

Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

www.iabonsai.org

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



June 2021

Volume 80, Issue 5

From the Editor

Hi, Everybody! Bonsai in Iowa is starting to swing! See information in this Newsletter regarding Todd Schlafer and Jennifer Price workshop opportunities. Meeting particulars are set out in the President's reports. We have a great article by Noah Butler on Bonsai Soil components and a little bit about what is going on in Members' bonsai yards in the Members' Activities column. We hope you enjoy the read!

Send me pictures and information about what you are doing and any weblinks, pages or posts you think should be shared with the club and I'll put them in future Newsletters!

NEWSLETTER CLASSIFIEDS. Is there something you need? Do you have something you want to trade, sell or just give away to a happy home? Send me your adds! Bonsai related ONLY, please!

Remember that prior Newsletters are available on the Iowa Bonsai Association website (www.iabonsai.org). There's a lot of good information there.

scaufeldt@icloud.com
scaufeldt@daufeldtlawfirm.com
(319) 430-3822

Susan Daufeldt

Inside This Issue

From the Editor	1
From the IBA and EIBA Presidents	1-3
Jennifer Price Workshops	3
Name That Tree (Question)	3
Timely Tips	4
Noah's Arc (<i>Arc of Knowledge</i>)	4-7
Member Activities	7-10
Name That Tree (Answer)	11
Bonsai Inspiration	11
Bonsai Classifieds	12

Corporate Sponsor

DaSu Bonsai Studios



www.bonsaitrees.com/

From the IBA and EIBA Presidents

IBA

IBA members and friends,

And the roller coaster of weather continues. I was hoping to express how happy I was that it had finally warmed up but with highs in the 50's and lows in the 30's in some parts of the state I really can't do that. However, I can tell you that our first IBA meeting since Feb 2020 was a success. We had a good turn out and many brought trees to work on. David Lowman showed



up with some really nice companion plants, so I came home with some new stuff. The next IBA meeting will be Saturday June 19 from 9-1 at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden and we hope to see you all there. The meeting locations within the GDMBG have changed so please check with the front desk for meeting location. Masks will be required.

We still have one slot available for the Todd Schlafer workshop on Friday June 18th from 9-5. Workshop will be limited to 6 participants. Cost is \$100 and lunch will be provided by the Iowa Bonsai Association. This workshop is open to IBA/EIBA members alike on a first come first serve basis. If you want to register, please contact Scott Allen at scott@vividpix.com. The workshop will be held at Scott Allen's in Des Moines area.

The IBA will be doing another Bonsai for Beginners class at the GDMBG in June so if you're interested in that please contact the garden and get registered.

As mentioned last month, If you haven't done so already please renew your membership.
Hope to see you all soon!
Scott

EIBA

EIBA President's Report

Members: Note that EIBA board meetings are OPEN meetings. This means that you do NOT need to be a board member in order to attend. Because board meetings are now being routinely held on ZOOM, the meetings are more accessible. Going forward, the link for the board meeting will be sent to all members. Please feel free to attend.

June 10, 2021, 6:30 pm
EIBA Board Meeting via Zoom. The link will be sent out the Monday or Tuesday prior to the meeting. Please contact me by phone prior to the meeting if you think you have not received the link.

June 17, 2021, 6:30 pm
Club Meeting: Cat Nelson will present on Plant Physiology as it relates to Bonsai. Pierson's Greenhouse, 1800 Ellis Blvd NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405.



June 26, 2021, Noon – 4pm
Club Workday. Outdoor Location to be announced. Exact Time period may change slightly depending on location scheduling requirements. Let's get together and work on Trees. This takes the place of our picnic. You should bring your own food and drink, as you like. Because of COVID, we will not be bringing dishes to share and Jim will not be grilling. So sorry!

Jennifer Price Workshop

If you are interested in working with Jennifer Price, she is coming in the weekend of June 12, 2021. This is being privately sponsored and is NOT a club activity. See information concerning this opportunity set forth further on in this Newsletter.

July 8, 2021, 6:30 pm
EIBA Board Meeting via Zoom. The link will be sent out the Monday or Tuesday prior to the meeting. Please contact me by phone prior to the meeting if you think you have not received the link.

