



American Bonsai Society

Bonsai in America

Written & Published by Dave Bogan

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A Bonsai Pilgrimage

By Andrew Smith

I've always thought of bonsai as a sort of quest that all we bonsai-lovers are on

together. I'm not always sure exactly what the goal of this quest is, and probably it might be a bit different for each of us, and even different at different times for each of us. But it's a quest nonetheless, and I am always happiest when I am on some quest or another.

I was at a show not long ago and a well-known bonsai master was helping me set up my tree in the show. Actually, he didn't like how I had set up my tree display and actually he was criticizing it. So he was helping me by directing my attention to some flaws. "It just doesn't give me that *quiet* feeling," he said, and pointed out a few things I might change to remedy that.

I'm not sure I got it rearranged enough to calm him down but I spent a long time thinking about what he said. His goal in bonsai was to express a feeling of calm or serenity. So to him you could say, or I am going to say, that a bonsai represented a resolution of opposing forces into a harmony that reached a higher level.

That's a great goal and for a while I was seeing bonsai in a new light, as an expression of peace and harmony in nature, versus the chaos and mayhem of modern civilization. I really liked that. The only problem was that I work outdoors and I know firsthand that nature is filled with as much chaos and mayhem as any big city. From a distance the mountains look still and a city twinkles like a field of stars, but up close they're both buzzing with unstoppable energy.

And so are trees, including bonsai trees. So I gave up the idea that a bonsai *had* to express some transcendent tranquility, though of all the trees at that show my personal favorite really did give me a feeling of peace and calm. It just had a silent pres-

ence. But there are also trees that radiate strength by withstanding a brutal storm, or express softness and desire with cascades of flowers. Some bonsai have a humorous character, others a peculiar one. And some, of course, are just plain showing off.

So, a quest for tranquility might be a little too narrow to encompass bonsai. Maybe it could be a quest to create and appreciate beauty and share it with others. Or maybe it doesn't have to be exactly defined.

I'm thinking about all this because I am slowly getting ready to follow my quest again by attending the American Bonsai Society Capitol Collections Symposium, this June 11th-14th in Ellicott City, Maryland. I'll be bringing trees for sale, giving some workshops and displaying a tree, or maybe two. I haven't been to the East Coast in a while and I'm looking forward to seeing it and being with some of my bonsai friends again.

It's a long drive from the Black Hills to eastern Maryland. Although they have better seafood there than here, that alone is not enough to induce me to make the trip.

Instead, there's something that bonsai people share that other people perhaps haven't evolved far enough to grasp, though I've found it's best not to mention this to them. For instance, I can't sit around and drink beer with my neighbors and have an in-depth conversation on the textures of pine bark versus spruce or fir bark. Oh, the conversation starts off fine, but it always wanders off topic. They just don't get it, and we always end up talking about gun control or abortion or some other inflammatory subject that doesn't mix well with alcohol. Then, to calm down, we go out and admire our new 10-ply truck tires.

I just got a new set of 10-plys on my pickup and I'm darn happy with them. I guess the tread pattern might be a little like bark and I could compare and contrast different ones while drinking beer if I wanted to. For instance, I might note that the tread pattern on my new tires is far better than what my neighbor got. But that is so self-

(Continued on page 2)

evident that there is no need to even discuss it, no matter what he thinks. Anyway, no tread pattern is as cool as really old, reticulated, orange pine bark, in my opinion. And it's nice to be around others from time to time who are fanatic about trees and appreciate their beauty too. Because not everyone does.

One of the things I'm really looking forward to is the trip to the National Bonsai Collection at the National Arboretum in Washington. To me this is the shrine of bonsai in America. I've been there once before and I can't wait to go back again. John Naka's Goshin is there. And the Yamaki pine is there, and I just love that pine and the amazing story behind it. It's a real national treasure.

