

2010 Officers

President, Phil Krieg

[phil@bhpk.com](mailto:phil@bhpk.com)

239-489-3238

Vice President, Jim Gehring

[GJGehring@embarqmail.com](mailto:GJGehring@embarqmail.com)

239-772-1411

Secretary, Becky Bodnar

[beckybodnar@earthlink.net](mailto:beckybodnar@earthlink.net)

239-463-4102

Treasurer, Sandra Bishop

[SandraCB@embarqmail.com](mailto:SandraCB@embarqmail.com)

239-466-5939

Board Members

Virginia Boka

[gbokal@aol.com](mailto:gbokal@aol.com)

239-995-3558

Ernie Fernandez, Past President

[erniesbonsai@earthlink.net](mailto:erniesbonsai@earthlink.net)

239-947-3552

David Hamera

[david.hamera@yahoo.com](mailto:david.hamera@yahoo.com)

239-233-1177

Greg Lignelli

[glignelli222@gmail.com](mailto:glignelli222@gmail.com)

239-560-3275

Doug Suitor

[dgsuitor@earthlink.net](mailto:dgsuitor@earthlink.net)

239-334-2138

Cel Luke

[Jelcel661@aol.com](mailto:Jelcel661@aol.com)

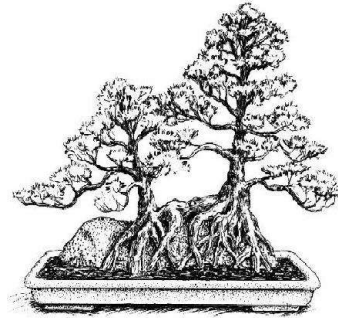
239-472-9281

# Bonsai Clipper

*Newsletter of the Bonsai Society of Southwest Florida*

*Online Newsletter, Issue 2*

*February 2010*



## February Program

**Reg. Meeting:** Saturday, February 20, 2010  
**Time:** 9:00 AM  
**Place:** SPALC Building, 6281 Metro Plantation Rd.

Kathi Maisano will present a power-point program on viewing stones/suiseki. Although stone appreciation is an ancient art, it has only come to some degree of popularity in recent years in the USA because of its use with bonsai. You may have read articles written by Kathi in the Bonsai and Stone Appreciation magazine, "Diary of a Snowbird, Parts One and Two." These articles talk more about bonsai. Now, she has become an expert dai carver. The dai is the wooden base that holds the suiseki. Many of the suiseki are sawed to create a flat base, but the trick to collecting is really to keep the stones as close to natural as possible. If you have suiseki that you would like to bring to our meeting, please do so.

### ***Upcoming Events:***

#### **Sign up at February Meeting**

The regular meeting on March 20 is the bus trip to TURNER AND SMITH'S nurseries. Signing up at the February meeting is important because, in March, I am going to invite the Garden Club members and neighboring bonsai clubs in hopes of filling the bus. So, pack a lunch, bring your spouse, and plan for an exciting day. You can pay \$20 at the Feb. meeting, or I will take the money on March 20 as you board the bus. Most important right now is plan to attend and get signed up.

#### **Message from the Prez:**

I hope everyone's trees made it through our recent cold snap. I moved about 35 trees into our house for about a week, and they didn't like it. Not only was it less humid with the heat on but watering was much more problematic. It is very hard to have water streaming through the bottom of the pots in the breakfast room. As a result many lost much of their foliage. The Raintree lost about 80% and the Campeche lost all leaves.

But this is an opportunity to see the structure and ramification. It is just as interesting without foliage as with foliage. This gives us the opportunity to take advantage of this imposed defoliation. You can trim and wire with a clear view of the future development.

This time of year is also the prime time to work with Bald Cypress. Guy Guidry visited Erik Wigert's nursery on Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup>. He is a great teacher and has terrific information regarding soils (Akadama easily absorbs water but gives it up more slowly) all kinds of horticulture advice and has a great sense of humor. We look forward to his next visit and strongly recommend that you participate.

Don't forget our next meeting on February 20<sup>th</sup>. We have a visiting artist, Kathi Maisano, who will make a PowerPoint presentation on viewing stones = SUISEKI . We hope to see you there.....

