

# How to Avoid Killing Your Bonsai by Joe Day

1. Understand each species you have in your collection. Some can take a lot of root pruning and some can't.
2. Repot quickly with a bucket of water and spray bottle of water handy.
3. Take your time working the soil into the roots. Only work on one bonsai at a time.
4. Work the soil into the root ball then tie or wire the root ball tightly then resettle the soil again.
5. As soon as you finish settling the soil water the bonsai until you see clean water coming out the drain holes.
6. Repotted trees must be out of the wind or direct sunlight.
7. Never expose more than the top 1/3 of the root. If newly exposed cover with chopped up sphagnum moss.
8. All newly repotted trees need is water. Some organic fertilizer can be added at potting time. Chemical fertilizer 1/2 strength only after the first true leaves are on the tree and only fertilize moist soil.
9. Newly repotted trees don't mind cold weather but allowing the root ball to freeze can kill all the new roots—finished bonsai.
10. The small dusty particles in the soil will settle to the bottom of the soil mix and form a soggy wet mush at the bottom of the pot. A perfect place for

soil fungus to find a home.  
11. That old soil could hold fungus, small insects or a type of disease that would be fatal to the newly potted bonsai.  
Not in any way a complete list but something to consider.

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](http://www.gnobs.org)



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# THE BONSAI Wire

January 2016

The Newsletter of The Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

## FROM THE President

**T**hank you for your vote of confidence in me as being your new president for the next year. I have several ideas for meetings and am looking forward to talking to you about them.

I would like to thank Kathy and William for the great jobs they did the last 2 years, and for leaving me such big shoes to fill, thanks guys.

I would like to "give back" and have a club sponsored pet project. The New Orleans City Park Botanical Gardens Historic Train Garden looked great when they installed it, but now it needs help. It is not Bonsai, because it's not a tree in a pot, but penjing, a miniature landscape. Please talk to me if you are interested. We can work during the week or on Saturday depending on you.

Robert Kempinski graciously offered to do a presentation at our January meeting, but his company decided they needed him elsewhere, so we have to cancel his presentation.

The first 30 people to pay their dues will still be receiving a free Kingsville Boxwood—come early, I have already paid mine. So bring your checkbook. We won't make you wait, we are going to do a styling of the trees at our meeting. They are so cute, you're going to want one of these. Bring your tools and be ready.

I will do a Bonsai Basics of how to start by cleaning your tree and look at it as what style you may want.

Brussel is coming back for our March Meeting. He wants to surprise us with a special tree. We hope to be able to tell you what tree and the cost at the January Meeting so you can sign up and pay for it then. Second reason to bring your checkbook.

I'm hoping you had a very Merry Christmas and are looking forward to the very Happiest of New Years. Best of wishes to you and your family. See you at the meeting.

Peggy Howard  
President GNOBS



## MEETINGS & Events

### Tuesday, January 12, 2016 Club Giveaway 7:00pm

Annual dues are due in January but this year we have a **special surprise** for members. The first 30 members that pay their dues and show up at the January meeting will receive a free **Kingsville boxwood**. You may have seen these trees at a previous meeting when they came in. If not, I can attest to the fact that they are really nice trees.

Unfortunately Rob Kempinski, due to a work conflict, is unable to be here do the presentation he planned. **For our program we will have an open workshop on our Kingsville Boxwood giveaways.** Club wire will be available for your use.

### Tuesday, February 16, 2016 (note: later date due to Mardi Gras) How and why to draw your bonsai - Kathy Barbazon 7:00pm Open Workshop with assistance- 7:30 pm

Kathy will do a short presentation on how and why to draw your bonsai with guidelines and suggestions on computer programs/methods etc that those members without drawing ability can use. For the rest of our program we will have an open workshop with advanced members available for advice. Kathy will draw or help members draw different suggestions for the workshop trees. Try to bring material for which you either need styling direction or for which you would like to see some other styling options.

