

# THE BONSAI Wire

The Newsletter of The Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

December 2018

## FROM THE President



If you missed the GNOBS monthly meeting for November, you missed a real treat. Dawn Koeting presented a

program on potting and repotting bonsai that was chock-full of information. She had samples of numerous soil blends and ingredients such as Turface, akadama, kanuma volcanic rock, pumice, etc., with first-hand information that she shared about each.

She shared her expertise regarding tools, equipment, techniques, procedures, timing and after-care. Even after her presentation was concluded, she was answering questions for another half hour.

I want to thank Dawn for volunteering to share her knowledge with the club. She is an outstanding bonsai artist and a huge asset to the Greater New Orleans bonsai society.

I also want to thank Robert Reed for sharing information at the November meeting about Gulf Coast Bonsai Federation. It is an idea that is finally coming to fruition and should prove to have a huge influence on the future

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## MEETINGS & Events

*Note: Study Groups are for signed up participants. Programs are open to ALL members.*

### Tuesday, December 11, 2018

**Program: Annual Christmas Party 7:30pm**

Bring your spouse or plus one and your favorite covered dish (side dishes, entrées, desserts) for our annual potluck Christmas party. The club will supply a ham, beverages and plates/utensils. Everyone attending gets a free raffle ticket for door prizes - including a tree from Brussel's Bonsai.

### Tuesday, January 22, 2019

**Intermediate Study Group (for signed up participants)**

**6:00pm-7:15pm**

**Program: Dave DeGroot 7:30pm**

Dave DeGroot, Former curator of the Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection (which included tending the collection of more than 120 trees, managing the facility, and operating an educational program that included approximately 20 lectures and several special exhibits annually), noted lecturer, author of two outstanding bonsai books and one of the original members of GNOBS (and former president) under the tutelage of Vaughn Banting will do a lecture and demonstration (topic to be determined)!

### Tuesday, February 12, 2019

**Intermediate Study Group (for signed up participants) 6:00pm-**

**7:15pm**

**Program: Silhouette Show and Lecture on How to Prepare Your Trees for a Show 7:30pm**

The Silhouette Program is a study of branch ramification and evaluation of plans for further development of our deciduous bonsai. Bring in a deciduous tree for display and discussion. There will also be a lecture on preparing your bonsai for showing in advance of our Spring Garden Show participation.



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)

## Fall Needle-Thinning on Japanese Black Pine

by Randy Bennett

**T**here are several reasons for thinning out needles on Japanese Black Pine in the fall: first, to increase the amount of light reaching needles on the interior portion of the tree. Second, to provide greater air circulation which facilitates the exchange of gases in the needles and subsequently, increases growth in the interior. Third, and most importantly, to redistribute energy from stronger areas of the tree to the weaker areas.

In our climate, here in south Louisiana, mid-November is the best time to remove last years' needles.



In the photo above, last years' needles are turning yellow or are already brown. At this point, they are no longer producing food and are, in fact, robbing the tree of energy by receiving water and nutrients but no longer producing food. This years' growth on this particular branch begins at the point indicated by the blue arrow. The portion below the blue arrow was last years' growth. Next years' growth will begin at the point indicated by the red arrow, which is currently a candle.

All of the needles below the blue arrow will be removed. The photo below shows the same area after the old needles have been removed. When removing the needles, you should pull them out one at a time and in the direction they are pointing. Pulling down and/or pulling out several needles at the same time may result in the needle sheath, the tiny cup-like structure that

secures the needles to the branch, being torn from the branch. Dormant buds are located inside each of these sheaths. Removing them eliminates any chance for back-budding and the creation of secondary or tertiary branches. You can see that there are a number of needle-sheaths that remain on the branch that was just thinned.

When needle-thinning a Japanese black Pine, you should only remove last years' needles from the medium and strong areas of growth. Do not remove last years' needles from the weak areas of the tree at this time. This time of year, you can recognize the various areas of strength by the size of the buds and candles that have set for next

years' growth. The majority of strong buds will, or course, be in the top portion of the tree, since most varieties of Japanese Black Pine are top-dominant. However, you may have weak shoots and buds in any part of the tree, so do not just indiscriminately remove needles in the topmost branches. Likewise, you may have shoots of medium strength in the crown of the tree, so treat them accordingly.

About mid to late December is the time to thin the current year's needles. In the strong areas of growth, typically in the crown of the tree, you should remove all but about four (4) pairs of needles. In the areas of medium growth, you should remove all but seven to eight (7-8) pairs of needles. In the weak areas of the tree, you should now remove all of the needles remaining from last years' growth, but remove none of the needles from this years' growth.

Once again, when removing needles, take care to ensure that the fascicle or needle-cup remains in-tact, to help increase the chances of back-budding and the development of additional branch structures.

The preceding actions are a vital step in helping to redistribute energy among the branches of your black pine, strengthen weaker parts of the tree and help to ensure greater overall health and vitality of your Japanese Black Pine.