And there are a lot of other awesome trees and stones to see there, many of them donated by great American bonsai artists. When I was there Ben Oki presented the arboretum with an enormous cascading golden cup oak that was really cool. I remember one particular, tall waterfall stone. My host said the artist had named it "30,000 foot white beard." and the name just brought it to life.

At the symposium there will be bonsai trees, bonsai pots, bonsai workshops, bonsai artists, bonsai lovers, bonsai T-shirts and any other bonsai thing you can think of. There will be a lot of bonsai people on a bonsai quest, and each one will be a little different. But together they will make up what bonsai is in America today. I will be one of them.

Join us. I'll be waiting to meet you there.



Coming June 11th–14th,

**The ABS Convention
& Learning Seminar**

Capitol Collections

in our Nations Capitol.

As part of this convention and in conjunction with the NBF, the National Bonsai Museum will be presenting a reopening of the Bonsai Museum. Recently improved and updated, a tour of this exhibit will be a once in a life time event. The NBF has graciously joined with the ABS and has issued a private invitation to all convention attendees. Many of you may remember a similar invitation and tour which was held at the 5th World Convention several years ago. This was a very thought provoking and enlightening tour. Please plan to attend. Get your reservation for the convention in early.

The following is a special invitation from the NBF.

**To All Attending the 2015 ABS
Convention & Learning Seminar:**

On behalf of the **National Bonsai Foundation**, you are cordially invited to attend **NBF's Welcoming Buffet Reception at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum** on Friday, June 12, from 5:30 to 8:00 pm.

Festivities will include the opening of the **3rd National Juried Bonsai Pot Exhibition**. Prizes for the Bonsai Pot Competition will be awarded, and the winning pots and other important American ceramic pieces from private collections will be on display as will **the bonsai and penjing from the National Collection**.

I look forward to

seeing you!

Felix Laughlin,

President NBF



**The National Bonsai
& Penjing Museum**



Crataegus Bonsai

By Bonsai Artist &
Master —

—
**Michael
Hagedorn**

Reprinted with Michael's permission

Visit Michaels Blog at <http://crataegus.com/>

There are a lot of things we might say about watering bonsai. I've tried a few times on this blog to mention some of them. Some are hard to make sense of in words, but as ever I'm willing to try. This one is about watering recently repotted trees. At post-repotting time we need to be awake to one change-up, and that is that the interior soil mass (the part that was returned to the pot) may dry out much faster than you'd think. *If that interior area is full of fine roots, it will dry out fast after repotting*



This pine is beginning to develop a solid mass of soil and roots, and this is the area that we'll take our moisture

'read' from when deciding when to water. When dry, it will look very light colored compared to the surrounding new soil.

If you cut all the fine roots off in repotting your tree, shame on you, but that's a different issue. For the sake of this example, we'll assume you have fine roots, and that we're talking only about established trees with a solid mass of roots and soil. There are myriad other situations, such as proto-root balls with stringy roots that don't yet hold soil together, but these photos show what we're hoping for and working towards.



A deciduous tree with a very mature 'loaf' of roots and soil that is returned to the pot, to be surrounded with new soil

Especially with conifers, we usually don't prune any branches at the same time as repotting. And so...

In repotting refined bonsai, we've created a situation where fewer roots are going to be supplying the same upper water need.

This interior mass we're talking about, this is the area you should watch to determine when to water. Ignore, for a few weeks at least, taking your moisture reading from the new soil you've settled in around the original mass. There's no active roots in the new soil yet and it won't be drying out fast.

Another thing to keep in mind when repotting is to keep a portion of this old soil mass exposed, not covered with new soil, so that you can see when it's drying out



- **Freshly repotted beech, showing the two zones of soil---the older soil that is a bit green and mossy near the roots, and the newer soil that is gray (sphagnum moss covering new soil, actually). The older soil will be our indicator when to water, and is not covered with new soil on top but is exposed.**

In many cases you'll be watering when the new soil is still moist. So we ignore that area. Again, I'm only commenting on watering repotting bonsai with more mature root structures.

