# SNIPS 'N CLIPS

A Publication of The San Antonio Bonsai Society, Inc.
http://sanantoniobonsai.org

JANUARY 2016 VOLUME 41 NUMBER 1


## BONSAI CALENDAR

**All meetings are held on the second Thursday, 7 pm, at Lions Field Adult Community Center, Broadway at Mulberry St., SA, TX. 78209**

**RICHARD HAYES BONSAI STUDY GROUP: —HELD THE SATURDAY AFTER THE THURSDAY NIGHT CLUB MEETING. VARIED LOCATIONS TO BE ANNOUNCED AND HELD AT MEMBERS HOMES. TOPIC OF DISCUSSION WILL BE A FOLLOW-UP TO THE THURSDAY NIGHT PRESENTATIONS.**

**January Mini-show - Winter Silhouette (any deciduous tree)**

**January 14th - Club Meeting, 7 pm.**

**January Food and Beverage Hosts - Tom an Nancy K.**

**January 16th - Soil Mixer, 9 am, Kevin and Hattie's House.**

**February 13th - Asian Festival.**

**February 26 – 28th - Spring Home and Garden Show.**

## President's Message

By Ryan O.
bonsaiode@gmail.com

The SABS board members have come up with a fun and exciting program for 2016. This year's events include lectures on sketching bonsai, tropicals, shohin, trunk chop techniques, and accent plantings; a tour of three member's personal collections; trips to local nurseries; two auctions; spring and fall Home and Garden Show exhibits; and various outings/exhibits throughout the year. We are also introducing a few exciting changes which I will mention later.

January's meeting includes a presentation on soil composition, pot cleaning, and insect prevention techniques. Following the Club's meeting on Saturday (1/16) we will have a Soil Mixer at Kevin and Hattie's house beginning at 9 am.

The club will have different ingredients for a common use bonsai soil for all to mix. Kevin is providing large buckets to take your mixture home. All you need to bring is a shovel. The Board is also asking members to help mix for Club usage and possibly to sell. A small fee per bucket will be required.

On Saturday **February 13** is the annual **Asian Festival** at the Institute of Texan Cultures. We would like to get a large assortment of trees, displays, and volunteers to help out with this event. The event is from 10 am to 5 pm. I will pass around a sign-up sheet for volunteers. Set up begins at 8 am.

Also in **February, beginning on the 26th,** we are exhibiting at the **Spring Home and Garden Show**. I will be presenting the art of bonsai on Saturday and Sunday

A big change for 2016 includes our **Richard Hayes Bonsai Workshops**. The workshop meetings has moved from Wednesdays to the Saturdays following our Club meetings. The workshop is now set up to practice the topic discussed in our Club meeting with a more hands-on approach. The Board feels this may assist members in retaining the knowledge presented in a meeting by practicing it within 2 days.

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Each workshop group will be at various homes or locations (locations and addresses will be mentioned throughout the year). Each workshop begins at 9 am and ends around noon or 1 pm.

Our Backyard Bonsai Tour is scheduled for September this year. Kevin and Hattie are hosting the final location and BBQ. The Board is looking for 2 volunteers to open their backyard to their collection and host mini munchies and drinks. Please let Ryan know if you are interested in hosting.

We are still in need of monthly host volunteers for June and October. A full meal is not needed, but small nibbles to feed the group is required. Remember you could always share a month with another member to help with costs/cooking and set-up.

Remember, the Club has a huge assortment of bonsai related resources in our library set-up at Donna's studio and viewable during normal business hours.

Ryan O.
President

## PROGRAM CORNER

**David W.**
redhawkbonsai@yahoo.com

This month's program will be on soils, what types we can use, why we use them, and how we mix it.

We want to use soils that are free draining but will also have good water retention.

The most important thing with all soil mixes is to be sure you screen out the fines and dust prior to repotting.

Following the meeting on Saturday, Jan 16th, we will be having a soil mixing party at Kevin and Hattie's house. Every member is encouraged and invited out to learn how we mix up a large batch of bonsai soil. After we mix up the new soil members may purchase as needed.

## January Monthly Tips

**David W**
redhawkbonsai@yahoo.com

Even though we had some early freezes during late fall, December stayed pretty mild with only a few cold nights. This kind of "Nice for us in South Texas" weather can be dangerous because it'll make us anxious to be clipping, wiring or re-potting something, anything. The plants know when its time to grow not only by the warmth, but also when the days start growing longer – just the opposite is what causes them to start into dormancy. Hey, maybe this would be a good time to screen some soil, clean and sharpen your tools, prep your pots, just to do something.

