

IBA News & Muse
Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter
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www.iabonsai.org

www.easterniowabonsai.ning.com

IBA APRIL Activities

April 16, 7pm. Meeting at the Des Moines Botanical Garden. (Location therein to be announced by email from our President.)

Program: Collecting/ from local to mountain sites; presented by Larry Totten and Ron Heinen. Collecting can be a very rewarding experience. Two of our most frequent collectors will discuss the highs and lows of this approach to finding potential bonsai "in the wild."

Tree of the month: Mulberry; comments by John Hultgran.

Bring a tree of your choice to work on or talk about.

April 20–21. Spring Bonsai Show, Des Moines Botanical Garden. 9 am–5pm, Saturday–Sunday. Bonsai Show in the Walsh Room, vending in lobby or as before in the Walsh Room (yet to be determined). Contact Larry Totton (tottonia@aol.com) for details.

In conjunction with Earth Day on the 20th, a free admission day at the DMBC; Earth Day family activities are scheduled from 11am–4pm on Saturday. The DMBC website advertises the event as two days of bonsai display and demonstrations, so be prepared to contribute in both aspects if possible.

Iowa State Fair Bonsai Show reminder. Postcards arrived this week reminding exhibitors of deadlines for entries. The 2013 Iowa State Fair premium books and entry forms are only available

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online at: www.iastatefair.org/premiumbooks.

Entries will be accepted by mail or online at www.iowastatefair.org (beginning May 1). The entry deadline for bonsai is July 1.

EIBA April Activities

April 11, 6:30 Board Meeting. Chris Burr home.

April 18, 7:00 pm, Club Meeting, Pierson Flower Shop on Ellis Blvd.

We will continue work on club Foster trees. Also, if you need help with any repotting, bring your tree and tools.

April 20, 9 am, Azalea Workshop with David Kreutz, Bruce more Mansion Greenhouse. Contact Chris Burr for information.

Select your size, style and cost of azalea so Dave can bring what you desire. This should be a fun and different workshop and a chance to learn azaleas from an expert.

Timely Tips

Today the sun came out and temps hit 60F! Finally, we have a spring like day. It is time to start moving your trees outdoors.

I have my pines and junipers in a protected area as the spring wind can be harsh on bonsai trees. They also have partial sun so the needles don't get sunburned. I do watch the weather reports so I can pop them back indoors if the temperatures get too brutal.

Some of my Japanese maples and larches have begun pushing buds. I have them on tables at the front of my south facing garage. I leave the door open during the day so they are getting sun. I will wait on moving them to my backyard until I am more sure of avoiding low night time temps. It is a lot of work carrying trees back to the garage for protection, which is why I sun them in the garage for a couple of weeks. It is important to get your newly growing deciduous trees light, so the internode length does not get too long. Bonsai require short internodes, especially on new growth close to the trunk.

When your trees show signs of growth it is time to start fertilizing them. Remember there are no nutrients (limited anyway) in the soil so they depend on you to provide their nutritional needs. Hold off fertilizing newly repotted trees for at least a month.

Watering in spring can be tricky. There are not a lot of large leaves pulling water now plus temps are lower. These factors mean trees need less water. However, the spring winds can howl and I am always amazed at how quickly the soil surface can dry in wind. Wind means you should water more. Be especially cautious if you have seedlings whose roots are located near the surface of the pots. Consider adding some sphagnum moss you have run over a coarse soil sieve to the area around the trunk of seedlings or newly potted trees. Sprinkle a layer on and mist it immediately so it will not blow away. This will help hold moisture.

I love watching trees begin pushing buds in spring. The bonsai season is truly upon us! Enjoy it!

National Bonsai Events

By John Denny

There are a number of great bonsai events coming up this year. Let me list just a few.

May 4, 5 is the St. Louis Shohin Bonsai Convention. This convention is within driving distance of Iowa. This year it features two excellent artists for you to work with: Ted Matson of California and Suthin Sukosolvisit (my favorite shohin master). For Information Contact, Ted at circustaz2@sbcglobal.net or [314-952-1317](tel:314-952-1317)

Also in May (25, 26, 27) is Brussels Bonsai Rendezvous which is a 3-day bonsai party featuring 6 great bonsai teachers from around the world, wonderful food, great hospitality, 20 fantastic workshops, many demos, and of course, thousands of trees to buy. This event comes highly recommended.

