

THE BONSAI Wire

The Newsletter of The Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

January 2021

FROM THE President



Happy New Year from the Greater New Orleans Bonsai board!

It is our sincere hope that this year will be more event filled and healthier than 2020. It was a pleasure to see so many of our members support our club by attending the Christmas party. I would like to give a big thanks to Gerald Nolan for cooking us a delicious dinner. I would also like to thank Randy Bennett for being our president for the last 3 years and for all his years in the club sharing his bonsai knowledge with us.

A few reminders for this time of year to maintain your bonsai. Now is the time to start repotting if you haven't already. Be mindful of watering this time of year. You don't want to water too much now. This is a good time to spray fungicide if the soil stays too wet. Now is a good time to clean your benches. I have used outdoor bleach and water solution (10-1) or undiluted white vinegar. Spray on solution and let sit about 10-15 minutes and rinse off. Make sure your trees are far enough away to not get splashed with the solution. Once bench has dried return your trees. I also use the vinegar to kill the artillery fern weeds that like to grow in the cracks of the cinder blocks that make up

President cont. pg 9

MEETINGS & Events

Attendees at our regular meetings will be required to wear a mask. Due to social distancing guidelines, we will not be able to conduct the study group at 6:00pm. With that activity being postponed for the time being, our regular meeting time will be moved up half an hour to 7:00pm.

Tuesday, January 12, 2021

Program: Silhouette Show 7:00pm

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 or two for display and discussion. If you don't have a deciduous tree, you are welcome to bring in any tree. Advanced members will make suggestions to further refine your trees.

Tuesday, February 9, 2021

Program: Open Workshop 7:00pm

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.

March Program

To be announced

REMINDER: GNOBS Club dues are due in January. (\$30 Individual or \$35 Family)

Our very reasonable annual dues help to pay for our regular club expenses - hall rental, postage, printing, snacks, web fees etc. Your dues are especially important this year as we were not able to hold our annual auction/fundraiser. Thank you in advance.

You may pay at the meeting or mail in your payment to:

Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

PO Box 381 Kenner, LA 70062

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

facebook.com/NewOrleansBonsai gnobs.org

SPECIES Spotlight

Louisiana Native Species as Bonsai

By Randy Bennett

This is part of a series of articles on Louisiana native species for use as bonsai. The goal is to make our readers more familiar with the pros and cons of each species as bonsai material and provide some guidance in developing them as bonsai.

Part 3: American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)

The American Hornbeam is a deciduous tree that can also be called Ironwood, Musclewood, Blue Beech or Water Beech in different parts of the country. It is typically an understory tree, preferring shaded woodlands, river banks, floodplains and bottomlands. It is a member of the Birch family and typically only grows to about 30 feet.



size can be reduced considerably in bonsai culture – typically to about 1 ½ inches. Being typically an understory tree, they tend to grow with a flattened crown. However, in more open areas they develop a rounded canopy.

The bark is gray and thin and the trunk begins to develop vertical fluted ridges like a flexed muscle, even at a young age. This characteristic becomes more pronounced with age. The wood is incredibly hard. Locals use it for making tool handles.

In deeply shaded locations you will typically see them as single-trunked tree, but where they can get more light, the predominate form is multi-trunked, much like a Crepe Myrtle. They prefer deep, rich, fertile soil that is acidic and moist. They are sometimes difficult to transplant, so you are better off trying to collect younger specimens.



The leaves are simple, oval in shape with the margins doubly serrated. They come to a point at the leaf tip and are symmetrical at the base. They alternate down the stems and shoots. The leaves may be anywhere from 2 ½ to 5 inches in length, depending on how much sun the tree is getting. Leaf



inches in diameter with a cut height of about 18 inches, only to have one or two shoots pop and neither may be very close to the cut. Sometimes you get lucky, but it is a roll of the dice.

