

# SOUTHERN BONSAIST

A publication of the Azalea City Bonsai Society Mobile, Alabama

## ABOUT SOIL BY JOE KUHN THE ACBS FEBRUARY PROGRAM

Soil for bonsai and gumbo have much in common. Everyone makes it a bit different for their own reasons. The many different ways to create soil has more than one positive benefit. When you can't find the exact ingredient you can use something else that functions in a similar way. Most plants have the ability to tolerate a wide variety of soils. Joe Kuhn will have a great program about bonsai soils. The ways to create soil are vast. The fundamentals of what a soil has to do are rather simple. When you understand what soils have to do for the tree in a positive way and what negative will happen when you don't do it correctly, what you use to get it right becomes much easier to choose. Joe Day

**ACBS**  
February 5th Regular Meeting  
Program  
Soils by Joe Kuhn  
Mobile Botanical Gardens  
7:P.M.  
Host: Derald Eastman  
Tokanoma: Joe Kuhn

**March 4th**  
**ACBS Meeting**  
Program  
Members Workshop  
Host: Mr. Mrs. Kunz  
Tokanoma; Joe Day

**April 1st**  
**ACBS Meeting**  
Program  
Juniper Bonsai by  
Don Corley  
Host: Bob, Yvonne Schwartz  
Tokanoma:Mr. Mrs. Kunz

## ABOUT BEN OKI

Every bonsai has his or her own style when it comes to handling a workshop. Ben's style is to not say a lot and to work fast. Ben has a lot of interesting stories it is just seldom that he tells them. At the Pensacola Workshop he said "my father told me that

Men do not talk a lot, so I don't talk." Traditional he might be but he has a very modern bag of tricks to bring out the best style in each piece of material that is presented to him at a workshop. His work at the ACBS workshop was both fun to watch

and a lesson in working with many varied pieces of material that offered both challenges and opportunities. With luck we will have many more Ben Oki workshops to both enjoy and have a chance to learn from the master.  
Joe B. Day

## IT'S ALIVE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! OR IS IT?

When you take on the process of repotting a bonsai you accept the fact that instead of giving it more health and opportunity to grow you just killed it. Harsh fact but true. You must repot every bonsai at some time. A neat trick you can try is cut off a small twig that you can lose. Tape it to the pot. With a Juniper or Pine it might stay green for weeks. But when it does start to turn brown and your newly repotted bonsai stays green you know you "at that point of time" have not killed your bonsai. If it is still green it is growing. This works with any bonsai that you can trim a bit of green at repotting time.

A lot of factors go into successful repotting. One that the books often do not talk about is the age of the bonsai and the condition of the roots. When a bonsai is fully developed with a dense root system it slows down root production. Only the tips of the branches need to grow each year so only the tips of the roots need to grow to support this Spring flush of growth. If you repot and remove a layer of roots all over the root ball you have removed all the root surface that functioned to take up nutrients. If the tree isn't strong, weather is bad, you allow the soil to become dry the tree will struggle to

reestablish new feeder roots tips. Young trees, nursery stock are putting on lots of new growth each year so they are conditioned to grow lots of roots. They are young, strong and use to fighting for life. They tolerate your mistakes.

When working with old developed bonsai treat repotting like operating on an old sick person. Research the species. Set up everything you need. Work out of the wind, cold. Work quick but with extreme care. After care is critical. They are treated much like a new born person or animal.

Joe Day

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## HUMP MONTH

January and February are months when our weather is cold, wet and a bit windy. All your bonsai except the touchy tropical bonsai love this weather. The humidity is high and the air cool. You start March with benches full of newly repotted bonsai. March can quickly turn hot with air off the gulf. The wind can

quickly turn coming from the north or west. This can be very dry air. This mix of very dry warm air blowing over a bonsai that can't replenish its moisture because the roots are damaged is a killer. If you protect your bonsai and watch the moisture level of the soil March can be a month of growth. This growth will rees-

establish the root function. You will be past "hump" month and on to May. May can be a great growing month. Not too hot and in normal years a month of regular rain. I write this for February so you can establish a good bonsai area to bonsai recovering from repotting.

Joe Day

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## TAKING A BONSAI TO A SHOW.

January is a good month to decide what bonsai you are going to show to the public. A local one day show isn't a lot of stress on a bonsai but the trip to and from the show can be a killer. Trees do not travel in nature. Once established they condition themselves to grow where they are. They don't like to be shaken, bumped hard or hit with intense sunlight if they have been in a shade or partial

shade. When you transport the bonsai. Keep it secure inside the vehicle, if needed cover it with a lightweight cloth. Do not put it where the air conditioning vent blows on it. If you must transport in the back of a pickup truck place a cloth or box over the bonsai, secure it "good" next to the cab of the truck out of the air stream. This is good for only a short trip. Bring your own mist bottle to lightly mist your

bonsai during the show. If you repotted the tree that you are going to show this Spring it will need extra care. Much like a person getting over a illness your bonsai will be a bit weaker than normal. Another caution is do not show a tree that has recently treated for a insect or root problem. It will be weak and the chemicals could weaken it further ahead of recovery.