In June is a new event sponsored by Bill Valvanis of upstate New York. He calls this a "Bonsai Colloquium". This event celebrates Bill's 50th year in bonsai. He will have several national experts including Ryan Neil of Oregon who apprenticed under the great Kimura of Japan for 6 years and David DeGroot, curator of the Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection owned by Weyerhaeuser, Inc. For further info go to <http://www.internationalbonsai.com/files/1708315/uploaded/Colloquium/index.html>

August 16 - 18 is the MidAmerica Bonsai Exhibit held at Chicago Botanic Gardens. Bjorn Bjorholm is the guest artist and judge. This is another very good show within driving distance. I also like the vendors at this show.

Lastly, is a new exhibit called the "Artisan's Cup" to be held in Portland, Oregon at the Art Museum October 4 -6. This show is the brainchild of Michael Hagedorn and Ryan Neil. It promises to be quite an event. High class bonsai exhibit plus tours of bonsai nurseries, artist's studios, and a bus trip to Pacific Rim Collection in Seattle. Check it out!

Penjing: A Book Review with John Naka Introducing*

By Ivan Hanthorn

The relationship between *Bonsai* and *Penjing* is quite interesting to even casual observers. After 50 years of post-WW II assertions that bonsai comes from Japan serious bonsai literature is now correcting that over simplification and more fully noting the Chinese connection. Having matured past the destructive outrages of the Cultural Revolution the Chinese Peoples Republic has rediscovered its *penjing* past and fully supports its revived status and development. What this means is that those interested in the foundations of bonsai will find a richer and more varied landscape to look at for inspiration.

The never ending book sales at Stone Lantern (www.stonelantern.com) this winter included two greatly discounted *penjing* books of note. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai* by Zhao Qingquan (2012) is an eye catcher because of its very stylish cover photograph of a well known land and water *penjing*. With a list price of \$26.95, the sale price is still \$18.95. The blurb states it well: "A pictorial exploration of its history, aesthetic, styles and preservation of the art of Penjing. Zhao Qingquan is the world's most renowned Penjing master and when you see this gorgeous new book you'll know why."

However, the better buy for *penjing* knowledge was the older but more informative *The Chinese Art of Bonsai & Potted Landscapes* by Y. C. Shen, Beulah Kwok Sung, and C. B. Sung (1991). (List price \$65; sale price \$29.97.) John Naka wrote an introduction for this monograph which is a strong endorsement for the book and for the need of serious bonsai artists to acknowledge and learn *penjing*

Hornbeams

By John Denny



A beautiful Korean hornbeam with great trunk in full autumn color.

This genus contains 30+ species from around the world. These species have alternate leaves, prominent veins, and most have toothed leaf edges. However, only three are typically used for bonsai.

European hornbeam or *Carpinus betulus* has bright green foliage turning clear yellow in Autumn. Fully hardy.

Korean hornbeam or *Carpinus turczaninowii* is slightly less vigorous than the European version. Very small leaves and delicate, branching growth pattern makes it an excellent bonsai. It has orange-red Autumn color. Needs some protection from winter cold.

American hornbeam or *Carpinus caroliniana* is a spreading shrubby tree, which needs protection from cold in winter and when weak can lose lower branches.

Try one of these great bonsai species. Korean hornbeams are especially common and easy to find.

The Real Name of Everything Important

by Ivan Hanthorn

Japan is the source spring for bonsai as we know it in North America. Frequently in the literature terms for species, styles, practices, and even tools often appear in the Japanese form, particularly when the author or the source are attempting to imply seriousness or authority. A few Japanese terms become commonly understood but many that a bonsai enthusiast encounters remain somewhat mysterious because of the infrequency of appearance unless one is well read in the bonsai literature. There are various lists of Japanese bonsai terms here and there on the internet but they can be difficult to find when you want to. The growing bonsai blogosphere is a new source, and the following are gleaned from trolling in those waters. These terms can be interesting and even enjoyable to learn and use.