## Grafting The Roots Of A Bonsai To Improve Its Nebari

By Harry Harrington (bonsai4me.com)

My *Fagus sylvatica*/European Beech bonsai pictured in my garden in early March 2018. This tree will be familiar to those that have read my first book "Bonsai Inspirations 1" as its initial development features heavily within the book. Over the years, as the trunk and in particular the nebari (surface roots) had swelled with age,



lifted upwards and pinned into position, effectively being grafted into place while still attached to the tree.

This vigorous root was pinned into the nebari (at position "A"). A small wedge was cut into the bark and cambium of the tree, and the root held tightly against it with a pin (in this case,



nebari had become more prominent. Although pleasing in appearance, the nebari could be improved by addressing these gaps

(marked "A" and "B" in the image).

In the same way that the branch structure of a deciduous bonsai can be slowly improved over the years, so can the rootsystem and nebari.

After gently combing-out the old soil, it is possible to see how shallow the roots of this tree are after many years of cultivation.



made from a length of copper wire).

The root was then bent downwards.. and anchored into position using a wooden stick. As the wedge-shaped channel in the tree heals around the pinned area of the root, they will naturally graft together over the coming years. (For further reading please see Approach Grafting



Roots for Better Nebari on [bonsai4me.com](http://bonsai4me.com)).

After returning the tree back into its pot for another couple of years. Three other roots were grafted into new positions (in area "B").



Although thinner, these roots will be allowed to grow freely until they thicken up to be of appropriate size.



The rootball as seen from the left-hand side. It is sometimes possible to find vigorous young roots that have emerged from below the level of the nebari. As they are, they are

too low to be part of the nebari itself. However, they can be

## Double trunk style – Soka from a Twin tree – Soju

by Erik Wigert wigertsbonsai.com

\*Father / Son planting

### Overview:

Double trunk style is composed of two trunks sharing the same root system. The double trunk style is commonly found in nature and may occur naturally from a side sprout or seedling from the 'father tree'. Many times this style starts out as a Twin tree style – Soju, and over time the two trees eventually grow together forming a Double trunk style. These two styles are the only acceptable plantings using two trees in a single pot.

### Basic design considerations:

The general rules for these styles are the same as any single tree style.

- The height of each tree should be different. The taller tree should also have the thicker trunk.
- The trees should be planted slightly diagonal to create depth, do not plant them directly side by side.
- The trunk should divide at or near the soil level.
- Trunks should form a 'V' shape, try to avoid crossing roots.
- Usually the direction of the trunk and apex should be the same with the exception of some cascade styles.
- The trees should harmonize in curve of the trunk as well as branch arrangement.
- Branches are trained as if it were a single tree.
- The first branch is shared by both trees. It should ideally be on the shorter of the two trees.
- Branches should not be on the same level, or cross one another.
- Do not place a branch from the taller tree over the apex of the shorter one, in nature the shorter tree would grow away from the branch to reach sunlight.
- \*The overall outline of a Double trunk or Twin tree should form a triangular shape.



Double Trunk



Twin Tree

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growth and development of bonsai and bonsai artist in the gulf coast region.

I strongly encourage our members to support the Gulf Coast Bonsai Foundation by joining. We will all benefit by expanding the educational outreach and information about bonsai to the general public as well as the ability to bring in talented artists for its members.

'Tis the season..... I hope each of you will join us for fun and food at the Annual GNOBS Christmas Party! The club will be providing a baked ham for the festivities. And even now, I smell smoked brisket! I'll bring pulled pork and many others signed up to bring various dishes and desserts to the party. In addition to the great conversation and company, we will have several drawings throughout the evening for prizes, including a \$100.00 Chinese elm bonsai from Brussel's Bonsai Nursery. Hope to see you there!

### December Bonsai Tips

1. No fertilizing at this time.
2. Watch your watering. You should be watering much less, but do not let trees dry out – even when dormant! Trees are sensitive to extreme changes – even during dormancy.
3. This is a great month for collecting trees from nature.
4. December, January and early February are the best months for grafting conifers.
5. I don't recommend any pruning at this time. It may stimulate growth and cause leaves to sprout prematurely and that can be devastating if new growth is hit by cold weather.

**Randy Bennett**  
GNOBS President



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

### Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society Board

President:  
Randy Bennett  
504-402-3646 (cell)  
504-888-7994 (home)  
ourproperty4u@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor/Website  
Kathy Barbazon  
504-470-8134 (cell)  
504-737-6747 (home)  
kbarbazon@me.com

Vice-President/  
Exhibit Director:  
Taylor Williams  
504-701-3181 (cell)  
504-701-3181 (home)  
twillgarden@gmail.com

Masters Program Director:  
Jim Osborne  
504-458-6956 (cell)  
wevoodoo@cox.net

Treasurer:  
Dawn Koetting  
985-859-3400 (cell)  
dkoetting@msn.com

Hall Manager  
Cheryl Mechler  
504-452-1222  
mechler465@att.net

Past President:  
Peggy Howard

Recording Secretary  
Chris Knowles  
504-939-8341  
chris.knowles24@gmail.com