



RMBS

June 2023

Volume 55 Issue 7

Photography and editing - Mike Green

## President's Message

by Paul Koenning

pjkoenning@gmail.com

Presidents Message

### The Root of the Problem

Congratulations Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society for hosting and attending an incredible American Bonsai Society Conference! It was great to see so many of you there, and the bonsai on display, and workshops were incredible! I hope you all went home with several new treasures, and many cherished memories. While the ABS conference was certainly a highlight, stay tuned as our calendar remains filled with many more events to keep your bonsai desires satisfied.

- **Our July monthly meeting will be on July 13<sup>th</sup> in Gates Hall at Denver Botanic Gardens, and Mike Green will be presenting on photographing bonsai. Mike**

is a very talented photographer, and he will help us all to present our bonsai at their best with tips and tricks to produce better bonsai photos.

- 
- The Saturday workshop series will continue at my home in Aurora on July 15<sup>th</sup>. Bring bonsai to work on, come see my bonsai setup and landscaping, talk bonsai with fellow enthusiasts, and we will continue helping to refine bonsai in preparation for our annual show.
- August 3<sup>rd</sup> our top talent member Todd Schlafer will be presenting on (To be announced) in Gates Hall at Denver Botanic Gardens

Now to the root of the problem! :) Roots! We all know they are needed, but there always remains a lot of mystery when roots are involved. The primary reason for this is because once you dig them up their environment has been drastically disturbed and it hard to impossible to observe issues or draw any conclusions. With the summer heat around the corner, I thought this would be the perfect time to dive into what we do know about roots, and how we can use that knowledge to help keep our bonsai healthy and thriving.

While the foliage is where photosynthesis creates energy from sunlight, the roots are where water and nutrients are absorbed to help drive photosynthetic reactions. In particular the fine feeder roots are where all of the water and nutrients are absorbed, which is why we value them so much. While leaves can sense the light and grow towards it, roots do not have the ability to sense where the best soil is. They do however respond to good conditions by slowing their growth and staying in in ideal locations as long as possible. So a mass of circling roots in a container is not a sign of a healthy plant. Often this is the result of the plant being in the container too long before being repotted, but it can also indicate the roots are stretching and seeking better conditions. Now with this information we can postulate that a bonsai in the best soil will have slower root growth, and the bonsai can remain happier in the container for a longer period. So what is the best soil? Well, that involves a ton of variables including your unique microclimate, and your routine of care. We can debate at length about this, and I would love to at the workshop I will soon be hosting. What we should all understand and be able to agree on is that roots need water, air, nutrients; and a substrate that provides anchoring, darkness for the roots, and if we are really good a beneficial environment for soil microbiota. Already a lot of variables to consider, but in general a substrate should provide 25% air space, 25% water holding capacity, the ability to hold on to nutrients, and 5-10% of organic matter to help foster healthy soil microbes.

If we can manage to maintain a healthy rooting environment, trees have the ability to put on up to 5

flushes of root growth a year. Even single flush pines can grow roots up to 5 times per year, so be sure they get some water when we have extended dry periods in the winter months. Alternately, in the spring much like the very wet one we have just had, there can be too much water in our bonsai pots which will drastically stunt root growth and not in a good way. If roots are not able to find good, aerated soil they will work on anerobic respiration, which is a slowly declining state for any plant. Additionally, the stunted root growth may be able to keep up with springtime temperatures, but once the summer heat hits the plant will struggle greatly to absorb enough water to keep up with transpiration. Transpiration does a lot for plants, and one of its roles is to help cool the plant so a lack of ability to cool in the summer heat can quickly lead to scorched leaves. I hope this helps our newer members to see why we put so much thought into our bonsai soils, and why we are often on the search for the next great component we can include in our mixes.

