



# Bonsai Society of Dallas

Monthly newsletter

May 2010

## Message from the President

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- Message from the President
- May Program – Flowering Bonsai Demo w/ Jim Gremel
- Juniper Workshop with Jim Gremel
- May Bonsai Tips
- Calendar of Events
- April Recap
- Virtual Garden Tour
- Photography tips

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Has your address changed?  
Comments? E-mail the editor at  
[amy.james@gte.net](mailto:amy.james@gte.net)

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Spring is here and I am enjoying my time outside pruning and watching my trees grow. Last month we had good turnout for a holiday weekend. We enjoyed the hands on meeting and we appreciate the time and advice from our table leaders, John Miller, Dave Schleser, John Borusheski and Bill Webber. Our trees are better because of their input. After the program, we enjoyed another installment of “Bonsai 101” on growing your collection. John B. and Diane Lowe took us through a nice presentation with photos and good discussion on sources for bonsai material. Much thanks to them for the hours of preparation. Bonsai 101 filled that void for those people who are new and interested in the hobby. I receive a couple of messages a week from prospective hobbyists inquiring about the upcoming Bonsai 101 sessions.

Attracting new members promotes our hobby and increases our club’s knowledge base. Each of us has something to offer and our meetings are a good place to share. I encourage everyone to continue bringing trees to each meeting for either show and tell or expert advice after the meeting. I am pleased to say our membership is up to 64 already this year, up from mid 50s last year.

I need to remind everyone that the LSBF convention is right around the corner (June 11-13<sup>th</sup>) in Fort Worth. Our club has six spots for trees and we need you to submit photos of your trees to James Bonney ([amy.james@gte.net](mailto:amy.james@gte.net)) or Howard and Sylvia Smith ([slysmith@earthlink.net](mailto:slysmith@earthlink.net) or [bonsaismiths@earthlink.net](mailto:bonsaismiths@earthlink.net)). Six trees will be selected from the photos submitted. We would also like to add your photos to our club website, so even if your tree is not selected it will be a good use of your photographing time. See our subsequent article on photography tips. Thanks to Bill Weber for pulling those together; it will help us take better pictures of our trees and gardens. Remember our December program is a virtual tour of members’ gardens, showing how you site your collection and we need five to ten photos from each of you for this program too.

Finally, we are looking forward to a great Saturday of bonsai on May 1<sup>st</sup> with visiting artist Jim Gremel of Deer Meadow bonsai. In the morning he will give a demonstration on a Mustang Grape to the full club and visitors. Then after lunch he will lead a workshop creating “squash” shimpaku junipers. Eleven have already RSVP’d and we have a few spots open. You can RSVP to Diane Lowe ([diane\\_lowe@tx.rr.com](mailto:diane_lowe@tx.rr.com)) directly or another board member during the morning program.

See you at the next meeting!  
Chuck

## Styling Demo: Mustang grape

May Program with Jim Gremel  
9 AM to 12 Noon, May 1<sup>st</sup>

This month we're bringing in Jim Gremel from Occidental, California. Jim owns and operates Deer Meadow Bonsai, a bonsai nursery in the northern part of the state. Jim has been practicing bonsai and pottery since the 70s and decided in the 80s to follow his passions fulltime. Jim produces some of the best trees in the country as evidenced by his win at the 1<sup>st</sup> National Bonsai Exhibition in Rochester, New York. He also happens to be a great source for decorative pottery and annealed copper wire, folks! Visit [www.jimgremel.com](http://www.jimgremel.com) for more.



A Mustang grape from the collection of Howard & Sylvia. Shown at Bill Valavanis' 1<sup>st</sup> National Exhibition in 2008. Photo H. Smith

Sylvia and Diane have picked out a wonderful native mustang grape for Jim to work on at the meeting. So come on down and join us for what promises to be a wonderful time!

## Shinpaku Juniper Workshop

Afternoon workshop with Jim Gremel  
1 PM to 3 PM (-ish), May 1<sup>st</sup> at NHG

The afternoon workshop with Jim is almost full as of this writing. If you are interested in grabbing one of the last spots, contact Diane Lowe at [diane\\_lowe@tx.rr.com](mailto:diane_lowe@tx.rr.com) to reserve. If the workshop fills up, I believe Diane is keeping a waiting list in case there are any last minute cancellations.

