



# SNIPS 'N CLIPS

A Publication of The San Antonio Bonsai Society, Inc.

<http://sanantoniobonsai.org>

JANUARY 2023

VOLUME 48 NUMBER 1

## BONSAI CALENDAR

### FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 5 Club dig in Leaky, Tx.

FEBRUARY 9: Lions Field, Club meeting, 6:30 to 8:30, Repotting deciduous trees.

FEBRUARY 22, Lions Field, Bonsai Workshop, 6-8:30

FEBRUARY 25th, Club dig in Hondo, TX

MARCH 4th: Club members going down to Redhawk Bonsai Nursery (David Whitaker's house)

MARCH 9 Lions Field. Club meeting, 6:30-8:30

MARCH 22nd, Lions Field Bonsai Workshop. 6-8:30



## President's Message

**KEVIN P.**

A big thank you to Ryan Odegaard and David Whitaker for their educational and follow up information on what to bring to a dig and how to take care of your tree after it finds its new home at last months meeting. Get ready to get your hands dirty at this meeting while we re-pot those deciduous trees that haven't "popped out" yet. I know some of our trees think it's spring after a cold Christmas week and a few freezing days last month followed by nice warmer weather! There will be plenty of experienced members who are willing to help (you don't even have to ask). Does anyone remember last years convention? Well.....get ready because we need to start planning now if we are going to hold another one in 2027. I want to remind everyone that now is the time (if you haven't already) to pay your dues for 2023. Please see Jay Nolen (your Treasurer) close to the refreshments and pay up! I'll see all of you on the 9th, and remember that special someone on Valentine's day Tuesday the 14th.

# Vice President/Program Director's Message

David Whitaker

This year we are returning to some past routines and encouraging monthly for members to bring a "show and tell" tree(s) to help others see and to be inspired to the many different possibilities of what / how we can style plants as bonsai. If you have a peculiar problem or question about any species, please feel free to bring it in too. Please do not bring an unhealthy or dying plant inside that you could possibly expose to other plants, bring it but leave it out in your automobile and I or others can take a look at it to help you determine what the problem is. We *usually* bring trees of the interest to the particular meeting, this month is deciduous trees.

February 9<sup>th</sup>'s meeting we will be having a group effort to repot (root prune, add fresh soil and wire to pot) our deciduous trees. Please bring all your materials needed, tools, soils and pots, etc needed to repot. While repotting trees, this also gives an opportunity to realign and /or reposition the tree or roots if necessary to make the best presentation of a bonsai that any tree can be.

February 22<sup>nd</sup> the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday's workshop. Members are encouraged to bring in any tree to work on and get helpful insight and advice from our more seasoned members.

All, please be on the lookout for stones and native ground covers for our future and upcoming L/D/W on Saikei on June 17<sup>th</sup> and L/D/W on Kusamono in November 9<sup>th</sup>.

We have 3 collection digs scheduled this month, first dig is on Feb 5<sup>th</sup> in Leaky, and the slots are filled. Second collection dig is on Feb 18<sup>th</sup> in Boerne and there's 3 slots available (at time of writing). Third collection dig is on Feb 25<sup>th</sup> in Hondo and this dig is filled also. WOW! From someone who has collected hundreds of plants, this is the best way to get to know any species and you will get firsthand knowledge of the bonsai process from the start of collecting to the show quality stages. This is really very encouraging to us more seasoned to the bonsai world, this shows that we definitely have a very strong interest in bonsai in the San Antonio area and will continue to grow our local bonsai interest! If you haven't signed up yet, please do ASAP. Sign up, using link.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B4BA8AF2CA1FF2-2023>

## February Monthly Tips

By VP David Whitaker

We've had very mild temperatures here and my native Anacacho, Anaqua, Brasil, Coma, Kidneywood and Persimmons are pushing new growth out now. Anaqua trees are also pushing out flower buds. Are you prepared for the new growing season? It is closer than you think! Keep your eyes on your deciduous trees and all others, you want to root prune/repot them before the buds start swelling and showing signs of new growth. It's very risky and you'll have a higher mortality rate if you do root pruning after the buds have opened and there is new growth of leaves. The window of opportunity can come and go real fast for us. If you have several to do, then you can do like I do and try to start repotting them in earlier and protect them from temperatures that get below 50s.

When root pruning, remove 1/3 to 1/2 of the roots and leave the fine hair roots. If the branches need wiring or pruning, do it before you repot, because it is easier to shape them without leaves (remember to check the wire throughout the growing season as they will "cut in" as the tree swells with new growth). Make sure you tightly wire your repotted trees into their pot. We want to protect our newly potted tree from the seasonal high winds. Along with wiring the bonsai into the pot, I add the support of rocks around the base of the tree, be careful not to harm the roots. The first few weeks after repotting are a crucial time for the new roots; you must anchor the tree to the pot securely! The newly growing roots are delicate, so do NOT fertilize for a few weeks until you have strong signs of new growth, the tree has some stored energy and new soil will have plenty of nutrients too.

After you repot, bring it out to get some filtered or shaded sun for few days and protected from winds, then place it accordingly to the needs of the species. Watch out for cold weather that might come screaming down during the end of winter, be prepared to shelter those trees to temperatures above 50 degrees, if needed.

