

# Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

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## Activities

### **September 20, 7 pm. IBA Membership Meeting at The Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden. 909 Robert D. Ray Drive Topics:**

*Styling and wiring workshop. Species to be chosen by club member from available trees, so bring a tree. Tree of the Month*

### **EIBA September Activities**

#### **September 22, 7:00PM, Club Meeting held at home of John Clemens home in Marion.**

**Topic:** *Building Outdoor Display Tables.*

#### **September 3 – 5. 6:30 pm. Board Meeting at Panera Restaurant on Edgewood Dr. Topics:**

*Review of Bruce-more Show, planning of Sept, Oct mtgs, planning for Officers and Holiday party, planning for club trees.*

#### **Watch for EIBA club Trip to Iowa Bonsai Assn Fall Bonsai Show at Reiman Gardens in Ames on October 8 and 9. Great show, great people, great fun, and great food!**

#### **IBA July Activities**

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## **Iowa Bonsai Shows in August**

*During August, bonsai shows were held at the State Fair and the EIBA held a show at Bruce-more Mansion's Garden and Art Fair.*

### **2016 Fair Show**

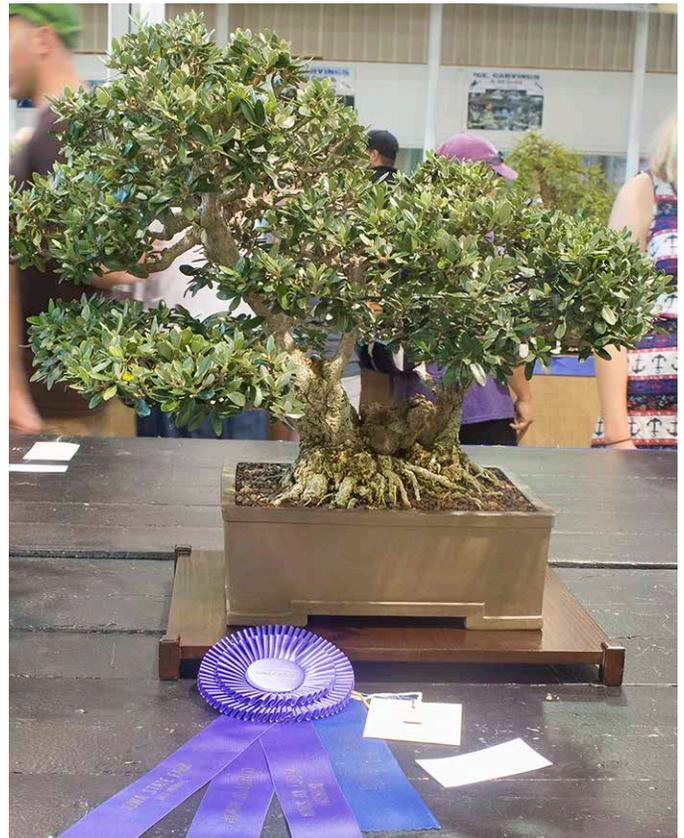
*Michael Hamon*

We had another great 2016 Fair show this year with many great trees on display. Thank you to all that participated. At the fair show, we always have a great deal of variety in regards to styles, species and skill levels displaying. Despite the fair heat and lack of air flow in the Agricultural building we had a good turnout. It

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always feels awesome to get the public involved and see them take an interest in our hobby, and even snag a few potential hobbyists. The fair gives us a great opportunity to display our wonderful little trees. Bottom line is we had another great showing this year. Thanks to all those that made it possible. Congratulations to Zoe, her wonderful European Olive tree won best in show.



## **EIBA Brucemore Show** *Bill Englert, John Denny*

EIBA has held a bonsai show at Brucemore for the past dozen years. The show gets better each year. This year was looking to be the biggest and best, however, the weather thought differently. The show is held outside and a decision was made to reduce the number of trees in half in order to keep all the trees under the limited canopies and so that visitors could have overhead



protection from the rain as they observed the trees. The quality of trees was still good and the displays were helped by excellent companion plants. Denny Molumby brought a half dozen shohin which was a fine addition. It is evident that EIBA is steadily improving the quality of their trees and making strides in display ability. Thanks to all who participated and we all look forward to a dryer year next year!