Since bonsai are in shallow and small containers for design purposes, we need to be sure we maximize every cubic inch of space in the container in order to provide every opportunity for the bonsai to thrive and be healthy. For this reason, I want to be sure to explain why drainage layers are not a real thing and why they do not work. The old concept of drainage layers on pots involves adding large particles of rock or substrate to the bottom of a pot. The thought was that over saturated substrate/ soil above could drain into the lower large particle drainage layer to then drain from the pot fully. What actually happens is that a soil texture interface is created, which means two soils of different qualities about each other but are not mixed. A classic visual of this is sand sitting on top of gravel. When you water the sand it slowly saturates but does not drain into the lower gravel layer until the sandy layer is fully saturated. That situation is best defined as a perched water table, which easily creates overly saturated areas with not enough oxygen. For all these reasons it is best to move away from drainage

layers, as they only work to create more unusable space in our already small containers.

On the other hand, we can use the concept of perched water tables to our benefit. In our high arid desert growing bonsai proves difficult to manage, and the top few inches of soil dry down incredibly quickly. Instead of a drainage layer at the bottom of our containers we can use a perched water table near the top of our containers to keep the top few inches of substrate wet longer. Notice I said inches. This concept should not really be used on pots that are only 1-2 inches deep but can become very helpful for larger bonsai and cascade pots. In these situations, I like to have my bonsai soil sifted into two piles. One pile is roughly ¼" substrate, and the other is 1/8" substrate. I fill the majority of the container with ¼" substrate, and then fill the top 1-2" with the 1/8" substrate. Now a soil texture interface has been created near the top of the pot and when you water a perched water table will help to keep the top of your bonsai soil moist longer, with the goal of the entire container drying down at the same rate in our hot sun.

That was a lot to fit into a newsletter article, but I hope that it helps to demystify bonsai soils, and what we are trying to accomplish. Did this spark questions that were not answered? Please let me know via email at [pjkoenning@gmail.com](mailto:pjkoenning@gmail.com) and I will make sure to answer your questions. If there are some good ones, we may even turn it into a forum or blog post for the entire membership. Thank you again to everyone who help with and attended ABS, and I hope to see you all at upcoming events.

Paul Koenning

### **From the editor: Pat Deutschman**

We hope everyone enjoyed the ABS Learning Seminar a few weeks ago. I have attached Part 2 of the newsletter to this email because of length. In it you will find the list of award winners (RMBS members did amazingly well), credits, photos, etc. I will add more in next month's newsletter – photos from the Artists of the Year exhibit, events, member participants, volunteers. If you would like a particular photo of a workshop you attended, please let me know and I will look for it in our collection from a number of attendees.

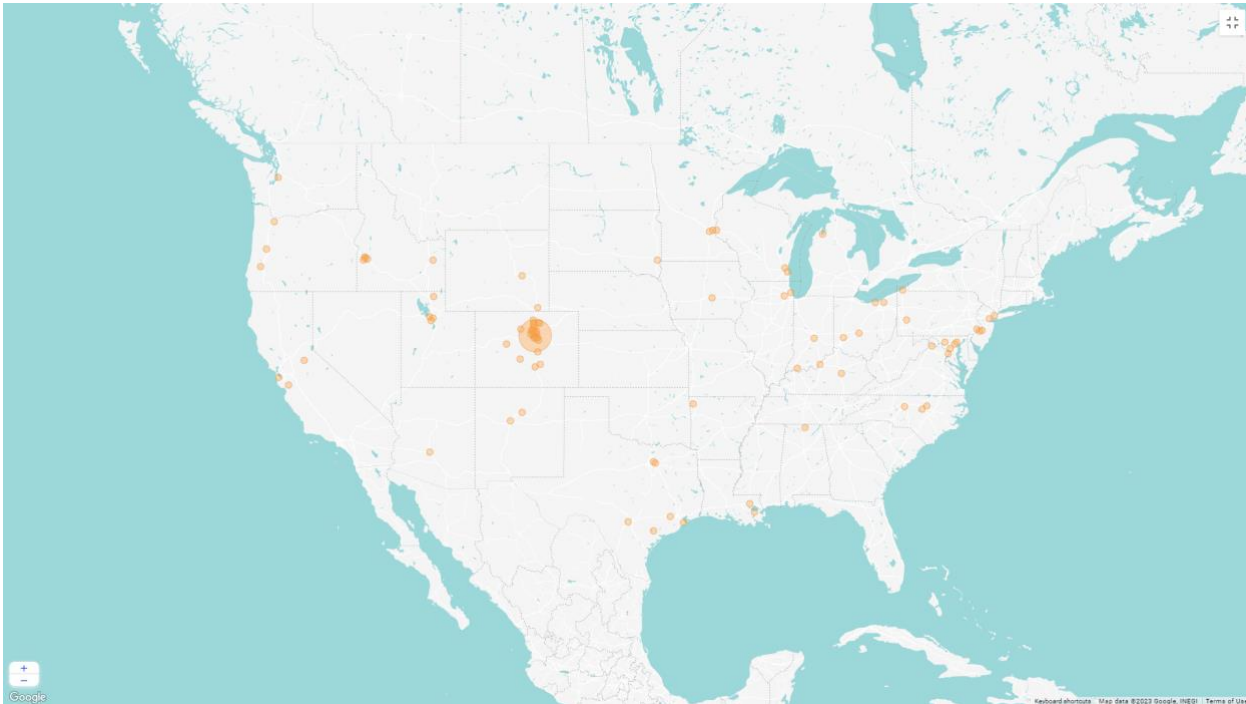
Please note the sponsors of the event who are listed in this newsletter.

