



# Bonsai Notebook

*A Publication of the Austin Bonsai Society*

*October 2005*

## October Programs

by Jim Trahan

This month we have guest artist Kathy Shaner. For our General Meeting on October 12<sup>th</sup>, Kathy will give a **lecture/demo** on a tree to be raffled-off at the end of the program. Kathy is regarded as one of California's best instructors and is well known internationally for her excellence in the art of bonsai. Having apprenticed under the Japanese bonsai master Yasuo Mitsuya, she was certified as a master by the Nippon Bonsai Kyodo Kumaii. This made her the first non-Japanese and the first woman to be certified as a bonsai master. She is currently the resident bonsai master at the El Dorado Bonsai School, and curator of the Golden State Bonsai Collection-North in Oakland, California. Kathy is an amazing artist and teacher. We are very fortunate to have Kathy as our guest.

Our Study Group on October 26<sup>th</sup> will be an open **workshop**. The premise behind this is that members can bring anything to work on. This includes being able to simply come and ask for assistance. Our social period before each meeting is often too short for us to get the assistance we need. Other times we simply don't have enough time to finish the work we began during a workshop. For example, I will be bringing the tree that I consulted with Marc Noelanders about at our last meeting. I really liked his design and will begin the process of redesigning the tree. This open workshop was worked into the schedule specifically to give everyone an opportunity to socialize and work on whatever they have left to do before the end of the growing season.

I've heard a lot of positive feedback on the workshop with Marc Noelanders. As it turned out it became more of a consultation than a workshop, but for what we learned it was worth it. There was no way I was going to work on my tree as Marc discussed the design strengths and weaknesses of the other trees. I would like to take this moment to thank Chuck Ware for suggesting to Marc that he present the workshop in the manner than he did. It was a good suggestion and we are all better for it. This suggestion was made to the Longview club and they were also very happy with the results!

## Calendar of Events

- Oct 12**    **Monthly Meeting**  
**Kathy Shaner Lecture/Demo**  
**Zilker Garden Center**
  
- Oct 19**    **Board Meeting**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Zilker Garden Center**
  
- Oct 29**    **ABS Annual Garage Sale**  
**8AM to 3PM**  
**4005 Edgemont**
  
- Nov 9**    **Monthly Meeting**  
**Annual Auction**  
**TTSBE Cruise Drawing**

**2006**

- July 14-16**    **LSBF Convention in**  
**Corpus Christi, Texas**

The bunjin workshop with Mike Hansen was a success. We had quite a few nice trees by the end of the workshop. Everyone seemed to have fun. Some of the observers were baffled by our funny looking trees, but I am certain that some of these trees will make it into our next show.

The Board has voted to try a new auction format this year to boost the quality of trees being auctioned. Our hope is that by this we can boost the amount of money we raise for the club. Inside, you will find the details of the new auction format. Please read the details so that you will be ready for the upcoming auction.

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“Bonsai Notebook” is the monthly newsletter of the Austin Bonsai Society, Inc., and is provided to its members without cost.

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.

Articles may be submitted, by the 20th of the month, for publication to the Editor, in care of the Austin Bonsai Society, 8205 Beaver Brook Lane, Austin, Texas 78748. Original articles for the “Bonsai Notebook” may be reprinted, if credit is given to the author and to “Bonsai Notebook”.

## **New Auction Format**

by Jim Trahan

If you are like me then you probably have a tree that is worth a lot but you’ve become bored with it over time. With so much money invested in the tree and pot it’s difficult to feel comfortable donating it outright to an auction. Yet there’s someone out there that would enjoy it more. For just this case, the Board has made it possible to get the value of your tree and also help the club raise money at the biggest club booster of the year.

Over the past few years the quality of material that has been donated has declined. As a result, the earnings from the auctions have declined as well. Recognizing that the material for a nice auction is available, we voted to allow members to auction items and split the closing bid 80/20. Eighty percent of the closing bid will go to the donating owner. Here is how it will work:

- Only items with a reserve greater than \$50 are eligible for the 80/20 split.
- Let the Treasurer know that you will be selling items at an 80/20 split. You may contact Pat Ware at 512/847-2514.
- Each 80/20 seller must supply a reserve for the auctioned item.
- The starting bid value will be approximately 20% less than the reserve.
- If the reserve is not met then the seller is given the option to sell the item below the reserve. A small charge of \$5 must be paid to the club if the seller does not accept the bid.
- The Treasurer will mail checks to the 80/20 sellers shortly after the auction.
- Items may still be donated outright to the auction.

There are no other changes to the auction format. As always, items may be donated 100% to the club auction. But we hope you will consider donating a nicer tree if you know that you will get a return on the value of your tree. By bringing in higher quality material we can encourage members to get more excited about participating in the auction and in the end provide a better club for you. More money in the treasury means better programs for you. If you have questions or comments about the new format, please e-mail me at [malhomme@austin.rr.com](mailto:malhomme@austin.rr.com). I really think that this will add some excitement back to our club auctions!