### Friday, March 18, 2015 Demo by Brussel Martin 7:00pm

Species/details to be announced. We hope to have details at the January meeting.

### Saturday, March 19, 2015 Workshop by Brussel Martin 7:00pm

Species/details to be announced. We hope to have details at the January meeting.

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

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# TECHNIQUE Tips

## *Pests and Bonsai*

by Randy Bennett

This month I want to talk to you about something that is near and dear to my heart: The use of chemicals and pesticides in the care of your bonsai. There are seemingly endless volumes of books on the subject. And, there are as many opinions about how to use chemicals and pesticides as there are authors of these books. So, who do you listen to? I don't know. I can simply add to the confusion and tell you what I do.

The way I see it, there are basically three camps. First, is the "all natural" group. Second, you have the "use'em' if you got 'em" crowd. Third, are the "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" proponents.

There are those who feel that the "all natural" way is the only way we should be controlling pests and diseases. Who wants to get into an argument with these people. If you're against all natural anything these days, it's like being against motherhood or apple pie. I watch HGTV. (That's Home and Garden Television for the satellite/cable disadvantaged). I've seen the shows where they puree bugs in a blender with cayenne peppers to spray their flowers and veggies. (I think bugs are supposed to have some sort of aversion to snacking on the body parts of their brothers and sisters, and we all know what cayenne pepper does to your appetite). Have you ever run around your backyard trying to catch enough bugs to put in the blender? Has your husband or wife ever caught you putting bugs in the blender? Trust me... neither one is a pleasant experience.

I know, there are other "all natural" methods. One spring I hatched out several thousand ladybugs. You've seen the ads. "Control pests the natural way." I was so excited when they hatched and started crawling all over everything in the yard. For a week we were just one big happy family! But when the bugs were all gone, they left me like a gold-digger in Vegas for my neighbor's vegetable garden. Then, they were on to the next feast, and the next. In a couple of more weeks, I had bug problems again. But where were my ladybugs? Probably "getting friendly" with some grasshopper in another neighborhood.

I'm all for saving the environment And I understand the tendency of insects to build immunities to pesticides. I also understand the danger that chemicals and pesticides pose to humans if used carelessly and without taking proper precautions. I simply have not had a great deal of success following the "all natural" gurus.

The second group is the "use 'em' if you got 'em" crowd. The basic idea is: why spray if you don't have a problem? And when you get a problem, identify the problem and only spray the chemical that specifically deals with that pest. Boy, doesn't that sound logical? And doesn't it seem like a good compromise between radical, indiscriminate spraying of chemicals and the "all natural" method? Sure it does! And that way you're not killing the beneficial insects along with the ones that damage your trees.

The problem here is three-fold. First, if you wait till you notice that you have a problem, the damage is done. The very tree that is being eaten alive is invariably the one you planned on exhibiting. Or, all of a sudden you have black spot fungus on all of your elms and now the leaves look awful for the rest of the season. Second, you have the problem of identifying what the problem is. Okay, you come home from work and go in the backyard to check on your trees, only to find that some varmint thinks your bonsai is the salad bar at a buffet You pull out your pests and

disease books and try to track down what it could be. "Let's see... it could be this... it might be that... or maybe it's this!" Another day or two passes by before you finally are able to gather enough information to make an intelligent decision, and hope that you're not wrong. By this time, your tree is looking worse. Naturally, when you check the shelf in the garage, you don't have the pesticide or chemical recommended for that particular critter. This brings us to the third problem. You now have to find the time to get to the nursery or garden center to buy what you need. You have to do that in between soccer matches, softball games, buying groceries and the thousand other things that seem to consume our day. But you finally get it, and now you're ready to spray the little devil, annihilating him and all his family. And you can sleep nights knowing that you have gassed only the guilty, and the innocent bugs can crawl in freedom. The only downside is that by now, at best, your tree is weak and sickly, and at worst, looks like a deciduous pine. But Hey!... you've done the ecologically correct thing! That is, IF YOUR GUESS WAS CORRECT AND YOU TREATED FOR THE CORRECT PEST... but what if you were WRONG?

