

# Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

[www.iabonsai.org](http://www.iabonsai.org)

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

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## IBA October Activities

**October 21, 9:00 AM, Open Study Group and Presentation at 11:30 AM**

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

**Topics:** *Viewing Stones by Larry Totton and Display by Ron Heinen.*

## EIBA October Activities

**October 12, 6:30 PM, EIBA Board Meeting at Panera Restaurant on Edgewood Road**

**Topic:** *Reiman Garden Show, Orchid Show, soil day, October club mtg prep, officer slate, workshop with Gary Wood in November and 2017 workshops.*

**October 19, 7:00 PM, EIBA Club Meeting, Pierson Flower Shop on Ellis Blvd.**

**Topic:** *Whoin and mame presentation by Cat Nelson. A short discussion on overwintering trees will follow.*

**November 19, 7:00 PM, Holiday Party held in back room of Leonardo's Restaurant.**

*Come enjoy the camaraderie and fun with fellow bonsai enthusiasts. Spouses most welcome.*

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## IBA Fall Show Review

*John Denny with photos by David Richmond*

The Iowa Bonsai Association's Fall Show at Reiman Gardens was held September 30/October 1. What an excellent show! If you have not been there before, it is worth the drive. Reiman Gardens is a fine venue to host the show. There are many other exhibits to see and, of course, the gardens are a beautiful walk. Ron Heinen of IBA coordinated the show. He was ably assisted by Alan Magruder. Several other IBA members



pitched in to man vending tables, give demos, answer questions by the public, photograph trees, and set up educational displays on suiseki (viewing stones) and kusamona. Thanks to all for a job well done, IBA.

Fall Show - continued

This year, IBA invited the EIBA club from Cedar Rapids/Iowa City area to display as well. EIBA put



up a display on one end of the large room. It was anchored by an excellent shohin display.

The IBA Fall show featured trees large and small, tropicals, pines, junipers, fruiting and flowering, deciduous, forests, shohin, modern styles and classical, collected yamadori and nursery grown. Something for everyone. Several folks worked on their trees while



the public watched and asked questions. Ron Heinen, Larry Totten, Cat Nelson, and Scott Allen all did demonstrations.

There was a very fine vending area just outside of the bonsai display area. Dasu Bonsai was there with Dave Lowman and Terri. And IBA had a very good club vending section made up of member's items for sale. At the sales area, you could buy trees, collected trees, books, pots, display furniture, tools, wire, etc. An IBA Board meeting was held on Sunday afternoon. EIBA was invited. There were good discussions and exchanges of information and ideas which will help both clubs be stronger.



In the end, the stars of the show were the wonderful trees and how well they were displayed. Bill Englert, EIBA President, commented, "I think the thing that stood out was the spectacular trees and the presentation of each tree. Each tree had a story to tell, and every time you would look at a tree, something else caught your eye. It was definitely a first class show."

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## Is Your Tree Tired?

*John Denny*

Most of our trees are in the early development stage, not the established old refined bonsai stage. So, we try to keep our trees growing with fresh soil and good fertilizer and big dollops of sunshine and water. This usually keeps our young trees healthy.

But, sometimes we have a tree that does not want to grow strongly. Often a repotting will invigorate that tree. And sometimes not. Further thinking leads us to make sure there are no pests or diseases. We treat successfully and sometimes that tree will recover strongly. And sometimes, not.

There are times when putting a tired old tree or a damaged tree (due to loss of limbs or foliage from accident or disease) in the ground or into a large growing container and letting it grow wild is the best thing to do. I have an Ume that I can't seem to get going. I have fertilized it, I have repotted it into good soil, I have changed the amount of sun it receives... nothing seems to have helped. This is a tree I am considering just letting grow wild in an Anderson tray. It can build all the roots it wants, which should eventually lead to stronger top growth.

Below I have taken a few paragraphs from a blog post by Michael Hagedorn on the subject. His blog is titled, "When to Take Your Bonsai Off Leash".

"We talk endlessly about how to manage the growth of bonsai. Which technique for this species, which for that...and it's a good thing we do, as it's very important. If we get it wrong we could end up in a pretty pickle. Less often do we talk about how important the opposite is for an old bonsai: Letting the tree go a bit. Stop 'managing' it for a while. Many trees cannot be kept in continual show shape.

There are two concepts here and I don't wish to confuse them. Most trees need to grow a bit seasonally before they can be cut back to where the profile is. Without that extension growth, if we're constantly nibbling on the tree, then it can just tire out. This goes for many trees, not all, but it's not the purpose of this post to go into detail about all that.

