

Volume 35 Issue 6
June 2022
Bonsai Society of
Southwest Florida

CLIPPER

*“Genius is
internal patience.”
Michelangelo*

It’s June, and it’s hot in SWFL. Your trees will demand water and food. Prune and clip, and watch your wiring. In this summer growth spurt, tree circumference expands and wire can dig in.

News from State Convention

Fifteen of our number represented BSSWFL at the annual BSF convention May 25-27: Joe Mayhew, Phil Krieg, Dave Bovio, Justin and James Michael, Jim and Gail Gehring, Bill and Maria Smith, Jaye and Terri Saarinen, Wellesley Legier, and Sam and Sandee Wollard. In addition we welcomed a surprise appearance by founding member Judy Gore, who reminded us that her heart is still with our club. Below are members at Club Night. That’s Phil Krieg behind Bill Smith, and on the table is our Club Night tree, a Chinese Elm forest.



On the next pages are winning trees from the statewide competition. In addition to these awards, our own **Ham Agnew** received a special award for pioneering Zoom club meetings during the period of Covid isolation. And our members volunteered 28 hours of their time at the convention, led by **Wellesley Legier** with over half of those hours and earning money, plus good will, for our club.

*This Hackberry won the
prize for best Florida
native.*



This was judged Best Companion.



This display was voted Best Shohin.



This Buttonwood was judged Best Small Tree.



The Ficus above was named Best Large Tree.



This Shimpaku Pine was judged Best in Show.

Closer to Home



This Chinese Elm forest was BSSWFL member Bill Smith's entry in the BSF competition.

ABOUT BONSAI SOCIETY OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA:

We meet the third Saturday of each month at the Berne Davis Botanical Garden building located just north of the Edison Estates at 2166 Virginia Avenue. Parking is located on Larchmont Street, one block south of Virginia off McGregor Boulevard.

Our website is:

www.bonsaiswfl.org

We welcome everyone interested in this ancient art form to take advantage of our many experienced artists and teachers.

Officers:

President Martha Goff

Vice President Dave Bovio

Treasurer Hamilton Agnew

Past President Sam Wollard

Board Members:

Jim Gehring

Linda Rodriguez

Bill Smith

David Bovio

Wellesley Legier

Phil Krieg

In Local News: Next Meeting June 18, 10 AM Berne Davis Garden Center

It's a full program again this month. After the business portion of the meeting, **Troy Allen** will present a brief demonstration on air layering. Then after the raffle is the main event, **Mike Lane's** Exposed Root [aka bottle tree] workshop using *Desmodium*.

The first three rows are reserved for those who have paid to participate in this sold-out program. Others are welcome to observe, of course, quietly, while working on their own trees. Below are photos of members' trees using this technique. Top: **Rick Hawk's** exposed root Bougainvillea. Bottom: **Dave Bovio's** Schefflera, trained in a pvc pipe and styled as root over rock.

Feel free to bring your own tree to work on at the June meeting. The holiday tree will also be ready to begin refinement at this meeting. And holiday tree raffle tickets are on sale at \$5 each from Dave Bovio.



Officer Vacancy:

With the departure for Texas of Judy Giandelone, there is a vacancy on our board. We need a Recording Secretary. This person will record attendance and take minutes of the general business and Board meetings and will report the minutes to your editor, Mary Charles [mary@marycharles.com], for inclusion in monthly issues of *The Clipper*.

Reminder: Nomination of officers takes place in October. Please put your name forward if you're interested in joining the leadership of this dynamic club.

July program: July 16, Adam Lavigne presentation on *Tree Refinement*. Members can bring trees for advice, time permitting. Also be prepared to sign up for the August workshop [\$25 fee]. These slots fill up quickly.

Big News!

We are taking sign-ups for a wiring class. It will be taught by Jason Osborn. Jason was an instructor at Wigert's Nursery for years and is quite adept at wiring. The class is for 10-12 people. The club will supply the wire and a demo tree for Jason. Those signing up will be notified about the class schedule. It will be 1-4 PM after the July or August meeting. The cost of the class is \$30.

