

The Summer Work by Joe Day

The “Summer” work of bonsai is very important but it’s also the most demanding and at times not the most fun work. The first job is just making certain that you take a good look at each of your bonsai as you water. The inspection is for fungus, disease, insects and wire problems. Plants swell quickly so any wire can present a problem. Remove the winter wire as soon as you can.

Know when to prune each species. Some, Maples and Elms can be pruned as soon as a new growth extends but Hawthorne and Hornbeam need the wood to go from green and soft to brown and stiff before pruning. Prune too early

and these species take the cut as an injury and start a abort sequence on that shoot delaying the next set of buds until the shoot has recovered its health. Study each species and find the best way to prune.

We are very dry now but the rains will come and when they do all your dead wood will do what dead wood does, rot. Rot can be “almost” prevented with good lime sulphur treatment. Do it now and do it correctly and you will thank yourself many time over the years as your bonsai develops its style and the dead wood stays beautiful.

Don’t allow the soil level to drop in your bonsai containers. If the soil drops

below the level of roots where you can see under the root many species will abort that root and seek to grow a root that is still below the soil line. You can loose a great root you need for the style quickly.

You can get better style on many species if you wire the tree after the tree finishes its spring flush of growth. With some species you can pull most of the leaves, wire and get good bud back and better style. The work never ends.

Members are always encouraged to bring any tree to meetings that they wish to discuss or about which they need advice.



Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society
PO Box 13212 New Orleans, LA
70185

THE BONSAI Wire

April 2014

The Newsletter of The Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

FROM THE President

Despite the crazy weather, it looks like Spring has finally decided to stay. Your bonsai should be starting to grow at a fast clip now - which means you need to be just as fast. Keep up with regular pinching and take a good look at your bonsai. Remove branches that you know you don’t want so that your tree can use its energy on the ones you do want. Feed and water well now and keep an eye on your wire. With the fast growth wire can bite in quickly. Next month work can start on tropicals. Check now to see if you have the pots etc that you need. In June we will have an open workshop. Consider working on one of your tropicals then.

I wanted to stay thank you to Robert Reed and Jim Osborne for stepping in and providing a great critique program when Adam Lavigne had to cancel at the last minute after pinching a nerve in his back. They gave good advice on the trees members brought in and communicated a lot of good information on species and bonsai techniques. We are currently trying to reschedule Adam Lavigne.

If you have any ideas or requests for programs please email anyone on the board or speak to one of us at the meetings. This is your club and we are always trying to meet the needs of our members.

Kathy Barbazon
GNOBS
President



MEETINGS & Events

Tuesday, April 8, 2014 Program: 7:00pm Jim Osborne will demo a Bunjin style boxwood Bunjin is a passion for Jim and has it’s own distinct rules—or lack of rules for styling. Jim, a previous Vaughn Banting winner, will demo a collected boxwood and lecture on the nuances of the Bunjin style. Check out Jim’s article in this issue. *Bring either a Bunjin style tree or a boxwood for display.*

The boxwood workshop previously scheduled for April 12 will be rescheduled for a later date due to a scheduling conflict. Participants will be notified.

Workshop: Collected boxwoods suitable for Bunjin styling This will be an informal workshop led by Jim Osborne. Cost of the workshop, which includes the collected boxwood and use of club wire is \$25. There will be a sign up sheet at the meetings.

Tuesday, May 13, 2014 Program: 7:00pm Dawn Koetting will do a presentation on Shohin bonsai. Dawn is a previous winner of the Vaughn Banting Award for her Shohin display and has done shohin presentations for the Louisiana Day of Bonsai. Shohin is not just a size. It involves it’s own techniques for styling and rules for display which can be complex. It should be an interesting and informative program.

Tuesday, June 10, 2014 Program: Open workshop This is your chance to bring in and work on one of your trees and get the help and collaboration of other members. Sometimes a second opinion can help you take your tree from good to great. It’s also a good time for newer members to get the help of more experienced members. Club wire will be available for use.

Workshop News

Adam Lavigne’s Neea workshop may be rescheduled as early as September - stay tuned! We will let you know as soon as possible.