By now all trees should be sleeping and dormant, they *should* be dormant for the rest of winter and around our place that could be a month or just a few more weeks. Dormancy is very important and gives the plant a rest period. With the bouts of mild weather we've had, some trees could start showing signs of breaking dormancy – watch out for these trees when we have those cold snaps, they'll be more vulnerable to cold damage. We really don't want to try to stimulate growth (fertilize) until they shows some sign of new growth in the new spring season. It's a good idea to give Semi- & tropicals quarter strength to make them happy. Most won't show any signs of growth until the temperatures get warmer and stays warmer. All species have different temperature requirements and growth patterns.

**Be familiar with your plant needs** - not only their seasonal care but also their nutritional needs and the best times for trimming, pinching, repotting, or root pruning. Temperate zones are how the USDA defines it. The Hill country to the Coastal Bend area have zones anywhere from zone 8A to 9B, with 9B being near the bays, Gulf of Mexico and in the Rio Grande Valley. There can be anywhere from 5 to 20 degrees temperature differences in these areas throughout the year. **USDA, East Texas Zone guide - http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/**

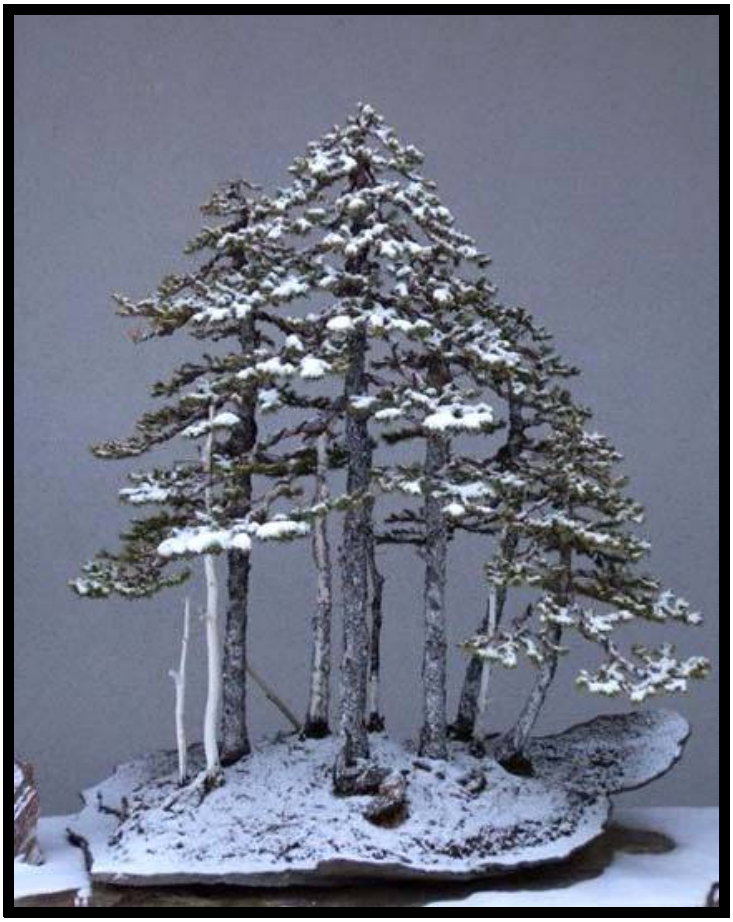
continued from page 2

Another quirk of our winter weather is we tend to have long stretches of cloudiness with little or no rain. Watering this time of year can be challenging, the overcast days can lull you into thinking all is well but the winds can quickly pick up and start drying out the soils and leaves. Be careful not to over water though (watering too frequently), rot can quickly set in with the cooler temperatures and lack of drying sunlight. Check the soils before watering, some plants may need a good soaking, others just a light splash, especially those that are dormant at this time.

It's a good idea to treat your trees for fungus on a regular basis, monthly is usually sufficient. Treat with Maneb, Benomyl or a copper-based fungicide. Spray the leaves and thoroughly drench the soil, making sure the solution drains out the drain holes.

Check your training wires so they aren't cutting into the branches. If they are cutting in, remove them. **Note** that when removing wires (or re-wiring), be careful - trees can be very brittle during the winter dormancy.

