

Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

www.iabonsai.org

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

March 2018

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IBA March Activities

March 17, IBA Board Meeting 8:00 AM, At The Greater, Des Moines Botanical Garden. 909 Robert D. Ray Drive March 17, 9:00 AM, 9:00 AM, All members welcome.

March 17, 9:00 AM, Open Study Group and Presentation at 11:30 AM :

Bring a Tree

Group and Presentation at 11:30 AM, Topics:
ringing trees out of dormancy, Ron Heinen. Talk about pots and repotting demonstration,
Formal display of Bonsai trees, Dave Lowman.

IBA Meetings at The Greater, Des Moines Botanical Garden. 909 Robert D. Ray Drive

EIBA March Activities

March 15, 7:00 PM, EIBA Club Meeting of 2018, Pierson Flower Shop on Ellis Blvd.

Topic: *Dues, Soil Handout, Review 2018 Schedule, "Taking Trees Out of Hibernation"*

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Gateway to Bonsai—2018



April 19-22, 2018

Presented by American Bonsai Society and Bonsai Society of Greater St. Louis

Gateway Convention Center
Collinsville, IL (10 minutes east of St Louis)

Easy access from St Louis airport to the Convention Center with ample parking

For more information and on-line registration, go to

www.absbonsai.org

Three GREAT Headliners!! Marc Noelanders, Bjorn Bjorholm, and Matt Reel

Twenty Workshops, 17 Seminars, 3 Critiques, and Vendors galore

Ikebana Display and Workshop
Some workshops are filled, so register quickly.

Juried bonsai exhibit with awards and prize money, \$1000.00 for Best in Show, 2nd Place -\$500, 3rd Place, \$250, Best Conifer-\$250, Best Shohin Display-\$250, Best Tropical-\$250, Best Broadleaf-\$250, Best Native Bonsai & ABS Medallion-\$250, Best Ikebana-\$100

Call for Entries—entry forms and information sheet:
www.absbonsai.org

Go to www.absbonsai.org. Go to “events”, click on the gateway picture and a larger picture with clickable links will appear. Click on “bonsai exhibitor entry form”.

Remember one form per tree display (shohin being ONE display). Include a tree picture in jpeg format with your entry. Can be a separate file keyed to your entry form. Email Your Entry to:
gatetobonsai2018@aol.com

Joshua Roth New Talent Contest—The Joshua Roth-American Bonsai Society New Talent Contest is intended to recognize and promote new bonsai talent in North America.

The first stage of the competition requires each entrant to submit photographs of three trees they have personally designed and styled. Those entrants selected will then be eligible to compete in the second stage, which consists of the production of a bonsai from provided raw material, on Friday, April 20, 2018 during the ABS/BSGSL “Gateway to Bonsai”

Get Out

EIBA Member Susan Daufeldt

It is February 25, 2018, and I am moving north-northwest deep into a ravine to visit some of my favorite trees. This is a regular activity. I visit them through the year. Through the years. And as I progress in my thinking, I notice things I never noticed before - so that, Always, the Woods is new and fascinating - full of wonder and wonderful. Today, I take pictures because I am thinking of you. And I wish that I could convey just a little bit of the visual information here. No photograph can do these great sights justice. The photo flattens the image. Light and shadow is altered. The frame cannot contain the experience or the



Exposed roots over an icy stream.

perspective. If pictures were enough, we wouldn't do bonsai. But I take pictures anyway. And hope that

these images will inspire you to go out where the big trees are and take part in the glory of it all. This is a



The nebari and lower part of the trunk of a fabulous oak tree.

Unexpectedly, there is often a lot of green in the woods in winter.

you. I am walking along a strip of wild area between farm fields, looking at trees.



Mosses and Lichens completely cover a log spanning the streambed.

It is February 26, 2018, and I am still thinking about



A new discovery...I can't wait until this clump leafs out so that I can identify it!

There are wild areas and woods all around us – invaluable experiences that will inform our art as nothing else can. Go look at trees. Get out.

The Smell of Bonsai (A Noelanders Trophy Experience)

Andrew Smith Photos by the author

I'd been told that Belgium in February was a rather dreary, wet and cold affair. I also heard they had the world's best beer and love to eat chocolate.

are people involved, and many of those people are fanatically dedicated. Going to a show in the U.S. is almost like going to a family reunion –you see your friends and partners in crime that you never get to see any other time. However, this show was over 5,000 miles from any place I had ever been before, so I had



Judy and I did a couple of quick calculations. Belgium might be cold and dreary in February, but we knew for a fact that South Dakota was likely to be downright frigid. Not to mention that the local beer of choice is Bud Lite, and we're known more for beef jerky and jackalopes than chocolate.

I can take or leave the chocolate, though I do like M&Ms. But, sum total, it came out that in February Belgium would be warmer than South Dakota, with better beer. And, The Noelander's Trophy Bonsai Exhibition is there! So we went.