At the workshop, Jim will show us how to turn young juniper stock into twisty, gnarled shohin like what you might find in the wild. Over time these trees will develop a lot of character. The workshop is in the smaller room that was our normal meeting room last year.



Visit [www.fwbonsai.com](http://www.fwbonsai.com) for more details on the convention.

## Upcoming Events



Saturday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 9 – 12 Noon  
Flowering tree styling demo  
with Jim Gremel

Saturday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1 PM – 3 PM  
Juniper workshop with Jim Gremel

Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 9 – 12 Noon  
The Three Stooges BYOT Advice &  
Show-n-Tell

Thur. – Sat., June 11–13<sup>th</sup>  
LSBF/FWBS State Convention  
Fort Worth, Texas  
[www.fwbonsai.com](http://www.fwbonsai.com)

Saturday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 9 - 12 Noon  
Make Your Own Pot Workshop  
with Sandy McFarland

## Link of the Month



Matthew H. Ouwinga is a young and enthusiastic bonsai artist from the Chicago land area. A graduate of the international school of bonsai under the direction of Kunio Kobayashi and Peter Warren (head apprentice) in Tokyo Japan, Matt is a high school teacher and spends his summers traveling the country visiting bonsai clubs and headlining conventions.

Matt is a featured artist at next month's [LSBF/FWBS state bonsai convention](#) in Fort Worth. His work with maples has won many awards on a professional and national level.

Matt is also the owner of Kaedebonsai-en that grows nearly 100,000 seedlings yearly for bonsai use.

<http://www.kaedebonsai.com/>

## Cowtown Bonsai LSBF/FWBS Convention

Don't forget folks, there are 6 spots for exhibit trees at the convention. Each Texas bonsai club gets a minimum number of reserved spots, and we want the Dallas club represented well! To submit a tree, take a photograph or two of your tree and provide any interesting history/facts (botanical name, common name, estimated age, etc.) and email them to Howard and Sylvia Smith at [slysmith@earthlink.net](mailto:slysmith@earthlink.net) or [bonsaismiths@earthlink.net](mailto:bonsaismiths@earthlink.net). See Bill Webber's helpful tips on photographing your bonsai.

Also, if you have any bonsai-related material, consider donating it to the convention raffle. Raffles are the primary way clubs recoup money for expenses and to bring in artists from outside the area. ✍

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## Future Program: Members Virtual Garden Tour

The details of the members' virtual garden tour have been firmed up and it has been slotted as our December program. This will be a lovely program for one of our colder months when our bonsai are safely tucked away waiting out the winter months.

We want YOUR help. We need volunteers to take 5-10 digital photographs of your bonsai setups so that Chuck and James can collect them into a PowerPoint presentation for all to enjoy come December.

We, of course want to see bonsai (who doesn't), but we really want pictures of how your gardens are set up; what you do to combat wind, hail and our tough Texas summers; how and where you place your benches and what they're made of; and what your watering solutions are; how you protect them during the winter months; anything that has proven to be a good solution for issues we all deal with.

The reason I bring this up now is that the weather is great, our setups should be recently cleaned from winter and our plants are flush with new growth, undamaged by our brutal summers. Plus, many will still be blooming or are just about to. Check out Bill W's photography tips for help taking good photos. They are more oriented toward

photographing bonsai themselves, but the tips can be applied in a general sense to all photography.

Please send submissions to James at [amy.james@gte.net](mailto:amy.james@gte.net) or Chuck at [Chuck Talley@tandybrands.com](mailto:Chuck_Talley@tandybrands.com). At the presentation, we'll ask members take a few minutes to talk about their bonsai setups. Hopefully we'll all learn something new we can apply in our own gardens. ✍

## Photographing Tips for Your Bonsai

from Bill Webber

Plants and shade structures aren't usually camera shy, but here are a few tips to get the most out of your photographs.

