

Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

www.iabonsai.org

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



February 2022

Volume 88, Issue 1

From the Editor



Happy New Year, Bonsai Enthusiasts! And boy has it been a cold one so far! Trees are sleeping, but spring is nearly here and it's time to get ready and set for the GO. We already have an exciting calendar for 2022! Check out the Calendar of Events for a quick run down.

In this issue, we reprint a very informative article published by the New York Times on the evolution of the art of Bonsai in America. And, while many of us have been resting, storing up energy for the growing season, there are a few of us who've been very busy. See the Members' Activities column for details!

I'm happy to tell you that Cat Nelson has agreed to provide the Timely Tips article for the coming year. I'm extremely grateful to her for that, as her knowledge is far deeper and broader than mine. For those of you who don't know Cat, here's just a little bit about her:

Cat has been interested in Bonsai since she was young. She spent seven years as a student of Ivan Watters and volunteering with the Chicago Botanic Garden's bonsai collection. She is a past president of the Midwest Bonsai Society, a past Secretary of the American Bonsai Society (ABS) and a current member of the ABS Board of Directors. She is also about to transition into the role of Journal Editor for the ABS. She has written several articles for the Journal in the past and an ABS booklet on bonsai pots.

We look forward to learning from Cat's many years of experience in the art.

We hope you enjoy the first issue of the IBA/EIBA Newsletter of 2022. Remember that this is your club! If you have ideas, thoughts or comments, we'd love to hear from you. Please feel free to contact me at any time.

Susan Daufeldt

scaufeldt@icloud.com

sdaufeldt@daufeldtlawfirm.com

(319) 430-3822

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From the IBA President

Happy New Year, IBA members and friends,

I hope you all had a relaxing Holiday season and your new year is off to a good start.

The IBA BOD is working to get the 2022 membership meeting scheduled, so please fill out the questionnaire that we sent in early January. Bring it to the Feb 19th meeting or email it to us. This helps us to understand what our members are interested in learning.

Winter has definitely set in. Make sure you're keeping your trees watered. They say watering is the hardest thing to learn in bonsai and, in my opinion, winter watering is the toughest.

We'll be mixing soil at the Feb 19th meeting, so if you're interested in learning about that or you need to buy a gallon or two make sure to be there. Akadama is currently on SHORT supply so we won't be mixing very much, as we don't have the components to do so.

Our next show is the Spring Show at the Greater Des Moines Botanical (GDMBG). The show is April 23-24, during their Earth day weekend. This show isn't as big as our fall show but we do need trees, so please plan to show one or two. After much discussion with the GDMBG administration, we will be having a bizarre table at the Spring Show, so if you're looking to unload some bonsai related stuff here's another chance. Ten percent (10%) of all sales go back to the IBA.

The IBA BOD is also working to get some workshops on the books for 2022. We'll likely have one in April with Jennifer Price but that hasn't been nailed down yet. Todd Schlafer will be doing a workshop on Friday June 17th and we're trying to nail down a date in August with Julian Tsai. Watch the IBA website and FB page for details. If you want to register for Todd's workshop on Friday June 17th contact me and I'll get you registered. Todd's workshop is \$100, which includes lunch. Silent observers are \$20 and don't include lunch.

We still have some of the new T-Shirts as well as some of the old ones, so if you're looking for IBA swag let me know. See attached pictures. New shirts are \$25, the second generation shirts are \$20 and first generation shirts are \$15. All proceeds will help grow bonsai right here in Central Iowa.

Hope to see you all soon!

Scott Allen
IBA President



Calendar of Events

February 11, 2022, 6:30 pm

EIBA Board Meeting. Contact an EIBA Board Member for more information, if you wish to attend.

February 19, 2022,

9 am to 1pm (Saturday)

IBA Meeting and Open Study Group at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, (Check with the front desk for location within the Garden). Bring your completed activities questionnaire, if you haven't already submitted it. We'll be mixing soil on that day.

