

IBA News & Muse
Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter
NOVEMBER 2013

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www.iabonsai.org

www.easterniowabonsai.ning.com

IBA NOVEMBER Activities

November 19, 6:30 PM, IBA MEETING & POT LUCK
Des Moines Botanical Gardens

Our annual pot luck dinner. Unplanned as usual. Bring something tasty.

PROGRAM:

1) Mini show of deciduous bonsai. *Bring a deciduous bonsai with interesting branch structure to show. Bare branches with perhaps a few leaves left are the style of the season.*

2) Ron Heinen *will present some photos of members' bonsai summer and winter housing arrangements.*

3) *Election of the Board of Directors and annual awards and prizes.*

N.B.: *The November Meeting begins at 6:30 PM sharp! The Iowa Bonsai Association will not convene again this year.*

EIBA NOVEMBER Activities

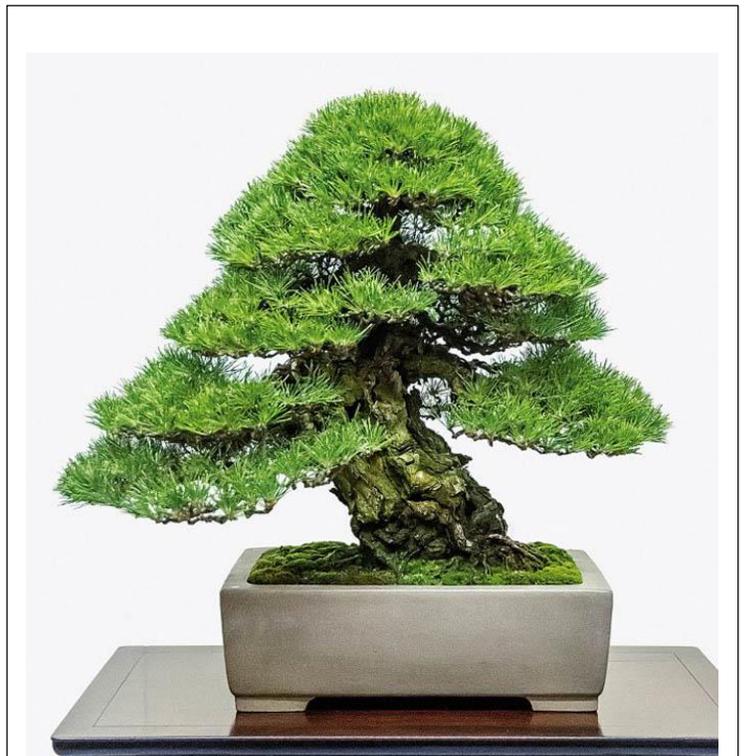
November 21, 6 pm. Annual Holiday Dinner
Lighthouse Supper Club, 6905 Mt Vernon Rd SE
RSVP by November 14 to Chris Burr, 319-389-3821 cell
The food here is excellent. Bring your spouse or a friend and come join the fun!

Officers elected from October meeting are Chris Burr, President; John Clemens, Vice President; Bill Englert, Secretary; Jim Rajtora, Treasurer.

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Please bring your ideas for next year to the dinner. These can be ideas for meeting topics, trips, workshops, membership, fund raisers, advertising, etc. This is your chance to make the club what you want it to be!



A beautiful world class Black Pine. (From blog of Bill Valvanis.)

Timely Tips

Our trees remaining outside are hardening off during these cooler days and cold nights. I leave most of my trees out until night time lows reach down to 22F. Pines and junipers I leave out longer. Generally, I bring my trees into the unheated garage Thanksgiving.

Gary Wood always says, "November is the beginning of the bonsai season". You can do a lot of work on your trees once you bring them in. Clean them up, removing dead leaves and needles, dig out weeds, refresh the topsoil, and clean off the pot.

Junipers can have the loose bark brushed off the trunk. Trim away brown, yellow, or weak foliage. Prune (or jin) dead branches. Remove old wire. Now is a good time to rewire junipers. Bend the branches to the styling you like, then put the tree away for winter in a place where the branches will not get bumped. Do not forget to spray prior to winter storage.

Pines can use the same basic clean up, but leave the bark alone. Use long tweezers (great tool to own) to pluck old brown needles from your pines. In strong areas you can pluck or cut some fresh needles to help "balance energy". Leave all green needles in weak areas. Look for buds on terminal ends. Try to leave two buds only. They should be roughly the same size and strength. If you find a terminal end that has one strong and two weak buds, cut out the strong bud.

