

# THE BONSAI Wire

The Newsletter of The Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

January 2018

## GNOBS Notes

### 2018 Dues are due!

Please pay at the meeting or mail your check to the PO Box. Your dues help pay for the hall, communications and allow us to bring in guest bonsai artists.

#### Membership rates:

Single: \$30

Family: \$35

See the **SPECIAL GIVEAWAY** for club members that pay their dues at or before the February meeting in the February meeting details!



## MEETINGS & Events

### Tuesday, January 9, 2018

**Program: Silhouette Show 7:00pm**

The best time to study and evaluate our deciduous trees can be when they are devoid of leaves. This allows for study of the branch structure and ramification that is hidden when the trees are fully leafed. Bring in a deciduous tree for display and discussion. Randy Bennett, our new GNOBS President, and Robert Reed, one of our most experienced members, will conduct an informal critique and give suggestions for the further development of the trees. (NEW members: If you do not have a deciduous tree, you are welcome to bring in non-deciduous tree for discussion and critique)

### Tuesday, February 20, 2018 (note: 3rd Tuesday due to Mardi Gras)

**Program: Air-layering by Taylor Williams 7:00pm**

Learn the different variations of this highly useful method of propagation. The principal of layering is to force a tree or branch to form new roots at a certain point. You can use air-layering for; reducing the length of a trunk, growing a better Nebari or selecting a branch to be grown as a separate tree.

**Bonus Program: Re-potting giveaway**

**Pay your yearly dues and you will have access to free bonsai soil and wire to pot one of your trees.** Bring your own pot and tree. Experienced members will be on hand to assist newer members in the correct ways to re-pot.

### Friday, March 16, 2018

**Program: Brussel Martin Multi-tree Rock planting demo 7:00pm**

Brussel Martin, bonsai artist and owner of Brussel's Bonsai will do a demo of multiple trees on a lace rock.

### Saturday, March 17, 2018

**Program: Brussel Martin Multi-tree Rock planting workshop 9:00am**

Brussel Martin will conduct a workshop on a multi-tree lacerock. (Species will be determined later by best available for workshop). Sign up sheets will be available at the meetings. Full payment must be made at least one month before the workshop.

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

Meetings take place 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)

## Branch Development in Deciduous Trees

by Randy Bennett

Our January program is a “silhouette show” for deciduous bonsai. We are encouraging our members to bring one deciduous bonsai for viewing and discussion. Members will be asked to elaborate on the acquisition and training of their tree after which a couple of our members will critique the trees and offer suggestions for future development.

We typically display our bonsai in spring and summer, when flowers bloom and foliage is lush and full. The unfortunate situation in viewing and evaluating deciduous trees during spring and summer is that the leaves can hide all the structural flaws that may exist. So, the best time to truly appreciate an artist’s work is in winter, when leaves have fallen.

So, in anticipation of our silhouette show, I thought it appropriate to review general goals and objectives for branch development in deciduous trees. While the same general rules and approaches apply to all deciduous trees, I will use maples as the example.

First, you must consider the spacing of branches as they ascend up the trunk. In a mature tree, weaker low branches will have died out, leaving a single, dominant branch and the space between the lowest, most dominant branch and the second branch up from there has the greatest space between them. As you ascend in a vertical line, the spacing between each successive higher branch becomes less and less. Of course, this is not a hard and fast rule that must always be followed, otherwise all bonsai would tend to look alike. But it is a guideline, which bonsai artists should bear in mind when selecting branches and designing a tree.

Second, you must consider branch thickness and length. The older the branch on a mature tree, the thicker and longer it will be. Therefore, you branches should continually decrease in diameter as the branches ascend the trunk-line. They would also naturally be shorter the higher up you go. This is where the problem comes in for most artists, in that most deciduous trees are top-dominant and it is, therefore, a constant struggle to keep the upper branches from getting too large and losing the shape and proportion of your tree. This can happen very quickly unless you are very attentive and vigilant with your pruning and pinching.

