



RMBS

April 2018

Volume 50 Issue 4

April President's Message

by Tom Anglewicz

Contain Yourself!

Someone recently referred to our Colorado spring as "fickle." I think that is an apt expression given the mood swings of weather that we tend to experience at this time of year.

In our neck of the (literal) woods, about a week ago we received roughly six inches of very wet, heavy snow that proceeded to rapidly melt over the next several days as highs reached into the 60's. I'm anticipating more snow tomorrow; and, as April approaches, I'm reminded that we got over four feet of snow during that month about three years ago!

It's at times like this that I am *extremely* grateful for our greenhouse, and also for our

tuck-under garage that doubles as my winter bonsai work space and stays relatively warm just from the residual heat generated by the adjacent boiler room. Hence, I have been repotting trees over the past couple of weeks, even pulling some out of the cold frame. They can go into the greenhouse and onto the heating bed after repotting for a cozy recovery.

As I've mentioned before, I love repotting. As I've become better at it over several years, my confidence has grown and I take real pleasure in seeing the potential for improving both the health and aesthetics of a bonsai through the repotting process. Sometimes it's a real challenge, as with the three-foot tall Japanese Black Pine that, with Florentina's help, I removed from its plastic growing container and successfully planted

into its first bonsai pot, with excellent substrate. A three-hour intense process, but the result is beautiful!

That brings me to the subject of bonsai containers, which is also the subject of our April RMBS meeting. Bonsai containers, or pots, come in a huge array of sizes and styles, some traditional and others more organic or cutting edge. As we expand our knowledge of bonsai through hands-on experience, I believe that our understanding and intuitive response to the selection of containers becomes more nuanced.

As novices we are likely to select a pot because we like its looks, it's what we have at hand, and the subject plant fits into it easily. Most of the time, this results in a container that is way too large for the bonsai and that may not suit the character of the tree. As our knowledge expands, we begin to appreciate the ways in which shape, color, texture and other subtleties of the container can actually enhance the tree's visual character and the overall composition. We also learn that there is a proportional relationship between the container and the tree; some pots just "feel" right in proportion to the scale, size and character of the tree, others seem too massive or too delicate, too "masculine" or too "feminine" to use the traditional Japanese terminology.

In our discussion at the April meeting we'll talk about and explore these nuances of tree-container design aesthetic. We'll also discuss various traditional "styles" of pots and how these historical precedents contrast with the work of contemporary ceramicists.

Of course the proof of the pudding is the functionality of the container. Does the tree, and its root mass, fit into the pot, or can it be successfully modified to do so. This last point is very important. It's generally a cop-out to put a tree into an oversized pot, but it's also not good practice to jeopardize the health of the tree by reducing root mass to excess in order to cram the tree into a predetermined container.

Most of the time I have some idea about which container I would like for a given tree, but I can't really finalize that decision until I remove the tree, examine the roots and determine to what extent they can be reduced or altered. That's why it's a very good idea to acquire a variety of pots over a period of time. They don't have to be very exotic or expensive pots, but having choices once that root mass is exposed and examined is really important.

For the aforementioned large Black Pine, we probably considered a half dozen different pots, narrowed the field to two and actually used the more conservative one (wisely advocated by Florentina) to compensate for the dry climate and strong sun that tend to dry out shallower containers in our environment. Especially critical for Black Pines, which like a little higher water to oxygen ratio than other pine species.

I think you can see that there are lots of issues to consider when we are potting, or repotting, our bonsai. I hope that we can have a lively discussion about all of these factors when we meet on April 3rd, and a hands-on follow-up at the repotting workshop on April 21st!

