

# THE BONSAI Wire

March 2024

The Newsletter of The Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society

## FROM THE President

**S**pring has sprung! I have sourced some interesting Parsoni (AKA Parsons) junipers for the

club give away this year. Hopefully you will be happy with the one you end up with as they will be selected at random by drawn number. Don't forget to bring your tools and raffia if you plan on bending branches. These junipers have been neglected by the landscape industry which is beneficial to us for bonsai material. They have been growing unchecked for a very long time. They are diamonds in the rough. With a little cleanup, wiring and your imagination they have the potential to be nice looking bonsai! I look forward to see how you all take them on the first step into their bonsai journey.

The Spring Garden show at City Park is fast approaching, April 6 & 7. If you have a tree or two to display let me know the species, age if known, time in training as a bonsai, source. We will also need volunteers to help us out even if you don't show a tree. The spring show is usually very busy so we can use all the help we can get and it is always a good time. You may even learn something new yourself by helping the club out. We will need the same at the Destrehan Garden show April 20 & 21. I hope to see you all at both shows.

Dennis Burke  
GNOBS President



## MEETINGS & Events

Meeting Location is:

**American Legion Hall 1225 Hickory Ave, Harahan, LA 70123**

### Tuesday, March 12, 2024

**Program: Repotting by Carl Gilbert 6:30pm**

**Program: Club Giveaway and Open Workshop 7:00pm**

Carl Gilbert will do a lecture/demo from 6:30-7:00 on repotting your trees. The club is attempting to acquire 40 nice size Parsoni Junipers. Dues paid members will receive a free tree until they are all gone. (first come/first serve). For the rest of the meeting members will work on their free trees with the help of experienced members.

### Saturday & Sunday April 6 & 7, 2024

**City Park Garden Show**

**Set up is on Friday, March 31 from 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.**

**Show hours Sat and Sun are 9-4**

GNOBS will once again be doing a large exhibit at the Garden Show. We 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). We will have sign up sheets for volunteers and tree submissions or contact Dennis [dpbbonsai@yahoo.com](mailto:dpbbonsai@yahoo.com) (For trees - we need species, approx age and/or time in training)

### Tuesday, April 9, 2024

**Program: Wiring by Carl Gilbert 6:30pm**

**Program: Bald Cypress Lecture by Randy Bennett 7:00pm**

Randy Gilbert, one of our foremost experts on Bald Cypress, will do a lecture/presentation. Randy has been conducting bald cypress training and workshops at the request of other clubs across the South. He asks that members also bring in bald cypress for display and he will give suggestions for their development.

Meetings cont. pg 7

## Kumquat as Bonsai

By Randy Bennett

The kumquat is a member of the orange family. There are four main species of kumquat: Marumi, Meiwa, Nagami, and the ornamental Hong Kong, or wild kumquat. The first three mentioned produce fruit that can be eaten. The Hong Kong species, as the name implies, is primarily an ornamental and the fruit is too small to serve as an edible variety. In addition to the four main species, there are multiple hybrids available.

For the purpose of this article, the focus will be on the Hong Kong kumquat (*Fortunella hindsii*). It also goes by such names as the Formosan kumquat, Taiwanese kumquat, Pea-Sized kumquat, Golden Bean kumquat, and Kinzu orange. The species is a dwarf, evergreen tree growing to somewhere between 4-8 feet in height. The fact that this species has the smallest fruit, about the size of a marble, makes it ideal for even shohin bonsai.

The Hong Kong kumquat grows wild in Hong Kong and in the Chekiang and Kwantung provinces of China. It is the oldest species of kumquat and is not sweet like other kumquats. Because of its small size, the fruit is full of seeds with little to no pulp. Kumquats are self-pollinating, which means that you only need one to produce fruit. They have been grown throughout Asia for centuries and do well in container culture. This makes them quite suitable for bonsai.

The kumquat below was developed by one of our own artists, Melissa LeBlanc



2020

2021



2022

2023

They illustrate excellent progression in development over a period of 3 years.

Another one of our members, Cheryl Mechler, has a beautiful kumquat bonsai that she has been growing for about 15 years. The tree was originally obtained by her in 2008, at the annual club auction. So, she has been developing the tree for the past 15 years. This beautiful specimen stands 19 inches above the rim of the container and the canopy is 21 inches across at the widest point. The tree is pictured below.