The third group are the "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" proponents. This is where I currently stand. Over the years, I have listened to a great many individuals who certainly know more

than I do. After all, I don't have a nationally-syndicated television show. I haven't written any books on pests and diseases. I don't have a degree in pest management. What I have done is experiment with a variety of chemicals, products, and techniques for controlling pests and diseases. And I know what works best for me, and in my situation. I'm pretty good at identifying pests and diseases among my trees, but sometimes I've been wrong, and my plants have suffered. So, I'm sorry... but any bug that enters my yard is dead meat! For me, prevention is the key. And more importantly, it is critical to establish a weekly routine for pest management as a preventive measure, rather than suit up to do battle after the bugs have declared war and damage has been done. I want my trees to look healthy and at their best at all times. And it is, in fact, trees that are in a weakened state that insects are prone to attack. It is only the healthy sucker that can fend off the attacks of pests and diseases. My routine is as follows: Every Monday - I fertilize all trees with fish emulsion. Every Tuesday- I spray a fungicide. Every Wednesday- I spray with a broad spectrum insecticide or Neem Oil. On other days, I'll use other products for more specific reasons on specific trees. But for me, there is no substitute for preventative medicine. What's best for you? Let your conscience be your guide and... May the Sprayer be with you!

## *Preparation of Trees for Display*

by Wayne Greenleaf  
and Kirk Vaughn

**The first consideration, obviously, should be the tree itself.** The tree must be healthy. The leaves/needles should be green, with no evidence of pests, disease or pest damage. Perform any work on the tree several weeks before the planned showing. Remove any twigs that are growing outside of the profile of the canopy. If you find any large tertiary or secondary branches that should be removed, consider waiting till the next exhibit to show the tree, unless the removal will not leave a noticeable gap in the design. Remove any dead leaves, twigs, and needles. Some minor trimming of deciduous and tropical trees can also be performed. This grooming is done to refine the silhouette. There is some disagreement as to whether a tree should be shown with wiring in place. Club members have displayed trees with wiring in the past. The presence of wire can serve to educate the public on the methods used to bend the branches in the design of the tree. A purist may disagree with such a practice, but if the wiring is neat, it is permissible and commonly seen. The emphasis here is on neat wiring that is not cutting into the tree.

**The next step is to clean the trunk.** Jins and sharies should be treated. This will remove undesirable mosses, mildew, and algae. Brush the wood to clean it. Then, renew the lime sulphur. If you are too close to show time for the lime sulphur to become grey instead of bright white, add a drop or two of india ink to the mix. There are special considerations for pines, particularly black pines. Carefully pick off any moss growing on the base of the trunk. You do not want to remove the bark plates that indicate the age of the tree. For most deciduous trees, the bark can be scrubbed with an old toothbrush (Or, buy a new one)! We certainly spend a whole lot more on other bonsai tools). If there are stains, use a little soapy water with the brush. Junipers can (some would say "should") have the bark polished to reveal the reddish underbark. 'This is accomplished by scrubbing it with a wire brush. Be

careful that you do not expose the green cambium layer which lies below the bark.

**Next, attention should be given to cleaning the pot.** Pots can be lightly cleaned with a soft brush and a very diluted soap and water solution, or lightly scrubbed with a Scotch Brite pad. The idea here is to remove dirt. If there are white mineral deposits, scrub with a mild vinegar solution. After a non-glazed pot is rinsed and dried, it can be wiped with mineral or baby oil to enhance its appearance. A glazed pot can be rubbed with a clean soft cloth to remove any water spots. The pot should be immaculate.

