

Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

www.iabonsai.org

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

November 2018

Volume 64, Issue 11



IBA November Activities

Iowa Bonsai Association Lunch and Auction

Donations for auction items are accepted all year at IBA club meetings. Contact any Board of Director for more information.

Luch in the Trellis Café, 11:00 am

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

Everybody is welcome.

EIBA November Activities

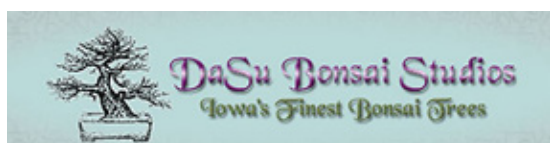
**November 8, 6:30 pm. Board Meeting at
Panera Restaurant on Edgewood Road**

*Topics: Holiday Party, soil production update, Winter
Garden Fair*

**November 18, 6:00 pm. Holiday Party, at
Leonardo's Resaurant on 16th Ave.**

*Come celebrate the end of a good year of bonsai and club
activities. Enjoy a libation, good food, and great company!
Let Bill Englert know you plan to be there.*

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Brilliant Autumn Bonsai At The International Bonsai Arboretum

William N. Valavanis



The 2018 summer growing season has come to an end with a hard freeze a few days ago. But, before winter arrived, my deciduous bonsai decided to put on a show and I'd like to share thier beauty with you.

The spectacle of green foliage turning rich red,

International Bonsai Arboretum- continued

yellow and orange in autumn happens when trees have taken all the food they can from the foliage which is filled with chlorophyll, the molecule that absorbs energy from the sun and gives leaves their green coloring. When the length of daylight and temperatures decreases leaves cease to manufacture food and when the green colored chlorophyll is broken down other colors are revealed.



Usually each species has a common autumn coloring. Maidenhair trees, or Ginkgo and Birch normally become bright yellow in autumn before leaf drop. Japanese maples often turn brilliant red, sometimes orange and even yellow foliage. I've even had Chinese elm leaves change to pink before dropping to reveal the quiet beauty of small fine twigs and grey bark. Japanese, European and American beech leaves usually become yellow in autumn rather than orange or red. Of course there are physiological reasons for these leaf color changes, which plant scientists have studied and can better explain. However, I'm a bonsai artist and educator, and although I've earned two ornamental horticultural degrees this topic does not really interest me because what goes on inside the leaf can't be changed. However, what I am interested in is to understand how to enhance autumn coloring.

Although each species has a "normal" autumn coloring, each year presents a different show of color depending on the daylight, temperature, water, fertilizer and trimming techniques. All of these elements contribute to the autumn foliage colors.

I've had Trident maple bonsai turn rich red one year, orange the next year, clear yellow another year and sometimes all three colors in one leaf.

<https://valavanisbonsaiblog.com/2018/11/10/brilliant-autumn-bonsai-at-the-international-bonsai-arboretum/>



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If deciduous bonsai are defoliated during the summer to reduce leaf size and increase fine twigs they often present richer autumn colors because of the chemical balance inside the leaves. It seems that the younger foliage change to more intense colors than bonsai with only older foliage which were not defoliated.



It seems that if the summer weather is hot and wet the foliage does not become brilliant in autumn. If the bonsai tend to dry out during late summer autumn coloring will be better than normal. Perhaps the slight stress stimulates rich coloring.

Fertilizing bonsai also contributes to the autumn foliage color change. If fertilizer applications stop

in August or September the autumn colors begin sooner than if fertilizer is given in September into October. I do not change my fertilizer schedule during the year. Beginning in May and continuing to September, sometimes October, I use a mixture of high Nitrogen fertilizers throughout the growing season.

The addition of Nitrogen will be beneficial to the tree in spring. I do not reduce the Nitrogen levels as the growing season progresses. Most growers do not recommend this, because they say the addition of Nitrogen fertilizer will encourage late new growth which might be damaged by cold weather because they don't have time to mature. This is not true if you have regularly fertilized with high Nitrogen fertilizer throughout the growing season. New growth will not be encouraged. However, look at my bonsai. I must be doing something right because my bonsai always reward me with a colorful show before leaf drop.



During late summer some deciduous leaves show a discoloration or leaf burn around the edges because the leaves are thinner towards the tips. We often let them remain until September or October then gently pluck an entire layer of the damaged foliage revealing an older crop of foliage which has not been damaged. These new leaves become exposed to the sunlight and change color. As the growing season ends they put on a colorful showing. These bonsai are often put on turntables and rotated a couple of times a week so both sides of the bonsai can receive

an even amount of sun. If the bonsai are not rotated the coloring of each side often differs. Bonsai kept in the shade tend to change color later than those in the full sun.



2015



2016
November 4, 2018



November 8, 2018



Young Winter Hazel Structural Design *Michael Hagedorn*

Although we create a lot of deciduous bonsai here, embarrassingly few of them show up on this blog. I'll endeavor to include more of them down the road.

One of the enticing challenges of deciduous bonsai is seeing the future tree in the young twigs in front of you. The process is so long that unless you can push aside the years and see the final product in one's imagination, there will be a moment ten years down

Young Winter Hazel - continued

the road when one will think, 'Darn, if I'd only moved those branches over there way back when.'

This Winter Hazel, *Corylopsis spicata*, is native to Japan and came from Telperion Farms here in Oregon a few years ago, and until now I've done little with it but grow the extensions to get a bit of trunk caliper. This past Seasonal class noodled it a bit further, to set it up for its future form. Thanks to Carmen, Sam, and Zach who were our noodlers for this project.



Our spidery-looking Winter Hazel, maybe 10 years young.



After initial structural pruning.



And where we ended the day. There's no reason to wire or tweak every last tiny shoot at this stage, nor is it necessary to wire all the way to the ends of the extensions, which will be cut back eventually anyway. It is essential however to have extensions at this early phase; without them the development of the trunks and roots will be diminished dramatically.



An image of what this tree might become now that the branches are set for a similar future.
Photos courtesy Andrew Robson.