

# BONSAI SOCIETY OF THE CAROLINAS

## FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

### February Meeting

Fellow Bonsai Artists:

The February meeting will be a repotting workshop. You should be checking your trees frequently so you can repot those whose buds are beginning to swell. Bring one or two that are ready to repot along with your tools.

Your Executive Committee has a goal to make meeting locations more centrally located and accessible this year. Unfortunately, our plans for February ran into availability problems, so it will be at my house on February 8th at 10 AM. My garage and bonsai shed can accommodate 15-20, so there should be plenty of space. My address is 79276 Ridgeway Road, Lancaster SC 29720-6422

And yes, there will be a Raffle so bring stuff for that.

Hope to see you then,

Carl Maxell,

President

### 2020 AT A GLANCE

JAN 11 - "DOG TREE" SWAP

FEB 8 - REPOTTING WORKSHOP

MAR 14 - ROOT OVER ROCK WORKSHOP

APR 4 - JOHN GEANANGEL ROADTRIP

APR 11 - BONSAI 101 / BYOT WORKSHOP

MAY 9 - TREE CRITIQUE PANEL / EXPO TREE

JUNE 13-14 - ARBORETUM EXPO

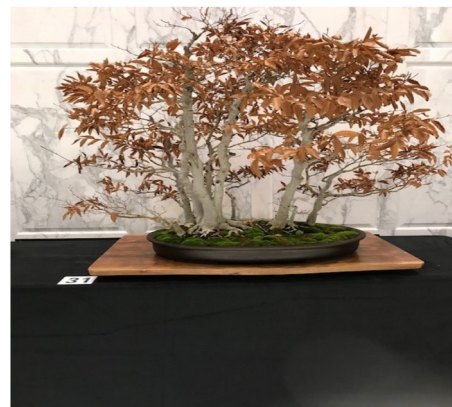
JUNE 13 - PREP FOR DSBG SHOW

JULY 11-12 MEMBER SHOW @ DSBG

JULY 12 - ARTHUR JOURA DEMO

AUG 8 - ANNUAL CLUB AUCTION

SEPT 12 - OPEN



*Entry in the Kannapolis Winter Silhouette show in December.  
This tree is a Japanese Beech*

# January Recap

by Gene Martin

About a dozen of us met at the UNCC Levine Campus in Matthews for the January BSC meeting. President Carl welcomed everyone and gave out tickets for the Dog Tree Swap. The Swap is based on the proposition that “one person’s challenge is another person’s inspiration” and there were several challenging trees in the group. Only time will tell if any of them generated inspiration.

Carl next announced the availability of a wagon-load of SuperThrive in 1 qt containers, courtesy of Lowe’s Home Improvement via George Anderson (excess inventory). They sold for \$5, limit 2 per member. A few were left, if you’d like one, contact Carl.

VP Scott Telk presented a program on Sharpening Bonsai Tools. Keeping your tools sharp results in cleaner cuts and faster healing. Knowing where the edge is and how the tool works are important prerequisites to any sharpening exercise. Scott may repeat this program in the future in case you missed it.

Last activity of the day was the Raffle. There was a good selection of plants, pots and tools available and \$48 was added to the Club coffers.

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*A few 1 qt. SuperThrive till left @ \$5. Let Carl know if you are interested.*

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## Increasing Trunk Girth

Taken from an article by Nick Fowler, BCI Magazine,  
March 1986

I recently started delving into the club newsletters from 25 years ago. One might say these are outdated and have been replaced with new and innovative techniques but it was amazing how relevant the articles are to today’s bonsai enthusiast. This testifies that working with small trees in pots today conforms to traditional techniques. These techniques can be added to but they retain the basic framework. In the following months, I will be synthesizing some of these articles from these archived newsletters including interesting tips that are still relevant today.

There are many routes to increasing the girth of a bonsai trunk. Some are dependent on species of tree, others on the development of the root structure, health of the tree or the nutritional condition of the soil and fertilization regime. This will, over time, result in the increase in girth desired.

But suppose you are more impatient, like all of us, and want quicker results There are methods for doing this as effective today as they were in 1986.

Here are a few suggestions from the article by Nick Fowler back in 1986.

1. Open Ground Method or Potting On: Open ground method refers to taking a tree out of its pot and planting it in the ground. Potting on refers to taking a tree out of its bonsai pot and planting it in a much larger pot. Either way, you are letting the roots expand downward. When using the open ground method, placing a tile in the bottom of the hole to prevent the tree from growing too far allows the roots to expand but limits the roots from going too far down. Of course, the larger pot method also limits the root expansion but still allows more than the bonsai pot. Giving the roots freedom allows the roots to seek nutrients from a larger area and will result in a larger trunk diameter quicker.
2. Fertilization: In 1984, there was a controlled study done on vegetable plants involving seaweed concentrate containing plant regulators. The result increased yield and was eventually applied to bonsai culture. Today, I checked my fertilizer (SuperThrive) and found it was derived from kelp (seaweed). Twenty-five years later, we are still using a seaweed derivative to promote rapid root development resulting in increase in tree girth.

