

# SOUTHERN BONSAIST

A publication of the Azalea City Bonsai Society Mobile, Alabama

## THE PRUNING WORKSHOP THE MAY ACBS PROGRAM

One of the inside articles says the whole truth, pruning is complex, Working on individual trees and understanding "that " tree is the key to transforming material into a great bonsai. Please bring a bonsai to this workshop. If you are one of our talented long time members bring a tree to demonstrate how pruning can be done properly. We can all learn from your knowledge. I "Joe Day" will bring an assortment of sealers, sharpening tools, One workshop, one newsletter can never cover the complex process of pruning but it can shine a bit of light on this subject and perhaps make an artist or two understand how important this procedure is to the ultimate art of transforming material into great bonsai.

Pruning bonsai early in the morning as the sun first peaks out or late in the afternoon as the day cools is a Zen like experience. It's a mental quiet that refreshes.

Joe Day

### ACBS

Month May 6th Meeting  
Mobile Botanical Gardens  
7 P.m.

Pruning Workshop

Host: ACBS

Tokanoma: Bob and Yvonne  
Schwartz

June 3rd  
Monthly ACBS Meeting  
Insect and Disease  
Control  
By Patrick LaNasa

July 01  
Monthly ACBS Meeting  
Critique of Members  
Bonsai that are under  
development

## THE SPRING ACBS LIBRARY SHOW REVIEW PICTURES NEXT MONTH

It was a wonderful mix of bonsai. Large, medium and small bonsai created from a wide range of species. The weather was a bit windy and a bit cool but near perfect for a Spring show. We had a steady flow of nice people looking at the bonsai and asking questions.

We picked up a possible 5 to 7 new members. Set up at this location is so easy and the library folk are so nice. The new Café was a nice addition. A hot cup of coffee a couple times during the day was wonderful.

The public at the library show are excellent. Nice to talk with, they respect the bonsai, no touching or wild children. It's a wonderful place to hold a show. See you all there next year.

Joe Day

## EVERY BONSAI IS A LIFE STORY

You get to know the bonsai as an individual plant. You get to know how it grows, when it grows, it's strength and weakness. The local climate has a lot to do with those things so knowing the quirks of the weather in our area is a necessary thing. Each species has a method of pruning. Applying these pruning methods depends on both the health of the individual bonsai and the weather forecast.

Every thing on this earth and the earth included has this cycle, growth, maturity and decline. With some insects this is a three day cycle, a diamond, has a few million

year cycle. All trees and bushes start with the growth cycle. This never stops but it gets slower and slower the older the tree becomes. When you prune, what you prune and why you prune changes and the design starts to mature and the tree gets older. Exactly how this works changes with every species.

When you are transforming a tree from nursery material or collected material you prune to develop good trunk movement, branch positions, branch size and scar healing. If you proceed correctly you also build ramification.

Prune your tree after consid-

ering the health of the tree, What you are developing, and the weather. Always prune only because the tree needs to be pruned. Do not prune because you need something to do and want to work on a tree.

Only prune with sharp tools. Healing scars is probably number 2 on the most important thing to do when creating a bonsai. Keeping the bonsai healthy is number 1 on the important list. Scar healing information is only slightly covered in books and magazines. Our next newsletter will cover more of this critical area. Joe Day

---

## HEALING SCARS

No bonsai is created without scars. Scars are a danger to the tree. They are a portal for fungus and disease. Scars also weaken the tree. Create scars with sharp tools. A smooth cut will heal much faster. Rough cuts slow the formation of scar tissue. A rough cut can have an area up to 4 times as large as a

smooth cut. About 95 percent of the species we use for bonsai should be sealed with a bonsai sealer. If in doubt or you don't know what species should be sealed, seal it anyway. Seal as soon as you work on the tree. Bonsai sealer kill fungus and disease. It also keeps out air that would dry the wood, water

that would help rot the wood. Bonsai sealer remains flexible allowing the scar tissue to lift it off the sealer as the tissue grows across the scar.

The quick way to heal a scar is to have a healthy bonsai. Trees that are not healthy form scar tissue slowly or not at all. More next month on this vital subject. Joe Day

---

## THE COST OF BONSAI

Over the life of a bonsai the major cost will be soil, water, chemicals and fertilizer. Pots and tools seem like the largest cost but not so over the years. Plant material can be costly if you pay a lot for plants and kill them.

You use 90 percent of your tools to cut your bonsai. Cuts that don't heal or cuts that allow disease or fungus that rot the wood probably kill the largest percent of bonsai.

Sharp tools are a bit of an insurance policy for your bonsai. Tools to sharpen most knives, scissors and other things are now easy to find and not expensive to buy. Academy Sports is a good place to buy these items. How to sharpen is a skill that isn't mastered easily but with a bit of time and effort learning how pays big dividends. Good bonsai scissors are not expensive. The average bon-

sai artist should buy new scissors about every 5 years. Most bonsai actually break or twist their concave cutters, root cutters and mellon cutters out of shape long before they get dull from use. Rust is probably the reason most tools become unusable. Camellia oil is the oil of choice, sold by bonsai vendors, to keep tools rust free. Clean after each use. A bonsai grit eraser sold by vendor helps keep tools clean Joe Day

# TRANSFORMATION

## THE GROWTH CYCLE AND GROWTH RHYTHM

Say the word a couple of times. It's a word that says a lot. We love to say we create a bonsai. Humans don't have the capacity to create anything. Nature holds that in her realm. We can transform things. Transforming is the act of working with material to make it into what we want. It's the idea that we can create that makes many people try to "make" a tree grow or "make" it grow a branch in a certain location or make the tree live in a container that is much too small for the plant.