To sum up, only read the moisture level where there are roots to determine when to water.



In a joint effort, the **ABS, PBS and NBF** will be presenting a joint convention in Washington in June 2015. Let's all join in helping the **NBF and The National Bonsai Museum**. Please make it a point this year to **join the NBF** and help support the Museum. Please visit -<http://www.bonsai-nbf.org/sign-up/> for exciting news and to receive their newsletter. Remember, the NBF needs your support and donations to help maintain, strengthen and improve the Museum.

Lets make 2015 a banner year for the NBF with our donations to the NBF and Museum.

Suggestions, Tips and some of My Ideas

By Dave Bogan

Quick Clean Up

Spring arrives and it's finally time to get all your trees out of their winter storage. Many times, the surface area around the nebari will need cleaning and probably fresh top dressing or maybe moss. Many times, the very top soil has compacted and become somewhat ugly and probably has a few weed roots or seeds waiting to sprout. A quick easy clean up is to simply scratch all around the surface area and then use a shop vac to remove the loose soil. Once vacuumed, I usually go back, spend a little time cleaning around the nebari and then vacuuming again. Now, add your favorite top dressing and the bonsai will look fresh for a good while. My favorite top dressing is fine akadama. It looks clean and if you want moss, it will grow moss like a champ.

Rain

As summer approaches, we will all look forward to a day off from watering when it rains. The problem is if we do this, we must make sure we actually received sufficient rain to properly water our trees. First, my rule is a minimum of 1/2" of steady slow rain. With most trees, the canopy area is wider than the soil area. Have you ever heard of the dip line? This is where the majority of moisture drips off and saturates the ground. So, a large portion of the rain will run out the branches and drip off at the outer edges of the foliage. Thus, possibly not allowing the majority of rain to actually water our trees. Simply watch and be sure before you arbitrarily skip a watering. In truth, when possible, it is always better to water at least twice per day during the summer months.

Additional watering note. Many of us use akadama and pumice as the main ingredients of our soil mixes. Keep in mind, these are fast draining soils and when watering, always water twice to insure these particles become fully saturated.

Soil—update

Recently, I have heard of people using and attempting to find "high" fired akadama. I recommend you not use this product. High firing of akadama takes away all the good properties we want in a soil ingredient. It turned the particles into rocks which have very little if any ability to absorb moisture or nutrients—similar to Turface which has been found to have very little benefit in bonsai soil. Find and

use regular "low" fired akadama. Recently most all akadama coming into the U.S. has to be low fired at a minimum to pass our stringent inspections. Akadama can contain small organic articles such as pieces of roots. By low firing it to approximately 350 it will kill off any and all organic matter and make it legal for sale here in the U.S. but still very useful as a soil ingredient

Spring Workshops

Take advantage of every workshop or demonstration you can. Personally, I enjoy watching and listening more than I do participating. Take every advantage you can to learn from others. There is so much new knowledge coming out now. Many of the old standards are being disproved and many are not as necessary or actually did no good. Listen and learn. Attend the spring meetings of your club. This is the most important time of the bonsai year and now is when most of the good information is being discussed. Try your best this year to improve your tree stock. Try your best to avoid the garden center trees, the cast off trees and most importantly the bargains. Garden center trees many times are root bound or honestly have no real character. Step-up to better trees. Tell yourself this year you will buy one great tree instead of a dozen cheap ones. The cheap trees are ok to learn on but very few will ever become nice, let alone great bonsai. Bonsai is not a cheap pastime. The more you invest the better trees you will have.

The wonders and unique characteristics of Junipers

Over the years, I have worked with or saw most every species of junipers and have always been intrigued by their very unique characteristics and of course, their strengths and weakness.

