

*IBA News & Muse*  
*Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter*  
**OCTOBER 2013**

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[www.iabonsai.org](http://www.iabonsai.org)

[www.easterniowabonsai.ning.com](http://www.easterniowabonsai.ning.com)

## IBA OCTOBER Activities

October 16, 7pm. IBA MEETING  
Des Moines Botanical Gardens

*Program: Winter care, presented by David Lowman and Ron Heinen*

*David will discuss and review appropriate winter care and site preparation.*

*Ron will begin a power point presentation of club-members pictures to show at the November potluck. Bring Photos or brief videos of your bonsai summer/winter sites or anything else you would like to share about your bonsai setup. Please bring photos on a flash drive/CD/or email anytime to: [ronheinen47@gmail.com](mailto:ronheinen47@gmail.com).*

*Bring a tree to talk about or work on.*

## EIBA OCTOBER Activities

October 10, 6 pm, Board Meeting, Nothing But Noodles Restaurant

*Several items on the agenda this month. Officer slate includes Chris Burr, Pres, John Dlemens, VP, Jim Rajtora, Treas, Bill Englert, Secretary.*

October 17, 7 pm, Club meeting. Held at Pierson Flower Shop on Ellis Blvd.

*Topics include Winter Storage, Election of Officers, and Planning of Holiday Party.*

*Thanks to all EIBA members for a great soil making day. We accomplished a lot and had a good time, too.*

*A small group of club members visited Peck's nursery looking for pre bonsai material. It was a beautiful day, but good material was scarce.*

*Four of us made our annual visit to the IBA Fall show, which we truly enjoy each year. Great weather, great trees and displays, great friends in both clubs, and we love the BBQ at Hickory Park!*

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*Shohin display by Suthin Sokolovisit (above).*



*Morton Albek, of England, in his bonsai garden. Morton is the author of the premier book on shohin size bonsai. Read his blog article which appears in this newsletter.*

## Timely Tips

The weather has begun to turn colder lately and a few of the leaves on some of my trees are showing color – Stewartia, amur maples and Japanese hornbeams especially. Hopefully, you have been fall feeding with 0-10-10 or some other low nitrogen program. This will help trees build roots and prepare for the long winter and early spring.

Let your trees harden off before storage. But make sure you know the lowest outdoor temperatures your trees can handle. This is based on species tempered by how hard you worked your tree (i. e. repotting, pruning, wiring), and how healthy your tree has been. If you have questions, ask a club member for advice.

Clean your trees of all weeds, leaves, etc. before bringing them inside. Clean the pot, including the bottom, where spiders like to hide. Give your tree a good spray of fungicide and pesticide for the winter. Some folks will use dormant oil or diluted lime sulfur in lieu of fungicide and pesticide. Monitor the temps in your storage area. It will help you improve your winter storage practices. Know your lowest temps and your highest temps of the winter.

Now is a great time to view your trees. Enjoy the great colors of fall as your trees turn red, orange, yellow, gold. Grab a camera and capture a photo of your favorite trees while resplendent in their fall colors.

Now is also a great time to just look at your trees. Grab a cup of coffee one morning and go sit with a tree or two on the table in front of you. Take your time. Note all the things you like about your tree – the nebari, branching, bark, leaf shape, movement, etc. Then you can list two or three things you do not care for about your tree and how you might improve them. For example, I have a maple I like, but the first branch could be a bit lower and the nebari on the back can be improved, and I could remove a thick branch sitting high in the apex. Aha, a plan! Try this simple exercise.

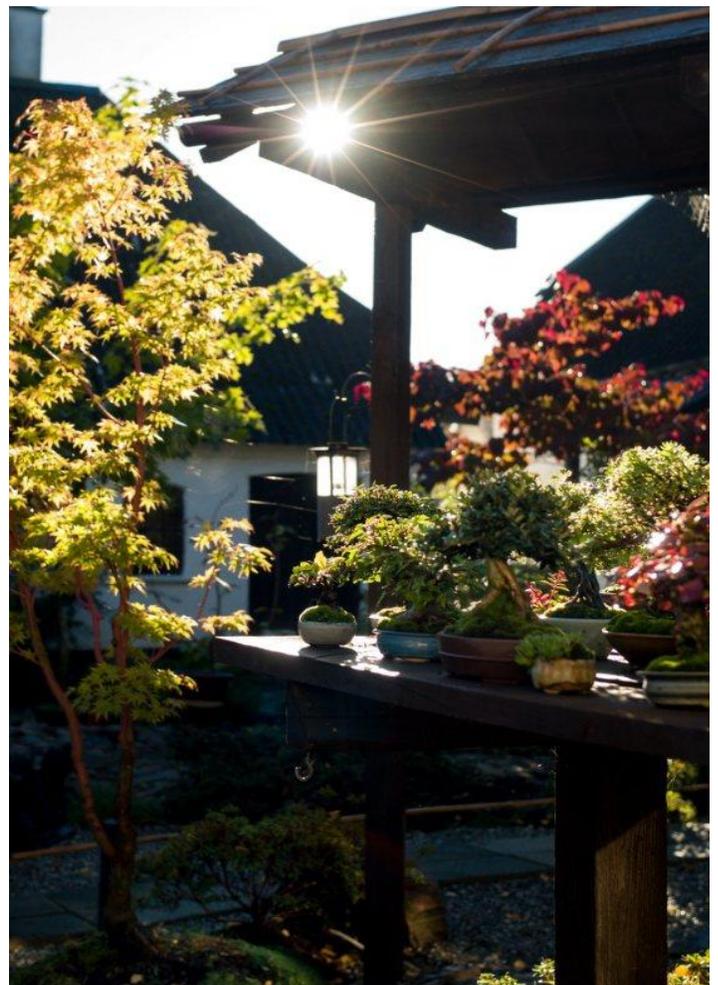
Enjoy the coffee. See the beauty in your tree. Find a plan to improve your tree. And enjoy yourself!

