

IBA News & Muse
Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter
JUNE 2015

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www.iabonsai.org

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IBA JUNE Activities

Tuesday, June 16, 7:00pm, IBA Meeting
Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, 909 Robert D. Ray Drive, Botany Lab
Program: Chat and Chop, Pruning – bring your project tree or any other to work on. Experienced members will be available to help. Discussion about signing up for State Fair Show.

July 1, 2015 DEADLINE for IOWA STATE FAIR BONSAI SHOW ENTRY

This is the last day of acceptance for entries for the Iowa State Fair Bonsai Show, which is held the first Sunday of the Fair, August 16. It is now far the easiest to do your entry on line, although you can do this using the post office, with the postmark preceding July 1. See the State Fair Website: www.iowastatefair.org Bonsai information is under the competition tab, where one will find Categories/Premium Books under which one finds Iowa Family Living, under which you come to Floriculture. Almost home. Page 7 of the online premium book is where the details on Bonsai reside. Read it closely. Bonsai is division 205. If you are either really good or good at guessing the judge's tastes, you can win a fancy ribbon and \$30. But you do have to enter.

EIBA JUNE Activities

June 18 No club meeting this month. EIBA Picnic replaces the club meeting in June.

June 27, 2015 Noon Club Picnic at Guthridge Park in Hiawatha at Green Pavillion.

Foster Tree Auction. Dave Lowman and DaSu Bonsai will be vending. Pot Luck Picnic. Bring side dish to share and your own plates/silverware. Club to supply meat and drinks.

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Above is a shohin Cotoneaster with berries from the cover of Morten Albeks book on Shohin. Below is a large Ilex serrata or Japanese fine toothed Holly full of berries.



Timely Tips

It is mid-June and temperatures and humidity are rising. That makes tropical trees happier, but can begin to add some stress to our pines, junipers and deciduous trees.

So, watch your trees for signs of stress, especially the leaves. Are they drooping a bit? Has their color faded? When you water, water thoroughly so every soil particle is wetted. On very hot days you can water in the morning and spray the foliage in the late afternoon to help with the heat stress.

Also, watch leaves for signs of disease. Look for spots, blotches, curling, color fading, etc. If you find something wrong and you don't know what it is, give a call to someone knowledgeable in your local club. Do not wait for it to go away on its own. Catch the problem early and you can avoid serious damage to your tree. Once a fungus, virus, bacteria, or pest gets a hold, the damage can happen quickly. So, be observant.

Pruning should be completed by now on double flush pines. Keep your junipers free of spider mites. Look for faded green foliage, yellowing or browning foliage. You can shake your foliage over a sheet of white paper and look for the very small spots that move. You can treat mites with a miticide spray. You will need to spray two or three times about a week apart to make sure newly hatched mites are killed. It can help to keep your junipers, especially procumbans, thinned out and use a strong water spray to knock mites off the plant.

Mid-summer is a good time to repot Tropical trees. If you do not repot your Tropicals, and they are growing strongly, you may want to defoliate or partially defoliate them. Tropicals usually respond well to this by ramifying branches, pushing smaller new leaves, and back budding further back in the tree.

Summer is vacation time. Plan ahead if you have bonsai and you are leaving for a few days. You can figure out a watering system with a timer, but test it well before leaving. Or you can line up bonsai friends to help you out. Bonsai friends are the best kind of friends to have in waw!

Keep Your Trees Healthy

Helene Magruder

Bonsai trees must be healthy to be good bonsai. Good soil, good watering techniques and proper pruning are all important but good pest and disease management and a good fertilizing schedule are essential to keeping your trees healthy.

