

IBA News & Muse
Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter
SEPTEMBER 2014

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IBA SEPTEMBER Activities

September 16, 7 PM, IBA MEETING

Des Moines Botanical Garden Commons

Topic: *Shimpaku Juniper Bunjin Workshop*. Leader: *Dave Lowman*.

By popular demand we are repeating a past in-meeting workshop on bunjin (or literati) with everyone's favorite juniper material, Shimpaku. \$36 for a high quality tree from Dasu Bonsai. Bring basic tools (scissor and a branch cutter and a wire cutter if you have one). If you don't have all the bonsai tools bring a simple pliers. Others will also be able to assist you. Anyone interested in purchasing Shimpaku suitable for twisted bonsai or forest can get them from Dasu at 14.

October 4-5, Saturday-Sunday, 9-4:30

Reiman Gardens, Ames

IBA Fall Bonsai Show

EIBA SEPTEMBER Activities

September 11, 6 pm, Board Mtg. Nothing But Noodles Restaurant. *Topics include Soil Making Day, Fall mtg plans.*

September 18, 7 pm, EIBA Club Mtg. Meet at John Denny home in Fairfax. *Topics to include Pests and Diseases, Soil Making Day, nomination of officers. Tour John's bonsai yard, studio, winter storage.*

October 4 or 5, EIBA Trip to IBA Fall Show at Reimen Gardens in Ames. *Details TBD.*

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Wouldn't you love to have this fine collection of pots? Michiko Koide is the artist.

Timely Tips

Fall is arriving, rather quickly. Night time temps have fallen sharply. Length of daylight hours is shortening and the angle of the sun is flatter now, too. So, how does this affect our trees and what we do to care for them?

First, get your Tropical trees inside if the predicted night time temperature will be 55F or lower. You can bring them back outside for more sunshine during the days, but keep a keen eye on night time temps.

Another issue to observe is the location of your trees. As the sun angle flattens, your trees made catch more shade. A couple of my large pines that require lots of sun, began to be shaded during mid-day by the shadow of the house, so I moved them. Get your trees as much sun as you can in fall.

As air temperatures drop in fall, your trees will use less water. Our summer watering habits will have to change. Fall weather can be quite variable, so stick your finger in your soil to test dryness of the soil. You can use a chopstick or wooden skewer placed in the soil to help you assess dryness of your soil deeper down. Also, pick up your tree and feel the weight. Water a tree that is lighter than usual. And look at the leaves for droop.

Fall is a great time to fertilize your trees. I fertilize hard in September for nearly all my trees. I will continue to fertilize pines late into fall. Trees are building roots and getting strong for the winter. Being strong and healthy are critical for a tree to survive winter storage. Give your trees the best chance that you can. Fertilizer is key. I use both organic fertilizer cakes and Miracle Gro full strength every two weeks in September. I do not prune trees this time of year to avoid late growth which may not harden off prior to winter.

Check your trees for pests and diseases. Remove dead, damaged leaves. Spray for any problems you find. Clean your soil surface of weeds. Clean your pots. I see more spider webs lately. Cleanliness helps.

Here's hoping we have fine fall foliage colors this year!

Bonsai
2014 US National EXHIBITION
SEPTEMBER 13-14, 2014
TOTAL SPORTS EXPERIENCE
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

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2014 US National Bonsai Exhibition

This exhibition will be held in Rochester, NY, September 13-14. It features 200 museum quality bonsai from the best private collections across the country.

This year Iowa Bonsai Association member Helene Magruder will be showing two trees. To show a tree, one has to send photos to the Exhibition and they vote to accept your tree or not. Helene had two trees accepted.

Her two trees are large and will not fit in the Magruder's vehicle, so itinerant bonsai teacher, Gary Wood, will drive them in his panel van to NY. The Magruders will catch up with Gary and their trees in Rochester. Helene and Alan are very excited to be a part of the show. Helene also is excited to see the vendors as she is search of an antique pot or two.

Judging the show will be Peter Warren of England. Peter apprenticed in Japan and travels the world teaching bonsai. In fact, Peter led a workshop at Magruders about three years ago.

Helene, we wish you good luck at the Exhibition!

The Travels of Gary Wood

By John Denny

Gary Wood gets around. Really around. Gary is a bonsai expert from Alabama. He has traveled extensively during his bonsai teaching career. Oregon almost became a second home for a few years where he worked with Telperion Farms to develop a top notch bonsai nursery.

Gary comes to Iowa three times a year to work with two study groups. He was here in March and again in June. However, Gary added an extra visit to Iowa in August to judge the Iowa State Fair and lead a workshop in Indianola.

