



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JERRY MORRIS

RMBS

February 2016

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February President's Message

by Tom Anglewicz

So here we are in the middle of winter, many of our trees are hunkered down for a long winter's nap, and ma in her kerchief and I in my cap....no wait a minute, that's the wrong story.

In the throes of the midwinter doldrums, many of us cannot wait till spring so we can once again begin to work on bonsai in earnest. Some who have greenhouses or other protected environments can at least do some work on species that spend the winter months in these environs. But there are a number of tasks that require our attention and preparation in advance of the new growing season, and we should use this time judiciously. Here are some suggestions:

Identify which of your trees are scheduled for repotting this spring, or even before. If you have a greenhouse or warmer protected

area, some trees, including conifers, can be repotted even in February or March, provided that they have had enough down time in the cold frame, or mulched in outside. I find it useful to tag the trees for repotting, and even to identify the order in which they will be tackled.

Take an inventory of your available containers and consider which ones may be suitable for specific trees to be repotted. I say "may be" because it is difficult to determine which container is suitable until we actually take the tree out of its growing container and evaluate the size and configuration of its root mass, how it might be safely altered, etc. If you don't have a suitable container for a given tree, now is the time to talk to other RMBS members and possibly make a trade or

purchase a required pot. Members can utilize our newly established “classifieds” section of the RMBS website for this purpose.

Consider building a “heating bed” to stimulate root growth for repotted bonsai.

This is an implement that can easily be constructed, and it is invaluable, especially for trees whose roots have been somewhat compromised by the repotting process. There are detailed instructions for building a heating bed in a separate section of this newsletter.

Repotting is a careful and systematic process. Make sure that you have all the necessary materials and tools ready. Do you have plastic mesh for drainage holes? Do you have steel wire for anchoring large trees, or aluminum wire for securing smaller ones? Do you have neoprene material to use as a cushion for anchorage wire over roots? Do you have a variety of chopstick sizes, cut and shaped from bamboo, that are used for working the potting soil? Do you have tools, such as a scythe, root hook or other implements to facilitate safe removal of the tree from a growing container or previous bonsai pot? If you elect to do some repotting during the winter months, remember that you cannot repot a tree and then return it to a cold frame or the outdoors. It must be in a warmer, protected environment afterward.

Prepare adequate quantities of bonsai soil, or substrate. You don’t have to purchase pre-mixed bonsai substrate. In fact, if you have a number of trees, it is more economical (and satisfying) to create your

own. Make sure that you have adequate supplies of the necessary ingredients (e.g. pumice, scoria, akadama, etc.). There is no reason why you cannot sift and mix bonsai soil during the winter months, either in your garage or out in your backyard on a warmer sunny day. If you mix soil indoors it is a good idea to wear a mask as protection against dust.

Sharpen and clean your tools. The winter months are a great time to tune up your bonsai tools. Utilize some of the pointers that Larry Jackel illustrated during our January meeting to make all of your tools more effective.

Check all of your trees for old wire that may be cutting into the branches and in need of removal. This is a good time to cut away this old wire and prepare the tree for a new growing season, especially on deciduous trees that have shed their leaves and are now easily accessible.

If you have them, focus your attention on tropical bonsai that may be growing indoors during the winter months. These trees may have grown vigorously during their summer months outdoors and are now in need of pruning or wiring and styling.

I hope that you find these suggestions useful. I think they illustrate that, even here in Colorado, there is plenty to occupy our bonsai addiction during the cold months of winter!

