

# THE BONSAI Wire

The Newsletter of The Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

November 2018

## FROM THE President

**D**uring the last couple of months, I have had the pleasure of presenting presentations on bonsai to two groups of Master Gardeners through the LSU Agricultural Department. The first was a group in Luling. They were extremely interested and asked a lot of excellent questions. What was supposed to be a one and a half hour lecture demo extended to about two and a half hours with all the questions. I was delighted at the amount of interest.

At the conclusion of the program, one of the attendees asked if I would travel to Amite and make a presentation to another group of Master Gardeners. I spoke to them November 7th. Once again, great questions, a lot of interest and a delightful group of people, professional gardeners from a wide range of backgrounds.

At the conclusion of the presentation in Amite, I was asked to speak to the Camelia Society about bonsai. I must say, I have presented programs on bonsai to many different groups over the years, but I have never spoken to groups with so much enthusiasm and interest. I certainly want to thank the Master Gardeners for their kindness and hospitality.

**Randy Bennett**  
GNOBS President



## MEETINGS & Events

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

### Tuesday, November 13, 2018

**Intermediate Study Group (for signed up participants) 6:00pm-7:15pm**

**Program: Repotting 7:30pm**

Dawn Koetting, winner of Vaughn Banting and Johnny Martinez awards, will do a presentation on all aspects of repotting.

### 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.

**Bonus:** There will be a door prize raffle for all **dues paid** members.

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)

## MASTERS –What, How & Why?

Edited from a previous GNOBS article



One of the benefits of being a bonsai club member is having other people to learn from. And if a club is strong enough (financially and with an active

membership), it can reach outside of itself and utilize renowned bonsai artists. These artists, often referred to as “Masters” bring new ideas and fresh presentations of old ones. Inviting guest Masters gives a breadth and range to bonsai instruction that would be hard to duplicate using only club talent.

GNOBS is fortunate to be able to have a Masters’ Program every year. It is paid for (mostly) with money earned at the annual auction. Participants do pay a fee for workshops to help defray some of the expense as well as for any tree material provided by the club.

The usual format the club schedules is a lecture/demo followed by a workshop. The lecture/demo is where the Master talks about a particular topic in bonsai then designs a tree in front of the group. A workshop is where students bring plant material, sometimes brand new unworked plants and sometimes bonsai that need refinement or help. At other times, the club acquires trees of a particular species from a bonsai nursery and workshop participants purchase that material as part of their workshop fee and the Master works with them to design or refine a tree. Also at a workshop, observers are allowed to watch and learn, they bring no plant material and do not work on a tree.

Once they’re here how do members get the greatest benefit from them? The following hints will help:

1. Attend the lecture/demo and listen. Of course personal instruction will be given to each participant during the workshop, but the more often you hear the information, the more likely you are to remember it and use it.
2. Pay attention to any general comments and instruction given at the workshop.
3. Wait until the Master gets to you before doing any cutting on your plant. You may, however, remove any debris (i.e., fallen

leaves, excess moss and top soil, and dead foliage) in preparation for working on your tree.



4. Listen closely to the Master when discussing your tree, take notes or draw a picture if necessary. (Some masters will draw a picture of their vision for you). If a front is designated at this time, mark it. Do any pruning & wiring you are told to do. It's important to remember what you should be doing between visits so as not to interrupt when he's working with someone else.

5. Don't be overwhelmed. It's your tree, express your impressions of it so they can be considered in its design. If those impressions are unworkable at least you'll get an explanation why (if not - ask).

6. If you complete your work before the Master gets back to your station, you may wish to watch and listen while he/she works on another participant's tree. However, do not talk, unless invited to do so, when at another person's station (they deserve the same consideration you want!)

7. On the last (and maybe only second) visit, finishing touches, future development and care may be discussed.

Workshop observation is free but observers are “silent” observers, unless invited to talk by the Master. Even as an observer, you can learn a great deal from the masters comments and their design choices on various trees.

Workshop participation is, unless otherwise noted, usually limited to ten paid participants. Sign up sheets are available at least a month or two before the workshop. Payment for a workshop is strongly requested at the time of sign-up but MUST be paid 30 days before the workshop or a participants spot may be given to someone on the wait list.

GNOBS generally tries to provide an assortment of workshops in different price ranges and appealing to beginners through advanced members.

This is perhaps the most exciting kind of event the club sponsors. Take part in these visiting Masters’ programs. You will not only improve your bonsai skills but have a great deal of fun while doing it!

## Wrightia Religiosa, Water Jasmine

by Erik Wigert (wigertsbonsai.com)

Water Jasmine is a very popular species for Tropical Bonsai. Native to Southeast Asia it grows as a shrub with 2 inch leaves. As a bonsai these leaves reduce well and its twiggy growth habit makes for excellent bonsai material. They prefer full to partial sun and well draining soil. Wrightia is cold sensitive and can become deciduous under 65F in the winter. Protect from freezing temperatures and take care not to over water when it is defoliated. Wrightia begin to set their flowers in spring, and a Water Jasmine in bloom is a wonderful sight. The fragrant flowers hanging in clusters below your foliage pads making for a perfect bonsai display. They can be trained to almost any bonsai style – take care to leave space between the foliage pads to showcase the blooms. Wrightia will bud back well so heavy pruning in an initial styling is acceptable. Wrightia adapts well to wiring and younger branches can be easily positioned. To reduce leaf size defoliation techniques can be applied. They can be apically dominant and here in Florida where they grow quickly, we often have to prune the apex heavily every few years to keep good proportions. Repot every 2 to 3 years in summer months when temperatures are in the 70's or above. Defoliating when repotting will help reduce the stress of root pruning. We use a well draining soil mix of lava rock, pine bark, and turface. Keep in the shade after repotting until new growth emerges.

