

Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

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August 2017

Volume 50, Issue 8

IBA August Activities

August 19, 9:00 AM, Open Study Group and Presentation at 11:30 AM

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

Topics: *No presentation this month*

EIBA August Activities

August 10, 6:30 PM, EIBA Board Meeting at Panera Restaurant on Edgewood Road

Topics: *Discussions on NewBo Show, Orchid Show, IBA All Show, August Club mtg.*

August 17, No Club Meeting this month.

August 18, 19, 20 Mid America Bonsai Show, Chicago Botanic Garden

..... "Yamadori"

Ron Heinen

Backpacks, electrolytes, pumice, burlap, tools? Check!
Transplant permits, cabin reservations in Wyoming and South Dakota? Check!



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As we head out to pick up our rentals, a Ram diesel with a topper and a fully equipped UTV, we question each other's preparation. We have been planning this collecting trip for a full year and every detail is double-checked. On the road again, our excitement peaks as we get closer to our cabin, "somewhere" high in the Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming.





Upon arrival, we review our first 4 day itinerary. We arrive early enough to drop off the trailer and take the UTV to scout our first collecting area. Fortunately, the weather has cooperated, no insurmountable snow drifts and we know we will be able to hunt tomorrow.

On the way back to our cabin we encounter another vehicle. In these "parts of the country", you stop to visit with other vehicles

since you may not see another person for days. The driver was looking for an obscure road where his friend, the "bear lady" was camping. Scott, the geographical and topographical savant, knew exactly where she was.



later, we discovered that the "bear lady", a professional wildlife photographer, hunter, and bear and lion dog trainer, had been camping there for 165 days.....In a tent!

Needless to say, we gave new energy and attention to mountain safety and smart collecting. Bears and cats? Oh my!

The following three days of collecting in Wyoming, ranged from hunting spruce in moose-laden mountain bogs at 8,000 to 9,000 foot altitudes to backpacking to heights of 10,500 feet for fir and lodge pole pines.

Each excursion was carefully planned. Weather conditions and terrain cooperated and we were able to get to each site.

However, on the fourth day we journeyed to our furthestmost collecting area, tree line at 11,600-12,000 feet. Five miles into a rock-laden, obscure side road, we decided to re-visit our objectives. With 3 miles left to our destination where Google Earth tempted us with tantalizing trees, we decided to turn back. If we had mechanical problems or the weather turned bad, we would have a minimum of a 24 hour hike out. At this altitude, walking 20 feet took your breath away. We decided that without a back-up vehicle it was too dangerous. We chose to turn around, vowing to plan to have 2 vehicles on our next trip.



At the end of four days in Wyoming, we tagged-out and headed to South Dakota for the second leg of our trip to collect Rocky Mountain Junipers, Common Junipers, and Ponderosa Pine in the Black Hills.



The next three days in S.D., planned to perfection by Scott, yielded some outstanding trees.

With updated collecting skills, we felt more confident to collect larger and more difficult specimens.

We were able to tag-out by collecting in one area previously scouted by Google Earth. In 7 days of collecting and 2 days of travel time we were able to meet our objectives and returned to

“Yamadori” - continued

Iowa on day 10, with a truck laden to the brim with..... “Yamadori”



In retrospect, preparation and planning was the key to a memorable and successful collecting trip. A few hard-earned collecting skills, the proper equipment, and good



mountain experience (by Scott) contributed to a journey I can only “smile” at every time I reflect upon it.

Dream big! Start planning “now” for your collecting journey for next year.

Fertilizer – or How to Start a Holy War

Dave Paris (Rochester, NY)

One moment, please, while I put on my Nomex fire suit. Ok, that’s better, now let’s talk about fertilizer! So we have two basic types; organic (cakes, balls, etc.) and inorganic (Peter’s, Miracle-Gro, etc). The sole purpose we fertilize is to make sure our trees are getting the macro and micro nutrients they need to perform cellular division, be as healthy as possible to withstand or ward off both pests and pathogens, and to build up energy stores in both buds and roots to permit a good & healthy start after their winter hibernation.