There are a lot of nasty things floating around, nasty bugs and nasty fungus are everywhere all the time so we must be vigilant to protect our trees. Spring is a ripe time for a nasty fungus that attacks junipers, especially Shimpaku. It can do a lot of damage before you catch it so it is a good idea to do preventive spraying. One application isn't going to do the job so a ten day to two week schedule is a good idea. Daconil used to be the fungicide of choice but overuse has made it less effective. A copper sulphate spray is effective and there is a fairly new systemic fungicide called Eagle which is very good. It is pretty expensive but it only takes a little per gallon so it goes a long way. I found it on the internet. I do like to use a variety of fungicides to cover all the bases.

Another fungus that will need to be prevented is coming up soon. That is needle cast on pines. When the needles start to open up is when they are the most vulnerable so start spraying as soon as they start opening and continue until they have hardened off. Last year every one of my pines was on a different schedule so I was spraying almost all summer.

Crabapples are vulnerable to Cedar Apple Rust so it is a good idea to do preventive spraying on them. Black spot can show up on some varieties. Unfortunately by the time we are aware of it the fungi have already done some damage so preventive spraying is a good idea.

(cont. p 6)

Brussel's Rendezvous Trip and Tips

John Denny

I recently returned from Brussel's Bonsai Nursery's big four day event they call their Rendezvous. Three other EIBA club members and I headed south for a long weekend of bonsai fun and camaraderie. Jim and Chris had attended before and Bill was a first timer. In short we had a great time. Here is a rundown of the weekend and some of what we learned.

Each year Brussel Martin invites six bonsai experts from around the world to lead workshops and do demonstrations on very nice material. Attendees can then buy lottery tickets for the resulting trees, most of which are truly excellent trees. The winning tickets are drawn the following day and six lucky people go home with a wonderful addition to their collection of trees.

If you are not in a workshop you can wander the premises and shop for trees among the thousands of bonsai for sale. You can shop for pots, display furniture, bonsai supplies, etc. You can watch the Japanese gardener from Texas, John Powell, work on new garden projects on site. You can eat and drink all day and evening. The food was excellent every meal. The southern hospitality was always evident.

Here are a few of the tips from each Master as they worked on their demo trees. I hope you find them interesting and helpful.

Rodney Clemmons is a bonsai expert from the southeast U.S. who's expertise is placing Kingsville boxwoods on interesting rocks, which is what he did for his demo. In a landscape, select your stone first and trees second. The stone is primary. Rodney used quickset concrete to fix tie down wires to the stone. Clean the stone first. He said you can also use Krazy glue and baking soda for a very quick setting adhesive to attach the wires to the stone. He used a muck made from 1/3 each of peat moss, long fiber spag moss, and powdered potter's clay. He adds akadama fines, too, if he has them available. Add water and mix until the muck ball will stick to a glass wall (he throws it against his patio door). Prune your trees and tie them onto your stone. The trees can stay in the muck soil for many years without having to "repot" the trees.

Colin Lewis is an Englishman now living in Maine. He worked on a Hinoki cypress. Colin likes to be a little more daring in his stylings of trees. He suggested creating rougher more natural looking jins rather than the "sharpened pencil jins" you usually see. "Nature is much rougher when it breaks branches, so you should be, too." Colin prefers to style his trees more like how that species looks at the edge of its natural range. The trees there do not have the fat, full, and happy look. They have far more character near the edge of their range.

Pedro Morales grew up in Chicago and now lives in Puerto Rico where he works on Tropicals since most typical bonsai species will not grow there. Pedro placed a very large semi cascade Ficus onto a large stone. He also worked on a Brazilian Rain tree and created an African flat top style that looked very cool when finished. Pedro shaped the Ficus into three triangular foliage pads as they moved down the cascading main branch. Just beyond the tip he placed a separate small stone with a small Ficus on it. The small Ficus was an accent that looked like a natural extension of the larger tree when placed just beyond the tip of the big Ficus. The whole creation really flowed well. Pedro and his son made a nice addition to the master's group with their humor and Latin flair.