**DAVID**



BONSAI OF THE MONTH
A RANDOM SELECTION FROM THE INTERNET.
AREN'T WE LUCKY

**TRANSPLANTING**
**a series developed and presented in *BONSAI TODAY, Issue 17, 1992-1***
Authors:
Ioo Nishikawa, Taisaku Nomotoo, Akira Kansaku, Toshio Onishi, Tokuyi Yoshioka, Eiji Sueda, Hideyi Kanda, Taiyu Ezaka, Hiroshi Takeyama, Noboru Futayama, Saburo Kato, Noboru Kaneko, Sugi Mitsuya, Koji Kubota, Kihachiro Kamiya, Goro Innan, Juyo Ioneia, Mikio Oshima, Tokugiro Ocutani, Sugi Yoshida, Kooji Onishi, Masahiko Kimura, Kioyi Yoshida

# 45 Changing the rock in a root over rock

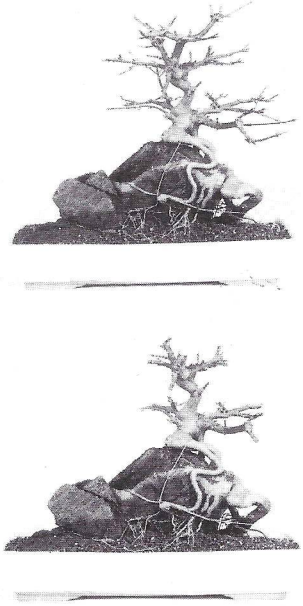
Some bonsai styles do not readily permit changes in their basic style at the time of transplanting. For example, for the forest with many trees shown on the previous page, it would not be appropriate to make many changes in trunk locations each time the group is transplanted. Similarly you would not want to frequently change the rock on which a *sekijou* (root over rock) is planted. But, can you ever change the rock?

Why not, for if you follow the illustrations on this page, you will see how to substitute one rock for another, one that will conform much better with the shape of the tree's roots. Of course, the tree was young and its roots were not yet fused to the stone so that removing the rock and setting it around another was not terribly difficult. But it is necessary to find a rock on which the roots would fit. Rather than forcing a major change in the roots to conform to a new rock, a rock is selected that is a good fit for the roots.

**The roots of the tree had completely filled the pot.**

**In order to be able to remove the stone from between the roots, it was necessary to prune the roots severely as you can see.**

**These two illustrations show the pruning of the branches to adapt them to the new crown style that will be necessary to makes its design consistent with the new rock.**

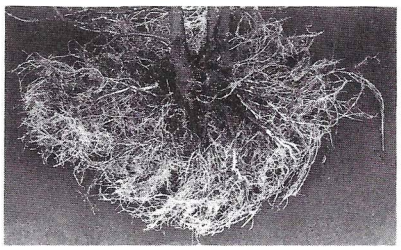


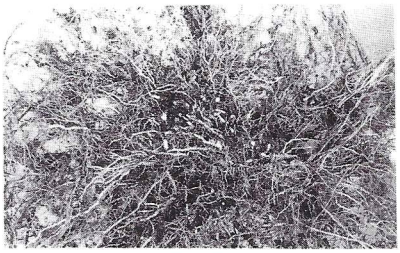
# 46 Transplanting a clump style

There are some peculiarities involved in the transplanting of the multiple trunk or clump style bonsai (f384kabudachi) that merit some special comment.

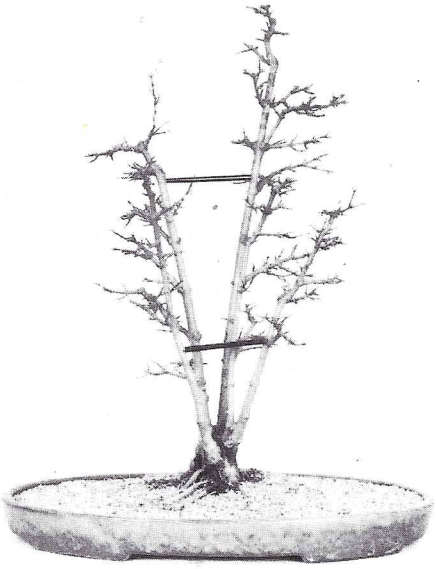
As you know, for a bonsai to be clump style all of the trunks that comprise it must emanate from the same root base. The arrangement of the roots is, therefore, more difficult than in other styles, since the base must be thick, the roots must remain in sight on the surface of the soil, and they must be consistent with the thickness of the trunks closest to them.

