

# THE BONSAI Wire

March 2020

The Newsletter of The Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

## FROM THE President

**I**f you were not able to attend the February program with Arthur Joura, I will try and fill you in on some of what you missed. The main focus of his presentation was on bald cypress. He had a great collection of photographs of bald cypress in the wild. He emphasized how Bald cypress grow in nature. If you read my 9-part series of articles on bald cypress, you know that the flat-top pattern, in which all mature cypress eventually grow, was proposed to the bonsai community by Vaughn Banting. I appreciated Arthur's recognition of Vaughn and all the work that he put forth to introduce that design. Vaughn and many others have taken a lot of criticism over the years for designing bald cypress bonsai the way they grow in nature. Even today, it is not readily accepted by Japanese bonsai artists.



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## MEETINGS & Events

**Note to members:** If you have not paid your dues this is the last newsletter you will receive for the year. If you wish to stay on the mailing list, please pay your dues at the next meeting or mail them in.

### Friday, March 13, 2020

Intermediate Study Group 6:00pm-7:15pm

Program: Brussel Martin Juniper Demo 7:30pm

Brussel Martin, owner of Brussel's Bonsai, will be doing a demo on a large upright juniper.

### Saturday, March 14, 2020

Upright Green Mound Juniper Workshop with Brussel Martin 8:00am

Cost of the workshop is \$120. Sign up sheets will be available at the meeting.

Some spots in the workshop are still available. Contact Dawn (dkoetting@msn.com) or Cheryl (mechler465@att.net) to sign up.

These are nice junipers trained specifically for upright bonsai which are not available in regular nurseries.

*If there are members who have taken Brussel's workshops in the past (pine, trident forest) and would prefer to bring those trees back for more advice and work (instead of the junipers), the price for the bring your own previously styled tree workshop will be \$50*

### Saturday-Sunday, April 4&5, 2020

Spring Garden Show - City Park

Saturday 9am - 5pm; Sunday 10 am - 4pm

GNOBS will be doing a bonsai exhibit similar to last year. Think now about a tree you would like to exhibit so it can be prepared in advance.

Meetings cont. pg 9

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)

[facebook.com/NewOrleansBonsai](https://facebook.com/NewOrleansBonsai) [gnobs.org](http://gnobs.org)

## *The Case for Wiring*

by Randy Bennett

I cannot tell you how many times I have had discussions with bonsai practitioners who do not like (or want) to wire their trees... or at least, wire them as little and as seldom as possible. They prefer, instead, to shape by pruning. Some will say that they always leave the wire on too long and end up scarring their trees. Some will admit that they really do not know how to wire properly. Some say that wiring is too time consuming and tedious.

There are some who will disagree with my thoughts on this matter and some that I may even offend. I am not trying to make judgements about the “anti-wiring establishment”, but it is exceedingly difficult not to. Wiring is an essential component for creating good bonsai. There is certainly some work that can be done by pruning alone and there are some species that do not readily lend themselves to wiring, either by foliage that is too dense and branches being too brittle to bend, but such species are few in number.

Wiring allows you to create structure and enhance design. Wiring allows you to duplicate or recreate what we can see nature cause in harsh environments, but fail to ever find in our own environment. Pruning alone does not create master-class bonsai... wiring does. That, or course, is just my opinion.

There is certainly a place for ‘clip-and-grow’ design, but it cannot, nor should it, be the method to use all the time. Clip-and-grow design takes a lot of time, patience and practice to do it correctly and to produce good results.

And, at the risk of sounding mercenary... wiring enhances the value of any bonsai by allowing the artist to bring out the beauty and artistry that any given tree may offer.

The following photos illustrate before and immediately after wiring. It is impossible to obtain this kind of design, beauty and elegance by clip-and-grow techniques.

*Mugo Pine*



*Shimpaku Juniper*



*Dawn Redwood*

*Wiring cont. pg 4*





*Procumbens nana Juniper*

I believe that wiring is absolutely essential for creating beautiful bonsai. However, wiring can be challenging to a lot of people. And you can do it incorrectly, so much so, that you can wire a branch you wish to shape only to have the wire actually loosen when you bend the branch and therefore, not hold. Why? Because you applied the wire on the branch by coiling it in the wrong direction.