Kathy Shaner is a regular at Brussels. She trained in Japan and has worked in both California and the southeast US. She is an expert on a wide variety of trees, especially many of the flowering trees like azaleas, crab apples, etc. Kathy worked on a very large Dawn Redwood. Her first tip was to pinch the foliage tips shortly after early growth. If you fail or miss doing this, then in May/June (southern US) cut the new branch back. Redwood cambium is soft so use care in wiring. Wire from top down first, not the usual bottom up if you are doing a broom style which she was doing on this rather unusual dawn redwood. Since the wood of this tree is soft, she did not recommend lime sulfur to protect jins and deadwood. She suggested using Minwax with a stain. She also recommended use of a wood hardener called PC Petrifier.

Bjorn Bjorholm is a 29 year old who has been living and apprenticing in Japan for 7 years now. Bjorn has wired many very large white pines for major shows which he said took him 40 to 60 hours each to wire. Wow. I complain after 20 minutes! Bjorn worked on a very large Prostrada juniper with at least an 8" caliper. Looking for a front, he warned to avoid material with a "pigeon breast". Sometimes you can hide it a bit with branches or by moving it to the back. He cut all the low and middle branches with plans to pull the top branches down. As he jinned branches he said do not ring the jin first as many amateurs do to keep the bark of the jinned branch from tearing down the trunk. The circle looks too unnatural. Instead, pull carefully down to the trunk and just a bit past. He outlined the shari deadwood and cut it, then removed the bark. Bjorn said cut the outline twice. First time shallow. Second time deeply. He found the live veins as they were slightly swollen and the dead veins were slightly shrunken. This takes experience. Start with narrow shari. The tree will begin to redirect itself, then eventually you will see where you can widen the shari over the years. Use shari as a "suggestion" and do not overdo it, he advised. Bjorn said to remove the berries to help the tree save energy. While wiring, pay attention to making good anchors. Connect two branches with one wire. The branches should be of similar size and similar flexibility and they should be far enough apart to act as good anchors to each other. Bjorn offered a couple of suggestions on setting branches just wired. Find the line of best fit first and adjust the branch to that line, then add the movement = back and forth, up and down - to add interest. Often you will have a sterile section on a juniper branch. Wire and set the branch above so the foliage of the upper branch covers the front of the sterile section of the branch below. On his tree, this was very effective.

Marc Noelanders comes to Brussels every year from his home in the Netherlands. Actually, this guy seems

To just live all over the world because he travels so much. Marc went to Japan to study martial arts as a teen. His teacher suggested he needed something in addition to martial arts in his life. Lucky for the bonsai world he settled on bonsai as his new interest. Marc is famous for working on Blue Alps junipers and he delighted the crowd by choosing another one. His tree did not look to be in very good shape with a great deal of brown, dead foliage. He cut many low branches and began turning the tree looking for a front. He did not find one, so he cut more branches. Marc feels like 60% of the quality of a tree comes straight from the initial decision on finding the front and he really emphasizes angling the tree in various ways to make the front look more dynamic. His demo trees always seem to be dangerously tipped on edge as he works on them! Marc did a great deal of die grinding to get the deadwood established. The wood was soft, so he did not go as far as usual. He said let the tree dry out, then do the finer detailed work on the deadwood three months from now. I have seen a lot of good artists, but none of them come even close to wiring as fast as Marc Noelanders does. You have to see it to believe it. After the tree was completely wired, it still did not look like much. Then in about 10 minutes of setting the branches into place, the tree exploded to life as a beautiful, exciting bonsai. The guy is a marvel. The scruffy looking tree was transformed into a specimen. You could hear audible sounds of amazement from the crowd as the tree was brought to life in that short span. No wonder Noelanders is sent an airline ticket year after year to attend Rendezvous. He is a true headliner.

We packed up our trees the last day and headed home – tired, but more knowledgeable, and excited to come back again next year. If you love bonsai, set aside the time to get to Brussels’ Rendezvous!



This is Bjorn Bjorholm's Prostrada juniper. Compare to before photo on right. Less than 3 hours of work and he has a beautiful nearly finished bonsai!