A major appeal of junipers is their foliage and its unique characteristic. As with many species, juniper foliage will vary considerably among the different sub species. First, notice its color and how it changes during the seasons. In winter the foliage turns dull, sometimes brownish or even silver grey but always a dull lackluster color. Now, as the weather warms, it starts to green up very quickly. This foliage is very tolerant to weather conditions and if cared for properly, will never brown or wilt. With most species, the foliage color will remain consistent once it has matured, but with junipers, the color and vigor can be changed even after it has matured. If you want the foliage to become very vibrant green, it loves foliar feedings. I use kelp / seaweed solutions or fish emulsion on it every weekly via a fine mist. Most of this color change is due to the fact that this foliage is very active as a receptor of nutrients and moisture. I have been told in areas of high humidity a juniper may grow twice as fast as in areas of very dry air. Junipers have the unique

ability to take in a lot of its required moisture through its foliage. Thus its additional ability to also take in nutrients via its foliage.

Continuing with its foliage is the huge variance in its look and characteristics. One huge factor is the two types of foliage they exhibit which most call mature or juvenile foliage. If you stress the plant, it will typically revert to a non desirable type of juvenile foliage which can remain for years.

Even with the most desirable Chinese species such as a sub species of Sargent, known as shimpaku, there are variances between the sub species such as Itoigawa and Kasha. Next many seem drawn to the Rocky Mtn, species which in my opinion, has some of the worst foliage even though its basic structure is one of the most desirable of all junipers except the shimpaku.

Juniper root systems are also very unique and sometimes temperamental. I always lean towards removing less roots when repotting as they seem to prefer not having their roots trimmed aggressively. The roots are also very subjective to the soil used. Having used an akadama mix for years, they with its usage, acquire roots that are very fine and almost wiry. The root systems also seemingly feed specific areas of the tree. So again, less root trimming is better.

Another characteristic of junipers is found when we create different types of deadwood. Generally when we decide to create jins or shari, we find the bark very easy to remove if done during the growing season. We have all seen where the bark, if squeezed with jin pliers, will almost fall off the branch or at least be easily peeled off. This is one characteristic that you must stop and think about. If a branch is wired and severely bent while the sap is up, the bark will or could, have a tendency to separate from the heartwood. This of course could unknowingly happen below the bark and not be apparent. With this under consideration, you should never move or bend a branch multiple times as this can cause additional damage. Please consider this and keep in mind, you should avoid wiring a juniper once they break dormancy and are full of moisture under its bark.

The other issue with junipers is to pinch or not. Most all books and workshops talk about continually pinching your junipers. This may be fine if you are preparing for a show to neat the overall silhouette but I totally disagree and never pinch a juniper. Especially with a juniper that is full. When you pinch the tips, it energizes the next set of buds to grow and lengthen thus it will seemingly get thicker but, it will also continually thicken your foliage mass and quickly reach a point that no light or air can enter the interior areas. I practice minor pruning. I remove sections of the sprouts to encourage growth farther back and to continually thin the foliage areas to allow in light which will encourage additional growth further back inside and thus make the tree fuller. Look at each tuff as a miniature Christmas tree. Cut the top third out of every tuff. Then clean back down the tuff, removing the weak crotch growth. Remember even with a juniper, growth only happens in areas that receive light.



The **American Bonsai Society**

Bonsai Resource Directory for 2016.

This directory will be sent out with the 1st Edition of the Journal in 2016. They will also be distributed at conventions and offered in our bookstore. The directory will be 9 x 4", a handy size to keep on one's desk, pocket or car. The directory will include vendors, clubs and bonsai artists.

If you are vendor or know of any in your area, please let me know so I can contact them to be listed.

If you are a member of a club, please make sure the club information is updated on our website.

Bonsai artists will be listed. If you want to be listed as a bonsai artist/instructor, please let me know, so I can send you a form to complete.

If you have any questions, call me at

812-922-5451

or e-mail me at

abssecretary@frontier.com

Barbara Bogan ABS Executive Secretary

Prairie State Bonsai Society Show

The show will be once again held at the beautiful
Morton Arboretum in Lisle, IL.

