

SHO FU BONSAI

March 2004 - Volume 6, Issue 3

Pedro J. Morales Returns to Sho Fu

Pedro Morales will return to Sho Fu Bonsai on Tuesday, March 16th. This year, he will do a one-hour demonstration, starting at 6:30PM and then conduct a two-hour workshop.

The material for this workshop will be bougainvillea in three-gallon containers, at a cost of \$30 for the tree and workshop. No root-work or potting will take place.

Since this will be a large workshop (up to 15) in a small room, please do not bring any other trees for Pedro to critique. Also, I am sorry to say, there will be no room for silent observers after the free demonstration.

Pedro J. Morales Orellana was born in Chicago and moved to Puerto Rico when he was three months old with his parents.

He became interested in bonsai in 1980, when his teacher at university assigned bonsai as a research program. He became a member of the P.R. bonsai club in 1986 and now teaches throughout the country.



Photo by Peter Trigg

Mary Madison puts finishing touches on her Buttonwood demo
Well, . . . now actually it's Vito's buttonwood. Lucky Vito won the raffle! Again! Thank you Mary for two great days of workshops and a first-class demo. Mary will return to Sarasota again as our "headliner" for the Selby Gardens show.

From the President

Wow, here we are with the March newsletter already. Time is fleeting and I feel like the white rabbit in Alice In Wonderland. I'm late . . . I'm late . . . !!

Thanks to all of you for your tremendous support and feedback on our three-day marathon with Mary Madison. The trees she brought were spectacular and I can tell you, she took very few of them home. What great deals we all got! Did everyone see Joe Moreno's tree? Hopefully he will bring it in to show the members who were not at the workshops.

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March 4th Program

Guest Artist — Erik Wigert

Jaboticaba Demo, March 4th 6:00 PM

at Waterside Retirement Estates 4540 Bee Ridge Rd



Erik, owner of Wigert's Mango Grove & Nursery in Bokeelia, will do a Jaboticaba demo for the club and will also bring along some pre-bonsai material for us to admire and or purchase.

Ten Greatest Bonsai Fallacies

EDITOR'S NOTE: I didn't want to edit this severely, so I am splitting into two articles. It will be continued next month. Jerry Meislik has given us exclusive permission to print this article in the Sho Fu Newsletter. Thank you Jerry.

By Jerry Meislik

Everyday you hear a guideline, rule or suggestion about bonsai. Often this is a great idea that you should adopt immediately to help grow or design better bonsai. On the other hand some of the suggestions seem to fly in the face of common sense. In 1970 I published an article for American Bonsai Society Bonsai magazine called "The Ten Great Bonsai Myths". I recently updated the myths and presented it at the American Bonsai Society Symposium in Kalamazoo Michigan. For those of you that missed the talk I have used it as a starting point for an updated look at my current Ten Greatest Bonsai Fallacies.

■ 1. The older-looking the bonsai, the better it is.

By definition, a bonsai is a trained tree in a container. Years ago when I started in bonsai I would find very young material to work with. Time after time, and year after year my advisors would tell me how to make the bonsai look older by doing this and doing that. I concluded that the goal was to make my tree look as old as possible. This, of course, is completely false.

A bonsai may represent a very young or an ancient nearly dead tree. Neither is better than the other. The success of a bonsai must be measured by other than some preconceived concept of the ideal age of the tree that the bonsai represents.

Perhaps, success may be defined by the ability of the artist in achieving the desired appearance of the bonsai. This could be naturalistic, that is, representing a copy of an actual or literal tree, while another artist might design trees that are artistic expressions carried out on a living medium. This last bonsai may not represent a tree but something such as an elephant, a rock even a mood or a feeling. perhaps, we can not judge the bonsai's success unless we know the artist's intention. An older looking bonsai is not automatically better.

■ 2. The myth of the instant bonsai.

Watch this demonstration and you will see an instant bonsai. Or go collecting and get an instant one from nature. I have had this fantasy, and probably deep in my heart I believe that one day I will find the perfect bonsai. One that pops out of the ground and does not require another 10 years of careful and thoughtful pruning and wiring to bring it up to snuff.

After seeing many demonstrations and attending innumerable workshops the anticipated instant tree often brings major disappointment especially when it is studied later in the confines of my home. A tree that was breathtaking at 10,000 feet in the Rocky Mountains comes crashing to earth when a saner mind looks at its poor root system and awkward branching structure.

Hope springs eternal, perhaps tomorrow I'll find my perfect little tree.

■ 3. However you wire it's wrong!

Bonsai journals and books are full of advice on wiring. You must do this and that. You must use copper or aluminum or else. You must wire or unwire at this time of year or your branches will die. You must not cross wires. You must wire the tree neatly.

I personally believe that you can wire with anything that will hold and shape the branch properly. Whether this is copper or aluminum or anything else is irrelevant. Neatness does not count unless you want a neat tree or unless you intend to show your

tree in its wired state. Time of year doesn't matter to the tree, (exception - do not wire a frozen tree). Leaving wire on all winter does not hurt the branches.

Here are some wiring recommendations that I think are helpful.

Wire when you have time. Wire the branches with loops at 45 degree angles for best holding power.

Wire your trees often and you will have better trees.

Move the branch the absolute minimum number of times to get the position right. Do not wire the branch and then keep bending it back and forth to get just the right shape as this will damage the branch with each bend back and forth.