That being said, they make beautiful bonsai, especially if you are able to find a trunk with some movement in it. Once you get them successfully transplanted and their roots are given the room to recover, allow them to grow unhindered for a year or two, then you can cut them back with greater back-budding on the trunk.

It is that first year of collection that is the most difficult. Because the wood gets incredibly hard, young branches stiffen up quickly and become difficult to bend, so wire shoots into desired positions when quite young.



My suggestion is to get as large a root ball as you can comfortably deal with at the time you collect. This will give you a greater chance of success and will enable the tree to recover more quickly. Once the tree has successfully made the transition to a container, you can transplant every few years with no problems. It is simply the initial collecting that can prove problematic.

They are relatively slow growing and prefer shady locations. They DO NOT tolerate the soil being allowed to dry out. So as bonsai, they are a little more finicky and slower to develop. My recommendation, if you want to plant them in a bonsai soil mix, is to make the mix about 60 to 70 percent organic. Remember where they grow in nature. They like having their “feet wet”.

The biggest drawback is that they do not pop back on old wood profusely when collected. You might collect a stump-cut specimen that is about 2



BONSAI Design

Deciduous Bonsai Design

By Harry Harrington (bonsai4me.com)

Bonsai enthusiast Samuel Brierley, the owner of this 40cm/16" tall Siberian Elm/*Ulmus pumila*, asked me recently if I would suggest a design for the tree and sent me a number of images from which I could design him a bonsai. Sam lives in New Zealand and the tree had just entered dormancy, dropping its leaves and revealing its branch structure; a perfect time for styling deciduous bonsai.



While the tree had an impressive trunk taper and size and was in good health, it also had many aesthetic defects that would need to be addressed before its full potential as a bonsai could be realized.

After studying images of the Elm, I found my favourite front for the tree (above). As the basis for all good bonsai design, the trunk and trunkline must first be established as, unlike the branch structure and exact placement of the branches themselves, the appearance of the trunk is the most difficult part of a bonsai to change.

However, from my proposed view, it was easy to see that

the large crossing root was ugly, there were a number of large perfectly circular wounds that were obviously man-made and the top half of the trunk lacked taper, coming to an abrupt halt where the tree had been chopped in the past.



The large crossing root at the front of the tree, not only is this root out of scale and growing sideways, it is also very straight and untapered. In this particular case, the best solution would be to remove the root entirely.

(Virtual image) With the root growing sideways along the trunkbase, the resulting wound would be surprisingly small and when hollowed out into an uro (literally a deadwood hollow) it would become much more attractive.

As Elm (along with most deciduous trees) do not have strict life-lines there was no risk of losing any top-growth as a result of removing the root.



(Virtual Image) The next problem to resolve on the trunk were the large wounds where branches had been removed in the past. Two large wounds could be seen on the front of the tree and their perfectly rounded appearance belied their manmade origin.



Wounds such as these can sometimes be made to look more natural and aesthetically pleasing by simply altering their shape and hollowing them out into Uro. However, I felt that combined with the new hollow at the base, the three proposed uro would look slightly strange and isolated. And so the idea of linking the wounds into a long shari began to take shape. The shari could then be hollowed out deeply, adding a great deal of interest to the trunk and the bonsai as a whole.

