

Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

www.iabonsai.org

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

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IBA October Activities

Open Study Group 9:00 am to Noon

Topics: *Come when you want and bring a tree to work on to work on.*

Roundtable Discussion, 10:30 am: *Topic is winterisation.*

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

Everybody is welcome.

EIBA October Activities

October 11, 6:30 pm. Board Meeting at Panera Restaurant on Edgewood Road

Topics: Election of Officers, new positions/duties, soil day prep, follow up of Club garage sale and Reiman Show.

October 18, 6:30 pm. EIBA Club Meeting, Pierson Flower Shop on Ellis Blvd.

Topic: *Election of Officers, discussion of Winter Care and Preparation for Winter, Holiday party discussion.*

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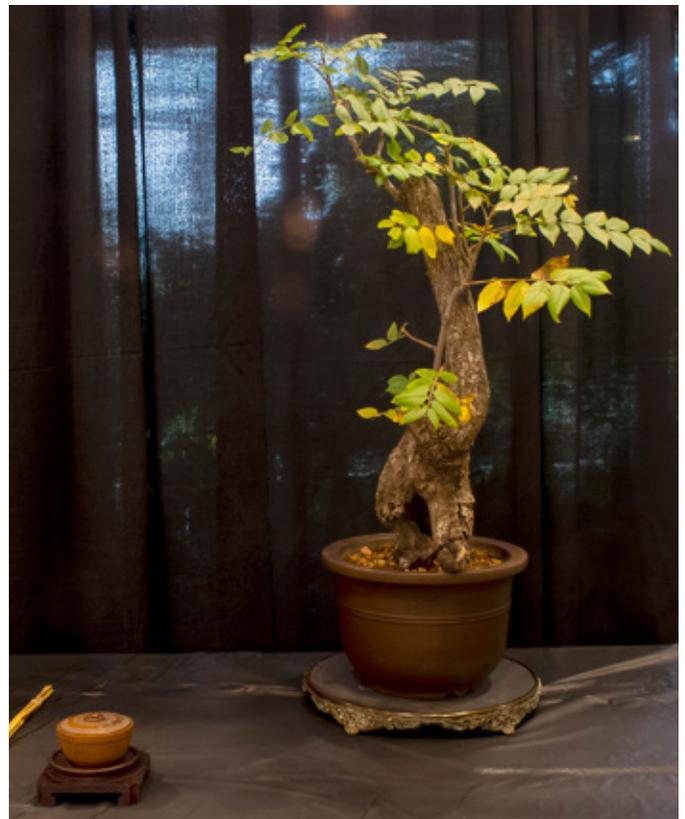
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2018 Reiman Gardens Bonsai Show *Heinen with photos by Dave Richmond*

The dust has settled, and we have wrapped up another successful Reiman Gardens Bonsai Show.



Reiman Gardens Show- continued

I cannot do justice to the history of our Fall show in Ames, but it goes back more than 25 years. To the best of my knowledge, Alan Magruder and Bill Todd organized our first show around 1992. Sometime later, I took the helm for a short period only to hand it over to Ivan Hanthorn several years back. Ivan took the show to another level, and returned it to me 2 years ago.

and a record gate revenue. We broke the gate record for a weekend event, in 1 day. Contributing to that success, was the Eastern Iowa Bonsai Association. As I reflect upon the show, the EIBA took us again to another level, showing bonsai reflecting a high level of expertise and experience.

Ten members of the IBA (including EIBA) showed 35 bonsai. The most members and number of trees

we have had to date. On Saturday, Ron Heinen did a PowerPoint presentation on Mountain Yamadori. On Sunday, Ivan Hanthorn did a demonstration and talk on Kusimono, followed by a talk on backyard and urban bonsai. Both presentations had standing room only.

As the scope and quality of our Fall show rises, we welcome your insight and ideas to help make next year's show even better. Please feel free to share your ideas with me. Finally,

I want to extend a huge thanks to Alan Magruder, EIBA, Scott Allen, Ivan Hawthorn, Larry Totten,



Our last exhibit was a huge success according to the numbers and gate revenues. On Saturday, October 6th, we tallied a record 2,020 visitors



and to all who exhibited, became docents and covered the sales table. It took a community of (bonsai) people to succeed.

Ginkgo Biloba in Spring, Summer, Fall

It's a Chi Chi, a small leaf Ginkgo cultivar from <http://lakeshorebonsai.com/?tag=chi-chi> (Toronto area). Here's Lakeshore's caption: "Ginkgo biloba 'chi-chi', 7 years in development from imported raw



material. Probably started as an air layer in Japan." Love the gnarly trunk and smaller in scale leaves. Many Ginkgo leaves are huge.

