

IBA News & Muse

Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

March 2013

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www.iabonsai.org

IBA MARCH Activities

*MARCH 15, 7pm, IBA Meeting
Greater Des Moines Botanical Gardens
Program, an Open forum: Everyone brings a tree
to work on.*

You can work on virtually any kind of tree this time of the year. Bring a tree and work or just observe others working on a variety of trees. Repotting, pruning, wiring, tree design, selecting a proper pot, pot preparation—all are open for work and discussion. Call Dave Lowman at Dasu if you need wire or soil to do work at this meeting. This month is the beginning of the spring bonsai work season. Club wire will be available.

*Jim Doyle Literati Workshop Saturday, March 30,
1–5pm at Magruder Farm, Indianola*

A few slots are still open. If interested in joining this workshop by one of the great American master bonsai artists, contact Helene Magruder at helenem@me.com. A map is available on request. At this point in time you would need to bring your own tree. Dave Lowman, of Dasu Bonsai Studios, has some great material available for this workshop at a very reasonable price.

EIBA March Activities

March 14, 6:30 Board Meeting. Chris Burr home.

March 21, 7:00 pm, Club Meeting, Pierson Flower Shop on Ellis Blvd.

www.easterniowabonsai.ning.com

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

IBA Calendar	1
EIBA Calendar	1
Timely Tips	2
Companion Plant Photos	2
Bonsai Repotting at the Botanical Center	3
Kingsville Boxwood	3
Viewing Stone Reprise	5

We will work on elms during this meeting. Additionally, we will do follow up on our Foster Trees. Also, if you need help with any repotting, bring your tree and tools. We will continue to collect club dues and hand out club soil to members.



A beautiful Japanese beech. Notice the nebari. Wow!

Timely Tips

Repotting activities are beginning. Often many of my deciduous trees have started to leaf out by now. However, this year they are a bit behind as the weather is also a bit behind. But, I will begin repotting deciduous trees now.

Aftercare of repotted trees is very important. They do not appreciate being watered heavily after the initial watering. The roots have undergone some rough treatment and are trying to get back on their feet. Meanwhile the foliage will benefit from frequent misting. Keep newly repotted trees in a protected place until they have recovered.

It will soon be time to start putting our bonsai outdoors. I am always eager for this time of year. Not only because it is spring, but because trees need sun to grow well. They may not need full sun but light is as important to a bonsai as water and fertilizer. When moving trees outdoors, put them in partial sun to start with, until they become acclimated. Direct sun can burn tender new leaves and needles. Be sure to introduce them into it gradually.

Also, after repotting, avoid fertilizing until the roots have recovered and established themselves. I usually make my first application of fertilizer a light one. I apply it a month after repotting. Generally, I will use fish emulsion, which is low in nitrogen and has additional nutrients for the trees. After that for my second application a couple of weeks later, I will use either Bonsai Pro fertilizer (5/6/5) or a half strength application of a standard 20/20/20 like Peters or Miracle Grow. After that I use MG/Peters full strength.

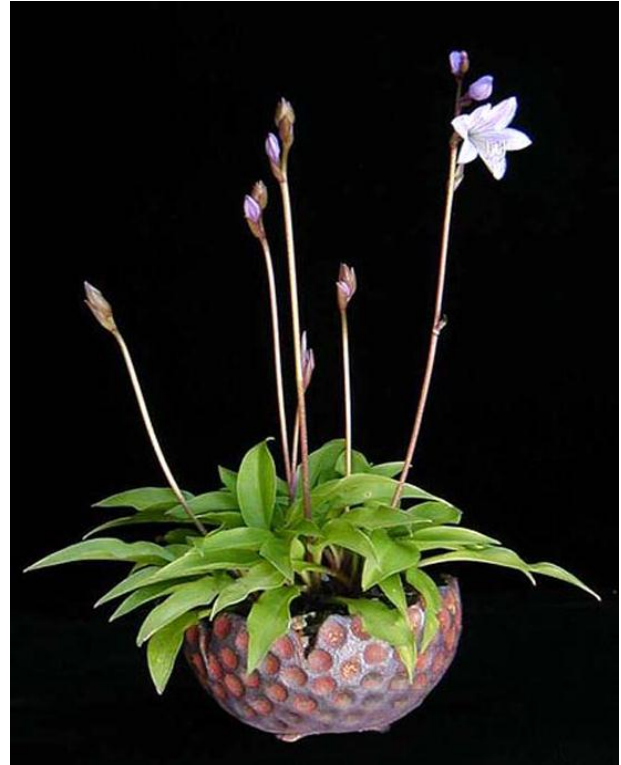
Additionally, after repotting, watch the wind factor. Those trimmed back roots often cannot get enough water to the new foliage on a windy spring day. Remember, spring can be windy, so protect your trees from harsh winds until the trees have fully recovered from the challenges of repotting.