February 19, 2022, (Saturday)

EIBA Activity – Winter Gardening Fair Exhibition and Demonstrations. Kirkwood Linn County Regional Center, 1770 Boyson Rd, Hiawatha, IA. Set up at 7 am. Exhibition and Demonstrations 8 am – 4 pm. For more information, contact Bill Englert (319) 471-1594.

February 26, 2022

10 am – Noon (Saturday)

EIBA Soil & Dues at Pierson's Greenhouse, 1800 Ellis Blvd NW, Cedar Rapids. For more information contact Jim Rajtora (319) 573-1202.

April 2, 2022 (Saturday)

Jennifer Price Work-study group at Susan Daufeldt's home in Conroy, Iowa. This is a privately sponsored activity.

April 4, 2022 (Monday)

Possible IBA workshop with Jennifer Price in Des Moines. Contact Scott Allen ASAP if interested.

April 23-24, 2022 (Sat/Sun)

Iowa Bonsai Association Spring Show & Sale, Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden. See the IBA President's report for more details.

June 17, 2022

9am to 5pm (Friday)

Workshop with Todd Schlafer at Scott Allen's home in Des Moines. Contact Scott Allen ASAP if interested. \$100/person. Lunch provided by IBA.

August 2022

Possible IBA workshop with Julian Tsai.

May 26-29, 2022

ABS Learning Seminars and Brussels Rendezvous, Olive Branch, MS. Forms and details available on the ABS website at: <https://www.absbonsai.org/abs-learning-seminar>

November 22, 2021 - New York Times
THE EVER-EVOLVING ART OF BONSAI

The centuries-old craft is thriving as both a hobby and an art form, with contemporary practitioners around the world asking what lessons it can impart today.

In 1913, A shipment of plants from the Yokohama Nursery Co. in Japan arrived in the port of San Francisco, among them a seven-foot-tall trident maple destined for the Japanese Pavilion at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition to be held two years later. More than a century old, the tree was an exemplar of the Imperial style, a type of bonsai developed for shoguns and feudal lords and named after the Imperial court during the 19th-century Meiji Restoration, an era of cultural transformation that arose following the country's 214-year-long period of isolation. Evenly spaced branches reached out from a trunk twisted into gentle contrapposto, its clusters of spring green foliage suggesting the outline of an isosceles triangle. Like most bonsai from that time, the maple expressed an ageless ideal of the natural world wrested into equilibrium.

When the exposition ended, the maple was purchased by Kanetaro Domoto, a Japanese immigrant who arrived in Oakland, Calif., in the 1880s and co-founded with his brothers what would soon become the largest Japanese-owned plant nursery in the country. When the Domotos lost their property — which once spanned 48 acres — during the Depression, Kanetaro's eldest son, Toichi, brought the trident maple to his own nursery in nearby Hayward, but by 1942 the family was imprisoned at Colorado's Amache internment camp.

In the camps, bonsai artists — those forced, like the Domotos, to give up their collections — made trees and flowers from paper and wire, makeshift manifestations of their own heartbreak. After the war, when the camps were closed, those practitioners started local clubs as private spaces for Japanese American hobbyists, eventually welcoming a broader public fascinated by Japanese aesthetics. Toichi Domoto returned to his nursery, which had been left in the care of an employee, and began the long process of restoring his family's prized maple. In his absence, the tree had grown scraggly, its wooden container rotted and its roots broken through into the soil below.

In the decades that followed, the Domoto Maple, which now stands nearly nine feet tall and is a centerpiece of the permanent collection at the Pacific Bonsai Museum outside Tacoma, Wash., became a living symbol of struggle and survival — and an inadvertent precursor to a new movement of contemporary bonsai. By training native species into sculptural forms that express their unique ecological and cultural climates, bonsai artists from East Asia to South America are proposing a new, expressionist style that both questions and embraces the constraints of this centuries-old botanical tradition, exploring the immensity not just of nature but of human experience itself.