I am not going to provide a wiring lesson at this time. However, if I hear from some of our readers that you would like an article on proper wiring, I will certainly accommodate you.

I will simply end by making this comment; wiring is a skill. Moreover, it is an acquired skill. It takes practice – a lot of practice. You don't become proficient at wiring by only applying it to 2 or 3 trees a year – anymore than you can learn to play the piano by only practicing 2 or 3 times a year. Yet, it is a critical part of creating quality bonsai. Creating bonsai without wiring is like painting portraits without using any brushes. It can be done by using a palette knife, a spray can or even your fingers - it just won't look as good as it could.

Use clip-and-grow when appropriate. It is a much better technique to use for things like pruning fine twigging for directional growth, or to thin out dense growth – just don't rely on it for initial design. You will come up short every time.



## Bonsai Tips for March

by Randy Bennett

IT'S HAPPENING!!! Everything has begun to move. I had Japanese maples pushing new growth by the 1st week in February! And by now, everything has begun popping out.

1. Now is the time to begin fertilizing your evergreen species: pines, junipers, azaleas, pyracantha, hollies, etc.
2. Now is also the time to start checking for insects. Be proactive. Begin spraying with Safer's Insecticidal Soap or Neem oil.
3. You should wait one more month before beginning to fertilize your deciduous material.
4. If you have Japanese red-leafed maples, place them in full sun for the time being, so that they can produce as much food and new growth as possible without getting leaf-burn. As soon as we start getting 85 degree temperatures, move them back into the shade.
5. Do not repot deciduous material at this time. If you missed your window of opportunity during the dormant months, you will need to wait until May or early June, when new growth has hardened-off and the leaves have had a chance to begin replenishing the food that was used to push out this years' growth.

# Pedro Morales' Tropical Bonsai School

## Begins in 2020!



Hosted by the Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

**Instructor:** The course will be taught by the internationally known bonsai artist from Puerto Rico, Mr. Pedro Morales.

**Students:** Members of the GNOBS will be given first preference during registration. We will make registration available to other clubs if space allows. However, participants must already be proficient in wiring and have a good foundation in bonsai techniques. This is not a course for beginners.

**Number of Students Accepted:** A minimum of 8 students will be required to start a school in this area and the school will accept a maximum of 15 students.



**Course Description:** There are 3 levels that students will work through during the course of the 3-year school. All enrolled students will begin at **Level 1**, regardless of prior experience. The Tropical Bonsai School will require a three year commitment from each student enrolled. The school will be held for three consecutive days each year; a Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Classes will start at 9 AM each day with a break for lunch. Classes will resume after lunch and conclude between 4 and 5 PM. The school will, of course, teach you all about tropicals, with the morning hours consisting of lecture and discussions on various tropical species with a focus on horticultural information, pests, diseases, training and pruning methods required for the various species, design and care. The afternoon hours will be spent working on trees under the guidance and direction of Pedro Morales. Students will be asked to bring the same material to the classes over the three-year period so they can be guided on how to develop raw tropical stock to refined bonsai. The techniques taught and the skills acquired will help students to become proficient tropical bonsai artists. The progression and development of each tree will be discussed, evaluated and documented with photographs. At the end of the course, students will be required to enter at least one of their trees into a bonsai exhibit.

**Course Material:** Students will be responsible for providing their own tropical stock for the school. Mr. Morales can provide hand-picked tropical stock, which he will bring from Puerto Rico to sell to students at their request. Each student is urged to bring at least two (2) tropicals each day to develop over the three year course. Students would then bring the same trees back each year to build upon the work of the previous year(s). Bringing material to work on is not required and there are participants in his other schools around the world that bring no trees, but are content to take notes, listen and watch others work on their trees. However, the best way to learn is by actually doing the work.

**Cost for Enrollment in the School:** The cost will be \$395 per person, per year. There will be an additional cost for the use of the Marine Corps League Hall. The Marine Corps League Hall charges \$100 per day for its use. So the additional annual \$300 fee for the use of the hall would be equally split among participants. For example, if there are 10 participants, then each participant would pay \$30 for the use of the facilities over the 3-day period, which would bring the total cost to \$425 for each three day session. Naturally the cost for securing the hall would increase or decrease slightly depending on the number of participants.

