

# Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

www.iabonsai.org

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

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## IBA March Activities

**March 16, 6:00 pm. IBA Club Meeting:  
Confluence Brewing Co. 1235 Thomas Beck Rd**

*Everybody is welcome.*

**March 20, 9:00 am to Noon, IBA Club Monthly  
Meeting, 9:00 am to Noon**

*Bring a tree to work on, whatever you want.*

**Special Topic, 10:30 am: Making a bonsai soil  
mix, group activity.**

**IBA Meetings at The Greater  
Des Moines Botanical Garden.  
909 Robert D. Ray Drive**

*Everybody is welcome.*

## EIBA March Activities

**March 12, 8:00 pm. Board Meeting at  
Panera Restaurant on Edgewood Road**

*Topics: Topics: Prep for March club mtg, discuss  
potential talks to various groups*

**March 19, 7:00 pm - 2:30 pm, EIBA Club  
Meeting, Pierson Flower Shop on Ellis Blvd.**

**Topic: Pot sale. Repotting demo and discussion.  
Repot some 2nd year seedlings.**

## Bonsai Soil Components for Sale

**Pumice \$20 for five gallons  
\$15 if you bring your own Bucket.**

**Akadama \$32 per bag, \$30 for members**

**Contact Scott Allen or Tim Peterson**

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## MABA/Milwaukee 2020

### INTRODUCTION

On June 25-28, 2020, Bonsai artists and MABA members are heading to Milwaukee, WI for the MABA/Milwaukee Convention! In part to see headlining artist François Jeker from France, Ted Matson from California and any of the other eight artists.

### 10 Reasons to Attend MABA in Milwaukee

**Learn from the Best:** François Jeker is a world class artist in design. His carving techniques are arguably the best in the world. Ted Matson is a stellar teacher. Todd Schlafer and Jennifer Price are two of the best new artists in North America. Mark Fields leadership skills are among the best along with his artistry. Watch them transform a piece of raw material.

**Regional:** Take the weekend to discuss techniques, care, trees with others from our region. Those of us who have distilled information from numerous artists and adjusted it for our region will be available to answer your questions

MABA - continued

and talk about our particular challenges.

**Value Priced:** MABA/Milwaukee 2020 has many sponsors to help offset the cost of bringing quality artists, material, and experience that is value priced. Included in registration are educational presentations, observing of all workshops and diverse demonstrations.

**New Trees:** Twelve workshops have material provided! The artist usually picks the material so that you get the best material along with their guidance. And the material is geared to our climate and can be developed by you into show quality bonsai

**Community:** Become involved and connect with a community of bonsai enthusiasts in your area. Get recognized for your skills, connect with friends and make new friends, network with experts in your area. Attend some great lectures in a small intimate environment.

**Workshops:** Workshops range from beginner friendly, intermediate to advanced; including a set of “experience with” workshops that highlight treatment for collected, nursery, and pre-bonsai material. There is a workshop for everyone.

**Quality Vendors:** Our careful selection of vendors allows you to purchase material, containers, and supplies without risk of inferior products. The vendors are partners in our convention. Win some great bonsai items from a raffle and or buy yourself something new.

**Bonsai Exhibits:** Exhibit your tree to receive written critiques by the headlining artists. See your tree among other quality bonsai in the innovative exhibit area. Experience not only the exhibit at the hotel but enjoy the Bonsai Exhibit and viewing stone display at LSG.

**Local Attractions:** Take advantage of all Milwaukee has to offer during the weekend and extend your stay with your family. Summerfest,

Harley Museum, Art Museum, Discovery World, Milwaukee County Zoo are just a few attractions.

**Lynden Sculpture Garden:** Experience art in nature through its collection of more than 50 monumental sculptures sited across 40 acres of park, lake and woodland., along with the Bonsai Exhibit which is collaboration with the Milwaukee Bonsai Society and the Milwaukee Bonsai Foundation; and the private collection of viewing stones by Artist Tony Ankowicz.

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## 94th Kokufu Bonsai Exhibition

Photos by Bill Valvanis



*Kokufu Bonsai Award Japanese five-needle pine*



*Kokufu Bonsai prize Chojubai Japanese flowering quince*



*Firethorn Pyracantha*



*Kokufu Bonsai Award Hinoki cypress. This is the true species, not the commonly available dwarf cultivar.*

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## Roots: Out of Sight, Out of Mind?

*John Denny*

Fully one third of every bonsai tree remains out of sight, only to be seen once every couple of years at repotting season. So, how much do we really know about bonsai tree roots? What is their purpose? How do they work? How can I screw them up? How can I make them function better?

The root system is just as important as all the tree's parts above ground. The roots hold the tree upright. This is true in a bonsai, too, although repotting disturbs this function, so we usually wire the tree into the pot to keep it upright until the roots have grown back and become firmly held in the soil. The roots

collect and move both water and nutrients from the soil into the tree, a critical function. Roots can store food for emergency use. Witness some trees like ficus that can lose all its branches yet is able to survive. Roots also are involved in the hormone function of the tree producing cytokinins which communicate and control to some degree the actions of the leaves and branches.