# Mark Noelanders' Workshop

photographs by Charlotte Cranberg



*Mark sketching styling options of trees*



## President's Message

by Carl Quisenberry

It is hard to believe fall is here. The temperature was over 100, the fourth week of September and topped out at 108 degrees. Aren't we supposed to start winterizing our trees this month? Joey McCoy is Chairman of the Nominating Committee, for club officers. If he or another committee member, contacts you, please give serious consideration to a seat on the board. I have gained much more knowledge and experience from of my time, than I have put in. It is a great way to grow and have a positive impact on the club.

Editing our newsletter has been another opportunity to learn. Thank you all for your support. Please continue giving me your suggestions, I appreciate the advice and help. This edition has pictures of Marc Noelanders' workshop and of Mike's bunjin Members Workshop, along with an article on bunjin. Mike's workshop was very interesting and a new area of Bonsai for me. I would encourage everyone to attend our third Wednesday workshops, even if you don't want to work on the topic tree. There is so much to learn from the teachers and students. Our members enjoy sharing their knowledge of our hobby. Attendance has been good this year. If you have never been to a Member's Workshop, please do yourself a favor. Come out and learn.

### *The Texas State Bonsai Exhibit*

*This is the month to gather up your garage sale donations. Kitchen and children items, tools, books and electronics. If possible put them in plastic garbage bags or boxes and bring them to the meeting October 12th.*

*If you have large items such as furniture, please bring them to Audrey's house, Friday October 28th from 9AM to 5PM, at 4005 Edgemont (behind Camp Mabry) The sale will be October 29th, from 8AM to 3PM, and we can use some volunteers!!*

*Those that have not sold all of their Cruise Tickets have until November 2nd to mail them to Bill Cody. If you have stubs and money to turn in, we will collect them at the October 12th meeting.*

*Thanks for all of your help,  
Elaine*

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## Board Meeting Minutes

by Charlotte Cranberg

The September board meeting was called to order at 7:20 PM at the Austin Area Garden Center by President, Carl Quisenberry. Present were Carl, Jim Trahan, Alisan Clarke, Charlotte Cranberg, Chuck and Pat Ware.

Treasurer, Pat Ware reported we have \$620.86 in income over expenses for the year to date. Vice President, Jim Trahan reported on the proposal to sell trees valued over \$50 on an 80/20 plan and have a minimum bid. If the reserve isn't met, the owner is asked if he/she wants to sell for less. A \$5 charge will be levied for a no sale on those trees. Disbursement of checks would be within one week. The Dallas club found that the amount and quality of their material improved with this plan and the club made more money. The plan will be presented to the membership to vote on at the October meeting. Pat will need to know ahead about these minimum bid trees.

Charlotte gave a report on garden council rules, regulations and other matters. It was voted to give the garden council \$50 instead of having a table at the Holiday Bazaar. Joey McCoy was appointed Chairman of the Nominating Committee. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

### **You Might be Hooked on Bonsai if:**

... You know someone who has been sent to the ER with "bonsai" injuries.

... You have enough spilled bonsai soil on the floor of your vehicle to re-pot a tree.

... If you plan to get GPS so you can easily find trees in nature prepared for collecting, next year.

... If you think a bag of soil is a nice gift.

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### Literati or Bunjin Bonsai

Literati bonsai is an "approach" or "interpretation" within bonsai and not a specific style in and of itself. It is somewhat difficult to describe. However, we shall try. Consider the following comments by bonsai artist Harry Tomlinson:

Also called bunjin, this style of tree is often seen at the seashore or in areas where trees have grown up reaching for the light in competition with other trees that have since died or been felled. Characteristically, the trunk line flows or twists through several curves. Some trees grow this way with old age - the Scots pine naturally assumes this style in maturity. Most conifers can be recommended for growing as literati, and rugged deciduous trees such as flowering apricot and hawthorn.

#### *Difficult To Define*

Difficult to define precisely, this style breaks many rules but nevertheless the trees have an air of refined elegance. According to Kevin Landdeck at UC Berkeley, the Japanese term "bunjin" is derived from the Chinese "wenren" which is a term that came into widespread usage during the Song dynasty (960-1278) to refer to scholars (often government officials) who engaged in literary and painterly arts. These men saw themselves as embodying a particular lofty attitude toward the arts, particularly a dedication to the "amateur ideal" and a naturalistic approach. They disdained and denounced the widespread commercialization of art (i.e., they didn't like professional painters and took exception to their overly contrived or artificial scenes). Thus, the term "wenren" came to embody an extremely cultivated (but noncommercial!) artistic sensibility that purported to "get back to nature." In a sense, the wenren ideal, was a

rejection of the profound forces of commercialization sweeping through Chinese society at that time. The slender trees of these "wenren" painters had an abstract, calligraphic quality that was the inspiration behind cultivating bonsai in this style.