**Course Dates for Classes:** June 12,13 and 14

**Enrollment:** Registration for enrollment will open on Friday, February 7, 2020 at 6:00 PM, at the regularly scheduled GNOBS Club Meeting. A \$200, non-refundable deposit will be required to reserve your seat in the course. Students will be accepted on a first-come-first-served basis. The balance will be due at the first meeting of the Tropical Bonsai School. If we have 20 or more students wanting to participate, Mr. Morales has agreed to establish a second Tropical Bonsai School that would meet on different days.

**Location:** Marine Corps League Hall  
2708 Delaware Ave.  
Kenner LA 70062

*President cont. from pg 1*

But that was another aspect of Arthur's presentation; namely, that we should not be bound by Japanese convention. That we should take our cues from nature by designing our bonsai the way various species grow in nature. After all, let's remember that the five basic bonsai styles, formal upright, informal upright, slanting, semi-cascade and cascade were derived from the way pine trees grow – not deciduous material. Yet it seems that so many bonsai practitioners want to force those designs on everything.



Arthur followed his photos of bald cypress in the wild with photos of bald cypress bonsai and talked at length about a 'naturalistic design' applied to bald cypress.

Saturday, he conducted a "Bring Your own Tree" workshop. There was a wide range of material that made an appearance – including a bald cypress grove. I think everyone greatly enjoyed Arthur's down-to-earth approach to bonsai along with his sense of humor.

## March Program Features Brussel Martin!

Brussel Martin will be here on March 13th and 14th. Friday, March 13th, he will present a lecture/demo on 'procumbens nana', a dwarf Japanese garden juniper. That tree will be pampered during the next few months by one of our experienced members and will be up for auction at the GNOBS August Bonsai Auction. Saturday morning, he will conduct a workshop using the same species of juniper. The workshop material has been



selected by Brussel and he will bring them from his bonsai nursery in Olive Branch, Mississippi. Brussel will also bring a wide selection of pots that members may purchase either before or after his lecture/demo Friday evening.

Brussel has been practicing bonsai for many years and hosts the Annual Spring Rendezvous at his Bonsai Nursery. This year's event will be held May 22-24. The artists that will be conducting workshops and demonstrations during the multi-day event include: Marc Noeanders, Rodney Clemons, Kathy Shaner, Suthin Sukosolvisit, Danny Coffey, Young Choe, Byron Myrick and John Powell. If you have never been, you should consider attending. It is an experience you will not forget.

## Black Pine Study Group



### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION!!!**

GNOBS members who will be participating in the Japanese Black Pine Study Group need to begin following this fertilizer regimen... NOW! You must begin fertilizing your black pines during the first week of March. You must use an organic fertilizer. You should begin application during the first week in March and stop fertilizer applications during the first week in May. It is critical that you follow that procedure. **ONLY USE ORGANIC FERTILIZER AND DO NOT FERTILIZE PAST THE FIRST WEEK IN MAY.**

It is important that you read and follow the directions for whatever type of organic fertilizer you decide to use. For example, I will be using Bio-Gold organic fertilizer this year. Let's say that I have a black pine in a 12 inch pot. I will place two piles of Bio-Gold at opposite ends of the container with about 13-14 cubes of Bio-Gold in each pile. I will place them on top of the soil on March 1st. I will place two more piles on the soil equal-distant from the first two piles on April 1st and using the same number of Bio-Gold pellets, I will place four smaller piles between the first and second applications on May 1st.

As a second example, Alaska brand Fish Emulsion recommends 1 tablespoon per gallon of water applied every three weeks for outdoor container plants with 1 cubic foot of soil. That should be used as a foliar spray and a soil drench on black

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pinus. The first application would be on March 1st. The second application would be on March 22nd. The third application on April 12th. The fourth application on May 3rd.

Whether you are using a premixed brand of organic fertilizer or following a recipe that uses cottonseed meal, bone meal, blood meal, etc., begin your regimen March 1st and cease applications on May 1st, or within the first week.

It is critical that you follow this procedure if you are going to participate in the Black Pine Study Group. If you have questions, call me at 888-7994.

The Japanese Black Pine Study Group will meet June 6th at 9:00 at my home (1816 Fairfax Ave. Metairie). At that time, we will conduct candle-pruning and needle thinning to balance vigor in the trees. We will meet again on July 11th to thin new growth.