Wait for several weeks or until you see lots of new growth before you start trimming and pinching the new growth. Trimming branches increases branching and lets the light in so your plant will stay healthy. The more you trim and pinch, the better the ramification gets. Trim the “new” branches down to 2 or 3 leaves; continue this throughout the growing season. When trimming remember the basics, remove crossing, spokes, and the up & down branches. **Before trimming branches and foliage, check a species reference guide to see when it should be trimmed, we don’t want to cut off any branches too soon that might be flowering &/or fruiting.**

Watch the soils every day so they do not dry out. All soils must be free draining. It is best to screen all your soils to promote good drainage, air flow and to get rid of the “fines” or dust. A good mix should be around 50% organic such as pine bark or fir bark and/or Akadama, some good potting soil, and 50% inorganic such as, granite, haydite, kanuma, turface or coarse sand. Adjust your formula accordingly to suit each species and keep in mind of your water pH and quality. Experiment with your own combinations and see what works best for your trees.

Inspect the bonsai from top to bottom.

With the *warmer* weather we have during late “winter time” we should inspect for ANY and all insects and treat accordingly. I try to apply the practice of “an ounce of prevention”, I treat with insecticide and apply fungicide at least once every 4 weeks. If you discover an infestation, treat according to the label of the pesticide.

### Tools for the Beginning Bonsai Artist

Those who are new to the art of bonsai are often unsure about what tools are necessary to begin developing their bonsai skills. Starting with a few useful basic tools will equip one to perform most of the tasks necessary to produce and maintain a modest collection. Purchasing more tools as needed through your bonsai endeavors.

#### Concave Pruner

The single most important bonsai tool is the concave pruner. Its primary function is to remove branches that promotes rapid and smooth healing of the wound. Its name comes from the shape of the cut and wound left on the woody trunk or branch. When used properly, the concave pruner leaves a wound on the trunk that is taller than it is wide and slightly concave. The characteristic shape of the concave pruner wound makes use of the fact that wounds on the trunk of trees heal in from the sides rather than from the top and bottom. The concave depression into the trunk allows the wound to callous over without creating an undesirable bump on the trunk. The 8-inch concave pruner is the most versatile size.

#### Bud Scissors

Bud scissors are the best tools for trimming leaves, buds and small branches. The short blades and finger holes give excellent control, enabling the user to reach into interior parts of the bonsai for trimming with precision. As the blades of the bud scissors are closed, the shafts of the handles remain apart. This helps prevent inadvertent crushing of other parts of the bonsai by the closing handle shafts.

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## **Wire Cutters**

Training bonsai normally involves the use of wire to position and shape trunk and branches. Either aluminum or annealed copper wire is used for this purpose. Any wire cutter commonly found at hardware stores are adequate for cutting wire when applying it to bonsai but, this is not the case when cutting the wire to remove it from the bonsai being trained. It is good practice to remove training wire by cutting it off. The training wire is in close contact with the trunk or limb. Therefore only the tip of the wire cutter is used to sever the wire. Otherwise the branch may be seriously damaged. Relatively long cutting blades on hardware store wire cutters have very little mechanical advantage at the tips, making wire removal a difficult chore. Bonsai wire cutters have very short cutting blades. This greatly increases the mechanical advantage of the tool.

## **Knob Cutters**

Sometimes called the melon ball cutter has several unique capabilities. It is a valuable addition to the bonsai tool kit even though it is used much less frequently than concave pruners or bud scissors. The cutting blades of the knob cutter are shaped somewhat like two halves of a sphere coming together. The shape allows the tool to aggressively bite into wood. It can remove lots of wood fast and is precise enough to shape the final surface cut on the trunk or branch. An additional use of the knob cutter is the removal of undesirable root or trunk material in the area of a partially removed taproot. No other tool is as effective and clean in performing this task, which is often necessary to properly fitting the bonsai to the pot.

## **Root hook**

Soil removal and untangling roots is a regular part of the chore of repotting. A pointy chopstick or something similar is often used, especially with small size bonsai. When working with medium and large size material the need for a more efficient tool arises. A variety of root hooks with as many as four points (rakes) are available. In this case, less is definitely better than more. The single point tools are superior in getting the job done with minimal damage to fine roots. Rakes are slightly better for soil removal but tend to do much fine root damage due to the tendency of roots to get tangled in the multiple points.

## **Root Cutter**

When potting untrained material for the first time, one almost always needs to remove or shorten large roots. A number of tools can perform the needed cuts including concave pruners. The risk of damage to the tools is high because of the likelihood of small stones getting caught in the blades. The root cutter has thicker, coarser blade construction that is more resistant to damage from small stones. An additional use of the root cutter is for rough pruning of branches that are too thick and tough for the same size concave pruner. The cut is made a safe distance from the trunk and then nibbled down to the desired shape with a knob cutter. Use of this tool is much less frequent than the use of concave pruners but it is quite helpful when needed.

## **What to buy**

Quality and price of bonsai tools vary over a wide range. Any quality Japanese bonsai tools are consistently superior to those made anywhere else. There are several grades of tools made by several Japanese companies. The best are expensive, even for those who have a serious bonsai interest. I own and use some of the top shelf tools, I find that the functionality only slightly superior to the less expensive "entry level" Japanese tools. A complete set of bonsai tools is not necessary for the beginner. Start with a concave pruner and perhaps a pair of scissors. Purchase other tools as expertise and requirements increase, then wire cutters, knob cutters, a root hook and root pruners will soon be added to your wish list.





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The informal upright style (Moyogi) is considered the most popular shape in all bonsai, especially suited to our native Ashe Juniper.

Our logo, represented by this informal style stands for the informal nature of the San Antonio Bonsai Society, Inc. This popular, interesting style depicts the objectives of the Society—promoting participation and enjoyment of Bonsai.

The emblem was adopted as the official logo

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