#### ***Minutes – Bonsai Society of Southwest Florida:***

DATE: JANUARY 16, 2010  
TIME: 9:30 AM  
LOCATION: SPALC BUILDING, 6281 METRO PLANTATION ROAD  
PRESENT: SEE ATTENDANCE ROSTER (28 MEMBERS ATTENDED)

President Phil Krieg called the meeting to order at 9:35 AM. Becky Bodnar read the Minutes of the November 21, 2009, meeting. The Minutes were accepted as read. There was no Treasurer's report, as Sandra Bishop was not present. New member, Mike Knowlton, and penjing expert, Hal Mahoney, with his wife, Mary Mahoney, were introduced to the membership.

NEW BUSINESS: Phil announced that the Garden Council would have a "Wild West Day" and Chili Cookoff Competition on February 20.\* Phil reminded members that the BSF convention would take place on May 28-31 in Orlando. The registration form is available on the BSF site, [www.bonsai-bsf.com](http://www.bonsai-bsf.com). The SW Florida Orchid Society is sponsoring a trip to the Tamiami Orchid Festival on January 30. Details are available on the Garden Council web site, [www.fmlgardencouncil.com](http://www.fmlgardencouncil.com). Phil thanked Judy Gore, who has volunteered to chair the next

annual show. Judy is open to suggestions on where to have the show. Jim Gehring presented the programs for 2010 along with a budget, which has to be approved by the membership. (See Attachment I for the list of programs.) The total cost for programs is \$2,875. *Jim Bremer moved that the budget for programs be accepted, Vic Laakkonen seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.* Jim Bremer submitted a report on the Club Library. (See Attachment II). Jim Gehring asked members to donate bonsai-related books to the Club library. The Naka I book is not presently in the Club library, but can be purchased with money in the budget allotted for the library. Jim Bremer volunteered to be in charge of the Home and Garden Show.

Advice--because of the recent extended cold weather is to leave plants alone until late February. Even if there are brown leaves, don't remove them because you don't want to encourage new growth until the threat of a freeze is over. There are protective cloth bags that fit over plants, which are available from Loew's. Becky agreed to make up a list of Club members' email addresses, with only the first name and last initial indicated. Keeping members' home addresses private is necessary because of the danger of tree theft.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 AM.

Respectfully submitted, Becky Bodnar, Secretary, BSSWF

\*This event has been cancelled.

### **Bonsai Buzz:**

#### **TIPS TO PINCH**

by Ernie Fernandez

Typically, if the weather permits, February is the last month in which we can shape deciduous trees while they are still dormant. It is easier to wire and prune trees in dormancy because the foliage is not there to hide individual branch twigs.

All dormant trees; i.e., cypress, pine, maples, elms and junipers can have their roots worked on and can be repotted; if leaves (not needles) are still on the tree, they may be removed. Elms and cypress trees should not have their branches pruned until new growth begins to break in spring. Be careful not to rub off any important buds as you work. You may find it easier and less sentimental about cutting and removing unnecessary branches while they are naked.

Look over your trees and remove training wire as the buds start swelling, so do the branches and twigs.

This is also the time for collecting deciduous trees. Primed as they are for their annual growth cycle, they can withstand more trauma now than any other time of the year. After buds begin, your risk goes up. Be sure to have your potting materials ready. Study your trees and make sure you have the right pot at the right time. Get your Super Thrive, B1, or whatever, prepare your bonsai soil, making sure to screen out the fine particles to avoid soil compaction and poor drainage setting up conditions for root rot later in the year.

Compensate for the lower angle of sunlight of the winter sun. The hottest and brightest part of your yard may now be shaded part of the day. Move plants accordingly. Turn your deciduous

trees so that the weak side faces the South or Southeast, so the dormant buds in these areas will be the first to break and grow in Spring.

