

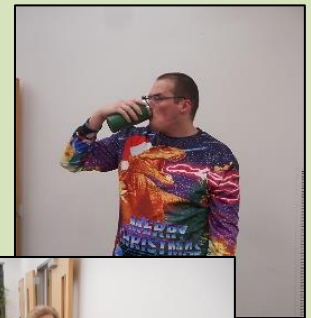


# The Louisiana Bonsai Society Newsletter

January 2023

## December Meeting

The annual LBS Potluck Holiday Party was held on December 20<sup>th</sup> at the Baton Rouge Garden Center at the regular meeting time. Lots of good food, friends and fun! After dinner, the Yankee Gift Swap kept everyone on their toes to try to keep someone from stealing their gift. Thanks to everyone who attended and brought delicious dishes to share and a few festive bonsai trees to display. Thanks to Kim for taking some great pictures. Hope you enjoy them. We are a fun group! Hope you will come and join us in 2023.



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*The Louisiana Bonsai Society (LBS) is a non-profit organization of people interested in the art of bonsai.*









## Bonsai Soil Mixtures

By Lowell Tilley

It is not the time of year to repot your bonsai, but it is time to make plans for potting. But it is never too early to get your bonsai soil ready. Getting the correct bonsai soil is not simple.

When the United States opened trade with Japan about 1900, Japan donated some bonsai to the United States. Then some gardeners tried to grow some bonsai and were unsuccessful. So, they decided the Japanese had a special variety of plants for bonsai. Later they learned that the problem was the soil they were using and found that the soil mixture must be different for the plant that is growing in a pot. The most important thing is to design your bonsai soil. What is the best bonsai soil? There is no one best formula. The soil needs to be custom designed for each species of bonsai, your watering and fertilizing habits, and for our climate. In other words, one size doesn't fit all, the bonsai soil should be custom tailored for you and your bonsai. Are you confused yet? If you are confused, that's good, you are thinking. You need to think about the soil you have used in the past and how well the soil mix works for you and your bonsai. I am not going to try to tell you exactly how to mix and what to use for your soil, but I hope to give you information that you can use to improve your soil formula. The perfect soil is custom designed for each of you and your bonsai.

I repotted a bonsai for a friend and the soil was very good quality high fired Akadama with no organics. I found all the roots had grown down the inside edges of the pot and formed a mat of roots in the bottom of the pot and started to block the drainage. There were no roots growing into the soil mix. With no fertilizer in the Akadama, the roots would not grow into it. Many people think that they can use sterile soil then fertilize with organic and liquid fertilizer which works if the soil is uniformly loose enough for water to flow and not to channel. The roots grow where the fertilizer dissolved in water is on top of the soil and down the sides into the bottom. This can cause the roots to cover the top and cause the water and fertilizer to go down the side of the pot and out the bottom. That is why it is very important to firmly compact the soil at the edge of the pot. Soil that is less compacted with no air pockets in the center will cause the water and fertilizer to flow to the center.

Bonsai soil components are in two categories, inorganic (mineral with no carbon compounds) and organic (carbon compounds). Bonsai soil can be one component like Haydite, lava gravel, turface, Akadama, or multicomponent containing inorganic and organic compounds. I like to use Haydite (expanded clay) or lava gravel, clay (oil sorb or Akadama), and organic compost (fine pine or hardwood bark). I avoid one component soils. The lava gravel provides a hard structure to prevent compaction to ensure good drainage. The clay products will act to absorb and hold water. The harder the clay the slower it absorbs and slower it releases moisture. It helps to stabilize the moisture, provides some trace minerals, and as it breaks down and is washed out the bottom of the pot, it will remove some of the salts. If there is too much saturated clay, it will interfere with drainage. The organics provide fertilizer and are used by the microbes to help the plant take up nutrients. The bark will absorb liquid or dissolved fertilizer to be available for the plant to use later. The microbes that break down the bark use nitrogen to prevent spikes and stabilize the nitrogen content. Higher ratio of organic to inorganic components will lower the soil pH. Enough lava gravel will provide the drainage to prevent the clay and organics from becoming saturated. Soil particle sizes make a difference. If it contains all different sizes, the smaller particles can fill the air spaces to create poor drainage and smother the roots. If all the particles are the same size and are too large (3/8-inch), it will create air pockets. It is good to sift out the large particles using a 3/16-inch or 1/4-inch sieve. Use a 1/8-inch sieve to remove the fines. The drier it is, the easier to sieve.

You can buy some very good pre-mixed bonsai soils and I have heard good and bad reports on most of them. Try some and see how they work for you. If you find they need a little tweaking, add components to them to customize them for you. Why do you need to customize your soil? If you have pre-bonsai in growing pots or beginning bonsai that are over-potted in large pots, you need soil that will hold more fertilizer and water, maybe even a



potting soil mix. In other words, soil is not critical at that time. But as your bonsai grows and develops, the soil components do become critical. A thirty-year-old bonsai in a nice bonsai pot will not live in the soil it liked in a growing pot when it was five years old, so you should improve the soil mix each time you repot.

## Mid-Winter Bonsai Workshop Conference

We are looking at a very busy weekend filled with fun bonsai activities that we have been looking forward to for a year. This year we are excited to host master artist Jennifer Price from Chicago, IL. Jennifer has studied with



numerous Bonsai Masters including Mauro Stemberger, Colin Lewis, and Walter Pall. She became an apprentice to Mr. Pall in 2015 and continues to work with him, as well as with Ryan Neil. She has taught workshops and given demonstrations throughout the United States and worldwide. Jennifer was the first female artist to be a part of Generation Bonsai and has twice represented the United States at an international bonsai convention in Shanghai, China.



