



# Alabama Bonsai Society



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Alabama Bonsai Society

January 2012

## Presidents Notes for January

**THE REGULAR JANUARY 9th MEETING IS CANCELLED BECAUSE OF THE CONFLICT WITH THE BCS CHAMPIONSHIP GAME.**

**Visit Us On The  
Web At**

**[AlabamaBonsaiSociety.org](http://AlabamaBonsaiSociety.org)**

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## No January Meeting Agenda

As there is no meeting for January, there is no agenda.

Please note, that Byron Myrick will be at the February meeting on the 13th. We will be forwarding further information regarding Byron's demonstration in the next week, so stay tuned!

**Upcoming Events**

**Saturday Workshop**  
*January 14th*

**Byron Myrick Demonstration**  
*February 13th*

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## Saturday Workshop Will Be Held On January 14th

WE WILL HAVE THE REGULAR SATURDAY WORKSHOP ON JANUARY 14 at 8 a.m. Bring your trees to work on them. We will also work on a few of the pavilion trees.

There will be a board meeting after the workshop.

## January Bonsai Care Corner

“Dead of Winter...”?

While our trees seem to be dormant, some activity is still occurring. Check regularly for water; the warmer, sunny days we’ve had can dry out pots if you’re not paying attention. This is a very good time to work on trees, particularly pines and maples. You may notice that Japanese maples “weep” sap when cut. If this happens, the tree is active and you may want to delay work for a couple weeks to see if the sap flow is reduced.

Complete major branch pruning and wiring with black and red pines this month. Red pines are more brittle, so work done in the middle of winter reduces risk of breaking branches.

Once a month, use a dormant oil or lime sulfur (100-1 dilution rate, or 2.5 Tablespoons per gallon) to smother overwintering insects and eggs and reduce risk of fungal diseases. Remove dead leaves and keep trees in a site that prevents rapid and wide temperature fluctuations. I place them on bricks under my benches, mulched in pine

straw from mid-December to mid-March.



While not much is happening with the trees, this is a good time to take inventory of soil needs, sift soil components, and ensure you have the pots you need for March repotting. Utilize our Club Vendors! Byron Myrick is presenting a great program at our club meeting on February 13, 2012, all about pots, and pot selection. He’ll have pots available for sale as well!



## 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>

