

SOUTHERN BONSAIST

A publication of the Azalea City Bonsai Society Mobile, Alabama

GRAFTING TECHNIQUES THE FEBRUARY ACBS MEETING

A Tree Story

This will become a feature of every ACBS newsletter for a while. I would like "your" tree story with a couple a good pictures to include in the article. Every bonsai has a story and every story is interesting. Let us hear and see your story.

Joe Day

No..not any, never seen a perfect piece of bonsai material. The ability to graft isn't actually about creating a perfect bonsai. Nothing is perfect. It's about having the ability to overcome and correct faults in a bonsai and make it a better bonsai. Some grafting is complex and takes almost perfect timing but most grafting techniques are easy to do, can be done almost any time during the growing season and give results quickly. Grafting is a great development tool. When you know you can place branches, roots and a new apex where you need these features on a piece of material it allows you to build a bonsai from a greater range of less than perfect bonsai material. Although some of these grafting techniques are easy they all can be done badly and give less than great results. This program will show you how to do the grafts and the extra tips that help you get successful results each time. Joe Day

ACBS February 02
Monthly Meeting
Grafting by
Joe Day

Host: Russel Coker

Tokanoma: Russel Coker

March 02
ACBS Monthly
Meeting

Members Workshop
We will set up new host tokenoma and program list at the February meeting.

We will need the members Input on the programs we will present at our monthly meeting for 2010. Take a few minutes to make a list of programs you would like to see presented or a program you would like to present to the ACBS membership.

BEN OKI WORKSHOP REVIEW

Ok, it happen. Ben Oki arrived and the weather was "great". Normal for Ben is the coldest weather of the winter when he arrives. Thanks to old members, new members, Mississippi club members we had a great turnout. The material brought to the workshop was

Shop was excellent and provided Ben with some interesting choices. Every tree in the workshop can with a bit of work and time become a excellent bonsai. After almost 20 days on the road Ben was his hard working self. Amazing! Wonderful and plentiful

Snacks, hot coffee, Friday night so no early wake up for a work day all made for a great night out with Ben Oki. The clean up crew was fast and efficient. Ben was in Bed by a bit after 10 P.M. slept late and headed home to Los Angeles. Joe Day

A Tree Story



Gator Vickers the first President of the South Alabama Bonsai Society, later the name was changed to Azalea City Bonsai Society, brought this clump of Boxwood into one of the first meetings of the society. Gator had a 3 gallon Juniper and this clump of Boxwood freshly pulled up from the ground, roots hanging. The point of the program was, if you want to create a bonsai start with good material. Wish I a picture of the Juniper. It was nice but this was 1981 and nice 3 gallon Juniper were available everywhere and cheap. Gator's comment about the Boxwoods was " I pulled this up from a landscape job today, you don't want to start a bonsai with this type of material. With good bonsai material available at many mom and pot nurseries and woods full of great digging material he was certainly correct.

At the end of the meeting Gator dropped the Boxwood clump into the garbage, I pulled it out. I had made a couple of grow boxes and had soil on hand so it got potted as soon as I got home. This was the first Tuesday meeting in March so the Boxwoods settled in the grow box and grew all summer. The next Spring we were invited to show bonsai at a 3 day craft show. The ACBS had no -show quality- bonsai. The bonsai we displayed needed work so we would work on the bonsai at the show. I took the Boxwoods and wired them as I talk with people viewing the display.

This clump of Boxwoods was photographed when my bonsai collection consisted of about 10 bonsai. After 30 years I still have 5 of those bonsai in my collection

Joe Day.

Continued:

As a , out of the garbage, piece of material I was not inclined to fear messing up this material. I decided to put a lot of curves in the trunks to add a bit of interest and bring the branches down closer to the ground level. I knew Boxwood do not like to push new growth low on the trunks. The process from that day forward was similar every year. Grow the clump, take it to shows and wire it completely. It stayed in the wood box for years. The next move was into a cheap but large plastic forest pot that is still a part of my pot collection. About 10 years after I first potted the Boxwoods I started making stone slabs for forest. The Boxwood clump got moved on to a rock slab. Along the way I this Boxwood group taught me a lot of things. Boxwoods love to eat. They love organic fertilizer. They grow foliage quick but branches, slowly. They are fun to wire but as soon as warm weather and spring rains come they swell quickly. Boxwood is hard and oily but cuts on the trunk that hold any moisture will rot quickly so treating and sealing is a must. They don't heal quickly. They will grow in almost any soil but our 50/50 mix of Pine bark and lava rock or turface is a good growing mix and it allows the roots to be combed out and trimmed easily. The slab it sit in now was carved from a large deep piece of rock. The deep dish and all the ledges were carved by me over many weeks. This 30 year journey is just a beginning.

