

Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

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<https://sites.google.com/site/cedarrapidsbonsai/>

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IBA January Activities

January 21, 9:30 AM, Presentation at 11:30 AM

IBA Membership Meeting at The Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden.

909 Robert D. Ray Drive

Topics: *Open Study Group - free to work on whatever you want. 11:30 Presentations: Wiring Deciduous by Scott Allen and Power Carving by Ron Heinen*

EIBA January Activities

January 12, 6:30 PM and February 9, 6:30 PM, Board Meeting at Panera Restaurant on Edgewood Dr.

February 16, 7:00PM, Club Meetin.

First meeting of the year.

Topic: *Dues, hand out club soil, discuss calendar and activities for the year,*

The Bonsai Garden

Andrew Robson (Andrew wrote this for the ABS January newsletter)

There's something magical about a garden that's hard to put into words, it's like a little slice of Elysium in our own backyard. The great impressionistic painter Claude Monet once referred to his garden as, "my most beautiful masterpiece." British actress Audrey Hepburn said that, "to plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." Thomas Jefferson loved returning to his gardens at Monticello, saying, "though an old man, I am but a young gardener." Historically, gardens have been a pillar of human life, once serving as an indispensable place for growing the food necessary to survive, and evolving through time, to now being a place of enjoyment and delight.

Sadly, in my experience the American bonsai enthusiast pays little attention to the place in which their trees

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reside. The bonsai garden for the average American enthusiast often serves as only a functional place, rather than an aesthetic one as well. I've had the honor of being Michael Hagedorn's full-time apprentice for the last six months, and one thing that Michael has taught me is the importance of a beautiful space to

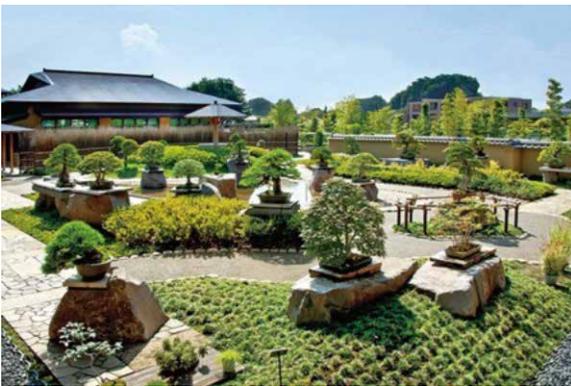


enjoy bonsai. In Michael's yard, we try to give as much attention-to-detail to the yard as we do the trees we work tirelessly on.

One important part of bonsai gardening is cleanliness.

As an apprentice, I spend the first hour of every work day cleaning the yard. This involves weeding the bonsai, sweeping the studio, and making sure the space around the bonsai benches and posts are kept very tidy. Michael's garden consists mostly of benches over gravel, and several display posts in small moss gardens. The gravel creates a clean state for one to view the bonsai scattered throughout the yard.

Michael sometimes refers to his yard as a sanctuary, and one of the very special services we offer at Crataegus Bonsai is a space for people who have experienced recent loss or trauma to come be around trees. We recently had a fellow come by the garden for this no-fee service. He had been dealing with some stress from a taxing legal battle he was involved with, and he came over one sunny, autumn afternoon to relax among the trees. With a cup of tea in hand, and some gentle music exuding from the studio, his day was made a bit brighter being around the elegant and graceful trees of Michael's yard. It was then as I sat in the studio, wiring an Engelmann spruce and watching this stranger experience the backyard sanctuary my teacher had built,



that I realized the importance of having a special place for our bonsai. A place that is not just functional for our trees to reside, but one that can soothe our soul and exude the peace and happiness we experience by having these little trees in our lives. A garden, as beautiful as the trees themselves. "Everything that slows us down and forces patience, everything that sets us back into the slow circles of nature, is a help. Gardening is an instrument of grace." May Sarton

IBA 2017 Calendar and Meeting Changes

John Denny

Iowa Bonsai Association is making changes to its monthly meeting day and time. In 2017 club meetings will be held on the third Saturday of each month. Meetings will begin at 9 am when members will work on trees they bring and end at 1 pm. There will be time set for an actual meeting/presentation at 11:30.

Check out some of the important dates on the 2017 IBA Calendar below. Looks like a great year for the IBA!!

JAN 21 – Bonsai 101 with Ron Heinen at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Gardens

APR 22-23 - Spring show at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Gardens

APR 29-30 – Todd Schlafer

MAY 14 – Bjorn Bjorholm

AUG 12 – Todd Schlafer at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Gardens.

AUG 13 – Iowa State Fair Bonsai Show.