The show will be held on **August 1 - 2, 2015.**

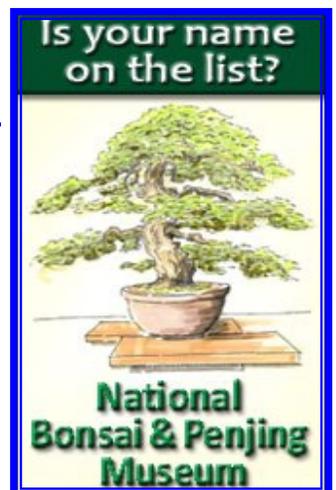
Our featured artists will be Jim Doyle, Brian Ciskowski, and kusamono artist Young Choe.

Show hours are 10 am to 4 pm both days. The show will feature a display of members' trees as well as several vendors.

Please visit **www.prairiestatebonsai.com** for information on workshops and demos.

Email:

snipologist86@gmail.com



Mid America Bonsai Alliance— MABA Convention JULY 10-12, 2015

Featured Artist

Suthin Sukosolvist

Workshops, Seminars & Demonstrations

Bill Valavanis	Pauline Muth
Jim Doyle	Frank Mihalic
Mark Fields	Paul Weishaar
Ken Huth	Brian Ciskowski
Mike Thiedeman	Scott Yelich

The American Bonsai Society (ABS) will be presenting a special National award for the best indigenous species

Clarian Hotel Waterfront Plaza & Conference Center Indianapolis, Indiana

Visit our website : www.maba2015.com



The World Bonsai Friendship Federation (WBFF) honors the legacy of bonsai master Saburo Kato (1915-2008) a key figure in the modern history of bonsai. In honor of Saburo Kato and in keeping with his beliefs, the WBFF has designated the second Saturday of May as World Bonsai Day.

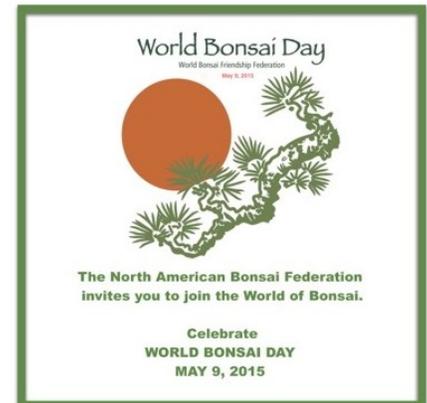
Mr. Kato, whose centennial we celebrate this year, was Chairman of the Nippon Bonsai Association for over 30 years, and is the most respected bonsai master in the world. As an author, teacher and philosopher, Mr. Kato inspired countless people around the world to learn bonsai. Despite his international stature, he was gracious, humble, considerate and warm.

In 1989, Saburo Kato founded and became the first Chairman of the World Bonsai Friendship Federation (WBFF) whose mission is to bring peace and goodwill to the world through the art of bonsai. His co-founder, the American bonsai master and good friend John Naka became the first Vice-Chairman of the WBFF. Master John Naka is considered the Father of Bonsai not only in America but many parts of the world as well. Last year the international bonsai community celebrated the centennial of Mr. John Naka and this year we celebrate the centennial of Mr. Saburo Kato.

Please join The North American Bonsai Federation (NABF) and plan a special event in your area to mark World Bonsai Day and then take a few pictures. We would love to share them with everyone on our website, northamericanbonsaifederation.com. Just send your photos to our webmaster Randy Clark at randybonsai@gmail.com.

By sharing the love we all have for bonsai with those around us, we make the world a better place to live. Please join us and make May 9th, 2015 a special day for bonsai this year.... and every year!