We also know if we make a serious error and damage the root system, we can kill our tree. Errors like: under watering, over watering, over fertilizing, over pruning, damaging root hairs during root pruning, etc.

A tree's roots can extend much further outward than its canopy. Pioneering species, say an Elm or Juniper, will send one or two very long roots out which helps it find water and nutrients. I heard a Master Gardener say he uses the following formula to determine the distance a root system extends from a tree: take the diameter of the tree, say 10 inches, multiply by 1.5, giving you 15. The root system extends 15 feet from the trunk. That is in your yard. It is very different in a bonsai pot where the canopy can extend twice the width of the root system.

The tree needs a constant supply of food and water to survive. These enter the tree through the root system. Dissolved minerals and water are absorbed, by osmosis, through the root hairs along the tips of each small root. These nutrients are carried up to the leaves where they are converted into complex carbohydrates, which are the food that the tree uses.

Each of the root hairs is actually only one meristem cell which has elongated to protrude a few millimeters from the surface of the root. By osmosis, the dissolved minerals are passed into the root hair and then, by fluid pressure, passed through the xylem layer all the way up to the leaves.

Bonsai trees like to have their roots in moist, but not wet, soil at all times. This means that the soil must never be allowed to completely dry out or the tree will quickly die. If you discover one day that your bonsai is wilted and has drooping leaves but was in perfect health the previous day, it's safe to assume you probably forgot to water it. Watering too often, however, can also harm the tree because it can allow root rot to set in.

Soil composition has important interactions with

the roots. You want a fast draining environment that retains just enough moisture for the following 24 hours. A coarse soil provides a multitude of tiny spaces for air and this aids the growth of the roots.

When a bonsai's roots grow to where they completely fill the pot they have become root bound. When this happens the mass of dense roots inside the pot prevents water from draining through the pot and causes it to merely overflow the edges of the pot..

Because repotting is done on a bonsai only once every few years, it should be taken as an opportunity to carefully examine the tree's root system. While the bonsai tree roots are exposed and spread out, look for roots that are spongy or of an unhealthy color. An unhealthy color is one that is dark brown or black when the root is scraped with your fingernail. If you find any, remove them so that only strong healthy roots remain.

Next begin pruning unwanted roots. The type of roots that you want to keep on the tree are the thin, short ones. These have many more root hairs than do thick, long roots. Roots that are the diameter of a drinking straw or larger and are long should be removed from the tree. After removing all the large roots, you should have a mass of very thin, short roots.

Be careful when removing soil from the roots. Root hairs are thinner than a human hair and can be destroyed either physically or through drying out. Be gentle in combing out roots and keep the roots moist if repotting outside in hot, windy conditions. Aftercare is important when finished repotting. Since those root hairs have been severely reduced through root pruning and damage, the tree's ability to acquire moisture and nutrients is now limited until the roots and root hairs can recover. Meanwhile the canopy can still transpire moisture out of the tree and the tree is limited now in its ability to absorb water and transport it to replenish the water the leaves have just lost. That is why you must keep your newly potted tree away from heat and wind. And do not fertilize a newly repotted tree for three weeks or so, because the root hairs cannot handle the fertilizer yet. Thoughtless aftercare is responsible for many tree deaths in the spring time. Understanding your roots should help limit those losses.

## Timley Tips

John Denny

Temps are warming quickly and for those who keep their trees around 30 to 35F over winter, it is time to begin repotting. The fun begins. Time to get your hands dirty.

I won't go into details on repotting techniques as we have covered that before.. However, here are some thoughts for you. First, consider working with a bonsai friend. Placing a tree in a pot takes careful consideration and also takes an extra pair of hands to keep the tree in perfect position as the other partner wires it into the pot snugly. A friend can remind you of the steps it takes to repot, make suggestions, and help vote on the best front to your tree, or mix soil while you work on roots. And then you can return the favor. Plus, I think bonsai with friends is just more fun.

Another thought is to take notes. If you have not done this, begin. Write down a list of all the trees you repotted, date repotted, soil used, pot description. Trust me, this will help you down the road in future repotting years.

Aftercare for newly repotted trees is a biggie. Newly repotted trees with freshly cut roots are susceptible to all manner of calamities. Keep them out of freezing night time temps. Keep them out of wind. Wind can kill trees when roots cannot get enough water to the tree. And do NOT fertilize the newly repotted trees for three weeks or more. Let the roots get established first.

You might consider taking photos of each of your trees after repotting. You will have a nice idea of how much your tree has grown and improved since that point.

Without a reference photo it is difficult to see progress.

Last thought. Repotting can be seen as work and dirty work at that. Or it can be seen as a joyful opportunity to give fresh life to your beloved bonsai trees. Enjoy the process of repotting!' Bonsai is FUN!!