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## **Midwest Bonsai Show at Chicago Botanic Gardens**

*John Denny*

Each year I look forward to enjoying the Midwest Bonsai Show held at Chicago Botanic Gardens on Lake Cook Rd north of Chicago. The drive is not too bad and you will miss the worst of the traffic which occurs going into and out of downtown Chicago.

The Gardens are a wonderful asset for the city of

Chicago. There are many gardens, including English gardens, Japanese gardens, Children's gardens, Bulb gardens, Aquatic garden, on and on. They are all worth seeing. At the end of the day, you may wish to take the narrated tram ride.

However, let's talk of the bonsai show. The show is always in mid to late August and begins noon on Friday, running through the weekend. There is the actual bonsai show where hobbyists and professionals show their best trees. I ran into Ron Heinen, of Ames, and learned he won an award with his large Yew. Congrats, Ron! The show is nicely done and they always bring in a top notch judge. This year the Judge was Colin Lewis. I am always amazed at the number of large trees people bring to this show. But, there were many nice shohin



as well. This is the best bonsai show within driving distance of Iowa.

In addition to the actual bonsai show, the CBG has a very large number of its bonsai collection out for display in two large outside courtyards. There is excellent variety of species and many trees have a good deal of age on them. Many are quite powerful trees. An excellent photo opportunity exists as the trees all have back drops. Just take notes on the species of each photo. If you don't, you will forget what is what when you get home. At least, I do.

One of the main reasons to attend is the excellent vendor area. There are many vendors selling everything



bonsai. Cass, Natures Way, Sara Raynor, Golden Arrow, Knittle Display Stands, Mihalics from Ohio, Dasu of Iowa, and many others. You can actually see and feel the tools, pots, companions, trees. You can ask questions of the many knowledgeable vendors regarding their products and suggestions. Come with an idea of what you want and have a budget!

There are workshops available, too. Andy Smith often does one on Spruce or Ponderosa he has collected. The headlining judge will do a workshop. These are good beginner and intermediate workshops



## Chicago Bonsai Show Vendors John Denny

One of the main reasons I look forward to attending the Chicago Bonsai Show is the large selection of vendors who are selling tools, pots, trees, accent plants, display tables, wire, and everything else you can imagine. Rather than purchase online where I am sometimes disappointed upon receipt with the color of a pot or the feel of a tool in my hand, I can visually see the item and hold it feeling first hand if the tool is sturdy and well balanced or if the pot is the perfect color or depth for my tree. It is a great advantage. Yes, attending costs me money, but it can save money by not buying a pot online that I may never use. Prior to the Chicago show, I assess my tree collection to figure out which trees need a pot for next March's repotting season. If I do not have a good pot for that



tree, I measure the tree to help me determine the size of a potential pot and I determine the style of pot – oval, round, rectangle, square, etc. I begin a list of what I will need for pots. I might add a specific tool I would like. I make my shopping list, so I can be specific and not get caught up in the excitement of buying cool stuff just because it's cool. I have to have a need. This lets me then assess a rough budget.

Upon arrival, I temporarily bypass all the show trees, the Chicago Botanic Garden Bonsai collection which is always beautifully displayed, and all else. I head straight for the vending area, starting with the renowned American bonsai potter Sara Rayner. My wife came along this year and when she noticed me drooling

immediately over Sara's wonderful wares, she said to me, "You have a pot addiction and I now know who your dealer is! You need help." I told her I was following a 12 step program. "I start at one end of Sara's tables and then I slowly take 12 steps, picking up pots as I move along." Gail laughed and said she was going to join a tour group to see the garden. I told her to call to meet up later. She responded, "Oh, no need, you will likely still be standing right here an hour from now." I felt the pain of her successful needling, then I realized by leaving me alone, she had become an enabler to my pot addiction and I turned back to my task at hand – looking for the perfect pot.

Of all the vendors, I will share a bit about just three this year. Sara Rayner is the most well known creator of bonsai pots in America. She works out of Red Wing, MN. She makes glazed pots. Her glazes are soft and warm and are beautiful. They harmonize with the trees, complimenting them, not stealing attention from them. Her pots are perfectly shaped, level and stable, often with fine work on the lip. Her attention to detail is notable.

