

Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

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

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IBA Response to Coronavirus

Scott Allen

As always, the safety of members, volunteers, and general public is our top priority.

The Iowa Bonsai Associations (IBA) response to the coronavirus pandemic continues to be informed by the guidance of official bodies, including Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>) whose framework for mitigation for community groups is based on the level of community transmission of COVID-19.

As the national response to the coronavirus pandemic shifts to a state-focused and phased approach the IBA has canceled all club meetings and implemented the appropriate protocols to help keep our members, volunteers, and the general public safe. We'll continue to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>) guidelines and will advise our membership when plans to start in-person meetings and activities is more clear.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please contact me directly.

Scott Allen – IBA President
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EIBA July Activities

NO Board meeting in JULY
NO Club meeting in JULY

Bonsai Soil Components for Sale

Pumice \$20 for five gallons
\$15 if you bring your own Bucket.

Akadama \$32 per bag, \$30 for members

Contact Scott Allen or Tim Peterson

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Support Your Local Bonsai Club!

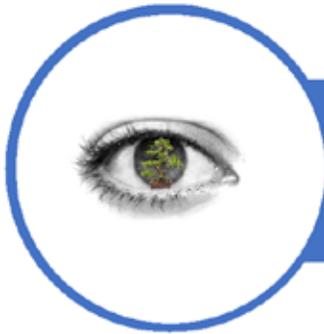
By John Denny

It has been a tough and strange year in our lives. Work changes. Family changes. Shopping changes. Travel changes. But, our trees don't know about all of these changes. They just grow. And we care for them and enjoy them.

One of the key resources for us is the bonsai clubs to which we belong.



Helene Magruder works on her Shimpaku, with Ron Heinen at a Workshop in 2018.



MABA/MILWAUKEE 2020NE

WE COME TOGETHER TO MAKE OUR COMMUNITIES STRONGER
THROUGH BONSAI

RE-FOCUS

On June 10-13, 2021, Bonsai artists and MABA members are heading to MABA/Milwaukee Convention!

CHALLENGES

As the COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) outbreak continues, our commitment remains to you.

ARTIST / WORKSHOPS

Beginner friendly artist will help you get started.
Workshop and material opportunities.

PLANNING

Learn from the Best is the first of 10 reasons to attend MABA Milwaukee regional convention.

VENDORS / EXHIBIT

The 2020 convention will feature a Thursday evening reception dedicated to the vendors.
And an innovative, world class MABA exhibit.

FOCUS ON VENDORS

MABA 2020ne is trying something new for a convention, instead of allowing any vendor that wanted to sell at the event, the convention committee has selected 8 Vendors specializing in covering all your bonsai needs and wants. We looked for vendors that offer high quality goods and have had a relationship with the Midwest Bonsai communities for years and mixed in a couple of new comers. The following is a brief introduction to the 8 Selected Vendors for this convention:

Mark Fields – Bonsai by Fields LLC, Greenwood, Indiana

Mark has been a bonsai practitioner for years and works with many different trees. His booth will carry a wide variety of bonsai items from tools to pots and trees.

Byron Myrick – Myrick Bonsai Pottery, Moselle, Mississippi

Byron has been creating interesting bonsai pottery for years and makes pots ranging from very small (accent plants) to very large pots for large tree (in excess of 20") has a number of very creative glazes, textures and shapes.

Mark & Racie Rhyne – Stands and Stones, Cape Coral, Florida

Mark and Racie supply just what their company names states, Stands and Stones. Mark handles the Stands part of the business and he makes some very beautiful stands in many different sizes and styles. Racie handles the Stones part of the business and always has a wonderful collection of stones to choose from.

Jeff Schultz – The Hidden Gardens, Willowbrook, Illinois

Jeff is the owner of The Hidden Gardens and has a wonderful facility and has been bringing in top notch bonsai talent from around the world to conduct workshops.

Todd Schlafer – First Branch Bonsai, Denver, Colorado

Todd is the owner of First Branch Bonsai and will provide a variety of collected trees. His specialty is collected Spruce and Pines of various species.

Andy Smith- Golden Arrow Bonsai, Deadwood, South Dakota

Andy Smith is the owner of Golden Arrow Bonsai and has been vending at MABA conventions since his first one in Milwaukee in 1995. Andy always has a wide selection of collected trees from Ponderosa Pines to Black Hills Spruce and many other species.

Brian Soldano – Brian Soldano Pottery, Augusta, Maine

Brian is the owner of Brian Soldano Pottery and makes some very cutting-edge pieces. His pots have very creative textures and finishes and shapes. Look forward to adding a few of his pots to your collection. There is no end to this potter/tattoo artist creativity.