Deciduous trees should be cleaned basically as above, leaving bark alone except to remove moss growing on trunks. Clean soil surface and replace top layer if needed. Keep fine surface roots covered. Remove dead leaves. Prune out all extraneous, unneeded branches and twigs – crossing branches, bar branches, branches going in wrong direction, branches in apex that are too heavy, crowded or double branches, etc. Leave a short stub when pruning deciduous, especially maples. By doing this, a collar will form between the stub and trunk. The following year you can then remove the stub. This will help avoid branch dieback.

Do this work in the fall and your trees will get off to a great start in spring!

Bonsai on the Move: Iowa to Tennessee

By Craig Bean

When John Denny contacted me to write this piece, it made a lot of sense, but I wasn't sure what I'd say.

There most definitely ARE some differences that the move has brought to my trees. I moved from Iowa to Tennessee just over 8 years ago, and most of the trees I have were trees that moved with me. I was a big one for local species, and digging up random, interesting specimens so moving those 550 miles south has some potential for trouble!

Winter isn't as cold here, but tropicals still come inside, and everything else gets heeled in to a protected spot under my raised deck, up against the foundation. Our average lows are in the upper 30's to lower 40's through December & January. Critters are still about, so some protection is needed, and since it doesn't get as cold, bugs and even some weeds survive and even thrive, so some vigilance is good. I take my tropicals outside anytime the temps get over 60, which happens occasionally even through December & January. I really believe it's the change in the way I water inside that really slows my trees down as much as anything in the winter. They may all have drip trays of some kind, but I still water much more carefully inside. When I can take them outside and give them a good drenching, foliage and all, they always seem much happier for days after. During the long cold stretches, I will resort to taking the trees into the shower one by one occasionally, and giving them a nice gentle shower, then letting them sit with the curtain closed for a while, just loving the humidity.

Spring comes a bit earlier in Tennessee so I need to be thinking about repotting sooner than I'm used to. Those tropicals get more and more time outside here, and pretty soon only coming in for the coldest nights (under 50).

Bonsai on the Move: Iowa to Tennessee

The growing season is a bit longer here. Rather than summer being June, July, & August, I think of May thru September as being summer weather pretty consistently. April and October tend to be pretty nice in general, but getting a bit shaky.

We do get just a bit more heat in July/August, so I either take more advantage of shade, or adjust my watering to limit the abuse.

I've found that my junipers have done less well here, where the tropicals in general have done better. Brussel's Bonsai is just over an hour Southwest of here, and they seem to manage just fine, so I know any issues with my trees are with me not doing what the trees really need at times. I know I haven't devoted the proper time on a regular basis, and many of my trees aren't as good as they should be because of it.

I put up a rain barrel at the beginning of last summer, and I'd say that 90% of the water I used for plants and trees this year came from that barrel, so that has been great. Water is pretty darn cheap, but after 2 summers, I figure it's paid for itself by now, and the water is probably better for the trees than tap water anyway!

The tropicals have all come back inside for now, and I've got my outdoor wintering space all cleaned up and ready for trees as needed. We've had a couple freezes so far, and I've covered the pepper plants in the garden, but not my trees.

This is my least favorite time of the year for a number of reasons, but I'm trying to make sure and take full advantage of the nicer days to get things ready for the colder ones!

Editors: Craig Bean was an original member of the Eastern Iowa Bonsai Association and is a past president prior to moving to Tennessee. Craig was a key club member showing many of his fine trees in EIBA shows. Living so close to Brussel's, Craig has hosted several EIBA members while they attended Brussel's Rendezvous event. Thanks, Craig.

Our next "Bonsai on the Move" article will be authored by Dr. Morris Dailey who moved from Iowa to San Francisco. Watch for it.

Reiman Fall Show Viewer's Choice Bonsai

We promised these photos in our show follow up article last issue. Visitors knew a good thing when they saw it.



Smaller table to left is a companion piece to larger shelf on the right; together they make up the total shohin exhibit.



What's the story?

Ivan Hanthorn

A bonsai must have a story to tell when exhibited for it to be successful as a work of art. Without the story what is presented is a small horticultural curiosity. The styling of the tree, the choice of pot, the table used, the companion plant (and its styling and its pot), the companion plant stand, the spatial arrangement—all are tools in the creation of a story line.

This is particularly true with a group presentation, which is best illustrated by a grouping of shohin on a shohin stand. Without some kind of internal story line, what you have is a curio cabinet of living objects. There were three group stand presentations at the IBA Fall Show. Did any viewers read the story lines?