SEPT 9-10 – Todd Schlafer

OCT ?? - Fall Show at Reiman Gardens in Ames

My Dad the Bonsai Guy

Zach Denny

Hi. I'm Zach Denny. I am 17. Therefore, I know everything, including about bonsai. Actually, my secret is to know just a little bit, but act like you know a lot more. When I was 9 or 10 my bonsai crazed father would come home from his annual pilgrimage to Brussels Bonsai Nursery and pull his newly purchased trees from his vehicle. I would look at his new maple, nod my head approvingly and, and say, "Nice nebari!" I could see my dad's head swell. Then he would pull out a new brush cherry and I would say, "Nice ramification!". Or, "Great aerial roots" to his tropical grove. I would score a lot of points.

My dad loves his bonsai. And I kind of admire some of them, too. However, it's not all roses at our house when it comes to bonsai. I have been left home from family trips so someone could water the darn things by hand with his beloved copper watering can. The hose worked just fine and I was done in half the time. (Keep that one under your hat, please.)

I like to have friends over for bonfires in the limestone fire pit. But, wait, first I have to ask permission to move one of his many benches and trees, so I don't start a very small forest fire. Then, I have to return everything to its original place – perfectly. I figure I am helping him out by rotating his trees, if they aren't replaced perfectly.

When the weather turns bad like wind, rain, cold temps the old guy shows signs of clinical paranoia. It's called weather, Dad. It's pretty normal stuff. Once, however, he was actually right. I went out onto the deck and suddenly patio chairs started flying. Yes, flying. I grabbed a couple. Then the bonsai trees began blowing off their stands. I hollered inside for him to come help save his 400 trees (slight exaggeration, slight). We grabbed as many as we could and placed them on the ground. However, he lost the tops out of two of his favorite trees – a red pine and a newer white pine which he had high hopes for. I was glad I could help him limit the damage. He was so distraught he immediately called Gary Wood, a bonsai teacher, to see what he should do to try saving the top of the red pine. The surgery seemed a success, but ultimately the top died off.

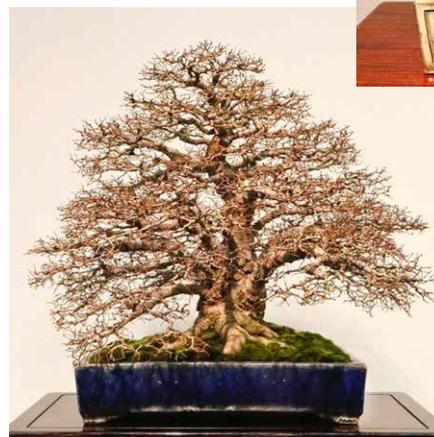
Speaking of Gary Wood, I have met some very interesting folks because of bonsai. Andy Smith was cool. So was Matt Ouwinga from Chicago (now Maryland). And the "Azalea guy". Gary was the coolest, though. He comes by often. Once, I came home from high school and Gary and Dad were working in the cold garage on trees. Gary called me over and said, "Hey, you want to see a coin trick I learned in prison?" I didn't know he was in prison once. I hesitantly watched the coin trick. It wasn't until the next day I learned Gary never was in prison. Advice to adults: do not punk a teen. It can only lead to bad things.

Hey, I am not the only one in our family who picks on pops. Mom would say to him, "Honey, I am so proud of you. I tell all my friends that you are the new president of the short tree club." I snorted my soup on that one. Good one, mom.

Okay, I have picked on my Dad enough. Bonsai are cool. And I admire anyone who has a passion for something in life, even if its bonsai. Dad, I promise not to give you too much grief about your trees. I might even water them or help you move them inside each fall. But, don't even think about leaving them to me in your will!

Chinese Quince, *Pseudocystodonia sinensis*

Chinese quince are wonderful trees. Beautiful flowers, rough craggy bark, powerful trunks – what's not to like? Here are some photos from Kokufu to enjoy.



Broom Style Zelkova Development Photos

John Denny



Zelkovas make excellent broom style shohin bonsai. Here are some photos of work done by Gary Wood on Zelkovas, which I grew from seedlings. In broom style trees, all the major branches emanate from roughly the same point on the trunk. Zelkovas tend to grow this way naturally, but we still have to do some work to really get a nice broom style look. In the first photo the branch at lower left was removed as it was too low.

Since we want branches with taper and branches that show a uniformity of size and look in broom style, we have to do some pruning. In the second photo you can see how we used grafting tape to tie the branching together. This

makes for an easy cut across all the branches, leaving them uniform. Growth will begin at the cut ends next spring and we will get nice taper in each branch.

I have some larger Zelkovas as well. On a couple of those trees, the branching does not start low enough for the tree to look good. The trunk seems too long. This happens frequently. An easy way around this is to create an air layer at a point where the top portion with branches will show just the right amount of trunk. For a shohin tree, this



might be 3 inches of trunk below the branching. You will have the original tree with a nice trunk and roots, but it will have to grow new branching. The air layered top will have excellent branching and the right length of trunk. This tree will have to thicken the trunk and grow out the small roots created by air layering. You can end up with two nice smaller trees rather than one larger out of proportion broom style tree.

Broom style is a delightful style that can create beautiful trees with great winter silhouettes.. Give them a try.