March 1s	fertilize
April 1st	fertilize
May 1st	fertilize
June 1st	prune all candles / thin needles (meeting June 6th)
July 1st	thin new growth (meeting July 11th)

## Spring Garden Show! April 4-5



Start getting your tree(s) ready for the show. Decide now which tree or trees you are going to show and plan accordingly. You will want to make sure that it is in a proper container for show. You should avoid any major pruning and wire should be kept to a minimum. There should be no wire on the trunks of trees. However, it is acceptable to have wire on branches. Make sure your soil is 'dressed'. Remove all weeds. Patches of moss on the soil make for a good presentation, especially when you use multiple species of moss. If you are going to show your tree with a "companion plant", remember that it should reflect the environment where the tree is normally found to be growing. We will provide additional information at the March Meeting.

## 6 Week Beginner Bonsai Course

The GNOBS will host a 6 week Beginner Bonsai Course, beginning April 16th. The class will be held every Thursday through May 21st. The classes will be held in Room 1 at the Mike Miley Playground, 6716 West Metairie Ave, Metairie. Classes will begin at 6:30 and end around 8:30. The cost is \$65 and will be open for members as well as the general public. The cost will include 6 weeks of instruction, a bonsai manual designed and written specifically for this 6 week course, a bonsai container, bonsai soil, wire and a juniper that participants will design into a bonsai. The last class will be the class where participants take the knowledge they have gained and design, prune, wire and pot their tree.

## Bonsai Styling Program for River Region Master Gardeners

On Saturday, April 18th, members of GNOBS have been invited to conduct a styling workshop for the River Region Master Gardeners of Destrehan, Louisiana. Our club will be providing plant material, pots, wire, screen, soil and member expertise to assist participants in the design, pruning, wiring and repotting of junipers into bonsai! We need 4-5 instructors!



## City Park Bonsai Styling Program

A couple of times a year, City Park sponsors a bonsai styling program. The number of participants is usually 10 to 15. Members of the GNOBS conduct this event by providing experienced members adept at styling and bonsai design, providing club wire for participants to use and an basic introduction to the art of bonsai.

The Park provides 3 gallon junipers to participants and pruning shears. Our members also bring their tools. We assist the participants in designing, pruning and wiring the trees. The next event will be held on April 25th, at City Park, in the classroom facilities of the Botanical Garden.

If you are up to it, we could use your help!

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## Tuesday, April 14, 2020

Intermediate Study Group 6:00pm-7:15pm

Program: Open Workshop 7:30pm

Bring your own tree to work on. Club will provide wire. (Bring your own tools). Take advantage of the time to catch up on styling and maintenance or seek the advice and opinions of other experienced members.

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## Saturday, April 18, 2020

Bonsai styling class for the River Region Master Gardeners

## Saturday, April 25, 2020

Bonsai Class - City Park

## Tuesday, May 12, 2020

Intermediate Study Group 6:00pm-7:15pm

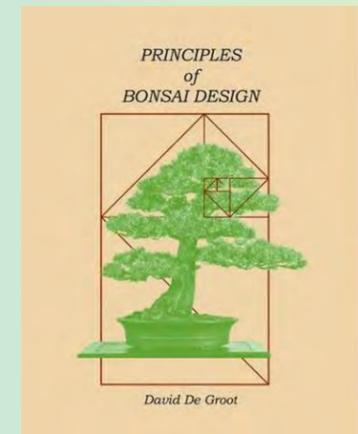
Program: Flowering/Fruiting Bonsai 7:30pm

Randy Bennett and Dawn Koetting will be doing a lecture/presentation on flowering/fruited bonsai including which species are suitable and their care. Members are invited to bring their own flowering/fruited trees for discussion and critique.

**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.

## Book Recommendation

Looking for a new book for your bonsai library? Consider *Principles of Bonsai Design by David De Groot*. This is not a beginner bonsai book with advice on types of soil, how to wire etc but a book focused on design and aesthetics. It has, for example, some of the best advice I've seen on how to choose the best pot for various trees. It is available on stonelantern.com and absbonsai.org (the American Bonsai Society site). If you are a member, ABS offers a nice discount. Dave is the former curator of the Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection and one of the original members and a former president of GNOBS. This is Dave's second bonsai book. His first book, *Basic Bonsai Design*, is still sold on the ABS site.



GNOBS Editor



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