

THE BONSAI Wire

The Newsletter of The Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

March 2022

MEETINGS & Events

With the Marine Corps Hall being sold at the end of March, the club has found a new home for our meetings:

American Legion Hall
1225 Hickory Ave, Harahan, LA 70123
(on a main street, with large parking lots on both sides)



Our MARCH meeting will be at the Marine Corps Hall

Our FIRST meeting at the NEW hall will be the APRIL meeting.

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Program: Bald Cypress Lecture/Demo by Randy Bennett 7:00pm
(LAST meeting at the Marine Corps Hall)

Randy, as many of you know from his newsletter articles, is well versed in all aspects of bald cypress collecting, development, styling and care. Randy will be doing a comprehensive powerpoint presentation. This is your chance to have all your questions about this native species answered. If you have a bald cypress, bring it in for display and questions/advice.

Saturday & Sunday, April 2 & 3, 2022

City Park Garden Show

GNOBS will once again be doing a large exhibit at the Garden Show. We will need volunteers to set up Friday, to man the booth on Saturday and Sunday and to take down the display on Sunday. We also need trees from members to display. We would like to have as many species and styles as possible. Members may submit one tree (or two, space permitting). Please let Dennis dpbonsai@yahoo.com or another board member know as soon as possible if you are submitting a tree or volunteering (and for what times). (For trees - we need species, approx age and/or time in training)

Meetings cont. pg 8

The Prodigal Son

By Randy Bennett

I began growing bonsai in 1971 after my father brought a Japanese Maple bonsai home as a gift for me. I set up a couple of benches in the backyard and began successfully killing most of what I laid my hands on. I lacked the right kinds of pots, the right tools, the right soil and, most importantly, the knowledge I needed. There were only a couple of books out in English at the time and they were woefully lacking in useful information and so I struggled as much as my trees did.

In 1980, my wife spotted an article in the paper about a bonsai convention being held at a Canal Street hotel. It was there that I found out about the Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society and joined on the spot. After talking to members and picking their brains, I began creating more and more bonsai and actually began having a measure of success.

In 1982, I put together my very first root-on-rock forest using 13 Chinese elms. I had collected the rock while visiting my grandparents in Oklahoma the year before. The elms were some that I had been growing for several years from cuttings and after mixing up some muck with long-fiber sphagnum moss and clay, I hammered lead fishing weights with tie-down wires attached into various crevices in the rock, bare-rooted the trees, pruned the roots, wired them in place and applied the muck and topped it off with some moss.

Back then, I lacked the foresight to photograph the process of starting my bonsai and so, I do not have a photograph of the composition when it was put together. However, I did photograph the tree a few years later, in 1985. That photo can be seen below.



1985 – three years after putting the elm grove together

A year later, in the spring of 1986, I placed the composition in an annual bonsai exhibit the club put on at Perrinos' Nursery. The tree, as it appeared in that show, is pictured below.



1986 – photo taken at Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society Spring Show at Perino's Nursery

Through the club, I met a man named Lanny Edwards, a long-time member of the club. I had started a bonsai mail order business and he would come by from time to time to buy pots and other bonsai supplies. Lanny would always want to view my bonsai collection. I was collecting a lot of trees and so I had a lot of pre-bonsai stock as well as “finished” trees. He had admired the elm forest on a rock on previous visits and on more than one occasion had stated that I should sell it to him. I sold Lanny a number of trees over the years and he eventually wore me down regarding the forest on a rock and I sold it to him in 1990.

Being one of my earlier creations, it wasn't particularly noteworthy and not one that I was emotionally tied to. And, since I was managing Lanny's personal collection of bonsai at the time, selling him the tree was not that big of a deal since I got to see the forest planting every year and continued to guide its' development.

Then came hurricane Katrina in 2005. Lanny's home was flooded and he lost most of the trees in his collection. Soon after, Lanny decided to move to his ranch in Texas. The loss had taken its toll on Lanny and he decided not to bring the remaining trees in his collection with him to Texas.

I too, lost trees in my collection because of Katrina. In fact, I lost all of them – over 200. When that happened I decided

to take a ‘break’ from bonsai. So, when Lanny contacted me about taking his trees, I declined. I did not know which trees had survived. Lanny shared with me some of the ones he had lost, but I did not think to ask about the root-on-rock forest. And so, I simply forgot about it, assuming it had died with the others.