Meetings take place on the second Tuesday each month at 7:30pm (pre-meeting activities begin at 7:00pm) at the **Marine Corps League Hall**, 2708 Delaware St., Kenner, LA. For more information, articles and everything bonsai, check us out on our website at www.gnobs.org

THANK You To MELE Printing
(985) 893-9522 for donating the printing of this newsletter

BONSAI Terms

CHOKKAN formal upright form
MOYOGI informal upright form
SHAKAN slanting form
FUKINAGASHI windswept form
SABAMIKI split-trunk
SHARIMIKI driftwood
TANUKI 'cheats'/form where sapling is attached to deadwood/ also known as a 'Phoenix Graft'.
HOKIDACHI broom form
KENGAI cascade
HAN KENGAI semi-cascade

SHIDARE-ZUKURI weeping
BUNJIN literati form
NEGARI exposed root form
SEKJOJU root over rock
ISHI SEKI planted on rock
SOKAN twin-trunk
SANKAN triple-trunk
KABUDACHI multiple-trunk
NETSUNAGARI root connected
YOSE UE group planting
SAI-KEI landscape planting
PEN-JING landscape planting

Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society Board

President:
Kathy Barbazon
kbarbazon@me.com
504-628-3546(cell)
504-988-0928 (work)

Vice-President:
William Majoue
wmajoue@yahoo.com
504-606-4143 (cell)

Treasurer:
Rick Hamilton
rick@hamiltonjewelry.net
504-391-0111 (work)
504-231-1914 (home)
504-391-1810 (cell)

Recording Secretary
Peggy Howard
504-887-3116
peggylh@cox.net

Newsletter Editor
Kathy Barbazon
kbarbazon@me.com
504-628-3546(cell)

Exhibit Director:
Gerald Nolan
snoot@cox.net
504-884-8929 (cell)

Masters Program Director,
Forum Moderator:
Jim "Ozzy" Osborne
wevoodoo@cox.net
504-458-6956

Web Site Manager,
Forum Administrator:
Bill Butler
bill@bayouconcepts.com
504-455-5282

Past President:
Jim "Ozzy" Osborne

BEGINNER Basics

Editor's Note: Though this article refers to ficus, most of the techniques described will work with any species.

Ficus Techniques: Large Tapering Trunks by Jerry Meislik

There are two basic but related questions; How do I increase the trunk size and how do I increase the trunk taper? This point is often quite unclear to bonsai beginners. They often ask how to thicken the trunk when what they really wish to accomplish is more taper.

Anything that you can do to increase the growth on the tree will increase the trunk size. Naturally this takes time but the key fact is that the more leaves and chlorophyll, the faster the trunk will fatten. Using a larger container, good fertilization and not trimming the tree will accomplish this goal. However, often the trunk is actually of good size but the trunk does not appear large due to lack of taper. It is taper that gives the tree a big boost in achieving a mature look and not the raw size of the trunk.

One way to get a large but well tapered bonsai is reduction. All the fabulous trees that you see in my book, on the internet and in show publications are large trees that have huge bases and lots of dramatic taper. These have had years of strong growth in a large container or the ground and then were cut back to a branch which formed the new apex. This new apex was then allowed to grow strongly until it was about half the thickness of the trunk immediately below it.

This process is repeated at intervals introducing directional movement to the trunk as well as tapering segments. Once the tree has gotten perhaps half way to its final design, attention is directed to finer details like branches and silhouette. Wiring and grafts and other techniques are then used to correct deficits.

This process takes years outdoors in tropical climates. Indoors it will take many, many years.

Another technique to create a large trunk is to fuse smaller trees together. Smaller figs are placed together, the outer bark is protected and the trees are wired to each other. With time they will grow together and form a larger tree. See Ficus fusion techniques.

Check out Jerry's website and books at:
<http://www.bonsaihunk.us>

STYLE Spotlight

My Thoughts on Bunjin

By Jim Osborne

Bunjin is probably the most misunderstood of all the bonsai styles. Actually, it is not really a style at all but more of a feeling. All good bonsai should evoke some feeling in the viewer, and this is especially true with bunjin. In most other styles, you look at the roots first, then the trunk. In bunjin, you look at the trunk, the branches and roots come second. Bunjin is all about the trunk, in other words, the line of the tree.

