

*IJA News & Muse*  
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*Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter*  
[www.iabonsai.com](http://www.iabonsai.com)



### MARCH ACTIVITIES

**MARCH 14**, Ivan Hanthorn will do a presentation on bonsai at a meeting of the Japanese American Society of Iowa at the Botanical Center. Ivan will show a shimpaku juniper in a formal presentation mode and a Power Point program, "Bonsai as Art in Art"

**MARCH 17**, Des Moines meeting, 7 PM  
Des Moines Botanical Center

**Collecting Bonsai** presented by Bill Todd  
*Tips on how to collect trees from the wild will be discussed. Where and what to collect, as well as tools needed to do the job right, will be discussed. Possible sites and collecting opportunities would be welcome.*

**Tree of the Month: Azalea**, presented by Angie Allison

**Q & A:** *Bring an azalea, bring any tree. We welcome questions.*

**MARCH 21**, Bonsai Techniques study group,  
Magruder Farm

**Repotting/Aftercare**, *bring a tree to repot along with a pot, soil and #2 wire. There is some soil from our soil mixing last time.*

### March EIBA Calendar

March 12 Board Meeting 6:30 pm Edgewood HyVee  
March 19 Club Meeting Repotting and Spring Activities

Club members who still need soil can pick it up this month at our meeting. A couple members have already repotted trees that have become active. We still have a couple slots available for Andy Smith workshops.

Get excited! It is time for us to get our hands dirty and watch our trees come to life this month. Enjoy

your spring work and the beauty and uniqueness of your trees.

*Our heads are round so that thoughts can change direction. -Francis Picabia, painter and poet (1879-1953)*

### COMING UP

**APRIL 4 & 5, SPRING SHOW** at the Des Moines Botanical Center. Details to follow. Plan to participate and attend.

**APRIL 24-26, SHOHIN CONVENTION**, Sponsored by the Bonsai Society of Greater St. Louis at the Gateway Convention Center in Collinsville, IL. Featured is Nobuichi Urushibata, President of the Shohin Society of Japan.

This is a pretty easy trip and is very reasonably priced. There will be a number of well known artists, workshops, demonstrations and lots of vendors.

**APRIL 28, ANDY SMITH WORKSHOP**, Cedar Rapids

**APRIL 29 & 30, ANDY SMITH WORKSHOPS**, Magruder Farm, Indianola

Andy will be stopping on his way home from the Shohin Convention in St. Louis. The response from club members was so positive that he agreed to stay and do an extra workshop.

**MAY 22-24, RENDEZVOUS**, Brussel's Bonsai, Olive Branch, MS. Guest artists will be Mark Noelanders from Belgium, Kathy Shaner curator of the Golden State Bonsai Collection, Rodney Clemens, Arthus Joura, curator of the North Carolina Arboretum, and Peter Warren who spent several years as an apprentice to Kunio Kobayashi in Japan.

There are numerous workshops with wonderful material, demonstrations, terrific bonsai material and great food. There is a catfish dinner, a barbeque, lunches are provided and plenty of refreshments provided. For us this event is not to be missed. Check it out at: [brussel's bonsai.com](http://brussel'sbonsai.com)

### SPRING SHOW

The Iowa Bonsai Association has been invited to have a small bonsai show in the Showhouse at the Des Moines Botanical Center April 4 & 5. There will be a display of about twenty trees. The Botanical Center is providing the stands. Trees are to be brought to the Botanical Center Saturday the 4th at 8:00 AM and removed Sunday the 5th at 4 PM.

Saturday April 4 from 10:00 AM until Noon Ron Heinen and Mike Adams will do a demonstration, styling a Japanese Black Pine.

Sunday April 5 from 10:00 AM until noon there will be another styling demonstration.

There will be an ongoing Power Point presentation on the Art of Bonsai created by Ivan Hanthorn.

Dave Lowman of Dasu Studio will be vending both days. Visit Dave's website at: <http://www.bonsaitrees.com>

**Important:** All members! Please let Dave Lowman or Ron Heinen know roughly how many trees you plan to bring at the next meeting or at least before the show date. They need to know so they can adjust (increase or decrease) the number of trees to have a full show. We need your participation.

*Whenever two people meet, there are really six people present. There is each man as he sees himself, each man as the other person sees him, and each man as he really is. -William James, psychologist and philosopher (1842-1910)*

### TIMELY TIPS

The time has finally arrived!!! It may not actually be spring yet but potting season has arrived. The lengthening of daylight has stimulated some awakening in our trees. My deciduous trees are putting out new buds so I have started to repot them.

When repotting a bonsai, to me, one of the most important things is to anchor it securely in the pot. We live on a windy hilltop so it is a necessity. If the wind wiggles the tree in the pot the tiny hair roots are torn and the tree suffers.

