

*IBA News & Muse*  
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## IBA AUGUST Activities

No meeting this month. Meetings resume in September at the remodeled Des Moines Botanical Gardens main building.

September 17, 7:00 Membership meeting at Des Moines Botanical Center.

October 5, 9 am, Fall Bonsai Show at Reimen Gardens, Ames, Iowa

## EIBA AUGUST Activities

August 8, 6:00 Board Meeting at Nothing But Noodles.

August 15, 7:00 Club Meeting at Pierson's Flower Shop on Ellis Blvd.

*Topics: Bonsai Display Basics*

August 16, 17, 18 Midwest Bonsai Show at Chicago Botanic Center – Regenstein Center

August 24, EIBA Bonsai Display at Brucemore Mansion Garden and Art Show.

September ?? Soil making day is coming in September. Date yet to be determined.

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*Kokufu bonsai exhibition in Japan. Approximately 250 of the best bonsai in Japan are shown each year.*



*A Trident maple shown by Matt Ouwinga of Chicago.*

## Timely Tips

Have you noticed how cool it has been this July and August? This means you may have to actually reduce watering. I noticed a Japanese quince that is showing signs of slowed water uptake. The leaves had changed their appearance, so I stuck my finger into the soil. It was still wet even though I had not watered in 24 hours. I reduced water and hope it becomes healthy again. Maintain your fertilization program. It is easy to get lazy. Your trees will be healthier and more beautiful.

Also, deciduous trees have kicked out a lot of growth this summer. I was trimming a Trident and found wire that was biting in, even though the wire has not been on this tree for long. Please check your trees, especially higher up in the tree. Do not be afraid to remove foliage either through pruning or partial defoliation so you can spot tight wire.

Tropicals, like Ficus, should be getting all the sun you can give them. It is a good time to really prune them. They will respond to hard pruning. I have pruned and defoliated Ficus and Schefflera with excellent results – smaller leaves and back budding galore.

A couple of pests to watch for are red spider mites and Japanese beetles. Mites like hot humid weather and often attack junipers in August. Spray for them, but make sure the chemical you choose is listed as being a miticide. Japanese beetles can be a real nuisance as well. They can decimate leaves in a hurry, so keep a watch out daily. Systemic insecticides will kill them, but not until the leaves they are chewing on resemble lacework. Pick them off if you see them.

In August and early September, the sun will begin to move differently across the yard. I end up having to move trees from my deck to a sunnier locale by mid-August. Keep those species that love sun (pines, junipers, tropicals), in the sun for as many hours a day as you can. This will keep your growing season going longer and stronger. Hmm. Perhaps I need some more sun, too!

## North Carolina Arboretum Bonsai Exhibit

By John Denny

Recently I visited the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville, NC over on the western side of the state. The Arboretum was very well done with beautiful views, lots of local stonework, and a very nice main building for indoor exhibits. The main attraction for me, of course, was their bonsai collection and the very nice display area. Visitors to The North Carolina Arboretum will find the art of bonsai expressed with a Southern Appalachian accent. The quality of the collection and its presentation has attracted national attention.

The quality of the collection is good, not great. However, the display of the trees is wonderful, both the overall set up and the display of individual trees in a very regional setting. You will not think of Japan while browsing this display. The collection has some standard Asian bonsai species on display such as Japanese maple and Hinoki cypress. But many trees and accents are local species – American hornbeam, bald cypress, limber pine, eastern white pine.

A bonsai collection was not part of the original plan at the NC Arboretum. A gift of several bonsai was given to them in 1992. A staff member, Arthur Joura, was assigned to manage the collection and is still the curator today. One of the aspects you will notice is the collection does not have trees with great age. It is a young collection. In this regard it resembled a collection that an experienced bonsai amateur might own. But, the real strength of this exhibit is the unique setting created for the trees. It is southern Appalachian all the way. You enter at the top of the exhibit and begin a serpentine descent down a constantly curving walkway which repeatedly crosses a large dry stream made of beautiful colorful local boulders with local plant species mixed in along the edges of the stream. Around each curve is a display of one to four or five trees.

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## TREE OF THE MONTH: Fukien Tea (*Ehretia microphylla*)

By John Denny



*Fukien tea. Alan Leong of Malaysia*

Fukien Tea is a commonly used tropical plant for indoor bonsai. It grows natively to China, India, Malaysia, and Philippines. The old scientific name of *Carmona* has been changed to *Ehretia microphylla*. The name Fukien Tea comes from Fukien Province in southern China.

Fukien Teas have a nice gray bark with raised, darker, warty areas. The leaves are small, thus lending the tree to shohin sized bonsai. The tree has small white star shaped flowers that if fertilized will result in a hard small red cherry like berry. The plant grows year round with no real dormant season. It is twiggy which gives a nice tree look.

Fukien teas are not particular about soil, as long as it is not compacted. Fukien teas enjoy the summers outside, just make subtle transitions between inside and outside or vice versa. The tree does not tolerate night temperatures below 55F. Bring it inside for protection. Fertilize half strength weekly during spring through fall.