A Rocky Mountain juniper created by Ryan Neil of Bonsai Mirai outside Portland, Ore. Chris Hornbecker, © Bonsai Mirai

The Practice of miniaturizing plants is thought to have come to Japan from China sometime around the seventh century, when the two countries formally established diplomatic ties. By that point, Chinese gardeners had likely been creating potted landscapes, or penjing (“potted scenery”), for hundreds of years, bringing nature into the homes of political elites, painters and calligraphers. Penjing, as it developed over the centuries, didn’t idealize nature but rather portrayed — or, as some bonsai scholars suggest, exaggerated — its strange, expansive beauty. Until the 1970s, when the Chinese government began codifying five regional schools of penjing, each with its own approach to styling local species through cutting, wiring or pinching, there were few rules: Early guides published in the 16th and 17th centuries suggested that practitioners should attempt to imitate values like vigor and austerity represented in classical landscape painting, says Phillip E. Bloom, the 38-year-old curator of the Chinese Garden at the Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, Calif. Often, the principles were abstract — an artisan might have aimed, Bloom says, “to somehow create heaven in the tree” — which left penjing open to poetic interpretation.

As early as the 12th century, Japanese craftspeople and monks had likewise evolved the art into a controlled, observational form that later came to be known as bonsai (“potted planting”); while the term itself had existed for centuries, it was not until the Meiji era (1868-1912) that it took on its modern meaning. By then, scholars had begun to classify elements like trunk shapes, branch placement and preferred species — any locally grown, woody-stemmed perennial with true branches and relatively small leaves, including pine, maple, juniper, beech, elm, cherry and plum. Bonsai could range in size from just a few inches tall to Imperial trees that could exceed six feet. Regardless of size or species or age, each tree distilled the sublime beauty of an ancient forest. Today, the Kyoto-based bonsai curator and scholar Hitomi Kawasaki, 41, compares the ideal form of classical bonsai to the kamae posture of Noh theater, with the actor’s knees slightly bent and arms held away from the body. “If you’re in that stance, it’s the most stable point, and if you can let go, it’s almost like floating,” Kawasaki says. “With bonsai, it’s similar: There’s a point of balance, you strengthen that point and everything comes into being.” When practitioners succeed in this, their trees can outlive them by centuries, their growth slowed, but never fully halted, by confinement; if the specimens are off balance, they eventually wither. Poised between control and abandon, creation and destruction, life and death, the art is, as Kawasaki writes in a forthcoming essay, “an attempt to find a middle way out of dualism.”

Though European missionaries encountered penjing and bonsai as early as the 16th century, these crafts were then practiced exclusively in East Asia by masters who largely tended the collections of aristocratic patrons or government officials. But during the Meiji period, bonsai specimens were displayed at world’s fairs in cities like Paris, Vienna and Chicago, helping spark a craze for the aesthetic movement known as Japonisme, which influenced the French Impressionists and countless European fine jewelry and furniture companies. By the mid-20th century, though, both bonsai and penjing temporarily stalled in their home countries; in



Neil's Yatsubusa elm for Bonsai Mirai.
Chris Hornbecke



Neil's vine maple for Bonsai Mirai.
Lani Milton © Bonsa

Japan, most nurseries were asked to grow food during World War II, and in China, the discipline was purged in the Cultural Revolution as a relic of the feudal past.

Despite that, the art form flourished in the West thanks to teachers like Yuji Yoshimura, who taught bonsai to foreign diplomats and American G.I.s stationed in Japan after the war, and the charismatic, Colorado-born John Naka, who introduced the practice into households across the United States. Working in Southern California from 1946 until his death in 2004, Naka made extensive use of native trees such as California junipers and coast live oaks, a departure from traditionally favored Japanese species like black pine, cedar and maple. He published a pair of seminal technical guides and mentored students around the world, inspiring new clubs to form in Australia and South Africa and across South America. Though Naka's trees were formal — in his most famous work, a miniature forest of 11 Foemina junipers held at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum in Washington, D.C., tufts of foliage levitate around a cluster of pin-straight trunks — his cosmopolitan view of bonsai set him apart from some of his peers who, in the 1950s, argued that bonsai should be taught exclusively in Japanese. “There are no borders in bonsai,” Naka once said. “The dove of peace flies to palace as to humble house, to young as to old, to rich and poor.”