More Big News!

Mike Lane is interested in teaching our next *Beginner's Class*. The cost will be the same as for previous classes, and the schedule will be worked out when we have enough sign-ups. We need 8 people to start a class.

Volunteers for June program:

This month's Display will be by Martha Goff.

This month's refreshment hostess is Becky Troop.

We hope volunteers will step forward to help clean up our botanical litter after the meeting. We must leave the Garden Center as we found it, and we all know how the twigs fly when we meet! Please consider staying a few minutes after the meeting to help sweep up.

Advertise in your newsletter.

Many of our members have goods and services available for sale to members and friends. Let us know. We'll place a free ad in the newsletter to announce your merchandise. Keep it simple, and specify contact information, pricing, commission fees if applicable, and a description of your product. For example, here's an ad from Martha Goff:

Super Bonsai Soil Sale

Will Deliver Free in Lee County

If outside Lee County, call for delivery arrangements.

MINIMUM ORDER 1 BUCKET WITH LID (5.75 GALLON TO A BUCKET)

Soil is premixed with the following ratio:

1/3 pumice

1/3 lava (black or red)

1/3 high fire clay

Plus Horticultural Charcoal

All soil can be special ordered with different ratios.

All components are sized (1/4 inch) and washed.

All components can be bought separately by the bucket; same price.

PRICES:

1 Bucket	\$38.00
2-3-4 Buckets	\$35.00
5+ Buckets	\$32.00

\$2 credit per bucket with exchange of bucket with lid when purchasing.

TO ORDER Call: 239-332-3850

If no answer, leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

TROPICAL GREEN BONSAI

Ed and Martha Goff

MARTHA'S HINTS FOR JUNE

MAINTAINING HEALTHY TREES A Primer for the Beginner – A Reminder for the Seasoned

What is the first thing you think about when you purchase a plant for a potential bonsai? Could it be—how will I design this tree? Should it be—how will I keep this tree healthy? Spending \$25 on a potential bonsai and creating a beautiful design and then watching it struggle to live or die is painful. Increase the cost and the pain increases exponentially.

One evening in our study group, made up of beginners and seasoned “bonsaiists,” a discussion arose: How do you, referring to each individual present, care for your trees? Before long we were covering areas from sunlight to watering to pH to – whatever. Following are the guidelines we compiled. Hopefully, you will find something of benefit to your bonsai adventure.

Some facts:

1. **Every tree is different in its horticultural need.**
2. **Everyone has a different approach that works for them.**

Ed Trout says that every bonsai grower is an expert in his own yard. He explains what he means by saying that everyone has different sun exposures, different temperatures, different watering devises, and different trees.... different, different, and different! So... that individual becomes an expert in what works for them in their own backyard. BUT I think we can make some generalities that guide the beginner and remind the seasoned.

I. Sunlight

- a. There are trees that like full sun and those that need shade. This can vary according to the time of year and your zone. Each person must study their species to find out what is best for that tree. This can be done through research or asking a person with experience with that species.
- b. If you place your trees so that one side is always toward the sun, the growth and health will be uneven. **ROTATE YOUR TREES.** Try to pick a day and rotate the same day each week. This insures the same amount of sun on all sides of the tree.

II. Watering

- a. Again this has to be according to the individual tree. Some like it wet, some moist, some dry. “They” say more bonsai have been killed by overwatering than underwatering. Check your trees every day. Placing a wooden pick into the root ball is a sure thing. The surface soil may be dry but the tree may still have plenty of moisture.
- b. Some hand water. Others use an automatic system or a combination of both. I doesn't matter which you use as long as it is thorough an often enough. Make sure the water goes all the way through the pot and drain out the bottom. You would be surprised how many give a light once over with the hose and are surprised when the trees wilt or worse.
- c. Know your water's pH. Some plants prefer to be acidic and your water may be alkaline. There are a few species which react adversely to alkaline water. You can easily check this by contacting your county extension office or taking a sample to your local aquarium store. A rain barrel is a good

source of neutral pH water.