If you need to redo the shape wait several months until the branch has healed from its first wiring insult.

Its OK to cross wires, but remember a crossed wire cuts in faster than the uncrossed — so be watchful!

Thin wire will cut in before thick wire so watch those thin wires carefully.

Always remove wire with a wire cutter. Unwinding wire, unless done very carefully, will disturb newly formed wood that holds the branch in its new position.

■ 4. Cutting branches at the wrong time or in the wrong way.

Many, many times there are suggestions to cut a branch in a certain way, or at a certain time or at a specific angle. The story goes that unless you do this the branch will bleed until it dies and/or the tree itself will die. Unless proven otherwise most injuries, or cuts to branches do not result in the death of branch or tree. There are very few and specific examples of trees that do not tolerate severe reductions of branches. This short list includes pines, Ficus benjamina, aspen, and white birch.

In a similar vein much information exists that claims roots must be cut a specific angle or the root will rot. Again ignore this and cut the root at any angle you wish. On some materials the roots will not regenerate if the root has been cut back too far. The angle isn't the critical factor.

■ 5. Follow all the rules, and you will get a bonsai masterpiece!

The truth is that after following all the rules you are much, much more likely to get a turkey! Creating a bonsai by the rules is like creating pictures using paint by numbers. One should approach bonsai by knowing the rules, and then applying the rules at your own peril. The rules will help you in deciphering why certain bonsai designs do not work; but the rules should never stop your creative instincts. The rules help to train your "eye", but they should never dictate to your eye.

The best example of this are the wonderful wild trees that I have collected over the years. They have a special character provided by the years exposed to elements which shaped their design in unpredictable ways. After some years, I noticed that many of my collected trees were less exciting than when they were collected. Each year I would remove or refine some "problem" area. After a few years I had ruined the tree but made it more perfectly adherent to the bonsai rules. There is a fine line between perfection and cutting the soul or spirit out of a tree. I failed in keeping the spirit and character of the tree alive.

One technique that I use is to let chance dictate some of my bonsai decisions. For instance, if I have a tree with three branches close together, but only one is needed. I quickly glance at the branches and cut two off. This avoids carefully studying the three branches to see which is exactly, mathematically correct. The quick snip approach avoids the precise "cookie cutter, follow the rules" design that is so sterile.

Continued next month

Bonsai Calendar for March - Zone 9

Weather Protection & Location

If the temperature is staying above 50, tropicals can be moved from winter protection.

■ Watering

Trees will probably need to be watered more often, especially on windy days.

■ Feeding

As the buds begin to swell, start feeding lightly with a balanced, relatively higher nitrogen fertilizer about every two weeks (1/2 strength 10-10-10). It is a good idea to rotate between organic fertilizer — full strength — and inorganic fertilizer at 1/2 strength. Jim Smith says “I don’t fertilize at all from December through January. Then I start with a 20-20-20 in mid-to-late February.

■ Styling

Routine. Keep after the new growth.

■ Repotting

It is getting late (unless an emergency) for deciduous and conifers. Do not transplant if there is any tender growth, even on conifers.

■ Pest control

The same as February, but watch for caterpillars. Spray two weeks after seeing white fly swarm. Use appropriate insecticide and follow instructions. Repeat in 10 days except for spider mites, then spray every three days for at least nine days.

Compiled by Marian Borchers & Marian Rousseau of the Hukyu Bonsai Society of Tampa.



Sho Fu Dig Was Very Successful

A dozen members met last month at Victory Church for a most successful dig. Some very large maples were collected and a few oaks, some horsetail etc.

Thank you Maureen Morgan for setting this up with the Victory Church people and thank you Lois for scouting out the ground for us. Maybe we could have a “show and tell” month and we could bring our collected trees. Or are they too large to move?

Members who came out were:

Joe Moreno, Lois and Tom Bennett, Lisa Webber, Timmie Stewart, David and Carrie Ebinger, Jeff Crago, Treva Kurtz (shown at left ready to dig), Maureen Morgan and Peter & Julie Trigg.

It was lots of fun and I got some amazing trees. Can’t wait for next year to do it again. Maureen, can you set it up again for us?

Sho Fu Bonsai Society

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Officers

President: Julie Trigg **Vice President:** Walter Hamm

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If you’d like to contribute to our newsletter, please contact Julie Trigg at: julie.trigg@verizon.net

From the President

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At our next meeting, we will raffle off Suthin’s juniper that he did for our club on December 15th. Thank you Lois for taking care of it for the past few months.

Congratulations go out to Joe Moreno and his wife for their new addition to the family. Daughter Isabella was born on a recent Monday. Joe, we’re still waiting for those pictures!

See you all on the 4th at 6PM.

Julie Trigg

Next Board Meeting March 3 6:30PM

at Waterside Retirement Estates
4540 Bee Ridge Rd

Sho Fu Workshop

Tokonoma Nursery March. 6 (10AM—2PM)
6611 14th Street W. Bradenton, Fl.



Photo by Julie Trigg

Dr. Doug gets ready to trim his Black Olive, slab forest

One very warm day, I recently went to see the “much talked about” collection of Dr. Doug . . . I wasn’t disappointed. Don’t know how he finds time to take care of such a large collection but he manages, and then devotes time each month to anyone at the club who needs his assistance. I first met him at the annual Selby Gardens show and was impressed the way he offered to help everyone trim or pot their potensi or a treasured bonsai. that they were a little hesitant about touching.

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