pruning them will remove some flowers. Those that bloom later in the year will generally bloom on this years growth. Pruning them will reduce the amount of flowers. In some cases such as crape myrtle, tip pruning of the branch will result in no flowers at all. In these cases you must decide which is most important, ramification or flowers. An compromise would be to prune the branch shorter than you normally would and then let it bloom on new growth which will at the proper length, at least for the first flowering of the season.

When the growth starts the tree will need fertilizer. However, use one that has a small amount of nitrogen (the first number). The tree is naturally programmed to grow rapidly at this time so you don't need to encourage it further. Feed lightly to maintain a healthy green foliage. Ideally use an organic fertilizer which provides nutrients more slowly when the weather is cool. Trace minerals should be added to help with both the foliage color and the color of blooms.

If you have not used an horticultural oil, the time is fast running out. The oil would be used to kill scale and overwintering mites and other boogers. When new growth starts oil might damage the tender foliage. When new growth starts, the problems to look for are the above mentioned mites but especially aphids and mealy bugs. These can be controlled as well as giving the plants the required fertilizer by using an organic spray. (1 tablespoon each of liquid kelp, liquid fish emulsion, apple cider vinegar (5%), and molasses in one gallon of water. Or use a commercial mix like Garrett Juice. All these are available in any organic nursery.) If leaf spot, mildew or any other fungal problems appear, use a baking soda (sodium bicarbonate), potassium bicarbonate spray, or a commercial fungicide.

An important job which many neglect saying they are not going to show any trees is to detail their trees. This makes them look their best and that helps give you incentive to follow other good practices. Start by checking the branches. Prune any out of place or too long twigs. Remove any unnecessary wire, that is wire on limbs that have set in place. Treat any jin and shari that needs it. Then move down to the pot. Be sure it is clean and all lime deposits are removed. Steel wool works great to clean pots. A coating with a very light wax polish

such as leaf shine will make the pot look good and helps keep the mineral deposits from forming. Then check the soil. It should cover the outer roots. The surface of the soil must be clean of any fallen leaves or other debris. Now it looks so good you might as well take it to a show.



New Members

Sally Cotter

Rusty Willmon and

Ken Williams

Jacob Hannusch

Recruiting Authors

With a nod of respect to John Miller, who has been diligently writing monthly columns for our newsletter, we would also like to take this time to invite interested members with knowledge and experiences of local Austin conditions to write articles for beginners and potential aspirants keen on raising bonsai. The Bonsai Notebook is looking for a new voice to author a column providing helpful reminders and tips dedicated to caring for bonsai. Be it a monthly routine or winter procedures, we'd like to welcome new perspectives and experiences to be shared in this newsletter. If interested, please contact Simon Tse at tse_simon@hotmail.com.

A warm thank you to John Miller for writing the latest columns. Even I, as the editor, may have taken these last months for granted and have been reminded that life is a charming companion that deserves to be appreciated every day. Thank you for your helpful words!

JADE GARDENS
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OWNERS  **Chuck and Pat Ware**

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About Us

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, contact the Austin Bonsai Society at P.O. Box 340474, Austin, TX 78734.