

Nashville Bonsai News

November 2010

www.nashvillebonsai.com

created & published by **Dave & Barbara Bogan**



Every year at this time, we say that we are going to have elections, but we never have anyone who is willing to serve as an officer, so if you are interested in stepping up and helping us out, we would be glad to have you. We need new fresh people with new ideas for meetings and workshops. Chad Kinkle has agreed to be our treasurer. I want to thank Malcolm Lewis for serving in this position for several years. It was not a job that he wanted, but was nice enough to agree to do it. We need more people to do the same. I am hoping that someone will also take over the presidency. It is very difficult for me to continue in the position since I live in Indiana and cannot attend meetings etc. I just do not feel that I am doing an adequate job and attendance seems to be falling off. I am willing to help anyone who would like to be our president.

Owen Reich is going to Japan for a bonsai apprenticeship with a bonsai master. He will be gone for 6-12 months. We all wish him well and hope that he comes back with lots of knowledge to share with us.

Nashville Bonsai Society displayed bonsai at the Bonsai Expo in Asheville, NC. in October. As usual, I heard it was a great show. Mike Blanton took home several honors, The Peer Award and The Judges Award. Mike, John Wall and Owen Reich took trees for the show. This is really a great show, so if you have never been, put it on your calendar for next year.

**Christmas Party
Dec. 4th
Mike Blanton's
Home**

**Bring a dish
RSVP
Door Prizes**

Details later

Happy Thanksgiving

It has been a rough year for many people, please remember to give thanks for all that we have and pray for those who are in need.



A Lot Going On This Year

If you like to go to shows and/or attend great workshops, there is a lot offered this year.

March 3-6—Nashville Lawn and Garden Show—Tennessee State Fair Grounds
www.nashvillelawnandgardenshow.com

April 9-10- Nashville Bonsai Society Spring Show—Cheekwood Botanical Garden
www.nashvillebonsai.com

May 6-8—Potomac Bonsai Show—U.S. National Arboretum, Washington DC. Great time to visit the arboretum if you haven't already been there. Azaleas usually in bloom throughout the arboretum. Great show, lots of vendors.

May 20-22—Shohin St. Louis, "A Growing Experience" , Gateway Center, One Gateway Dr. Collinsville IL 62234 Special Guest Artist [Koji Hramatsu](#)
www.stlbonsai.org

May 27-29—Rendezvous, Brussel's Bonsai Nursery, Olive Branch, MS—guest artists: Guy Guidry, Marco Invernizzi, Ryan Neil, Marc Noelanders, John Powell, Kathy Shaner, Erik Wigert, Dana Quattlebaum.
Register before April 1st-\$150. This includes all your meals for Fri, Sat and Sun, til noon. Food is great. For listing of workshops go to:
www.brusselsbonsai.com.
Register early the workshops fill-up fast.

June 16-19—Bonsai in the Bluegrass, ABS/BCI Symposium, 13 guest artists and 46 seminars and work shops. Don't let the registration fee scare you away, there is also a \$10 admission for the show and vendor area only. The full registration allows one to view any of the workshops and lectures and includes dinner. Full registration is \$295 before May 15.
For a list of workshops, seminars and vendors go to: www.bonsaiinthebluegrass.com

July 22-23 Nashville Bonsai Society Regional Show—Cheekwood Botanical Garden, guest artist Ryan Neil.

Oct 8-9— Carolina Bonsai Expo, North Carolina Arboretum, Asheville, NC, guest artist, Walter Pall.
For more information go to: www.ncarboretum.org

Looks like another great year for bonsai shows!!

This is all that I know of at present, but I'm sure that there will be a few more to add later. These are all great venues, try to make it to some of them. They are all within driving distance of Nashville and include some great artists and workshops.

Branches

Branches create and support the outline or silhouette of a Bonsai. Ramification of the branches and fine twigs is the sign of an outstanding Bonsai. This outstanding Bonsai with its outstanding ramification was achieved only through proper training and pruning over a long period of time.

Proper branching is so very important in achieving a fine specimen. Typically, a Bonsai is designed in the typical left—right—back branch style. Almost like a spiral staircase that tapers slowly to the apex. This perfect spiral is very hard to achieve and is rarely found on American Bonsai. In most cases you are forced to work with what is available.