Not wanting what remained of his collection to perish, Lanny contacted Guy Guidry to see if he would take his remaining trees. Guy agreed and took the surviving trees in Lanny's' collection to his home and nursery.

When I backed away from bonsai after Katrina, I lost touch with everyone in the club, including Guy. Even though I was away from it for a few years, once bonsai becomes a part of you, it is in your soul. And so, in 2010 I collected a large bald cypress to begin building my collection once again.

Once I began to rebuild my collection, I visited Guy at his bonsai nursery a few times. We would laugh, drink a couple of beers and try to fill in the gaps the years had created. I had closed my bonsai mail order business in 2005, but still had a lot of pots. And so, in 2012 I traded Guy my remaining pots for a large trident maple stump he had collected from some field-grown stock.

In the years that followed, I rejoined the club and would see Guy occasionally when he came to a club meeting. We would slap each other on the back and say how good it was to see one another. We always said we needed to get together, but we never did. I finally decided it was time for Guy and I to have a ‘bonsai reconnect’ and so, in July of 2021, I went to see him at his home in Covington.

When I arrived, one of the first things Guy told me was that I was going home with a tree that had belonged to Lanny Edwards. He knew that I had taken care of Lanny's collection for several years, and that I had worked on the tree at least 25 years ago.

Guy showed me around his yard and we talked about each tree in turn. When we got to the last pedestal, Guy smiled and asked if I recognized the tree. I couldn't believe my eyes! There was the little Chinese elm forest on a rock, but not quite so little as I had remembered. And it was no longer a root-on-rock. The roots had long ago worked their way down over the stone and now it was a root-over-rock, with the roots growing in a 22-inch shallow oval beneath the stone.

I shared with Guy the humble beginnings of the little forest and that the bonsai was a little older than the 25 years he had thought. He had no idea that I had created the little forest and that Lanny had purchased it from me. It was in fact, my first forest on a rock from 39 years ago and now the “prodigal son” was returning home. After learning that I was the one who had put the little forest together and that it was the first one I had ever done, Guy was more insistent than ever that it needed to come home with me. I did not even pretend to argue.

After our visit, Guy helped me load the tree into the back of my truck with the rain coming down. I didn't care about the rain. Guy apologized for not taking better care of the tree, but

it looked wonderful to me. It had lost a few branches here and there and was now a 9-tree forest instead of the original 13. In addition, it was a little chlorotic, but still healthy. The photo below shows the tree after bringing it home.



After coming home in July 2021 - Original front of the composition



July 2021 – original back of the composition

Now that the “prodigal son” had returned home, I wanted to make him feel welcome. The first step was to strengthen the trees and improve their overall health. I treated the trees with liquid iron every two weeks for six weeks. In addition, it received a weekly feeding of Miracle-Grow at half-strength.

In August of 2021, I decided to go ahead and prune the tree. I eliminated long shoots, cutting back to the first pair of leaves. I also eliminated weak shoots that had sprouted on the interior of the tree. In addition, there were a few dead branches which I cut off.

The death of several trees in the original composition altered the perspective of the forest. In addition, there were six new shoots that had sprouted from exposed roots within the past year. All but two of those shoots were in positions that would create greater problems if they were allowed to grow any further and so, four were eliminated. It will be a few more years before the two shoots that were left are large enough to become significant to the composition, but since they had volunteered and would be in a good position to provide additional depth to the forest, they were kept. I will add three additional trees this winter in places where additional depth is needed but where no existing shoots were growing.

There was another problem. Two shoots had sprouted from exposed roots in the front of the original composition. They were both several years old. One now interfered with the view of the main trunk while the second interfered and crossed the trunk line of two other trees. The simplest solution would be to prune out the two trees entirely to eliminate the problems.

However, this forest has managed to survive hurricanes and circumstances that many other bonsai did not, including over 200 in my personal collection. It has lived on for nearly 40 years since it was put together. My decision was to honor its' age and its' survival by working with what was there and not disassemble the grove and recreate it for my personal sense of what is aesthetically pleasing.

So, I decided to wire the two trees in front and bend the two trunks into a semi-cascade position to add greater perspective in the front of the grove and open up the sightlines through the composition.



