



Bonsai Society of Dallas

Monthly Member Newsletter

April 2013

Message from the President

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slysmith@tx.rr.com

Paul Muraida, *Vice President, Program Chair*
anast1925@aol.com

Chuck Talley, *Treasurer*
chuck_talley@tandybrands.com

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diane_lowe@live.com

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jafa625@gmail.com

John Miller, *President Emeritus*
bonsaimiller@aol.com

Les Porter, *Newsletter Editor*
lesliep@baylorheath.edu

Mary Polk, *Member at Large*
doggiedigs2@att.net

Hiram Quinones, *Member at Large*
hiramaquinones@yahoo.com

My favorite time of year is back! Trees are budding, flowers are in bloom, and the fear of a late freeze is gone. Repotting season is now behind me too so it feels great to have an off day here and there!

Looks like everyone enjoyed last month's meeting. There were many trees that were bent into their future bonsai shape. I hope each one of you will take good care of them since we plan to make this a two part demo. John Kirby will return same time next year to help everyone with the second phase of this work. I'll be looking forward to seeing these same trees again next year (no pressure, lol).

This month our friend and local vendor Ray Hernandez will be giving a demonstration using *elaegnus* as bonsai material. This should be a very interesting demo. If you haven't ever visited Ray's nursery, now is a great time to do so. I would recommend you give him a browse and maybe you'll find yourself going home with a nice little treasure. (His business card can be found on the last page of this publication).

We are starting a new feature in the newsletter that I hope you find helpful. It is a monthly 'To Do List' specific to our climate with the tasks grouped by material type. It is intended to give you a list of 'what' to do, not 'how' to do it. John Miller's wonderful monthly column gives us more of a description of 'how' to do things. And of course we cover a lot of how to do things in our monthly programs as well.

Last but not least, I hope you all are getting geared up for the upcoming convention. I'm really looking forward to this as I have never attended a symposium style convention. I'll be looking forward to getting a new feel at a convention and Howard and I will be bringing trees for the exhibit. I hope you will be encouraged to do the same. I will not be vending this year but I'm excited to be celebrating my anniversary and hanging out with my best bonsai buddy instead! Remember that we will be drawing a name for the convention registration reimbursement in the April meeting so don't forget to contact Diane Lowe by April 1st to get your name on the list.

See you all soon!

Sylvia

April Program

Guest Artist – Ray Hernandez

9:00 AM to Noon

North Haven Gardens

As a young high school student, Ray Hernandez would do odd jobs in his neighborhood to make some extra money. Usually it was cutting lawns and household chores. Then one year a new couple moved into his neighborhood. They were a Japanese couple whose hobby was growing bonsai. And one summer they hired Ray to water their bonsai for them.

So began the nearly 50 year love affair between Ray and bonsai. Even after a stint in the Air Force following high school, Ray's initial experience working for that couple had planted a seed. So he returned and immersed himself in the study and growing of bonsai. Like any bonsai pro, he put in his initial years of dead trees and starting over. Eventually he became learned in the art, and his passion gave way to the birth of his own bonsai business.

Functioning since 1988, Bent Tree Bonsai has become an important part of the bonsai community in Texas. And the Bonsai Society of Dallas is lucky to call him one of our own. Both he and his wife Maria have served on our board in the past and are long-time members.

Ray will bring his expertise to our meeting on Saturday, April 6th at 9:00 a.m. at North Haven Gardens. We'll get to watch and listen as Ray shows us his techniques in shaping and molding an *elaegnus* as his chosen material. *Elaegnus* make especially good bonsai in the hot Dallas weather, and are evergreen as well. Come see Ray in action and learn some of his practical techniques and tips.



The photo at left shows the potential of this hardy specimen. Our tree will be raffled off at the end of the meeting to some lucky club member.

