



Alabama Bonsai Society



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December 2011

Presidents Notes for December

We were able to clean, prune and repot all the pavilion trees that needed work. Members repotted and styled almost 100 shohin trees for the Garden's spring sale and for the club's show sale, both of which were successful. We arranged for two two-day workshops with the artists Joe Day and Peter Warren which gave participants good hands on experience with developing their own trees.

Brian arranged for the club to purchase a pallet of bags of volcanic aggregate for club trees and for members. This was a big help as our local supply of aggregate has dried up.

Our Spring Show was the best ever thanks to the hard work of the chairwoman Jane and co-chair Sandra. Everyone chipped in for the set up and takedown which were accomplished in record time. Our member potter Byron Myrick brought many of his excellent pots for sale and that was well received by members and show atten-

dees. Byron is becoming one of the better potters in bonsai. The trees in the show have improved every year in direct testament of the growth of our member artists. This requires the participation of all members and y'all did a great job.

About a dozen members attended the Rendezvous Weekend at Brussels. This annual event brings in master artists from all over the world and provides opportunities for hands on learning under their guidance. This is a wonderful event for improving your artistic skills.

Our summer BBQ was hosted by Gerry Fuller and was a great success. Gerry has done an outstanding job developing his yard into a beautiful bonsai landscape and display area. Everyone was impressed by his work which continues to grow each year. Thanks Gerry.

At the November Saturday workshop Doug, Sandra, Brian, Margie, Belinda and others bedded the pavilion

trees for winter weather. I was waiting at the potting shed for folks to show up to work on the pavilion but the group stopped first at the pavilion and did it all on their own. Thanks everyone.

We have already made plans for next year and will let you know the details as we work them out.

Byron Myrick will present a program on bonsai pots. It will be a good time to see some of your trees in various pots as part of the demonstration. Pots will also be available to purchase.

Have a happy holiday and New Years.

Jack

ABS Officers

Jack Pierce
President

Brian Van Fleet
Vice President

Belinda Waldo
Treasurer

Marge Wirth
Recording Secretary

Marty Bostick
Corresponding Sec.

Directors:

John Walker
2011 – 2013

Sandra Haynes
2009 – 2011

Brian Van Fleet
2010—2012

Upcoming Events

Christmas Party
December 12th

Christmas Party—December 13th

- 5:00** Setup for Dinner
- 6:00-7:00** Meet and Greet/Board Meeting
- 7:00** Installation of New Officers
- 7:10** Christmas Dinner

There is no board meeting. We can't wait to see everyone at the dinner. Many thanks to Sandra Haynes for all her help in getting the dinner coordinated.

No Saturday Workshop With Upcoming Holiday

There will be no Saturday Workshop in December due to the holidays.

December Care Calendar

As holiday schedules, parties, commitments, baking, and shopping trips accelerate, our trees are doing it right: slowing down to a crawl. Once our schedules slow down to a crawl for a few days, it is a good time to reflect on the past year as a bonsai artist. Are your trees better this year than last year? What did you learn? If you lost a tree, do you know how to avoid that fate next time? Have you read something that you got to try? Are you working with someone who can help you develop your skills? How have your watering and feeding practices improved? A bonsai pro said something that resounded with me: "There are those who have done bonsai for 30 years, and those who have done it for one year, 30 times over."

As the trees make their way to winter quarters, and they should be there now (a shaded location with pots completely covered in mulch), consider what next year will bring for each tree. Maybe some winter pruning will improve the refinement, wire can move branches into bare spaces, and a new pot can change the look of a composition entirely. Make a to-do list and at the point when winter seems to be lasting forever, working on a tree will make spring seem "right around the corner".

Winter is a good time to wire trees and complete heavy pruning on conifers. No feeding until Spring, and watering requirements should be minimal. If trees are under a bed of mulch, we typically get enough precipitation to

handle watering needs. However, if we get a sunny, warm spell, be sure to check moisture levels every week or so.

Our January meeting will be a great lecture about pots, as suggested in our August brainstorming session. We're taking it a step further...it will be presented by our own master potter, Byron Myrick. Byron's pots are excellent, and as his bonsai studies continue under [Boon Manakitivipart](#), the quality of his pots just keeps getting better. Be sure to support Byron by picking up a pot at the meeting!

