

SOUTHERN BONSAIST

ACBS

Fall Auction

We have a date of October 23rd, at St Lukes church and school for the ACBS fall auction. We have a back up date of the Oct 30th if it is need. We plan to as always have a great selection of bonsai items, great food, drinks and fun.

The ACBS

Day of Bonsai 2011 March 19th.

As the world in scheduled to end in 2012 we plan to make 2011 the best "Day of Bonsai" ever. If it doesn't end we have to work very hard in 2012. Plans to be announced.

A Bloom Nursery Center

Has nice Procumbus Nana Juniper 3 gallon for sale at about \$6. each

This info was called to me by Don Corley. He said they show some summer stress but are still healthy.

The nursery is located just before Alverson Road ends at Old Shell Road. Alverson runs from Airport Blvd. to Old Shell. It is On the right side of Lowe's at Shillingers.

PLANNING WINTER, SPRING WORK

JOE KUHN OUR SEPT PROGRAM

The first half of the September ACBS meeting will be planning ACBS programs and activities. The second half of the meeting will be a program about planning for Winter and Spring Bonsai work. When you know what you need to do and when you need schedule the event you can get a lot of bonsai work done in a limited amount of time. We all realize our time will always be limited. A good bonsai collection is a big job that has never ending work. Attend the September meeting and help us plan a great year for ACBS. Joe DAY

ACBS September 7th

Monthly Meeting at The Garden Center Program

Joe Kuhn, Winter-Spring
Bonsai work and
ACBS Programs and Events
for the next 12 months

Host: Becky Guthrie

Tokanoma: Tommy Skelton

THE NEW ORLEANS AUCTION

Joe Day, Joe Kuhn, Russell Coker, Becky and Buck Lawrence car pooled, Tommy Skelton and his wife made a lazy weekend of it but we were all at the New Orleans Bonsai Society Fall Auction. Great turn out, great selection of plants and other bonsai

items moved across the auction table at very fair prices. I returned with Bald Cypress saplings, Joe Kuhn, Boxwood Literati, Becky, nice Azalea, Buck, Boxwood, Tommy a number of different items. Our carpool group had burgers and sandwiches at the Camellia Grill. This is one of

the "must eat there" places in New Orleans. With a short time to spend eating it was a logical choice. New Orleans club had a nice spread of food for everyone. Great way to spend a part of the weekend. A bit of a half day vacation. Joe Day

Repotting

The month of September is a good month to make the decision to repot or not to repot a bonsai. The first step in repotting is making the decision to repot based on a good and logical reason to repot. Repotting gives the bonsai a healthy soil environment for the roots, a positive factor, but the new soil and more room for the roots to grow can result in strong new growth and larger leaves. Repotting can result in the death of a bonsai if the repotting is preformed badly or the bonsai artist makes bad decision on why the bonsai needs to be repotted. When a bonsai container becomes filled with roots to the extent that water cannot drain through the root system quickly the bonsai must be repotted. This is necessary repotting making the decision easy. Other repotting decision are not as easy.

Bonsai species that grow roots quickly make a - repot or not to repot- decision a bit complex. If you notice the water draining slowly during the growing season you have to decide whether the tree can grow for one more season without the roots growing enough to totally stop water from draining. If you are trying to develop small leaves and small internodes you only want to repot when absolutely necessary. American Hornbeam and Crepe Myrtle are species that comes to mind as I write this. As a developed bonsai they grow wonderful when their roots are settled in the soil. Give American Hornbeam and Crepe Myrtle new soil and they grow like a weed and the growth comes from the trunk, the roots, the bottom of the branches, top of the branches. The new leaves are about twice the size of the older leaves. Let the pot get too root filled, preventing water from draining quickly and these trees suddenly dies due to root problems. This-repot or not repot- decision becomes more difficult because we can never predict the weather for next Spring or Summer. Too hot, cold, wet or dry makes recovery a more complex situation.

Sensitive species are great for people who hate to make a decision. They make you realize that you can, **yes-can**, do everything right and have it all come out a totally wrong. Sand Pine seem to be the king of this list with all other Pine species coming in a close second. If you allow any species that is sensitive to repotting become root bound the tree will weaken. If the bonsai is sensitive to repotting when it is healthy, it will be very sensitive when it is in a declining health condition. I have a great Japanese Black Pine sitting on that fence as I write this. It isn't strong. The tree came to me more dead than alive. It is now with years of tender care more alive than dead. The tree needs new soil to get strong, but cleaning out the roots and repotting might just be the fatal good deed.

Tropical species, Northern species in your collection can be very hardy species when they are comfortable and settled in their growing mix. Trim the root mass, settle it in new soil and suddenly that happy, hardy bonsai becomes a giant question mark. The problem with both tropical and cold weather loving species is, you can't control the weather. A severe cold snap after repotting tropical species and you have a critical situation. A quick jump from Winter to Summer and those cold loving species are suddenly in a critical care situation.

Severely root bound nursery stock is a real challenge. The , probable, regular watering with a diluted fertilizer solution at the nursery, sitting in full sun , closely pushed together with other trees so the pot sides are shaded allows these trees to grow in a very unnatural situation. Bring it home where you water with water, sit it where the sun shines on the container in a place where the sun only shines some of the time then yank it, root prune it and give it new soil or do you?

Collected material you want to put into a bonsai container is a very important repotting decision. Repot too early into a small bonsai container and you can delay development for years. Repot this material after it is allowed to become severely root bound and **you will** delay its development for years.