## **KYUHON YOSE**

### **BALD CYPRESS - *Taxodium Distichum***

Family: Taxodiaceae

#### **General**

- Grows from Texas to Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Florida and north to Massachusetts.
- There are 14 species found in China, Japan, Formosa, Tasmania and North America.
- *Taxodium Distichum* is pronounced “tack-SO-dee-um DISS-tick-um”.
- Related to the *Sequoia* and *Sequoiadendron* genera.
- State tree of Louisiana.
- They are not true cypresses which are in the *Cupressus* family that are not native to the U.S.
- Grows between 100-150 feet and live to well over 1,000 years.
- Can gain a diameter of 14 feet.
- Bark can range from reddish shredding into strips in bald cypress, to grayish and furrowed in pond cypress.
- Deciduous conifer that goes dormant in tropics as late as January.
- Wood is resistant to rot because it contains oil, cypressene.
- Knees (pneumatophores) function are not fully understood. They could provide structural support when immersed in water and/or provide oxygen. Most claim they are part of the root system which grows above the soil, some as tall as 12’ (Dennis 1988). It is likely that they are solely for structural support. Swamp cypress which are flooded or flood prone, tend to be buttressed as opposed to cypress on higher ground which may grow with very little taper.
- Bald cypress is the most flood tolerant of all Florida tree species.
- About 200 year’s growth are required to develop a high proportion of heartwood.
- Cypress Dome - they grow in pure, almost circular stands. Viewed from the horizon, these stands have a peculiar dome shape with shorter, almost stunted trees gradually growing taller towards the center. They develop in a ground depression of pine flatwoods ecosystems where the water moves very slowly and only drains internally through the water table.
- Logging during the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century removed the majority of large, old-growth trees in virtually all the swamps of Florida. Heartwood, which takes centuries to develop, was marketed as “tidewater cypress” known for its durability, attractive appearance and workability. It is also called “eternal flame” from long-term use as hollow logs installed as water pipes in 1798 that were still functioning when removed in 1914. However, pond cypress has a tendency to develop heart rot. Cypress was also used for water tanks and cisterns since it will tolerate dampness without affecting taste or odor. Cypress reached its peak production in 1913 when one billion board feet were milled (Williston 1980).
- Estimates of current forests are 592 million pond cypress trees and 68 million bald cypress trees.

#### **Types used in Bonsai**

- *Bald Cypress* has featherlike branchlets with flat leaves (needles) that grow in an alternate pattern along the branch. Grows on river floodplains, along spring runs and on lake margins, sites with moderate water flow, high nutrient soils and infrequent fire. Growth rate in the wild is approximately 11”-18” per year. Can become chlorotic in high pH soils. The largest

individual specimen is “The Senator”, near Longwood, Florida which is 35m tall with a trunk diameter of 344 cm. Varieties include ‘pendens’, a weeping form; Prairie sentinel and Shawnee Brave.

- *Pond Cypress* was once treated as a separate species called *T. Ascendens*. It is now considered a variety of bald cypress called *T. Distichum* var. *Nutans*. It is less likely to have knees and is usually smaller. Its leaves tend to lie along the branchlet, looking like corded juniper foliage with gray bark, heavily furrowed and shaggier. Typically, the leaves are tightly pressed to and spiral around the twig. Generally grows in isolated, shallow ponds and poorly drained areas of the coastal plain where water is still or slow moving, low in nutrients and oxygen. With its thicker bark, it is more resistant to fire. On poor wetland soils, such as the marl soils in the Everglades, growth is extremely slow and the trees are stunted. These trees are called dwarf cypress or hat-rack cypress (Brandt & Ewel 1989). Growth rate in the wild is approximately 5” per year.
- Pond cypress can interbreed with Bald Cypress.
- *Montezuma Cypress* (*T. mucronatum*) is often found in south Texas and Mexico.
- Common names are gulf cypress, red cypress, southern cypress, swamp cypress, tidewater redcypress, upland cypress, yellow cypress and yew-cypress.

### Flower

- Produces both male and female catkins 2” – 4” long on second year twigs.
- Cones are produced that are round and green about ¾” to 1” in diameter, wrinkled and leathery. Upon maturity cones become woody. Seed is rarely seen due to bonsai pruning methods except in the weeping style.