After that, Gary flew to Oregon where he worked with Michael Hagedorn and his apprentice, Bobby, for a week. During this time he gave a seminar to a dozen folks in Michael's studio and bonsai yard. Gary then flew home, then next drove to a client in Ohio and on to Iowa again where he will drive two of Helene Magruder's fine trees to New York for the National Bonsai Exhibition run by Bill Valvanis. Gary will then turn around and bring those trees back to Iowa, before he finally heads home to Alabama. In October Gary returns to Oregon to consult and work with Telperion Farms. And finally he plans to return to Iowa to meet with his study groups in November. Wow! I need a nap just thinking about Gary and his trusty van, Estelle, covering all those miles! We are lucky to have Gary, with all his tree knowledge and experience in bonsai, visit us in Iowa so often.

Here are some photos of Gary giving his seminar at Michael Hagedorn's studio (courtesy of Crataegus Bonsai).



Chicago Bonsai Show Review

By John Denny

Each August I try to get over to Chicago to see the Midwest Bonsai Show held at Chicago Botanic Gardens. It is always a good show and worth the drive despite tolls and traffic. This year was no exception. My travel companion was Bill Englert and we had a great time! There is a lot to see and do at the show. You can view the actual show trees and see if you agree with which trees won ribbons. There is the excellent CBG bonsai collection to see. It is a very nice collection, well displayed in two large courtyards. There are workshops and demos. Bill and I, however, were most looking forward to the many vendors who attend the show – Sara Raynor Pottery, Andy Smith and his collected trees, Cass Bonsai, Wildwood, Dasu, Myrick Pottery, Meehan's Miniatures, etc.

Upon arrival Bill and I headed straight for the vendors. Our plan was to visit all the vendors to get a lay of the land, to see what they each had to offer. We kept our powder dry, so to speak, until the second pass, which was a full out charge (card). Andy and Sara were conveniently located side by side. We picked out some very nice small pots from Sara along with some tools from Cass.

After making our purchases, we viewed the show and took photos of the best trees. IBA's Ron Heinen won ribbons for both of his trees – a large Willow Leaf Ficus and a large Yew. Congratulations to Ron! I noticed a couple days later a photo of Ron's Willow Leaf in Stone Lantern's Bonsai Bark blog. We ended Friday with a fine meal at an Italian restaurant near our hotel. If you don't eat well in Chicago, it is your own fault!

The following day we viewed and photographed the CBG bonsai collection on display. There were many fine trees with excellent accents. Bill and I then headed back to Andy's and picked up a couple small Ponderosa pines. Then we each encouraged the other (like it really took much encouragement at all) to buy one larger tree apiece from Andy. From there we picked up pots from Myrick of Mississippi. Bill and I especially enjoyed buying companion plants from Meehans. We went back at least twice after our first visit to Meehans.

One of the things I enjoy about the show is seeing people from the bonsai world I have met over the years. Bonsai folks are good people. Bill and I ran into many bonsai acquaintances from other clubs, from Brussels, from past shows, previous workshops, and I count the many fine vendors among this group, too.



A good sized Hinoki cypress with a Japanese maple accent.

Juniperus Virginiana as Bonsai—Tree of the Month

Ivan Hanthorn



The yamadori *Juniperus virginiana* above is by Pavel Slavak. Collected from a garden in 1999 and first styled in 2002, it was gorgeous by the end of a styling in 2010 as pictured. This is an excellent example of the magic of bonsai created from collected native material. *Juniperus virginiana*, commonly called Red Cedar in the American Midwest, is certainly native in Iowa now, although it was originally not nearly as weedy as currently before European Americans so drastically altered the prairie landscape with the plow and this invasive species from the east (*virginiana*) gladly moved in. Now it is found in every pasture and county road ditch in the state. So there is much material to choose from in the “Iowa wild.” This is the “cedar” wood tree for fine boxes and wedding trousseaus, as well as the berry that gives gin its distinction. Regardless of these historic merits, it is now widely considered a trash tree. MABA has encouraged bonsai use of native materials from its beginning and has an advice page on its website regarding *Juniperus virginiana*.

The species has been mentioned before in this newsletter and bonsai literature in general. It is back in mind again because of the interests of one of our club members, Larry Totten. Larry had an attention grabbing example of native yamadori red cedar as an entry at the Iowa State Fair Bonsai Show this summer. I was pleased to note the number of people who commented on it or asked questions about it, including a number of East Asian members of the Iowa community. One fairgoer in particular kept looking for the magic contraption surely hidden behind or inside that keep material above alive on top of a certainly dead trunk. I think that was a sign that the nature designed yamadori worked. See the photo above right. My only critical comment on Larry’s tree is that this is classic penjing, not bonsai.