Wrightia can be grown from the seed pods that will sometimes follow the blooms, or propagated easily from cuttings. There are a few popular hybrids including a “double flower” and a variegated variety. Also popular is Wrightia vietnamensis a variety with extremely small leaves that is excellent for shohin bonsai.

Wrightia are heavy feeders and enjoy a high nitrogen fertilizer. Yellow leaves can be a common problem caused either by overwatering or underfeeding.

Water Jasmine will occasionally get scale, mealybug, or aphids but it is easily controlled with pesticide spray.



Tree by Jerry Meislik

## Assessing Material to Collect

Edited from material by Vaughn Banting, Donna Banting and Alan Walker

*Editors Note: The below tips were included in an article on selecting material to collect in the wild during the Fall and Winter - but many of the same guidelines can be used to assess nursery material for bonsai.*

1. **Is it alive?** The trees will usually be dormant, so you do not want to collect a dead tree. Scratch a twig with your thumb nail. If there is a light green color exposed, the tree is alive. This is the cambium layer.
2. **Rootage.** Check to see if you have some large surface roots by digging at the base of the trunk with your fingers. See that they radiate out in at least three distinct directions.
3. **Flared base.** Although not essential, the base of the trunk should flare out to some degree. This will contribute greatly to the illusion of age.
4. **Trunk diameter.** Since you are not restricted to the small trunks available in nursery stock, take advantage of this and try to find the thickest trunks compared to the total height.
5. **Taper.** Does the trunk taper from a large base to a fine twig for the apex? If not, is there a secondary branch that can be wired up for a new apex, allowing you to remove the upper portion of the tree?
6. **Overall height.** Remember, a bonsai is not really considered a bonsai when it is over 48 inches tall, so don't collect trees that cannot be reduced in height and still have a convincing taper.
7. **Ratio of overall height to trunk diameter.** Is the trunk thick enough to account for the height? Remember, the thicker the trunk and the shorter the tree, the older it will appear.
8. **Low branching.** Are there branches at least as low as one third the total height of the tree now or after you have topped it?
9. **Branch arrangement.** Are the branches spaced evenly enough to allow the later removal of all “bar branches”, “cross branches”, etc., without removing all of the branches on one side or disfiguring the tree?
10. **Twig ramification.** Look for specimens that have developed more than just secondary branches. Secondary branches should have an abundance of tertiary branches which should give rise to an abundance of fine twigging.

## Bonsai Tips for November

By Randy Bennett

1. First and foremost, discontinue fertilizers at this time. Since we really haven't had any temperatures below 60, it is fine to fertilize for one more week. However, your trees need to rest and hopefully you resumed fertilization during September and October with products containing phosphorous and potassium and little to no nitrogen. Regardless... no more fertilizers by the time this newsletter is posted.
2. This is the time of year when the window begins to open for carrying out a couple of tasks on azaleas. The first one is Mesuki or bud-thinning. The window opens in November and extends through March. And although the window opens in November, it is best to wait until we have had temperatures in the upper 30's to low 40's. Flower buds will have set for next spring and should be clearly visible. You should judiciously remove buds with several thoughts in mind. First, you want to leave only one flower bud at the end of each branch. Second, you want to remove buds that will have flower petals overlapping when they open in spring. Third, you want to remove flower buds that are growing downward or in unwanted directions. Fourth, consider removing buds that are not the same size as the majority. Fat buds will open first and tiny buds will open last. Keep the buds that are of uniform size so that they will all open at one time. Another task that applies to Mesuki is the thinning of leaf shoots that may be growing in the wrong direction or do not contribute to the branch shape and overall profile.
3. This is the month to perform needle thinning on Japanese Black Pine. There is a lot to consider when needle thinning pines, so I will not go into as a part of monthly tips. But I suggest you find an article that explains needle thinning in detail if you own a pine.
4. You should continue to spray your trees for insects. Aphids and ants are still active and powdery mildew may still be forming on trees such as Crepe Myrtles. You should also continue to check leaves for fungal diseases and treat them accordingly.
5. Now that cool weather is starting to move into our area, you should cut back on the amount of water you give your trees. Remember that overwatering is the main culprit for the death of your bonsai.

Elections for the 2019 Board will be held in November.

### Current Nominations are:

Randy Bennett - President  
Dennis Burke - Vice President  
Dawn Koetting - Treasurer  
Kathy Barbazon - Newsletter/Website Editor  
Jim Osborne - Masters Program Director  
Peggy Howard - Secretary

**All members are welcome to run for any board position with the exception of President.** *Any nominees for President must have served on the board previously.* If you would like to run for a position please let Randy know at the meeting so he may announce it.

## BONSAI News

**March 15 & 16th:** Brussel Martin (owner of Brussel's Bonsai) will be visiting to do a lecture/demo and a workshop on Black Pine in the Bunjin style. Sign up sheets will be available for the workshop as soon as we have the cost determined.

**April 6 & 7:** Mark your calendars for our club participation in the Spring Garden Show at City Park.



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