

THE BONSAI Wire

June 2022

The Newsletter of The Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

FROM THE President

I would like to inform all members that the GNOBS board has voted to join the Lone Star Bonsai Federation on the invitation from Hurley Johnson (LSBF President). More information on what that means for us as a club to come. I think this will be a mutually beneficial relationship for all the clubs involved in LSBF. This will allow us as a club to expand the exposure of possibilities for our members and the art of bonsai. Please check out their website <http://www.lonestarbonsai.org/>

The heat is on!!!! But I am glad when it rains really well so I don't have to water that day. I know it can be difficult to water twice a day but sometimes it has to be done especially on smaller bonsai. They can really suffer if one watering is missed. You can set up a watering system rather easily these days with the plethora of DIY systems available. Be aware of the issues that can arise. You need to make sure they are all still getting water. Depending on the dripper or emitter used take note of the patterns that it distributes water. Also be aware of fungal issues that may arise from being watered too much. So just know that you still need to monitor your trees daily even if they are on a watering system.

President cont. pg 10

MEETINGS & Events

Reminder - our new home for meetings is:
American Legion Hall
1225 Hickory Ave, Harahan, LA 70123

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

Intermediate Study Group: Wiring your Bonsai and Decandling Pines by Dennis Burke 6:00pm

Program: All About Tropicals (Multiple Presenters) 7:00pm

A number of more experienced members will be bringing in and discussing a wide range of different tropicals. Members are encouraged to bring in a tropical for display, questions or critique.

Friday, July 8, 2022



Program: Demo/presentation on Water Jasmine by Mike Lane 7:00pm

Mike will be doing a demo on a nice water jasmine (flowering tropical) from Wigert's Bonsai. Mike studied and worked under Erik Wigert and had additional training with Mauro Stemberger, Min Lo, Robert Steven, Vlad Novak, and Enrique Castano. He began teaching and doing workshops in 2012. He specializes in Shohin and



tropicals. (He did a demo for GNOBS in 2020 and was very entertaining and informative.)

Program: Initial Competition for Johnny Martinez Award

All members (including beginners) are asked to bring in their best trees (limit 2) for a friendly competition. All members present will get 3 votes for their favorite trees. The 3 trees with the most votes will be displayed at the Auction. Auction attendees will vote for their favorite tree from the 3 for the Johnny Martinez Award. We ask that you not bring in a tree from a workshop done in the past year. Time permitting, Mike will provide a constructive critique.

Meetings cont. pg 10

Save the Date!
GNOBS Auction
has been confirmed for
August 13

SPECIES Spotlight

Water Elm – 3 ½ years of Development

By Randy Bennett

In August of 2018, Jim Osborne, Dennis Burke and I drove to Catahoula Lake to collect a few bald cypress and water elm. I collected one water elm and wrote an article about Catahoula Lake and our collecting trip. In the article, published in the February 2019 issue of the GNOBS Newsletter, I presented a plan for the development of that water elm. If you are unfamiliar with the article, it is posted under the “Resources” tab on the club website. Scroll down and click on “Newletters”. You will find it there. The second article on this tree was written in December of 2019 and appeared in the January 2020 Newsletter.



The photos above show the tree the day after it was collected in August of 2018

This sketch illustrates my vision for the tree in the future at the time the tree was collected.



However, when January 2019 rolled around, five months after collecting the tree, I began to more closely examine the growth that had occurred during the previous months, my design changed slightly. I decided that keeping the low-growing branch on the left side of the main trunk and treating it as another trunk would not work. It did not emanate from the base and was too high up on the trunk. It

looked artificial as a separate trunk and so I decided to treat it as a primary branch. That meant eliminating one of the smaller trunks and create a three-trunk design.

The photos below show the tree after setting the structure for the future design. Many of the basal shoots were removed, including one of the trunks that I had originally planned on keeping. As you can see, the main trunk was also cut back to the desired height. After that, remaining branches were wired into position and movement created.

Note that the two smaller trunks are almost exactly the same size. In fact, the one on the outside is slightly larger. From a design standpoint, it makes more sense for a triple-trunk such as this, for the second largest trunk to be in the middle and the smallest of the three to be on the outside.