Thanks and Happy Bonsai Day!
Solita D T Rosade



THE ARTISANS CUP

September 25-27, 2015

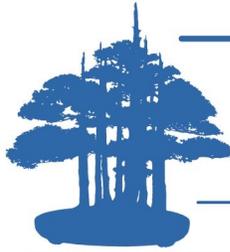
The Portland Art Museum

An event celebrating the beauty of time and the balance of nature

The Artisans Cup is the premier exhibition of American Bonsai, located in the heart of Portland, Oregon

The time has come for American Bonsai. A steadily growing subset of the millenia-old art form, American Bonsai honors tradition while pushing the artistic boundaries of what is possible. The Artisans Cup is the leading expression of American Bonsai, showcasing the highest level of craftsmanship and skill in an experimental environment that will engage and inspire. The Artisans Cup welcomes five of the world's premier Bonsai professionals to evaluate

info@theartisanscup.com



CAPITAL COLLECTIONS

& COLLECTING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

★ ★ ★ ABS • PBA • NBF • 2015 ★ ★ ★

June 11 - 14, 2015
Ellicott City, Maryland

Four days of lectures,
workshops, exhibitions,
vending and more!

Featured Artists:

- Ryan Neil
- Guy Guidry
- Arthur Joura
- David Easterbrook
- Andy Smith
- Larry Jackel
- Martin Schmalenberg
- Jack Sustic
- John Kirby
- Pauline Muth
- Ron Lang
- Jim Gremel
- Young Choe
- David Knittle

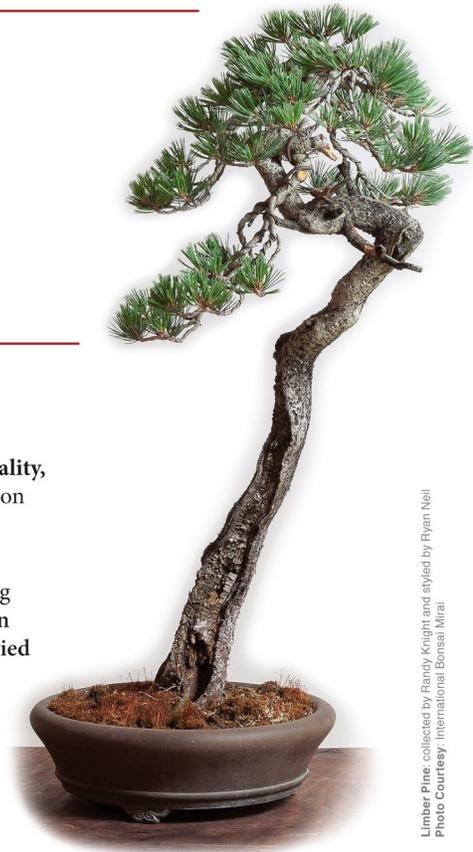
Workshops, demonstrations, lectures and other festivities

Workshops and demonstrations will feature a wide variety of **high quality, collected material**. Lectures will also focus on collected material and on **modern American potters**.

Attendees will be transported to a festive reception by the **National Bonsai Foundation**, with cocktails and dinner enjoyed while admiring the **National Collection** and the **NBF Container Exhibition**. The **John Naka Prizes** will be awarded at the reception and **The 3rd Annual Juried Bonsai Pot Exhibition** will follow a call for entries to all American ceramicists, featuring both traditional and novel pot designs.

Vendors

The vendor hall will be well stocked with collected trees and handmade pots as well as tools, stands, and related items. Onsite shipping will be available.



Limber Pine: collected by Randy Knight and styled by Ryan Neil
Photo Courtesy: International Bonsai Mirai



About Turf Valley, Maryland Resort

Turf Valley, located in Ellicott City, MD, is a full service, family-oriented facility, with a championship golf course, tennis courts, and indoor and an Olympic outdoor pools, located within easy striking distance of Baltimore's Inner Harbor, Washington D.C., and BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport.

more info: www.turfvalley.com

Get the latest information and register today at:
www.absbonsai.org/2015-abs-learning-symposium