Sara has an easy going personality. She is quite humble, given her ability and the fact bonsai people are always gushing over her talents. Sara knows bonsai and has



shown trees at the Chicago Show often. This helps her assist you in selecting the right pot for your tree. I was looking for a pot to suit a Stewartia. Sara knew Stewartia have a reddish hued trunk and pulled a pot from her

back table that was perfect. Another time, I described a large, slanting Ponderosa of mine. She said, "Oh, look at the Ponderosa and pot at the other end of her several tables." There was a nice Ponderosa very similar to mine in size and shape. She showed me the pot it was in and commented she thought the pot was slightly oversized. That allowed me to pick the perfect size pot for my own Ponderosa. Her expertise has expanded to suiban, suiseki, etc. Sara shows and sells her pots at many of the larger shows like Artisans Cup, Valvanis's National Exhibition, Chicago Show, and others. Get to her table early if you go.

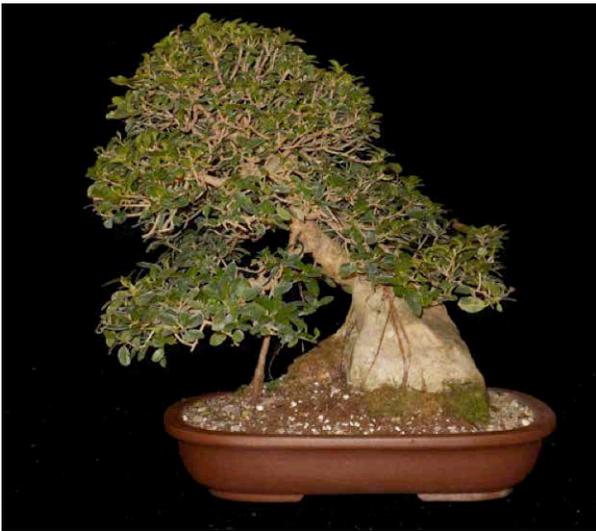
Another vendor, I always love seeing is Andy Smith of Golden Arrow Bonsai. Andy has given workshops in Iowa. He is a good hearted humble fellow who works in forestry. He is noted for collecting trees from nature like Rocky Mountain junipers, Ponderosa pine, Lodgepole pine, Limber pine, and Spruce trees. Andy has perfected collecting, potting up the newly collected trees and nurturing them through the shock of transplanting and the first winter in a pot. Andy is honest as they come. He will tell you the truth about the trees, about the state of the roots which he grades prior to potting, and he will give you can honest price. Andy is a guy who loves the outdoors and has a deep reverence for nature and the earth. His philosophy is largely influenced by his study of Buddhism. Andy is a fine writer, where his humor and homespun philosophy shine even above his bonsai knowledge. He writes the lead column for the ABS e-newsletter. Andy also has a couple of videos out on Collecting and Finding the Bonsai Within where he works on several collected Ponderosa. Be sure to check out his trees for sale at his website, Golden Arrow Bonsai. You cannot go wrong with Andy.

I met a new vendor this year from a small town south of Buffalo, NY, where I lived for three years. Fred Miller runs Tandamiti Bonsai. We began by sharing stories of the western NY area and progressed to his tree hobby that had become a business. Fred lived 20 years in South Africa and also lived in Saskatchewan, Canada. "Tandamiti" is from the Zulu language of S. Africa and means, "We love trees."

At Fred's booth I bought a small display table made in his NY workshop. He had several larger ones, which were well made and reasonable in price. Fred has

between 400 to 500 trees, mainly Tropicals. Imagine the work it takes to manage hundreds of Tropical trees in the snowy climate of western NY?!! He keeps them inside a greenhouse during half the year, then slowly moves them outside for summer.

Fred's tropical species include *Ficus netalensis*, *Ficus burtt-davyi*, and *acacia*. In Fred's experience he thinks *netalensis* (see photo below) is a much better bonsai than given credit by Jerry Meislik in Jerry's book on *Ficus*. It is a strangler fig and makes a great root over rock bonsai. It grows quickly with good trunks. The *acacia* is usually styled as a flat top wide canopy and makes for good groupings. If you are interested in Tropical trees including shohin sizes or need a new display stand, give Fred Miller of Tandamiti Bonsai a call or look at his web site.



There were many, many other very fine vendors, including Iowa's own Dasu Bonsai. Perhaps, I can write them up next year!

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## Hinoki Cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*)

John Denny

Hinoki is a broad, conical tree with soft, stringy bark. Flat, fan-shaped foliage is dark-green when mature with bright white bands underneath. Can reach heights of 20 meters in its native Japan.