Teas have a couple issues to manage. Branches tend to grow straight and become woody quickly. So, either, wire early to shape or use the clip and grow technique to create taper and movement. Another issue is large scars do not heal, therefore, plan to hide them or incorporate them into your design.

The biggest issue with FTs is they attract insects – mealy bugs, scale, ants, etc. Spraying is important to control these issues for the health of your tree and so your FT does not infect other trees in your collection. They can be touchy to some sprays, so test a few leaves, see how they do for a week, then spray the entire tree.

Fukien teas make nice bonsai. Just be aware of the aforementioned issues and you will get along with your tea just fine.



## North Carolina Arboretum Bonsai Exhibit

(cont. from p 2)



*The beginning of the NC Arboretum Bonsai Exhibit walking tour.*

One of the unique aspects of the collection you will notice is the large number of local species planted with the bonsai trees. Sometimes as many as 5 different local species are planted in the understory level of a bonsai tree. This adds to the unique regional flair of the display.

A listing of regional trees and accents would include azaleas and rhododendrons, boxwoods, red cedar, white cedar, hinoki, pitch pine, limber pine, swiss pine, serviceberry, ginko, English oak, amur maple, bald cypress, Virginia creeper, crepe myrtle. There were many accent like dwarf dandelion and many I was not familiar with. Accents and understory plants were listed on the display tags, so one could note an interesting species and research it.



## North Carolina Arboretum Bonsai Exhibit

Arthur Joura, Bonsai Curator, has a quote inscribed on a stone which I liked.

“The world of bonsai is miniature, but the natural world it evokes is boundless.”

Another stone was inscribed with:

“When you enter here, become small. Open your mind to the possibility that the greatest mysteries of life can be found in a single, tiny leaf.”

At the beginning of the walkway was a very well done educational area which educated the public on the various aspects of bonsai. One display had 6 posters each showing a large photo of someone Pruning, Potting, Wiring, etc. Another unique and clever display was a series of three drums, side by side that rotate like wheels in a slot machine. Each drum had 8 sides. The first drum had photos of 8 hand drawn bonsai styles, the middle drum had photos of 8 trees in nature that represented those styles, and the third drum had photos of finished bonsai in each of the styles. The idea was to rotate the drum wheels to line up a given style drawing with its finished bonsai of the same style and also a tree in nature exemplifying the same style. It was an excellent hands-on learning display. The Arboretum also contained exhibits of pottery and bamboo.



*A typical mixed display of junipers with several undershrubby plants.*

The purpose of our trip to North Carolina was primarily to visit colleges – Duke, UNC, and NC State. Originally, I said no to the question, “Do you want to visit the bonsai exhibit at the NC Arboretum?” I had heard it was a mediocre display. However, though the trees themselves were average, I was captivated by the regional aspect of the Bonsai Exhibit and how uniquely they were displayed. If you find yourself near Asheville, North Carolina, I highly recommend you visit. You will enjoy yourself.

## On Being the Son of a Bonsai Legend

By Zach Denny

Many people ask me what my father has been up to since he retired and the answer is always the same, bonsai. I add that his collection comprises 50 plus short trees that have taken over our backyard, rendering our fire pit useless. A fire pit is meant for fires, not bonsai trees. I am occasionally allowed to make use of the fire pit, but first I must move every midget tree within a 15 foot radius of the fire to make sure none of them catch fire from errant sparks. (Wouldn't want a miniature forest fire!) Not to mention his concern about my teenage friends whose limited knowledge does not include the fragility of small trees. But once I get over the fact that our fire pit has become a bonsai stage, I realize the beauty of them, especially, the overgrown seedlings. They are something else. I will admit some of those things look half way decent, maybe even cool enough to show some people.

My dad takes pride in his trees and has taught me to appreciate and respect the trees, almost as though they are a part of the Denny family. They receive daily attention and drink more water than our dogs do. Whenever I'm left alone with the trees for a weekend and am in charge of watering them, I get a short lesson on how to water them. Every time. This has happened like seven times. Nevertheless, I manage to sneak by with the minimum information before I walk away, leaving my father talking to himself about how to water trees. He wants me to water using his beloved copper watering can. But the hose is faster - keep that one under your hat , ok?

On top of watering them, the trees have to be moved frequently because of weather, staining the deck, a bonfire, or even just because dad wants me to move them. I've had to move those darn trees in the middle of a thunderstorm, windstorms, in 100 degree weather, and in the winter.

There is a certain kind of love my dad has for his bonsai collection. A pride that he has passed on to me in my hobbies. It might be genetics or just learning through osmosis. Either way I have learned to be committed to and take pride in the passions. For him, it is bonsai and I respect his commitment and dedication to them. For me it is golf, tennis, and my friends. Of course there are other things I've learned from his bonsai hobby like you want a tree with trunk girth, nebari, and ramification. And I can water them! I guess that's really about it, but hey, it's more than most 17 year old boys know about bonsai trees.

Being John Denny's son can be a hassle with the bonsai infestation taking over our yard. (There's not much difference between a hobby and mental illness they say.) But it has more pros than cons. And, hey, I'm just thankful that his hobby is growing little trees and not marijuana!

Oh, yeah, one more thing. Dad, don't even think about putting your bonsai tree collection in your will with my name on it!