To begin our analysis of the Hong Kong kumquat as a viable species for use in bonsai, let's look at some of the characteristics and growth habits.

### LIGHT

Kumquat can be grown in a range of lighting situations – even as indoor bonsai. However, in order to get maximum health, resulting in the greatest number of flowers and

fruit, they should be grown outdoors and receive at least 6-7 hours of full sun every day.

### WATER

Water is a critical element. Kumquats prefer the soil to be moist. One should never allow the soil to become dry, as this will cause root damage and affect the overall health of the tree. Should dryness become too severe, the tree will die. However, good drainage is essential and soil that stays wet will result in the leaves turning yellow with the possibility of developing root rot.

### FERTILIZATION

Hong Kong kumquats are heavy feeders. It requires a lot of energy to produce flowers, even more to produce fruit and more still when the fruit is left on the tree until the fruit falls, allowing the seeds to become viable for reproduction. Liquid chemical fertilizers are fine during the initial stage where growth for size is important. Once the desired trunk size has been achieved, it is recommended that one switch to applications of an organic fertilizer. And because we want our kumquats to produce flowers and fruit, a fertilizer that is higher in phosphorus is recommended. Fertilization should begin in March or April and end in September.

### SOIL

They can be grown in a wide range of soil types, but do not do well in soils

with a lot of clay. Kumquats like soil that stays moist but not wet. This requires a sufficient amount of organic matter in the soil. A blend containing 50% organic matter is a good rule of thumb. Kumquats are happiest in soils that are more acidic. So, incorporating organic matter aids in providing the proper pH. For those who prefer Akadama, use a coarse particle size that is baked at a higher level to obtain greater hardness in the particles. The blend that I use for my kumquats contains 50% sifted pine mulch, 10% Akadama, 10% Perlite, and 30% pumice. Whatever you choose as a soil mix, remember that the key is soil that remains moist (not wet) and that drains well.

### FLOWERING AND FRUITING



This occurs because you are depleting some of the energy of the tree by removing the first set of blooms. It is the same concept as defoliating a tree to obtain smaller leaves. For show purposes, remove fruits that are touching one another.

### PROPAGATION

Kumquat can be propagated in several ways. The most obvious way is by planting the seeds. I have had so many kumquats sprout when one of the fruits simply fell into the pot. They can also be propagated by cuttings as well as air-layering. In addition, grafting onto a root is also an option. In that situation, a longer, thick root pruned from a tree during repotting that has an interesting shape is selected and planted in a new pot with the interesting shape exposed above the soil. All of the smaller roots are pruned away from the section that will remain above the soil and a young shoot is grafted onto the top of the exposed root using standard grafting techniques. The whole planting, pot and grafted root are covered with a poly bag to keep in humidity.

### PRUNING

Growth on Hong Kong kumquat can be vigorous when given adequate fertilizer. A single shoot may grow as much as 2 feet in a single growing season. However, do not allow suckers to grow from the base. Instead, use low side branches to develop trunk thickness. Suckers will rob the tree of energy and



weaken branches. In addition, the trunk will swell where the suckers emerge. If the tree is healthy, a kumquat will sprout from the trunk endlessly. In June and July, you may find it helpful to trim away some of the outer leaves to allow light and air to the interior of the tree. You should be careful when making large chop cuts or removing very large branches as such activities may cause die-back below the cut. When making large cuts, it is advisable to do it in the same manner as done with azaleas – cutting back partially so that there is still foliage in front of where you want the final cut to be. This allows the flow of sap to be redirected around the branch to be removed. Another method is to cut halfway through a thick branch starting at the bottom of the branch and cutting upward. Using this method, you cut at the point where you want to remove the entire branch. This technique does the same thing as the previously mentioned technique, by reducing the flow of sap and allowing the vascular tissue to be redirected around the branch that is to be removed. Like the first technique, the cut branch is left on for a year before removing the entire branch.

### DEFOLIATING

Defoliating can be done with kumquat in June or early July. You can perform partial defoliating to redistribute growth or total defoliation to reduce leaf size. Cut the leaves off leaving the petiole in place. It is not recommended to perform total defoliation except when it is needed prior to exhibiting the tree. The timing must be taken into consideration if fruit is also desired for the exhibit.

### WIRING

Kumquat wood is very hard and becomes stiff and unbendable very quickly. Therefore, any wiring must be done when shoots are still young and pliable. If your intent is to put movement in the trunk, here too you must wire the trunk when they are quite young.