## From David McPeters- ABS learning seminar Chair

The ABS Learning Seminars at DBG are over. Whew! I want to first thank everyone who had a part in the planning and running of the show. Your contribution made it a success! From my perspective it is a wonderful thing to watch a group of people work together to deliver such an event. RMBS delivers!

Since several of you have asked, here are a few data points for the show. We had 110 people register for the full three days. We had 48 register for a single day. Out of 150 workshop seats available, 139 were filled. We had 12 businesses or individuals sponsor the events. There were 13 vendors, 5 were RMBS members/artists.

Here is a graphic of where the participants came from. As expected, many were from the front range but quite a few came from much further.



From the feedback I received, the workshop and learning seminars were well received, and everyone was pleased with the workshop material. I am looking forward to seeing them in future annual shows.

Although my time during the show was a bit hectic, I was able to check in on many of the activities and I snagged a tree or two to add to the backyard.

Again, thanks to all who volunteered and participated. It was a wonderful weekend.

## MEMBERSHIP

*By Patrick Allen – RMBS Membership Chair*

New members continue to seek us out. Several joined at the ABS Seminar. Many are new to bonsai, others have had bonsai, but did not know about RMBS.

If you meet these new members at a RMBS event, please welcome them and see if they need any help with the Bonsai trees, tell them how you deal with Colorado's weather, or just share with them how you got started. They will appreciate the comradery and help!

Please welcome our new members:

Ed Mizicko – Pueblo

Michael Peck – Wheat Ridge

Terrence Olson – Denver

Joan Weiner Tarasar – Evergreen

William Graff - Denver

**Membership Dues will start being collected in June. Renewal date is July 1, 2023 for a one-year membership that ends June 30, 2024. It is very helpful if members would submit membership dues for this time period only. Payment information is on the following page. New dues amount is: \$50 for single membership, \$75 for family.**

**Payment can be made on line via PayPal or Venmo, and we will now be able to take any credit card payment in person via Square. A check or cash is always accepted.**

# American Bonsai Society 2023 Learning Seminar Sponsors

## Organizations

[Denver Botanic Gardens](#)

[American Bonsai Society](#)

[Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society](#)

## Enthusiast

[The Krafting Home Team](#)

[REALITYONEGROUP](#) – Owner Dusty Kraft, RMBS member

[Leiffa BRANDS](#) – Bart Hall RMBS member

## Contributor

Larry Jackel – RMBS member and curator of the Denver Botanic Gardens bonsai collection