Keeping Trees Healthy (cont. from p 2)

On to pests. Tender new growth is candy to aphids in the spring so keep a close watch on those new buds. Other chewing and sucking critters abound. I have even had problems with inch worms chewing away at some succulent new leaves. As summer arrives spider mites are a menace. They can do a lot of damage in a very short time, junipers are especially vulnerable. There is a huge variety of insecticides, both systemic and topical. As with fungicides, I like to use several different kinds. Again, spray an infestation more than once as eggs can hatch and start a whole new infestation.

A lot of people are leery of using so many chemicals which is quite understandable. Some are more lethal than others so it is a good idea to educate yourself about what you choose. I was all excited about Neem Oil as it was touted as being very safe, unfortunately I found it wasn't very effective. One technique I use on my trees is to give the foliage a pretty strong spray every time I water. That tends to knock spider mites off for a day or two until they crawl back up.

Fertilizing is also key to a healthy tree. Bonsai soil has little or no nutrients so our trees depend on us to supply it. I start fertilizing when I see new growth. I will start fertilizing my pines in February when I see buds starting to swell. Later when needles start to form I hold off until they have hardened to try to avoid long needles. When leaves start to pop out on deciduous trees they really need some food. Lighter green tips on junipers are new growth calling for food. I start off with half strength fertilizer but I go to full strength after a feeding or two. I like to use a variety of fertilizers just in case one doesn't have some micronutrient another can supply. One of my favorites is fish emulsion with a bit of kelp thrown in but I don't feel that all fertilizer must be organic. There are some good chemical fertilizers and sometimes they have some goody in them that might be lacking in an organic fertilizer. So mix it up.

Fertilizer cakes give a tiny bit of nutrition every time you water and I like to use them. Dave Lowman makes some very good ones although dogs really like them. I feed every two weeks up until my trees go dormant. Just keep feeding your trees and they will respond to your care.

In accomplishing the tasks discussed above, I have assembled a growing arsenal of chemical weapons. On my shelf at the moment are:

Insecticides

Ortho Bug B Gone

Concern, contains Canola Oil

Sevin

Worry Free, a Pyrethrin insecticide derived from Chrysanthemum Flowers.

Cygon, a systemic insecticide. Been there a while, not sure it is still effective.

Safari, new and very powerful. For special circumstances.

Fungicides

Ortho Disease B Gon, a copper soap fungicide.

Garden Safe by Schultz; from Walmart, contains Neem Oil.

Daconil, left over, use it once in a while.

Eagle, systemic fungicide available on the internet.

There is a product available on the internet called *Zero-To* which has a Hydrogen Peroxide base and is a fungicide and a bactericide. I use it in my storage area and on my bonsai in the fall and the spring.

Read labels. Be sure what you use is effective on whatever you are trying to control. In the legal regulatory realm the label is the law, literally.

How to Make Fertilizer Cakes

John Denny

Many bonsai hobbyists use fertilizer cakes to get daily nutrients to the root zones of their bonsai. Purchasing premade cakes can be expensive. Here are a couple of ways to make cakes yourself for much less cost.

Gary Wood Recipe and Method

Cottonseed Meal	5 Parts
Blood meal	2 Parts
Bone meal	½ Part
Flour	¼ Part
Fish Emulsion	As needed to wet the dry ingredients

You can also throw in one scoop of Miracle Grow if you use the entire 3# bag of cottonseed meal to make your batch, but this is optional.

Mix the dries together. Add fish emulsion to wet the dry ingredients and mix until just moist enough to stick together. Stay a little on the “dry” side as you can always add a bit more fish emulsion. Begin to knead the “dough” to even out the moisture level. The ball should hold together. If it is still crumbly, add a bit more fish emulsion. Knead again until ball holds together. Press the dough flat against the sides of your mixing bucket. Crumble the flattened dough into pieces and begin to knead again. This will help even out the moisture level better.