- d. Seasons dictate how often to water. Our summers are very sun intense. If it doesn't rain or the rain is light, you may have to water 2 or 3 times that day. In the cold and more dormant months you may even be able to skip a day with large tree.
- e. **WATCH YOUR SMALL TREES.** For those tiny trees in tiny pot that dry out quickly, fix a tray of small rocks or sand. Wet it thoroughly. Place the tiny trees on this bed. This can save your trees.

III. pH—The measure of alkaline to acid in water, soil, plant need

- a. Know your water's pH. Some plants prefer to be acidic and your water may be alkaline. There are a few species which react adversely to alkaline water. You can easily check this by contacting your county extension office or taking a sample to your local aquarium store. A rain barrel is a good source of neutral pH water.
- b. It is important to know the pH of your soil and what the plant requires in order to fertilize and water correctly. Most fertilizers have the pH listed.

IV. SOIL: I am sure some of you have seen the recent articles in some of the bonsai magazines that discuss different soil mixes! That can make your head spin.

- a. If you know the contents of the soil you are using and any nutrients in it or lack thereof, you can adjust from there. For instance: A lot of organic soil added (potting soil), means you will definitely adjust your watering as organic soil stays wet longer. Organic soil also means an adjustment in fertilizing. It is easy to over fertilize with organic soil since the soil already includes some nutrients. Over fertilizing can cause large leaves and long internodes and even leaf burn.
- b. Soilless mix (without organic) has no nutrients per se. Therefore you will need to add all of them. Soilless mix dries out faster, so adjust your watering. The soilless mix is superior in that it provides air in the soil which encourages fine roots.

V. Fertilizing—know your plant!

- a. Some plants love acidic soil and need it to thrive – Azaleas. Some like a little acid now and then. Using Fish Emulsion (organic) usually takes care of a plant's acid needs. You can also buy many products (synthetic) formulated for acid loving plants.
- b. All plants need minors. Read the ingredients on your fertilizer and make sure that it includes essential minors.
- c. It is hard to 'hurt' your plant with an organic fertilizer as far as burning it but you can do damage with a synthetic. Always read instructions and use accordingly for container plants.
- d. Alternating an organic fertilizer and a synthetic fertilizer seems to be a common practice.
- e. During the growing season, fertilize once a week with liquid, either Miracle Grow or Fish Emulsion. Many also add a slow release (it has minors) every six weeks during the growing season. Since heavy rains wash out liquid fertilizers quickly, adding the slow release ensures steady feeding. Be sure to work the slow release into the soil to prevent salt build up.
- f. My personal preference is non-organic soil and organic fertilizer. More discussion on soilless mix and organic fertilizers is found elsewhere in the Appendices.
- g. Starting in November through February, any plant that is a bloomer or fruiter, should receive a bloom fertilizer to help boost bloom setting in the spring.

VI. Pesticides—Be Careful. What is okay for one plant can kill or defoliate another.

- a. One choice is always a soap mixture. You can do this with any mild household liquid soap, 1 part to 5 parts water or buy a product like Safer soap. Use this when you clean your trees and if you see bugs.

- b. You can use a granular systemic every 6 weeks for prevention.
- c. Spraying your trees once a month with a 3 in 1 for fungus, mites, and insects is another preventative method.
- d. Don't overdo. Choose the method that works for you and be consistent. Remember that general spray insecticides can also kill beneficial insects.

VII. Repotting

- a. The most important thing is WHEN. Nurserymen must repot year round for business and willingly take their chances with a certain amount of loss. As a hobbyist, we should play it safe.
- b. When you get a new plant, the first thing to do is research the basics: sun, water, fertilizing, pH, pests, soil and when to repot. This is the best way to ensure the health of the plant. Many people think of the design first.
- c. Questions to ask:
 - i. How much root pruning can I safely do each time I repot?
 - ii. Do I trim the top at the same time?
 - iii. Should I remove all the old soil the first time?
 - iv. How often should I repot this tree?

Hopefully you have found something in this list that will help you with your bonsai and save you the stress of losing trees.

Compiled by the Southwest Florida Shohin Society

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