Juniperus virginiana winters well in Iowa in an attached garage or buried in the ground up to a low branch and protected from rabbits. Easily collected in the spring in the Iowa countryside, this is great training material and with enough work can make a show piece. As a juniper, more pleasing foliage from such juniper species as Shimpaku can be grafted to a good red cedar trunk, completely transforming the tree with “new cloths.” The species is wonderful material for literati. John Naka provides some tantalizing diagrams in his books that can be followed for wiring thin red cedars into truly fantastic shapes.

IBA Fall Bonsai Show

By Ivan Hanthorn

The first week of October is soon upon us, which means it is time for the Fall Bonsai Show. Our theme this year is Bonsai Forests. So those of you who enjoy this form now have the encouragement and opportunity to show your stuff. It would be desirable if every member who is going to exhibit would include a forest in the bonsai they wish to show. Other styles of bonsai will also be shown but we will emphasize the forest form in show layout and programming. Ron Heinen will present a program on Forest Bonsai on both days of the show, at 1:30pm. Ron has had good luck with awards several times on a tropical forest that he most recently showed in Chicago at the Midwest Bonsai Show, so he is perhaps the most informed among us to talk about the practicalities and design principles of effective forest creation and maintenance.

A secondary theme of this coming fall show is kusamono, on which we had a workshop earlier in the year. A display area will be devoted to kusamono with text explaining the basics of this popular Japanese horticultural art form. If anyone has a kusamono you want to exhibit in this portion of the show, please contact Ivan Hanthorn soon at ivanhanthorn@hotmail.com.

A morning program on "How to Read a Bonsai" will be presented each day at 11:00am by Ivan Hanthorn. A room at Reiman is reserved for an open board meeting at 2:30 on Sunday. The show is concurrent with the open hours of the Garden, so we have to be good to go by 9:00am Saturday and cannot begin take down until 4:30 Sunday.

To accomplish this we need some assistance on Friday afternoon as always. Preliminary work occurs in the Garden Room, the site of the show, in the morning. At 1pm we will begin table set up and exhibit site assignment. This is usually done by about 5 to 6 people. Volunteers are welcome. Bonsai to be exhibited can be delivered to Reiman during the afternoon open hours of 1-4:30pm. Those who do not bring bonsai in advance can enter the back entrance to the main building on Saturday morning after 7:00am. Remember we must be ready for opening at 9:00pm. Exhibit sites will already be assigned.

Dave Lowman will vend bonsai and related products as has been usual. We can also have a Bazaar table if wanted, but we need to hear from the membership if this is wanted. Does anyone plan to sell anything this year? If so, let us know.

We have had the good experience of constantly improving quality in our Fall Shows. We have developed a real following of people in central Iowa who look forward to this fall event. So please participate by showing or coming. The more members that stay present throughout the show the more the public finds the show interesting and understandable. Oddly enough, it is during this show that the membership tends to really see up close some of the interesting work of fellows and a convenient venue for discussion of how and why and how long. A form will be emailed to you shortly requesting details about the bonsai you plan to exhibit. See you all at the show.

Bonsai Smart: Changing Foliage or Can a Bonsai Change Clothes?

By John Denny

Some trees have great trunks and deadwood, but the foliage is not what we like. Perhaps it is too sparse, too loose, too light or dark in color. This is often the case with Red Cedar which grows wild here in Iowa. It is possible to collect a nice tree and graft a different variety of juniper foliage onto that tree.

Some think “changing clothes” on a tree is akin to creating something unnatural and out of place. What is that tree now? Red Cedar or Shimpaku? Or a mutt? I won’t weigh in on where I stand on the issue. I don’t know for sure. Perhaps it depends on the individual tree we are talking about. The reader can decide for themselves.

A common example, and one I have personally seen, is grafting shimpaku foliage onto Rocky Mountain Juniper. While visiting Michael Hagedorn, I watched him graft the accompanying tree. Recently he featured the tree in a blog. The grafted foliage had progressed enough that Michael felt it was safe to remove all of the original RMJ foliage. The final photo shows the tree with the newly styled Shimpaku foliage now on the RMJ trunk with all of its wonderful deadwood. What do you think? Would you have grafted or kept the original foliage?



Here you can see both the original RMJ foliage as well as the new Shimpaku foliage. Below is initial styling of Shimpaku foliage.



MORPHING OF AN INDUSTRIAL TOOL INTO A BONSAI SUPER CART

By Ivan Hanthorn



The Before: Northern Industrial Tools Hydraulic Table Cart, 500 lb. capacity, item #143654



The After - New wheels, wider improved balanced footprint, Iteration 3

Pictures are supposedly worth a thousand words. Text will follow in the next issue of the newsletter.