You can also see what I mean about the branch on the left really being too high to serve as a separate trunk.



Initial structure and design set in January 2019



Photo taken in December of 2019 – 11 months after the previous photos were taken.

After the initial design was set in January 2019, the tree was allowed to grow freely. The wire had to be removed early on to prevent wire scarring. The result was that the secondary trunks and branches did not maintain their desired positions. The growth was quite rapid. The photo above shows the growth that occurred during that year.

A month later, in January 2020, the growth from the previous year was pruned back hard and wire was reapplied.

Photo taken in January 2020



The nebari is over 6 inches at this time. Because the tree was allowed to grow freely for the entire growing season, the problem still exists regarding the diameter of the second and third trunks. That issue began to be addressed during the 2020 growing season. You can also clearly see the notch of deadwood near the large cut on the main trunk and that portion of the main trunk lower down, near the base, that has died as a result of some previous trauma it sustained. The area between the two areas of deadwood is very much alive. However, the two areas of deadwood were later joined when carving was done.

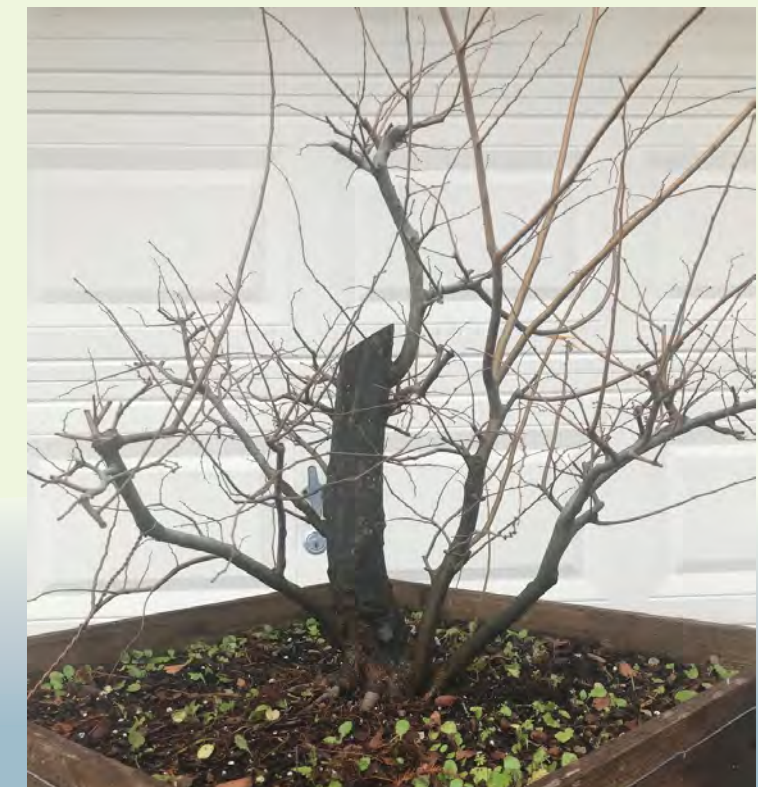
In that the wire on the branches and two smaller trunks had to be removed so soon, this time guy wires were used to

hold the trunks in position without the risk of wire scars.

The tree was allowed to grow freely until May of 2020. At that time, it was pruned back and rewired. The “growth for Size” stage was completed by nature. All of the work that has been done to this point and all the work that will be done during the next 2-3 years are all in the “Growth for Design Stage.”



January 2020



January 2021

SPECIES Spotlight

Water Elm *cont. from pg 3*

As was previously stated, the tree was allowed to grow freely until May of 2020. At that time, most of the long shoots were pruned back. The exception to this were the shoots on the middle trunk. By allowing them to continue to grow freely, it began to catch up to the third (outside) trunk and eventually became larger. During the 2021 growth season, you can already see that it was no longer the smallest trunk. Both of the smaller trunks were now the same diameter.



January 24, 2021

The photo above shows the tree after pruning back hard once again. You will note that the shoots on the middle trunk were not touched. These shoots, being taller than any other portion of the tree, became the dominant shoots and most of growth energy was concentrated in this trunk during the 2021 growing season. The result was that it quickly outdistanced the outer trunk in terms of diameter.