The primary differentiation between organic and inorganic fertilizers is the rate at which the macro & micro nutrients release themselves into our essentially sterile growing medium. Organic fertilizers release their payload over time, as daily watering and the occasional rain dissolve the hard cakes, permitting the roots to absorb nutrients at a steady, but low, rate. Inorganic fertilizers hit all at once, making their way into the tiny pores in our growing media, where the roots can extract what they need. One thing both have in common is that neither provides all the micro nutrients the tree needs.

There are a number of factors to account for when deciding on what type and how much. The primary factor is the state of the tree. Is the tree in heavy development or in a state of fine refinement? What species of tree is it? What growing media are we using?

When it comes to organic cakes, I will offer a bit of personal experience. Use either tea bags (ideally cloth that is washable and reusable) or small plastic containers to hold the cakes. Can you use organic cakes without these? Of course. However, they tend to deplete over time and leave a hard crust on the soil surface that needs to be periodically removed during the growing season. Tea bags prevent this crust from forming, though the small plastic container do not. Another crucial part about organic cakes is the need to reposition them on a monthly basis to insure all the roots are being fed equally. If you don’t, then you’ll likely end up with an area under the cake that has feeder roots all the way to the surface of the media. This eventually leads to a rootball that has uneven growth of fine feeder roots. So move those cakes around to a new area each month. On a well-refined tree, a good strategy is to put them in the corner of the container for one month, then halfway along the edge of

the container the next month. The larger the container and the tree, the more cakes you'll need. Just space them evenly and move to an empty area each month. Also be aware that organic cakes break down and should have fresh cakes replacing old cakes every four to eight weeks, depending on the size of the cake, how dense the binders are, and the general recommendation of the manufacturer (or recipe, if you make your own from components). If the tree is highly refined, use fewer cakes to insure delivery of nutrients, but not to the point that fine ramification is ruined by heavy growth.

Inorganic fertilizers also play a role in delivering micro nutrients that may not be present in the organic cakes. They're also quite helpful during early development of a tree so that it has access to major nutrients required for heavy growth – just watch for wire bite if you're feeding heavily – three weeks isn't uncommon for deciduous trees, nor is a couple months for most evergreens. It's far better to unwire and re-wire rather than having to deal with wire scars, particularly on deciduous trees.

To get all the micro nutrients a tree needs, ideally a combination of both organic and inorganic fertilizers are used. There are some cautions to be taken seriously and those will be noted shortly.

Let's look at some caveats and cautions: a) Pines. If your pine has a good population of mycorrhizae in the rootball, use a very weak concentration of inorganic fertilizer, use it infrequently (a few times in a season) and lean more heavily on organics, even during the course of heavy development. The salts contained in inorganic fertilizer, in more concentrated solutions, can kill off this beneficial fungi. That's not a beneficial situation. Instead, use more organic cakes during the development stage. The slow release of nutrients can be accessed by the mycorrhizae and delivered to the roots efficiently. b) Freshly repotted trees. Hold off on fertilizer for a few weeks after repotting so the tree has a chance to start growing new fine feeder roots and then resume your normal fertilization regimen. c) Collected Trees. After potting up a collected tree, treat it as you would a root-pruned tree, but instead of resuming a course of heavy feeding, slowly increase the amount of fertilizer over the course of the growing season as the tree acclimates itself to its new home. After the first season in a container, you can then go ahead with a normal fertilization regimen, appropriate for the stage of development of the tree.