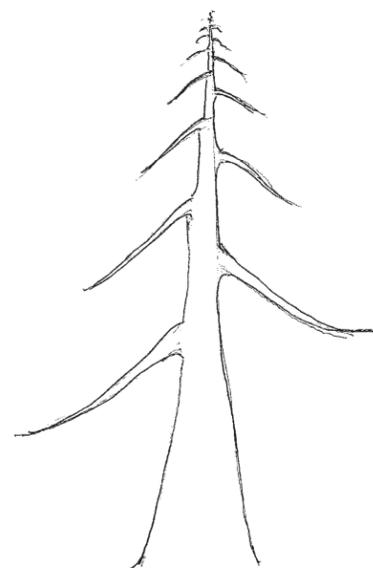
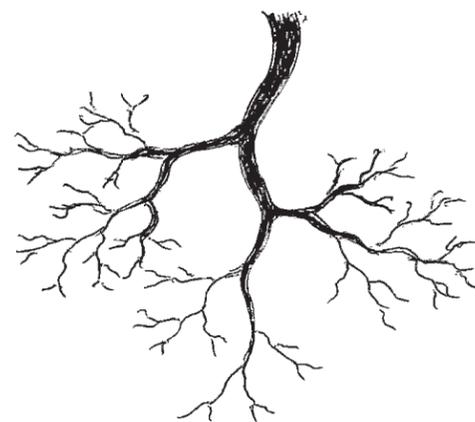
Third, branches, like the trunk of the tree itself, must have appropriate taper. The branch should be smooth and free from

unsightly knots and scars. Evaluate each branch as a separate unit and follow the same formula as the branches ascending the trunk. Each secondary branch, as it emanates from the primary branch, should alternate from one side to the other. Likewise, the first secondary branch, closest to the trunk, should be the longest and thickest, with each subsequent secondary branch getting shorter and smaller as they extend out toward the tip. In addition, the internodal spacing should decrease as you move toward the tip of the branch.

The same goals hold true with tertiary branches; smaller and smaller as they extend outward from the secondary branches, always leaving two shoots available for the next stage of development. Generally speaking, your goal is to have each branch outline form a scalene triangle, just like you do for the overall silhouette of the tree. You should remember that in bonsai, as in any art form, your goal is perfection. But because trees are living, growing things, perfection is something that is not easily attained and is certainly never permanent. The table below should serve as a general guideline for working on deciduous trees in the New Orleans and surrounding areas.

TABLE FOR WORKING ON DECIDUOUS TREES

	Dormant Season				Growing Season							
Month	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Task	Lightly prune when leaves fall off and remove old wire											
	Pruning and wiring											
	Pinch back new growth											
	Pruning and restraining second flush of growth											
	Defoliation											
							Pruning branches that are too long					
	Transplant											



1. After leaves have fallen, you should conduct light pruning of small twigs, cutting back to the first set of buds. Do not do any heavy pruning at this time as you may induce new growth to appear, which could be damaged by cold weather and cause dieback. Prune only small twigs and shoots. If any wire remains on the tree from the growing season, remove it.
2. In late January and through the month of February, conduct your heavy pruning and any new wiring that needs to be done. This would include any branches in the apex that may have grown too heavy. Occasionally, if you allow the growth to go unchecked, you may have to develop an entirely new apex. February is also our best month for repotting and transplanting.
3. You should pinch new growth as it begins to emerge at the end of February and on into March. This is a task that must be performed DAILY. You must thoroughly examine growth each day and pinch the center out of the opening buds as soon as two leaflets appear opposite one another. If you allow the center to develop into leaves, the internodal space will elongate. On vigorous varieties, this may ultimately require the entire removal of the shoot because it will be too long and out of scale with the rest of the branching. The obvious exception to this is when you are trying to get branches to thicken or if shoots are in weak areas of the tree. In such cases, you do not pinch at all. If you inadvertently miss pinching a shoot and the center growth has pushed out to form leaves, remove it with scissors and avoid trying to pinch it out with your fingertips.
4. Following bud-pinching, a second flush of growth will emerge. These shoots must also be selectively pruned. The second budding of leaves will emerge from the base of the two leaves you allowed to remain from the pinching. If you have shoots from the second budding that are strong, you may pinch back the new growth again. These vigorous shoots will primarily form in the apex. This will help to keep the internodes short. You should still be monitoring growth daily at this point.
5. An entire article can be written on defoliation alone, so I will simply touch on the highlights. First, pinching alone will not give you the results you need. Defoliation will help to further reduce leaf size and internodal spaces. However, defoliation should only be conducted on strong vigorous trees and should not be done two years in a row. When the tree has fully leafed out and new growth has “hardened-off”, you can defoliate your tree. Defoliation will help you to balance vigor in different parts of the tree and greatly increase the number of