Tom Anglewicz

2018 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Date and Location	Agenda or Program
<u>Monthly Meeting</u> April Tue, April 3 rd , 6:30 – 9:00pm Denver Buddhist Temple 1947 Lawrence St. Denver Google Maps Link	<u>PROGRAM</u> POT SELECTION DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS MEMBERS SHOULD BRING TREES AND POTS
<u>Saturday Workshop</u> April Sat, April 21 st 9:00 am – 2:00 pm (weather fallback to the 28 th) Adam Johnson's home 701 75 th St, Boulder	<u>REPOTTING WORKSHOP & POT SALE</u>
<u>Nursery Stock Excursion</u> April Sat, April 28 th , 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm Alameda Wholesale Nursery 1950 W. Dartmouth Ave Englewood	<u>CHOOSING NURSERY STOCK FIELD TRIP</u> DARELL HAVENER
<u>Visiting Artist</u> April Sat, April 28 th , 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm Plant Society Building Denver Botanic Gardens	<u>VISITING ARTIST</u> RYAN NEIL
<u>Beginning Bonsai Workshop</u> April Denver Botanic Gardens Sat Apr 28 th	<u>BEGINNING BONSAI</u> HAL SASAKI & LARRY JACKEL REGISTER ON THE DBG WEBSITE THESE CLASSES FILL UP FAST!
<u>Monthly Meeting</u> May Tue, May 1 st , 6:30 – 9:00pm Plant Society Building Denver Botanic Gardens	<u>SHORT PROGRAM</u> SUBSTRATES FOR BONSAI JERRY MORRIS <u>LONG PROGRAM</u> PORTULACARIA SOILS STUDY RESULTS LOU DEHERRERA
<u>Field Trip to Aspen CO</u> May Sat, May 5 th , all day	<u>ASPEN CO</u> Visit to 2,000 year old transplanted trees JERRY MORRIS
<u>Guest Artist – Todd Schlafer</u> May Sat, May 19 th , 9am – 4pm Plant Society Building Denver Botanic Gardens	<u>VISITING ARTIST</u> TODD SCHLAFER
<u>Takayama Park Event</u> May Sun, May 20 th , 9:00 am – 1:00 pm	<u>TAKAYAMA PARK</u> 3700 Cherry Creek N Dr, Denver, CO 80209 DARELL HAVENER
<u>Field Trip to Mt Evans</u> May Sat, May 26 th , 9am – 4pm	<u>MT EVANS CO</u> Visit iconic Bristlecone Pine JERRY MORRIS
<u>Monthly Meeting</u> June Tue, June 5 th , 6:30 – 9:00pm Plant Society Building Denver Botanic Gardens	<u>PROGRAM</u> FOCUS ON FICUS AND TROPICALS TERRIL SAMUELSON & DAVID MCPETERS

The entire yearly calendar is online [here](#).

MEMBER FORUM

April Meeting Program and Location Parking

The program in April will address pot selection and analysis. This is very timely since we are entering repotting season and the April workshop is a repotting workshop. For the Tuesday night meeting members are encouraged to bring trees and pots. Perhaps you want to repot a tree and want input on appropriate pots. Or you have several pots in mind and want advice on which is best.

Remember April's meeting is at the Denver Buddhist Temple at 1947 Lawrence St. Denver [Google Maps Link](#).

Parking is available in a parking garage. Here are the specific directions into the garage.

The entrance to the Temple is on the 2nd floor of the parking structure on the Southeast corner of 20th & Larimer St.

Larimer is 1 way "SOUTH" from 20th. The entrance is the first left after 20th.

You will need to take a ticket to get in. **(There will be parking vouchers for free parking.)**

Park anywhere on the first 3 levels. The entrance to the Temple gym is on the 2nd level – an Orange door.

Mentor Program

From Connie Garrett Program Chair for 2018

I want to update you about the RMBS Mentorship Program.

A questionnaire has been sent to the members who indicated interest in mentoring. Once responses are received, the information will be collated and sent to the mentees. I foresee this as an evolving process that may need to be tweaked and refined over time. Mentees will be asked to commit time and effort to use this opportunity to learn from our experienced members who are offering access to their expertise. In addition to one-on-one mentoring, some other options that are being considered are study groups and workshops. Thanks so much for your interest and please let me know of concerns, ideas, etc., that you may have about the program. Also, if you've not yet signed up as a mentor or mentee but are interested, please contact me. Connie Garrett, cagarrett@earthlink.net or 303-355-2684.

Ponderosa Pine Age Study

How old is that dwarf ponderosa pine?

Mike Britten (comments welcome: brittjohns@msn.com)

In 2012 and again in 2017, I hiked through the area of the 2002 Big Elk fire (SE of Estes Park) to see how well the area is recovering. You might recall this tragic 4,800-acre wildfire; three pilots died fighting the fire that threatened the community of Big Elk Meadows for several weeks in July.

In terms of severity, the vast majority of the trees within the fire perimeter died (Figure 1). There are a few islands of surviving ponderosa pines and, as you near the perimeter, more and more survivors.

What surprised me most was the post-fire regeneration (vigorous). Before the fire, the area was dominated by ponderosa pine and Douglas fir. But the new trees coming in are almost all lodgepole pines – and they are thick! If they continue to thrive, it will be the lowest elevation lodgepole pine forest I know of in the Front Range (between ~7,500 and 9,200 ft). Some of these young pines (less than 15 years old) are already reproducing - with open cones on their trunks and main branches (Figure 2).

I was also surprised that virtually all of the small trees growing on rock outcrops within the fire perimeter were killed. I thought they might be protected because the outcrops are sparsely vegetated with little to fuel a wildfire.