There are a number of varieties available of which *C. obtusa* 'Nana Gracilis' and *C. obtusa* 'Yatsubusa' (both referred

to as Dwarf Hinoki Cypresses) are of particular use due to their naturally more compact growing habits. *Nana Gracilis* can be prone to lose inner foliage which it does not replace. Easily if at all.

There is also *C. pisifera*, Sawara, which is another version, with varieties of Boulevard which has steel gray foliage and Plumosa which is more dark green.

Hinoki make fine bonsai and are a classic Japanese species for bonsai. They have a reputation for being somewhat difficult, but as we shall see, if you know enough about them, these difficulties can be minimized and you can be successful in your cultivation.



The major styling challenge for false cypress is the fatal combination of rapid growth, die back from lack of light, and refusal to bud on old wood. If *Chamaecyparis* isn't pruned constantly, inside and lower branches will die and may never grow back. Another issue that causes loss of foliage is lack of proper watering. Hinoki love water and there are several tips to help with this issue.

Hinoki grow in Japan and are tall straight trees that create a damp, even wet environment on the forest floor. This has implications for culturing as bonsai. Hinoki prefer to have their roots cool and damp both in nature and as bonsai. When repotting Hinoki, wait until their natural green color returns which is often later spring. Do not repot too early. Hinoki do not like their roots disturbed, so care is taken to remove no more than 30% of the roots. Remove the old soil with chopstick and root rake, but be gentle. Use a sharp scissor to cut roots. A mix of equal parts akadama, lava, and pumice works best. In more arid areas, add a bit more akadama as this holds water better and Hinoki must not be allowed to have their soil dry out. Put a larger particulate drainage layer down as Hinoki require more waterings, but still must drain well. Another trick when repotting is to place sphagnum moss you have rubbed

## *Hinoki Cypress - continued*

through a screen on the surface of the fresh soil. This will keep the soil damp and moist, similar to its natural growing environment. Established Hinoki bonsai are repotted every 3-6 years, younger trees more often. Using a slightly deeper pot is yet another way to keep the roots moist and cool, which in turn increases your chances of holding inner low foliage.

Fertilize from spring through fall with high Nitrogen cakes. I have used full strength Miracle Grow liquid twice monthly with success on younger trees.

Hinoki are less drought tolerant than other conifers, so require more frequent watering on hot days. Keep those roots moist. Water this species when the top soil is dry. This is not the same as most other species. On the hottest days, water a second time.

Hinoki are fairly resistant to pests and disease. You should spray for mites, however. Floromite works well. Winter care is typical for our area. They should not be exposed to temps below 20F. I have not kept them outside, mulched over, so cannot vouch for that approach in Iowa, but they have done well for me in garages where I only heated with a small portable heater on nights below zero. Some species of Hinoki will turn purplish brown in winter, but recover their color in spring.

Once Hinoki come out of winter, allow them to grow without pruning until early June. Like junipers, prune Hinoki in early June and again in September. However, pruning Hinoki is very different than pruning junipers. Hinokis are pinched to maintain size, balance and structure.

Pinch using the pads of your finger tips and thumb. Use your off hand to hold the foliage to support it as you pinch. You may use scissors to remove small branchlets, but do not cut into green foliage or it will turn brown from the cut. Pinch back the bright green new growth until you leave only a small amount of this year's growth. Hinoki usually only grow a couple inches a year on the end of branch tips. If you want to cut back just into brown wood, you can, us-

ing scissors. After the June pinching, allow the tree to grow naturally until early to mid-September, when you should repeat the pinching. As this pinching process is repeated, the foliage becomes finer and finer.



Regarding styling, Hinoki are usually styled as they are found in their native environment, which is formal upright. Because of the twice annual pinching, Hinoki are usually styled with rounded pads. Branches of a formal upright should be lowered but there should not be too much wiggle or movement in the branches. Wire to the tips, as you would with juniper. If your Hinoki is young, fan the pads out like fingers on a hand to maximize sunlight to them and to encourage vital back budding. As they mature, you can do more layering of branches to form pads.

Hinoki make classic bonsai with strong trunks and feminine foliage. With new knowledge you can grow these lush looking trees, keeping the inner growth on lower branches happy. Give Hinoki cypress a try!