Joe Day



The Bonsai Artist

The Juniper was small. The curves smooth and flowing with delicate amounts of Jin and Shari. The pads were almost too perfect. The pot was delicate but had nice texture and color. The stand was also delicate but with a dark color that seem to add strength and bring out the texture of the pot and the color of the foliage. Comments from anyone viewing the bonsai in the show ranged from a low speaking, "nice" to a almost loud "wow" that anyone could hear. I ask a member of the showing club, "who did this Juniper that everyone likes so much"? A voice from behind me said "I did". I turned to the sound of the voice and my eyes saw a large smiling man. Hard to look him in the eye without the eyes moving to look at the large snake tattoo emerging from his shirt and moving around his neck and on to his face. Various metal objects were a part of his nose, ear lobes , eyebrows and lip. I did notice his arms and legs were also covered with designs of many types. "nice tree" I said. Being fairly new to bonsai I didn't totally want to believe this , biker type, guy and the small, delicate Juniper went together. They did. I had coffee with this bonsai artist and discovered he was a talented artist, medical professional and all around nice person. As the years have gone by I now know bonsai artist come in all sizes, shapes, colors, personalities, professions, and kinks. With only one or two exceptions, I have liked them all. Things I find in common with all artist are they enjoy many types of creative work. This is good and bad when it comes to bonsai. You have to stay deeply involved in bonsai to develop a collection of old trees. The average length of involvement with bonsai for most people is less than 3 years. Hardly enough time to develop good bonsai. Bonsai require either one person with a very settled life or a couple who work to fill in the attention gaps in the bonsai care. Any bonsai collection that has been around for a good while is a case of good management. All the good collection that I have see built and no longer exist have been lost to life events, death, sickness, failed marriage or dissolved romance, moves to locations that could not accommodate the bonsai. I've see people come back into bonsai but I have never see anyone build two good bonsai collections.

I would have argued that lack of resources was the primary reason that the art of bonsai had a hard time attracting and holding people. Now with the internet for shopping and next day delivery , world wide web sites that show and detail how bonsai has been done, can be done , local clubs, bonsai auctions, traveling teachers and more resources at local outlets the art of bonsai still grows at the same 70's and 80's rate. Part of the problem is both lack of local organizations and the depth of the organizations. The organizations that exist work very hard and have very dedicated people but unlike many other "art" organizations -the bonsai society- in town is -the only bonsai related organization- in town. To gather with other "bonsai artist" is a day trip to another group in another state, usually. Another problem with bonsai as art is the lack of personal recognition. When bonsai are shown they are never shown with the artist name attached. This tradition goes way back to forever but has a practical reason here in the good old USA. Bonsai stay outside and mostly unprotected. A name on the label in front of a bonsai could quickly lead someone to the backyard where the bonsai stay. Other than just often being difficult to do, this roadmap to your bonsai is why more artist hesitate to post pictures of their bonsai to internet sites. The ability to give artist due recognition for good work is a difficult situation that grows more difficult every year. If your bonsai are stolen you can call the cops but they have ...no...way and no time to follow up on your problem. Lost trees in pots ,no matter how valuable they are, hold ..no..priority with law enforcement. With luck you might find your pots for sale months later at the flea market.

Bonsai is an art for self motivated individuals who enjoy their time working with their trees don't mind not being a part of a people oriented large support group and don't expect either a lot of glory or money for the effort they put into creating wonderful art. This is hardly the description of the average person. Take away the search and reward of recognition, money, being a part of a large support group, and add in the need for self motivation, and self management and you begin to see why bonsai is and has stayed a small group of people. That description hardly fits the majority of people anywhere in the world but it does create a small group of people that when they do get together are a great group to share time with.

Joe Day

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Dedicated to the art of bonsai

Normal but Cold

Normal weather for December is weather fronts coming in from the northwest bringing rain about once a week. The rain days are low 60's for day temps and 40's for nights. The clear days are 50's or daytime and 30's at night. So we have had a normal December. If you are trying to work outside on bonsai that normal is also , not so comfortable. Over the years I have developed my own schedule of how to get the most out of December. As soon as the leaves fall I start trimming all the bonsai on the main benches. I have a small bag with just my trimming tools and sealer. I'm a "big" believer in sealing cuts. I trim, seal, listen to the radio and move from bonsai to bonsai. It's a great time to see how each species grows from year to year. I also do a check to see the amount of root growth. I make a list of the bonsai that need to be repotted later in the winter. I always enjoy my time spent working on bonsai but this year with only , I think, two days it has been too cold, windy or wet to be enjoyable. If you bonsai only when it's great weather outside you never get what needs to be done, done, when it needs to be done. If you have a bonsai collection of any size you will never, ever, get it all done. That's both the joy and burden of bonsai. If you love to do bonsai you will never run out of things that need to be done. Any free time you can spare you can spend it in the bonsai area and spend it doing something that will benefit your bonsai.

Joe Day