shoots. You should conduct defoliation with a sharp pair of scissors and leave half the petiole after pruning. This process will activate dormant shoots which lie at the base of the petioles. So basically, where you had a single leaf before, now two will emerge, basically doubling the number of leaves. You can entirely defoliate the tree or partially defoliate it by removing all the leaves in areas of strength. I do not advocate removal of all leaves. There are always weak areas of a tree and these weaker shoots will greatly benefit by having energy redirected to them. Removal of leaves in weak areas only make those areas weaker. Just remember that if you partially defoliate your tree, you must still remove a significant number of leaves to force the tree to bud again. I will typically remove all leaves in the canopy and all leaves towards the outside of the branches, leaving only the leaves on weak branches on the interior of the tree. This allows light and air to reach these weaker areas and aids in balancing vigor. The new flush of growth that will result from defoliating will need to be pinched and restrained as well to maintain short internodes and further balance energy throughout the tree. Do not defoliate in the same year that you repot

Now it’s time to test your observation skills... take a look at the photographs below and see if you can determine the issues exist with these maples and what steps need to be taken to correct them.



## Louisiana Bonsai Society Mid-Winter Workshop

Baton Rouge Garden Center  
7950 Independence Blvd. Baton Rouge, LA

### Friday January 19, 2018

Bonsai Workshop 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Workshop \$40 (LBS members \$30). Limited to 8. Supper social \$12.  
Observer \$10 (LBS members-Free)  
Demonstration by Mr. David DeGroot 5:00

### Saturday, January 20, 2018

Bonsai Workshop 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
Workshop \$50 (LBS members \$40). Limited to 8 participants. Lunch \$12.  
Observer \$10 (LBS members-Free)  
Demonstration by Mr. David DeGroot 2:30

### Sunday January 21, 2018

Bonsai Workshop 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
Workshop \$45 (LBS Members \$35). Limited to 8 participants. Lunch \$12.  
Observer \$10 (LBS members-Free)  
Raffle of Demonstration Trees 2:00 p.m.  
Two trees. Separate raffles. \$5 per ticket \$20 for 5 tickets.  
Need not be present to win.

## Featured Artist and Workshop Leader Mr. David DeGroot

LBS welcomes back David DeGroot. He has been practicing bonsai for nearly fifty years. He is the curator emeritus of the famous Weyerhaeuser Company's Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection near Seattle. His early bonsai study was in New Orleans as a member of the seminal Vaughn Banting study group. He has also studied with such teachers as Chase Rosade, Yuji Yoshimura, Beno Oki, and John Naka. He has written dozens of articles and books on Bonsai, and served twice as director of the American Bonsai Society.

**Pre-bonsai available:** Workshops are bring-your-own-tree, or a limited supply of pre-bonsai is available for the workshop. Reserve your tree by calling Lowell Tilly at (225) 241-2396.

**Vendors:** Rick Berrigan, A Little Piece of Heaven Bonsai; Bill Butler, Bill's Bayou—Bonsai; and Byron Myrick, Myrick Bonsai Pottery will have a supply of trees, supplies, and pots.

**Silent Auction:** Visiting clubs are encouraged to bring items for silent auctions to be held each day of the workshop. Proceeds will go 90% to the donating club and 10% to the Garden Center.

**Registration: Registration is open to Louisiana Bonsai Society members only until 11/22/2017, and the general public after this date. To register, please call Lowell Tilly at (225) 241-2396.**

## Lime-sulphur and Ash

by Harry Harrington (bonsai4me.com)

To achieve a more desirable grey/silver white tone on deadwood:

On dry wood I moisten some ash, I use cigarette-ash but burnt newspaper with plenty of newsprint on it works well, and use a toothbrush to rub it into the wood. You need the ash to be just wet enough to moisten the wood but not so much it is truly wet. This way the ash takes in some places and not others. Do not use too much water in the ash or it will produce too uniform a grey. If you rub the ash across the grain, it darkens the grain better.

For darker-grey tones on deciduous or broad-leaf bonsai, apply extra ash and just one application of lime-sulphur. For lighter tones, use a smaller amount of ash and several applications of lime-sulphur.



by rubbing ash into the wood first (after carving had been completed), the wood turned a grey-white immediately after applying the lime-sulphur. Note that the deeper areas of the deadwood have been stained with a water-based black paint to produce an even darker colour and contrast.



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