Finally, a greeting from Robert Steven:



Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Brian Van Fleet

<http://nebaribonsai.wordpress.com>

An Interview With Byron Myrick



You're a potter by trade; can you share a little about your ceramics background?

As an art (Painting/Drawing) major in undergraduate school I was required to take a certain number of elective studio classes. I chose a pottery class, well the rest is history; the bug had bitten. I have been working in clay ever since, from functional ware (dinner ware) to art pottery (sculptural). Of course my interest in bonsai meant that I could make my own pots.

How did you first become interested in bonsai?

Well I first became interested many years ago, I think about the time I was in collage, I am not sure why, but I just remember asking a few people that had been to Japan, if they knew anything about bonsai. They didn't and I soon forgot about it, this was before the Internet so research was limited. Well back in the early '90s I found Brussels, bought a couple of small trees, and just tried to keep them alive.

What made you decide to study with Boon?

Well there is no one near me that I could learn with or from, and I felt after several years of learning by reading books was not working for me, and after a few workshops, I just felt that I was not progressing fast enough. I read a couple of articles in ABS written by Bob King, the editor of

the magazine and a student of Boon. This seemed the route for me except for the fact it was on the other side of the country. After thinking about it for a while I contacted Boon and made the commitment, I am glad that I did.

What is Boon like as a person, as a teacher, and as a bonsai artist?

Boon is a very giving person, he likes to laugh and make jokes. As a teacher he is very serious and wants the student to understand what he feels is necessary to develop good trees, be it potting, wiring, styling, or horticulture. As a bonsai student all you have to do is walk through his garden to know he knows what he is doing. To watch him work is a real joy especially if you are looking over his shoulder.



Byron Myrick Interview Continued

How has your horticultural approach to cultivating bonsai changed since working with Boon?

Boon emphasizes the importance of tree health before anything else. Soil is important to that, so repotting in a good soil is important. Boon uses an inorganic mix of akadama, volcanic rock, and pumice; these ingredients are hard and or expensive to get here, so a substitute was made. I am using a mix of Turface, volcanic rock, and haydite. Working on a tree at the proper time has become important as well.

How has your approach to styling bonsai changed since working with Boon?

After exposure to Boon's trees it become painfully obvious what my trees lack in quality, and what would help in their development. I think I have been able to cut more without fear; you need to do what you need to do.

What new techniques have you picked up?

Root development and grafting, and then wiring, Boon really stresses correct wiring techniques.



What were the biggest surprises while working with Boon?

His willingness to let you work on his very high quality trees, it is quite intimidating at first.

What advice would you give a new comer after studying bonsai on your own for some time, and then after studying under Boon? Biggest differences between the two approaches?

Learning on your own is a much slower process, you can certainly learn a lot from written material but at my age I felt that time was an issue. If you have the means I would highly suggest finding a teacher like Boon, or the next best thing: someone that knows more and has more experience. I could have not done this if I had a young family or

not had support at home. I would encourage anyone to seek out a mentor be it someone like Boon or a mentor close by.

Your bonsai pottery has been excellent, and has continued to improve over the last few years. How has your time with Boon changed your approach to creating bonsai pottery?

Boon of course travels a lot around the country and makes trips to Japan every year, he is always looking for good pots. So when I am at his place I have the opportunity to look at some of his collection, some antique, some contemporary, I am always looking for ideas.

Byron Myrick Interview Conclusion



What have you picked up that we can do, as a club, to develop the skills of our bonsai practitioners?

I think the club does a great job, the workdays, workshops, and the mentoring all of which you do will does wonders for new people. I would certainly take advantage of it if I lived closer.

Which species or individual trees have you enjoyed working on? Why?

The trees that I have worked on with Boon are Black Pine, Cork bark Black Pine, Junipers (shimpaku, California, rocky mountain) , Maple (Japanese and trident) . Some of these have been very refined trees that are a pleasure to just touch and observe up close. Others are trees like a rough bark maple that is still in development that I was allowed to work on using a root development technique that Boon had only done one other time. It is a pleasure to work on and observes trees of such good quality, and trees I would not have an opportunity to work on here in the Deep South...those that would not survive here.

Thanks Byron for taking the time to share your experiences at Boon's Intensives. Please be sure to join the January meeting to hear Byron discuss bonsai pots and pot selection! Byron will also have a sales table in January, pick up a pot for spring repotting season!

Visit his website: <http://www.bmyrick.com/Pottery/Welcome.html>

