

# SOUTHERN BONSAIST

A publication of the Azalea City Bonsai Society Mobile, Alabama

## BONSAI CONTAINERS FOR GROWING AND DEVELOPMENT *BY RUSSEL COKER*

Even the best bonsai artist in the world with those deep pockets and unlimited knowledge of the bonsai container market place has a lot of bonsai material growing in a lot of different types of containers. They are not show containers, they are grow containers.

At times you want to develop better roots. Another time you want to develop a thicker trunk. You might want to let the material grow without much pruning to heal scars faster. You might want to develop a more shallow root system. At time it just a matter of cost. You need a practical container for a very precise reason.

Russell worked and studied at a bonsai nursery in Japan where he had the wonderful opportunity to get a look behind the "show benches" and into the grow area that almost every bonsai book and magazine tends to not show on in any pictures or stories.

Joe Day

**ACBS**  
**November 6th**  
**Regular Meeting 7 P.M.**  
**Mobile Botanical Gardens**  
***Bonsai Containers for Growing***

**By**  
***Russell Coker***

***Host: Pan & Brenda Castle***

***Tokenoma: John O. Lee***

December 4th  
ACBS  
Christmas Dinner  
Mobile Botanical Gardens  
Members covered dish  
Dinner.  
**We hope all ACBS members can gather and enjoy this Special meeting.**

January 2008  
**The Ben oki Workshop**  
We do not have a date so we can not book a location at this time.

## A REVIEW OF THE ACBS FALL AUCTION

The chairs were full of wonderful bonsai artist. The tables were full of great bonsai material, food, books, magazines, a bottle of liquor (it came home with me). Randy did a great job with moving items across the auction table. The total was around

1,600.00. was raised to fund ACBS activities. Jeff and Robin Lignell did a wonderful job of bid and money handling making for a smooth check out. Jeff and Robin's children moved all items to the winning bid area saving the backs of all us old bonsai folk.

Bonsai folk brought lots and lots of food so no one went away hungry. Thanks to New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Pensacola and Ft Walton bonsai artist we had a good auction and a great get together.  
Joe Day

## LOCAL SPECIES FOR BONSAI

Local species, Black Pine, Red Pine, Azalea, Camellia, Maple, Zelkova and Juniper were what Japanese bonsai artist used. They were all local species in Japan. We use them because they grow well in our area and they have become our landscape plants. Bald Cypress and Youpon Holly are native to our area. They have become a familiar plant for bonsai artist. What else can you use from our woods? Our native Hornbeam is a great species. It has small leaves, small branch growth, great bark color and very good root display. In short the Hornbeam has everything you want in a great bonsai. Haw-

thorne is another local native that's great. The leaves are small, the bark exfoliates giving the trunk a great color. It has a trunk that has a lot of character, adapts well to pot culture.

Spruce Pine, Pitch Pine and some other native pines do well after you get them settled into a container. Sweet Gum and Black Gum can make good bonsai. Hackberry isn't a local plant that is easy to find around Mobile but the New Orleans folk find it growing around their area. It grows fast responds on bonsai type growing in a pot, has beautiful foliage, bark and roots.

All these species are well known to local and area bonsai artist. They can give anyone a lot of help and advice on how to proceed in creating a great bonsai within a relatively short period of time.

To create bonsai with any species the plant must always be very healthy. Knowing when to prune, wire, fertilize and how often to repot and when it's best to repot are very important when you are creating a bonsai with any species. Always ask those in your area that have long term success with these species.

Joe Day

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## YOU CAN MOVE TO MOBILE YOU CAN'T MOVE MOBILE

Japanese White Pine, Mugo Pine, Yew, Spruce, are just a few trees that will not grow in Mobile or this area. If it requires a long cold winter, dry roots, lots of winter sunlight a cool summer it will not live in Mobile. It might live a few years but not long enough to create a great bonsai. If it grew in the desert, grows

north of Tennessee, came from the left coast, you have a plant that does not a history of living a long time in our area. You will always hear about someone, somewhere who lived in a hot area and grew those species with success. I never found any of those people, I just hear about them. I know of no

bonsai organization that gives out awards for beating the odds and growing a species that doesn't normally stay alive in your area. They all reward the artist who creates a great bonsai from species that love to live in our area. It's a lot of work to create a great bonsai without creating more problems. Joe Day

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## PAYING FOR THE TICKET

Each bonsai teacher we bring to ACBS is a \$300 to \$500 expense. Our meeting location is a \$300 to \$400 expense. Our storage locker is a \$300 expense. ACBS spends about \$300. for food for the Christmas dinner, Summer Social, Show material expenses add another couple hundred each year if we just use all our old display materials. These expenses continue to increase every year. Our

successful auction buys one more year of activities. That's why the discussion of how we can change things to have a successful auction a year from now have already started. No two auctions are the same but we take clues from this auction of what type materials we should try to provide, what other items moved well and what brought the best bids. This year we had a great selection of items

and a great group of bonsai artist from all over.

As you put your collection away into your winter area take a look at what you actually work on and what just hangs around. If it's still just hanging around next September you might want to put it aside and bring it to the auction and let another artist have a go at it.