At this time, the first initial carving of the trunk took place. The two deadwood areas on the main trunk were joined. I must apologize for the quality of the photo. It does not clearly show how low the deadwood extends down the main trunk.

The tree was allowed to grow freely during the spring. The photo below shows the extent of growth after pruning back in January.



The above photo shows 3 months of growth

While a tree is in the development stages, it should be allowed to grow freely during the spring months. This water elm was pruned back heavily on May 15th. The shoots that were not needed for additional branches were removed. Those shoots that were kept were cut back to two and in a few cases, three leaves.

Leaving two leaves or dormant buds is always advisable, but it depends on where the second leaf/bud is located. For example, some species form pairs of buds (opposing pairs) where each pair alternates horizontal to vertical to horizontal, etc. as seen with the trident maple photo below and to the right. Other species have alternating buds which repeatedly occur horizontally along shoots as seen on the water elm photo below on the left.

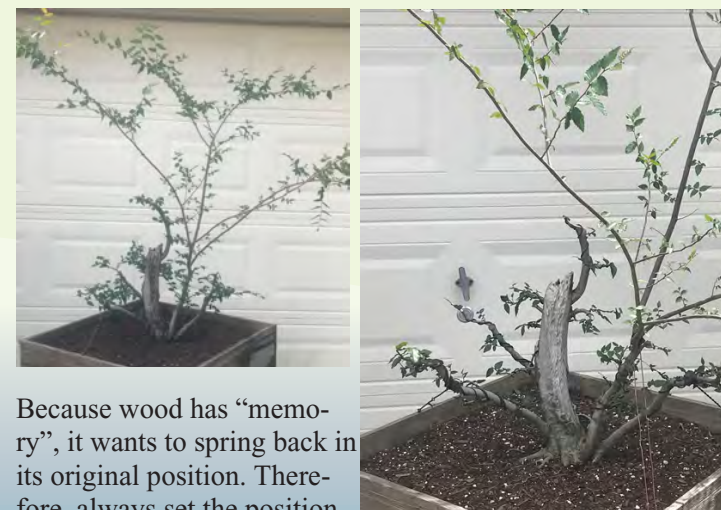


Dormant buds are at the base of each leaf, so where you prune determines the direction the new shoot will grow. If you look at the photo below, I am pruning behind the third leaf because I want the shoot that will sprout from that leaf's base to grow outward. Pruning behind the second leaf would generate a shoot that would grow inward and once these two shoots are wired into position, the shoot that would sprout from the base of the second leaf would grow into the other branch, crowding it out.



The spring pruning is almost complete in the photo below. Once again, the second trunk went untouched for the remainder of the growing season so that the diameter could increase, passing up that of the third trunk. The photo below and to the right shows the tree after all the pruning was completed and branches wired into position. You will notice that three loops of wire have been attached to the grow box and have been looped around the two smaller trunks on the right and the lowest branch on the main trunk. Rubber pads were placed between each wire and the tree to prevent it from cutting into the bark. They acted as turnbuckles to gradually pull the trunks and branch into the desired position.

Because it takes much longer for larger branches and trunks to develop enough woody tissue to get them to remain the desired positions, you have to wire and rewire repeatedly, and risk inadvertently creating wire scars. This must be avoided on trees with smooth or thin bark. Because it is a loop of wire, a stick can be placed in the middle of the loop and repeatedly turned, causing the loop to twist and gradually pull down the branch or trunk.



Because wood has “memory”, it wants to spring back in its original position. Therefore, always set the position of the branch or trunk a little lower than you want. Once enough woody tissue has been generated, the wire turnbuckle can be removed, and the branch will remain in the desired position. You should pull the branch down as much as you can by hand before securing the loop of wire. Otherwise, you

will twist the wire until it snugs up against the branch without sufficiently pulling it down. If, at the end of a year or two, the branch does not stay where needed, simply apply a new loop of wire, and reset the desired position.

The photo below shows a closer view of the work that was just completed. One week after this photo was taken, new leaves emerged everywhere on the tree. A close eye was kept on the wire to make sure it did not cut into the bark. There were signs of cutting into the bark by July 1st, 2021 and so it was all removed at that time. Shoots in the upper third of the main trunk and the third trunk were pruned back to two leaves when they got longer than 12 inches. I was able to allow the lower shoots to grow freely to begin to developing proportional thickening of branches.