A must see for both novices and the 'old guys' too! ✍

Upcoming Events



Saturday, April 6th, 9 – 12 Noon
Guest Artist – Ray Hernandez,
styling *Elaegnus* 'Silverberry'

Saturday, May 4th, 9 – Noon
From Rough Stock to Beautiful
Bonsai

Saturday, June 1st, 9 - Noon
Bonsai Study Group with the Bonsai
Smiths "Summer Bonsai Care"

Saturday, July 6th, 9 – Noon
Wiring Techniques / Workshop,
followed by Bonsai 101

Events Elsewhere



April 11th – 14th
LSBF 2013 State Convention
New Braunfels, TX

April 18th – 20th
**International Bonsai Convention
and Bonsai Clubs International
(BCI) 50 Year Anniversary**
Yangzhou, China

April 19th – 21st
**MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies
30th Annual Spring Festival**
Grantville, PA

May 3rd – 5th
Shohin St. Louis III
Collinsville, IL

May 24th – 26th
Brussels Annual Rendezvous
Olive Branch, MS

June 6th – 9th
International Bonsai Colloquium
Rochester, NY

October 4th – 6th
Artisan Cup of Portland
Portland, OR

Whitesboro Dig in Retrospect

By Dave Schleser



Dawn broke cold, cloudy, drizzly, and windy, the morning of February 9th, but that didn't deter a small band of intrepid tree diggers who arrived at George Straw's awesome ranch for the second, and final club dig of 2013. After a short warm-up and orientation in his palatial home, George gave us a tour of his menageries, comprised of peacocks, chickens, guinea fowl, geese, wallabies, and ring-tailed lemurs. He then loaded people unfamiliar with his ranch into a 4-wheeler and drove them to promising dig sites. Others just hopped in their vehicles and bounced across pastures to a favorite spot.

There is a nice variety of deciduous trees on the property, including zillions of winged elm, oaks of several species, plum, and American persimmon. The ranch is also a great place to collect sheets of moss and companion plants. The soil there is loose, sandy loam, making digging easy. I came home with 6 winged elms to be eventually used in creating a mixed forest of winged elms and red cedars. I love digging elms; no need for root balls. Just bare root them, spray the roots with water, wrap them in wet burlap or newspaper, then place them in large plastic garbage bags for trip home. Survival rate is always excellent. Persimmon and oak can be a bit more difficult due to their deep taproots.



Although I wished more club members would avail themselves of these digging opportunities, everyone who did brave the weather had a great time and got some nice plant material. George was a great host and several times during the day drove out to check on the diggers' progress and to see if they needed any help. He even decided to hold a raffle among those who joined the dig so he donated an antique roofing tile from his collection. These tiles can be used as a planter for a companion plant as you can see in the picture. And the winner was Todd Hang!! Congratulations.

Let's hear it for George! What a great friend you are to our club! ✍



March Program in Review

Guest Artist – John Kirby

We had a great turnout for our March meeting and welcomed our guest John Kirby all the way from Connecticut. He brought with him dozens of seedlings - Black Pine, Juniper (San Jose, 'Itoigawa', 'Kishu'), and Japanese Maple. Just about everyone went home with one, if not multiple new potential bonsai.

The topic was field growing pre-bonsai material and what we learned quickly was that each tree type should have a different strategy in order to be successful. All could be planted in the ground and grow, but that doesn't mean they will have the potential to become good bonsai. The right preparation from the beginning will yield the best results.

Using the right strategy is the key to success and at this stage of development the focus is on the trunk. For junipers John advocates application of thick copper wire then twisting and spiraling the trunk and branches in exaggerated bends. For pines he recommends wiring the trunk and bending it to get movement, but not spirals. And for the maples and many other deciduous trees that are bare rooted, get them in good bonsai soil to get well established and let them grow, with the intent of eventually air layering where taper begins to develop.

A few other points he made:

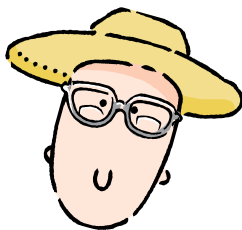
- Take the long view when it comes to working with seedlings - 10 years is realistic
- Wire can be left on the conifers much longer than deciduous trees. He even recommends leaving the wire on the pines allowing it to cut in slightly, as this will create texture and interest on a pine trunk. That is not the case on deciduous trees. Wire marks are much harder to conceal on a deciduous tree and may even be permanent.
- When bending, dramatically over bend as the tree/branch will naturally straighten out as it grows and matures.



