

PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY MORRIS

RMBS

February 2019

Volume 51 Issue 2

February President's Message

by Andy Berry

The Spirit of Bonsai

"There are no borders in bonsai. The dove of peace flies to palace as to humble house, to young as to old, to rich as to poor. So does the spirit of bonsai." –John Y. Naka

In the *spirit of bonsai* the RMBS 2019 board has set our sights high for the 50th annual RMBS show! Our show chairman Mike Britten has put together a comprehensive working plan for an event that promises to be a benchmark for future exhibitions of bonsai in the United States. Aligned with the mission of RMBS, we aim to create an inclusive event for all members that showcases our love of the art of bonsai. It is our hope that the exhibition both excites and educates those in attendance (flying the dove, so to speak). Please join us for the February meeting where Mike and leaders of

our "working groups" will be asking for your thoughts and assistance with this landmark exposition.

Expanding on our conversation last month, ***my work this time of the year is varied but of great importance to set my bonsai on a path to maximize their potential this growing season.*** In addition to the January discussion (pot cleaning, top-dressing creation, tool maintenance) I am focused on refining some species while they overwinter. This is a perfect time to prune deciduous species to achieve attractive taper from branch shoulder to tip. I find myself often removing bulky branches with poor ramification (if I have a reasonable replacement available) as well as cutting back congested areas to two remaining pieces of growth. It is also the time to wire

deciduous trees once they have dropped their leaves and the branch structure is clearly visible. Care may be needed when bending, as branches tend toward brittle during these dormant periods with less nutrient traffic occurring in the vascular system. As previously stated, any dormant tree that is subjected to heavy work or wiring will require winter protection from drying winds and freezing temperatures. I cultivate some tropical species indoors that seem to be actively growing this time of year. They need to have wires checked, occasional fertilization (I use liquid inorganic: diluted to ½ strength and applied every two weeks) and trimming when the new growth has hardened (lignified).

At the forefront of my mind is the **upcoming repotting season** with all its perils and potential “big wins”. I find **repotting to be one of the most gratifying and potentially harmful undertakings in bonsai**. It is not to be done lightly, on a whim, or a schedule. As I advance in my practice, I have found repotting to be the skill that has been the most challenging to perform, and with the highest likelihood to drive the tree into “permanent dormancy.” **A few thoughts here that have increased my success** in this critical endeavor: **1) Timing is key**. Early spring, as the buds are just beginning to swell, is an indication that the tree is mobilizing energy away from the root system into the vascular tissue of the plant. Root pruning and repotting done at this time is less likely to decrease the tree’s energy reserve and works with the tree, not against it. **2) Don’t force the tree into a specific container**. You might have that ideal pot in mind, but the tree may not agree. Have

multiple sizes, shapes and styles available (cleaned and prepared) because it is hard to predict to what degree you can reduce the root mass without significant risk of killing the tree. It is always best practice to use slightly larger container if needed, and work toward that exhibition pot slowly over the course of years rather than gamble an “all-in” bet. **3) Get the planting angle correct**. This is my most frequent “miss” when repotting and, at times, I find that the bonsai settled slightly with the chopstick work required to compact the soil. To remedy this, assure that you have tiedowns in the correct location with the most downward (vertical) pull /orientation possible. You may need to drill additional holes with a ceramic tile bit (a skill in itself). This takes planning based on the availability and location of structural roots. I use some chalk inside the pot to trace where I need tiedowns points prior to drilling. Also make certain you have an adequate “cone” of soil built up below the tree for it to rest on before snugging up the tiedown wires (steel to minimize stretch). Additionally, consider “kickstand” pieces of bamboo: cut to length below the anticipated soil surface to lock that angle in. Care must be taken when chopsticking not to displace them. Lastly, a well-placed deck screw may also be necessary to gain at least 3 points of contact and immobilize the tree. Remember, stationary roots are happy roots. **4) Take your time**. You may need to manipulate the root mass in and out of multiple containers, as well as fit it into the final container multiple times to get everything just right. Mist the root system with water to keep fine roots from drying out. Expertly plan your tiedowns and make sure the planting angle is optimal. Have a

careful, unrushed and systematic approach to chopstick in new soil starting from the edge of the pot and working inward to eliminate all major dead space and large air pockets. **5) Know your (and your tree's) limits.** Always respect the health of the tree and understand how much the root mass can be reasonably reduced (given the species and condition of the tree). Always seek assistance with advanced planting angles, techniques, and large specimens. I find repotting with a wizened RMBS elder is the best recipe for success.

Finally, please join us for our February meeting! One of our most meticulous and scientific-minded members Lou Deherrera

will be discussing the results of his Portulacaria soil studies to help us advance our understanding of soil substrates. Soils are always a hot topic in bonsai. If you ever want to see two bonsai practitioners close to fisticuffs, ask them to debate the benefits of their mixes. Considering this, no alcohol will be served (*sorry, no bonsai spirits*) to minimize potential bloodshed.