Good luck this spring!

Companion Plant Photos

By John Denny

If you like growing trees, you probably also like growing accent plants. I recently saw the following photos in Bonsai Bark. The photos are of accent plants by Wolfgang Putz in Dan Barton pots.



Hosta "Golden Tiara"



Sempervivum spec. – HAUSWURZ

Bonsai Repotting at the Botanical Garden

By Helene Magruder, Monday pm, March 4

This past weekend a number of club members assisted Gary Wood with the repotting of the entire bonsai collection at the Botanical Garden. We had a very impressive turnout of members and got the job done in two days. Dave Lowman and Terri Nelson arrived early with the supplies and were busy mixing when the rest arrived. Gary started with a demonstration of the repotting process. Soon everyone was busy helping, carrying trees, sifting and mixing soil, cleaning and preparing pots, cleaning roots, cleaning Shari and Jin and treating with lime sulphur, you name it.

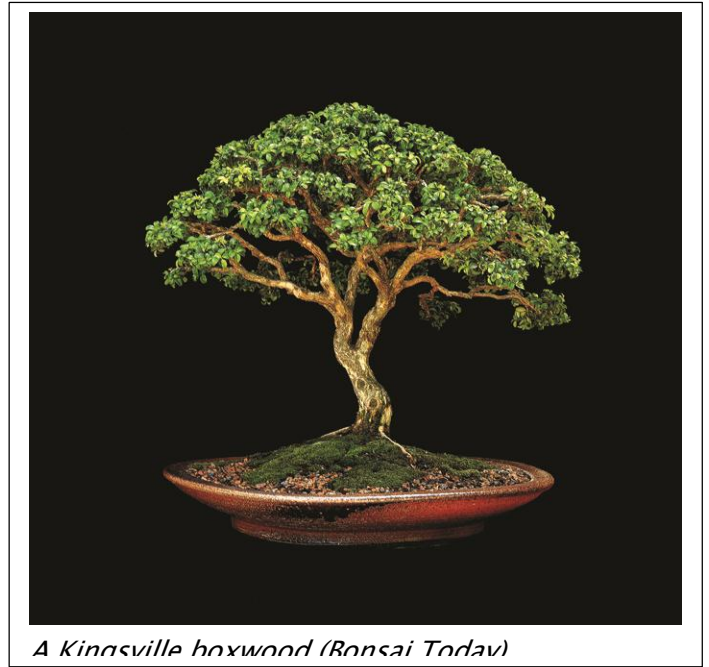
Everyone who attended was excited at the prospect of rescuing the collection and also with how much they learned. It was basically a free workshop. Beside Alan and myself, members working were: Scott Allen, Ron Heinen, Angi Allison, Kathy Larson, Bob Thompson, Dave and Jan Miller, Ivan Hanthorn and Marianne Buddensiek, and Patty Shaw and her daughter and club president David Richmond. Some worked all weekend and several came for as long as their schedule allowed. Thank you all; it was an impressive show.

Now it is up to the staff at the gardens. They have demonstrated a commitment to the care of the trees. Gary, Alan and I met with them this morning and went over the care of the trees. We were so excited to see tiny new green tips on several of the junipers already. The staff will start fertilizing the trees in a few weeks and we hope to see new growth soon.

(cont. p 4)

Kingsville Boxwood

By John Denny



A Kingsville boxwood (Bonsai Today)

Boxwoods can make very nice bonsai, especially Kingsville boxwoods (*buxus microphylla* 'compacta'). These trees feature very small dark green leaves and bark that shows good age. The branching can be very nice. The tree back buds easily. In fact you have to work to keep the budding under control.

Kingsvilles are slow growing. They like partial shade in my experience. Use well draining soil. Water thoroughly, but let dry out some between waterings. Roots can be damaged easily in repotting, so go easy. However, you can remove up to half of roots if care is taken.

Various bonsai styles work for this tree, but they are often seen as informal uprights as in the above photo. The other style for which Kingsville works well is rock landscapes. The small leaves allow the tree to work in scale with rock plantings. You can plant the trees around or between rocks, or you can plant the trees in rock pockets if you have large enough pockets with adrainage.

You can find small Kingsvilles for \$15 at Wildwood Gardens. Try one!

Botanical Garden, cont. from p 3

Postscript

By Ivan Hanthorn

Helene is always polite, so was in search of inoffensive means to convey a necessary message. Since harshness comes so naturally to me, I took on the responsibility. The trees are owned by the new management entity, The Greater Des Moines Botanical Gardens. Gary Wood is the contracted care taker of the bonsai collection for the present. He has asked the Iowa Bonsai Association Board of Directors to notify our members that there is to be no work done on the trees by any IBA members until he returns. The trees are so weak they need every tiny bit of energy to go to developing the root systems. If you have favorite trees in the collection because you have worked on them, that is wonderful. Should you have concerns about particular trees or the collection in general, do not until further notice do anything to the tree but do bring your concern to a member of the board. Substantive concerns will be collected and forwarded to Gary Wood as appropriate. As a club, we are currently in the position of being concerned friends of the bonsai collection. Our comments and concerns will be directed to Gary Wood until he asks us for further volunteer assistance in the future. Our greatest concern in the past has been the watering practices of the old staff. New staff has been trained by Gary Wood in watering and fertilizing. They will do those chores now; I am confident we will see much better results than heretofore.