You now are ready to form the dough into cakes. You have two basic choices. One, you can press the dough flat onto a plywood or cardboard base. Then score the sheet with a knife. Let dry for 3 or 4 days, then break into square cakes. The other forming approach is to use a scoop like a melon baller, small ice cream scoop, Miracle

Grow green spoon, etc. Press the dough into the scoop by pressing the scoop against the side of the bucket and scraping the excess off using the top bucket edge, then drop the fresh cake onto your board to dry. You can make cakes of various sizes for use on shohin or large trees. Cakes typically range in diameter from ½ inch to an inch. Most common size is around ¾ inch. Let dry in the sun.

Remember, do this process in the garage or outside. It is smelly and can attract bugs while drying. If you do this in your wife's kitchen or use her kitchen utensils, I do not know you. And do not ask me to loan you money for an attorney.

Simplified Version

Start with a granular fertilizer that is roughly 5-5-5. Plant Tone is one brand I have used. Add about 5% flour to the dry granular fertilizer. This is equivalent to one part flour to 19 parts fertilizer. Mix it in evenly. Add water slowly until the dry ingredients are wetted. Mix well. Knead the dough. Adjust with more water or flour as needed. The texture of the "dough" should be similar to thick oatmeal.

Now form your cakes as described above and let dry.

Using Fertilizer Cakes

Most of these cakes will be approximately 5-5-5 in strength. Miracle Grow is roughly 20-20-20 in comparison. Fertilizer cakes have the advantage of adding a bit of fertilizer to your tree with each daily watering. It will take a couple of weeks for the cake to begin working as it will need to become wetted again and bacteria will begin to help release the nutrients.

Place the cakes uniformly around the tree. You can focus the cakes around the trunk to help grow good nebari. Or you can focus the cakes in a ring further away from the trunk to help grow new root tips. But, generally place the cakes uniformly over the soil. A small tree might use two cakes, while a large tree might use 8 or more. It is very hard to over fertilize with organic cakes.

If you have birds or dogs bothering your cakes, there are small plastic cages for sale from bonsai outlets that are designed to cover the cakes. I do not know if they work as I have not used them.

The cakes will eventually "wear out" after roughly six weeks. You can pull off the old ones and add a fresh layer. At the end of the year, be sure to remove all fertilizer cakes when you clean up your trees and their soil surface prior to placing your trees in winter storage.

My last bit of advice is to make cakes as a group project. Find a friend or two in your club who wants to give organic cakes a try. It can help to have an extra hand especially in the forming process. Another advantage of working with a friend - you won't be the only one to smell bad when you are done!

Are You Growing, Developing or Doing Finished Bonsai??

John Denny

The last couple of times Gary Wood has come to Iowa to work with his two Bonsai Study Groups, he has emphasized asking students, "What are you doing with this tree in front of you? Are you growing it? Are you developing it? Or are you ready to do finished bonsai techniques on it?"

I did bonsai for a long time before really beginning to understand that trees from my bonsai collection were in various stages of bonsai and that I needed to keep in mind what stage each tree was in. You have to be careful to do the right techniques to your tree basis the stage it is in. Sometimes you are only Growing. Sometimes on a finished tree, you are only doing classic Finished bonsai techniques. Sometimes, on Developing trees, you might be doing some of all three techniques at the same time.

Growing Stage – These trees typically are young trees that you still want to grow bigger thicker trunks. If you begin doing finished bonsai techniques on these trees you will actually stunt or slow the growth of the trunk that you want to thicken. Often these trees have sacrifice branches left to grow long as they help to thicken trunks and low branches. These trees are generally fertilized hard and given lots of sun. Styling these trees much at all will slow down the growth. You can wire a few basic branches into place and you can get rid of a few bad branches you know will never be part the trees future (though sometimes you may keep one that could contribute to the thickening of the trunk). Basically, do very little bonsai work and just grow them. Do not worry about them being coarse in appearance.