We really appreciate how the club members help at these events and a little planning can increase our fun. First is get your workshop trees ready to work on. Clean up the pot, take out the weeds. All members that are taking care of club plants should bring them Friday morning. If you see a plant you are interested in, it is wise to go ahead and pick it up ahead of time, you can pay at the workshop. That would be a big help, because some of us cannot bring all of them in one trip and the sooner you get them the better selection you get.

The club will provide bonsai wire. You need to bring your own tools, a pencil and sketch pad or notebook, a table cover or large trash bag, and a turntable if you have one. A turntable is very helpful for looking at the tree from different angles. Wooden wedges or beanbags are very helpful for tilting the pot.

Those who can help, please arrive around 10 am to the BR Garden Center to help set-up tables and chairs and unload trees. It is best to set up the tables in a box or "U" configuration for the workshop with participants on the inside and the observers on the outside of the "U". That way, Jennifer will have less walking as she goes from person to person. She can also bring any of the trees to the center to make a point as she teaches. Be prepared to take notes as even observing will be a wonderful learning experience for everyone.

We will have some silent auction and raffle items and 5 very good vendors. We plan to have food at a nominal price but feel free to bring some dessert items to share. We are looking forward to a weekend of fun, food, and friends, so bring money and let's pass a good time.

## MWW Schedule

### Friday Jan. 13

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| 10am    | Set up venue (table, chairs, raffles, silent auction), bring in club trees, vendors<br>Set up |
| 12pm    | Registration table open-Lunch on your own   |
| 1pm-4pm | Workshop with Jennifer  |
| 4pm-5pm | Dinner-on your own or purchase food   |
| 5pm-8pm | Workshop with Jennifer  |

### Saturday Jan. 14

|                |                                     |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 9am-12pm       | Workshop with Jennifer              |
| 8:30am-11:30am | Ceramic Workshop with Amanda        |
| 12pm-1pm       | Lunch-on your own or purchase food  |
| 1pm-4pm        | Workshop with Jennifer              |
| 2pm-4pm        | Juniper Workshop with Dennis Burke  |
| 4pm-5pm        | Dinner-on your own or purchase food |
| 5pm-8pm        | Workshop with Jennifer              |

### Sunday Jan. 15

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| 9am-12pm | Workshop with Jennifer                      |
| 12pm     | Raffles Drawings and Silent Auction Winners |
| 12:15pm  | Conclusion of workshop and venue breakdown  |

## Vendors

**Amanda Proctor Ceramics**- Offering a workshop as described below:

Workshop project: Hand-build an earthen red/brown clay, rectangle bonsai pot

Dimensions of pot: 8”(L)x 5.5”(W)x 2.5” (H)

Date: Saturday, January 14th

Time: 8:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m.

Cost: club members \$65; non-members \$75

Spots available: 12

You may register on site at the time of the event

Clay and tools will be provided. You may want to bring an old towel to wipe your hands.

All the pots will be kiln-fired unglazed, and ready for pickup at the February meeting, just in time for repotting season!!

### **Dennis Burke Bonsai**

Dennis will be vending on Saturday and Sunday. He will have bonsai soil, turntables, bonsai tree stands, pre-bonsai in grow pots, and a few green mound junipers and black pines in bonsai pots.

He will be offering a juniper workshop on Saturday from 2-4 pm with a 1-gallon green mound juniper and supplies included to create a juniper bonsai. The cost will be \$50 and limited to 10 people.

### **Underhill Bonsai Nursery**

Evan Pardue will be vending on Friday and Saturday. He will have bonsai soil, trees, good bonsai tools, and other bonsai related items. He will not be doing a workshop this year.

### **Bill's Bayou Bonsai**

Bill Butler will have bonsai soils, and some new products this year such as diatomaceous earth, perlite, etc. and (slabs on request) for purchase on Friday and Saturday (possibly Sunday).

### **Myrick Bonsai Pottery**

Byron Myrick will display handmade bonsai pottery for purchase on Friday and Saturday.

## Points to Remember

- There is no fee for silent observation only. This is a great free opportunity for everyone to learn.
- There will be a master list of participants and payment status for each workshop located at the registration table.
- Dues must be paid to receive your free workshop and/or receive the member discount rate on workshops and club pot purchases.
- Our space will be very full this year. The workshops are designed for learning. When not participating in the workshop, please keep noise level down to respect participants and teachers.
- Because we have a waiting list, if you show up late for your workshop, your slot may be filled by another participant and your money refunded, or you may register for an open slot in another workshop.

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Membership dues can be mailed to PO Box 41661, Baton Rouge, LA 70835. You can also pay them at the workshop if you haven't mailed your check yet. You may also pay by cash, Venmo or Zelle. Everyone who wants to sign up for a slot in the Mid-Winter Workshop and has paid dues will receive (1) BYOT workshop. If you are present and have not signed up yet, you may register for any open slot at the time of the event.

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## Coming Events

**January 13, 14, & 15, 2023 Mid-Winter Workshop featuring Jennifer Price** Baton Rouge Garden Center.

**January 17, 2023, Monthly Meeting 7 pm** Bring your trees for Show and Tell, BR Garden Center

**February 21, 2023, Monthly Meeting 7 pm** BR Garden Center

**March 18, 19, LBS Spring Show,** BR Garden Center.

**March 21, 2023, Monthly Meeting 7 pm** BR Garden Center

Watch for future notifications regarding a workshop series with Mike Lane possibly starting in June and the LSBF Workshop with Jim Doyle in October.



## Just for Laughs Dad Jokes

Overheard in a Bonsai Shop: Business has been so good lately; we're considering going out on a limb and opening a new branch.

My friend is entering his bonsai trees in a show this weekend. I'm rooting for him.