Transformation is the constant phase of bonsai. It never ends. As a growing tree

it never stops changing.

Transformation starts with a understanding how of how the species of tree you have grows. Trees have both a growing cycle and a growing rhythm. The growing cycle records the way a tree grows over a one year time frame. The growth rhythm records the way each species of trees grow during the active growing season. How the tree buds out, where it buds out, how the new growth lengthens and how it reacts when it is pruned. The growth cycle and the growth rhythm change with the health of the tree. A healthy tree is much more predictable. A weak tree in

almost totally unpredictable. When a tree is healthy and you understand the growth cycle and growth rhythm what results you will get when you prune the tree, cut a branch off the tree, wire the tree or pot the tree becomes predictable and allows the transformation to proceed.

Record keeping is important but you only record what you see. Only a daily walk around your collection with a clip board to take notes , notes that you can understand is critical. Photographs with dates are a great visual memory tool. Knowledge is the most important tool you can have. Joe Day

---

## PRUNING

Pruning is a very simple word for a very complex process. Every species is pruned slightly different. A Japanese Maple and Trident Maple during Spring can be pruned daily. Beech are pruned once in Winter and usually once in the Spring. You don't prune Hornbeam until the new wood has started to harden and

turn brown. Boxwood and Juniper can not be pruned back beyond the last green growth. You don't prune off large branches on a Trident during the Spring, you don't trim the apex of a Trident in the fall. You prune Black Pine different than you do White Pine. Azalea are base dominant so you take care to not

prune the apex back too far. Japanese Maple and Trident are apex dominant so you trim the apex and let the lower branches grow each stronger before you prune them. If you prune an Azalea at the wrong time you will not get any flowers next spring and on and on and on.

Joe Day

---

## PRUNING SEALER

Every time I visit with a bonsai supplies vendor live or on line I see a new type of bonsai sealer. They are slightly different in color, density and cost. The good news is they all work well as a cut sealer. If you have a small collection one good tube of bonsai sealer will last a lot of years. Bonsai sealer come in tubes, is usually a shade of green and it's thick and sticky. It also comes in squeeze bot-

ties, is green, brown, and orange and spreads like glue. Cut paste is brown or green and is a lot like modeling clay. For our area the first types work best. The cut paste allows moisture to get under the seal promoting rot. The brand names include, Yugoza, Top Jin, Shin-Kiyonaal and Tsuqi-Roh cut paste. Most if not all are labeled entirely in Japanese with no....English instructions.

They sell probably millions of containers of this stuff in the west but still do not label in the English language. All we know from books and magazines is rub a small amount on any cut. Guess they think we should be able to master that complex move.

You can find other types of pruning sealer for landscape work. They work but are usually messy, stink and appear very unattractive. Joe Day

---

Azalea City Bonsai Society

P.O. Box 9591  
Mobile, Al 36691  
E-Mail: ACBSbonsai@aol.com  
Web site azaleacitybonsaisociety.com

Phone: 251-344-5873  
Fax: 251-342-6431

*Dedicated to the art of bonsai*

## *Spring*

*This Spring has brought forth the most beautiful display of shades of green and the colors of the rainbow. Every walk in the yard and bonsai area was a pleasure and with the rich supply of regular rain continues to be the same. To watch bonsai, some that have been on my benches for more than 25 years, flush forth and enjoy the Spring brings a smile to my face. Some of the Spring seasons of the past few years were a struggle for the bonsai to endure. Both the bonsai and I wanted and needed a nice Spring. Even with the wonderful Spring it's always interesting so see how each bonsai grows differently every Spring. Logic would say that each Trident Maple growing in the same area, with the same soil would grow the same. They never do. None of the species grow the same. Every bonsai grows differently, reacts to all bonsai techniques differently. The morning walk into and around my bonsai area is certainly a pleasure walk but it's also a walk to look for trouble. Leaves that have chew marks on them, wilted leaves, branches that are slow to bud out, bugs and ants. Ants climbing up a bonsai can indicate you have a aphids. I look for scale because it is so hard to spot and spreads quickly. I water in the morning to give the plants the maximum amount of moisture to make it through the most drying part of every day. When I water I look to see how fast the water drains from the pot. If it stands on the top of the pot too long I know I will need to get my stainless steel probe and work it into the soil to create a more open soil that will drain quickly and dry quicker keeping the roots healthier. Creating bonsai is a long process. Every day is a rewarding process. They become part of your life over the years. Watching them daily and taking time to take care of them isn't work, it's care. It's that part of you that you give to them so one Spring when everything seems to be going the right way you walk among them, brush the leaves and feel them giving back.*

*Joe Day*

---