July 15, 2021

Club Meeting: Gary Gnade will present on his trip to Japan in the Spring of 2019. Come and hear Gary talk, ask questions and see many wonderful photographs! Pierson's Greenhouse, 1800 Ellis Blvd NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405.

If you haven't had the opportunity to pay your dues yet, you can send dues or donations to our club Treasurer: Jim Rajtora, 3512 Sue Lane NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405. Checks should be made out to "EIBA." Dues without soil: \$15.00. Dues with one bucket of Soil: \$30.00

Susan Daufeldt

scdaufeldt@icloud.com

sdaufeldt@daufeldtlawfirm.com

(319) 430-3822

Jennifer Price Work Study Group and Work Shop Opportunities

June 11, 12 and 13, 2021 **Jennifer Price** is coming to Iowa. This is a privately sponsored opportunity. If you are interested in working with Jennifer or auditing, please contact me.

Susan Daufeldt

scdaufeldt@icloud.com

sdaufeldt@daufeldtlawfirm.com

(319) 430-3822



Name that Tree

**What kind of tree is this?
(Answer on page 11.)**



Timely Tips

Susan Daufeldt

It's June and the hot weather (the really hot weather!) is on its way. The wind seems to continue unabated and with it, after a brutally dry and windy spring, the rain. Rain and more rain. Interspersed with some unseasonably cold weather, the heat and humidity are here. Heat and humidity means pests and diseases abound. You are probably already experiencing the effects of overwintering, unseen and unaddressed pests and the fungal disease rust that is invariably present during the cool and wet springs. Those of you with more experience may have instituted your pest and fungal control measures already. If you haven't begun, it's time or past time to get started. A strong water spray, with regularity, can help in controlling pests. Bayer 3 in 1 is a good basic starting point, but will not control many types of mites (as I have discovered to my chagrin). If you want to stay as organic as possible, don't underestimate the usefulness of Copper and/or Sulfur for controlling black spot and other fungal diseases. Rotating these with Mancozeb is a good basic disease control practice. In ALL cases, follow manufacturer instructions and do not spray more frequently than advised. Avoid using different products in the same 7 to 10 day period. Over-spraying may cause phototoxicity and damage or kill your tree.

As your more developed trees harden off their first flush of spring growth it's time to prune and start fertilizing (you have already been fertilizing developing trees!). If you have deciduous trees that have put out a lot of spring growth, you will need to keep them out of direct sun for a bit after pruning. Otherwise, interior leaves that weren't getting much sun before will be sunburned. Black and Red pines need to be decandled around the 10th of June in Iowa. Do NOT fertilize your pines after decandling until the new shoots have hardened off, usually around mid-August. When candles open, you may want to spray the new shoots to prevent needle cast (See Noah Bulter's Article on Needle Cast in the April 2021 Issue of this Newsletter). It is time to repot your tropicals. If your tropical trees are strong, you may want to defoliate for smaller leaves and improved ramification.

Watch your trees' water needs as the weather and their growth changes. Also, as the summer progresses, sunlight will be more intense and may impact certain locations much more than they did in, say, March. Make sure your small trees and trees in shallow and unshaded pots are not getting too much sun. Also, be careful with trees like Japanese maples, who don't like a great deal of sun, in any case. Conversely, if you have trident maples or other trees that have great fall color, those trees will need plenty of sun in order to produce that color. Be careful though – a small tree may do better in less sun than a larger tree that may be able to tolerate a great deal of sun because of larger pot size or a canopy that shades the pot well. While most trees have broken already, it is still possible to collect some deciduous species. Careful after care is critical, however. Keep them out of the sun and wind until they are growing well.

Warning for Collectors: If you are still collecting deciduous trees, the ticks are at incredible levels. Long pants and boots highly recommended.

Information in this month's Timley Tips specifically relating to conifers and tropicals was gleaned from prior Timley Tips written by John Denny.

Susan Daufeldt

Noah's Arc of Learning

Noah Butler

Article 4: Digging into Soil

I am indebted to Jonas Dupuich, Michael Hagedorn, Walter Pall, and Julian Adams for sharing their essays, perspectives and experiences concerning components and substrates for use as bonsai soil.