1. Use a neutral background – a solid color or relatively neutral background is best for your subject matter. It can be a backdrop, wall, fence or whatever, as long as your subject stands out.
2. Use a tripod – This is a must for clear sharp photographs. Position the tripod at least 10 feet from the subject and use the zoom lens if you need to get close. When photographing bonsai, the camera should be the same height as the top of the pot or lower trunk and directly head-on.
3. Lighting – Remember, bright is good, but mid-day on a sunny afternoon is often harsh. Bright overcast days or placing your subject under the shade of a tall tree softens shadows.
4. Prepare your area and/or tree – clean up the shooting area, remove stray leaves and debris, and clean the pot. There are products you can purchase for pot cleaning, but in a pinch, vegetable oil, Pam spray or even crushed walnut shells in an old sock work well. Rub off excess.
5. Use appropriate camera settings – for most of us, the AUTO setting will be our best bet. But don't always take the camera's word that it's the best it can do. If the picture doesn't look right, consider taking several, or even try using the SCN (scene) setting. Most cameras have multiple scenes that deal with situations from very sunny to very cloudy. Feel free to try them out. Don't like the results? There's a delete key for that. ✍

## May Bonsai

Tips and advice by John Miller



Does mycorrhiza work? Apparently all plants, not just pines, have a need for some form of mycorrhiza. The topic is too involved to be covered here. Go to the website [www.fungi.com/mycogrow/amaranthus](http://www.fungi.com/mycogrow/amaranthus) for a good article. If you have problems with that (as I did) go to [www.fungi.com](http://www.fungi.com) and click on the product Mycrogrow. Then scroll to the bottom and click on their link to Dr. Amaranthus article. If you can't find their product in the local store get whichever one has the most species of good fungi.

Three new tasks present themselves this month; repotting tropicals, leaf pruning and keeping roots cool.

Leaf pruning is the cutting off of many or all of the leaves in order to induce a new flush of growth similar to the growth after breaking dormancy. This should only be done on very healthy trees and it should not be done two years in a row. Sometimes the excuse is made that you get two seasons of growth. However, if you do the proper trimming during the growth phase the plant is continuing to produce the division of twigs necessary for ramification and the stress of leaf removal is unnecessary. The only real justification for leaf pruning is to replace old or damaged leaves with a newer set that will be prettier in a show or in the fall. The pruning must be done while there is still a month of good growing weather left meaning before the end of May in the D-FW area. The tree should be fertilized a few days before pruning. When pruning defoliate strong branches fully while leaving some leaves on weak branches. Usually interior branches will benefit by having their foliage kept on. When the leaves are off you can check the branches for undesirable characteristics. Cut vertical growing, hanging, or crossing branches. Leave any major work for next fall.



John gives some advice on a twisted pomegranate while Karen looks on. *Photo C. Scholz*

After this work watch your watering, the tree will not use nearly as much water as when in full leaf, so do not overwater. When growth starts, get your tweezers out and keep up with the trimming. Do not let the new shoots get long internodes.

When the night temperatures are consistently above 60 degrees you can start thinking about repotting those tropicals. They need the warmth for good root growth. Remember that the warmer temperatures and spring winds will cause the roots to dry quickly so have a spray bottle or some damp cloths handy. Keep them shaded until they recover.

The old methods were to repot azaleas after they finished blooming thinking that the tree needed nutrients from the roots for their blossoms. The newer thoughts are that the plant has all the necessary nutrients available in the bud and to repot the azaleas in the spring while they are still dormant. If you repot after blooming, do not remove as much soil and keep them shaded until they recover and are growing well. When the azaleas finish blooming remove all seed pods and do any reshaping that is necessary. You have 2 to 2-1/2 months (that is mid-July) to work on them. They will start setting buds for next year's growth at that time.

The hot sun shining on the pot, especially the dark colored ones, can raise the temperature to the point of killing the roots. Especially sensitive are the nice growing tips at the edge of the

rootball next to the pot. If the pot feels hot to your hand think about how the roots feel, after all they are living things too. These temperatures can be kept lower by shading the pot with any porous material. Putting sphagnum on the surface is good. Do not use any solid material like newspaper on the surface of the soil as it will cause you watering problems. And speaking of watering problems, do not rely on rainfall to water for

you, some plants shed the water to the outside and miss the pot. You must check them yourself.