## Only Now I Understand Nothing

By Morton Albek

(Morton Albek is an English bonsai expert who specializes in shohin size bonsai. He is the author of the book *Shohin: Majesty in Miniature*. This article is taken from his blog at <http://shohinblog.com/2013/09/27/only-now-i-understand-nothing/>. EIBA member Denny Molumby is a shohin fan and suggested this article.)

I have been doing bonsai for app. 20 years now, if I count in the very first lessons learned, killing innocent small trees collected in local forests, working on them way too early and way too hard. Before that I bought a book, maybe 30 years ago, first time bonsai caught my attention. It took a while before I then tried and failed and had few successes. Today I know more, but still know nothing. As a Danish artist expressed it, “Only now I understand nothing” after many years of work with his art. In other words, the more I know, the bigger the world of untrodden land seems to be.



(cont. on p3 )

## Only Now I Understand Nothing

(cont. from p2)

By Morton Albek

Today I know plenty of techniques, how to prune, how to fertilize, how to develop a tree from raw form, how to keep them healthy and growing i.e. and am still learning. Secondly the land to discover that seems endlessly open is the aesthetics and appreciation of bonsai as art. We all (most of us I guess) are flabbergasted when watching a stunning aged Juniper with dramatic deadwood and nicely arranged foliage pads. But how about the small things, the less intrusive and silent expressions of bonsai? The fine and graceful maple, the flowering small Shohin Potentilla. The aged branches where even the small branches are showing age like the bark of the trunk, the well developed root base (nebari); do we watch and appreciate?

What about the pots? Do we value new nice clean pots over aged weather exposed and aged pots? I now put unused pots outside during the growing season to add weather to my pots. Sun, dust, fertilizer and rain develops patina and age. This is the aesthetic preference of a bonsai pot, and I enjoy as well the silent expression of the old Japanese maple in an old pot. Maybe more than the over exposed and over appreciated Junipers with massive deadwood. Maybe, because I live in a country with soft landscapes and silent trees. I am fascinated by watching the dramatic mountain trees, but they are so far away from my daily life, that I do not see them as a natural bigger part of my personal bonsai collection, and even tend to find them a little odd in local bonsai exhibitions if present. I appreciate and study more and more the textures of bark, and enjoy the new buds during winter getting ready for spring. I study and practise how to display bonsai, and how to arrange a shohin-bonsai display with the right mood and feeling.

I try to understand the aesthetics of bonsai through my daily work with my trees. And I develop a sense for the simpler and humbler trees like deciduous trees often are, as time goes by. But I feel that I have to know more about how to express this in bonsai displaying, and in the way the bonsai are styled. This is an endless road with many directions, and I just hope to learn it little by little. This is the joy of bonsai for me developing through experience and facing an even wider field. Experiencing the feeling and the untold, and trying to understand how to express this. Not easy to put words on, and not easy to learn. But I try, and keep trying. Maybe, someday I will succeed. 😊 This is part of the dedicated work. Next is the daily living with my bonsai. Remembering to stop and observe. Just standing and watching, without doing anything else.

From time to time I try to remember taking a tree aside and just study it. No work, no watering – just using my eyes to observe and enjoy textures of bark, branches, leaves and the pot. This I find as valuable as working with the trees, and I think it is as important as learning techniques and horticultural knowledge. I can recommend this – just relaxing with a tree for an hour (more or less doesn't matter) – just do it, and learn your tree better than you do when just passing it when watering, or wiring it.

## Bonsai Sizes

By Ivan Hanthorn

*Generalized American contemporary usage of differing Japanese terms and definitions*

In the USA individual bonsai clubs often compile their own club definitions because of the disagreement on terms and definitions in Japan, Europe, and the USA. Only in Japan are viewers comfortable with the very Japanese essential definition that you can “see” and “feel” what size a tree is and thus its classification. Visual weight is just as important as measurements.

The following terms and definitions are a compilation derived from usual mid-American bonsai community usage and the influence of bonsai mentors who have influenced mid-Iowa bonsai enthusiasts.