Well, it's June and with the exception of tropical bonsai, re-potting season is far behind us. Nevertheless, this month I would like to discuss bonsai soil. Soil is just so fundamentally important I think it's a reasonable topic for discussion anytime of the year. Addressing matters related to bonsai soil now may also help you plan in advance for next spring.

As many IBA members know, selecting the appropriate soil substrate for your bonsai trees can be overwhelming. Those who have attempted to independently research this topic will also know there are enormous numbers of contradictory assertions and loads of confusing information out there, both online and in print. Some will say you must use imported, traditional volcanic clay components, such as akadama or kanuma; others will attest to their successes using fired silica clay material like either Turface MVP™ or kitty litter, or even automotive oil absorbents like Dry-Stall or Oil-Dri, which are really pumice and diatomaceous earth, respectively.

Although opinions do vary, in this installment I will attempt to help you make practical decisions about your bonsai soil recipe. In general, your thoughts should be focused on considering: 1) the stage of the tree's development; 2) whether the tree is either a conifer or deciduous species; 3) the basic needs of a few common bonsai species; and 4) budgets and availability of substrates. Considering these points should ultimately help you make the best decisions for your trees.

Let's start with pre-bonsai. Soil selection for pre-bonsai trees in the earliest stages of development is much less important, as the soil will be replaced multiple times before these trees are eventually placed in bonsai pots. I am defining pre-bonsai as either young nursery stock or a tree that requires substantial trunk and branch thickening and development. For pre-bonsai, good options include 100% perlite for very young seedlings, or perlite mixed with an organic mulch containing peat moss and/or pine (or fir) bark. Pumice mixed with an organic mulch is a great option because the developing trees will benefit from nutrients and moisture provided by the organic material. Akadama, discussed further below, is not recommended for trees in early development. In fact, professional Jonas Dupuich from the California San Francisco Bay area reports that during his 30 years of cultivating bonsai, using more akadama actually slows growth (see below). Because we generally want faster growth for pre-bonsai in these early stages of development, the use of organic mixes that contain either peat moss, fir or pine bark, along with either perlite or pumice, are terrific.

For collected trees, especially conifers, 100% pumice is widely used with excellent success. Pumice drains very quickly yet retains enough moisture to keep the trees moving along and healthy. Of course, regular fertilizing is critical when using completely inorganic substrates such as 100% pumice. When using pumice or any other mix or substrate, it is very important to sieve the material and sort according to particle size (Fig. 1). Uniformity in particle size better regulates moisture and oxygen levels around the roots. Smaller particles will retain more moisture than larger particles. If you do not have a soil sieve, pick one up immediately! There are a number of inexpensive sieves available online. Select one that comes with multiple screen/mesh/insert sizes (Fig. 2) so you can sort particles into batches of uniform size.



Fig. 1. Bulk pumice before sieving. Ideally, a sieve is used to separate pumice particles into their respective sizes. Sieves should also be used to separate clay components, such as akadama, kanuma and Turface MVP™, into uniform particle sizes. Photo credit: Crataegus Bonsai



Fig. 2. Bonsai soil sieve set. Generally available for less than \$30, these are critical for both beginners and seasoned bonsai growers. Screens are interchangeable and simply snap into the circular ring.

Tropical bonsai like ficus, schefflera, and fukien tea trees will grow successfully in soil that contains 50% akadama and 50% pumice and/or lava rock. The proportion of akadama can be adjusted if you find the substrate either stays too wet (use less akadama) or dries too quickly (use more akadama). Fertilizing regularly is again key, as neither akadama nor pumice/lava contain any nutrients.

Is there a difference between pumice and lava? Do they impart distinct characteristics and properties to the soil? Probably. But professionals like Jonas Dupuich say the differences are too small to matter much. Jonas also recently remarked that he was moving away from using lava and he now focuses more on using pumice. I am following suit, as lava is unforgiving to shears during root pruning, whereas pumice easily cuts in half. Eliminating lava also means one less ingredient for me to have to hunt down each year!