Then, in the 1980s, the Japanese practitioner Masahiko Kimura, now 81, rose to global prominence with large Shimpaku junipers contorted into clouds of foliage swirling around ghostly deadwood bases. If Naka described bonsai in the utopian language of 1960s California, then Kimura, who often gave workshops in Europe, espoused a vision for bonsai that was as vivid, muscular and ego-driven as Modernist painting, recasting the master not as a craftsman but as an auteur.

Today, Naka's and Kimura's students continue to redefine the field: Take, for instance, Ryan Neil, who founded his studio, Bonsai Mirai, outside Portland, Ore., in 2010 after a six-year apprenticeship at Kimura's garden in the Saitama prefecture, home to Japan's most venerated bonsai nurseries. Neil, 39, combines his teacher's formal daring with Naka's open, idealistic approach, sculpting Rocky Mountain junipers into pale white streamers or rugged bursts of deadwood reaching out from plumes of foliage. These trees, he says, “allow people to see their place in the native environment.”

On Croatia's Dalmatian coast, Marija Hajdic, 45, celebrates seasonal transformation with wild plum trees that blister with pale pink blossoms in the spring, and deciduous hornbeams that drop their leaves each winter to reveal branches that seem to claw at the air. Like Neil, Hajdic works principally with foraged trees — known as yamadori in Japan — often gathering ones that are dynamic and wild rather than calming or geometric. “When I go to nature, I want my heart to start pounding,” she says.

In Japan, where classical bonsai still predominates and young people view the craft primarily as a hobby for the elderly and the rich, the 40-year-old artist Masashi Hirao, based in Saitama, has turned public demonstrations in which he plants, prunes and wires his trees for live audiences — a common source of income for bonsai professionals — into performance art, complete with live music, a practice that traditionalists have denounced as antithetical to bonsai's meditative intent. In his displays for retail spaces and fashion shows, Hirao has



A bantigue tree created by the Filipino bonsai artist Bernabe Millares. Courtesy of Susan Lee

suspended wispy junipers in tiered ceramics and trained variegated landscapes over precarious stacks of stone. “The trees themselves are not about self-expression. I’m a servant to the tree,” he says. “The way I put the trees together is how I express myself.”

Then there are Filipino artists, like Bernabe Millares, who work with the mangroves that fringe their archipelagic homeland, while their counterparts in Brazil, like Mario A G Leal, work with fruiting pitanga trees from their country’s tropical coast and gnarled calliandras from the northeastern bush. In China, WeChat groups dedicated to penjing have proliferated, introducing species and styles from regions that previously had no formal tradition, while a new generation of oligarchs has spent small fortunes collecting penjing, sometimes investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in a single plant. The venerable Seikouen nursery in Saitama teaches hobbyists to make playful, accessible bonsai using inexpensive materials — similar to the “pop bonsai” described by the author Lisa Tajima in her 2004 book of the same name — while the increased exportation of classic species, says Kawasaki, the Kyoto-based scholar, has led young artists to experiment with nontraditional plants like gajumaru, a banyan from the island of Okinawa, in the south, that is rarely used by older masters.

For enthusiasts who have taken to bonsai during the Covid-19 pandemic — Bonsai Mirai saw a 27 percent increase in registrations for online classes from March through May of 2020 alone — the art form has become a ready metaphor for days spent in confinement and has offered solace from the monotony of modern life, much as it did for its early practitioners. In a world shadowed by death, it proved that life would carry on, even under difficult circumstances. “When I look at a tree, my troubles are gone,” Kawasaki says. “Humans worry. The tree keeps growing.”

Source: The New York Times

Timely Tips - What to do in February

Cat Nelson

Your activities in February will vary depending on what you grow, where you grow it and the material’s level of development. In general, winter is a great time to read books or magazines, renew (or start) magazine subscriptions, make repotting plans, and clean your tools. Some people enjoy a break over the winter months, while others actively look for things to do to fill extra time indoors.