Tom Anglewicz

2016 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Date and Location	
<p>February Monthly Meeting Tuesday, February 2nd, 7 - 9pm Denver Botanic Gardens Plant Society Building</p>	<p>Short Program – Regional Horticulture Presenter: Hal Sasaki</p> <p>Main Program – Potting Medium Presenter: Charlie Sisk</p>
<p>March Monthly Meeting Tuesday, March 1st, 7 - 9pm Denver Botanic Gardens Plant Society Building</p>	<p>Short Program – Making a Root over Rock Presenter: Patrick Allen</p> <p>Main Program – Shohin Bonsai Presenters: Les Siroky</p>
<p>March Community Outreach Event ECHTER'S GARDEN CENTER Spring Gardening ECHXPO Friday, March 4th, 3 - 5:30pm Saturday, March 5th, 10am - 5:30pm Sunday, March 6th, 12 - 5:30pm</p>	<p>Community Outreach Event Information Booth - 2 RMBS Members Saturday & Sunday Demo "Making a Bonsai" with Alan Hills</p>
<p>March Saturday Study Group Saturday, March 19th, 9am – 12pm Location – Denver Botanic Gardens</p>	<p>SATURDAY STUDY GROUP "Hands On Repotting of Deciduous Bonsai Trees" Workshop Lead: Darell Havener</p>
<p>April Monthly Meeting Tuesday, April 5th, 7 – 9pm Denver Botanic Gardens Plant Society Building</p>	<p>Short Program – Viewing Stones Presenter: Paul Gilbert</p> <p>Main Program – Bougainvillea Bonsai Presenter: Darell Havener</p>
<p>April Saturday Study Group Saturday, Apr 23rd, 9am – 12pm Location – Denver Botanic Gardens</p>	<p>SATURDAY STUDY GROUP "Hands On Repotting of Yamadori Bonsai Trees" Workshop Lead: Bob Randall</p>

February Programs



SHORT PROGRAM – Regional Horticulture

With Hal Sasaki

In the early fall of 2014, temperatures were as warm as 80 degrees, lulling the trees into a false sense of

season. Then on Nov. 10, the Front Range received a chilling shock when temperatures plummeted from 58 degrees at 8 a.m. to 16 degrees by 11 p.m., Temperatures stayed frigid for nearly a week, chilling trees and people alike to the core. Of the 2.2 million trees in the city, Denver forester Rob Davis estimates that tens of thousands are dead from the November frost.

Colorado's weather is unlike any other region in the U.S. Our friend, and master bonsai artist/teacher, Hal Sasaki, owner of Colorado Bonsai will speak with us about Colorado's Regional Horticulture, what species do well here and bonsai trees that need greenhouses to make it through the Colorado winter.

It takes skill to have bonsai trees that look majestic in Colorado. Hal Sasaki has done it, year after year and he will give us some tips that will help us with Colorado's "regional horticulture".



MAIN PROGRAM – Potting Medium

With Charlie Sisk

One of the most widely debated subjects for most bonsai enthusiasts is soil composition. There are a large number of soil ingredients that can be used when mixing your own soil; different mixes are used by different enthusiasts. Through the soil in the pot, the tree must be able to obtain water, nutrients and gases in order to grow. For this reason, a bonsai must be planted in a good quality bonsai soil. There are a number of qualities that are required in a good soil mix; water-retention, drainage and aeration.

As we get ready for the repotting season, Senior Bonsai Member and Instructor, Charlie Sisk will help us select the right types of soils that work in Colorado and work with the various trees we have in our collections. Many of us consider Charlie our "Sage" and look to him for guidance on how to enhance, and/or keep them looking good. His knowledge of bonsai soil is second to none!



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NEWS FOR MEMBERS

Membership Renewal:

RMBS has adopted a policy where all membership renewals occur on July 1, and cover the succeeding 12 months, ending on June 30.

All memberships renew this summer on July 1, 2016. Individual memberships are \$24 per year and family memberships are \$36 per year.

You may pay via cash or check at any monthly meeting, or mail your check to the address below.

If you mail your check please be sure to include your email address and telephone number.

PAYMENT ADDRESS:

Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society
c/o Membership Renewal
PO Box 271043
Louisville, CO 80027

Classified Ads:

//////WANTED///// - bonsai pots made by RMBS member Don Osbourne - I have two and would like more. Prefer to trade yamadori or other pottery. Please email me at adamhjo@yahoo.com or call/text 303.921.5860 to discuss. - Adam Johnson.

Resources for Members:

Go here for information on the 2016 Tree Diversity Conference sponsored by DBG and University of Denver

[2016 Tree Diversity Conference](#)

[5th U.S. National Bonsai Exhibition 2016](#)

[Brussel's BONSAI Rendezvous 2016](#)

[phutu blog - Show Prep - The Final Mile](#)

Other internet resources:

[RMBS Web Site](#) – A members only section is being added to the web site. Stay tuned for more information.

[Colorado Bonsai Ltd.](#)

[First Branch Bonsai](#)

[S&S Bonsai](#)

[RMBS Facebook Page](#)

RESULTS OF THE MEMBER SURVEY

The following is a compilation of the responses to the member survey held late last year. We had a total of 40 responses.

1) Do you consider yourself:

Beginner - 20%

Intermediate - 57.5%

Expert - 10%

Advanced – 12.5%

2) What do you see as the primary mission or goal of RMBS? How does/should this translate into specific programs or actions by the club?