Andy Yountz- Superfly Bonsai, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Andy is the owner of Superfly Bonsai and for those of you who are not aware of him. Andy bought out Roger Lehman of Meco Bonsai when Roger decided to retire. Superfly Bonsai will have soils, tools, pots especially Mica pots which do really well in the Midwest winters. Don't forget he also carries the work stands and carts that Roger produced.

To get first looks at what the Vendors are offering make sure you are a Full Registrant as only full registrants will have access to this Meet the Vendors Event Thursday Evening.



EIBA NewBo Show in 2018

They offer knowledge, support, camaraderie, material, supplies, pots, etc. But, this year has been topsy-turvy with our clubs. Board meetings have been infrequent, if held at all. Club meetings and shows have been canceled. We have not seen each other in person. Our club memberships and dues collections have been reduced. Our footprint in the community has shrunk.

Our clubs need help. Many of us have lost contact with our clubs. Now is a great time to ask ourselves, “How can I help my club survive and even thrive?” Small improvements will help. However, I think it is a great time to get creative. Can we have a board meeting or club meeting through Zoom? Can we have a sale of trees, pots, tools, books, supplies done in a way that is low risk for virus transmission? What if we held it outdoors with distance and masks? I think we may be able to figure out the details.

How solvent are our clubs? Can we survive

another tough year financially? Maybe. Hopefully. But, perhaps a club needs added resources. How can we make sure we do not lose members and their dues? How can we bring some back if we have lost members? Acquiring new members is difficult without having events for the community to see and then get interested enough to join our clubs. So, how can we work towards that goal?

Contact is important. I hope the newsletter helps members feel some contact with others in the hobby. We can send individual emails to club members asking how they and their trees are doing and do they have any questions about their trees or the club. Asking club members to share photos of their favorite trees with each other can be fun. We need to be proactive in holding our clubs together.

So, I urge us all to think how we, as individuals, might help our bonsai club stay strong for the rest of this year and likely half of next year, as well. Give it some serious thought!

Newer Thinking on Repotting Established Trees

By John Denny

When I began repotting trees nearly two decades back, it was common practice to wash away all the soil on deciduous and Tropical trees, then repot them in fresh soil. For junipers and pines, we picked out soil from half the roots, then washed those roots clean, prior to repotting in fresh soil.

These days, on mature trees, I remove the top bottom and sides of the root ball, then repot using fresh soil on

the bottom, top, and sides. Why the change? Do you ever replace the soil in the middle of the root ball? If you leave the old soil, it breaks down, doesn't it? And won't that kill the roots?

The big change for many in the West is we now use a soil based on volcanic particles. Generally, akadama, pumice and lava (scoria). Old soils we used in the West were organic based (bark, composted bark, leaves, potting soil, good old "dirt". This organic portion is what held the moisture. The higher the organic percentage in the soil, the more water it held and the less often you had to water. But, eventually, the organic portion broke down and held too much water, perhaps even becoming "muck". Too much water meant the roots would often rot and stop picking up and transporting water to the foliage, turning it yellow. Oh, no! Something is wrong with my tree! I better make sure it has enough water. And you watered some more. And the yellow leaves fell away and the tree died. How many bonsai died this way is unknown, but must have been a common occurrence. We re-potted often in those days because the soil broke down and had to be replaced.

Today, we use soils similar to Japan. Not because we want to be cool. Not because we have big bank accounts. But, because they work! The volcanic soil mixes grow beautiful, fine roots. Just the kind a good bonsai tree desires. I first witnessed this while in Oregon at a Michael Hagedorn Seasonal a decade back. We re-potted trees together. The trees came out of their pots and held their shape. There were no long thick roots encircling the pots like I was used to seeing back home. The akadama soil particles had partially broken down, but the lava and pumice were still held in place by the fine roots. It took a good deal of chop sticking to remove those particles. I saw huge root balls with no large roots. The root balls held the shape of the pot even after you pulled the tree from the pot and set the root ball on the work surface. It was a night and day difference from what I was used to seeing back home.

So, I had to figure out if the difference in these fabulous roots was due to this volcanic soil mix or Oregon and its lovely climate which favors growth. Long spring and fall seasons favor root growth, a cool summer means the trees do not totally shut down due to hot weather, and a winter in the 30s, 40s and

50s means the trees do not freeze over for weeks at a time. I decided I had to try the soil mixes back home in Iowa to find out for myself, what kind of impact they would have on my trees in my climate.