The plan is for John to return next year and teach us the next step in proper development of our seedlings. Take good care of them and plan to bring them back to our March 2014 program. It will be fun to see the change in just one year! ✍

April Bonsai Tips and Advice

by John Miller



April is a good time to enjoy your bonsai. The mad season of repotting is over, the new flush of growth has slowed a bit and the weather is not so hot yet (usually). Most trees will do well in the full sun at this time of year. However, if you have had them in partial shade, be careful about giving them full sun. They probably should be acclimated gradually.

So in April repotting for the hardy bonsai has ended and it's still too early for the tropics. So what is left to do? Just pruning, feeding, pruning, check for insects, pruning, shows, pruning. You get the idea.

Remember when pruning that there is no one-size-fits-all, even on the same species. First of all, **formation pruning** is when you are doing the initial styling of the tree. In most cases you are trying to grow new branches requiring you to have the branches grow long. After the tree has been styled, you then need to do **ramification pruning** to develop twiginess and a patina of old age. To properly prune you need to know how they grow and to remember that new twigs, even in the far future, break from the internodes so it is important to keep them short.

On deciduous trees, there are two types of growth – alternate and opposite. On elms and other trees with leaves appearing alternately down the shoot, the first leaves are smaller and internodes shorter. As the shoot grows, it gets larger (all along it) and the internodes get wider. On maples and others with leaves coming in pairs on opposite sides of the twig, the bud send out a stalk with two leaves on the end. The length of this stalk is the first internode. As the leaves enlarge a new growing tip emerges and this process continues. As the new tip elongates the first stalk keeps elongating also until the third new tip breaks. This creates long internodes on the developing branch which is not desired. If the second tip is removed as soon as it emerges the first stalk stops growing and two new twigs will develop from the first set of leaves.

On alternate growing species, formation pruning is easy. Since the first internodes do not lengthen, you let the branch grow rampant until it gets to the diameter you want. Then cut it back wherever the design dictates and let a new branch grow and repeat the process. For ramification pruning you do not want

to let the twig thicken. After 4 or 5 new leaves appear, cut back to 2 or 3 leaves, leaving the last leaf on the side that you want the new shoot to grow toward. Secondary shoots will also appear.

For formation pruning on opposite leaved species, you must work to get short internodes. After the first set of leaves emerges on an established branch, pinch the tip of the next set of leaves before they actually become leaves. Pointed tweezers are the best tool for this job as you want to get the growth when it just starts to emerge. Use this same technique through three sets of leaves, after which you can let the newly created branches grow to thicken. Each pinch results in two new leaf sets, creating shorter nodes for future branches. When the desired primary and secondary branches have been grown, the ramification is achieved by pinching the tip from each set of leaves as it grows thereby doubling the number of twigs each time. This can be a big job on a large maple, but is necessary to get the desired result.

Feeding needs to be done judiciously. A lot of nitrogen will push the new flush of growth too much, but with no fertilizer you will get foliage with poor color that lasts all year. The organic fertilizer balls are the best solution. You can add a few at the start and increase them as the foliage matures. If you use chemicals be sure to follow directions and use them lightly at first. Also be sure to get a brand with the minor elements listed. Commercial water soluble fertilizers wash out with the next watering and result in poorly fed pale bonsai.

A good organic program takes care of both the feeding and the insect problems. I recommend the mixture of 1 tablespoon each of fish emulsion, liquid kelp, molasses and apple cider vinegar to a gallon of water. I use the mixture both as a weekly foliar spray and as a soil drench fertilizer. As a weekly foliar spray it keeps aphids and mites under control. I try to drench twice a month partly because I don't think the plant can absorb all the minor elements it needs thru the foliage.

Whether you use the organic or chemical spray, the trick is to be sure to thoroughly cover the plant including all the leaf axils. Use a hand or pump up sprayer to get a fine spray to cover all, a hose end sprayer does not cover good enough.

Fungal diseases develop during warm humid weather. Too much foliage misting can do it also if the leaves stay damp very long. One of the most prevalent

(Continued on next page)

April Bonsai (continued)

prevalent fungus is leaf spot which will hit several kinds of plants especially elms, hollies, and roses. Control consists of spraying with baking soda. A 1% solution of Hydrogen Peroxide can be used except on very young foliage which may be sensitive to it.