Dai	(Large)	Four-handed	30–48 inches
Chuhin	(Medium large)	Two-handed	16–36 inches
Kifu	(Medium)	One-handed	10–18 inches
Shohin	(Small things)		
Komono	(Small)	One-handed	6–10 inches
Mame	(Mini)	Palm size	3–6 inches
Shito	(Very small)	Fingertip size	Under 3 inches

In current usage *Shohin* is usually used to apply to *Komono* and *Mame* together (3–10 inches) whereas *Mame* is used for the small end of the small things scale (1–6 inches). Some maintain that in Japan *Shohin* means 8 inches or less but in North America and Europe *Shohin* means up to 10 inches in height. The literature of bonsai indicates absolutely no agreement on this and many other aspects of bonsai classification.

In Japan bonsai that technically measure as being in one category will be occasionally included in a show of another category because of “feel”, with particular regard to visual weight. One must develop “feel” for what a bonsai truly is.



*Display of sizes at IBA Fall Show; from left, Dai, Chuhin, Kifu, Shohin, Mame, Shito. Dai on left is 48”H. Shito on right is 3”H.*

The editors of this newsletter have boldly taken the following from the webpage of Dallas Bonsai Garden, which enjoys getting its name around. You will read wintering information in this newsletter and elsewhere for weeks to come, but we just like the way they said this. Besides, this is Iowa, where a cultural characteristic is that we really like to hear things at least twice to make sure we understand it. Everything below is a direct quote except for bracketed inserts by the editors.

---The Editors

### *The Two Rules of Winterizing – Location and Fertilizer*

There are two things you should be thinking right now: location and fertilizer.

If you are [anywhere that has enjoyed warm weather], you probably had your tropicals outside until recently. As the temperatures drop, it's a good idea to bring them inside because they like warm, moist environments. Some like more sun than others, but warm, moist environments are a necessity. So, where is a warm moist environment in your home? Even if it's the bathroom, that's where your plants need to be. You may even need to run a humidifier. Remember, the heaters remove the moisture from the air, so, even though your house may be warm, the plants probably won't have a proper environment. You will have to create one for them. [A basement room with grow lights and manipulated heat and humidity can be very successful.]

For outdoor varieties, like deciduous maples, elms, etc. you have 3 options: leave them where they are; bury them, pot and all, in the ground; or move them to the garage or a cold room that is insulated from extremely low temperatures. If you have quality Japanese pots, and you live in a temperate climate, then you can most likely leave them outside where they are. If you expect a lot of snowfall and freezing temperatures, then you can either bury them in the ground pot and all, or bring them inside. By burying them in the ground, you are utilizing the ground's ability to retain heat. The ground will not freeze as fast, or as deep as the soil in an exposed plant in a pot will. Inside a garage is a good alternative for your plants, but there is usually not a lot of light in garages. True, the plants will be in a dormant, to semi-dormant state and will not use a lot of light, but some varieties still track photoperiod, or length of the day to know when to come out and start growing again in spring.

As to fertilizer, you should tattoo this on your arm if you need to because as long as you grow bonsai you must always remember: six (6) weeks before the first frost, you should start giving your bonsai 0-10-10 fertilizer. The low nitrogen helps the plant focus on strengthening the roots during the winter and prepares it for nice quality growth in the spring. This is an absolute must for winterizing regardless of the variety. I do it with tropicals too because during the winter, the tropicals aren't going to be growing much, there isn't enough light. So all you are essentially trying to do is keep them happy enough so all the leaves don't fall off.

Again, you need humidity to make sure of that. So remember, start fertilizing your bonsai now with 0-10-10 and prepare a place to move them, or identify what exactly you are going to do with them over the winter. They don't need much over the winter, just your protection. If you take care of them, they will pay you back in the spring with lush foliage and fantastic growth – for a bonsai.

## Viewer's Choice, IBA Fall Show

By Ivan Hanthorn

The Iowa Bonsai Association's Annual Fall Bonsai Show was held October 6–7 at Reiman Gardens in Ames. In this fall show we highlighted bonsai, and in that endeavor we acquitted ourselves well. The sense of those there both as presenters and observers was that this was the best bonsai show yet. We seem to say that every year since we began having our Fall Show at Reiman Gardens.

This year we did something not done before by us and which we may well do in future. We asked viewers to let us know which bonsai exhibit was their favorite, regardless of any previous knowledge of bonsai. Each formal display had a unique number label. Those who participated wrote the number they picked on a small slip of paper which they then deposited in a box. We tabulated results at the end of each of the two days of show. The results were amazingly rather uniform across both days.

The bonsai that most impressed the viewing public were: Ron Heinen's large yew and his ficus nerifolia forest at the south end of the show, Helene Magruder's shohin bonsai stand exhibit in the middle (with that fantastic Japanese maple that caught everyone's eye), and Zoe Nady's tamarix with the dandelion shitakusa at the north end of the show.

Photos of the IBA Fall Show will follow in the next edition of the newsletter – the Editors.

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