

IBA News & Muse
Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter
2016 MARCH

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www.iabonsai.org

www.easterniowabonsai.ning.com

IBA MARCH Activities

IBA MARCH & SPRING EVENTS

**IBA Meeting Tuesday, March 15, 7:00pm,
Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, 909 Robert D. Ray
Drive, Botany Lab**

The program will give all a chance to get down and dirty. The club will make soil again this year with vastly improved components over the previous year. We will be using a new component that has taken the bonsai world by storm, primarily because it is quite affordable and also it is not from Japan where it is mined from a shrinking finite resource. It is related to a product previously villainized by many bonsai commentators, so come to get the whole story. The soil made will be immediately for sale.

Bring any bonsai material that needs some attention. The committee of the whole will as usual give you several solutions to pick from.

**SPRING BONSAI SHOW, Saturday–Sunday, April 23–24
Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, 909 Robert D. Ray
Drive**

**TODD SCHAFER BONSAI WORKSHOP, Saturday–Sunday,
April 30–May 1**

Magruder Farm (aka Bonsai Heaven), 16545 Illinois St.,
Indianola (NE of Indianola down a long gravel road)
See the article in this newsletter for further details.

EIBA MARCH Activities

**March 10, 6 pm. Board Meeting at Panera Restaurant on
Edgewood Road**

*Topics: March meeting preparation, review Coe
Gardening Fair.*

**March 17, 7 pm. Club Meeting at Pierson Flower Shop on
Ellis Blvd. Topics: Guest artist Gary Wood to demo Three
Tree Clump, Thread Grafting, Repotting.**

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WIRED FOR SPRING

Ivan Hanthorn

Yesterday morning it was one of the first really grand spring days. 20 degrees above normal on the 8th of March and no snow storm on the horizon. Hard not to walk around the yard and just look. In the process I rather mindlessly stopped by to investigate a birdhouse that I enjoy as well as the birds that annually use it as a domicile for parenting. There was the expected high stack of several years of home improvement on the core nest, with annual redesign and new lining every spring. Then something caught my eye—it was a piece of very thin bonsai wire, woven into the nest. There were more. And more. And more.

I decided to remove the wire; it seemed so unnatural although the wire satisfied the next builder. I faulted his design decisions because the wire diameter was varied. Anyway, it took a good deal of finagling to remove the visible wire without doing damage to the nest. Once done I had second thoughts about the whole experience. Here I had accidentally educated local birds in the structural integrity of metal wire reinforcement in utility objects built with ones beak, and then I removed the material. Shame on me. I will leave a basket of small wire scraps out from now on during the nesting season. Some birds are quite good structural engineers. This is true recycling.

Timely Tips

Have you checked your buds lately? If you keep your trees in an attached garage, you likely have seen buds swelling on your trees. Perhaps you have seen the color green! Pretty darn exciting, I'd say.

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 done that already. 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!!

Juvenile Foliage on Junipers

Michael Hagedorn

I've received several emails about how to handle juvenile foliage on junipers, and felt like this was one of those discussions that could be useful to a larger group of people.

- Juvenile growth in junipers is when the shoots display *needle-like growth* on *atypically scale growth variety* (a few of those are listed below).

Spiky juvenile growth is a response to either too much foliage loss from pinching (don't do that), overly hard pruning, or sometimes too much fertilizer. Naturally, since mature scale foliage is nicer to look at, and is what the tree grows when it's content, we might have the impulse to cut the juvenile off.

Don't do that. Leave the juvenile foliage alone.

The problem is, if we cut off the juvenile growth, we've likely cut off everything that is new growth on the juniper. And that would be deeply, seriously, and really quite intensely bad. A juniper needs its newer foliage to stay healthy and strong.

When the tree is ready, it will grow scale foliage on the new tips, replacing the juvenile. The needles of the juvenile foliage will over time yellow, brown, and eventually will be shed. But, it can be a year or two impatient wait for this to happen. You might want to stock up on gloves so you don't nibble your fingernails off.

Of the clearly scale-type junipers, Itoigawa is one of the most guilty in how it so easily reverts to juvenile foliage after an over-strong pruning. Rocky Mountain can revert to juvenile. So can Sierra. Shimpaku is one of the least susceptible.

Three Seasons of a Sharp's Pygmy Japanese Maple

Artist is Sergio Cuan



Morris Dailey Visits Kokufu Ten Show in Tokyo

John Denny

Recently I received an email from my good friend Dr. Morris Dailey. I never know where Morris is writing from – Paris, South Africa, Tokyo. Morris was a longtime EIBA member prior to his retirement and move back to his home state of California, which is where he began his love affair with bonsai. Morris was writing from Tokyo where he had just visited the world renowned Kokufu Bonsai Show. I have included a few of his comments and some of the great photos he forwarded to me.