Two of the three were shohin bonsai with shitakusa companions as appropriate. Very classical, and very classy. These were both creations of Helene Magruder. One of the many attraction factors of both of these exhibits was that they overwhelmed you with visual strength, evoking an emotional response. But if you then changed brain hemispheres and began to analyze the whole and its parts, it was also clear that in both of these there was a depiction of altitude declension—"coming down the mountain." There was also a suggestion of loving relationship, but that is a bit more amorphous.

The other stand exhibit was one of my creations, and typifies my approach to these sorts of grouping displays. See the photo at the end of this article. Before I explain the story in my exhibit, I should tell you that I am a fan of the very best book on this topic by the late Willi Benz, *Bonsai, Kusamono, Suiseki: A Practical Guide for Organizing Displays with Plants and Stones*. Reviews universally say something to this effect: "While Willi Benz passed away a few years ago, his book is still available and should be in the collection of everyone who plans to show their stones or bonsai." What some readers miss in first reading is that Benz provides guidelines on effective display of all of the accoutrement of Japanese small treasures presentation: bonsai, kusamono, suiseki, and okimono (usually thought of as figurines or other small inanimate cultural materials, but also including found objects). Furthermore, these objects can be intermixed in the same display; they must still follow the rules of presentation to avoid the sense of clutter. One more thing I should tell you is that I have a long interest in chado--Japanese tea ceremony and its accoutrements.

My exhibit was the culmination of some thoughts that I had revisited for several weeks, and I had the right materials for the story. The key would be if the Toad Lilly came in to bloom at the right time—it did. Toad Lilly, *Tricyrtis hirta*, is hardy perennial native to shady moist places in Japan, which blooms in the fall long after most other perennials have finished with a delightful orchid like bloom. Fall blooming flower, thus time frame and possibly place. A coming down the mountain arrangement of plant materials to also suggest geographic place. Okimono to complete the scene were a small stone lantern and a Japanese metal chop stick used to handle the coals for the fire under the kettle for tea in tea ceremony. So, evening tea. To express the thought stream within me I composed a haiku and put it to the side on a small slip of paper for anyone interested. It reads as follows:

Fall Mountain wind
 season of melancholy
 evening fire for tea

In the construction of this composition I used a needled evergreen shohin bonsai, a broadleaf evergreen mame, a broadleaf evergreen forest shohin, a suiseki mountain stone, a suiseki house stone, kusamono, shitakusa, and okimono. The whole palette.

Did it succeed? Well, two show visitors to whom I talked told me they did get the story line. One had lived in Japan; the other could read most of the story line and approached me for further details. So for some it was readable. For me, the composition and presentation experience was priceless. Even when one is quite certain that the story line is readable and interesting, one must remember the basic tenet of Kaido, which is that “What I see is not what you see.”

Whenever I show a bonsai, I have a similarly developed story. It brings coherence to all the parts of the individual exhibit. Even when others don’t comprehend my story, it’s there, and it gives me great pleasure. Work on your internal story; bring life to your bonsai presentations.



Gary Wood Random Tips

By John Denny

Leaf removal tips. When stripping leaves from maples and elms, you can lightly grip around the base of a branch and by sliding your hand towards the tip, most of the leaves will come off. This is much quicker than cutting with scissors. However, on species like hornbeam and beech, whose leaves like to stay attached over winter, take each leaf in your fingers and pull gently back towards the trunk or away from the tip. The leaves will come off easily and you will not damage buds.

How to initiate a broom styling. Zelkovas make nice broom style trees. Gary will take a seedling tree with a straight trunk and locate the beginning point of his broom – where 4 or 5 branches emanate from the same spot on the trunk. He nips off the main leader just above this multi branched beginning point. Next he scoops the 4 or 5 branches together, holding them like a bunch of flowers and ties them together in a bunch using grafting tape. Finally, holding the branches together, Gary uses scissors to cut the branches horizontally straight across. This leaves a whorl of new young all the same size and length tied together in an upward position. Repeat this procedure a year later and you will have a nice broom style tree.

Bending Pine seedlings to shape. Begin with second or third year seedlings. Place a 1.5 or 2.0 mm aluminum wire down into the soil and wrap it around the length of the seedling. Begin your bending as low as you can. Make sure to hold the base of the tree firmly so as not to pull the roots loose. Make bends tighter than you think you need to, even if the tree will be a larger tree. Make them in all three dimensions. If you have branches, bend so the branches are on the outside of the bends. If you do not have branches yet, then place buds on the outside curves.