August 2021 – the two small shoots that were left untouched, that sprouted from exposed roots, can be seen on the right side

of the composition, behind the 3 existing trees. The shoots will be allowed to grow, providing 5 trees on the right side of the grove and giving much needed depth perspective in that area.

The 5 existing trees on the left side of the composition lack depth as well. Three new Chinese elms will be added this winter in the back to correct this problem. In addition, you can see how the two “volunteer” trees that sprouted in the front of the grove have been wired down into semi-cascade positions. Once this work has been completed, the grove will have been restored to its' original 13 trees.



I was able to obtain 5 Chinese elms from the “Bargain Table” at the GNOBS Auction in August of 2021. The 5 trees cost me \$9. They all vary in size and I will select which 3 will be used this winter.

Most of the muck is long gone and roots are running everywhere. I will put together some more muck, cover the exposed roots and set about finding a suitable pot that is a little larger than the 21-inch Mica pot in which it is growing. The Mica pot is too small for the stone and I will have to find something about 24 inches in length and about two inches in depth. While normally one would pot deciduous trees in a glazed container, I will look for an unglazed brown or gray so that the stone is seen as the primary vessel and not the pot.



MEMBER Profiles

The Further Adventures of Guy Guidry (Part 1)

By Randy Bennett



he Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society has been very fortunate over the years. Our club has been the source for a number of nationally and internationally recognized bonsai artists. Our GNOBS “Hall of Fame” includes such artists as: Vaughn Banting, Donna Banting, David DeGroot, Gary Marschal and Guy Guidry. In addition, there are several other members who have regional and national recognition. I want to begin a series of articles to highlight some our more notable members and some of the trees they have created. And so, I begin by highlighting Guy Guidry.

For those of our readers who may be new to the club and not too familiar with Guy Guidry, let me give you a little background information. Guy began immersing himself in bonsai in 1984 when he attended his first international bonsai conference held in New Orleans. Soon after, he began studying with John Naka, Vaughn Banting and many others. He quickly became a rising star in the bonsai community, most notably known for creating large bonsai from collected and field-grown stock.

Guy with one of his creations... “Twister”



Guy has been a headliner at national and international conventions and has performed lectures and demonstrations all over the world, including such places as Africa, India, the United Kingdom, Wales, Panama and Columbia. He has taught workshops for many clubs, organizations and bonsai nurseries. One of his bald cypress bonsai is on display in the National Bonsai and Penjeng Museum in Washington DC. He has managed private collections and operated his own bonsai nursery for many years. He currently manages a large corporate collection of bonsai in Indiana as well as his personal collection. He has been a long-

time member of the Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society and currently resides in Covington, Louisiana.



Bald Cypress by Guy Guidry in the National Bonsai and Penjeng Museum’s North American Bonsai Pavilion in Washington, DC.

I recently had the opportunity to spend the day with Guy and tour his impressive collection of bonsai. I thought our readers might enjoy seeing what Guy has been up to, so this is the first of several articles documenting the development of a few of his bonsai.

Although Guy has taken a break from traveling and teaching bonsai, he has not slowed down when it comes to creating new and fabulous works of art in bonsai. True to his nature,

his backyard is filled with large specimen bonsai. In fact, a number of them would need a skid-steer or forklift to move! In this segment, I would like to focus on one of Guy's more recent acquisitions, a crepe myrtle. In January of 2020, a large crepe myrtle was scheduled for removal due to a construction project. It was a mature specimen and quite large. Guy saw the potential in the tree and convinced workers on the project to help him retrieve it. After using a chainsaw and cutting it back to a stump, a backhoe was used to surgically remove the tree from the landscape. Once dug, the stump was lifted onto a flatbed trailer and taken to Guy's backyard where the initial work could begin.



Guy's new acquisition being loaded onto a flatbed trailer by a backhoe

Once the stump was in his yard, he used a chainsaw to cut away much of the rootball, which initially hung over both sides of the flatbed trailer! Then, when the stump was a manageable size (for Guy), he brought it into the shade and put his chainsaw to use once more, further reducing the root mass and removing some of the problem areas.



Using a water-filled pump sprayer, the remaining roots were sprayed repeatedly throughout the process to prevent them from drying out. You might be shocked at how few small roots are left on the tree, but remember, it was collected at the end of winter dormancy and the trunk contains a great deal of stored starches that the tree is able to use for generating new roots.