HELP ME PLEASE!!! One of the Bonsai Collection junipers with a very unhappy root system which was cleaned up and repotted into much better soil this last weekend.

Viewing Stone Reprise

By Ivan Hanthorn

Viewing Stones have been the subject of a three-part piece in the previous three issues. These delightful sometime companions for bonsai are the subject of a fair amount of published literature and online information, although not nearly as much so as with bonsai. In the previous issue I also noted a bonsai book recommended to you for acquisition: *Fine Bonsai* by Singer and Valavanis, which contains some excellent appended précis on related subjects, including bonsai containers and suiseki. For those of you who did not immediately order a copy, I herewith am going to borrow from the text page on suiseki in that work (there are also suiseki photographs). I think this is a very succinct yet elegant summary of the topic we have so laboriously pursued over three issues.

“Suiseki is an art form steeped in Oriental tradition that, like stone itself, has undergone a slow evolution to become what it is today. Essentially, suiseki is the appreciation of stones in a contemplative way that can evoke a deep spiritual experience. Although suiseki is distinct from bonsai, the two practices are closely related and share many of the same ideas, aesthetics, and history.

Around the same time in Japan, Buddhism, which had been introduced from Korea in the sixth century, was starting to take root. The influence of Chinese culture and art was intertwined with the rise in Buddhism, and stone appreciation was introduced to the temples and courts of Japan. It is not until the end of the Heian period (A.D. 794–1185), however, that we see specific mentions of stones in the poetry and diaries of Japanese courtiers. During the following Kamakura period (1192–1333, along with a massive popularization of Buddhism we also see evidence of stone appreciation in Illustrated hand scrolls.

The development of Zen Buddhism was the main driving force for the evolution of Japanese stone appreciation. Monks writing about stones referred to them not as spirit stones but as *bonseki*, which translated literally means “tray” and “stone,” referring to the practice of display. Compared to the abstract shaped Chinese stones, bonseki are much more natural and often resemble mountains. Smooth textures are favored, as are dark, understated colors. Black stones were and still are seen as the ideal, the absence of color allowing the viewer the freedom to imagine a vista within the void. As other aspects of Japanese culture developed, bonseki was embraced by tea masters and later by the literati of the Edo period (1603–1868), who showed an interest in a wider range of stones.

In more recent times, from the Meiji period (1868–1913) onward, the practice of stone appreciation, by now named *suiseki*, has become closely associated with bonsai and increased in popularity. This culminated in a boom of interest during the 1960s and 1970s, a period of not only great experimentation but also the formalization of modern suiseki practice and the creation of standards and guidelines based on principles and aesthetics dating back many centuries.

Although styles, practice, and names have always evolved to suit the tastes of the times, the essence of suiseki has not changed for more than two thousand years. Suiseki is the appreciation of stones, in particular of their capacity to create the impression, on a spiritual level, of something deeper and larger than the stone itself. Perhaps the easiest example to understand is the mountain stone, which may resemble anything from a solitary peak to an entire range. Whether put on display formally or simply contemplated individually, mountain stones bring to mind various scenes, and the observer can readily imagine being part of the landscape.

Suiseki can also represent other aspects of the landscape, such as waterfalls, coastlines, or islands. Abstract stones and figure stones suggest an object or person, although ideally they do so with implication rather than explicitness. As with bonsai, the objective is not to re-create a quaint scale model, but rather to capture the essence and create a lasting impression.

Although suiseki is imbued with a rich history, and there are guidelines to help us understand it, the most important aspect is the mind and spiritual state of the viewer. Initially, looking at a suiseki allows the viewer to invoke a scene, perhaps a simple representation of nature. With further contemplation, the viewer may become more involved and more than just a passive observer. If it is still and untroubled, the mind can wander and experience what is not there—clouds, rolling over the mountains, bird song, or the vast infinitude of the universe. Gazing upon suiseki, an observer is limited only by the boundaries of his or her own imagination.”

The only remaining thing I perhaps should mention, particularly to neophytes in viewing stone appreciation, is that once you get hooked on looking at stones in this manner and are interesting in finding some on your own rather than simply buying them from vendors, your speed of walking on mountain and desert hikes can really slow down significantly. Bring lots of water.

Toyoma-ishi jade stone from Washington State (below)