Nick Nebari, Private Eye

The Case of the Missing Bonsai Tree

I awoke from a Hornitos tequila induced fog. My head was pounding. Like one of those Japanese drums. I needed coffee. Black and a lot of it. I headed to the diner on 29th St. After my usual breakfast of eggs and aspirin, I high tailed it to the office.

It was hot and humid. Just another August day. I entered the building and walked the dank stairway to the third floor. That's where I first spotted the dame. She was a good looking, alright. Big blue eyes that wouldn't let me go. "Is that you?" she asked as she pointed to the sign with the worn gold lettering on the door to my office. Nick Nebari. Private Eye. "That's me, doll. You in some kind of trouble?"

"Not me. It's my husband. "

"You got a husband, huh? Alright, what's his name and what's his problem?"

She looked up at me with those pleading eyes and says, "His name's Johnny. And his favorite bonsai tree has gone missing. He's distraught. I'm afraid he might..."

"Bonsai tree, huh?" I was a bit familiar with bonsai. I had been stationed in Japan while in the Navy. That's where sake had become a bad habit. I had seen a few bonsai trees in port and once took a bus to visit a bonsai nursery on the edge of a small village. I didn't know a lot about them, but I knew the good ones had a lot of value. The kind of value that might cause a bonsai to go missing, just like the lady said.

"Follow me." I growled as I opened the door to my run down office. You could see dust floating in the shafts of light streaming from the windows. My head began to hurt again. I motioned for her to sit.

"Tell me more about this missing bonsai tree." I asked.

She looked out the dusty windows and sighed. "It's a Red Pine. It's Johnny's favorite tree. It's beautiful."

"Can you describe the tree?"

"It has a wonderful thick trunk with tight movement and thick aged bark. Not too tall. Chohin height. Soft feminine light green needles."

"Any distinguishing features?"

Her soft eyes brightened, "It's in an unglazed rectangle, maybe twelve inches wide. Oh, and it has a couple of new grafts on the lowest branch."

I furrowed my brow, "Not much to go on, lady. This will be a tough missing persons - ah, tree case. By the way, lady, what's your name?"

“Loretta”, she said in a low husky voice. The tree didn’t really interest me, but Loretta sure did.

“Okay, Loretta. Did your husband have any enemies? Anyone in the bonsai world he crossed?”

“Well, he knew a lot of people – did business with a lot of people. I dunno. Maybe. Someone might have been jealous – of his trees, you know. He has some nice ones.”

“When did he last see this red pine?” I asked.

“He waters them every day, with his copper watering can. It was missing yesterday morning. Just gone, vanished. No clues, nothing. Just a couple of little fertilizer cakes that had fallen off the soil was all that was left.”

“Who was the last person besides you or your husband, Johnny, to have seen the missing tree?” I needed a clue and I needed it fast.

“Well, let me think.” Seconds passed. Criminy, this was like pulling teeth. Give me somethin’ lady.

“He had a bonsai expert come by and help him work on trees a couple weeks back. I think his name was Wood. Jerry or Gary or something. And he had a couple of local club members stop by. I can get you a list. Most likely it was some of the guys on the Board. They’re all nice guys, though. They wouldn’t do nuthin’ like this, would they?”

“Lady, I been doin’ this job a long time. They’re all suspects until I can prove them otherwise. Let me get started following up on a few of these leads. I’ll see what I can come up with as soon as you get me the list of club members. Soon as I get those names, my shoes will hit the bricks. I’ll get to the bottom of this and I’ll find that tree for ya.”

“Thank you, Mr. Nebari!” she said with a deep sigh of relief.

“Here’s my card. And call me Nick. Ok?”

I wanted to ask her for my usual retainer fee. But, those gorgeous eyes were enough of a retainer for me.

I got up to show her to the door. My legs were a bit unsteady. I wasn’t sure if my unsteadiness was due to the Hornitos infused evening before or the charms of Loretta. She walked to the door, turned, and quickly shook my hand.

“Goodbye, Mr. N., uh, Nick. Call me as soon as you find out anything.”

“Trust me, lady. I will.” She quickly turned again and I watched her walk away.

Editors: Let us know if you want to see the return of Nick Nebari, Private Eye to these pages or if you wish Mr. Nebari, awash in his favorite liquor, to fall off the 12th street bridge to an untimely death... prior to the next issue.