The goals for refined bonsai trees are generally to limit internode length and either maintain or modestly improve ramification. Akadama is the conventional volcanic clay substrate used for refined bonsai. For conifers including pines and junipers, both of which do better in slightly drier soils, the standard practice is to use 33% akadama mixed with 66% of either pumice and/or lava. For refined deciduous trees that require slightly more moisture, 50 to 80% akadama is standard with the remainder of the mix being pumice and/or lava. Of note, the proportion of akadama added can be adjusted to regulate growth. When refined trees are struggling, need more vigor, or they stay too wet, reduce the proportion of akadama. When refined trees require slower growth or they dry out too fast, use a higher proportion of akadama. Some species of bonsai, especially deciduous conifers like larch and bald cypress, are truly moisture loving and 100% akadama is a great choice for those trees. It's actually hard to slow larch and cypress down no matter the substrate they're planted in!

For those of you growing azaleas, an acid-loving species, 100% kanuma is the classic choice and an option that keeps them happy and healthy. This somewhat acidic substrate can be used for both developing and refined specimens of azalea. Like akadama, kanuma is imported and can be expensive. Thus, an alternative substrate for azaleas includes 60% baked loam and 40% peat moss, the latter providing necessary acidity in the soil. Walter Pall has been using this loam/peat mix for his azaleas for decades with truly excellent results.

Although there may be exceptions depending on the species, if you're growing broadleaf evergreens like Yaupon holly, live oak, *Elaeagnus*, privet and boxwood, you'll generally do just fine using a somewhat moister soil containing 50 to 80% akadama, just like the mixtures that benefit most deciduous trees.

If you're still reading, you may have noticed that I have made a significant number of references to akadama in this article. Akadama, as many of us know, can be very expensive and harder to acquire (this is also why you should avoid akadama for your pre-bonsai). If you are in a position to use akadama, it's very important to understand that quality matters. Low-quality akadama is soft and will break down very rapidly, essentially creating a clay mud in your bonsai pots. Try to get the hardest akadama available. Talk to your club-mates, read about the various offerings from importers here in the USA, and make an informed decision when purchasing a specific brand of imported akadama.

As suggested in the introduction, alternatives to natural volcanic clays like akadama do exist. Turface MVP™ is a fired clay widely used by many bonsai growers in the USA with high success. The key advantage of Turface MVP™ is that its inexpensive and easy to acquire. But some caution should be noted. If you're using Turface MVP™, it is critical to sift out the fines. Also, Michael Hagedorn of Crataegus Bonsai has extensively researched Turface MVP™ and Oil-Dri (diatomaceous earth) and he has concluded that these materials both have a somewhat hydrophobic property if they are allowed to get too dry.

That means they actually repel water! Not ideal. Moreover, Turface MVP™ particles are somewhat flat in shape (Fig. 3), so the particles have a tendency to stack upon each other in the pot, effectively making a series of compacted layers that repel water. If you do elect to use either Turface MVP™ or diatomaceous earth as the base for your bonsai soil, you may have to water very frequently to prevent the material from drying to the point that they become hydrophobic. Michael's observations are that root growth in Turface MVP™ and Oil-Dri are generally long, stringy and erratic, at best. Although Michael has had some success growing deciduous trees in mixes containing either Turface MVP™ or Oil-Dri, all of his conifers have failed to thrive in these substrates, for the reasons outlined above.



Fig. 3. Turface MVP™, a widely-used substrate here in the USA. Lots of growers report great success using Turface MVP™ in their bonsai pots. But, like any substrate, there are both pros and cons and some important consideration for using this material. Photo credit: Crataegus Bonsai

Michael's observations are in stark contrast to Julian Adams. Julian has been using Turface MVP™ for his beautiful and award-winning Japanese black pines, Scots pines and Zuisho white pines for years. Julian recommends the following mix for conifers: 4 parts Turface MVP™, ¼ part crushed granite (chicken grit) and 1 part fine peat (Julian buys bales from Lowe's and runs it through a ¼" screen and uses the fines). Notably, Julian never uses bark in his Turface MVP™-based soil mix, and he notes that bark's organic nature, especially related to drainage, can substantially change over the course of several years between re-potting. Much too unpredictable for his tastes.