Here is some information on Ginkgo from Heather Hartman via Stone Lantern's bonsai blog: "It is best to style Ginkgo based on their natural inclinations toward a column, or flame shape. Ginkgo can resent pruning, and as a result, many ginkgo bonsai have a similar look, due to how they show their dislike. Pruned branches are prone to dieback, either shortly after being pruned or the following winter. This can result in a heavy trunk with relatively few, upward facing branches. Twigs will grow in clusters from the branches. As the growth and replacement of branches is repeated over the years, it can result in interesting, gnarled areas on the trunk. Fortunately, not all shoots will dieback, but predicting which ones will and which ones won't is nearly impossible."

Bonsai and the Buddha

John Denny

Bonsai originated in China and moved on to Japan hundreds of years ago. Japan has a long history of Zen Buddhism. Many of Buddha's teachings connect with the sensibilities of bonsai. Bonsai can be a lovely representation of the natural world. Caring for the natural world is a feature of Buddhism. Think of monks sweeping the walkways to remove spiders, ants, etc., so the travelers that follow do not step on them. Many Buddhist

monasteries are built (or hidden away) in natural forest or mountain settings. There is a strong connection to the universe and nature.

Zen Buddhism features sitting meditation or zazen as a way of slowing down life and contemplating the world, who we are, and our place in the world. Bonsai does this same thing for us, as for many it has a meditative quality to it. Hours can pass as we quietly focus upon, work upon, and contemplate our beloved bonsai.

A recent article nudged me to think about another way in which Buddhism connects me to bonsai as well as to life. Zuiko Redding, a Buddhist teacher trained in Japan, noted: "Buddhist teaching often admonishes us to be detached, to have a sense of detachment, and it's hard to know what that means." She went on, "Maybe you thought of being detached as not feeling, not having preferences, not being involved. That's what usually comes to mind. But when we remember Shakyamuni Buddha, we notice that he was a passionate person who was heavily involved with human equality, dignity, and peace. And he was an awake person."

Let's take a step back. Buddhism has Four Noble Truths. Paraphrasing heavily, Noble Truth One is "The world is a difficult place with much suffering." Noble Truth Two is "Most human suffering is man-made, generally caused by wanting, desiring, clinging to, grasping for things or being too attached. And when we fail to own or control these things, we suffer." And Noble Truth Three is "We can relieve our suffering through non grasping, by not attaching too closely."

Shinshu Roberts has described non attachment as, "Being detached is about non-possessiveness. Non-possessiveness is not manipulating things and ideas for our own comfort and power. Not saying "This is mine" while ignoring the needs of other people, of other living things, of rocks, water and earth."

Okay, some of you are probably saying, "Whoa, I didn't sign up for this!" But, let's leave the theory and talk about how this relates to bonsai. In America we are raised to grasp. We grasp the good life, money, job promotions, cars, beauty, sex, bigger houses, boats, even wanting beautiful bonsai, on and on. I personally wanted more bonsai, better bonsai, bigger bonsai, award winning bonsai. I wanted to have the best collection. I wanted others to view my trees and go, "Wow, cool." Maybe you have had some of the same thoughts.

But, guess what. I don't have the best collection, the

best trees, and not everyone goes, "Wow." A bit of a let-down, huh? A bit of unhappiness or frustration. Maybe if I bought better pots. Yeah, that's it! Or spent more on raw material. Or hired an expensive super teacher? It is a cycle I can never win.

Another source of bonsai unhappiness I have experienced and witnesses in many others goes like this. I did everything right and I still lost a key branch over winter and now my beloved tree looks worse, not better. Ugh. This year was tough for me. I lost two top notch trees. One was already very nice. The other would have been a national level tree in a few years. Talk about disappointment and frustration. Why, oh, why do I do this darn hobby, anyway? It's painful. I love my trees. Being attached to them and their future is often painful.

So, maybe I should be less attached to my trees and pots and display tables. Perhaps I should just let them be. Do what I think is best, not expect so much. Whatever happens will be. If the tree improves. Great. If it suffers, I won't feel as badly. Nature over rides what I do for my trees anyway. A big windstorm. Freezing temps. Too much rain, week after week, extreme heat stress. I do not control those things. Why should I worry so about trying to control it all? Maybe I should simply work with hardier species. Not grasp at trying to make my trees do things they don't really want to do. Let the natural results happen and live with it. Maybe I would be a happier bonsai guy.

This year I vow to love my trees a bit less. To lower my high expectations, expect some damage and loss. Japanese beetles seem to come no matter what. Pots break, tables get scratched. Why lose sleep? Not that I plan to give up my hard work. Not to separate from my trees and become a bonsai zombie. Just to detach from expectations a little more.

