



**Mississippi Gulf Coast
Bonsai Society**

*Photo by
Patrick LaNasa*

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www.msgulfcoastbonsai.org

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Coming Events

- August 11th, 2010 – MSGCBS monthly meeting at **St. Joseph's Catholic Church, 12290 Depew Road in Gulfport**
- August 14th, 2010 – GNOBS (Greater N.O. Bonsai Society) Annual Auction. Viewing from 4-6pm, Auction begins at 6pm at Audubon Zoo.*
- October 9th & 10th, 2010 – Houston Bonsai Society Annual Fall Show/Sale, Hermann Park Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Park Dr., Houston, Tex.
- October 9th & 10th, 2010 – 15th Annual Carolina Bonsai Expo, North Carolina Arboretum, 100 Frederick Law Olmsted Way, Asheville, NC.
- October ??, 2010 - ACBS Fall Auction, St Lukes Episcopal School, 1050 Azalea Rd at Japonica, Mobile, Ala.

*NOTE: GNOBS has a new meeting place. Their new location is Audubon Zoo, Nims Community Center, 6500 Magazine Street, New Orleans.

Cedar Elm Progression

The story of my Cedar elm began last year, about a month before the BCI convention in New Orleans, around 3/09 . While at our bonsai show (MSGCBS) at Edgewater mall, we had a visitor from New Orleans. Donna Banting was scouting for some trees to display at the BCI convention that was coming up the next month. She was impressed by our members' trees, but she was looking for trees larger than we had available, so none were chosen.

While talking with her, and showing our display, she began speaking of a cedar elm she had. She had had the tree for some time and said I could have the tree, if I would come and get it from her in Metairie, La. ASAP. If I remember correctly, she said it was just too big for her to handle anymore and she had to make room for incoming stock trees for workshops at the convention. So needless to say, I made a hurried trip to retrieve my prize.

The tree was in great shape and well cared for, but it had become a bit over grown. It had a 3" diameter trunk and was about 4' tall, and had good basic branch placement. The tree was basically a collected tree that had never been styled as far as I could tell. A short time later when the BCI convention was in full swing, I apprenticed with Tedy Boy from Indonesia. Under his tutelage, we produced a rather impressive Penjing display on a slab from Joe Day, and some very nice Kingsville boxwood. I had a blast working under him and learned a lot in a short time. It was like we were life long friends. That's what John Naka must have meant when he said, " There are no borders in Bonsai". In my opinion, and many others in attendance, that was one of the best demonstrations of the weekend and also one of the best compositions of the convention.

The Penjing was later won in a raffle by Rob Kempinski of Florida and he generously donated it back to GNOBS. It was later auctioned off to the highest bidder in the yearly fund raiser for GNOBS. The composition was one of the highest money raisers of the night.

The seed was planted !

Then came a few weeks of studying the tree to see which way the styling was to progress. My first thought was there are too many heavy branches too high on the trunk to achieve a good taper. I couldn't bring myself to just chop them off and throw them away. The three branches in question were about 1" – 1¼" in diameter. Then I remembered a conversation with Rick Berrigan about his air layering technique. So I decided to air layer three large branches at one time in a fashion that would concealed all of the scars on the back of the main trunk. In a go for broke move, I went for it. That must have been late July, maybe, I don't remember.

The tree went wild for the rest of the summer and put out a tremendous amount of growth. I was reluctant to separate the layers. The tree sat dormant thru the winter. It was a very cold winter (one week of 10 degrees, very cold for south east Louisiana). I was certain the air layers had failed, but I still had hope that the twigs were continuing to show green in the cambium layer. In the spring, just before the tree was about to break buds and leaf out, it was time to separate them.



Mother Tree just after separation and before carving

After sawing them off, the newborn trees were laid flat in a wheelbarrow and in that moment I had the inspiration to take what I had learned from Teddy Boy to compose a Penjing.



New Air layers repotted

A plan is set in motion !

I hurriedly stuck the new cuttings into a pot to recover and leaf out. Using a technique I learned from Guy Guidry, I re-tapered the mother tree in the areas the layers came from. I soon began to realize my strategy was paying off when all the areas on the mother tree were re-tapered and all the scars were on the reverse side of the trunk, what luck. I now had four nice trees to work with. In a short time, they had all completely recovered and were putting out a tremendous amount of growth.

It was then, late May, and time to take advantage of a long spring and do the first styling of the mother tree. I defoliated the tree completely and wired it from top to bottom. This took me the better part of a weekend to complete. I was pleased when a stately looking white oak style I had envisioned began to emerge.



Mother Tree re-tapered rear view.



Mother Tree re-tapered front view



Photo by Mitch Thomas

Mother Tree re-styled.

Now beaming with confidence, I started to compose my Penjing. I retrieved a white marble suiban that I had tucked away in a cabinet. Then I obtained some green flagstone that I cut and shaped to fit the design I was working toward. With all of the pieces coming together, it was time to start building the tray. This was a weekend project.



Photo by Mitch Thomas

Starting to prepare Suiban



Photo by Mitch Thomas

Finished Suiban

The following weekend, I collected some moss and made sure I had enough planting medium to start bringing all the loose ends together. At first I didn't think it all would fit in the tray, but it soon all came together. Next all three trees were wired, trimmed, shaped and carved. It was a magical feeling for me to see it all starting to materialize. I am very



Photo by Mitch Thomas

Falling into Place

happy with the flow and rhythm of how it came together. It was like I was in a zone of sorts. I then waited to see if all of my work was going to pay off. Soon, the trees had new buds all over and leafed out nicely. The mosses seems to be taking root also. Now I have the endless regime of working on ramification and refinement and finding the right pot for the mother tree. As someone once told me, "It's like casing the tiger's tail."



Photo by
Mitch Thomas

Mother Tree in Full Leaf

You gotta love it when a plan comes together.

This project has come together in a little less than a year. Needless to say, I have had more fun this last year in Bonsai than I ever had. Now I would like to thank a lot of my Bonsai friends that I have admired their accomplishments. You all inspire me.

Thanks to all

Guy Guidry - my first teacher, design, tapering techniques

Donna Banting - for introducing me to Cedar Elm

Patrick LaNasa - your rock and raft plantings and teaching skills, and power point skills

Rick Berrigan - for sharing your technique for air layering.

Lou Leger and Lauralee Reugger - for your techniques in horticulture and literary and computer skills.

Tedy Boy - showing me how to use the cords and rhythm of composition.

Most of all, thank you Cedar Elm, the journey is only just begun.

Mitch Thomas

LABS 2010

LABS 2010 was hosted this year by the Louisiana Bonsai Society of Baton Rouge at Waddill Wildlife Refuge Outdoor Education Center. Present at the event were members from all of the Louisiana Clubs as well as Mississippi (Patrick, Mitch, Keith, Lou, DJ and myself) and Alabama (Joe Day). Patrick and Mitch were among those giving presentations. Patrick with his DVD of North Carolina Expo and Mitch on his Elm as shown here in newsletter. Byron Myrick of Moselle, MS (potter who gave presentation at our last meeting) was among the vendors. We couldn't resist, and had to buy a couple more of his beautiful pots. All in all, Lowell and the La. Bonsai Society are to be commended for putting on a wonderful event attracting such a good turnout.

Lauralee Reugger

Meeting – August 11

Bring a tree to Wednesday's meeting. We will gladly critique, dissect, give free advice and in general, let you know exactly what we think of your tree and what you should do with it. We may even help you work on it. Bring tools and wire if you care to do some laying on of hands. Hope to see you Wednesday.