

# SOUTHERN BONSAIST

A publication of the Azalea City Bonsai Society Mobile, Alabama

## HOW TO FINE TUNE YOUR BONSAI DESIGN—THE AUGUST ACBS PROGRAM

Every bonsai is a bonsai in transition. It grows. Deciding how it should look, not as a finished bonsai, but as a mature design isn't easy but at some point it becomes a necessity. Where you are going you need to define. How you are going to get there is the plan you need to make.

Bring a bonsai that you have in your collection. It can be a bonsai in training for a short time or a bonsai you have had for many years. To get the maximum benefit from this meeting the bonsai should not be just a trimmed piece of material. This is not a critique of your bonsai. The information you receive can help you to refine your design and define where and how you will proceed. With our many different shows coming up later in 09 and during 2010 this meeting could help you have a great bonsai to show.

See you at the Garden Center meeting location.

ACBS

August 4th Regular Meeting

The Garden Center at 7 P.M.

How to Fine Tune Your Bonsai Design

Host: ACBS

Tokanoma: Mike and Christina

### Watch This Space

In times when money is tight the art of selling what you don't need to someone who has a need works both ways to benefit the buyer and seller. If you will e-mail me at acbsbonsai@aol.com I will include your items for sale or items needed. I will need detailed info and contact information. Don't send pictures as they eat space and ink in an already expensive newsletter. This new feature is free to members of any bonsai society....but..no professional vendors please.

Joe Day

## LOOSING WALTER CRONKITE

MY SIMPLE TRIBUTE

I began reading the news when I was 5 years old. My grandfather taught me. As a person who came of age during the 60's and being an information junky you come to know not much you read or hear from anyone or any place can be or ever will be

totally accurate. In short all information is a form of opinion. Math is the only information form that comes close to being a true form of information exchange. When someone who's opinion you could easily trust is no longer with us it is easy for me to feel that

I have lost something that was important to me. I knew the loss when Walter retired from the evening news, the loss of the last person I trusted to tell me the news of the day.

Joe Day

## FROM CAN TO CAN'T

At some point in July depending on how the weather goes it becomes a time to either try and get a bit more development work on your bonsai or just do your best to keep the bonsai healthy and growing. When we get afternoon rain on a regular basis you can defoliate Japanese Maple, Trident Maple and Bald Cypress. Regular rain brings humidity and lower temps. This will allow budding and new growth to be strong. If we get higher than average temps and no rain it's best to just water and watch you bonsai. If you have bonsai with jin or shari and a desire to get something done with your

bonsai now is a good time to carve, clean and treat your dead wood areas of your bonsai. Next time you go into your bonsai area do these things.

Check for wire on your bonsai to make sure it isn't cutting into the bark.

Check the soil level in every container. No more than the top 1/3 of any root should be above the soil line.

The sun is moving across the sky and the days are getting shorter so don't let your sun loving bonsai have too much shade.

Bonsai foliage should not touch another bonsai.

This will affect each bonsai's growth habit and hamper air flow, promoting fungus problems.

Turn you bonsai often to let each area get sunlight. When the day lengths get shorter each species of plants start making decision on the bud positions that will stay active and push after winter. Buds that get low or no sun will either go dormant or be weak next Spring.

Azalea, Camellia don't like any serious work done on them in the Fall so your last chance to do any work is..now.

Joe Day

## Trident Dangers

Trident Maple is a wonderful species for bonsai. They are native of the lower and more tropical part of China. This makes them more of a warm weather tree than a needing a long winter Maple. It also makes them a bit sensitive to an early frost or early cold winter situations. Severe cut backs can be done now with-

out much chance of cold problems. We should have about 100 more days frost free. When you get into middle August and you need you Trident to grow some long apex growth or long branch you can get into trouble if this growth doesn't harden off before the first frost. Soft new growth on Tridents will

die quickly with a good freeze. If your Tridents are in the ground not much you can do. If they are potted trees you can move and protect them as best you can. If you are growing long shoots for any reason on a Trident and we have a tropical storm it might be best to trim them back so the wind will not do more damage. Joe Day

## OUT AND ABOUT

This month has been busy. I Joe Day and wife spent a couple of nice days with the Birmingham, Alabama bonsai society. I gave a lecture and held two workshops. Lots of great bonsai artist, good material and fun. The Birmingham bonsai society is going through a bit of a revival with more events and gaining members. All good for the art of bonsai. We had a wonderful host family who treated us

great. The past weekend was a full day special lecture on bonsai in Baton Rouge. About 7 hours of talking sure made the double shot Starbucks ice coffee I had on the way home taste and feel good going down. We ate at two Vietnamese restaurants and one Cajun restaurant so you know we ate well. I find every trip west on I-10 to be an adventure more than an pleasure but that's just the way it is.