Bunjin can trace its beginnings back to China, over 1,300 years ago. One can easily see a kind of abstract shape in bunjin, which brings to mind the art of calligraphy and landscape paintings of the Southern School of China. I learned that the men,



who painted in this way, were from the ruling class and turned their backs on the government and courts in order to dedicate their lives to things like poetry, philosophy, calligraphy and painting. They sought freedom for the individual man of culture. These men became known as the "literati," meaning educated ones. The literati felt that in their wild landscapes the entire man was revealed, even more than the mountains he painted.

Bunjin bonsai reflects this freedom. In other bonsai styles crossing branches or trunks would be considered incorrect. In the bunjin style, such crossings are not only permitted, but it can give a powerful tension and drama to the design of the tree. Look at the landscape paintings of the literati. Crossing branches, and odd twists and turns of the trunk are prominent features of their work.

According to Frank Nagata, former dean of the Southern California bonsai masters, "Bunjin is the last of the bonsai styles for the student to appreciate." As I've stated, bunjin is not really a bonsai "style". There are few rules, and everyone makes what they feel is right. However, if it's not done correctly, the tree just looks funny. Therefore bunjin is very difficult to do.

It is even hard to describe what makes a bunjin bonsai, because it is more of a spirit that invests the tree than some thing physical. There are some rules however. The most important of which is that the trunk is tall and slender with little or no taper, and it is never straight. The trunk should have interesting twists and turns. In some bunjin, the apex



can be a 180 degree turn in the trunk itself. The branches on bunjin are asymmetrically arranged and few in number. The first branch being, in most cases, two thirds up the trunk and sparsely greened. Most bunjin have very little or no surface roots at all.

My bonsai friends and people who know me know that bunjin has long been my favorite style. I do not really know why this is. Perhaps, it is because of the true freedom that one can enjoy when creating a bunjin bonsai. I do not have to concern myself with all the rules of the more conventional styles. With bunjin, I am free to create as I see fit, as long as I take into mind the spirit of the tree. I have found that with bunjin, you either love it or are indifferent to it. Most people look at a bunjin and don't see too much. They think that it must be easy to create, because of the simplicity of the design. Whatever the reason for my love of the style, it gives me great pleasure to create and enjoy them.

People often ask me what is the difference between a bunjin bonsai and a literati bonsai. Nothing, they are one and the same. Newcomers to the art of bonsai learn about the heaven, earth, and man triangle and the arrangement of the branches; first branch second



branch, back branch, ect. Then, just when they are beginning to feel sure of themselves, they see a tree that breaks all the rules, and they feel uncomfortable. They don't like it. When the novice no longer has to think about the rules in bonsai, then maybe they will at some point develop a taste for bunjin. It has been said that bunjin or literati bonsai is the most sophisticated of all the bonsai styles and sometimes the uninitiated may see them as artificial.

The great John Naka says this about bunjin, "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 conformation is simple, yet expressive. No



Save the Date!

The annual GNOBS Auction is set for

August 16.

It's not too early to start potting and trimming trees that you want to donate. You know you will need the extra room on your benches for the fabulous trees you'll buy at the auction!

doubt its most obvious characteristics are those shapes formed by old age and extreme weather conditions."

What type of pot can be used for bunjin? As with the style itself, less is more. A round, drum, or a nail head pot could be a good choice for the bunjin bonsai. Another good selection would be a natural looking crescent or boat shaped pot. In most cases, the pot will seem somewhat undersized. As in any bonsai, the tree and pot must harmonize with each other. The same rules for color and glaze apply to bunjin as in any other design.

Thinking about trying to create your own bunjin bonsai? What type of plant material can be used? Just like other bonsai, you have many choices. The most often used material is some type of pine, because they can be found growing in nature in a bunjin style. Juniper would be another good choice, but really you are only limited by your own imagination. Whatever you choose, it should be a material that will allow the harsh pruning and sparse foliage that is the hallmark of bunjin. It should also be something that does well in our southern climate. Bunjin are mostly grown in small pots, which is something to consider in the heat of our summers.

I love this style. It is a challenge to create, and I find that it epitomizes the very spirit of what we as bonsai artist try to create. Bunjin is about the struggle for survival against great odds. It has great age, and displays fantastic movement, and as such, great drama. It tells a story. It surely evokes a feeling in the viewer. It clings to life, year after year, despite itself, in the most adverse conditions. What is not to love about this wonderful style? What more could one want from a bonsai?