### REPOTTING



Repotting will depend upon the growth rate and at what stage of development your tree is in. That being said, you should examine the root system every year to determine for yourself how often to repot.

Once a tree is more or less in a finished stage where the yearly work being performed is mostly routine maintenance, then you should only repot every 4 to 5 years. When you repot, do so in the middle of

summer and when repotting is completed, water the tree by placing the pot in a tub of water so that the water is just below the soil line. You should leave it in the water for a couple of hours before removing it and letting it recover for a few weeks in a shady location. When new growth begins to emerge, locate the tree back in full sun.

### TEMPERATURE

The USDA puts their upper temperature range to zones 9-10. However, they are hardy and can tolerate temperatures as low as 18 degrees. Anything below that requires protection. The best time to work on kumquat is when

the average daytime temperatures hit 72 degrees or higher. When the average daytime temperature exceeds 86 degrees, growth begins to slow. When the average temperature rises above 86 then work should slow as well. The best time for repotting is when the average daily temperature is about 72. Although kumquats are rated to zones 9 to 10, they do not do well when temperatures get above 100 degrees. When temperatures get that high, it is advisable to move them under shade cloth or in a shadier location.

When grown in pots, they have a reputation for being difficult to grow in colder climates. This is not due to being cold sensitive, but rather to being sensitive to dramatic shifts in temperature. As long as the temperature change is gradual, they are fine, but sudden drops of between 20-30 degrees in a 24-hour period can be problematic for them. When this occurs, kumquat branches may dieback or the entire tree may die. In cases of such severe temperature fluctuations, having procedures or facilities to protect the tree is essential.

Let's take an example where the current daytime temperature is 45 degrees and a cold-front moves through bringing a nighttime temperature of 25 degrees. Such a situation can cause dieback or even death of a kumquat. Even though they can handle temperatures as low as 18 degrees without the need of protection, such dramatic swings can bring about severe damage and death to the trees. Thus, there exists a widespread opinion that kumquats are a temperamental species when it comes to cold tolerance and difficult to grow.

Luckily, here in the New Orleans area, we seldom have such problems with temperature. So, the kumquat is an excellent choice for bonsai, particularly as a tree that bears fruit.

## STYLING

The beauty of this species is that it can adapt to a wide range of bonsai styles. I have seen them styled as formal upright, informal upright, slanting, semi-cascade, broom, exposed root, forest plantings and even as bunjin.



## CULTIVATION TECHNIQUES

1. One of the more important aspects to be aware of is the yellowing of the leaves. This is an indicator of any number of issues. If you have yellow leaves and cannot uncover any aspect of insect infestation, then you clearly have a root issue. Do not automatically assume that the cause is chlorosis or iron deficiency. If the entire leaf is yellow without the veins of the leaf remaining green, it is not iron deficiency, but rather a root problem. The tree is being subjected to soil that is too wet or is holding water for an extended period and is not draining well. The solution is to bare-root the tree in order to identify and remove rotted roots and repot into a well-draining soil. The color of healthy roots is whitish or a light tan. Roots that are very dark or black are either dead or dying. Get rid of them.
2. Even though kumquat will readily sprout new growth from the trunk, you may not always get a shoot popping where you want it. One of the

unique opportunities when working with kumquat is the ability to get new shoots to sprout by making a cut on the trunk. Using an Exacto knife or grafting knife, slice into the trunk at a 45-degree angle. Do this when the average daytime temperatures range between 72 to 74 degrees and the trees are actively putting out new shoots. This technique doesn't work 100% of the time but it does about 90% of the time.

3. Good nebari is critical in developing high quality bonsai. The following technique is an extremely effective method for developing surface roots exactly where you need them. Take a sharp knife, such as a grafting knife or Exacto knife and slice into an existing surface root at a 45 degree angle on the side of the root. Take some sphagnum moss and roll it into a small ball. Soak the sphagnum ball in a rooting hormone solution and carefully place it into the cut. Then bury the root with soil and wait.



## DISEASES

The most important task is to accurately identify the pest or disease that may be affecting your kumquat. Below are the most common.