I might even enjoy the hobby more. I still will be able to go into a meditative trance as I wire or prune or simply sit and admire my tree imagining it placed on a cliff at 8000 feet with a monastery in the background. Perhaps, I might begin by purchasing a nice statue of the Buddha and placing it among my bonsai to remind me to be less attached and more accepting of whatever nature and my trees give me. It's all a gift, one way or the other.

Bonsai makes me think not just about bonsai, but of nature and life. I hope it makes you think, too!

2018 (6th) National Bonsai Exhibition Winners



The National Award
Japanese Black Pine, Suthin Sukosolvisit



Custom Oriental Woodcraft Award
Finest Shohin Bonsai Display, John Kirby



Tatemori Gondo Satsuki Award
Shiryu No Mai Satsuki, Melvyn Goldstein

Timely Tips

John Denny

Has anyone spotted the sun lately? The past month has been very cloudy and rainy. I am not sure how this long weather pattern will affect our bonsai trees as they prepare for winter. Hopefully, we get back to more normal Fall weather.

It is time to think a bit about winter care prior to the day we are forced to suddenly bring our trees out of the cold and into our winter care locations.

First, let's think about our locations for storing our trees. The location should be clean, have ample room for trees so they are not squeezed together, and maintain the temperatures you want for your trees. I always encourage people to have a couple of thermometers available to help measure the temps in your garage or shed or where ever you store your trees. Place one on an outside wall and one on an inside wall. Also, you can place one temporarily high and low to see how much variation you have. Remember, hot air rises, even in winter.

Generally, there are a few basic approaches to storing trees regarding temperature. You can store hardy trees outside. Water them well, then mulch them in so the soil is covered. You may wish to protect them from gnawing animals with chicken wire or similar material. Usually, it is best to do this on the north side of a building, so the sun does not heat and thaw your trees. Generally, once your trees and soil are frozen, it is best to leave them frozen. Some people build a cold frame for their trees, if they do not have too many trees.

If you store your trees in a garage, you have a couple of temperature choices. One, let the temperature be what it is and simply allow your trees to sit at that temperature. If they freeze, let them stay frozen. Do not water them while frozen. Keep a plastic bottle of water next to your trees and you will know if the water is frozen, therefore your trees likely are as well. Water your trees occasionally during the winter.

Choice two in a garage is to control the temperature in the garage. Generally, you will want to keep the trees just above freezing, 34F to 38F. It is tough to hold the top end of the range down when the temperature outside rises. But, it is fairly easy to keep your garage in the mid 30sF. Use those thermometers to figure out what the temp in your garage is, when it is zero outside, when it is 10F outside, and when it is 20F outside. When the weather man says it will be zero outside as a low temp, you will know how cold your garage will be.

For me, when it is zero outside, my inside temp is just a hair above 32F. If the night time temp is below zero, then I know I have to add a little heat to the garage. I have an oil heater. Oil is enclosed in the heater and it is heated electrically. The oil moves through the unit and heat is given off through fins. The heat rises in place. There is no fan. Fans can dry trees rather easily and the fans can stay too focused on just a couple of trees. Add heat gently to your garage or shed. It will take a bit of playing around to learn how your storage area changes with the nightly temps. But, I urge you to learn and understand. The more trees you have and the more good trees you have, makes it important to get it right.

Clean your area prior to adding your trees. Clean your pots including the underside. Clean debris from your soil surface. If your soil surface is in poor shape, consider removing the top surface layer and adding a fresh top layer of soil. This will allow water to absorb more evenly into your tree's soil. I don't much enjoy spraying my trees, but giving them a good spray for fungus and insects as you bring them inside will be of great value to the health of your trees over winter.

Watering is always a challenge. Each storage location and method of storage, as well as species and soil, will require a little different watering pattern. In other words, what works for one person, may not work for another. I keep trees in a garage with temps just above freezing. I use porous soil. Therefore, I water roughly once per week in winter. That may be a bit too frequent. I will often let my larger trees with deep soil go longer. I don't water too heavily each time, but once a month, I water heavily. Once a month, I water all trees, then a couple of hours later, I repeat and water everything again. I do this monthly to avoid trees with a wet top surface all winter, only to find when repotting in spring, that the lower part of the soil is dry. Do your best at watering. Know your trees, know your soils. Pick your trees up sometimes so you can tell the weight of your trees. It will help you know how wet your tree is, or how dry. Stick a finger in your soil, though this does not work as well in the cold of winter. You can use a chopstick or skewer in the soil to help you determine wetness of your soil.

There are a lot of things to pay attention to for good winter care. We have covered many of the basics. In the meantime, make sure your trees harden off during Fall. Night time temps lately have been around 32F, so your trees are hardening now. Give them a couple of light freezes, prior to bringing them inside. Once you get your trees cleaned up and into storage, take a bonsai break. You have earned it this year!