Branch placement is always critical to a tree design but some irregularities can be overcome. Especially those in the upper $1/3$ — $1/2$ of the tree. Only in the first $1/3$ of the tree are they very visible and very important since you typically can see where they emerge from the trunk. In this first third, branch location and angle are very important. Picture trees in nature. Descending branches speak of age, maturity and its struggles against its environment. Straight or horizontal branches have the look of a tree that is middle aged and still evolving while descending branches are young and immature looking as in a young tree or in the top of some pine shaped trees.

By manipulating these first few branches, you can not only show age but also move them to where they can also slightly conceal an improper location on the trunk. The location may require the branch to come forward or more of a downward angle into an area lacking these mature branches. I've seen many Bonsai on which the first or primary branches did not emerge until a good third of the way up the tree but because they were descending, they filled in the lower areas.

Primary Branches:

The length of a primary branch in relation to the trunk is very important and they must be balanced. The steeper the angles of the branch the higher up the trunk it should start. The more horizontal the lower it should start. Branch thickness is also important. A branch at the point it emerges from the trunk should be approximately $1/3$ of the trunk size. In other words, if you have a 3" trunk (at point branch emerges) than the branch should be 1" thick. This should hold true all the way up the tree and as the trunk size decreases so will the branch size. Example at the point the trunk is only 1" the branch will be $1/3$ ". The shape of the branch should also mimic the trunk's shape. On a straight or formal styled tree the branches should be straight. On a trunk which curves, the branches should also curve and have more movement.

On branches #1, 2 & 3 the spacing between them will also have an impact on the maturity or look of the tree. In a perfect world the spacing between branches should equal $1\ 1/2$ times the trunk area from which it emerges. This is for a mature look as well as allowing the proper amount of light to penetrate these areas. As you progress up the tree keep trying to maintain these rules.

Secondary Branches;

Branches which emerge off of the primary branches—some call these side branches. As you progress up the tree the point at which the secondary branches emerge or begin should also. These branches need to emerge on an alternating or herringbone pattern. Secondary branches are arranged just like the primary branches. Low on the tree the spacing will be wider and closer to the trunk as you progress up the tree they will become closer together—denser. A good rule of thumb is for the secondary branches to emerge at intervals three times the thickness to the branch they're growing from. Example; a 1/2" thick branch would have its first side branch at 1 1/2" out from the trunk. As the branch thins, the side branches get closer.

Of course, the above are rules but we must consider them as guidelines. No tree will be perfect with branches in exactly the right locations. Simply use these to help you balance your tree. One real misconception or misused tactic is to change the diameter of a branch by allowing it to grow wild. This will work to a degree and may be your only option but please keep in mind it will take a few years. I usually prefer to remove all branches in the lower third that do not measure up to the rules. Then utilize what remains. Many times it is better to have a branch emanate from the wrong location than to have a branch 1/3 the size and never measure up. In the top areas, most trees are prolific growers. Remove all those heavy branches and allow the tree to fill back in. Keep in mind in the upper area the point at which a branches emerges is never or rarely seen but, heavy branches will go quicker than the surrounding area and be hard to maintain.

Winter Watering

Watering during winter can be a huge balancing act and unfortunately a chore you probably won't look forward to. Some of the problem is our own forgetfulness. In summer, we get set in a routine generally watering every day. Winter watering has no real routine. Plant moisture will be dictated by numerous conditions. Some of you will even have 3 or so totally different environment to deal with. Greenhouse, home, cold room, and those sheltered outside. Each environment will require different timing.

Greenhouses: At this time of year, generally I water every third day but even then some will have varying needs. My ficus generally go the longest without water. Others like my raintree need every other day water.

House: As mentioned on page one, be very careful watering in the house. Plants will be stressed. Never allow a plant to set in water. Your home's humidity and heat will cause varying conditions. So water these trees only on an as needed basis. Never get lulled into simply watering them all once a week or at the same rate.

Coldroom, cold frame or shelter. These will depend on location. Those in exterior locations – I.E.

in-ground cold frames will change based on ground moisture and sunlight. These plants generally winter over in a humid atmosphere. With higher humidity, they will generally need less watering but several warm sunlit days can change this dramatically. Other wintering over in a garage, unheated building or porch generally use less moisture due to a colder environment but remember winter can be very dry with no humidity.