I was interested in the age of these naturally dwarfed dead trees, so I sampled them by taking a small cross section (~1 or 2 in above the ground surface) of eight ponderosa pine trees (Figure 3). I sanded these, counted the rings (Figure 4) and plotted the number of rings against the diameter of the dead tree. Most of the trees were not round so I made multiple diameter measurements (including the bark) to determine the average diameter for each tree.

Like most people, I am interested in the age of trees in general (including bonsai). The dead trees were between 31 – 125 mm in diameter (1.22 – 4.92 in) and had from 69 – 225 rings. Figure 5 shows the relationship between diameter and estimated age (number of rings) of these dead naturally dwarfed ponderosa pines. The black line shows an exponential regression model of the data which fits the data reasonably well ($r^2=0.5390$) especially since there are only 8 data points.

You could use this model to estimate the age of a ponderosa pine of a certain diameter with some assumptions and caveats. First, this assumes the rings are annual rings and the count represents the age of the tree. It may be that there are “false rings” and the trees are younger. Second, all the samples are from the Big Elk fire – does this represent ponderosa pines from other areas in Colorado or the west? Maybe or maybe not? What about ponderosa pines from lower or higher elevations or from sites with more rain and snowfall? Third, this sample represents naturally dwarfed trees growing in cracks and potholes in granite; it surely doesn’t provide an objective way to age ponderosa pines growing in other situations (e.g. an 80 foot tall ponderosa growing in an open meadow with deep soil).

I also sampled one Douglas fir (120 mm diameter, 214 rings) and include it on this graph (the green dot). It falls almost directly on the regression line.

Figure 1. Panorama of the Big Elk fire (July 2002), CO from the SE edge of the burned area (photo Dec. 28, 2017). Tall living trees are ponderosa pines; the snag in the center is a Douglas fir; and young trees in the foreground are lodgepole pines. As you walk into the main burn area (in the background to the left), almost all trees were killed by the fire.



Figure 2. Young lodgepole pine (15 years old or less) with open cone growing in the Big Elk fire, CO.



Figure 3. Dead ponderosa pine sampled to count rings and measure the trunk diameter. Note the cross section (labelled "5") on the right showing mountain pine beetle cavities.

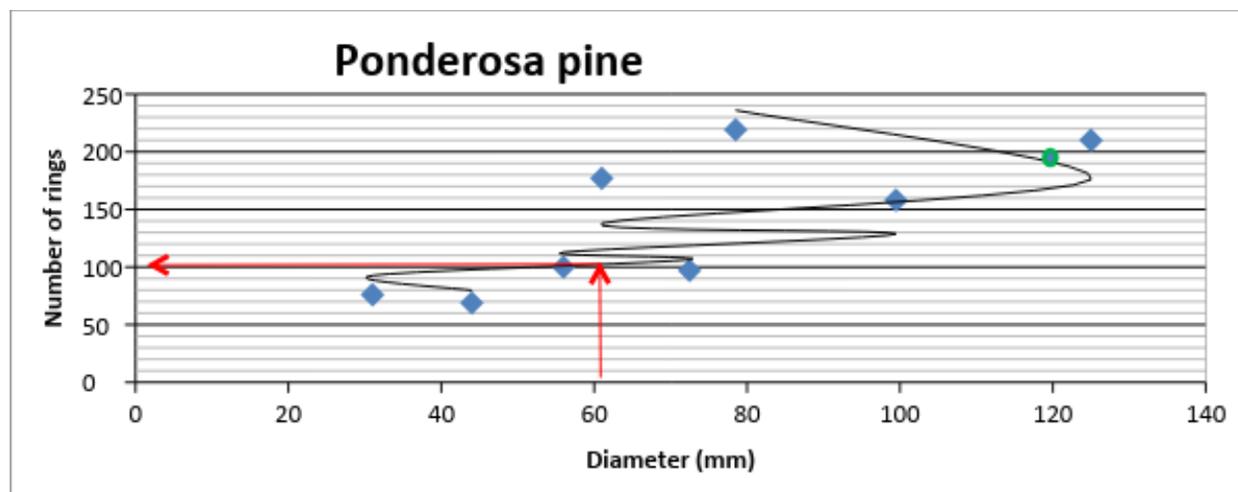


Figure 4. Cross section of a ponderosa pine (78.5 mm diameter), sanded and used to count rings. Note, I did multiple counts to estimate age of this tree; the tree has many more rings on the bottom side (225 rings, the number I used in the analysis) compared to the top side (140 rings). Note also that this tree has numerous scars embedded in the cross section; they may be fire scars(?) but could also be caused by other disturbances. None of the other cross sections showed as much scarring.