Joe Day

## HISTORY, PRIORITY, REALITY

Last growing season wasn't that long ago, so take time to remember how each bonsai grew and what problem, if any, that you had to deal with. It's time now to take steps to solve the problems last years problems before you get into this years growing season. It's difficult to set up and deal with bonsai on a priority basis. Makes your time in the bonsai area more of a job than a joy. Time is limited for everyone so setting up a bit of a priority schedule is important. Work on your early budding bonsai, Elm and Maple could bud out in February, Hornbeam and Bald Cypress

in March and everything else in April. Collecting and transplanting from the ground should end by March. All bonsai except tropicals should be on their benches where they receive the best amount of sunshine by March. It's important to turn them often allowing the complete tree to receive the sunlight on the buds. Those first weeks of growth are critical to the development of the tree for the whole growing year.

Today is a great example of the hard reality that we each face in winter. I sit her writing this and the sun is streaming into my windows but outside it's straining to reach 40 de-

grees and the wind is blowing. It was 2 P.M before it reached 40, the sun is dropping and the temps will drop quickly. It will freeze tonight. Doing nothing to my bonsai is difficult, doing something would probably harm them more than help them. I only have so much room in my hot house to hold tropicals and trees that have already been repotted. Catching available time to accomplish needed work over a very short winter is a neat form of managing the unmanageable. It's the reality for us all. We try to squeeze a long winters work into a short Winter and even shorter Spring time frame. Joe Day

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## BONSAI MAGAZINES

Just received the Bonsai Focus magazine. That's the combined Bonsai Today and Bonsai Europe magazine. It's an excellent magazine. Lots of technical information combined with interviews and pictures of great bonsai. My measure of how good of a magazine I'm reading is to see how many times I pick it

up and see something new and interesting before I put into the book case. With Bonsai Focus it takes a couple of weeks. That's remarkable. I have received bonsai magazines that I could read on my walk back from the mail box and never want to pick it up again. BCI magazine is much improved. I find each issue

fun to read. If you can afford to get all the magazines you will enjoy them. Nothing like a hot cup of coffee, a comfortable chair and a quiet while and a bonsai magazine to settle the day. It's a big world full of talented artist. We are lucky to live in a time when it can all be brought together in color and delivered to your door. Joe Day

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## THE DAY OF BONSAI MOBILE ALABAMA

March 15th at St Lukes church and school on Azalea Road ACBS will again hold a Day of Bonsai. This educational forum will again bring together bonsai artist from all across the gulf south region. It's a day when programs about creating bonsai are presented to artist who are serious about the art of bonsai. It give many bonsai artist a chance to get together, talk, look at bonsai, visit with ven-

dors, learn new bonsai creative techniques and eat a great lunch.

The programs will teach how to create bonsai that are influenced by the look of our majestic live Oak, Bald Cypress and Southern Pine. You will learn how to design a bonsai using your computer. It's a get it right before you make cuts you might regret. The growing Bald Cypress program will teach you how to get a big

Bald Cypress by growing it in your own yard instead of wading the swamps and dodging he snakes and critters.

Joe Day and Rob Moak started the Day Of Bonsai concept years ago to provide bonsai artist with a low cost , fun, one day event that any artist could afford to attend. The rule was it had to be strong on bonsai educational, local and inexpensive, and so it is. Joe Day

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*Dedicated to the art of bonsai*



**Organization**

## *The Wealth*

I see the bonsai artist in Europe working on great local Juniper collected from the mountains. I live in Mobile, Alabama. We don't have mountains. We have swamps, pasture land and woods. Not a native Juniper in sight. Except for the Juniper we call Cedar. It grows like a telephone pole. I see the great tropical bonsai collected in the south Pacific islands. We have the ocean and the islands but those plants don't grow here. All of this doesn't mean we don't have great plants to collect. We actually have many local species that have never, hardly ever, and only some times been used to create bonsai. Nothing wrong with these species they are just waiting for a eager bonsai artist to take the plunge and start collecting and creating. Oaks are becoming more popular in Europe as bonsai. We have many small leaf Oak that grow locally. We have the small tree we call Sugar Berry. About four species of this tree exist in our area. Small leaves, beautiful bark, flowers and fruit go with the Sugar Berry. John Lee had a great one at the Ben Oki workshop. They are rare in bonsai but grow on almost any empty piece of land in our area. Hawthorne, Bald Cypress, Hornbeam, Swamp Maple, Beech, and landscape trees are all available to the artist willing to take the time and effort to go out and collect. The collecting window is at it's best from mid February to the end of March. April and May are good for some species that break dormancy only when it get warm at night. After May you can still collect it just take a lot of great after care to keep the material alive. If the land is being cleared you dig, pot, and cross your fingers any month of the year. Joe Day

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