“I decided that this was finally the year to see the Kokufu–Ten bonsai show, so, here we are in Tokyo at Keiko's sister's house. There were two batches of trees of 180 each for two successive 4–day periods. We just did the second batch today. It was really spectacular. As Peter Tea told me last month, the best trees in Japan are 10–fold better than almost any in the US, and I think that he is right. Every tree is essentially perfect, really breathtaking. It was a bit crowded, but there were surprisingly few westerners. (A guy there told me that Valvanis had brought a group through in the morning.).

We went to the sales area about a mile away, where I bought a leaf trimming tool. I wish that I could have gotten a plant or two, as there were some quite nice ones for a pretty good price. There was one area manned by an American apprentice where they were selling some amazing trees, as good as some in the show. They were selling for up to \$70,000, so quarantine or not, I wasn't about to invest in one.

One thing that caught my eye today was a beautiful and uniquely styled satsuki with a plaque listing the owner as Matt Ouwinga, the only westerner with a tree in today's show. The only thing I can figure is that he must have bought the tree here and is unable to bring it to the U.S., so I presume that he is leaving it with a master here. It seems kinda strange.”



Kokufu ten show in February 2016. Tokyo



Japanese beech broom style. Below Matt Ouwinga's Azalea.





Above Omiya Village Tokonoma. Below Shohin Shimpaku.





Above and below are both Shimpaku with lots of deadwood.





White pine literati.

BONSAI BOOK REVIEW

Ivan Hanthorn

I have so many bonsai books that I try to avoid being tempted by any new ones. That is hard to do, because I am a true bookman. I am a retired librarian and at one time had over 5000 books in my personal library. For some time now I have been weeding the pile, driven by my German spouse who claims that anything not immediately useful should disappear. I don't really want to argue this point because the argument could extend to my bonsai and even me.

Be that as it may, Stone Lantern continues its introduction of new relevant titles for bonsai as well as its never ending book sales. Sometimes I peek at the list. I found one title that I could not resist when he first announced it a few months ago; not unsurprisingly, it is now on sale. I refer to **Romanji-English Japanese Bonsai Terms and Tree Names**, by Robert Z Callaham.

Bonsai is Japanese. In its core, in its aesthetics, in its definition, in its integration, in its totality. Some have tried to expand the definition of the word to include other similar expressions with plant material from other cultures, and to strip the Japanese cultural components from the word to find a universal base. However, they are just quite wrong. Consequently every idea and term we utilize in bonsai practice has a Japanese original.

This matters for a variety of reasons. Particularly when listening to a Japanese master speak or demonstrate, traditional terminology will often be encountered. In reading older Japanese authored bonsai literature the same phenomenon occurs. Additionally, until the very recent past many of the greats in the American and sometimes the European bonsai scene also used Japanese terms to indicate familiarity and respect for the Japanese forms and to lend an aura of seriousness to the presentation of a finished work of living art.

Without an awareness of the meaning of nebari, kaede, chokkan, deshojo, ezo, bon, komoyo, kohachi, and so many other terms used in text and speech, one could miss the real point of the interchange. So now, for those who always were mystified by what the gurus were really saying when they reverted to original descriptive terms, you can have in hand an easy answer to the challenge. The entries are very informative, often useful, and downright entertaining occasionally. If for no other reason, it's a good book to have when you want to impress the dickens out of someone with what you know about bonsai.

Todd Schafer Bonsai Workshop

Ivan Hanthorn

This workshop will be held April 30 and May 1 at the Magruder Farm. It is two different days so one can come to one or the other or both, depending on availability of open positions. The visiting artist is Todd Schafer, from Colorado.

Todd Schafer has a rapidly growing reputation, another of the enlarging group of Western bonsai artists who collect and vend quality yamadori material, primarily from our Western mountains. However his bonsai work is not limited to yamadori. His business is First Branch Bonsai; the website is worth a visit.

On Saturday there will be a demonstration in the morning, with the rest of the day devoted to working on bonsai material that needs work to develop an eventual attractive form. Sunday will be a full day workshop.

Participants can bring their own tree or buy material from Todd, who is bringing potential bonsai materials with him. If there is something particular you may want from him to work on consider contacting him; see his website for contact information.

There are 8 session spots for each day. Some have already been taken. It is first come first serve. This workshop is open to anyone in Iowa who reads this newsletter.

Each participant will pay \$50.00 per day. If you plan to attend both days you will pay \$100.00. You do not have to participate in both days. You can participate only Saturday or only Sunday or both.

This is an incredible Iowa opportunity. Think about this one; it doesn't get any better than this for quality training brought to your own back yard. Contact Michael Harmon, IBA President, for further information or to enroll. (skwn12@gmail.com)