Bonsai, of course, is more than just trees. There

Bonsai have a very particular smell and I can now testify that bonsai in Belgium smell just like bonsai in the U.S., or Japan, or anywhere. I don't know exactly what causes that specific scent, whether it's the fertilizer, or the soil, or the evergreen trees, but I smell it as soon as I walk into a bonsai show, and in my own greenhouse, and at other bonsai people's greenhouses too. I suppose it doesn't smell much differently than a typical greenhouse smells, but it is a little bit different. And I always associate it with bonsai. I'd wear it as cologne if it were available, though it's not; and if I did Judy would probably just tell me I needed a shower. But it's not unpleasant. It's refreshing, to me at least. The bonsai sales area dwarfed any that I'd been to

before. It was in three huge rooms and the next day, when it was crowded with people, it took me hours to find Judy in there, even though I know exactly what she looks like. And our cell phones were working in slo-mo; so by the time I got a text telling me where she was, she was already long gone. Smell of bonsai, continued Literally thousands of superb trees, pots, tools and anything else bonsai-related you could think of were on display. They had some amazing and massive yamadori for sale, and we spent some time trying to guess what some of them were, like cork oaks, which you don't see often in the U.S. And there were a lot of very finely finished bonsai for sale too. There were a lot of great deciduous bonsai, like old Ume, Japanese flowering apricots, that were just coming into bloom. And those are one of my favorites.

The bonsai exhibit was, as expected, awesome and beautiful with many great trees. (No photography was permitted in the exhibit area.) There were a lot more well developed deciduous species on display than you typically see at a show in the states. There were some fantastic hawthorns, beeches, olives and weeping birch, as well as other species. Surprisingly, I didn't see a single Japanese black pine on display. My favorite was an old Norway spruce with a hollow base that was just cool. Apparently it was many people's favorite too, and it won several prizes.

So, I was wowed by the exhibit, but after walking through it several times what struck me was I wasn't really that wowed. I don't mean that the trees weren't everything they should have been, or were less than spectacular. But just that in the last few years here at home bonsai has made amazing leaps forward and you can see some pretty spectacular trees right here in the good ol' U.S. of A. too. The trees at the last National Exhibition are a good example of that. And that's great. My impression also was that there are more young people attending bonsai shows in the States than maybe in Europe. That's kind of a recent development, but it's a good one since it will keep bonsai growing into the future.

Neither Judy nor I had been to Europe before, so we were very curious as to what it would be like. My

off the cuff impression was that it is an awful lot like America, but everything is spelled wrong. All the buildings were made of brick, and many were very old. The people seemed friendly. Just about everyone spoke English, but with what I'd call an English accent –although, actually, over there we were the ones with the accent. Judy found out that her great-grandmother came from a town in the Netherlands, not very far from Genk. We didn't have time to go there, but if we go back, we will.

So, in the middle of the South Dakota winter we made a trip and saw some great and inspiring bonsai. It was -3F degrees here this morning, but now I can't wait for spring.

And we did try the Belgian beer, and chocolate too. They were fantastic. no idea if I'd know anyone there. But standing on the train platform for the last leg of the trip to Genk, up walked Frank Mihalic from Wildwood Gardens Bonsai, in Chardon Ohio. And a minute later another bonsai friend, Alex Ellis, came up on the same platform! That was a nice surprise. The Mihalics have been involved in bonsai in the U.S. right from the start and Frank grew up with it. I met him at the very first show I ever attended, over 20 years ago. He was at the Noelander's Trophy selling his well-known bonsai jewelry and the cast miniatures he makes. He said it was his biggest show of the year.

Once we arrived, since we were with Frank, we walked to the exhibit hall where they were setting up for the show. It was already dark outside, but it was a familiar scene –bonsai growers and vendors unloading their treasures and setting up their tables late into the night. I was head-spinning tired, but as soon as I walked into the vendor area I took a deep breath and smelled a very familiar smell –the smell of bonsai! And suddenly I felt refreshed.



Juniper Jin and Pine Jin

Michael Hagedorn

A month ago we started talking about pine jin. Here are some photos and thoughts about pine and juniper jin and how they differ.



This is a pine jin. It looks cut off, doesn't it? But it's never been touched. This is what a dead pine branch will do if left to its own devices, checks develop in it, and when old enough the end will fall off and it looks severed. Dead juniper branches don't do this.



Juniper jin splits longitudinally.



Juniper jin, getting nobbly in its old age, but not broken-looking, like a pine.



Another natural pine jin. The broken appearance.



Juniper jin, not checkered, and still striated.

And for those who like ponderables, here is a

puzzle: Naturally, as these photos show, pine jin is broken and not sharp, and juniper jin is eroded and comparatively sharper (but often not as sharp as some of us make our jin). One could certainly make the argument that a sharp jin is more in line with what bonsai scale would dictate. And yet when we see the craggy erosion of jin on our collected trees, which may have been exposed for many decades, a dichotomy emerges.