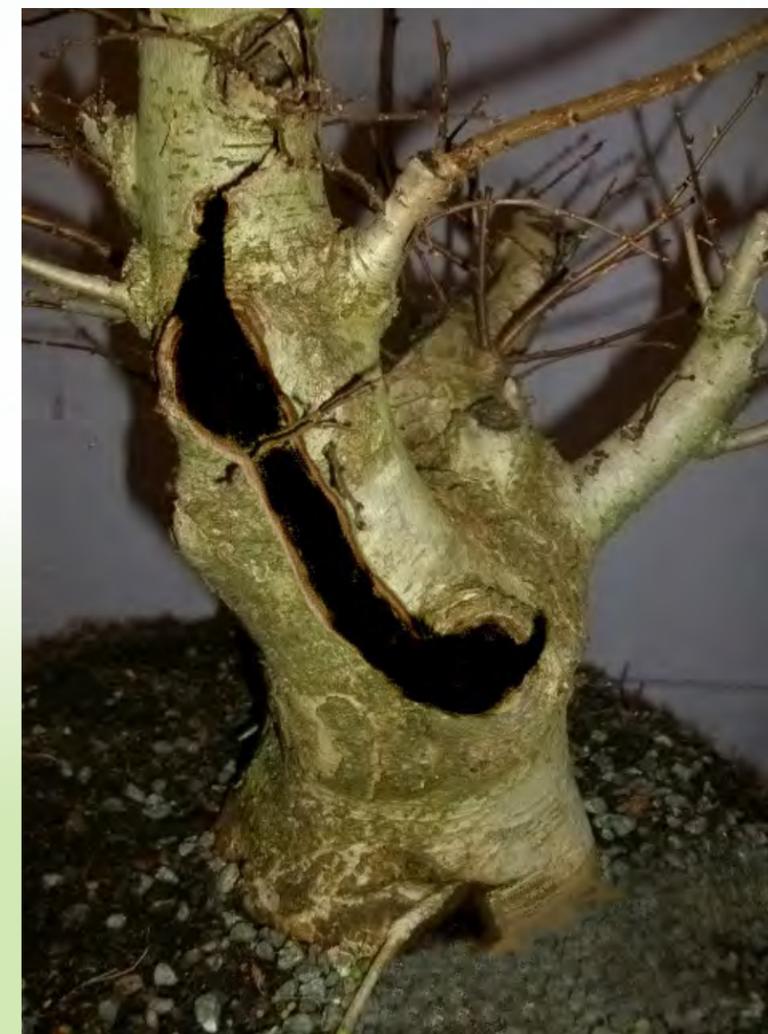
Designing a deciduous bonsai deadwood feature (such as a large shari) can be difficult. The temptation can often be to randomly carve out a section of the trunk, the result being that the shari does not seem to 'work' with the rest of the tree.

It is much better that an element of design is introduced into the all-important outline of the deadwood feature and this is best accomplished by imitating existing lines on the bonsai itself.

As indicated in the diagram above, the area between the two wounds was bordered by the strongly curved edges of the trunk. By replicating these curved edges, the shari could be designed so that it reinforced the natural lines and movement of the trunk.

(Virtual Image) And so I drew a shari/ large hollow connecting the two large wounds that followed the flow and movement of the trunk. By connecting the wounds, their roundness was removed and they began to look more natural.

However, the shari could still be further improved.



(Virtual Image) To further remove all traces of the wounds, I then virtually extended the shari out at each end.



Rather than have an area of the trunk where the wood has simply been uniformly dug out and hollowed to a uniform depth, I began to draw in edges to the hollow.

Now, with this design the bark would be removed to define the edges of the deadwood feature, but then a second complimentary 'shape' with different lines could be added to where the wood was actually hollowed out.

(Virtual Image) Another improvement to the design of the deadwood was then made to the lower edge of the wood to increase interest. Note that my intention was that the shari would be hollowed very deeply and knowing that there were wounds at the back of the trunk that would also need carving, I felt that it was a great opportunity to introduce some 'see-through's' all the way through the trunk.



(Virtual Image) Finally, it seemed natural to extend the shari downwards so it would then encompass the hollow at the base of the tree where the large root had been removed previously.



e-mailed my design to the owner of the tree and happy with my design, Samuel set to work using a die-grinder and a Dremel to carve out the wood.

After marking the edges of the shari on the trunk with a marker pen and using a sharp knife to cut along these lines, the bark was peeled away to reveal the bare-wood underneath. Having then marked the edges of the area to be hollowed, the wood was carved out as deeply as possible.....with great results!