Japanese Plant Names / Latin Names:

- Icho, Chi-chi – *Gingko biloba* – Gingko
- Ichii – *Taxus cuspidata* – Japanese Yew
- Karamatsu – *Larix kaempferi* – Japanese Larch
- Tosho – *Juniperus rigida* – Needle Juniper
- Tsugi – *Cryptomeria japonica* – Japanese Cedar or Cryptomeria
- Kuromatsu – *Pinus thunbergii* – Japanese Black Pine
- Akamatsu – *Pinus densiflora* – Japanese Red Pine
- Goyomatsu – *Pinus parviflora* – Japanese White Pine
- Kaede – *Acer buergerianum* – Trident Maple
- Momiji – *Acer palmatum* – Japanese Maple or Mountain Maple
- Gyo-ryu – *Tamarix chinensis* – Tamarix
- Shimpaku – *Juniperus chinensis* var. *Sargentii* – Shimpaku Juniper
- Suikazura – *Lonicera japonica* – Japanese Honeysuckle
- Kuchinashi – *Gardenia jasminoides* – Gardenia
- Ezomatsu – *Picea glehnii* (*Picea jezoensis* is also called Ezomatsu) – Ezo Spruce
- Hinoki – *Chamaecyparis obtusa* – Hinoki False Cypress
- Gamazumi – *Viburnum dilatatum* – Arrowwood Viburnum
- Piracan – *Pyracantha* – *Pyracantha* / Firethorn
- Nishikigi – *Euonymus alatus* – Winged Euonymus / Burning Bush
- Buna – *Fagus japonica* – Japanese Beech
- Ume – *Prunus mume* – Japanese Flowering Apricot
- Chochubai – *Chaenomeles japonica* ‘Chochubai’ – Chochubai Quince
- Gumi – *Eleagnus* spp. – *Eleagnus* / Silverberry
- Tsuge – *Buxus microphylla* – Littleleaf Boxwood
- Chosen Tsuge – *Buxus sinica* var. *insularis* – Korean Boxwood
- Haze – *Rhus* spp. – Sumac
- Karin – *Pseudocydonia sinensis* – Chinese Flowering Quince

- Boke – Chaenomeles japonica – Flowering Quince
- Sanzashi – Crataegus spp. – Hawthorne
- Mizuki – Cornus kousa – Kousa Dogwood
- Hanamizuki – Cornus florida – American Dogwood
- Sonare – Juniperus procumbens – Procumbens Juniper
- Sawara – Chamaecyparis pisifera – Sawara Cypress
- Tsuta – Parthenocissus tricuspidata – Boston Ivy
- America no Tsuta – Parthenocissus quinquefolia – Virginia Creeper

Descriptive terms for plants:

- Arakawa – Literally means "Rough Bark"
- Hime – Small or Dwarf; generally referring to the whole plant
- Ko – Small or Dwarf; generally referring to a certain aspect like flowers and / leaves
- Chosen no – Korean (North)
- Chugoku no – Chinese
- Yatsubusa – selection that forms many buds
- Sashiki – Rooted cutting
- Toriki – Air layer

Plant Anatomy:

- Kawa – Bark
- Ne – Root
- Nebari – Root spread
- Atama – Head (apex)
- Jin – dead branch (that you wanted to use in the design)
- Shari – dead section of trunk or main branch
- Ki – Tree
- Tachi agari – rising or movement of trunk above root base

Bonsai Display:

- Tana – Bench
- Tabeluga – Table
- Tsunoko – Bamboo shoot mat used for display
- Jiita – Burl wood slab
- Shoku – Stand (for bonsai or other display)
- Shoku-no-hako – Wooden box for display stand

So now you no longer need to be mystified when the photo caption reads something like: "This is a momiji ki with extensive shari and impressive nebari displayed on an antique jita on a low ornate shoku on the tsunoko."

Penjing: A Book Review

(cont. from p 3)

“Because ‘bonsai’ is a Japanese word, many people have erroneously assumed that bonsai originated in Japan. But in fact bonsai was brought to Japan in the eleventh century from China, where the art was known as *penzai*.

When Y. C Shen and his co-authors first contacted me to read their manuscript on bonsai, I was not convinced that another bonsai book was needed. After reading it, however, I must congratulate them on a valuable contribution to bonsai research.

This unique book should be on the reading list of all bonsai connoisseurs. For the first time, the historical origins of bonsai are traced through quotations in Chinese poems dating back as early as the eighth century. This could only be accomplished by a scholar like Mr. Y. C. Shen, who is very familiar with the Chinese classics.

Besides the detailed historical background, the authors also describe advanced technique that Y. C. Shen has developed during his life-long research with bonsai. They illustrate their narrative with an abundance of color plates that further enhance a noteworthy addition to bonsai literature.

No bonsai enthusiast should overlook this important and accurate account of bonsai history.

John Y. Naka

Whittier, California

Summer 1991”

High praise from the godfather of American bonsai, whose name graces the American wing of the National Bonsai Collection in Washington, DC.