Joe Day

# NOVEMBER

## THE MONTH WHEN MOTHER NATURE IS CONFUSED

It's dark when you go to work, it's dark when you get home from work. The weekend days are short. Weather changes come on fast and holidays take up time. First priority is to protect from sudden cold and or low humidity and wind. Second, keep your bonsai soil moist not wet. Third, watch for fungus problems caused by slow drying conditions. The sun angle will change giving your bonsai, in most cases, less sunlight. This can be a big problem because evergreen species. Juniper and pine and tropical's need the sunlight. Less than summer because they are either grow-

ing slow or not growing at all. If you have your plants in a hothouse that is not self ventilating must take care to not leave it sealed up on a good sunny day. A 75 degree day is a 100 degree day in a sealed hothouse. Leave the hothouse open when the north wind comes blowing in and you can have bonsai pop-sicles. Most people over protect their non tropical bonsai. Bonsai pushed together for winter protection in a hard to get to place leads to bonsai that are hard to water correctly. This leads to bonsai that dry out. Most of these show up very dead as the others leaf out the next

spring. It's easy to say " the cold killed it" but the truth is it just didn't get watered and it died.

Winter is rough along the coast. The weather is constantly changing between hot days and cold days. Make it as easy as you can on yourself. Look at your situation. See how you can set up your bonsai so they need to be moved the least distance or the fewest times to protect them from adverse conditions.

Now is the time to put all your tropical bonsai in one area so you can put them away quickly without over looking a favorite and loosing it to the cold. Joe Day

## SO YOU WANT TO CREATE BONSAI

Our local climate will allow a bonsai artist to grow many species. They all have to be handled a bit different to keep them healthy. If you lead a complex life you need plant species that require simple care. If you can spend almost all your time with your plants you can grow more demanding species. From my experience these species need

good but not complex care, Trident Maple, Japanese Maple, Elm, Hornbeam, Podocarpus, Boxwood, Bald Cypress Juniper and Youpon Holly. These species tolerate the same soil mix, fertilizer, temperature and amount of sun light. The Maples can do with a bit less sun and the Juniper a bit more sun. They have close to the same insect prob-

lems, mostly chewing insects and they have few disease problems. All these species will live a long time, grow well in containers and create highly respected bonsai that increase in value with age. This is in no way all species that do well but they all are available in our area at a reasonable cost. Joe Day

## WONDERFUL BUT DEMANDING SPECIES

All tropical species just because you need special winter care with each sudden change of weather and we have a lot of that. Pine, Azalea, Camellia, Crape Myrtle, Lantana, Gardenia, Wisteria, and Zelkova are difficult.

Pine, after 27years I know of no one who developed a great Pine bonsai in our coastal area. Needle cast and soil problems are a constant prob-

Azalea, Camellia, Gardenia, Crape Myrtle, all have the same type problems. They grow dense roots systems quickly. When our summers get into the 90's the demand for constant water sets up fungus problems with the root system. Reducing the root system almost every year and planting them into new soil works to control this problem. Wisteria, must be root pruned and the soil replaced every

year. It must be pruned and fertilized a certain way to create flowers. It is difficult to keep watered in the heat of the summer. The wood is soft and rots easily.

Zelkova do well in good soil with lots of fertilizer and filtered sunlight. They do not like the roots to get hot. A deep not shallow pot helps a lot.

You can create great bonsai with these species just not easily. Joe Day

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*Dedicated to the art of bonsai*

## *New Faces old Faces*

*Bonsai as a hobby is wonderful but most people don't stay in the hobby for a long time. Life changes is the most common reason people drop out. A hobby that takes up a lot of time but isn't critical to living life effectively is high on the delete list when changes are demanded. The second reason is a multiple part reason. I listen to a radio station where the DJ says a familiar bit known to some of old timers "nothing happens until you get there". The DJ is asking you to slow down and not drive too fast. "Nothing happens until you get there" used referring to bonsai, no work will get done on your bonsai until you go out and do the work. Over a bit of time this "nothing happens until you get there" leads to dead bonsai when a person, is a put it off until later person, has problems setting priorities, looks for a time when they finish every thing else they need to do, thinks bonsai is a hobby, the thing you do when you feel like having a bit of fun or relaxation, does bonsai when the weather is a, nice day to be outside day. I could go on and on but I think you understand. Dead bonsai lead to a dying interest in continuing with bonsai and soon a decision to just not do bonsai. ACBS is a wonderful resource but it can't do your daily bonsai work. Quick bonsai are a 5 year project, good bonsai 10 years, masterpiece bonsai about 15 years. No matter how pumped up a person is when they first start bonsai it leaks down in less then 5 years. Self motivation is the only way a person stays on the path to good, excellent or masterpiece bonsai. If you love working on bonsai the idea of how long it might take has "no" meaning. You will work on every bonsai almost every day as long as it is your bonsai, and it will continue to change in appearance as long as you own it. When your motivation starts to dip, visit with another bonsai artist, if you are having problems with some of your bonsai ask for advice, if the workload of care is a problem because of a "life" situation let a ACBS member take care of your trees for a while.*

*Joe Day*

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