**Finally, the composition should be freshly "landscaped."** Weeds should be removed, along with any other debris. Place fresh bonsai soil to within 1/4" of the rim of the pot. Or, replace the moss on the soil surface. The total composition can be enhanced by the use of stands. A few points should be remembered when stands are used in an exhibit. Usually, the tree is placed in the center of the stand. Before placing a pot on a stand, make sure the bottom of the pot is free of dirt and gravel, both of which might scratch the stand. Never slide a pot on a stand. Be careful of exposed wire used to hold the drain hole screens in place. Obviously, avoid water spots, and remove any that are present. A tree on a stand with thin legs can impart the feeling that the tree is floating. A low or massive stand in turn gives the impression of stability. Beautiful wooden stands, which are often works of art themselves, are not the only option here. An impressive presentation can incorporate alternative stands made from reed or straw mats, slabs of slate or stone, finished tree stumps, redwood slabs, etc. By keeping the foregoing in mind, a tree will have its maximum visual impact on viewers. Considering the amount of work that goes into getting a tree to the point that one is willing to show it to the public and other bonsai enthusiasts, these extra steps are painless and will reflect positively on the artist's attention to detail.

# SPECIES Spotlight

## *Crassula ovata/ Jade Bonsai*

by Harry Harrington of bonsai4me.com

**Overview:** The Jade Tree is an evergreen succulent native to South Africa where it can reach heights of 2 metres or more. In temperate zones Jades are regarded as indoor trees and should not be subjected to temperatures below 5-7 degrees centigrade (41-45 F). The Jade has a thick trunk and branch structure with thick elliptic green succulent leaves. Given sufficient light the leaves develop red edges to their leaves and produce clusters of star-shaped white flowers in Autumn. Natural leaf size is 1-2" but can be reduced to as little as 1/2" with regular pruning. The Jade Tree is suitable for informal upright and clump styles in all sizes.

**General Cultivation:** Jades should not be exposed to temperatures below 5-7 degrees centigrade and as a result are commonly grown indoors, though in warmer climates outdoor placement during summer is beneficial. Indoors, Jades should be placed as close to a natural source of light as possible, they will cope with poor light conditions though this will result in poor growth rate and increased leaf size.

Due to their arid natural habitat, Jade Trees are capable of holding large quantities of water in their leaves. Over watered specimen develop poor root systems which become incapable of physically supporting their heavy foliage and become top heavy. Unlike other bonsai species, Jade should be lightly watered, if the compost is allowed to dry in-between waterings the roots are encouraged to search for moisture creating a far stronger and vigorous root system. This also reduces the store of water in the foliage reducing the tendency to be top-heavy. Water is only essential to the plant when the leaves start to develop a wrinkled texture. In winter this can mean watering as little as once every 2-3 weeks.

**Repotting:** Jades should be repotted into fast draining inorganic compost every 2-3 years.

**Fertilization:** Stronger light encourages more vigorous growth than the use of fertilizers alone, a balanced feed once a month from mid-spring to Autumn is all the nutrients Jades require.

**Pruning:** New growth should be continually pinched out to encourage stronger lower growth and to reduce leaf-size. Jades readily make new growth from wounds and individual leaves can be removed to quickly produce new branches. Never seal pruning wounds; wound sealants can trap moisture within the wound site and cause rotting. Leave pruning wounds open and allow to dry naturally. Jades respond very well to trunk reduction techniques, producing new growth from the wound area within 1-2 weeks.

**Wiring:** Most enthusiasts don't bother wiring crassula, it simpler to shape this species by clipping and growing. However, Jades do respond to wiring, setting into new positions within 3-4 weeks depending on the vigour of the specimen. Beware though, as the bark marks very easily and can snap if bent too far. Wire loosely and bend branches a little at a time. Do not water the plant before wiring as turgid branches are far more likely to snap and mark.

**Propagation:** Cuttings can be taken at any time in sandy, well-drained compost. Even single leaves laid on the surface of the compost will strike.