Your brother in bonsai,

Andy Berry

(p):303-910-5756

(e): andrbo304@gmail.com

2018 - 2019 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Date and Location	Agenda or Program
<u>Monthly Meeting</u> February Tue, Feb 5 th 6:30 – 9:00pm DBG Plant Society Building	<u>LONG PROGRAM</u> Lou DeHerrera - Results of Soil Studies
<u>Monthly Meeting</u> March Tue, Mar 5 th 6:30 – 9:00pm DBG Plant Society Building	<u>SHORT PROGRAM</u> Hoop Houses & Greenhouses - various RMBS members <u>LONG PROGRAM</u> Mike Britten - Bonsai Ecology
<u>Monthly Meeting</u> April Tue, Apr 2 th 6:30 – 9:00pm Location Pending	<u>SHORT PROGRAM</u> Patrick Allen - Bonsai Stands <u>LONG PROGRAM</u> Patrick Allen - Bougainvillea
<u>Saturday Workshop</u> April Sat April 13 th 9:00 – 2:00pm Tom Anglewicz' s home	<u>WORKSHOP</u> Repotting, Pot Sale, & Pot Exchange
<u>Monthly Meeting</u> May Tue, May 7 th 6:30 – 9:00pm Location Pending	<u>GREEN ELEPHANT SALE</u>
<u>Takayama Park</u> May Sat, May 18 th 9:00am – 1:00pm 500 South Colorado Blvd, Denver	<u>TAKAYAMA PARK</u>
<u>Monthly Meeting</u> June Tue, June 4 th 6:30 – 9:00pm DBG Plant Society Building	
<u>Guest Artist Workshops</u> Sat Jul 6 th and Sun July 7 th 8:30am – 3:00pm DBG Plant Society Building	<u>BJORN BJORHOLM</u>
<u>Monthly Meeting</u> July Tue, Jul 9 th 6:30pm – 9:00pm Location Pending	<u>BJORN BJORHOLM</u>
<u>Guest Artist Workshops</u> Sat Aug 3 rd 8:30am – 3:00pm DBG Plant Society Building	<u>TODD SCHLAFER</u>
<u>Monthly Meeting</u> Aug Tue, Jul 9 th 6:30pm – 9:00pm Location Pending	<u>TODD SCHLAFER</u>

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

Update on the RMBS 50th Anniversary Show – Mike Britten Show Chairman

The RMBS Executive Board met on January 12th and (among other things) continued planning for the 50th Anniversary Show. We decided to establish workgroups (see the list below) to prepare and carry out the show. There are lots of opportunities to help (both ahead of and during the show), if you are interested in participating, please contact Mike Britten and/or Andy Berry. One task for the workgroups is to make a plan and estimate the cost (if necessary) for their workgroup. The Board will meet on March 9th to review these and prepare an overall budget for the show.

One workgroup is the Vendors workgroup. We would like to have a sales area near the display area where interested visitors could purchase starter bonsai, bonsai books, and other things they could help them get started in bonsai. We are contacting potential vendors now.

We are also **considering** whether RMBS members might be willing to donate items for and RMBS sales area. The primary goal would be to help visitors get a good start in bonsai (and hopefully join RMBS); a secondary goal is to help defray costs of the show. Starter bonsai should be easy to grow and care for and include both outdoor (e.g. *Juniperus procumbens nana*) and indoor species (e.g. *Portulacaria* or *Ficus* – since many visitors have no outdoor garden space). We would like feedback from RMBS members: **would you be interested and willing to prepare and/or donate items for an RMBS sales area?** Please contact Mike (by e-mail: brittjohns@msn.com or at an RMBS event) if you are interested in helping or have thoughts.

Workgroups:

1. Heritage Trees

- Pat Deutshman – Chair
- David McPeters

2. RMBS History Display

- Patrick Allen – Co-Chair
- Gary Matsuda – Co-Chair

3. Friday Night RMBS Celebration

- Tom Anglewicz
- Florentina Anglewicz
- Pat Deutshman
- Fred Deutshman
- Wayne Berve
- Adam Johnson

4. Organization of Volunteers and Demonstrators

- Connie Garrettt – Chair
- Mike Britten
- David McPeters

5. Vendors

- Mike Britten – Chair
- Patrick Allen

- Adam Johnson

6. Show Layout

- Mike Britten – Chair
- Tom Anglewicz
- Alan Hills
- Patrick Allen (shoji screen/backdrop options)

7. Tree and Stone Registration

- Patrick Allen – Chair
- Mike Britten
- Alan Hills – Consultant (for stones)

8. Show Photos and Documentation

- Larry Jackel – Co-Chair
- Paul Koenning – Co-Chair
- Connie Garrett

9. Advertising

- Mike Britten - Chair
- Connie Garrett
- Larry Jackel – Consultant for DBG advertising
- Paul Koenning – Consultant for social media

RMBS HERITAGE TREES - Pat Deutschman

Heritage Trees at the Denver Botanic Gardens

"The best thing about bonsai is the story of the tree. Every tree has a story about the interaction between humans and the tree." Larry Jackel

The Denver Botanic Garden's Sho-fu-En, Garden of the Pines and Wind, is a very special place to the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society. This two-acre Japanese garden was constructed in 1978 and displays mainly native Colorado specimens, many hand collected by a contingent of local bonsai enthusiasts including Bob Kataoka, Kai Kawahara, Harold Sasaki, Floyd Sunshine, Bob Krueger, Keith Jepson, Larry Jackel and Malcolm Correll. Kai Kawahara, one of the founding members of the Denver Bonsai Club in the 1950s was a gardener at Sho-fu-En from 1980-1993. In 2012 a Bonsai Pavilion and courtyard opened as a memorial to the late Japanese American news writer Bill Hosokawa. (More on Bill in DBG Part 2).

