

Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

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IBA May Activities

21, 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: *Root-Over-Rock Reveal, Larry Totton*

Everybody is welcome.

EIBA May Activities

May 13, 9:00 AM, Mother's Day Flower Show Noelridge Greenhouse

Topics: *Come see our EIBA Bonsai Display!*

May 19, 7:00 PM, EIBA Club Meeting, John Denny Home

Topic: *Outdoor display discussion. Demo: Muck and its use in creating bonsai art.*

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Todd Schlafer Workshop – Spring 2018

By Susan Daufeldt

On April 15, 2018, my husband, John, and I once again had the great pleasure of joining IBA members for Todd Schlafer's Spring workshop in Indianola. The



Todd Schlafer puts finishing touches on Bob West's Bird's Nest Spruce



Todd Schlafer and Scott Clark discuss design options for Scott's Rocky Mountain Juniper



Todd Schlafer and Randy Hoshaw discuss the positioning of the tree in the pot.

Magruder's hosted us in Helene's comfortable and well equipped work area. In spite of the daunting weather – rain, turning to freezing rain, turning to snow during the night and continuing throughout the day – everyone made it safely. And boy were we glad to have a warm place to work! Todd was dynamic, energetic and decisive, as he moved from student to student, deftly solving design problems, advising and instructing in every area of spring bonsai work and teaching to every level of experience.

Helene Magruder started the day by wiring an adorable little (Utah??) Juniper (the jury remained out as to exactly what kind of Juniper it was). It began as a darling little mop and became increasingly elegant as the day progressed. When she was finished, Helene spent some time working on a Shimpaku Juniper. Bob West began styling his Bird's Nest Spruce, a tree he collected out of his yard. The transformation that took place over the course of the morning was truly amazing. Scott Clark began by styling his Rocky Mountain Juniper and moved on to repotting the interesting Blue Spruce with the unusual low branch. This was the tree that Scott styled with Todd during last Spring's workshop and it was fun to see the tree a year later. And in a pot!

Randy Hoshaw repotted a collected blue spruce onto an unusual ceramic "pot." Ron Heinen spent the better part of the day on the styling of an Engelmann Spruce that he collected in 2016 in the Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming. This tree was still in its collection box. Ron puts handles on his boxes for ease in carrying bigger trees. Good idea! Ron had brought a drawing of his proposed design for the tree, but Todd took the project in a slightly different direction and I think that Ron was very pleased with the results. John Daufeldt began by repotting the Blue Spruce he acquired and styled with Todd last spring. Again, it was so much fun to see the tree a year later in a pot. He then repotted a Shimpaku Juniper. Todd used pieces of bamboo to support the tree in the desired position and to secure tie-in wire where the roots were not sturdy enough to hold the wire in place. Todd assisted me in repotting a small Shimpaku Juniper and then helped me style a very awkward collected tree in a pleasing manner. I honestly had no idea what to do with that tree and it was a great relief and to have Todd's expertise to guide me.

One of the very best things about these workshops is the seemingly small things that you pick up just by being there. For instance, Todd advises using steel wire to tie in conifers (most of the time - aluminum is often better for deciduous trees). Todd had a roll of 17 gauge electric fence wire that can be inexpensively obtained at Menards. When preparing the tie-in wire for the pot, Todd demonstrated a technique that causes the wire to lie close and flat against the bottom of the pot. Using pliers, Todd bent the wire in the opposite direction of the arc that naturally results from the roll at the exact places where the wire would go through the wire holes. There were two silent



*Steel Tie-in Wire
(Electric Fence Wire Available at Farm Stores)*

observers at the workshop: Bruce Pendland braved the winter driving conditions and came over from Iowa City for the morning and Brandy Flickering, who is a brand new IBA member who lives in Winterset. While we all worked hard, there was plenty of time for discussion and it was a pleasure to get to know other bonsai artists in our community a little better. As we talk and work, we learn from one another and it is a truly wonderful experience.

Thanks so much to the Magruders for allowing IBA to use Helene's workroom for this event and to Todd Schlafer for his energetic, dynamic instruction. Thanks, also, to those IBA members whose efforts made this workshop possible.



Helene Magruder works on her Shimpaku, with Ron Heinen and his collected Engelmann Spruce after styling. New IBA member Brandy Flickering is just visible in the background.

Tiny Trees and Tiny Pots

Bonsai vary from trees so large I cannot pick them up alone to trees so small my clumsy fingers can have trouble safely holding them. Here are some small trees, including flowering trees, in some quite lovely little bonsai pots that definitely add to the image.



An old tree with significant deadwood



The sweet little Japanese maple belongs to Hiroshi Kunii. Hiroshi calls the pot Maru (circle in Japanese).



Here is fun, flowing Crape myrtle i (*Lagerstroemia Indica*) in a fun little pot.



Zelkova (*Ulmus parvifolia*) in an attention grabbing blue pot. I have some nice shohin Zelkova, but this is really small. My watering skills would likely be inadequate to keep a tree like this.

Timely Tips

John Denny

Boy, am I tired! Since spring came so late, all of my yard work has been compressed into a much shorter calendar window. Pruning shrubs, mowing and edging, fertilizing, staining bonsai tables and pergola, moving mulch, raking, watering to get everything going. I also notice that I seem to be a little (or a lot) slower than last year. Hmmm?

Let's talk bonsai trees. Repotting should be done by now. And hopefully all of your trees have leafed out. Two of mine don't look very promising at this point. One large maple has only popped a very few leaves. The other I purchased from a friend in early spring and it has not pushed a leaf yet. But, everything else looks pretty good. I fertilized once to get things moving. I still have not fertilized my recently repotted trees, but will do so this week. I go easy with the first dose. I often use a little fish emulsion, too, for the micro nutrients. (A tip: wear old shoes in case you splash on them. And if you do, don't wear those shoes to a restaurant. Don't ask me any details of why I suggest this.)

Protect your trees from harsh spring winds. The trees and soil can dry out in a hurry, especially newly repotted trees. Also, as the trees add foliage, the added foliage can catch the wind and flip a pot over.

I see several of my trees are growing hard and extending shoots quickly. I need to get after my early pruning duties. As your new shoots get to eight leaves or more, cut back to two or four leaves. It won't be long before they begin to harden off.

I have put my tropical trees out for a day or two, but have brought them in when night time temps dip close to 50F or lower. They should be able to stay outside permanently soon. They will really enjoy and benefit from the sunshine. They will grow hard, creating fresh new leaves and stronger roots. Give them fertilizer and let them get strong. Then repot them at their peak in early July.

Pests usually are not an issue this early, but begin looking for them and be ready with the correct pesticide or fungicide when you see an issue.

My last tip is to enjoy the beauty of the freshness your bonsai should be showing right now. The beautiful shades of new green. The tiny new leaves of life pushing open. It is a good time to grab a camera! Also, grab a good cup of tea or coffee or something stronger if you like and just sit and meditate while admiring your bonsai tree's new Spring clothes.