3. Unwanted Shoots or Sacrificial branch: Twenty-Five years ago, to increase girth it was recommended that a shoot or branch be allowed to grow unfettered to stimulate increased girth. Today, we call this a sacrificial branch that can be removed when the desired girth is reached. Terms change but the basic technique is the same.
4. Grafting: Grafting involves the removal of a strip of bark from 2 young saplings, tie them together and let them grow together. This creates a thicker trunk. Today, another technique that has proven successful is air layering. Air layering is accomplished by stripping the outer layer of bark down to the cambium layer encircling the trunk. Damp peat moss is applied to this wound and a piece of plastic covers the peat moss to retain the moisture and tied at the top and bottom to hold it in place. I managed to air layer a ginkgo last spring which resulted in another plant with a thicker Nebari than if starting a plant from a seedling. Although grafting was suggested for the more advanced bonsai enthusiast, air layering proved to be a very simple technique. One must still use patience since the growth of roots in air layering will take 2-3 months.
5. Plaiting or Braiding: This technique involves plaiting several young supple saplings of the same species. For example, four young saplings can be braided starting just above root level crossing north with south and east and west until the desired height is reached. The trunk will look knobby for several years until the saplings have fused.
6. Sunlight: Sounds strange but Nicki Fowler claims that when transplanting a container grown tree in to a bonsai pot with a lower soil level, the newly exposed trunk is thinner. To cause the trunk to increase in diameter, expose the trunk to sunlight which will cause the gradual thickening of the area.
7. Other things to try which aren't mentioned often are: Bruising which involves covering the thinner section with a cloth and gently bruising the bark with a pair of pliers. Pricking which involves a strong, sharp needle being applied to the section that you want to thicken. Slitting which involves making vertical slits in the bark down to the cambium layer around the thinner section of the trunk. The healed scars will give the appearance of age. Having never really heard of these techniques, I'm not pro or con to these last suggestions.

harmful in the intervening years since written in 1986, please let us know so we can post a correction.

by Jeanne Anderson



### Bonsai Business Listings

Here are a few businesses that indicate that they either carry bonsai supplies, trees or pre-bonsai nursery plants. If you are new to bonsai or have been learning for several years, it can be difficult to find greenhouses, nurseries or other garden centers that actually carry what we need. Here is a listing of a few I came across but I'm sure there are those of you that know of others. If so, please let us know and we will add them to the list.

#### Bonsai or Pre-Bonsai Growers

The Painted Lady Bonsai – Wilmington, NC  
 The Growing Grounds – Cherryville, NC  
 Campbell's Greenhouses & Nursery – Charlotte, NC  
 Oakdale Greenhouses & Garden Center – Charlotte, NC  
 (Newly remodeled Bonsai Area)  
 Bella Bonsai – Mint Hill, NC  
 North Carolina Bonsai Nursery – Stokesdale, NC  
 Settlemyre Nursery – Valdese, NC  
 Shagreens Nursery & Arboretum – Shelby, NC  
 Hennis Plant Farm – Fletcher, NC  
 Berea Bonsai Studio & Nursery – Berea, KY

I hope you will find this article interesting and helpful. If there is anything mentioned here that has proven

## Chinese New Year's Festival

By Scott Telk

"The Peaceful Dragon held their annual Chinese New Year's Festival on January 25<sup>th</sup>. The Bonsai Society of the Carolinas was present. For the third straight year, Scott Telk represented the BSC displaying trees, holding demonstrations and talking about the art.

Due to the time of year, no repotting was done. Wiring and styling was demonstrated. Bending a branch using wire amazed many people. Long term root and foliage care was also discussed.

The moss in the forest fascinated almost everyone, especially the kids. Much thanks to Brad for teaching the technique. There was a lot of interest in purchasing the trees, but Scott couldn't part with any of them.

Looking forward to next year.

Scott



## Bonsai Plant Health and pH

by Gene Martin

Bonsai, like other plants, have environmental preferences. If one can meet those preferences, plants do well, all other things being equal. Conifers and deciduous trees like slightly different soil mixtures, for example. Hornbeams are understory trees and prefer not to be in direct sunlight. The list goes on.

Soil acidity is probably not on the list of things you're concerned about. But for some plants, it could be the difference between healthy and not-so-healthy. The pH scale goes from zero to 14, with 7 indicating neutral; below 7 is acidic and above 7 is alkaline.

I am on a municipal water system and their annual analysis says my water is slightly alkaline. For Boxwood and Serissa, that's just fine, but for Azaleas, Hornbeams and other acid-loving plants that isn't good.

There is plenty of information online about how to deal with various pH situations and I encourage you to investigate the ones that affect your plants. The purpose of this article is to compile a list of plants that prefer non-neutral environments. Please let us know ([bonsaisocietycarolinas@gmail.com](mailto:bonsaisocietycarolinas@gmail.com)) of species that should be added to our list. Here's what we have so far:

Bonsai - Alkaline loving:

- Boxwood
- Serissa

Bonsai - Acid loving:

- Azalea
- Beech
- Hornbeam
- Ilex crenata
- Loropetalum

**Executive Board of the Bonsai Society of the Carolinas**

President - Carl Maxwell

Vice President - Scott Telk

Treasurer - John Farrell

Secretary - Jeanne Anderson

Past President - Bob Hampel (in lieu of Tammy's move to  
Chicago)

Show Chairman - Brad Russell

Study Group Chairman - Ken Buechele

Email Coordinator - Gene Martin

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**2020 BSC Membership** dues are due. \$50. Bring a check  
to the next meeting or mail it to Treasurer John Farrell.