Figure 5. Plot of naturally dwarfed ponderosa pine diameter (including bark) against number of rings. Line shows a log level regression model of the diameter of the dead tree and the number of rings. The green dot shows a dead Douglas fir sampled but not used in the regression.

You can use this relationship to estimate the age of a naturally dwarfed ponderosa pine by locating the diameter of your tree on the x-axis, moving up to where it intersects the regression line, and reading the estimated number of rings on the y-axis (e.g., if your tree is 60 mm diameter, you would estimate the age to be approximately 110 years old). The relationship is not great ($r^2 = 0.5390$) so estimates are pretty fuzzy. This also assumes that there are no false or missing rings and that the dead pines I sampled, are representative of all dwarfed ponderosa pines.



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 30th.

All memberships renew this summer on July 1st, 2018. Individual memberships are \$35 per year and family memberships are \$50 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

Akadama for sale by RMBS

There is still Akadama available for sale from last year's order. There are three bags of the medium size and 11 bags of the small left. All will be in 14 liter bags at a cost of \$48/bag. Todd, and others, have ordered and used Akadama from this supplier. It is very good quality. Contact Todd and he will bring it to the next Tuesday meeting where you can pick up and pay.

Pumice for sale by RMBS

Larry Jackel has ordered another pallet of pumice. It will be delivered to DBG around 1/31. However, this year it cannot be stored at DBG long term due to the pending construction.

This is agricultural pumice in 40-pound bags. There are less than 20 bags available. They are being sold for \$15.00 per bag.

If you are interested, please come to the April meeting prepared to pay for and pick up bag(s). Forty pounds sounds like a lot, but as a basic component of your soil you will be surprised how quickly it is used. And you can't beat the price.

Discounts Available to Members

We have an account established with Way to Grow Gardening Supply in Denver. You can receive discounts on some items up to 15%. You will need to tell them you are a member of RMBS.

Classified Ads:

Summit Bonsai – Dusty Kraft is offering a discount to RMBS members on pre-sifted soil.

He has set up a special code for a 5% discount on the pre-sifted soil he sells online. The code is "RMBS5". It can be entered at the checkout on the website, www.summitbonsai.com.

If anyone wants to save on shipping, it would be best that they contact Dusty directly at summitbonsai@gmail.com or (970)405-0331. They can pick it up in Greeley or he can meet them somewhere if his schedule allows.

Website Resources

CPR's Colorado Matters interviewed David George Haskell, author of *The Songs of Trees: Stories from Nature's Great Connectors*. They had an interesting discussion of Ponderosa Pines. The link is [here](#).

For those interested in Ikebana, check out this Denver Post [article](#).

Resources for Members:

Other internet resources:

[RMBS Web Site](#)

[Colorado Bonsai Ltd.](#)

[First Branch Bonsai](#)

[S&S Bonsai](#)

[Summit Bonsai](#)

[RMBS Facebook Page](#)

[Mike Horine Website](#)



Colorado Bonsai Ltd. Harold Sasaki

The Rocky Mountain Region's most comprehensive Bonsai Nursery

Open by appointment call: 303-232-8700

Specializing in Character and Colorado Native Collected Trees, Finished Bonsai, Starter Plants, Pots, Soil, Books, Tools, Wire, Private Lessons and Online Native Spruce sales. Do you need a gift for a hard-to-shop for bonsai enthusiast? We offer Individual Bonsai Instruction Sessions and we have **Gift Certificates!!** Use them for *anything* (supplies, classes, etc.) and at *any time*.

We're located on the west side of the Denver Metro area, near I-70 and Youngfield.

Email us at: co.bonsai.ltd@gmail.com

Dusty Kraft
Owner

summitbonsai@gmail.com
(970) 405-0331

SUMMIT BONSAI

www.summitbonsai.com



First Branch Bonsai

world class raw stock & bonsai
from the rocky mountains

www.FirstBranchBonsai.com

S&S Bonsai

Always Growing

What We Have For You.....

- Bonsai Trees
- Bonsai Pots
- Bonsai Tools
- Training Wire
- Bonsai Soil
- Bonsai Books
- Gift Certificates
- FREE Saturday Study Groups (Once a month)
- And more.....

We carry many trees that you will not see on our website. We suggest coming by to see them. We only ask that you call ahead and make an appointment to make sure we will be there.



S&S Bonsai
1024 Bonfoy Ave.
Colorado Springs, CO
80909

719-633-9110
(Open by appointment only)

Near Olympic Training Center