

September  
2009



SPRINGFIELD BONSAI SOCIETY

Palmatum Press

## Future Tense September Meeting

September 14th meeting will headline Dick Hendee and Dick Adorjan. They will be doing a program on photographing Bonsai. They will bring backgrounds, cameras, lights, etc. Meeting starts at 7 pm in the Exhibit hall of Washington Park Botanical Garden.

You will not only learn how to take professional quality pictures, but you are also welcome to bring trees to photograph as well. These pictures will be made available to you electronically. Please contact Gary Trammell with the number of trees you will be bringing by Friday, Sept. 11. Cell: (217) 741-4849 or Email: [trammell.gary@uis.edu](mailto:trammell.gary@uis.edu)

Having quality pictures of your Bonsai is good for your personal album so you can display them on your computer or share them with family and friends. Good digital pictures can also be used for "Virtual styling" of your bonsai.

Here are some internet sites with examples of online styling:

<http://www.bonsai4me.com/Bonsai%20Virtuals%20Service.htm>

<http://ibonsaiclub.forumotion.com/bonsai-fl/wednesday-workshop-6th-may-2009-t605.htm>

[http://www.artofbonsai.org/tutorials/photoshop\\_virt.php](http://www.artofbonsai.org/tutorials/photoshop_virt.php)

The feature article this month will introduce you to basics of virtual styling.

Fall Bonsai Extravaganza  
Saturday October 24 Free Admission  
@ Lincoln Memorial Garden Visitor Center  
Bonsai Display 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. + Bonsai Auction 1 p.m.

Start getting your trees ready for the show and/or auction. Last year's show and auction were a big hit.

## Past Tense – August Meeting/ Andy Smith Workshop

The August meeting was held on August 17th and featured a Guest artist workshop with Andy Smith. The workshop was very well attended. Thanks to Jay Gaydosh for taking pictures during the workshop.



# "Virtual Styling (or Restyling) of Bonsai" by Thomas Zane

This article is reprinted with the author's permission. <http://www.bonsai-bci.com/virtual/main.htm>

## Virtual Styling (or Restyling) of Bonsai or Designing with a Mouse

**BACKGROUND:** Three years ago I attended my second university level six day Residential Bonsai Course in bonsai with bonsai artist Dan Barton in Bristol, England. A small part of that course was an introduction to styling and restyling bonsai using the computer. I was intrigued but did not retain enough of the information to be able to practice it once I got home. So I decided to have another go at it, along with some other specialized instruction that I requested. In May 2001 a fellow member of our local bonsai society and I spent nearly two weeks at Dan's studying some of the complexities of bonsai aesthetic, visiting some of the spectacular trees featured in Thomas Pakenham's "Meetings with Remarkable Trees", doing a bit of sightseeing (Gloucester Cathedral, Stonehenge, etc.) and participating in a bit of local pub life.

I had requested practical instruction on the creation of "ancient style" of bonsai - bonsai that represent the truly ancient trees of the world. We both wanted practical instruction on virtual styling and restyling of bonsai using a computer. We had taken digital photographs of several of our bonsai which we wanted to use as subjects for virtual restyling. With Dan's guidance we did a virtual restyling of several of the trees, saved the images, brought them home, and am using them to enhance the actual trees.

**THE PROCESS:** I took digital images of several bonsai, photographing all four sides. In most instances I used a neutral colored background to enhance the tree image. (If a digital camera is not available, color print photographs can be scanned into a computer for subsequent manipulation.) The images were saved on a zip disk and transported to the UK to be used as specimens in the study. The same disk was used to bring the manipulated images back home.

On either an IBM compatible or a Macintosh (my choice), the application program Adobe PhotoShop® is opened and a front view of one of the trees is opened. The original image, now on the screen, is saved with a slightly different name and it is that newly saved image which is used in the manipulation so that you can always come back to the original. One or a combination of effects can be applied to the image.

**Remove a Branch?** If you have a branch, such as a particular low one on a trunk, or one that appears on the two-dimensional screen to be a bar branch, and you would like to see what the tree would look like if the branch was removed, virtually prune it. Using PhotoShop®, lasso the offending branch and delete it. Fill in the blank area left when you removed part of the image by "rubber stamping" adjacent background into the area. Like it? Maybe I should have left a stump of dead wood. Revert to an earlier step, just before you removed the branch, and this time don't lasso the entire branch, leave a stump, and continue as described above. Now you have a pretty good idea what the tree would look like minus that branch. See an example.



Original image.



Using PhotoShop®, the lower right branch was removed and the remaining foliage was enhanced.

The two lower branches are close enough to being bar branches (opposite each other) to be distracting to some viewers. What would the tree look like with the branch removed?

(Continued on page 3)

**Grow a Branch?** Want a branch in a specific place. Using PhotoShop®, copy one of the branches on the tree and manipulate it until you have "grafted" it onto the spot where you think a branch is needed. Too long? Erase some of the tip. Not long enough, use the program to make it "grow" longer. See an example.

The juniper in the top picture is nice, but as seen in the virtual recreation at the bottom, adding branches, repositioning the tree, and changing the pot made for a much more dramatic presentation.



The tree after restyling based on above guidance:



**Repositioning Branches/Foliage Masses:** If you are considering moving a branch, or if during a critique it is recommended that a branch or foliage mass be repositioned, the branch may either be cut and pasted into its new trial position or lines can be drawn to show where they might better be located. See an example.