Now consider the comments of American bonsai master, John Y. Naka: The bunjin style of bonsai is so free that it seems to violate all the principles of bonsai form. The indefinite style has no specific form and is difficult to describe, however, its confirmation is simple, yet very expressive. No doubt its most obvious characteristics are those shapes formed by old age and extreme weather conditions.

Trees pictured (in old master sumi paintings) with crossed trunks and branches would be messy and confusing in any other bonsai style, but is acceptable in a bunjin style. On a formal upright style, a branch that returns back to the trunk and crosses it would be unacceptable, and such a violating arrangement would grate against the senses. However, on a bunjin style such a reversal can give an exciting dramatic tension and a freedom to the tree.

#### *Literati Style & Approach*

If one were to characterize the literati approach to bonsai design one might use words such as: elegant, simplistic, clean, tall, slender or flowing.

In most cases all would be acceptable. A general bonsai canon states that there is "symmetry in asymmetry" and "balance in unbalance." If we accept this concept the literati approach to bonsai design becomes easier to understand.

A literati may assume the style of a cascade, semi-cascade, formal upright, informal upright or indeed any of the five basic styles. Its approach can likewise be expanded to include variations on the basic styles such as twin trunk, forest planting, multiple trunk, etc.

The very essence of good literati necessitates a departure or modification (if not a total break) with the traditional bonsai values regarding line, balance and form. It then becomes necessary for the student to have a clear understanding of these concepts and how they work through all bonsai styles in order to find, identify and exaggerate the elements in their material which will best lend themselves to the literati approach.

In a word... If it feels good... do it! But, be prepared to defend your choices on solid bonsai artistic grounds. Although bunjin sometimes reflects the bizarre and unusual, tying your tree in a knot is insufficient grounds for dubbing it a literati.

#### *Suitable Materials*

How then to proceed. Literati generally focus on the line of the tree and less upon concepts such as mass and trunk taper. A good many literati have very little taper at all, and most have few branches usually located near the top of the tree. Generally speaking, two thirds of the total height of the tree is free from branches. Movement of the trunk can be flowing or angular and you should look for some unusual aspect of the material to feature.

Since a literati trunk usually features quite a bit of movement, Junipers (because of their elasticity) make excellent bonsai subjects. Pine also work well as do a large number of other evergreens. Deciduous species do not work as well because of their tendency to break and for foliage to always assume an upward growing path. This does not mean they won't work, just that they are more difficult. Don't be afraid to try. You may be the one to open a new frontier in bonsai design. Remember that the true excitement in a literati design is in the innovative way that it contradicts traditional values. Find the unusual or exotic in your tree and use it to good advantage.

#### *Containers*

Because of the movement, single trunk literati usually are planted in a shallow round or oval container. Trays are also acceptable and can be used in conjunction with rock or stone. In the case of ovals or trays, the tree are usually something other than uprights and should be planted somewhat off center. Remembering the rule that literati design should be simple... overly ornate or heavy glazed containers are generally avoided.

#### *Care and Maintenance*

Literati bonsai require the same kinds of care as do all bonsai with two small additions. First, because of their "tall" design they tend to be top heavy. In a good wind they can easily blow off a bench. You may want to tie them in place. Second, foliage should be kept relatively sparse. The general elegance of literati design prohibits heavy top foliage on a slender trunk with little taper.

*reprinted from: [www.bonsailearningcenter.com](http://www.bonsailearningcenter.com/Tips$Advice/bunjin.htm)  
/Tips\$Advice/ bunjin.htm*

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## **General Meeting Minutes**

by Charlotte Cranberg

The September meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM at the Austin Area Garden Center by Acting President, Jim Trahan. Refreshments were provided by Els Ulug and George Brown. Members were reminded to bring items for the Bonsai Display garage sale. Austin Area Garden Council (AAGC) Representative, Charlotte Cranberg asked members to please bring their volunteer hours to her at every meeting. They are important to our standing with the city and translate into dollars. We are putting in many more hours than we are reporting. All members who have done volunteer work for the AAGC or the Zilker Botanical Gardens, were invited to come to the 50th Anniversary party at the Garden Center to be held October 7th to honor all volunteers, past and present.

Marc Noelanders was introduced and gave the program, which was a departure from our usual lecture demo. It was a workshop lecture. Workshop participants brought their bonsai, which Marc took one at a time to the front and discussed in front of the whole group. It was a very successful program which held everyone's rapt attention for the entire time, even those with bad knees who were ready to leave early. There was no endless wiring in which people drifted off or went home. Marc was an excellent teacher-lecturer. The meeting adjourned at 9:15

# Mike Hansen's Bunjin Workshop

Photographs by Joey McCoy



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 the 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 \$25.00 for an individual and \$30.00 for a family.



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

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