Mark Mills – RMBS member

Mark Fields – ABS past President

Joe Gravis – ABS Treasurer

City Floral

Pauline Ayersmenk – RMBS member

## Basic

[Colorado Springs National Karate](#) – Owner David Kuntz, RMBS member

[The Purple Pot Society](#)- Samantha Holm, RMBS member

[Superfly Bonsai](#)

[Golden Arrow Bonsai](#) – Owner Andy Smith



## RESOURCES FOR MEMBERS

[Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society | Facebook](#) Post and view photos from RMBS members, post questions, comment

[Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society Forum](#) RMBS website forum has articles of interest

[Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society \(@rocky\\_mountain\\_bonsai\\_society\) • Instagram photos and videos](#) View or post photos

[Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society - YouTube](#) RMBS meetings recorded appear here, other videos of interest including RMBS show

[Rmbonsai.org](#) RMBS website – headers: News & Events, Galleries, Join, Blog, Forum, Education

Other resources

[Colorado Bonsai Ltd.](#)  
[First Branch Bonsai](#)  
[RMBS Facebook Page](#)

Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society Dues info.

Annual membership renewals were due July 1. Individual membership is \$50 per year, a family membership is \$75 per year. Since we are currently following social distancing measures, please send a check to:

Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society

c/o Membership Renewal **PO BOX 2095 Littleton, CO. 80161** **This is our new mailing address.**

Please be sure to include your phone # & email with your check so we've up to date contact info for you.

To pay electronically you must have your own **PayPal** account or **Venmo** account set up and linked to a credit card or bank account. It's very easy to do on their websites.

With **PayPal**, you can send money or make a payment to anyone with an email address or mobile number.

From your **computer**, Smart Phone or iPad here's how to send money:

Log onto your PayPal account.

1. Click [Send & Request](#) at the top of the page.
2. Enter rockymountainbonsaisociety@gmail.com
3. Enter the amount, choose the currency, add a note (if needed) and click **Continue**.
4. Select "Sending to a friend."
5. Select how you want to pay and click **Next**.
6. Review the information and click **Send Payment Now**.

**Venmo** is an APP available only for smartphones or iPads. You can set up a Venmo account through the app and pay directly from there.

The name of the account in Venmo to send to is: RockyMountainbonsaisociety

## 2023 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Date and Location	Agenda or Program	Workshop
<b>July Monthly meeting</b> <u>Thursday, July 13 7PM</u> Denver Botanic Gardens – Gates Hall	<b>MIKE GREEN</b> PHOTOGRAPHING BONSAI	
<b>July Workshop</b> Saturday, July 15 Paul Koenning host		<b>PAUL KOENNING</b> FINAL WIRING AND PRUNING GETTING YOUR TREES READY FOR SHOW
<b>August 2023 Monthly Meeting</b> Thursday, August 3 7PM Denver Botanic Gardens- Gates Hall	<u>TODD SCHLAFER</u>	
<b>August Workshop</b> Saturday, August 26 Patrick Allen host		<b>PATRICK ALLEN</b> BONSAI IN AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT LIGHTING, OUTSIDE SPACES, WINTERING PREPARING POTS FOR SHOW
<b>September – Annual show</b> Friday Sept 1- Sunday Sept 3 Denver Botanic Gardens	<u>ANNUAL SHOW</u>	
<b>September Workshop</b> Saturday, September 9 Paul Koenning host		<b>PAUL KOENNING</b> WINTER PREP AND PEST INSPECTION
<b>October Monthly Meeting</b> Tuesday, October 3 7PM Denver Botanic Gardens- Auditorium	<u>TBD</u>	
<b>November Monthly Meeting</b> Tuesday, November 7 Denver Botanic Gardens – Auditorium	<u>TBD</u>	





**First Branch Bonsai**  
world class raw stock & bonsai  
from the rocky mountains  
[www.FirstBranchBonsai.com](http://www.FirstBranchBonsai.com)



**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*.

Where Passion meets Quality & Respect



Backcountry Bonsai

[www.backcountrybonsai.com](http://www.backcountrybonsai.com)

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](mailto:co.bonsai.ltd@gmail.com)**