For 5 needle pines in advanced stages of refinement, there’s still time to do some needle plucking before the growing season starts up. Most trees that are kept in enclosed winter quarters can be wired and trimmed at this time, but, if you do, either leave a stub or seal the wounds since the cambium isn’t actively growing. Closely pruned but unsealed wounds will dry out more in the winter and extend the time it takes to heal over. Tropicals kept in greenhouse or near greenhouse conditions (i.e. more light, heat & humidity than the indoors of a house) can be lightly pruned, wired or repotted at this time. Some wiring can be done to tropicals being grown in windows, but avoid hard pruning as there isn’t enough light from a window and the resultant growth will be leggy with large leaves.

For trees in winter storage it's the game of monitoring the moisture level. Try to water when temps are in the 30's or above, or immediately before temps will drop into the 20s. Watering about once a week is generally a good guideline; though it's going to depend on a lot of factors. Small pots or warmer weather are going to call for more attention, but be sure that you're deciding on a tree by tree basis and not overwatering larger pots. You don't need to water if your storage gets into the 20s or below (if buried outside), though check on things as soon as temps rise again as cold can dry things out. A good practice if your trees are buried outdoors is to pile them with snow, it's a great insulator plus the melt does the job of watering when the temperatures rise.

Tool cleaning can be done in several ways. If there is a lot of rust on a tool a light sanding with a sanding block is good for removal. Otherwise some WD40 will clean off mild cases of rust. There are multiple types of sharpening stones on the market, just make sure to only go over the outside edges of concave cutters and knob cutters. Do not drag the stone along the length of the blade, make short strokes from the inner edge to the cutting edge. Camellia oil is the traditional tool lubricant in Japan, a drop at the joints keeps them moving well without harsh chemical smells. However, commonly available mechanical oils from local hardware stores work just as well.

Members Activities

Susan Daufeldt

November seems like a long time ago, but most of us were very busy in November of 2021. Here are some highlights.

Scott Allen, with a lot of help from his cousin, was working hard to get a greenhouse up and running. Here are some pictures from that impressive project.





More pictures of Scott's greenhouse



IBA members Dave Richmond, Jared Wall and Susan Daufeldt and EIBA members Bruce Pendland and Harvey Ireland took part in a Jennifer Price work-study group at Susan Daufeldt's home in Conroy, Iowa. Here are some fun pictures from Jennifer's time in Iowa last November.



Bruce Pendland works on his Black Pine



*Jared Wall works on a Ponderosa Pine**



*Harvey Ireland works on a Spruce**

Jared's Ponderosa Pine and Harvey's Spruce are the result of Scott Allen's and Ron Heinen's collecting activities in South Dakota and Wyoming.



Harvey's Spruce after styling



On the Friday prior to the workshop, Jennifer Price and Susan Daufeldt devoted the day to carving. Here, Susan uses a Dremel to carve the deadwood on a Mulberry. Susan's Mulberry was collected by Ron Heinen right here in Iowa.

Well, that was November. But that's not all. Winter has been a productive time for IBA member Ron Heinen, who has been very busy making incredible bonsai pots. Here are a few picture of Ron's wonderful work.



You can see more of Ron's pots on Facebook Bonsai Auctions, where they are available for purchase. (Note: Ron's pots are available for purchase only through Facebook Bonsai Auctions.)

IBA member Dan Morton has also been getting ready for repotting season by preparing some interesting planting vessels.



The ceramic pot was custom made for this composition by Ron Heinen. I can't wait to see these once Dan has planted his trees in them.

Bonsai Transportation.

One of the things that always taxes us is moving big trees. As I went through pictures from November activities, I thought I would share a couple good ideas! Take a good look at the carrying device that Bruce Pendland made for transporting his very large (and heavy) Black Pine. The handles extending from the platform make it easy for two people to carry this lovely tree without having to put pressure on the foliage.