The principal defect in multiple trunk styles is that the roots grow at different heights; for that reason you must selectively prune them with every transplanting until all are growing out at the same level.

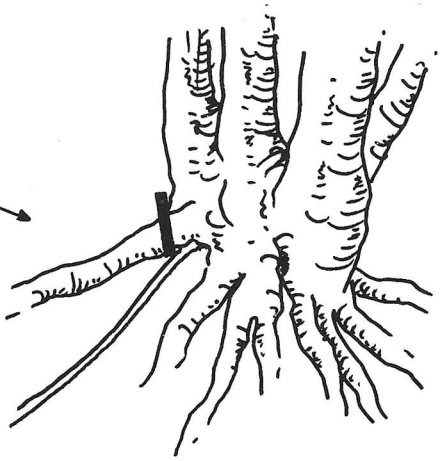




After growing in the same pot from seed, the five little trees fused together into a single root base as you can see in the photographs above.



This diagram shows the replacement of a thick, but high, root by another smaller one that was growing under it at the same level as the rest.
Obviously, you must let that weak root grow more than the others.



After transplanting to a bonsai pot, the nebari remains exposed so that it will acquire the same texture as the bark of the trunks.

# 47 Helping along the healing process

Since transplanting is always a shock for the tree, effort has always been made to mitigate its effects, attempting to help the plant recover from the pruning of roots as quickly as possible.

The most basic methods, such as protecting it from sun and wind, placing a plastic tent over it (or putting it in a cool greenhouse for those with such space available), etc., have given way to sophisticated products developed specifically for this purpose.

Perhaps the simplest approach is fall application of a fertilizer with high content of phosphorus and potassium; those two elements will help the roots to tolerate pruning, to heal rapidly and to grow again with the rising temperatures of spring.

Rooting hormones have demonstrated their great efficacy in aiding roots to form calluses. Especially effective are those that are sold in powder form which can be sprinkled on the recently cut roots, assisting in the formation of the callus from which new roots will emerge and protecting the wounds from fungus attacks.

It has recently been observed that trees need certain vitamins that help in their growth and metabolism. Among them, vitamin B1 stimulates the growth of the cellular root wall, acting as a catalyst for rooting.

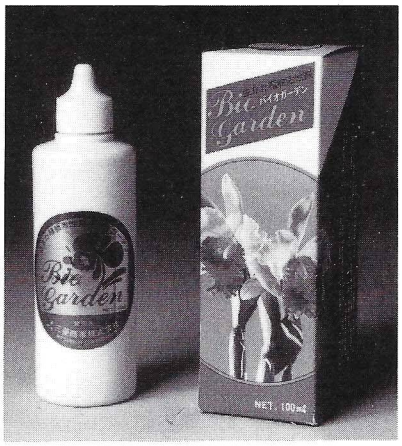
A product that is readily available in this country, but hard to find in some countries, is SUPERthrive™, composed of vitamins and hormones in a secret formulation, which produces excellent results, especially with collected trees and those that have very little rootball.

Apparently, it is also a "healing hand" for diseased trees and, since it is not a fertilizer, it can be applied safely in cases of root rot, fungus attacks, etc.

Something similar, of Japanese origin, sold in bottles with a rainbow painted on them, is perhaps not as effective as SUPERthrive but also performs well in helping trees to recover from the shock of transplanting, including helping with post-transplant radicular problems (e.g., root rot).

For pines there are also remedies: if you leave some soil around the roots that contains mycorrhiza, trees will recover much faster after transplanting. One further step: why not inoculate a diseased tree with mycorrhiza from a healthy one? That is precisely what several English bonsai masters who have been experimenting with this fungus for more than fifteen years with good results recommend (also, of course, correcting the problem that caused the damage in the first place).

SUPERthrive is a registered trade mark of The Vitamin Institute


# 48 Soils and soil mixes for bonsai

## I. SOIL TERMINOLOGY

**Soil:**

Soil is that portion of the earth's surface that is composed primarily of disintegrated rock and varying amounts of decayed organic material. Clay, sand and humus are all types of natural soils.