**Root Rot** – There are several species of fungus that cause root rot, but they tend to be caused by the same thing – soil that remains too wet. The best treatment is prevention by ensuring that the potting mix has good drainage. A typical sign that there is a root problem is the yellowing of the leaves. If you have leaves that turn yellow, beware. The more yellow leaves you have, the bigger the problem. You can treat it with periodic applications of Subdue Fungicide or Captan Fungicide. In an emergency, spray the foliage, top and bottom of leaves, with Wilt-Pruf. Once it dries, it is safe to bare-root the tree and prune away all dead roots. If it is within the season where it is safe to work on the tree, you do not need to apply Wilt-Pruf.

**Citrus Scab** – This is a fungal disease that attacks twigs, leaves, and the fruit of the tree. You can recognize it by the scab-like growths that appear. The fungus starts out as a grey or pink blotch that darkens with age. Treat with a fungicide such as liquid copper. You can also help prevent it by avoiding overhead watering and judicious pruning that allows light and air circulation to the interior portion of the tree.



**Exocortis** – This disease attacks the bark. You can recognize it by a lifting, drying, or cracking of the bark. When the bark cracks, you will often see sap oozing from the split. This disease is a virus and usually attacks older trees. This disease is incurable. If it occurs, you should destroy the tree as soon as possible.



**Citrus Blast** – This is a fungal disease and is also called bacterial blast and black pit disease. It usually takes hold as a result of damage from insects. You can recognize it by wilted leaves and lesions on the leaves that eventually fall off. Copper fungicide is the most effective treatment.

**Algal Leaf Spot** – This is a parasitic alga that enters the tree through small cracks in the bark. It is most commonly seen in the leaves, but can show up on twigs, the bark, and even the fruit. Leaves will begin to turn yellow and eventually drop. As it continues to spread, cankers will show up on the bark, killing branches. Treatment is regular application of copper fungicide.



**Greasy Spot** – This is a common disease in warmer climates. It can be recognized by yellow, brown, or black lesion on the underside of mature leaves. As the disease progresses, the lesion becomes visible through the top of the leaves. Leaves will drop off in the fall and winter. It is a fungus that spreads by spores. Treatment is done by applying an oil spray or copper fungicide in May and June.



**Anthracnose** – This is another fungal disease that typically occurs in spring when conditions are wet. It is typically recognized by dark spots or lesions on leaves, twigs and fruit which cause them to die and fall off prematurely. To treat it, remove infected areas and treat with horticultural oil multiple times throughout the growing season.

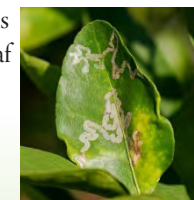


Almost all diseases that can attack kumquats are fungal diseases. Since prevention is the best cure, one should develop a regimen of spraying with a copper fungicide or oil spray throughout the growing season and keep the soil surface free from fallen leaves, twigs, and fruit.

## PESTS

There are a number of pests that can attack kumquat trees. As with the various diseases, prevention is the best cure. Routine spraying of appropriate insecticides will keep your kumquat healthy and happy.

**Leaf Miners** – The most obvious signs are the little trails of dead tissue on the leaf surface. It is difficult to treat leaf miners with an insecticide since they are inside the leaf. You can try treating with multiple rounds of an insecticidal soap. The best method of dealing with them is to apply a systemic insecticide in early spring and repeat as necessary.



**Scale** – Scale are tiny bugs that suck the sap from plant cells by attaching themselves to stems. Some species of scale will develop hard outer shells making them difficult to kill with insecticides. They are attracted by moisture so avoiding overhead watering will reduce the risk of infection. As with leaf miners, a good systemic such as Bonide will get rid of them.



**Aphids** – Aphids are sap-sucking insects and there are many species of aphid. They are always found on the underside of leaves and secrete "honeydew", a sweet substance



that attracts other insects. Typical signs of an aphid infestation are yellowing of leaves or leaf curling. Insecticidal soap and systemic insecticides will solve the problem.

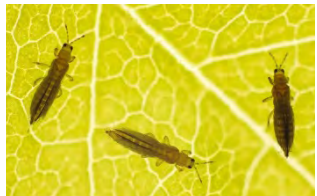
**Spider Mites** – Spider mites are the most common insect that attacks kumquat trees. They are sucking insects that are found on the underside of leaves. Signs are yellowing of the leaves, premature leaf drop and tiny webs between leaves and stems. Insecticidal soap, dormant oil sprays and systemic insecticides are all viable treatments.