Here is the choice: Either we carve our jins to be sharp and in scale, or we leave them less pointed and more in tune with the close-up virtues of old wood, which is checked and eroded blunt from exposure to sun and microbial breakdown. It seems to me the most natural course is to not to whittle our jins to the vanishing point, very sharp, as if that is assumed. We have two distinct parts, a small tree, and a piece of dead wood. One is viewed as if from afar. The other, from up close. Bonsai is famous for duality and how the minuscule can represent the macroscopic and vice versa, and how we handle our deadwood gives this scale shift one more

possible expression.

Timely Tips

John Denny

Greetings, after a long winter that seems still to be hanging on. This is the time of year when it can snow, sleet, freeze, or be as nice as a warm Caribbean breeze with sunshine on your face. So, what is going on with our bonsai?

If your bonsai are stored in an attached garage, then they are beginning to wake up. A few friends have reported swelling buds. For these trees, repotting season is just around the corner. If your trees are stored in an unheated garage, shed, cold frame, or dug into the ground, then your trees are still in dormancy and may be a month away from waking.

Repotting your tree may be the single most important thing you can do for your tree. Doing root work to rejuvenate them, placing them into good fresh soil, aligning your tree to the perfect front and angle, tying in perfectly, etc. all help your tree be healthy for two or three years. Learn to do it right. I strongly suggest, if you are a rookie at this, find an experienced club member who can help you learn to use the right soil, right tools, and right techniques.

When repotting, generally we remove all soil from our deciduous trees. Bare roots. Then trim about a third of the roots away. Remove long straggly roots, roots that cross over each other, roots pointing straight up or down, any mushy roots, tap roots, roots that sit too high or too low, etc. Try to maintain roots radiating out from the trunk like spokes on a wheel. You want to end up with a nice solid root pad of just the fine roots. Take your clean pot and place your tie in wires up through the drain holes. The length of your tie in wires is usually equal to $\frac{2}{3}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ of the pot circumference.

Use the best soil you can. It should have a uniform pebble size, have good air and water drainage. If you have a one gallon container of soil, half of the volume should be airspace! If your soil does not have enough airspace, your trees will not be as healthy as they could be. Many people add a thin drainage layer of slightly larger particle size soil. I like to use pumice. Pile your soil on top of the drainage layer, place your tree on top of this soil pile, twist the tree back and forth so soil works its way up into the central part of your root pad. Add some soil around the outside of the roots so the pot is about half full of soil. Connect your tie in wires by twisting them together. Once they have been connected, grab the joined end with your pliers and pull upward, then twist the wires more so they begin to snug down towards the soil. Before tightening fully, go to the other side and tighten those two ends together. Pull up to get the slack out, then twist to tighten down. Check your tree to make sure it is still sitting just the way you want. The right front, right depth, right angle. Remember, if you are misaligned, you will have to undo things or sit and look at your misaligned tree for two more years! Get it right. Then make the final tightening.

Your tree should not wiggle in its pot. If you can wiggle it, so can the wind. The wind will then damage your new roots as they grow. Use your chopstick, poking and wiggling it slightly to help the soil settle into any holes in the roots. You can hold your tree down with one hand and use your other hand to smack the pot, which also helps settle the soil. Add more soil and work it in with chopsticks. Finish your repotting by tamping down the soil with a bit of pressure.

Water your tree for a good long time. Let it sit and drain, then water it again. This removes unwanted dust and really assists dry soil particles to become fully wetted. Then you may want to protect the freshly cut roots by adding some roughly sieved sphagnum moss to the top surface. Spray water to wet the moss. Now keep the tree out of the wind and sun for a couple of weeks. Do not fertilize for at least three weeks.

You can repot junipers and pines just a bit later. Remember, with these trees, do NOT bare root them. Remove only half of the soil per repotting. You can remove the other half the next time you repot.

Gradually get your trees used to the sun. Avoid sun burning them. They adapt fairly quickly. However, keep your eyes on the weather reports. Watch out for heavy frosts and bring your trees inside if warranted. Watch for very windy days. Twenty mph can kill a newly repotted tree. Your tree will be screaming for water in the wind, but your brand new roots may not be able to keep up. In Iowa, protect bonsai from the winds of spring.

Late winter and early spring is a challenge to bonsai. When should you put your trees outside? If there will be heavy frosts, you may want to leave them inside longer. However, if your trees have begun to push new leaves, those leaves will crave sunlight. If you do not get sunlight to them, then your tree will grow long internodes. This is bad for bonsai, as you want short internodes. I have extra lighting in my garage, so I can get a bit more light onto the new shoots. Eventually, however, we generally end up doing the Spring Bonsai Dance. This is where you take your trees outside for sun, back inside due to low night time temps, back out the next day, etc. This is a ritual. Not always fun, but it is the price of doing business in order to grow nice bonsai in Iowa. I used to bitch a lot about having to do this Dance, but I finally decided it is just part of bonsai. If I did not want to take of my trees, why have them? So, now I enjoy the dance. Sort of.