OK. So, what does one do if akadama (or kanuma) is either unavailable or does not fit within one's bonsai budget, and you're now frightened by the thought of using Turface MVP™? Pumice is the answer. Pumice as a major base component of your substrate is advantageous because it is relatively inexpensive, widely available, and it exhibits key properties that are ideal for bonsai: pumice is very free draining yet also retains moisture and key elements and nutrients that you add when you fertilize.

Hopefully some of the information outlined above will be useful to those who are either just getting started in bonsai or those who are continuing their search for a soil recipe that is both good for both their trees and their wallet. If you have comments or questions about this article or you have your own stories to share about your experience using various soil substrates, email them to me at, noahsullivanbutler@gmail.com.

Member Activities

Susan Daufeldt

IBA Member **Lee Simpson** is passionately interested in collecting and working with native trees growing on his property near Dayton, Iowa. He has collected a number of trees by air-layering and is using Harry Harrington's black bag method, which he has found to be very successful. Look for an article from Lee on his air layering techniques in a future issue!

Sugar Maple Air Layered from the Parent Tree in 2020
by IBA Member **Lee Simpson**.





Left: IBA Member **Lee Simpson's** Hackberry Collected in 2020;

Right: Hackberry collected by Lee this Spring.



Right: IBA member **Dan Morton's** favorite tree is a Chinese Elm with beautiful deadwood.



Left: Elm collected by IBA Member **Dan Morton**



IBA Member **Bob West** wired these Ginkgo Seedlings together this spring to make a clump style tree.



Bob's Black Pine Seedling, wired this spring to create movement in the trunk.

IBA Member **Cat Nelson** collecting Russian Olive, with permission, at Lake Iowa Park on May 26, 2021.



Eastern Grey Tree Frog in the Canopy of a Beech Bonsai Forest, early afternoon May 16, 2021.

The same frog a few hours later. Note the color change. Pretty Cool. And a good reason to be careful about what you are spraying on your trees!



EIBA Member **John Daufeldt's** Engleman Spruce, May 9, 2021 (Styled by Todd Schlafer, Oct 2020).

Right: Trees Collected by EIBA Member **Susan Daufeldt**,
April 28, 2021



Left: Some of **Susan Daufeldt's** Trees Collected in the
Spring of 2021, photographed May, 25, 2021. These trees
are bunkered in with straw bales and lattice to protect
them from the constant wind. They are in the shade and
regularly sprayed with water. The trees in buckets had
tremendous tap roots, with few lateral roots. They appear
to be doing well. One of the biggest challenges is securing
such trees in the containers and keeping them out of the
wind is especially critical.

Right: **Susan Daufeldt's** Red Oak, collected 2015, planted
in Old Wood in the Spring of 2020, photographed May 25,
2021. Oaks break late and leaf out with little tiny leaves –
very charming. Susan is looking forward to pruning back to
smaller leaves in June.



Name that Tree

Answer: Gray Dogwood (*Cornus racemose*) is a deciduous shrub native to Eastern North America (Zones 4-8). In the wild it grows between 10 and 15 feet in height and breadth. The leaves are approximately 2-4 inches long, grayish-green, and elliptical to lance-shaped. In late Spring, it sports clusters of white flowers borne in terminal racemes. Clusters of white berries form after the flowers have dropped. Fall color is a dusky purplish red. *Missouri Botanical Garden Website*. This is a great wildlife plant, providing both habitat and food. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources sells seedlings. They are clump forming and will send out new trees from the roots. They bark up well and early. I have successfully dug young trees during the growing season, with 100% survival rate in terrible conditions. They are food for the caterpillar of various moths and butterflies, however, they recover from that sort of damage very quickly, indicating an ability to tolerate defoliation or partial defoliation, and thereafter producing smaller leaves.



*Gray Dogwood collected June of 2017
by Susan Daufeldt
(2017 through 2019 in a wooden box; potted
into this bonsai pot in the Spring of 2020).*

Bonsai Inspiration

David Richmond

I took this photographic image of our garden on April 26 of this year, 2:00 PM Central Standard Time (DLS)

During the night of April 26 there was a rare appearance of the Full Supermoon, called the Pink Moon.