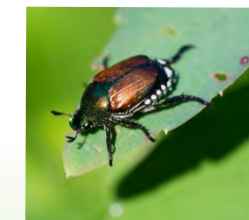
**Whitefly** – Whiteflies are found on the underside of leaves and are another form of sucking insect. They do not typically cause significant damage but secrete honeydew that attracts other insects. Insecticidal soap and systemic insecticides are the best treatment options.



**Citrus Thrips** – Citrus thrips are small, winged insects that also suck the sap from leaf cells. The worst thing about these thrips is that their saliva can transmit viruses into the trees vascular system. Viruses cannot be treated and so it is critical to get a handle on them if they appear. The main sign is leaf-curling. While thrips can also feed on other insects that attack kumquats, the danger is the introduction of incurable diseases to your tree. They lay their eggs inside plant matter, so getting rid of them with insecticides is difficult. Insecticidal soap is a better option. The best option is a systemic insecticide.



**Japanese Beetle** – This insect is a voracious eater, and they are very common. The signs are physical damage to the leaves and flower petals. They will typically start feeding at the top of the tree and work their way down, leaving only skeletal remains in their wake. They can be treated with various insecticides or simply picked off the tree and squashed with your shoe. In addition, systemics will take care of them. There are also pesticides that you can add to the soil that will kill the grubs in the soil before they mature into beetles.



The best resource that is effective in eradicating all insect pests is a scheduled application of a systemic insecticide. My recommendation would be one that is in granular or powder form and is applied to the soil. It is quickly absorbed by the roots and transported throughout the roots, trunk, stems, and leaves. You will typically see results in 2-3 days. Most will last about two months, so 2-3 applications a year is all you need. Since most insects are primarily active in spring, when new growth is tender, you may only need a couple of applications a year.

# BONSAI Basics

## Bonsai Stand Conventions

by Jonas Dupuich [bonsaitonight.com](http://bonsaitonight.com)

**B**onsai stands are small tables used to display bonsai. They're commonly found in exhibits or in formal indoor displays. We rarely see them in the garden as few stands are built to last outdoors. Why use stands at all? More than anything else, we use stands to raise bonsai above standard table height so they're closer to eye level. Elevating bonsai makes it easier for visitors to appreciate the trees without having to bend over to get a better look. It's easy to get started with bonsai stands when you know some of the basics. Today we'll look at how to select a stand based on its shape, size, and style.

### Getting the shape right

The most common shapes for bonsai stands are square, round, and rectangular. Here are some of the most common conventions for how to use them.

- Bonsai planted in round pots are typically placed on round or square stands. Alternatives include hexagonal stands, octagonal stands, and flat slabs with natural edges.
- Bonsai planted in rectangular or oval-shaped pots are typically placed on rectangular stands.
- Bunjin or literati bonsai (trees with long, slender trunks) are commonly placed on low, flat slabs.
- Cascade and semi-cascade bonsai, which are typically planted in square or round pots, are most often displayed on round or square (or hexagonal, or octagonal) stands that are taller than the average stand.
- Shohin bonsai are often displayed in box stands (see "Anatomy of a shohin display" and "Alternatives to box displays" for details).

### Getting the size right

After selecting a basic shape for your stand, the next step is to focus on the size. Using a stand that's too big can make a tree look wimpy. Using tiny stands for massive trees can look precarious. In other words, getting the balance right with stands is similar to getting the balance right with containers.

One tip: in general, most stands I see in the U.S. are too small and/or too low. The stands in the photos below aren't necessarily perfect for the trees they're paired with, but they're relatively well-matched in terms of their size.

### Get the style right

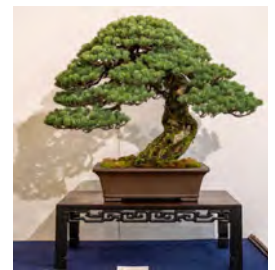
We'll keep this simple for now. In general, heavy trees with massive features often look good on stands that appear strong enough to hold them. Likewise, delicate trees often look good on stands with more delicate features. Is this a hard and fast rule? Definitely not! It is, however, a helpful starting point when selecting a stand. Sometimes a stand with lots of fine detail is too much when paired with a dense deciduous tree. In other cases it might be a great fit. The main thing is to consider which aspects of a tree are highlighted or downplayed when paired with a given stand.