One of my November projects was this incredible cart, available from Northern Tool and Equipment. It made my fall a much easier time and my back thanks me! Note the big wheels that make for a smooth ride over rough terrain.

Bonsai Inspiration

David Richmond

This photographic image was taken the day before Spring Festival, on the morning of January 31, at 9:00 AM Central Standard Time. Imagine this scene as a Penjing Landscape.

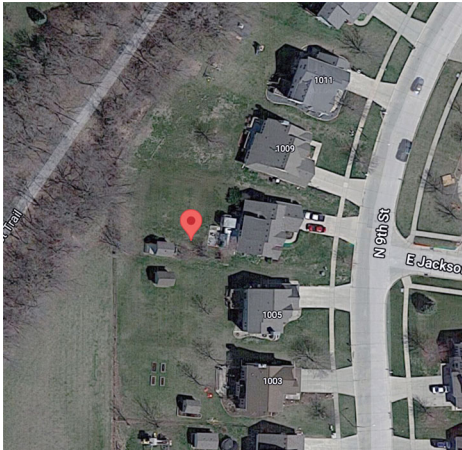


Photo Credit: David Richmond

You can find this imaginary landscape here,
41°22'11.3"N-93°32'53.0"W
(See location indicated on the satellite photograph).

Tuesday, February 1, is the Spring Festival or Chinese New Year.
2022 is the, Year of the Tiger. (See URL Below)

<https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/festivals/when-chinese-new-year.htm>

You can listen to some traditional music to celebrate the Spring Festival. (See URL Below)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGfewK2e_tU

In China, here are some traditions to remember on February 1:

Do not say words with negative connotations. These including: death, sick, empty, pain, ghost, poor, break, kill and more.

Breaking things ceramics or glass will break your connection to prosperity and fortune.

There is a day of cleaning before the Spring Festival, which is intended to sweep away the bad luck. During the actual celebration, sweeping or throwing out garbage may sweep away good luck instead.

Do not take a shower on Chinese New Year's Day.

According to Cat Nelson, February is a good month to care for your Bonsai tools, but I would recommend that you clean them the day before Spring Festival so as not to tempt fate.

Bonsai Classifieds

FOR SALE: IBA T-Shirts – \$25.00 each. Unisex sizes m l xl xxl xxxl. We still have some of the new T-Shirts as well as some of the old ones. New shirts are \$25, the second generation shirts are \$20 and first generation shirts are \$15. All proceeds will help grow bonsai right here in Central Iowa.



DaSu Studio, lowman@netins.net, will be getting in this spring (approximately April 8th) the following seedlings and transplants. Members who are interested should email me to reserve the items they might want this coming planting season:

50 Acer palmatum dwarf - pre-bonsai - \$ 8.50 each (a dwarf specially selected for bonsai form of red leaf Japanese maple)

10 Acer palmatum var. atropurpur. 2-3' Transplants - \$ 7.60 each (red leaf Japanese maple)

10 Acer palmatum var. atropurpur. 3-4' Transplants - \$10.85 each (red leaf Japanese maple)

50 Ginkgo biloba - \$3.60 each

50 Taxodium distichum (Bald Cypress) - \$3.80 season.

DaSu Studio, lowman@netins.net

FOR SALE: Pumice \$30 for five gallons. Akadama (Out of Stock) \$32 per bag, \$30 for members. We have Akadama on order. Bio Gold fertilizer from Japan, \$92.50 per 5kg bag. Contact Scott Allen or Tim Peterson.

FOR SALE: I have a variety of Yamadori for sale. Ponderosa Pines, Englemen Spruce and Douglas Fir. I also have some 2-4 year Trident's, a couple of Japanese, Maples, a Garden Spruce, some 3-5 year Japanese Black Pine, and a couple Shimpaku juniper. Call if you're interested in seeing what I have.
Scott Allen 515-480-4437

WANTED: (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. Susan Daufeldt, scdaufeldt@icloud.com, sdaufeldt@daufeldtlawfirm.com, (319) 430-3822

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