Be sure to check your soils each day for proper water content. It is easy to assume that the soil has plenty of water when the days are cool or there has been some rain. It's too easy for a tree with full leaves to shed

water outside of the pot or a good sun and low humidity after a front to dry the soil. I suggest that you remove most of the moss so that you can see and feel the soil in order to determine how dry it is. Moss growing on the trunk or roots will also cause the bark to rot. An automatic watering system will be an aid but you should not rely on it to replace hand watering. Hand watering allows you to adjust the watering for each tree individually. ✍

LSBF 2013 Convention Update

By Joey McCoy, Convention Chair

Tree Ring Circus – April 11 – 14, New Braunfels, TX



www.lsbfcconvention2013.com

What's that old saying about being like bamboo, which bends gently in the wind and is flexible to change? An announcement: Walter Pall has undergone an emergency operation so has had to cancel his trip. He seems in good spirits and says he would like to come back as he was looking forward to the visit. We wish him well and will look forward to that visit. We are very lucky and I am thrilled to announce that Walter's long time friend and fellow Bonsai artist Dan Robinson of Washington has agreed to come in his place. Speaking with Dan, he is excited to come to Texas, saying he has been wanting to visit with us again (it has been a long time), but he remembers us fondly: our great material and our kind and enthusiastic bonsai club members. All workshops and scheduling remain the same. For more information on Dan, see his website: <http://elandangardens.com/>

One of the workshops Colin Lewis is teaching will be on creating a Kingsville Boxwood planting on a natural rock slab. The slabs will be prepared with wire to tie the plants down and an assortment of different sized "Kingsvilles" will be available for each participant. We will have the soil, muck for the outer walls, moss and accent stones available to complete the scene. This is a great opportunity to work with sought-after material under the guidance of a true artist. *Buxus microphylla* 'Compacta' is a slow growing variety of boxwood, known for its

tiny leaves and aged bark.

Be sure to come to Thursday's Early Bird Reception to get a first chance to shop with the vendors and also to cheer on the Emerging Talent competitors who will be busy styling and shaping their trees. In the vendor room we will have bonsai, potters, and even a maker of display stands! Don't miss it!

I hope that we get a good turnout of trees from each club for the Exhibit. We really want the whole state to be represented. Contact Donna Dobberfuhr at two2views@yahoo.com to let her know what you'd like to bring.

Don't forget the Saturday night AUCTION which benefits the convention. This is a fantastic way to support LSBF, to sell trees you would like to pass along (but that are worth \$100 or more), and also to buy some real quality bonsai. You never know what's going to come each year to this fun event (a signed guitar by Creedence Clearwater!). Don't miss it!

Our team has been working really hard to make this unforgettable: from the goodie bags, to the workshops and artists, the food, raffles, vendors and exhibit. All of this is for us to enjoy and immerse into for the weekend. So if you're on the fence, or think this may not be the right year to come, please reconsider! We need our state Bonsai community to make this a success. See everyone soon! ✍



April's To-Do List

This is a simple monthly checklist for those enthusiasts who have the knowledge and skill required to perform the tasks listed. It is intended to tell you 'what' to do, not 'how and why' to do it. Want to know more? Send in any questions you might have or come to any monthly program to discuss further.

All Species

- Fertilize 4 – 6 weeks after repotting
- Watch and treat for pests
- Apply wire (if not recently repotted)
- Remove wire if cutting into branches

Deciduous

- Prune, wire, and style

Evergreen/Conifer

- Prune, wire, and style
- Fertilize pines heavily

Flowering/Fruit

- Prune sparingly so as not to reduce seasonal flowers
- Wire and style

Tropical

- Move to spring/summer locations
- Replenish potting supplies for summer repotting

Link of the Month

Walter Pall will not be able to join us as a guest artist for the LSBF convention but he continues to write extensively on his blog. Follow this link for an excellent article with great photos.

<http://walterpallbonsaiarticles.blogspot.com/>

In this article he discusses an alternative to the traditional method of leaf pruning on maples. He calls it the hedge cutting method. It is a very different approach but you can't argue with his success. There are lots of great photos in this blog so take a look.



Question of the Month

Why should you wait to wire your bonsai if you just repotted?

Newly repotted trees need to grow new roots. Moving a freshly repotted tree will cause any new tender roots to tear and will stress or even kill the tree. Wait a few months for new roots to get established before wiring.

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