By the end of July, the second trunk had sufficiently outdistanced the third, outermost trunk. The freely growing shoots reached a height of over six feet! They were allowed to continue growing until winter, at which time it was cut back. They have allowed the second trunk to double in size.

If you look at the photo of the tree when it was collected, you will notice that the second trunk was actually a good deal smaller than the third, outermost trunk. In nature, a smaller trunk between two larger trunks would eventually be shaded out by the other two, causing it to weaken and eventually die.

Water Elm *cont. pg 6*

SPECIES Spotlight

Water Elm cont. from pg 5

So, to have a more believable bonsai design, the second trunk had to be allowed to become much thicker than the third. In nature, a tree growing on the outside edge of a forest or in this case, the outermost trunk of a clump of trees can grow out from under the main canopy and support itself. Thus, the composition tells a story and the third trunk, now being the smallest is a believable design.



February 2022 – Before Pruning and Wiring

The shoots and branches were all be pruned back to two buds in mid-February of 2-22. The photo below shows the tree after pruning



February 2022 – After Pruning

Once the branches were pruned back to two buds and all unwanted shoots were removed, the dead portion of the trunk was hollowed out a little deeper using carving bits on a die-grinder. Once the carving

was completed, wire was applied to the branches and twigs to give more shape and movement. By this time, the tree had developed primary secondary and tertiary branching. The “refinement Stage” can now begin.



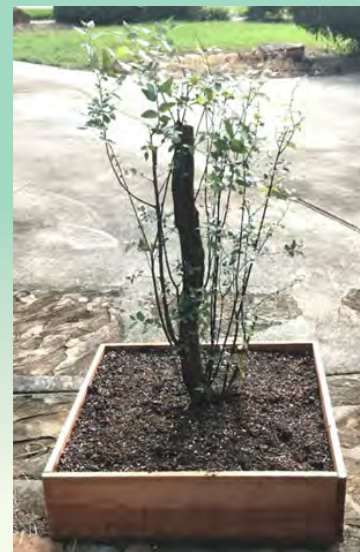
February 2022 – After Carving and Wiring

The last step was to remove the tree from the cedar grow-box and repot it into a bonsai container. Doing so will limit the amount of new growth, thus inhibiting coarse growth and promoting fine twigging. There were copious roots, filling the cedar grow box. The roots were pruned back heavily, and the tree was potted into an appropriately sized bonsai container. The



February 2022 – After Root Pruning and Repotting into a Bonsai Container

tree will remain in this container for the next few years, until a final container can be decided upon.



2018



2019



2020



2021



2022

Next Steps:

Step 1: By the end of March or the first week in April, the tree will probably need to have all the wire removed. If such is the case, there will be at least some pruning required.

Step 2: Fertilization will begin in April and will consist of Bio-Gold and other organics.

Step 3: By June 1st, 2022, the tree will be pruned again, bringing all the shoots back to 2 leaves. At that time, all branches will be rewired.

Step 4: On June 1st, the last application of fertilizer will be applied until the fall. It will take about 4 weeks for the tree to utilize the fertilizer applied at this time. This will coincide with a period of rest through summer dormancy during July and August.

Step 5: In September, fertilization will begin again, but with an organic fertilizer that has no nitrogen. “Alaska” brand fish emulsion has such a product. Weekly applications will cease by the middle of October.

This regimen will continue over the next few years. At which time, there will no longer be any need for wire (or the ability to apply it). What will remain will be routine pruning to develop fine twigging and fertilization to maintain the health of the tree.

NOTE: If there is nothing else you glean from this article, it should be the results that can be achieved using grow boxes. The biggest mistake bonsai practitioners make is to place a tree into a pot or bonsai container before it is relatively finished. You should have the size of the trunk or trunks set, primary branch placement established, size of primary branches established relative to their position on the trunk(s), and secondary and tertiary branching developed – all before attempting to place into a bonsai container. Placing a tree into a bonsai container before it is a relatively finished tree will prevent the development of a “finished” tree by years.



The Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

Annual

Bonsai Auction

(Free and Open to the Public)

August 13, 2022

Viewing of trees prior to auction: 4:00pm – 6:00pm

Auction 6:00pm – 9:00pm



NEW LOCATION

VFW Hall

1133 Hickory Ave

Harahan, LA 70123

- Quality, developed bonsai
- Featured bonsai designed by nationally known bonsai masters
- Starter material
- Pots and supplies
- Bonsai for every budget from the novice to the dedicated enthusiast
- Bargain tables

Light Refreshments

Join us for great bonsai and a great time! gnobs.org facebook.com/NewOrleansBonsai

BONSAI Basics

Fusion

By Jerry Meislik

Many of us do not have easy access to larger materials and must use small plants or cuttings to develop their bonsai. One way to utilize smaller material is to cultivate cuttings from a desirable plant. In this case it is a *Ficus concinna* with lovely new foliage that is quite red in color. I took multiple cuttings from the mother tree and rooted them. You can see the rooted cuttings in the first photo. Each is about 2-3 feet tall and in separate growing containers.

One after another is brought as close together as possible by removing interfering branches and roots. They are then held with plastic cable ties or any other suitable non-stretching material to secure the trees tightly together and then planted into a large growing container. These trees will be allowed wild growth with as little trimming as possible. Over time the ties will begin to press into the bark and then they can be removed and replaced as needed until the fusion is complete.

Over time branches are selected that grow out of the bundle are used in the final design of the bonsai. The end result is a larger tree than I could have developed in the same number of years in my plant room. If I lived in a tropical area I could have simply planted a tree in the ground and grown it for 5 years to get a thick trunk and then worked on developing the branch structure.



© Jerry Meislik 2019

Rooted cuttings in small growing containers will be fused



© Jerry Meislik 2019

Cuttings are brought tightly together with plastic cable ties

Plants are placed into a large growing container



Meetings cont. from pg 1

Saturday, July 9, 2022

Program: Water Jasmine Workshop with Mike

Lane 9:00am

Water Jasmine is a flowering tropical tree that produces fragrant white flowers that hang down below the foliage. They bloom in spring and in fall. A sign up sheet for the workshop will be available at the May meeting. The water jasmine workshop is FULL but you are welcome to sign the waiting list in case anyone needs to drop out. *As usual, members not in the workshop may attend as silent observers. I highly recommend this to new members. You can observe the work on multiple trees and the rationale behind the design choices.*



Saturday, August 13, 2022

Annual GNOBS Auction

VFW Hall - 1133 Hickory Ave, Harahan, LA 70123

Auction Setup and Donations Accepted –
12 Noon – 4:00pm

Viewing of trees and other auction items –
4:00pm – 6:00pm

Auction – 6:00pm – 9:00pm

Get your donations ready! Now is the time to go through that overcrowded bench and decide which of your trees should go to the auction for a new home. You'll need the space for the fabulous new bonsai that you just can't live without and bring home from the auction. All donations contribute to the operating budget of the club. (Please take the time now to root some cuttings, do air layers etc for the bargain table.) The club accepts bonsai, pre-bonsai, nursery stock and rooted cuttings (for the bargain table), bonsai pots, books and tools and anything else bonsai related.

President cont. from pg 1

Now is the time to repot tropicals. It's also a good time to start cuttings off tropicals, remember roots love heat! So even if you don't have a heat mat like the professionals you can still clone them yourself. It is also the time to de candle your double flush pines (Japanese black pine) only if they are in the refinement stage. I'll be doing a demonstration on 'how to' at the next intermediate meeting before the regular meeting.

I look forward to seeing everyone's tropicals at the next meeting. This will be a great opportunity for you to bring in a tree you are proud to have developed and share that knowledge with the other members. Even if it's not show ready (I have a lot that are not) still bring it to share. Through meetings like this even the "veteran" members can learn something new about a species they may not have handled before so don't be shy or think your tree is not worthy of noting. If you've kept it alive until now you are doing something correct!

Dennis Burke
GNOBS President



CLUB News

Several board members are looking to do some informal Saturday study groups on various topics. More information/sign up sheets will be available at the meetings

Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

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