### Collecting (Exert from *Bonsai With Tropicals, January/February 1998*)

- January and February are best times to collect before new foliage starts breaking out. Due to drier conditions, most of the sand around roots may fall off which requires caution to prevent the roots from drying out. Keep the tree wet after digging. Pot in moderately coarse but organic soil. As foliage develops trees are weaned from mist into filtered shade and eventually into full sun when roots are well established. It likes to be consistently moist to wet but does not like to sit in “sour” soil. If you have a problem with soil, flood the container with a hose, washing away as much soil as possible. Replace with fresh soil.
- (Gary Marchal) Look for an area of the swamp that is fast-draining, maintaining the same depth of water throughout the year. This produces flared and buttressed rootage. Water is 8”-10” deep. Height is normally 18-45 feet tall with root bases from 6” to 36” in diameter. Lateral rootage is cut by sawing approximately 6” away from the best looking base. Once the lateral roots are cut, the tree is pulled over using the weight of the tree and the tap root is cut. Leave extra height until a study of the tree can be done later. At home, wash all the muck and dead roots out of the root ball and make all the hard cuts again on the large roots and tap roots in order to develop the fibrous root system. Soil mixture is 50% expanded shale (Haydite) and 50% pine bark mulch both sifted to remove pieces larger and smaller than ¼”. Plant the tree in a nursery container with the nebari roots at least 6” from the soil surface. Grow in the container at least two years before the first root pruning when the hard cuts can be re-cut to the new roots which developed from the top of the cut. During these two years, create the tapered trunk line and work on developing the 1<sup>st</sup> branch, 2<sup>nd</sup> branch and 1<sup>st</sup> back branch. All other branching on the trunk should be removed during the first two years to prevent scarring. If upper branches are allowed to develop, they will get out of scale. On knees: they are root tissue and part of the root system. They proved neither “breathing” for the roots nor do they have bud formation. You’ll never see branches growing on knees.

## Repot

- Late January since it is important that the tree be dormant before new buds appear. Others suggest spring just when the green nubs appear.
- Roots can be cut severely usually yearly because of their prolific growth.
- If the tree is kept in standing water, re-pot every 2 years minimum.

## Soil

- Water retentive is considered best. Many add a loamy soil to the bonsai soil.
- Heavy soil such as a compact mushroom compost will retain maximum moisture.
- Controversy - Some say you cannot rot the roots but others say the opposite.

## Fertilize

- Use a well-balanced fertilizer such as Peters 10-10-10 at near full strength; weekly in spring and early summer; every 2 weeks in summer and fall until leaves turn brown; none over winter.

## Training

- Fast growing so that wire can damage the bark.
- If a branch is to be pulled down, make a V-shaped incision at the underside of the trunk. The V will close when the branch is pulled down and the wound will heal.
- Shape foliage by pinching back new growth. Let a branch grow for a season to thicken it, then cut it back the following spring. New growth will sprout at the site of the most recent pruning.
- Twigs sprout at sharp, acute angles.
- Prune throughout the summer and then shape in the fall just before dormancy.
- Leaves will sprout directly from the trunk. Some will develop into a branch others are just leaves which should be plucked off.
- You can develop “knees” by bending a root over itself into the shape of a knee but this is unnatural.

## Insects/Disease

- (BSF magazine 2008) Louise Lester reported that twig gall midge – *Taxodiomyia Cupressiananassa* - has been found in Florida. These are galls that develop from leaf or bud tissue with a spongy appearance. They are not cones. Newly developed they are light green to white in color maturing into brown and cause leaf tips to brown. They are usually 0.79” long and may cause branches to droop. As they mature, flies emerge to begin the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation during late July in north Florida. One to two generations per year are possible if not removed at first sight on infestation. Adult eggs emerge in spring as females lay eggs on developing leaves. There are approximately 15 yellow-orange maggots in each cell of the gall. These larvae over-winter within the gall and need to be removed as soon as possible. They pose no threat to tree health though they are unsightly causing die back affecting newly formed branches. They affect both bald cypress and pond cypress. Insecticide is not recommended.
- Twig blight is caused by weak pathogen usually present on dead or dying tissue. When the tree is stressed the fungus can kill branch tips. Dead tips must be pruned off.
- Potential scale appears to be female globose scale. It clusters along the twigs in late spring. A horticultural oil eliminates them.
- The fungus *Stereum taxodi* causes a brown pocket rot known as “pecky cypress”. It attacks

the heartwood usually from the crown down to the roots.