Outside: This is an area where most will probably disagree with me on. Once my trees are bedded down generally in late December, I forget about them. Dormant and receiving occasional moisture will keep them all winter. Plus, never water a tree, which has frozen soil. The biggest thing to remember is these trees should have been mulched in (I use pine needles) which will help hold a more constant temperature and moisture level. Generally it the freeze & thaw that hurts plants not the actual temperature.

So, you must be diligent and watch everything real close. Don't get lulled into a routine. Check your trees very closely. Winter can kill trees faster than anytime of the year. Generally if they do die, it was your fault and not Mother Nature.

Wiring versus Pruning

How often do you wire your trees? Once a year or maybe not? So many feel that after the initial wiring, they're done. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Now, many can debate this or claim they grow Bonsai through the "clip & grow" method. I would accept this if they really did practice clip and grow. This technique is not a simply minor pruning each spring. To actually see real results, most trees will need to be pruned back fairly hard every spring for several years. The success or maybe I should say desired results of "clip & grow" is short internodes and growth in the correct directions.

To get the desired results, I believe we should practice both techniques.

Initial designing of a tree:

Prune hard! During the first or initial pruning, you must be willing to prune back to the basic branch structure. If you fail to start with a proper balance of branches, (which also includes size as well as location) you will fight the design from now on and ultimately remove branches later on. Now with this said, the branches remaining after this initial pruning will probably need a little wiring. Wiring of these branches typically amounts to movement up and down. Remember that branches in the lower part of a tree pointing upwards will always look immature. Typically the first 3 or so branches actually need to have a downward bend which makes them look older and mature. Since we have pruned hard, most of the first branches will be thick and require a good deal of force to move them downward. Generally here I utilize more guy wires instead of wrapping the branch with wire. Sometimes though it may take both – guy and wrapped wire. In this case,

you may also consider leaving the branch slightly long to give you a little more leverage in moving it. Remember though if left long, later on you will need to prune them back again.

Second pruning:

Here again is where many go wrong. You have allowed the tree to grow new branches all year. You are reluctant to remove most of this new growth. But, you need to again hard prune these back. Typically, you will prune these back to about 1” long. Again, remember short internodes. In the second hard pruning, you will do more wiring. Shape and direction are now becoming even more important. In the initial hard pruning, you only had to deal with 2 or so limbs on each branch. Now you should have at least twice as many limbs on each branch. Moving them into their correct future positions generally can't be achieved with guy wires. The movement you require now is more side to side and pulling in down won't help.

Continuing the annual pruning:

The term hard pruning becomes less each year. You are now pruning third or so year branches. Each year the branches should be progressively getting smaller in diameter (taper) but, again, your objective is still to increase the quantity & taper of limbs on each branch.

By about the 5th year, you should start to see a lot of ramification – multiple limbs on each branch. Ideally through all this pruning, none of your limbs should be over 1” long before they split into two limbs and so on.

At this stage, (around year 5) you may want to consider wiring at least twice a year. Yes, it will be tedious and you will have a lot of branches to wire but I promise you will love the results.

On the subject of wiring, there is also always the question of how tight to wrap the wire or how long the wire should stay on.

First – wire tightness. Your wire should always be snug (no gaps) against the branch. It must support the bends. You don't need to wrap so tightly that you scar the bark but it should always be in contact with the bark in all areas. Loosely wrapped wire does not offer the support required and may result in branch breakage and less than desirable results. Many will say if it's wrapped tight, it will cut in too quickly. Wrong! If wrapped correctly, when it does start to cut in, it's time to remove it. Those that wrap it loosely are not watching their trees close enough to know when to remove wire.

Granted, you may need to re-wire certain branches after removing wire, this is all part of the process. In fact, most all branches will require several wiring's before they set in place. Some, like ficus for example, you may continue to wire for several years. Ficus have a tendency for branches to

always bend upwards. Only when they are mature will the branches set in place.

Briefly, we all know how to judge proper wire size. Take the chosen wire size, with the end, try to push the branch requiring wire. If the wire will move the branch with out bending, it will support it.

Now, copper verses aluminum. I probably use 90% aluminum. Generally because of its ease to use and remove. I only use copper on trees (example pines) which seem to take for ever for the branch to set and also that the branches actually enlarge only slightly – thus wire can stay longer.

I do use the smallest size of copper for all my fine wiring. It is actually slightly smaller in diameter than the smallest aluminum available.

In closing, prune with diligence and prune back all branches every time. Wire as required. If this means wiring twice or more times a year than so be it.