Developing Stage – Generally, these trees are ones that you feel the trunk and basic bottom branches have developed enough thickness to begin the process of making a bonsai tree. Typically, you will begin to do a bit more pruning and you will begin wiring more branches into place. You may not fertilize as hard as you want the tree to lose its coarseness and gain some refinement. You will begin cutting branches on deciduous trees back to help develop taper to your branches. And you may begin to work on developing some ramification of branching. You have left the hard growing stage, but you are not quite yet at the finished bonsai technique stage. Pines in the development stage can often be in all three stages at once. Pines are challenging to manage the energy between weak and strong areas. You can have branches you are still growing and some you are ready to do finished technique on all on the same tree..

Finished Stage – Don't we all wish we had trees at this stage? It might take 10 years or more to get here. Not many trees that we own are at this stage exclusively. Perhaps we have a nice Japanese maple where we want to avoid any growing or developing technique that can result in coarseness. The focus is on keeping short internodes, small leaves, etc. Pinching leaf tips early in spring after the first set of leaves push is typical here. These trees are done growing bigger trunks. Emphasis is on refinement.

Know the stage your tree is in. Do not get ahead of the tree and begin doing finished bonsai techniques too soon. It will only slow you down!

Books, Books, and More Books

Ivan Hanthorn

At one time a woman in my life was a rather good cook; friends invited over were usually delighted by something to eat that they had never before encountered. So it was no surprise that she had a good number of cook books, which she did actually use. The last time I saw that collection it was about 8 linear feet of strange and wonderful books on the wonders of the world's cuisine. Some friends came just to see the books.

Now as just about everybody knows, there is no end to the publishing of cook books. One could literally fill a house if one did not show some restraint in the acquisition of interesting and appealing new cook books. My spouse has for some time now been illustrating this very point.

It is not as broadly known that the same is now true for bonsai books. One might think that everything that could be written about training little whips into midget trees had been done over and over again, but it seems not so. The introductory information has been published many times over. However, more advanced interpretation and technical perspectives and experiences continue to be worth a look when they appear.

A few good bonsai books have appeared in the last 6 months that I was going to review individually until I gained my senses. Who really cares? In today's online world one can look at everything simultaneously, and if the old adage that "a picture is worth a thousand words" is still true, then one can have digested the equivalent of a few books in a few minutes.

However, unable to restrain myself, I will briefly note three titles for those who still use and enjoy the codex, the 2,000 year old textual form we call the book.

Commemorative Album, 4th U. S. National Bonsai Exhibition, 2014, \$55. Every two years, Bill Valavanis and friends put together a U.S. National Bonsai Exhibition in Rochester NY and every two years the trees just get better. 2014 was the fourth such exhibition. Entry is by invitation. See photographs of Helene Magruder's two bonsai in the exhibition.

Bonsai Deadwood, by Francois Jeker, \$24.95. An instant classic because of authorship. See his previously published volumes, **Bonsai Aesthetics Vols. 1 & 2**. This new volume is the ultimate resource if you want to learn everything about creating beautiful natural looking deadwood on your bonsai. Francois Jeker is an accomplished bonsai artist and renowned deadwood carving master. The IBA has one member who just cannot attend any bonsai workshop without turning on some form of electric tool for wood destruction (e.g., "carving"). Regardless of whether your preferred approach is electric or manual, there is a lot to learn from this volume.

Literati Style Penjing, by Shao Qingquan, \$23.95. An inspiring, beautiful and altogether wonderful new book with great photos and great how-to instruction. Zhao Qingquan is the world's most renowned Penjing master. This book illustrates more clearly than any other publication heretofore the connection between Chinese Penjing Literati and Japanese Bunjin. Note that literati and penjing are focus styles for the IBA Fall Bonsai Show in October in Ames.

Prices listed above are the current prices from *Stone Lantern*.

Kokufu ten Photos



Chinese Quince with large trunk caliper and lots of great movement in branches.



This looks like an Ume to me with gnarly bark and twisting branches in contrast to simple flowers.