### **Culture**

- Propagation can be either cuttings or air layer.
- Baldcypress is monoecious. Male and female strobili mature in one growing season from buds formed the previous year. The cones are green maturing gray-brown, globular, 2 to 3.5 cm in diameter. They hold from 9 to 15 four-sided scales, each bearing up to two triangle-shaped seeds. Thus the number of seeds per cone range from 2 to 34. Seeds are 5-10 Madison Marquette long, the largest of any species in the cypress family and are produced every year. Cones disintegrate when mature to release the large seeds which disperse in two ways: by water, the cone floats and moves on water until flooding recedes or the cone is deposited on shore. The second is by wildlife; squirrels eat seeds but usually leave some scales that fall off the cone they pick.
- Seeds do not develop under water but they can survive a long time underwater. They also cannot germinate on well drained soils either due to lack of water. The best soil is thus saturated but not flooded for one to three months. After germinating, seedlings grow fast to escape floodwaters. They often reach a height of 8” to 30” in their first year. Seedlings cannot withstand usually more than a month of total submergence.
- Trees grow slowly for 200 years and then their growth stops and they maintain their height until their death which usually occurs around 600 years old. It is difficult to know exact age of a tree since they may do more than one ring of stemwood per year.

### **Watering**

- Water daily, year around in the south. Pots may be submerged almost to the rim during the summer.

### **Light**

- Full sun

### **Styles**

- Formal and informal upright, slanting, literati, twin-trunk and forest. The everglades cypress (mostly pond cypress) is shorter and more scraggly more appropriate for the Literati style.
- Old cypress have long limbless trunk, capped with a cluster of horizontal-to-drooping limbs and a very flat top.
- Refer to article about Gary Marchal for in-depth discussion of mature flat-top.
- Groups of 5-7 trees should emulate the cypress “dome” habitat, a rounded dome rising from a flat horizon.

### **Pots**

- Flat shallow earthen colored pots reflect their natural environment.
- Outside glaze should be dull earth tone.
- Smooth surfaced pots are for those kept in water, easier to clean.

### **Miscellaneous**

- Locations to view cypress include *Collier-Seminole State Park*, 6,400 acres of cypress swamp, hardwood hammocks and mangrove swamps. It is located on US 41, 20200 South Tamiami Trail, 17 miles south of Naples.
- *Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary* contains 11,000 acres and is a National Audubon Society sanctuary noted for the large wood stork nesting colony and the largest remaining sub-

tropical, old growth bald cypress stand in Florida. Located off Exit 17 (SR 846) off I-75. Follow SR 846 east 15 miles, turn north at the entrance sign, following Sanctuary Road for 1 ½ miles. Phone: 239-657-3771

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## ***Wigert's Bonsai Special Valentine's Day Bonsai Class***

### **Class Date:**

Sunday, Feb 14<sup>th</sup>

1pm- 5pm

Please arrive at 12:30pm to pick out your pre-bonsai

### **Class Format:**

\*This is designed to be a fun class for a bonsai 'couple', or a current bonsai hobbyist and their less experienced (or less interested!) spouse.

\*At the beginning of class you will both select a starter pre-bonsai of your choice (\$25.00 value).

\*You will then have the opportunity to prune and wire the trees in class with our assistance. Erik Wigert will work with the more experienced participants while Jason Osborne works with the spouses.

**Share your hobby and enjoy a day doing bonsai together.**

**Class fee is \$50.00 per person and includes the following:**

- Starter pre-bonsai of your choice (\$25.00 value).
- Use of classroom tools if needed.
- Complimentary Beer or wine and special Valentine's day treats!

Please contact us ASAP to sign up as space is limited.

Sin

Andrea Wigert

Wigert's Bonsai

239-543-2234

[wigertsbonsai@embarqmail.com](mailto:wigertsbonsai@embarqmail.com)

[www.wigertsbonsai.com](http://www.wigertsbonsai.com)

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