After a concise but thorough accounting of the historical development of *penjing*, the work then covers definitions, classification, and various styles of *penzai* and *penjing*, explaining the fundamental differentiation between the latter two. The beautiful color plates are chosen well to visually explain stylistic variations accounting for the many and varied types of *penzai* and *penjing*. Notably, there are far more photographs of *penzai* than of water and land *penjing*, the current “Wow” fad in things Chinese.

Although there are multiple Chinese terms that technically are appropriate for differing types of *penjing*, the authors discussion throughout the book leads to a basic, simple, and essentially correct terminological scheme for the casual non-expert to follow. “Many people, even horticulturalists, have failed to make clear-cut distinctions between *penzhi* or potted plant, *penzai*, and *penjing* (including *shuishi*, meaning “water and rock”). For most people, *penjing* has become an all-purpose term. That it is necessary to differentiate between them has been emphasized repeatedly by scholars of art and literature.”

Penzhi does not a *penzai* make. “Ordinary potted flowers or trees such as chrysanthemum, Chinese rose and azalea should be called *penzhi*. To be worthy of the name *penzai*, a plant must be appealing aesthetically and must have a trunk that looks aged and gnarled and branches that have been trimmed and trained.”

Penjing (as opposed to *penzai*) can in simplistic terms be divided into two groups which are defined by materials used and the scenic intent: “*Jingzhi penjing* or miniature landscapes featuring plant life and *shanshui penjing* or miniature landscapes featuring rocks and water scenes.” Both types of *penjing* can and almost always do contain metal or terra cotta miniature pagodas, bridges, boats, birds, beast, houses, or figurines for ornamental purposes. These serve the purpose of firmly anchoring the suggested landscape into a shared cultural memory, classical poem, or a point in time as well as place. All of this is anathema to Japanese bonsai, in which well designed minimalism invites the mind to fill in such details.

The book covers cultivation and care quite well, and then turns to containers and stands. The color plates of classic Chinese pottery containers are delightful as well as informative. This section is the best succinct history of Chinese pots used for bonsai and *penjing* that I have every read. No wonder that with their new found wealth, Chinese businessmen are now buying back from Japanese dealers classic Chinese pots that have been used historically for better bonsai. From their view, they are repatriating lost treasures.

National pride is often only slightly below the surface in writing by Chinese and Japanese people when discussing things shared, borrowed, or stolen from the other. Sometimes the statements can be quite amusing. There are several comments within this volume regarding Japanese misunderstanding of the Chinese original that brought smiles to my face every time I encountered them. For instance, the following statement by the famous Chinese scholar, Zheng Yingsun. First I should note that much of what we consider zen inspiration and literati form derived from the paintings and poetry of the Song dynasty. That being said, here follows Dr. Zheng. “The Japanese understand the aesthetic principle of the Song dynasty paintings, that is, ‘let something small capture the effect of what is far bigger.’ Their miniature pines often have the same effect as those in the paintings of Ma Yuan, the Song dynasty painter. Unfortunately, most of their specimens seem to be made from the same model and they look monotonous and mediocre.” To be fair, Walter Pall and Jim Doyle frequently make a similar criticism with their references to “cookie cutter” bonsai, both in Japan and in American copyists.

The English title chosen for this book shows how recently our knowledge and acceptance of *penzing* has developed, in that to even explain the nature and contents of the book the words “bonsai” and “potted landscapes” had to be used rather than the more appropriate terms explained inside the volume. [The Chinese Art of Bonsai & Potted Landscapes](#) is a keeper. At the very least borrow it and read it if you are at all interested in the history of bonsai. Don’t argue with the godfather.**

*About the title, I should explain that my spouse, Marianne (who is foreign born) and I both enjoy casually collecting instruction sheets and other utilitarian texts written originally in another language

than English and then translated into fractured English by a computer or a person lacking a certain degree of skill necessary for the process. The more I looked at the draft title, which was intended to be changed, the more it looked like a classic in the terms just noted. No disrespect intended for any ethnic group or persons.

**To see photographs of some really fantastic *penzing*, go to the website of the National Bonsai Foundation and click on the button for the Chinese Collection under the header Collections & Exhibits. As a US citizen and taxpayer, you are a part owner of this fine collection of *penzing*. See the following photo from that website of a piece in the National Collection.



Acer buergerianum | Trident Maple

Donor: National Bonsai Foundation | In Training Since 2001