Now let's look at some individual nuances based on the type of tree: a) Satsuki & Azaleas: Starting in spring, fertilize normally up until the flower buds are about ready to open, then hold off all fertilizer during the blossoming. Once blossoming is finished and you've completed higar work on the tree, give it a good feed, and then stop fertilizing. In late August or some point in September, you should be able to gently squeeze the terminal end of a branch and feel a firm but nascent flower bud. Once you feel this, resume the normal feeding regimen until the tree displays fall coloration and then you can stop for the season. b) Red or Black Pines: Feed in the spring until the buds turn into candles. At this point, stop feeding and let the candles grow, treating them appropriately (the subject of another article and many articles elsewhere). Once you've completed candle cutting, let the new buds develop, open, and harden off. Once the second flush of growth has hardened off, generally a heavy feeding regimen is recommended to prepare the tree for the coming winter and have plenty of energy stored in the roots and new buds set to open in the spring. c) Other Pines (White, Mugo, e.g. single-flush of growth): Give one or two light feedings in the spring, then hold off until the new buds open and harden off. Once they're hardened off, resume the normal feeding regimen.

The point with pines is you want to give them some nutrients as they come out of dormancy, but not enough to cause excessive growth. On pines that experience two flushes of growth a year, the idea is that we want to have the tree in a state of low reserves for the second flush in order to keep that second flush of growth appropriately sized for the tree. Only once the new needles have hardened off and finished growing do we put the spurs to the tree and let it take up all the macro and micro nutrients it needs prior to dormancy and have an energy store for those two flushes of growth the next year.

The point with satsuki and azaleas is we want the new growth to terminate in a flower bud. By taking away nitrogen, the tree will set flower buds instead of foliage growth. Once the flower buds are created, we can go back to our regular feeding. During the development stage (or rebuilding a satsuki or azalea using hard cutbacks), I use both organic cakes and a weekly feed of inorganics at ½ strength.

During the refinement stage, I use organics and cut back my inorganics to ½ strength every couple weeks. Once

Fertilizer - continued

a tree gets to maintenance stage, I reduce the amount of organics and feed inorganics at ½ strength just a few times during the growing season.

One last crucial point; prior to feeding inorganics, make sure you make one pass of watering well. Give the growing media a chance to really get wet and put existing salts back into solution. Wait 15 to 30 minutes, then make another pass of heavy watering to flush the dissolved salts from the media. Wait another 15 to 30 minutes, and then feed with the appropriate dilution of inorganic fertilizer. I leave the organics in place during this time and don't see a need to remove them. While this two-stage watering should be the normal for regular watering, not everyone does it. The other benefit that is gained by regular use of an initial and secondary watering is that the organic fertilizer is slightly softened by the first pass, permitting a beneficial release of macro and micro nutrient quantities during the second pass.

EIBA NewBo Bonsai Show

John Denny

Eastern Iowa Bonsai Association initiated a new bonsai show which was held at the Cedar Rapids “NewBo” market square in Czech village. EIBA had participated each August in the Brucemore Mansion Garden and Art Fair with a public display of member trees, however, that event was cancelled this year. EIBA President Bill Englert came up with the idea of moving our August public display to the popular NewBo Market. A day was



selected that coincided with the CR Farmer's Market which brings a great deal of traffic to the area.

Four eight foot tables were set up just outside the NewBo building. There is a very large overhang that kept us in shade and would also keep the display dry in case of rain.

Club members set up the display which featured a new white backdrop to highlight the trees. The central feature of the show was shohin trees. Several members have



taken up shohin trees in the past couple of years and numerous fine examples were on display.