So there's that idea, seasonal wildness, unrestrained growth. Then there's the other one, where over some years of life in a bonsai pot, an old bonsai begins to just tire somewhat. It takes a close eye and a good memory to know when is the right time to let a tree off the leash. Any of you who have dogs know that when you go to the beach or a big field, and take the leash off, it is amazing to see a totally new animal. It takes off and

becomes years younger. It laughs. Dances. Becomes a wolf, even if it doesn't look like one.

The same thing happens for bonsai. Sometimes after years of applying the same techniques to contain growth---which is an important idea---the tree slows down to the point of damaging it. Branches begin to tire out. We might lose a few. And then it's time to consider taking the leash off.



*An old Winter Hazel, Corylopsis spicata, in a box for some rejuvenation following a couple years of weakness, now showing long extensions and large leaves*

There are a few ways to do this---simply leaving the tree grow for a while unrestrained, maybe until fall. Or if it seems like a serious problem and you're losing parts of the tree, slip potting it in a box, with large size soil. Be careful, though, as these techniques can totally change the age of a tree. If left too long in a box, a bonsai soon won't have the structure of a bonsai any more. Leaving it grow unmanaged for one growing season for a light adjustment, to three years for a really tired old tree, is the range.

Deciduous trees and conifers can respond significantly differently when let go. The deciduous tree is like a small rowboat, easy to turn in the water, needing only months to a year for an upward physiological swing. Conifers can take longer to turn around, sometimes a couple of years, like a big old battleship that takes miles to turn to port.

And then after a summer of joyful growth, or maybe after a couple years if it's a really tired out grandparent of a tree, return it to a bonsai pot."

## Understanding Glazes on Bonsai Pots

When I first began in bonsai, it was all about the trees. I knew nothing about bonsai pottery. Still don't, really. But, once I heard of the Japanese concept that your tree's pot should be equal in value (and cost) to your tree, I began to think more about ceramics. Like me, most of us become interested in bonsai, not because of pots, but because of trees. Now I have way more beautiful pots than trees. We should know more about bonsai pots – clays, glazes, techniques, history, famous potters, how to match pots to trees, how to size a pot, etc. So, here is an article from the latest ABS e newsletter that can help us learn a bit about one aspect of bonsai pots - **glazes**.

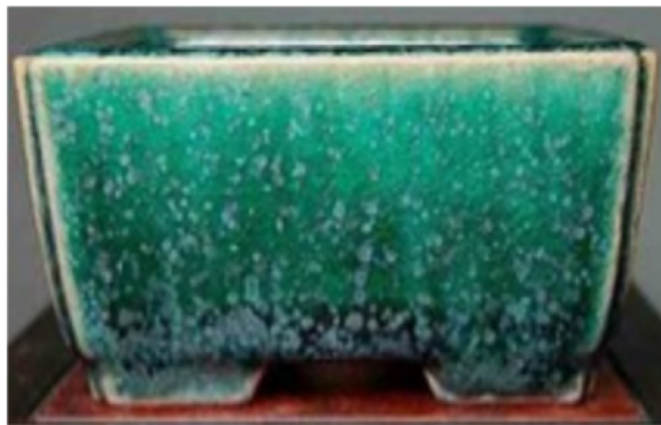
### **Bonsai Pottery Basics: Classical Glazes 101** *Michael Ryan Bell (Mississippi)*

With the significant rise in interest in higher quality bonsai containers over the last decade, you have probably begun to notice that more and more sellers are using Japanese terminology to describe their wares. I've heard more than a few enthusiasts say that this is just snobbish jargon, but in many cases it is necessary, as there are no sufficient terms in English that convey the same meaning as their Japanese counterpart. Classical Glazes are just one of the many examples of this trend. You're more likely these days to see terms like 'oribe' used instead of 'green', so here's a simple primer with a few of the most common glaze terms you're likely to see used.

**Namako-** literally, 'Sea Cucumber' Glaze. Dark blue to brown with flecks and streaks of white and black. Classically, this glaze was produced in several regions in China. Modern examples of the glaze can involve multiple color palettes, and many potters have their own signature version.

**Shirocochi/Cochin-**white to cream colored glaze. Originally from Southeast Asia. A classical color for maples and many other Deciduous species.

**Oribe-**Copper glaze invented in Mino, Japan that traces it's roots back to old Canton ware. A highly variable glaze, changes in technique and recipe can change the glaze dramatically. Oribe Glazes are typically Green (oxidation firing) with surface microcrystals, but can be red(reduction firing).



*Oribe glaze with significant microcrystals from Shukuhō*

**Ruri-**originally from the Canton and Shiwan kilns on the South China Sea in Guangdong province. A deep, rich blue that is just slightly lighter than indigo. A traditional glaze for Satsuki and red flowering and fruiting bonsai.