Repotting is a thinking persons game if you want it to be a success almost all of the time. No bonsai artist has a 100 percent successful over the years. We all have killed bonsai and we all have had bonsai die when we did everything as correct as possible. The following article is a strategy to follow during those potting months.

Important to remember....every potting experience is unique. You are dealing with a living thing and every living thing has its own life force. The tipping point between life and death is unknown to even the best, most experienced bonsai artist. You can only judge as best you can if the plant is in good health or weak. Plants in excellent health, potted correctly should recover and grow in a normal way with just normal, after repotting, care. Weak plants that are being repotted to assist them in their ability to recover their health will need -intensive care- type care until they start to grow in a normal manner. You must repot every bonsai at some point. The only way to increase your chances that your repotting will be successful is to try and have all the knowledge you can about repotting your bonsai. The following strategy is how I handle my yearly repotting.

A Repotting Strategy

Get to know every species in your collection. Every species grows in its own unique way so repotting can be unique in many ways. Joe Day, Russell and Leo Fortner have probably repotted every species that we grow in our climate area more than one time so they can give excellent advice on how to repot almost any species. The following advice is always good advice.

Have everything you need to repot ready before you ever bring the bonsai you are repotting over to the potting bench.

Use only very sharp tools to cut the roots of any species. New roots grow from those tips don't crush them with dull tools.

Have soil ready but be able to modify the mix for special needs.

Repot quickly and completely without a break for anything less than an emergency. The amount of time the roots are out of the soil decreases the chances of a successful repotting experience.

With any healthy bonsai that is repotted only new bonsai soil is added to the container, no fertilizer or other chemicals.

A bonsai that is being repotted to help restore the health of the bonsai might be helped with the addition of a mild organic fertilizer that contains a blend of microorganisms. I personally have never used a root stimulant chemical and found the bonsai did better than any other bonsai repotted without a stimulant and well cared for.

Removing roots allows the bonsai to renew the root system but the amount of root removed depends on species and the health of the bonsai. Ask an experienced bonsai artist about the needs of the species.

Make a list of the bonsai that need repotting then make a schedule of when to repot. Some species recover better if they are repotted close to the return to warm days and nights. A list remembers better than your mind.

Always tie the bonsai into the container securely.

Bonsai sit **in the soil** not on the soil. Settle the soil into the root ball with one chopstick gently. The soil will settle with every watering so you must check your newly repotted bonsai often and add soil when needed.

Always repot, water until it runs from the drain holes then put newly repotted bonsai into a protected area shielded from too much sun, wind, cold or heat.

Bonsai that stays too wet because the bonsai container is completely filled with roots **must** be repotted before the next growing season.

Bonsai that grow roots quickly and do not drain water quickly must be repotted before the next growing season. If.....you want to keep the tree from growing too strong do not do a complete repotting. Trim the bottom roots back to the old root ball then cut a few wedges out of the root ball to give the tree some growing room.

Species that are sensitive to repotting are repotted using all the suggestions listed above. The after care should be considered "intensive care". They must be checked at least every day.

Severely root bound nursery stock can be brought back to health by cutting off the bottom of the root ball then cut wedges into the root ball to give the tree room to grow new roots. Place it back into the nursery pot for the next growing season. The goal is to move small feeder roots closer to top of the root ball allowing a root ball small enough for a bonsai pot to be created over a couple of growing seasons. Each repotting the larger roots are cut and the smaller roots retained.

Collected material needs to grow a lot to heal scars and create a new tapered apex. It is common for collected material to respond after it is collected by growing large roots very quickly. You want to maintain the growth momentum so use the wedge cuts to allow the roots to grow but retaining older roots that will function at the very start of the growing season. You fertilize, push growth and repeat the bottom cut, wedge cut as often as every year if it is needed to keep good drainage.

Tropical trees grow quickly and produce a lot of roots. They don't like to be repotted during cool or cold weather. Most can tolerate a reduction of 50 percent of the root mass, some more but you must know which species is this tolerant. When the night time temps stay 60 degrees or higher most tropical start root growth. This is the time to repot. Most tropical bonsai will need repotting after two growing seasons.

This article could 50 pages long and not cover everything but this covers very important procedures. Joe Day

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Think About This

Only about the first hour or so of the life of a bonsai is devoted to absolute subtraction. You remove (subtract) all the parts of the plant you don't need for the design. About 99 percent of the remaining time in the life of the bonsai is devoted to adding to the bonsai. You add branches, foliage, increase trunk, root, branch size. Yes, you do trim (subtract) excess growth but in one year the tree adds material for about 2700 hours. If you trim for one hour a month when the bonsai is growing that's only 9 hours. It's easy to see bonsai is about adding a lot more than subtracting. The subtracting is critical but if you don't know how to make a tree add material in the correct places to enhance your design and you don't know what needs to be subtracted you can't create good bonsai.

*Workshops, books and magazine articles are mostly devoted to the subtraction part of the art of bonsai. It is a lot of fun to make dramatic changes quickly removing parts of the tree but if you are new to bonsai and you participate in a workshop **you go away-without-99 percent of what you need to know** about the bonsai. There is no lack of sources for that 99 percent of knowledge but sad to say –it's almost totally up to the individual artist to spend the time to find it and understand it. Workshops are fun but a bonsai organization should try to teach as much of the 100 percent of knowledge as possible not just focus on the one percent (subtraction). Much of the 99 percent of knowledge you need to know to keep a bonsai growing in your local area comes from the knowledge of your local bonsai society membership. That knowledge is transferred usually during lectures at bonsai meetings. **There is –no– 1% solution to bonsai.***

Joe Day