The red lines indicate proposed branch repositioning. The green shows proposed foliage masses.



(Note: It is important to capture the entire image - here I accidentally cut off its top.)

(Continued on page 4)

**Restructuring the Branches to Complement the Style:** Sometimes the branches are just about where they belong, but the foliage masses are incorrect for the style which is trying to be portrayed. The branches of my old Chinese elm, which I am working into an "ancient" style of bonsai, were too long. An ancient tree is more than a mature tree, it is a mature tree which is now on the decline. As Dan Barton said, it is slowly returning to the earth - its trunk is rotting, branches are falling off and branches are shortening and are displaying reduced amounts of foliage. See an example.



The branches were being grown out to thicken. But their length is incompatible with an ancient tree. The red circles show where foliage masses need to be created.

One at the lower right, indicates that another branch is needed.

(Note: Try to have a neutral background to enhance the tree image in the photo.)

**Total Restyling:** There are times when you might want to consider totally restyling a tree. This is a drastic thing to do and should be approached carefully. By using PhotoShop® to remove all offending branches and to add new branches, you can see a fair representation of what would happen. See an example.

This cork bark Chinese elm has been in training as a broom style, but I was never satisfied with it. The trunk will lend itself to being part of an ancient style bonsai - but the branches don't.



Using PhotoShop®, Dan Barton removed all the branches and drew in the location of where new foliage masses should be grown to complement an ancient style trunk.



**THE RESULT:** Styling, restyling and critiquing bonsai using the computer provides another tool for the bonsai artist. You can perform the "operation" on your own trees, or on images of trees sent to you by a friend asking for advice. While I used Adobe PhotoShop®, I suspect most drawing programs will permit you to do most of what I discussed. If you are doing a critique for a friend, only you need to have the drawing program, your friend needs only to be able to open and view the graphic you provide.

## My own humble attempt at “Virtual Styling”! - Manish Sumant

---

Whoever came up with the idea of having a Bonsai photography workshop needs to be complimented! I have taken pictures of my bonsai for a personal “chronicle” but none of my pictures look like the those in the magazines. The quality of my pictures (or lack thereof) makes virtual styling even more difficult.

I had bought a nice Buttonwood bonsai candidate from Erik Wigert this spring. It is a challenging tree so the conventional approach of “hide a branch with paper” etc didn’t give me any good ideas. I tried sketching the tree but I’m not too handy with pencil and paper. So I decided to try virtual styling. Taking a good picture to work with was not easy. I kept fighting leaf shadows, background obstructions, blurry picture etc.



Here are a few pictures of this tree taken earlier this summer.

Original picture. This gives an idea of the trunk thickness and the branches from a different angle.



Picture with the tree tipped at an angle (notice the improvised wedges)!



Tree after edits in MS Paint.



Paint is commonly available on all PCs. It is not as powerful as Photoshop® (\$\$) or other freeware image editing software like Gimp. However, it is very easy to use.

The end result after actual styling might not be the same as this picture, but it gives me a starting point. For deciding on a pot I could also use the tutorial for virtual pot selection on the Art of Bonsai website.

[http://www.artofbonsai.org/tutorials/photoshop\\_pot.php](http://www.artofbonsai.org/tutorials/photoshop_pot.php)

---

## September Bonsai Care Tips

Disclaimer: This is a general guide. Times can vary as much as a month depending on the weather trends. Some species of trees do not follow the general category guidelines of deciduous, evergreen or tropicals. Know your trees!

- Can prune junipers and pines, but not advisable to prune or trim deciduous.
- Continue to check watering but nitrogen feeding should be reduced.
- Generally, tropicals should be inside by middle of month (when temps are consistently below 50 F at night).



SPRINGFIELD BONSAI SOCIETY

Gary Trammell, President

c/o Washington Park Botanical Garden  
1740 W. Fayette  
Springfield, IL, 62704  
Phone: 217-753-6228

## Upcoming Events

---

**September 14, Monday 7 pm SBS Meeting – Photographing Bonsai.** Dick Adorjan and Dick Hendee. Bring a tree and your digital camera to learn about taking good bonsai pictures.

**October 12, Monday 7 pm SBS Meeting – Evergreen Styling.** Scott Day and Roland Folse. Bring your Pine, Spruce, Juniper Bonsai to style.

How are your Chrysanthemum bonsai doing? Bring them to the October meeting for show and tell.

Please let us know by this date if you have trees for the Oct 24th SBS Bonsai Show / Auction.

**October 24 – Fall Show (10 am to 4 pm) and Bonsai Auction (1 pm)**

Its not too late to style a tropical / conifer tree for display at our annual show or for the year end auction.

**November 9, Monday 7 pm SBS Meeting – Last meeting of 2009. Election of Officers and 2010 Events planning meeting.**

---

## Administrivia

---

Your 2009 Officers are:

President – Gary Trammell 217-741-4849 (M)  
Vice President – Scott Day 217-585-8473 (R)  
Treasurer – Tom Applebee  
Secretary – Manish Sumant 217-652-9619 (M)  
& newsletter editor

Annual membership is \$20 (family \$30).  
Email [msumant1@netscape.net](mailto:msumant1@netscape.net) to sign up or visit  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BonsaiSBS/>