**Acid soil:**

Soils in which the concentration of hydrogen ions ($H^+$) exceeds the concentration of hydroxyl ions ($OH^-$) are called acid soils. When the concentrations are equal, the pH is by definition 7.0, and the soil is called "neutral". A pH of less than 7.0 indicates an acid soil. It should be noted that the pH scale is such that to lower the pH by 1.0, there must be a tenfold increase in the concentration of hydrogen ions. Acid soils are often obtained from peat bogs. (see "peat moss").

**Alkaline soil:**

Soils with a pH greater than 7.0 are called alkaline and are usually associated with areas of low rainfall.

**Clay:**

Clay consists of the smallest particles that result from chemical action and weathering of surface rock. It is composed primarily of silicates of potassium and aluminum in colloidal form. Its color is due to the presence of iron minerals when it is reddish or of organic carbonaceous substances if it is dark. Clay can hold and later release nutrients in the forms of ions, a property important to plant health; this is called a high cation exchange capacity (see Section II). Clay is difficult to thoroughly wet and therefore relatively fast draining in particle form. Clay will deteriorate with time into small particles which tend to retain water as well as clog up pore space. There are several special forms in which clay is available:

Calcined clay: Clay is fired at 1300°F in a controlled environment then reground and screened into hardened pellets. This is called calcined, fired, blown or baked clay and is sold under a variety of trade names. It has a low cation exchange capacity and absorbs water much more readily than *akadama*.

Akadama: This is the most popular soil for bonsai soil mixes in Japan. It is naturally occurring inert clay granules of medium size (⅛ to ¼ in.) that give good drainage and thus provide oxygenation for the roots; its pH is neutral to very slightly acid with a pH range of 6.5 to 6.9. Its granules are quite tough resisting crushing and decomposition. In the same area where *akadama* is found, further beneath the surface, the clay deposits have a lower pH, very suitable for azalea culture; this clay is called *kanuma*. Both are very low in cation exchange capacity, a situation that is mitigated by the frequent use of organic fertilizers. Because of its inherently fast drainage, watering must be quite frequent, but the advantage is a very low incidence of root rot. Outside Japan, *akadama* is expensive and only found in specialized bonsai centers.

**Sand:**

Sands are sediments of medium sized particles coming from the disintegration of rocks by weathering or by chemical means; in general, the sediments are siliceous and they accumulate on the shores of oceans and on river banks. If they are rich in feldspars, they end up by forming clay, otherwise they are very stable and do not deteriorate with time when used in a soil mix. River sands, washed by the waters of a river, are more rounded in texture,

*In this article the qualities of the various soils that are commonly used as ingredients in bonsai soil mixes are summarized. Following will be a discussion of some of the more popular mixes themselves. However, it should be emphasized that these mixtures should never be taken as absolute, because in different latitudes mixes can and should be varied in accordance with local climatological conditions. The best soil mix is the mix that you or others have found to be the most effective in your area considering the ready availability of the various soils. In selection of the soils consider the attention that you expect to pay to your bonsai, especially in the frequency of watering and fertilizing.*

*The article is divided into five sections:*

*I. Soil terminology: A brief description of the soils most commonly used as ingredients for bonsai soil mixes is given. In addition, properties important to the soil mix are explained.*

*II. Chemical properties of soil mixes. Essential to plant survival is the absorption of nutrients in chemical form through the roots. This process is briefly explained considering the influence of soil pH.*

*III. Physical properties of soil mixes. The physical properties of the soil mix influence the availability of nutrients at the roots. The significance of aeration and the relationship of soil particle size to porosity are explored.*

*IV. Soil mixes for bonsai. Specifics of some of the more common soil mixes are given.*

*V. Specific soil mixes by species. Recommendations are presented in tabular form.*

**THE DISCUSSION ON THE SOIL DETAILS WILL BE IN COMPLETE FORM IN NEXT ISSUE. IF YOU ARE ANXIOUS FOR THE INFORMATION NOW, THEN EMAIL THE EDITOR.**

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 in September, 1977.

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**THE SAN ANTONIO BONSAI SOCIETY, INC.**

sanantoniobonsai.org

Webmaster: Ryan O.

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|---|---|---|---|
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All correspondence should be addressed to:
**San Antonio Bonsai Society, Inc.**
**P.O. Box 6658**
**San Antonio, Texas, 78209**

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**Newsletter editor: Donna D, two2views@yahoo.com**