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## **Old Historical Catlin Elm**

*By Michael Hagedorn*

This is an antique tree created by one of our great California bonsai masters Mas Ishii. His son Gary Ishii is now proprietor of their family nursery Chikugo-en in Los Angeles. A client of mine found this unusual Catlin elm, which had been grown from a cutting by Mas about 50 years ago. It's a modest sized tree, achuhin, 15 x high, 24 x wide.



Old deciduous that are well done are very rare. The lion's share of credit always goes to the creator of the tree, when grown for a long time since it was young. This is how it looked the day it was purchased:

Because the tree was so well maintained we only did a couple of things, and those were subtle. A branch in front



was removed, the tree was raised a bit to display the nebari, the front shifted just slightly, and also we found an old Chinese pot for it. The olive colored Chinese pot is about 150 years old and has been used in the

Kokufu show a couple times.

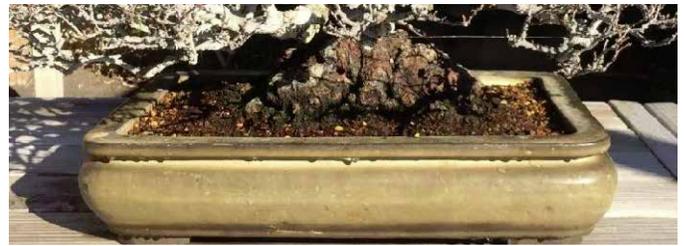
It is fun to play with changing the pot, and see how that changes the tree. Sometimes the tree actually changes a lot—it can feel differently—with a new pot.

We liked this pot not just because it's a bit sexier and has some softer lines for our elm, but also because the pot's age

is reflected in the patina, and that supports the true age of the tree. (If you blow up this photo a bit you can see light whitish-cream scratches...that's actually the true color of the glaze. The grayish brown cast over that is the patina from years of use...that's what a pot that is 150 years old will offer).

In the sun the depth in the glaze and the patina of the pot are more easily seen. Gorgeous old pot, makes potters like myself grin stupidly in admiration.

On New Year's day it's nice to look back and savor the past. The work the Ishii's put into this tree is worth a bow of gratitude, decades of careful cultivation and training that we can enjoy today.



## Timely Tips

September is a month of change. Temperatures begin to cool, especially night time temps. Colors change. Roots grow unseen beneath the soil. Trees are beginning to prepare for the upcoming cold season. The beginning of September will continue to be warm, but that will change and trees will not need as much water later in the month. If you have tropical trees, begin watching for night time temps below 55F. Bring tropical trees inside for the night.

September is a great time to work on junipers. Cleaning, pruning, wiring, styling can all be done. Clean weeds from the soil. Top dress with fresh surface soil if needed. Clean the pot. If you tree has dead wood, now is a good time to clean the dead wood with a light brushing to remove dirt, algae, etc. If you want to preserve the dead wood, use lime sulfur. Most people use it 50 50 with water. It is thin and can drip, so cover your pot with a cloth. Lightly mist your dead wood with water, then use a rag to remove any excess water. Use a fine brush. Don't get any on live bark. Speaking of bark, remove any loose bark using fingernails to catch the edges. Loose bark can harbor insect activity. You can brush the bark lightly to bring out the fine cinnamon color underneath. This color contrasts nicely with the sulfured dead wood. If you have moss growing on the trunk, scrape it off, then use a mild vinegar solution and a

toothbrush to clean the moss more fully.

Fall is a good time to prune junipers. First remove unwanted foliage. This means cleaning out unnecessary new buds in branch crotches, remove all yellow or weak foliage, remove extra small branches emanating close to each other to make room for light and air, remove foliage hanging straight down from branches, and remove unwanted foliage sticking straight up. Your foliage should look cleaner now. Look for areas of too much density and begin to thin branchlets out. Leave alternating branchlets. By thinning you create a healthier tree, allowing in more light and air, and your will have less disease and pests.

You may wire now or wait until November. Wire and bend major branches to achieve your style goals. Then complete wiring to the tips. Many folks skip wiring to the tips, but the extra work is worthwhile, as you can then place the small branches and foliage tips precisely where you want them. Pads come into place and your tree will look much more professional. Continue fertilizing in September to help build healthy roots for winter and reserves for next spring.

Make September the month to focus on Junipers, using this knowledge, and doing more for you junipers than you have in past. You will be rewarded!