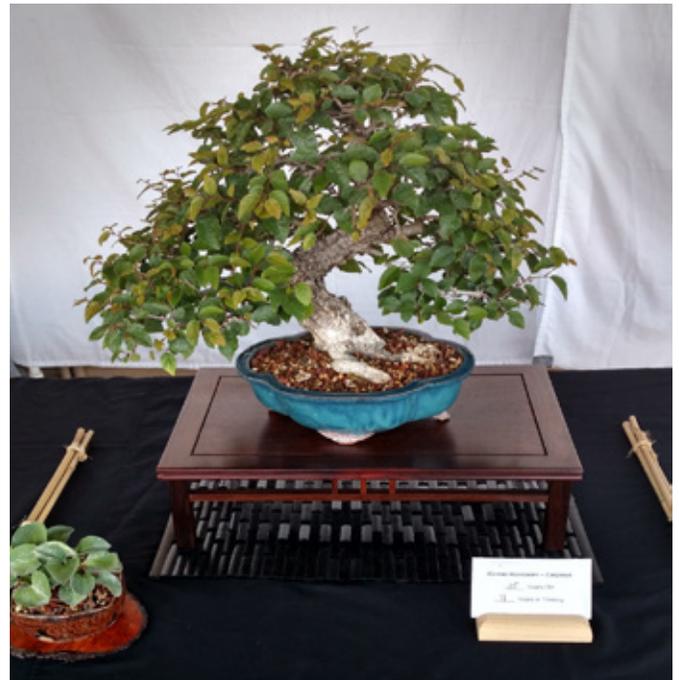
Traffic through the area was steady and several people stayed and talked, asking many questions. More than a few signed up for newsletters, membership information, etc.



Several nice advantages came with this venue. Free advertising of the event by NewBo. We could drive right up to our display area and unload. Ample parking. Coffee shop and several top notch food vendors just a few feet from our displays. Close rest rooms. Several patio tables and chairs close by where folks could relax or work on trees. And this year – perfect weather. I am sure this site and event will



become a regular annual feature of the Eastern Iowa Bonsai Association.



Timely Tips

John Denny

It is August. Hot weather. Cool weather. Wet weather. Dry weather. It is all there for us to enjoy. It is all there for us to figure out how it is affecting our beloved bonsai trees.

We have to constantly ask ourselves: are we watering our trees properly given the temps, rain, wind, growth rate of our trees, size of our pots, type of soils we use, etc. Keep paying attention. Sometimes it is too easy, especially if you own a lot of trees, to just water everything the same. But, keep sticking your finger in the soil to test for soil dampness. Keep checking leaves closely for signs of stress.

Growth is beginning to slow now. Continue to watch for pests and disease signs. Check for mites. Check for black spot on deciduous leaves. Early August is time to begin fertilizing your pine trees. My recently repotted Tropical trees (repotted in early to mid July) are about ready for fertilization, too. Remove the weak yellowish foliage from your junipers.

Check any trees with wire on them. They have been growing fast and wire bite takes a long time to recover, especially on deciduous trees. Be patient. I have been removing wire from a moderately large white pine. It is amazing how much fine wire was on that tree and how time consuming it is to remove without damaging the tree. When you look for wire biting in, look for the areas of the tree that are growing the fastest, for example the crown. Also, look for areas where branches have been bent sharply. When you bent the newly wired branch to its new shape, the area of the branch that was bent the sharpest will have tightened the wire the day you put it on. So, it only takes a bit of growth to get wire bite in that localized area. Look for sharp bends.

Keep rotating your trees so they get even sunlight on all sides. This is especially true of trees kept with their back side against a wall or have a shady side. Rotating will help keep growth even and sunlight will get to all buds more evenly. Your tree will be healthier both in the short and long run.

If you are planning a vacation or get away, make sure you have solid plans for someone to help water your trees. I once trained a young neighbor boy to water. He did well and I paid him well. His mother complained to me that I over paid him and now she would be expected to pay him too much for tasks he did for her. I explained to her about living art, how many years I had put into those trees, how much they would cost to replace, etc. The value of the young man's responsibility, accuracy of watering, and steadfastness was worth every penny I paid. Ask someone in your club if they can water for you. Or, if you only have a few smaller trees, take them to your helper's home to make it easier for them. And when you find someone good to water while you are away, treat them well. No, really well. You will enjoy your vacation a lot more if you do not have to worry about your trees. Remember, bonsai friends are the best friends!