

Heritage Trees at the Denver Botanic Gardens, Part 2

The Denver Botanic Garden's Sho-Fu-En Japanese gardens expanded in 2012 to include a Bonsai Pavilion and traditional tea house which were part of the original master plan by Sadafuni Uchiyama in 2004. The fundraising committee for the pavilion decided to name it in honor of Denver author and journalist Bill Hosokawa, who passed away in 2007. The Pavilion is orchestrated to highlight the rare bonsai collection and evoke the beauty and character of traditional design and has a major emphasis on native species from Colorado and the west.

Bill Hosokawa worked at the Denver Post for 38 years as a war correspondent, a columnist, assistant managing editor and as editorial page editor. He also authored at least 10 books.

Bill Hosokawa was not only a beloved journalist but was also very important to the Japanese-American community. He, his wife and his infant son were interned at the Heart Mountain Relocations Center in Wyoming during World War II and his book "Nesei: The Quiet Americans", which became a best seller in 1969, was one of the first books to recount the experience of internment. Bill Hosokawa served for 25 years as the honorary consul general of Japan in Colorado, which meant that Japanese citizens had to visit him to get their visas renewed. He was 90 when his last book "Colorado's Japanese Americans: From 1886 to the Present" was published.

Friends and family of Bill Hosokawa wanted to create a lasting memorial to a man who was a pillar of Colorado with something beautiful and restorative, and yet completely down to earth. Bill was a great and dedicated gardener in his own right, as his daughter said of him "in addition to caring about fairness, justice and the power of the pen, he cared about bright red tomatoes".

Links to biographies and other information about Bill.

[Densho Encyclopedia](#)

[Denver Public Library](#)



Ponderosa Pine

Collected by Jim Robinson 1988

Jim's tree is over 150 years old and has spent more than 30 years in training as a bonsai tree. Jim, an educator and clearly a legend in the RMBS had been working with bonsai since 1961. He studied with Bob Kataoka and Kai Kawahara and had a special interest in root-over-rock and cascade style. In his retirement he became interested in pottery and personally made a pot for each of his own trees! This Ponderosa Pine is still in the original pot Jim made for it.



PONDEROSA PINE (*PINUS PONDEROSA*)
COLLECTED: 1987 PHOTO 2001
EST. AGE: 150 YRS

Ponderosa Pine *Pinus ponderosa*
Est. Age 150 Years Years in Training 15 Years

When no longer able to care for his trees, Jim Robinson passed along this tree to Harold Sasaki. The Robinson family eventually asked that the tree be donated to the gardens in memory of Jim. The original styling was characterized as flat on top but has been allowed to produce more foliage and its branches have been restyled more recently.

This tree was one of three bonsai trees prominently displayed on pedestals in 2012 that, to the horror of the DBG staff, disappeared overnight - stolen through a break in the fence during a construction project. Amazingly, three weeks later this tree was mysteriously brought back and left at the door of the Visitor's Center at 4 AM with a hand-written note attached. The note was from the apparent thief who not only apologized for taking the tree and therefore denied DBG

visitors the pleasure of viewing it, but assurances that the tree was returned in perfect condition including the original pot. The other two bonsai were never found.



Douglas Fir

Collected by Dick Meleny and Joe Gutierrez

Dr. Joe Gutierrez, a surgeon from McClean Virginia, was one of the participants of the "Bonsai Safari" (that was explained in last month's newsletter) as he loved collecting in the Rockies. There he met Larry Jackel and they have been good friends ever since. Joe took the tree back to Virginia where he lives (and also volunteers at the national collection in Washington DC.), and while there the tree was damaged by a deer! Sometime later during a trip to visit with the North Virginia Bonsai Society, Larry Jackel was given the tree to be donated to the DBG. Joe

was very particular that the tree be driven across country and not shipped. When that didn't work out (after several years of trying) Larry decided to pack up the tree in a box and check it as baggage on this flight back to Colorado, but hand carried the very special Tokonoma pot on the plane with him. Back in Denver, the tree was re-potted in the original pot and allowed to grow back.



Ficus benjamina

Donated from Frank Hiraoka family

This ficus most likely began as nursery stock and is around 20 years old. The tree was donated to DBG by Frank Hiraoka's family from his estate after Frank passed away in 2014 at the age of 98. Frank was a long-term member of the senior Denver Bonsai Club and would appear at the RMBS club every year. Larry Jackel remembers he had a gift for gab and would keep you talking for long periods! Currently, the tree is housed at the Chatfield garden for the winter and is being worked on by RMBS member David McPeters along with input from other members who attend the Wednesday morning workshop. David reports that the tree had grown bushy with most of the foliage at the ends of the branches. This winter he wired parts of the canopy and did some targeted pruning to open the canopy and set some branch structure. More wiring and pruning will take place this summer as well as a repotting. It has been in its current pot for some time so it will be interesting to see the condition of the roots.