I use the cradle technique for securing a tree in a pot. Four wires stick up from the drain holes of the pot. Some pots have small holes on either side to do this but it can be done even if there are just two drain holes. Take one wire across the root ball and attach it to the next wire. Take the second wire and attach it to the third wire. To make the cradle complete take a short piece of wire and hook it around the first wire and secure. Then take that wire and secure it to the third wire. You will have a rectangular cradle that will secure most trees in a pot so you could pick up the tree and it will not move (I don't recommend doing that).

Occasionally a tree will only have roots on one side. This creates a problem. The best solution I know of is to insert a screw on the rootless side under the soil line. Wire over and around the screw will help secure the tree. Another method is to use the perennial chop stick to wedge the roots in and wired in place.

Speaking of chopsticks, no tool kit should be without a handful. They are very useful to gently rake out old soil when repotting a tree. They are invaluable as a tool to work the soil into every nook and cranny during repotting. They can be used to hold recalcitrant roots under the soil by wedging them over the root and between the sides of the pot. They can be used to wedge branches apart or prop a drooping branch. A technique that intrigues me is to make a grid of chopsticks for a group planting. If you have ever tried to secure trees on a slab this sounds like a plan. It would give you a place to secure the trees and, as a bonus, it should help hold the soil from washing away.

Aftercare of newly repotted trees is also important. They have been stressed so treat them gently. Don't stick them out in full sun and wind. Put them in a protected partially shaded area for a couple of weeks.

Newly repotted trees don't need heavy watering, frequent misting helps keep them hydrated and happy. Wait about four weeks before you start fertilizing them.

As your trees start to wake up from their winter sleep they will start taking up more water. Check them more frequently. Check them for pests too.

Before new leaves come out is a good time to do major pruning and wiring. Be very careful not to damage the buds and wire loosely enough to allow for the surge of growth in the spring. Branches can swell in thickness very quickly during that time.

If you are anxious to move your trees outdoors do it carefully. Start them in a partially shaded area and move them gradually into the sun. Be prepared to move them back into shelter if the weather reverts to winter.

*It is impossible to enjoy idling thoroughly unless one has plenty of work to do. -Jerome K. Jerome, humorist and playwright (1859-1927)*

## **BONSAI AT COLLEGE FOR SENIORS**

by Ivan Hanthorn

Bonsai was one of the topic areas of focus in a winter term College for Seniors Course at Iowa State University. Entitled Art beyond the Museum, the course was held January-February. The four segments of the course were: Architecture as Art; Cinematography as Art: Light and Shadows on the Silver Screen—How Movie Cameramen Created High Art out of Pop Culture; Advertising as Art; and Bonsai as Art. Course instructors were: Wesley Shank, emeritus professor of architecture at ISU and emeritus member of the American Institute of Architects; Thomas Beell, professor of journalism in the Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication at ISU and a well known Iowa movie critic; Dennis Dake, retired professor of art and visual communications from ISU; and Ivan Hanthorn, retired preservation librarian with a long time interest in Japanese aesthetics and a current student of bonsai. The premise of the course was that art is all around us, not just on the walls of museums. The four areas of discussion may seem unrelated, yet they are contemporary cultural phenomena that provide us all opportunities to delight in the connection of art with our lives. The course got great reviews, particularly the bonsai component. Interestingly, one of the course suggestions for the future that came out of the evaluations was the following: a course integrating bonsai, ikebana, and

Japanese gardening. Who says that Iowa is a boring place to be!

## **THOUGHTS ON COLLECTING**

*This is an excerpt from an article by Frank Harris for the Phoenix Bonsai Society. It was passed along to me by Max Miller.*

Collected trees have a unique history, written expressly for each one of them, making them more interesting and desirable.

Maybe the answer lies somewhere in that art enriches Life and makes it more interesting. No one would deny bonsai is a true art, but what really is it that captures us?

After many years in bonsai and all of them collecting, the answer for me still lies in the charm and sheer awesomeness of living ancient trees and our efforts to mimic them in miniature. I think, however, what is different for me, a collector, is what happens on the journey that is important and ultimately affects the outcome. In nature, an older tree often has a less than perfect image, which is caused by the passage of time and thus it can have wonderful imperfections – an incompleteness, as it were, that makes it radically different and memorable. Herein lies the essence of collecting for me: such trees from the wild are often contorted in fantastic shapes, spectacular movement with fine lifelines, ancient survivors from another era. And best of all, our attempt to recreate some of the visual surprise is just the beginning.

Old trees reflect the passage of time and the effects of the controlling forces that made them. Collected trees often have a less than ideal location and weather conditions, experiencing extreme droughts to hard freezes, and severe erosion which all describe their survival in terms of sometimes amazing shapes.

It has often been said that Bonsai is about illusion and the charm of proportion. Certainly I cannot dispute that. But for me the true essence of Bonsai is found in collecting ageless trees with all the seemingly imperfect shapes and incompleteness. When I do find such a gem, I always find myself sitting down, reflecting on what the life story of such a tree must have been.