This area at the back of the tree had a very thick branch whose base created inverse taper to the trunk when the tree was viewed from the side and the back. As there was already a large scar in this area, I suggested to Samuel that while he created the shari at the front of the tree, he also removed a large section of wood along the white line indicated in the image above.



After the inverse taper at the back of the tree had been removed, the scar was hollowed out.



(Virtual Image) With the trunk of the tree now established and armed with a new set of images of the newly carved tree, I began to draw the virtual design of the new branch structure. In the image above I have chosen which branches on the lower trunk to keep and which branches to remove.

(Virtual Image) I suggested to Samuel that as the top of the trunk was very obtuse and lacked taper, it would be preferable to accentuate the existing split to indicate to the viewer that the top of the trunk had divided into two parts (and was therefore naturally tapered). I then virtually designed the upper parts of the branch structure, constructing a natural apex comprising of all the upper branches rather than a more simplistic pine-tree-style apex.

I also suggested to Samuel that he could consider extending the shari all the way to the top of the trunk.....





.....which he did to great effect.....



(Virtual Image) My final drawing of the bonsai as I proposed it should be developed over the next few years, increasing the taper and ramification of the branches. Notice that the crown or apex is built from all of the branches in the upper trunk.

The three larger branches on the right hand side have been given smaller crowns of their own to reflect their size in comparison to the other branches. The general placement of the other branches has been made to reflect the movement of the tree towards the right, in accordance with the flow of the trunkline.

As a bonsai I have high hopes for this tree, a wonderful example of an ancient Elm!



.....before pruning, wiring and placing the branches.

The tree suddenly started to look like a bonsai and with the various faults on the trunk addressed and the basic branch structure in place, the tree could be allowed to rest for the rest of the Autumn and Winter before being planted into a bonsai pot next Spring.



Update: June 2013 I had the pleasure of receiving an updated image of the bonsai from its owner Samuel Brierley in June 2013, a year after its initial styling.

The Elm has now been potted up into a purpose-made bonsai pot from Vic Harris of ErinBonsai.com to create a quite stunning image!

Update November 2013: Samuel Brierley has been kind enough to send me this image of the Elm bonsai coming back into leaf. A stunning image indeed!

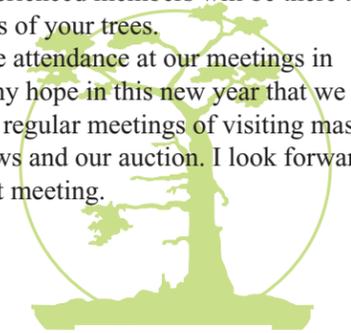


President cont. from pg 1

my bench legs. Another thing to be aware of, the wind, it can dry out even your dormant deciduous trees quickly even though they are not actively drawing up water through transpiration. It is the perfect time to collect trees either from the wild or that tree you put in the ground to girth up. Perfect time to wire trees, especially deciduous trees. You can see what needs to be wired better right now. Which brings me to our next meeting, the Silhouette show! Bring in two or three deciduous trees that you need help with or are just so proud of you just have to show it! This is the time to see what needs to be done to enhance your deciduous tree. The more experienced members will be there to help show you the possibilities of your trees.

It has been good to see the attendance at our meetings in the last part of the year. It is my hope in this new year that we will be able to get back to our regular meetings of visiting masters, attending the garden shows and our auction. I look forward to seeing all of you at our next meeting.

Dennis Burke
GNOBS President



Reminder: Club Discount

GNOBS has acquired a club discount with American Bonsai Tool & Supply Co. (AmericanBonsai.com). All club members can receive a **10% discount** by using the discount code **GNOBS10** on the checkout page. There is no minimum purchase required to receive the discount and shipping is **FREE** on orders over **\$99**.

American Bonsai is known for their high quality stainless steel tools. They also sell pots, supplies, soil, wire etc.

Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

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