Growing Pots

We all know that once we pot our trees in normal Bonsai pots, we slow its growth down by around 75 - 90 %. With the majority of slowed growth in the trunk and root areas. This is caused by a slow down in root growth due to the now limited growing area. Since we are seeing smaller and smaller stock plants, maybe we need to improvise and grow our own trees. In previous articles, I have talked about growing trees in stages - 2 years in ground, 1-2 years in pot and back to the ground. This all results in better trees of larger sizes and character. Now, lets evaluate the periods where we grow them in a pot. As mentioned above, pots restrict growth. That is, all pots restrict growth, even large deep pots. Many think that by potting in a large pot, they can obtain more growth and see more controlled growth. This is true to an extent. When we pot a tree in a large pot, we definitely

encourage root growth. This is good for the first year or two then, we will incur a reverse affect or at least an affect we don't need. It will also create a problem later during the re-potting into a finishing pot. Roots Always have a tendency to grow out and down. As they grow downward, they continue to gain strength but they cause the small upper roots to lose strength. These small upper roots are the ones which add strength to the trees base and also end up becoming our surface nebari. We will ultimately cut off all the long strong roots, leaving only shallow roots which maybe weak and slow to respond.

As usual, we need the best of both worlds, we need to change our techniques to achieve the best overall results.

When you're ready for the large pot phase, lets consider large as in wide but not depth. The best temporary training pot is a wooden flat. No deeper than 3" but as wide as possible. Think about it, we want the tree to grow strongly, we want to restrict downward growing roots, we want stronger surface roots. In the shallow box, we actually increase the size and quantity of surface roots since there is no other way from them to grow. As roots grow outward, they add girth to the trunk. Wooden boxes also have other advantages. Inexpensive, holes can be drilled or fasteners attached to use as guy wires, wood boxes hold and retains moisture but yet allows in air to aerate the soil. The only real disadvantage would be the actual size. Maybe a 3' square box instead of a 14" pot.

So, next spring, think about trying a couple trees in "shallow" wide wooden boxes.

Check out our Web Site

bogansbonsai.com

2010 Upcoming Events

- Jan. No monthly meeting
- Feb. 2 – NBS Meeting, Cheekwood, 7:00-9:00 p.m. —Collecting in the Wildll, John Wall and Owen Reich
- Mar. 2 – NBS Meeting, Cheekwood, 7:00-9:00 p.m.—llRepottingll, Mike Blanton
- Mar. 4-7 – Nashville Lawn and Garden Show
- Mar. 6 - Brussel's Spring Open House – Olive Branch, MS (outside of Memphis) 20% off
- Mar. 20 – Repotting Workshop; Mike Blanton's home
- Mar. 27 – Beginner's Workshop, Cheekwood 10:00-2:00 Dave Bogan
- Apr. 6 – NBS Meeting, Cheekwood, 7:00-9:00 p.m. —Detail Wiring-Makes the Difference between a Bush and a Bonsai
- Apr. 16-18 – Nashville Spring Show, Bjorn Bjorholm-guest artist
- Apr. 30-May 2 – Potomac Bonsai Show, National Arboretum, Washington, DC
- May 4 – NBS Meeting, Cheekwood, 7:00-9:00 p.m. —Pests and Pesticidesll
- May 8-9—Knoxville Bonsai Show
- May 15- —Azaleasll – Warren Hill Workshop ????
- May 28-30 – Rendezvous, Brussel's Bonsai, Olive branch, MS (outside of Memphis)
- June 1 – NBS Meeting, Cheekwood, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
- June 12-13 – U.S. National Bonsai Exhibition, Rochester, NY
- July 6 - NBS Meeting, Cheekwood, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Regional Show preparation
- July 23-25 – Southeastern Regional Bonsai Show Cheekwood, Guy Guidry-guest artist
- Aug. 3 – NBS Meeting, Cheekwood, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
- Sept. 7 - NBS Meeting, Cheekwood, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
- Sept. 25 – Brussel's Open House, 20% off
- Oct. 5 - NBS Meeting, Cheekwood, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
- Getting Ready for Winterll
- Oct 8-10 - NC Bonsai Expo, Asheville, NC
- Nov. 2- NBS Meeting, we will **not** be meeting at Cheekwood
- Planning for Next Yearll Committees to be established for 2011
- Dec. 4 – NBS Christmas Party , Mike Blanton's home

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