To educate members and the public about Bonsai techniques to include horticulture, styling, display, history and evolution of the art. To expand the art of bonsai to the community and continue to set a solid foundation for the longevity of the RMBS. Continually focus on our native species and how to push them to their full potential.

3) Do you participate in the visiting artist workshops? If no why?

Yes – 50%

I don't because it's not useful – 0%

I don't because my schedule won't allow it – 19.23%

I don't because it's too expensive – 30.77%

4) Who would you like to see as a new (or returning) Guest Artist in 2016 or 2017?

In order of most requests:

Ryan Neil, Micheal Hagadorn, Matt Reel, Walter Pall, Bjorn Bjorholm, Mark Fields, Bonsai Hunk, Marc Noelanders, David Nguy, Peter Tea, Owen Reich, Ted something (was at Tom's house)

5) Would you support a different meeting time, perhaps a Saturday or Sunday morning, as opposed to a weekday evening. If so, when?

The majority would prefer our meeting times stay the same, however there were several that would be open to having the meeting on the weekends which would allow for a longer meeting.

6) If you are relatively new to bonsai or believe that you could benefit from a review of bonsai fundamentals and techniques, presented by experienced club members, would you participate in a program of such classes?

Yes – 64%

No – 36%

7) Are you interested in presenting at one of the monthly meetings? If yes, please provide topic, name and email.

Wild bonsai: photos of naturally dwarfed trees in the wild with thoughts on what creates them.

I would be interested, but am unsure what topic I should cover. I am interested in soil science, tree hormones/ root gibberellins, shoot tip auxins. Pruning techniques for differing species. I can also present on my jade defoliation technique.

8) Do you feel that the club is really a useful vehicle for expanding your knowledge of and ability to pursue bonsai? If not, how could we be more effective?

Majority says yes, but here are a few comments on how we could be educating better:

Restart three part program: (1) show tree or viewing stone (5 minutes), (2) short subject (10 minutes), (3) main program (50 min.).

Post notes and presentations (especially about Rocky Mountain species) on the RMBS website. I think more effective use could be made of the website as a central source of Rocky Mountain bonsai information.

Make viewing stones a separate group. Didn't we have 3 meetings about them in the last 15-16 months?

Find ways to get members together more while working on Bonsai with more senior people who can help them.

I find presentations very repetitive. I like the sessions where our trees are critiqued and suggestions for improvement are made.

Splitting the meeting into horticultural or more artistic could help members decide which meeting will provide them the most benefit.

After 5 years, I feel that I must go outside the club to further my knowledge. It could be more effective by having club members that have ventured outside the club to study with Ryan and Peter to pass on their knowledge at club sponsored gatherings.

9) Do you believe that we are utilizing the knowledge and resources within the club in an effective way? If not, how could we do this better?

Use members to give demos, lectures, collecting trips, more often. Include more on viewing stones.

Yes but an 'Artist in Residence' program might improve access/education. One advanced member could be at DBG each weekend for a month working on his/her trees with members joining in for free and the public for a fee.

Maybe a guide or review of on line video so people can easily find the best ones to learn from when they can't work with someone more experienced.

Is it possible to create a group buying program through the club. For example: if enough members need copper wire we can order in bulk and all save

money. This has been done on the spot in the past, but a formal list of products and interest could help to keep the ball rolling.

Difficult when everyone has an opinion. Often club "knowledge" is composed of opposing viewpoints, and we should exploit this further with panel discussions.

10) What do you like best about RMBS? Least?

Best:

Fellowship, learning from other members experience, lots of talent in the club, workshops and the annual show and soils tools wire etc. at bulk prices.

Least:

Resistance to change, the constant raising of funds, we have enough money, and when we forget or do not honor our history, the Japanese gardens, our very basics ("how do you keep the tree small?"). If it is a really cool advanced topic or speaker, this really puts the brakes on the presentation for those who really wanted to hear it.

It is definitely a "good old boys" club.

Time of meeting

There are two types of RMBS members, hobbyists and real enthusiasts. Finding a way to serve both audiences without either getting frustrated seems important.

Japanese forbearers, Takayama Park. We are a society, not a gardening club.

Meetings that occur outside of the normal time with guest speakers. Emails not being responded to in a timely manner and members missing out on extra events.