First, let's talk for just a bit about the volcanic soil particles, without getting too deep into details. Akadama is a particle that is often called a clay. It actually has a bit of organic material mixed in with it. It is "mined" in Japan from certain locations, dried, often kilned to various hardnesses. Akadama is the main water holding component in these volcanic bonsai soils and it generally holds about a day's worth of water for your tree's roots. Then it requires you to water and "reload" the akadama so it can slowly give off another 24 hours of water to your tree's roots. Pumice is a light weight volcanic particle that can hold a bit of water, but if your pine likes dry roots, you add more pumice and less akadama. The third volcanic particle is lava rock. It is porous and its sharp edges can cause roots to divide and ramify – a key to creating fine roots in your root ball.

In the West, Boon Manikiviti returned from Japan and urged his students to use a 1:1:1 ratio of akadama, pumice and lava. This ratio is known as 'Boon Mix'. It works very well for junipers. Lower the akadama to 25% and the mix works great for pines. Bump the akadama to 50%, 70% for deciduous or even a 100%, say, for Japanese maples.

One of the things about akadama is, it breaks down. Akadama begins its life in bonsai soil as small particles. Over time, it loses its discrete individual particulate nature and becomes more like what we call "dirt". Michael Hagedorn, in his book *Bonsai Heresy*, explains that just because the akadama breaks down, you do not HAVE to replace it. While in Japan, he was taught to remove old soil from the bottom, top, and sides; leaving the central root ball. Fresh soil is added around the old established portion of the root ball. This central, stable portion of the root ball aids the tree in its post re-potting recovery. Michael claims this central portion can go untouched for a couple of decades. Eventually, they might dig a hole in areas of the old portion and add some fresh soil to slowly replace some of the old root ball.

I began using a volcanic mix soil 10-12 years ago and for the past six years or so, I have begun leaving the central root ball intact at re-potting. This means

some of my trees have a central root ball that is about ten years old. Michael says it takes about ten years to truly develop a state of stasis. This form of re-potting is actually easier than replacing nearly all the soil in deciduous trees.

One of the real advantages of this homeostasis of the old root ball is that it increases ramification. Fine roots drive finer branching. If you want your tree to reach the stage of aged refinement like you see in Japanese trees of Kokufu stature, the creating an old central root ball is key.

The Bonsai (Sirens) Song

Ron Heinen



Scott, Tim and Ron looking forward to today's hunt..

In Greek mythology, the Sirens, by the sweetness of their song, lured sailors to their destruction. Today, a quest for the best (yamadori), lures bonsai hunters to the mountains, year after year.

Tim Peterson, Scott Allen, and I answered the call and journeyed to the Big Horns in Wyoming the first week of June. After loading our truck, trailer and ATV, the journey was on. We left Des Moines early (5 a.m.) Saturday morning and arrived at our cabin just before dark. Scott informed us “we still have time to scout an area before it gets dark” - so off we went. It was cold, rainy, and muddy with a chance of snow and sleet. Fortunately, we were able to get to the area we had scouted on Google Earth. The year before we were not able to get to this road because of snow, but this Spring the thaw was early, so now it was on the agenda.

Bright and early on the first morning, we headed out to our first site. The road we discovered last night was still open, but we could see the side path to the site would be a challenge for the best of ATV drivers. But Scott's driving skills proved worthy of the test. We arrived, put our packs on, reviewed safety procedures, and began the hunt. In short order, we realized we fell into one of the wildest ponderosa sites we had ever seen.

Yamadori, seems to group itself into micro-environments specific to its species. At the altitude we were hunting, we expected to see; Engelmann spruce, white spruce, Douglas fir, common and Rocky Mountain Juniper, Aspen, and ponderosa. This small cliff side environment was ponderosa.

Previously, we found the oldest and gnarliest ponderosas in South Dakota, so this was a surprise. We proceeded to collect several trees throughout the day, but decided to leave in the late afternoon. in case of bad weather or an accident, this would not have been a hospitable place to spend the night. Once again, Scott reminded us, “we still have time to scout out a place for tomorrow”, NEVER a wasted minute. Throughout the week, we collected in the daylight, retreated to the cabin in the early evening and scouted our next days hunt before dark.



Scott's huge Engelmann spruce.



Tim and Ron contemplating today's hunt.

Sirens Song - continued

We spent long days hiking and climbing with little success at times. Most trees were not collectible, perhaps one out of every hundred was able to be removed. So, we frequently spent hours to find one yamadori to be collected with a reasonable expectation of survival. Tracking down the root system, at times, took only a minute to realize it had one root, directly straight down, through some inconceivable hole surrounded by solid impenetrable granite, and NOT removable. At other times, we slowly removed duff to expose the rock basin surrounding the trunk, moving back toward the trunk just to discover the root system found a crevice to follow, seemingly into the next County, NOT collectible. But then, we would find one with its root system (pad) incredibly contained within a small pocket, perhaps with several small inconsequential runners and this one was COLLECTIBLE. Each tree was different, each tree had its own story.