Larry Jackel, former President of the RMBS and avid bonsai enthusiast was hired as the specialist for the Bonsai Pavilion, which features a wide variety of bonsai trees from native Colorado species to tropicals. This collection includes a number of "Heritage Trees" which have a connection to the local bonsai community that began as the Denver Bonsai Club and continues today as the RMBS. These "Heritage Trees" have been donated over the years to the Botanic Gardens and remain in the collection as a lasting memorial to their caretakers, many of whom are legends in American Bonsai. These trees all have stories that will long outlive their original artist and reflect their heritage, the philosophy and skills of their stylist, their "training" and care... and that is truly is their legacy. Here are a few examples:

1. Limber Pine

Originally collected and owned by Kai Kawahara

This tree was shown in the 1970's through the RMBS. Kai was a featured artist in [Outstanding American Bonsai](#) and is quoted as saying "The best bonsai are formed naturally, it is difficult for man to duplicate the natural essence of a collected bonsai. To create a truly great tree, you must feel it in very much the same way a musician feels his music."

When Kai (see January RMBS newsletter for his story) passed away in 1998 many of his trees were given to other members to care for. Harold Sasaki obtained this tree from Kai's family, and subsequently Harold donated it to the DBG in 2012 to be part of its permanent collection in honor of Kai. Larry Jackel reports that it had lost a branch and he has nurtured the tree, "continuing to advance the style". Respect for the original design concept of the tree is a tenet of Larry's belief about the tree's legacy and his goal to improve the tree as it grows with good horticultural practices.



2. *Ficus salicifolia*

Cultivated by Jim Robinson 1977

Ficus salicifolia is a unique variety of ficus with long thin leaves, this variance having been discovered by a nurseryman in Florida. Since its discovery, it has been extensively propagated. Jim Robinson ordered two original seedlings and started this tree as a bonsai as a 1-year old cutting, planting it in a root-over-rock style. It has been training as a bonsai since approximately 1977. Jim is quoted as saying "bonsai is a challenge both intellectually and aesthetically. I am especially fond of 3-dimensional art and bonsai is the best."

This tree was also passed on to Harold Sasaki who donated it to the DBG. It is part of the permanent collection and is on display in the greenhouse window for the winter.



3. Ponderosa Pine

Collected by Dick Meleney, 2004

Dick Meleney had been involved with bonsai since the 1960s. His collection was comprised of mostly centuries old naturally dwarfed conifers native to the Rocky Mountains. Dick operated the Colorado Dwarf Tree Collecting Company in partnership with Harold Sasaki. Dick is quoted in [Outstanding American Bonsai](#), "I look upon bonsai as a perfect release from the stress of our high-tech, political lives, it offers a noncontroversial vehicle toward world understanding and the conservation of natural resources." This was in 1987!

In 1985 Dick hosted a "Bonsai Safari" taking 12 people from outside the local area on a collecting trip "up in the mountains" paired with 12 members of the RMBS. It was anticipated that 3 or 4 trees would be collected per

person but in fact over 200 trees in three days were collected and the club raised over \$4,000 for the National Bonsai Foundation!

This tree was purchased from Dick by club member Don Osborn and then given to Todd Schlafer. Todd did some basic restyling in 2011 and then donated the tree to the DBG in 2013 in memory of Dick. Since its inclusion in the collection it has been repositioned in the pot..."advancing the style"



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

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.

Resources for Members:

Other internet resources:

[RMBS Web Site](#)

[Colorado Bonsai Ltd.](#)

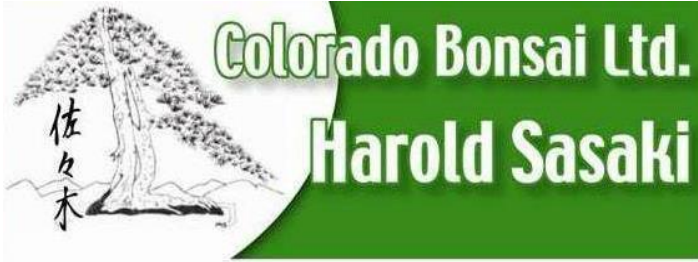
[First Branch Bonsai](#)

[S&S Bonsai](#)

[RMBS Facebook Page](#)

[Mike Horine Website](#)

[Perched Water Table In Container](#)



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

First Branch Bonsai
world class raw stock & bonsai
from the rocky mountains
www.FirstBranchBonsai.com

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

10% Off For Club Members