Insects are waiting for a chance to get hold of some well fed and very tasty snacks. If you give them half a chance they will move into your bonsai almost overnight and are usually hard to spot until damage shows up. The most prevalent ones are aphids, spider mites, and scale. Leaf miners and various caterpillars will sneak in too. I use the organic foliar spray (1 tablespoon each of liquid kelp, fish emulsion, molasses, and apple cider vinegar in one gallon of water) to control all these. Horticultural oil spray can be used year around. Note that the horticultural oil spray is a more refined and lighter version of the old dormant oil spray that could only be used in the dormant season. Do not use oils on those species (such as buttonwood) that have a sensitivity to oil. If in doubt, please read the label on the product you wish to use.

Treat for fungal problems too. Leaf spot, mildew, and such can be treated by using potassium bicarbonate obtainable from any good nursery. A substitute would be sodium bicarbonate (baking soda). Use one tablespoon per gallon as a spray and be sure to cover both sides of the leaf. I would not use these products together with the foliar spray because they react with the acid vinegar. I would just as soon use them separately because only a

few things (elms and hollies) at my place need the fungicide treatment.

If you are not on a regular organic foliar/drench feed schedule be sure to use fertilizer cakes with supplemental feeding with a good liquid fertilizer, one that includes the minor elements. Most bonsai I see are malnourished. The liquid water soluble fertilizer gets washed out with the next watering and the tree starves until the next infrequent feeding. There are a number of organic fertilizers in pellet or cake form on the market or you can make your own. These feed a tiny bit each time you water.

It's time to consider becoming more proficient at your hobby. The LSBF convention in Ft Worth this year is a great way to start. You can learn all the rules but without practice you will not be able to perform. You need practice (workshops) to learn to recognize the line of the raw material you are working with. You can also get this practice and experience by taking part in your clubs various study groups, beginner's classes, and workshops. If you are not a beginner, try teaching some beginners. The teacher always learns as much as his students by trying to verbalize what he is attempting to teach. ✍

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## April Recap

by James Bonney

The hands-on BYOT workshop last month was a real success. A bunch of trees were brought in to work on. The tables were split roughly into four groups: deciduous, conifer, tropicals and miscellaneous. Each table had its own leader and members could ask questions and get advice on their trees. There was much socializing and plenty trimming and wiring going on. I think everybody learned something by the end. Thank you John B., Bill W., Dave S., and John M. for being our leaders for the session. Several items were raffled off including several bottles of fertilizer and a cedar which Lee won. Congrats Lee!

At 11 o'clock, Diane and John B. co-presented our second Bonsai 101 session, *How to Grow Your Collection*. This program, aimed at newer bonsai enthusiasts, started with a recap of our first Bonsai 101 session and moved quickly into descriptions of some potentially unfamiliar terms often used in bonsai. The meat of the program discussed ways of growing your collection—buying, developing young stock or collecting older stock from the wild. Diane and John provided some

great imagery and stories to highlight the lecture. Thank you Diane and John for presenting! ✍



James trims up a shohin English elm while talking with a tablemate. Photo C. Scholz



Dave makes some suggestions on a huge trident maple that a member had chopped way back a year or two before (note the well-healing scar on the backside). *Photo C. Scholz*



You can never have enough shears. *Photo J. Bonney*



John discusses a large boxwood's possibilities. This one had good bark and an interesting nebari. *Photo C. Scholz*



When taking a break from their own work, members gather round each of the tables to listen in and gain some insight. *Photo C. Scholz*



An informal upright brought in for the workshop. *Photo J. Bonney*

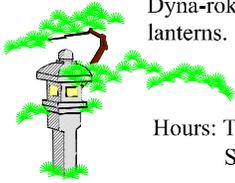


John talks about some of the unique vocabulary of bonsai during the Bonsai 101 session. *Photo J. Bonney*

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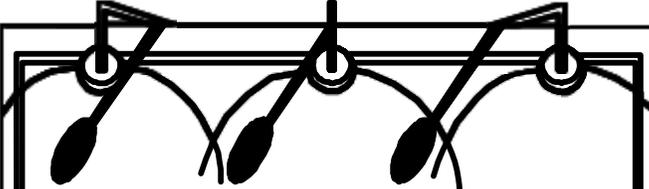
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