### Examples



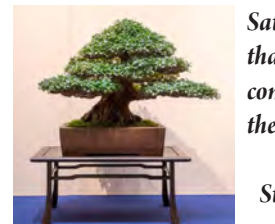
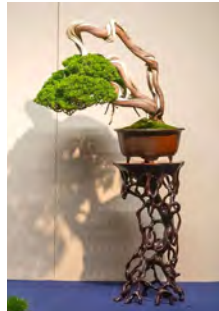
White pine on 6-sided cascade stand

Black pine with a strong trunk on a stand with strong legs and straight lines



White pine on a straight-legged stand with curved details

Shimpaku on a root stand – root stands make a nice contrast to square or round stands for cascade and semi-cascade bonsai



Satsuki azalea on a stand that looks lightweight compared with the size of the trunk

Sturdy shimpaku on a sturdy stand



Japanese beech forest planting on a slab stand

Chojubai on a stand with a floating panel



### Where to find stands

Stands are available from a growing number of craftspeople around the world. Some, like Austin Heitzman and David Knittle, are known throughout the U.S. for their extraordinary work. Imported stands from China and Japan are also widely available. If you need a standard size and shaped stand, imported stands can be a good way to go. If you're looking to borrow a stand, check with senior members in your bonsai community for suggestions. Many of us have been collecting stands for years and are happy to see them used in exhibits!

**C'est Bonsai**  
UNDERHILL BONSAI  
Bonsai Show & Crawfish Boil

**SATURDAY, MARCH 30TH, 2024**  
DOORS WILL BE OPEN AT 9:30  
FURTHER DETAILS CALL: (985) 351-4797  
80272 HIGHWAY 25, FOLSOM, LA



### Embracing the Art and Science of Bonsai

Underhill Bonsai is a full service bonsai nursery focused on horticultural science and the timeless traditions of bonsai. We offer products and services for everybody at every level of interest. We support you in your bonsai journey.

**Underhill Bonsai**  
80272 Hwy 25  
Folsom, LA 70437  
(985) 635-2413  
[underhillbonsai.com](http://underhillbonsai.com)

Evan Tylor Pardue – Manager  
(985) 351-4797  
[evan@underhillbonsai.com](mailto:evan@underhillbonsai.com)

Meetings cont. from pg 1

### Saturday & Sunday April 20 & 21, 2024

Destrehan Plantation Spring Garden Festival

Set up is Friday April 19, 8:30-5 pm.

Show hours Sat and Sun are 10-4

We will have sign up sheets for volunteers and tree submissions or contact Dennis [dpbbonsai@yahoo.com](mailto:dpbbonsai@yahoo.com)

### Tuesday, May 14, 2024

Program: Tropical 3 Ring Circus 7:00pm

Three members of the club will simultaneously demo three different trees. Bonus: One of the styled trees will be raffled off at the end of the night! (The other two will be in the Auction)

### Monthly study groups

1st Saturday - Randy Bennett

2nd Saturday - Kathy Barbazon

Specialty study groups

As announced - Dawn Koetting, Dennis Burke

### Club News: Guest Bonsai Artist Pedro Morales is coming in June.

Reminder: GNOBS Annual Club Dues are due in January. If you have not paid dues, March will be your last postcard and newsletter.



**Greater New Orleans Bonsai Society**  
PO Box 381 Kenner, LA 70062

President: Dennis Burke 504-224-0038 (cell) <a href="mailto:dpbbonsai@yahoo.com">dpbbonsai@yahoo.com</a>	Recording Secretary Tina Gilbert 985-346-2974 <a href="mailto:divercg33@gmail.com">divercg33@gmail.com</a>	Hall Manager Tina Gilbert 985-346-2974 <a href="mailto:divercg33@gmail.com">divercg33@gmail.com</a>
---	---	--

Vice-President: Carl Gilbert 985-346-2974 <a href="mailto:divercg33@gmail.com">divercg33@gmail.com</a>	Newsletter/Website Editor Kathy Barbazon 504-470-8134 (cell) <a href="mailto:kbarbazon@me.com">kbarbazon@me.com</a>	Past President: Randy Bennett 504-402-3646 (cell) 504-888-7994 (home) <a href="mailto:ourproperty4u@gmail.com">ourproperty4u@gmail.com</a>
---	--	--

Treasurer: Melissa Leblanc 985-438-6433 <a href="mailto:missykobe@hotmail.com">missykobe@hotmail.com</a>	Masters Program Director: Byron Carr 318-218-4844 <a href="mailto:bcjcec@aol.com">bcjcec@aol.com</a>
---	--