Back of the crepe myrtle after "root pruning" was completed

You can see that this tree had two main trunks. The lower section, which is on the back of the tree, will be left on for a full year, until the tree has had a chance to fully recover. It will then be removed as Guy moves towards the final design.



Front of the tree after root work

Note all the branch shoots that have been cut short but were allowed to remain. This will make it much easier for the tree to bud out in the spring. The tree was immediately placed into a large bonsai pot measuring 40 inches in length.



Crepe Myrtle immediately after potting

Note the large collected tree immediately behind the crepe myrtle. That's a bald cypress which was also collected about the same time.



This photo was taken in early spring of 2021. Note the number of new shoots that have sprouted. The tree will be encouraged to develop as many new shoots as possible to regain strength, while keeping the shoots small and not allowing any single shoot or shoots to become larger than the rest, since the shoots that will later become the primary branch structure have yet to be selected.

Guy standing next to his newest project

This photo was taken in the summer of 2021. The tree measures 32 inches at the soil line.



Guidry
cont.
from
pg 7

Photo
taken in
August
of 2021



This photo shows that the second trunk has now been removed.

In this photo, Guy is using a technique where the vascular tissue on new shoots is being gently crushed between his fingertips,

while at the same time, curving them downward. This forces the shoots to grow downward without using wire. It also helps to ensure that auxins, the growth hormones at the tips of vigorous shoots, are redirected to other parts of the tree to stimulate back-budding on the main trunk.

While this tree is years away from being show-worthy, I wanted to show our readers what Guy was up to and that even fully-grown trees can be used in the art of bonsai.

Meetings cont. from pg 1

Tuesday, April 12, 2022

Program: All about Roots by Dennis Burke

7:00pm

(FIRST meeting at the NEW hall)

Dennis will do a program on root form and function, development, pruning, improvement, treatment etc. as well as ground and air layering to develop or improve roots. Members are encouraged to bring in any trees with root issues.

Tuesday, May 17, 2022

Program: Juniper presentation by Robert Reed 7:00pm

Note: This meeting has been moved from May 10 to May 17 due to a scheduling conflict

Robert Reed will be doing a comprehensive lecture on junipers. Members who know Robert can attest that he is both an expert juniper stylist and well versed in their horticultural needs. Members are encouraged to bring in a juniper for display, questions or critique.

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Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

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FROM THE President



I was very pleased with the Jennifer Price meeting and workshop. It was a welcome change from how other artists conduct their workshops. I think everyone enjoyed the cypress she created. I can't remember a meeting when so many members wanted a close up of an artist at work. It seemed like it was a pleasant surprise to her as well. I know I'll be waiting to see what attention that cypress will get at the auction. I would like to thank Randy Bennett for his effort to get Jennifer here for us. What a lovely assistant he was at the meeting, right?

I hope most of you have a tree you would like to display at the spring garden show. We still need volunteers throughout the weekend and to set and break down. Please sign up at the March meeting! This will be our last meeting at the Marine Corps hall in Kenner. I would like to thank Gerald Nolan for his years of assistance with our meetings there. It is much appreciated!

Our new meeting place is in Harahan. The next meeting place (April Meeting) is at American Legion hall at 1225 Hickory Ave, Harahan, La 70123. Please make a note of it.

If you haven't finished repotting your trees you still may have a chance. If your deciduous trees haven't leafed out yet you still have a short window. If the dormant buds are swelling you can still get it done. If your trees have leafed out it's better to wait till next years dormant period.

I started filling some tea bags with fertilizer and placed them on my more developed trees. I don't add inorganic to the ones I am attempting to ramify. Organic is the best way to go for your developed trees. Synthetic fertilizers tend to have high nitrogen content which will give you too much green growth and longer internodes. Organics help keep your tree healthy and without risk of undoing all that work you've done on your tree. I do use synthetic on my "potensai" (potential bonsai) trees to either thicken them up or get them growing vigorously so I can chop it down later.

I hope I see some of you at Underhill Nursery in March for their show. March 19 and 20th. If you would like to represent the club there wear your club shirt. We will have a table and info for potential new members who attend the show.

Dennis Burke
GNOBS President.