Photo Credit: David Richmond

<https://rare.us/rare-life/april-pink-moon/>

The music that I chose to be part of this inspiration was the *Spring Festival Overture*. This music is traditionally played during the Spring Festival in China. This festival is also called the Lunar Festival. You can see several traditional Chinese instruments used in the orchestra on the youtube video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmiSku86YVg>

Our Garden was planted by my wife Carol who has earned the title Master Gardener. It is a complex mixtures of plants that bloom different colored blooms at different times of the year. The ornamentation around the shed by the garden was inspired by my visit to the Humble Administrator's Garden in Suchow China. Our Garden is much more humble the one in Suchow.

https://www.travelchinaguide.com/picture/jiangsu/suzhou/humble_administrators_garden/

Bonsai Classifieds

FOR SALE: At our greenhouse DaSu Bonsai Studio, 27887 Timber Rd., Kelley, Iowa we have sixteen varieties of companion plants stock coming in!! Should arrive this Wednesday or Thursday. Ten percent off to Bonsai Assn. members with a \$100 purchase. Come get some crushed lava for your planting needs and take some very cool miniatures home!

FOR SALE: Seedlings will be available at the farm/greenhouse. I have ordered: 100 Washington Hawthorn for sale \$2.50 each, 50 Malus Baccata Crabapple for sale \$2.56 each, 50 Nanking Cherry for sale \$2.80 each. I will also be offering grow bags (one and 2 gallon size) for growing out in the ground and developing your seedlings. \$2.00 and \$2.50 each per bag. As an incentive free lime sulfur will be given away with a seedling or other item purchase. BRING YOUR OWN CONTAINER TO BE TOPPED OFF or bring a four ounce dark colored bottle with tight fitting lid. Washington hawthorns immediately make great little forests. The other two items are probably best grown out in the ground or a larger container. Bring buckets to fill or waterproof bags for any of our 22 tons of bonsai lava, \$9 per five gallon bucket. Call 515-769-2446 if you have questions or need directions, and/or requests that you would want ready/reserved for pickup. Dave at DaSu Bonsai Studio.

FOR SALE: Pumice \$30 for five gallons. Akadama \$32 per bag, \$30 for members. Bio Gold fertilizer from Japan, \$92.50 per 5kg bag Contact Scott Allen or Tim Peterson

WANTED: Opportunity to collect or acquire (1) Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata* a/k/a Autumn Berry); (2) Box Elder (*Acer negundo*); (3) any variety of native Hawthorn; and (4) any variety of Oak . If you know of a place where I could collect or if you have one of these trees that you'd be willing to part with, please contact me - Susan Daufeldt, scdaufeldt@icloud.com, sdaufeldt@daufeldtlawfirm.com, (319)430-3822

FOR SALE: (1) Trident Maple \$50.00. This is a good tree for a beginner and priced to sell. It is the bottom half of a tree that was air-layered. It is a medium-size, with good trunk and nebari. One side is fairly well developed. Your task would be to develop the other side of the tree. (2) Cutting grown Fuji Cherries \$25/\$35. I have a nursery pot with one tree/and an nursery pot with two trees. Beautiful flowers in spring start out white and turn pink – ravishing! Great fall color. Hard to get and generally expensive. Priced to sell. I have other deciduous trees available. Contact me if you are interested and I can get you pictures and more information. Susan Daufeldt, scdaufeldt@icloud.com, sdaufeldt@daufeldtlawfirm.com, (319) 430-3822.

Articles in this newsletter are the intellectual property of the authors. If information or ideas are excerpted, paraphrased or duplicated in any way, proper credit must be given to the originator. Authors of articles published here also are expected to respect intellectual property rights and to give credit to sources they use. Neither the Iowa Bonsai Association nor the Eastern Iowa Bonsai Association are responsible or liable for opinions expressed or advice given by contributors in this newsletter. The Publication Staff welcomes letters to the Editor, but reserves the right to determine whether or not publication of any and all content is appropriate and timely.