Hate to say this but when new people (to bonsai) show up for a meeting, they sometimes ask a bunch of questions or want to have a discussion about the



HOW TO CONSTRUCT A BONSAI HEATING BED

Submitted by Tom Anglewicz. In the future, articles such as this will be available in the members only section of the web site.

It is a well-known fact that root growth in bonsai containers is enhanced and accelerated if the containers are kept warm, especially after a tree has been repotted. This is especially true for trees whose roots may have been compromised during the repotting process, or for trees that just do not have a strong root mass to begin with.

Construction of a heating bed to accomplish this purpose is actually pretty simple and only requires a couple of specialized components. Here's how you do it:

1. **Decide how large you want your bed to be, and purchase heating mats accordingly.** The mats I use come from a source called the Oregon Bag Company (OBC) and are usually referred to as "propagation mats." These are proven, good quality commercial grade mats, and they are easily purchased online.

They may come in different sizes, but mine are 18" x 60", so if you lay two, end to end, you have a heating bed that is ten feet long and about two feet wide. Since a maximum of four mats can be daisy-chained together, they come in two varieties: one with a primary power cord and an add-on mat that is designed to connect to the initial one. OBC also sells a thermostat that is designed to work with the mats. *It is imperative to have one in order to set and automatically control the bed temperature.*

2. **Create a solid, level bed for the mats using 2" thick rigid foam insulation**, cut to the desired size of your installation but large enough to accommodate the combined length and width of the heating pads. The rigid insulation can be placed on the floor of your garage or shed, or it can be placed on an elevated bench. The main idea is that it provides a flat, level surface as a base for the installation and, just as importantly, the insulation keeps the heat from simply dissipating through the bottom of the bed.
 3. **Place a sheet of ½" plywood, cut to the same size as the rigid insulation, on top of the insulation.** The purpose of this component is simply to protect the insulation from melting as a result of direct contact with the heating pads, a refinement added as a result of field experience.
 4. **Lay the heating pads on top of the aforementioned plywood sheet.** You can install them end-to-end or side-by-side, depending on the overall configuration you need. Allow at least a half inch of space between the pads *and never allow them to overlap one another.*
 5. **Place a layer of greenhouse plastic or 8-10 mil Visqueen over the heating pads** and cut it to size so it actually extends beyond the edges of the entire bed by an inch or two.
- Since the pumice fill of the heating bed should be kept moist, the purpose of this plastic sheet is to prevent moisture from being in direct contact with the heating pads. *This is a precaution against possible pad deterioration over time.*
6. **Build a wood "corral" around the entire perimeter of the bed.** This can be constructed using 2 x 4's or 2 x 6's and should be rigid enough to contain the pumice fill.
 7. **Fill the entire extent of the heating bed with 2-3" of pumice** and moisten the pumice using a bonsai watering nozzle or pump sprayer. The pumice does not need to be swimming in water, but it should be uniformly moist. The objective is to conduct moist heat, not dry heat, to the containers and therefore to the rootage, not to have them submerged in water. Any excess water within the pumice bed should be allowed to seep out at the perimeter, over the plastic sheet.
 8. **Connect the power cord from the heating mat to the thermostat and the thermostat to the power source.** Set the desired temperature according to directions provided with the thermostat. Make sure that the sensing probe provided with the thermostat is, at all times, buried within the pumice. If it is exposed to the air the pads will continue to heat but the desired temp will never be reached, so the bed will actually overheat. The objective is to maintain a bed temperature of 75-80 degrees.
 9. **Identify the trees to be placed in the bed and nestle their containers into the pumice.** Containers should not be in direct contact with the heating pads, but they should be partially set into the pumice. You can even mound the pumice around the pots if you wish.

Monitor the bed regularly, especially in the early days after installation, to make sure that the desired temperature is being maintained, that the bed and containers are feeling the warmth and that the pumice is being kept moist. When it begins to dry out, the drying will generally be most apparent in areas immediately adjacent to the containers.

Trees can be watered while they are in the heating bed, but watering frequency may be affected by their placement in the pumice, so that needs to be monitored as well.

Generally speaking, for healthy trees that have just been repotted, a stay in the heating bed of two to three weeks is adequate to give the roots a growing boost. If you know that a tree is weak, or its roots have been compromised, it is OK to leave it in for a longer period.

Please note that a heating bed should be installed within a space that is protected from the outside cold. This could be a garage, a basement, a shed or a bench in a greenhouse. It is not intended for, nor will it be effective in, an outdoor location in our climate during the winter months.



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