Tim and Ron with today's booty. A treasure trove of trees.

If we were real fortunate, we might stumble upon a collectible centurion. Confined to a small rock pocket, we would be able to remove it with our bare hands. We were hooked.



Scott scouting. It doesn't get any better than this!

By the end of the week, we had filled our tags, 10 each in the state of Wyoming. We filled our truck, trailer, and ATV with trees and various sundry items, such as accent plants, small viewing stones and.....and HUGE stumps (?) and boulders (?) that only Atlas or Scott could lift. In this case it was Scott!



Tim and Scott loaded with trees. It's a long hike back.

We answered the song of the "Bonsai Siren". Memories of a lifetime were made and many tremendous trees were collected. It was a SUCCESS! Now, the hard work would begin. To do justice to the yamadori, we would have to put our best 'bonsai-practice' forward.

AFTERCARE is everything and these trees will deserve ONLY the best we have to offer.

Timely Tips John Denny

It has gotten hot lately, After all, it IS mid-July. It should be hot. What should we be paying attention to this month? Heat, fungus, Japanese beetles, fertilizing, growth management to name a few.

First off, I am letting my trees grow a bit wild this year with no shows on the calendar. I pruned in June, but not as hard as usual and some trees I really let go. I also backed off on fertilization somewhat this year, though not on those in early development.

Heat can kill trees, so let's begin there. Bonsai trees have only a small root system in those small pots. Their job is to pull water and nutrients from the soil and transport it to the leaves. When it is hot, the leaves transpire a lot of water, thus they require a lot of water. So, make sure you water daily. If your soil does not have organic material you will likely have to water daily and on really hot days of 90F with sun, I water twice. Water twice if you have shohin sized trees. You can slow down the need for water by giving your trees shade. Move your few trees to a more shady location or set up a shade cloth. Also, wind adds another whole layer of stress to your trees. Wind causes soil to evaporate water much faster and will cause trees to lose water much faster. Six years ago, having moved to a new location, I immediately realized there was far more wind than in my old location. I had planned a fence on two sides and a house on one side. Still, I was forced to add a wind screen. I simply used a shade cloth to block the wind partially and it works very well.

The rainy spring weather is over. I sprayed during and at the end of the rain period with a fungicide. I use Daconil and rotate another one on occasion. (Do not use Daconil on spruces.) My trees look good this year. Only one tree showed any sign of fungus.

Japanese beetles have arrived at my bonsai yard for their annual nourishment. I watched daily for them and finally noticed the tiniest leaves just forming at the tips of my shohin Zelkovas were missing. Japanese beetles have defoliated my shohin Zelkovas the past two years and weakened them. My shohin Zelkovas are the canary in the coal mine for Japanese beetles. They ALWAYS go there first. (I am sure those little beetles were the first to come up with the slogan, "Life is short, eat dessert first!") The little Zelkovas leafed late, but have

gained much strength and are having a great year. I want to keep it that way. Immediately, I sprayed for pests, then covered all of my shohin trees with a netting to keep out those foreign visitors. So, far things look good.

Besides the beetles, there are mites and other pests out there that love the hot dry weather. It is a good time to spray prophylactically if you are good with that approach. I know many are not. You either have to watch diligently for the first sign of pests, then spray if you see damage from them. Or you just live with the damage and only spray in an emergency. I don't like spraying. But, I hate to see my trees suffer damage even more.

I hope you have been keeping up with your fertilizing. Trees in early development need more. More advanced trees need less. Heavy fertilizing helps trunk girth, but hinders ramification. Double flush pine bonsai should not be getting any fertilizer until their second flush of needles open. I usually begin heavy fertilization about August 15 and continue through late Fall. I don't fertilize single flush pines like Ponderosa until their needle growth is finished, about mid-August, also. Other folks use their own fertilization approaches. Just make sure there is sound reasoning behind them. Fertilizing improperly can screw up a good tree. Heavy fertilization will make an old looking tree look young again, which we do not want in bonsai aesthetics! Trees other than pines, I have been fertilizing with both inorganic (reduced levels from past years) and organic (BioGold). The organics are especially helpful as they give a bit of NPK daily with watering and they offer micronutrients which are important if you use soils without organics like bark, potting soil, etc.

Tropical trees are growing like crazy right now. If you wish to repot your Tropical, now is the time. Perhaps you may be on the late side. Tropicals are best repotted around July 1. If you wait too long the trees do not have enough growing days left in the year to fully recover and gain the strength needed to get them through the long winter season.

I hope you are enjoying your bonsai this year. Talking with friends, the word is, this has been a good growing year. I hope it has been so for you!