Later this month it will be another west drive on I-10 and I-12 to Lake Charles for workshops. The Baton Rouge event was set up by Lowell Tilley. Lowell is a good friend of ACBS coming to most of our events. Louisiana has 7 bonsai societies making it one of the strongest bonsai art cultures in the USA. It is certainly a state that has woods full of collectable species that are great for bonsai. Joe Day

## THE SIMPLE TRUTH

Just received the next issue of **Bonsai Focus** Magazine. Again most of what I see is transforming a great piece of material, almost always a Juniper or Pine species. I always read and slowly study the photographs. The bonsai moves over a short time from rough material to a very nice looking bonsai very quickly. It takes talent and time but not a long, long, time. Our local and almost all regional bonsai collections are made up of mostly deciduous material. In a recent bonsai magazine I read the following. The master at a Japanese bonsai collection as the student, a westerner, "do you know what

makes that Maple a great Maple?" The student answered correctly "no". The master said "Time."

A big old carving tool chest is almost useless with deciduous material, bonsai jacks and very large wire are seldom used.

Large collected deciduous material is usually cut way back and only the main line trunk is used. Small material either from collection or nursery material is developed slowly by careful use of wire and directional pruning. The beginning photo and a great deciduous bonsai photo will usually span a period of 15 to

20 years. This time span make a great deciduous bonsai often the work of more than one artist or the work of a artist grower. No..one session..styling day creates great deciduous bonsai. No one day visit by a master creates a deciduous bonsai.

The most important part of creating a great deciduous bonsai is the careful selection of the material you will use to create your bonsai. The material must be healthy, without fatal flaws, having at least good roots or the ability to air layer easily. The next article tells a bit more about this.

Joe Day

## FATAL FLAWS

Inverse taper is the number 1 flaw. The bottom of the trunk is smaller than the regions higher up on the trunk. Almost impossible to correct to a point that it will not distract from the design of the bonsai. Bad root displays are number 2 flaws. Ugly but numerous roots are better than few and small roots. Numerous roots

allow the artist to keep the best of the roots. Grafting roots is a possibility but all root work is a long, long term change. Awkward angles in a trunk will usually always remain as awkward looking parts of a trunk. Large scars on the front of a trunk are a fatal flaw ...but...if that is the only flaw of an otherwise

great trunk get some advice from a good bonsai artist before you make a final decision. A good design artist can show you how to play up the positives and reduce the negatives. The golden rule of design. Taking time to allow an experienced bonsai artist to help you select material is a wise way to go. Joe Day

## AROUND THE CORNER THINGS

As soon as ST Lukes sets it's school events calendar early in September we will know the exact date of our Fall ACBS Auction. We are working with the Mobile Public Library for a Fall Bonsai show. We have been contacted about taking part in a major fall festival but it's still a bit fuzzy at this time so look for more information next month. New Orleans bonsai society usually holds it's Fall

Auction in August and we just got word that it will be August 15th. Always interesting and fun to attend we might get a group together and show up. New Orleans bonsai artist always are a big part of our auction. Jim Vanlandingham our bonsai artist friend from south Florida usually gives us a call or e-mail in late July or early August to let us know if he can do a workshop with ACBS. Nothing yet but we will

let you know. The Pensacola Bonsai Society usually holds a fall auction. We will listen up for any news about their auction. BSF is busy scheduling Ben Oki for January of 2010. It is ACBS turn to host the Tri-Cities Regional Show Spring of 2010. This show of the best bonsai from Mobile, Pensacola, Ft Walton, Beach and Mississippi Gulf Coast is a great get together and display of bonsai art. Joe Day

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*Dedicated to the art of bonsai*

## Summer Dormant

As August becomes the days you wake up and endure your bonsai are doing the same things your are doing. They are slowing down in their outdoor activity. The soil in the pot is too hot to promote root growth. The buds are sense the heat is too high to allow soft new growth. Most bonsai just , with good care, sit and wait for cooler days. It's late July today and we have 80's so nothing but the average temps over the past 200 years says August will be hot, hot. I think it will be. Our actual cool days of Oct, Nov, and Dec, are also our short daylight days. Any work you can get done now will put you closer to where you need to be by bud bread next Spring. I repeat these thing here for all those who don't read all the newsletter. Removing wire, cleaning Jin and Shari, trimming back thick growth, buying what you need for mixing soil, deciding what bonsai container you need before your do root work in the Spring , ordering tools are thing you can do without spending time out side in the heat. When August heat declines, if we have some nice rain showers new growth on all your bonsai can happen very fast. If a bonsai has wire on the branches it can bite into the wood very quick. Insects also know Winter in coming so all that fall growth is the buffet before bed or to be more real, lay eggs and be dead. September and October can be our dry months of the year. Our weather pattern changes with dry air coming from the North and West in waves. Don't allow your bonsai to dry enough to kill your new twigs. The cool air will fool you into thinking your bonsai won't dry quickly. If the humidity is low and a breeze begins to blow and your soil is already dry .....bonsai die.

Joe Day

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