**Kinyo-**a powder blue glaze that originated in the Yuzhou Kilns of Heian province in China. A very popular glaze color for Deciduous bonsai, most contemporary artists make some version of this glaze.

**Tenmoku-**an Iron based glaze with a wide variety of appearances. Commonly seen with a running 'hare's fur' or 'oil spot' pattern. Tenmoku ranges from yellow to brown to black.

**Sango Yu-**Coral red glaze. You may be familiar with the Acer Palmatum cultivar, Sango Kaku, it is a similar color to this cultivar's light red twigs.  
**Keichi-**Chicken Blood red. As the name suggests, a deep rich crimson.

**Yohen-**Glazes that are changed in the kiln through firing process. Natural ash Glazes, running 'hare's fur', crystals, and oil spots are examples of Yohen glaze.

**Takatori-**A glaze originating in the Japanese region of the same name. Reds, yellows, blacks, and whites often intermingled in running and dripping patterns.

**Celadon-**a porcelain glaze. A very pale, light green, most often seen with relief carved or painted bonsai pottery. Hopefully this short primer leaves you a little less confused about the terms being bandied about lately. For pictures and examples of these glazes, and many more, check out my web site:  
<http://japanesebonsaipots.net/>

## Timely Tips

*John Denny*

We are in October now. Night time temps are dropping, as are leaves from the deciduous trees. Temperatures vary greatly in October. We can have beautiful warm days in the high 70s or cold, windy rainy days in the low 40s. Calm days and very windy days. These variations mean we have to pay attention to our trees and their watering needs. Don't let them dry out, of course, but we may not need to water everyday as we have been. We may need to water a few of our trees, but not all. Stick your finger into the soil and wiggle it in there to feel the moisture level. Test the soil moisture with a chopstick. Leave the chopstick in the soil long enough to see how damp it becomes. Think through the species of tree, how wet or dry the tree species likes it, how well does the soil drain, how much soil is in the pot. A large pot filled with soil holds water longer than a smaller pot. A deeper pot holds water longer than a shallow one.

Keep your trees and pots cleaned up, as well as the area you display them. Clean the bottoms of pots, too. Remove any diseased leaves as you don't want fungus or disease sources around your trees during winter storage.

Tropicals should be inside once night time temps drop below 55F (50F if your tropes are more cold tolerant ie. Ficus or Schefflera). Spray them for pests and diseases just before they come in for the winter. Tropicals can have disease issues over a long winter, so make sure they are as clean and healthy as possible when they first come inside.

Pines are pretty cold tolerant and stay out to harden off in night time temps down to 25F. Feed them into late fall. Some experts suggest using low or no Nitrogen in fall, such as 0-10-10. Other experts say it is not necessary to cut back on Nitrogen. The tree won't use the Nitrogen if it does not need it. Pick a side.

Junipers are fairly cold hardy in fall as well. I usually will let mine get down to 25-27F night time temps. Now is a good time to do clean up work on junipers. Knock loose bark off the trunk. This reduces bug harborage areas. Prune away low hanging foliage from under branches. Remove weak, yellowing foliage. Clean branch crotches. You can thin healthy foliage, then wire and bend branches this time of year.

Deciduous trees vary in their fall cold hardiness. I will let maples and elms drop to 27F. Any weak trees, bring in earlier to be safe. Hopefully, you are aware of how much hardening off your deciduous species can take based on experience. If you are unsure, ask a fellow club member who also has the same species.

Since we never know when a sharp drop in fall temps can happen, it is a great idea to have our winter storage area cleaned and ready for our trees. If you have a lot of trees, then a sudden drop in temps means you may have a lot of work staring you in the face moving all those trees into protection. So, be prepared.

It is quite possible you will have to bring trees inside on a very cold night, then the forecast will tell us that a week or two of fine weather is coming. Trees can benefit from the extra time outside getting more sunshine (especially pines) and our trees can continue to harden off a bit more completely before they finally come inside for good. I have often not had to bring pines in until the first week in December. Just follow the forecasting and give the weather folks a little leeway for imperfection. Weather Channel may say night time temps will be 51F and I think I can leave my Tropicals outside. However, it may actually get down to 47F! And now my Tropicals may suffer some damage to roots and leaves. Forecasts are guidelines, better than not having them. But don't place your trust in them blindly!

Next month we can talk about what kinds of work you can do on your trees in November to get them, not just ready for winter, but ready for next spring. November is a great time to work on pines (bud selection, needle plucking, styling). Junipers can be pruned back and wired. Deciduous trees can be pruned to remove unwanted branches, shorten length of branches, establish your new silhouette, and wire and place a few branches. More details in November.

Timely Tips. Have your tools and wire ready. See you then!