



COLORADO BLUE SPRUCE – DERICK STARKEY – 5 YEARS IN TRAINING – PHOTO BY MIKE GREEN

RMBS

November 2019

Volume 51 Issue 11

November President's Message

by Andy Berry

"Finding Meaning"

"A society grows great when old folks plant trees in whose shade they know they will never sit." –Greek Proverb

What a maelstrom the last few months have been: finalizing and executing our 50th anniversary exhibition, a large amount of seasonal pruning and styling of our collections and the occasional repotting session for the bold bonsaiist. More recently, my efforts (and yours, I presume) have been aimed at preparing the bonsai for their winter quarters and making sure that my newly constructed cold frame is nearly bombproof. Only this week has the breakneck pace appeared to have slackened enough to grab a few moments away. Just in time for the holiday festivities, our trees are doing it right: slowing down to a crawl

for their period of well-deserved dormancy. Often, we are so caught up in the practice of "doing bonsai" that we lose sight of the reason "why" we do bonsai and its deeper meaning. Given the relative quietude of seasonal work, I find this is a perfect time to ponder this point.

Being a millennial (although, as with most of my generation, reticent to self-define as such), I do enjoy a good amount of bonsai related material online (blogs, photos, articles, lectures and social media). But what I really gravitate toward as the days shorten and the nights get chilly is sitting down with a good book. With actual pages. That you pull from a shelf. **There is something about the experience of spending time with a printed bound volume that is tactile, immersive and calming.** I do not find this to

be true with an electronic page, plus books are made to be shared. I wanted to share some of what I have been reading lately, and hopefully gain additional insight from what my fellow members are reading as well.

In Training: Stephen Voss (\$30 on Amazon)

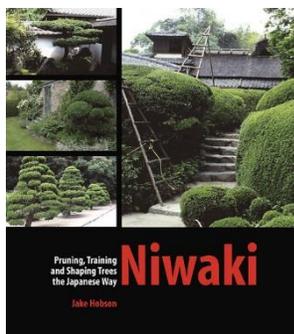
A nice coffee-table sized book with arrestingly beautiful photos of the collection at the National Arboretum in Washington D.C.



These detailed photos demonstrate the minute beauty of these trees with an emphasis on their branch structure, trunk and aged characteristics. Sparse text here, but still an interesting study of individualized aesthetic aspects of specific specimens and species. I would have liked more full-tree photos of the collection (only three of the most famous are pictured in their entirety).

Niwaki: Jake Hobson (\$25 Amazon, also Stone Lantern)

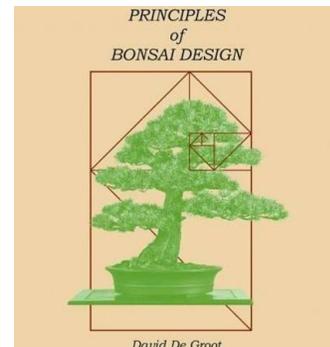
A great discussion of Japanese Garden aesthetics with special emphasis on *niwaki* (character trees). I enjoyed the discussion on creating these specimens and many of the techniques mirror those in bonsai. Species specific tips abound, as well as a sense of cultural and



historic sensibilities of the Japanese garden and how these relate to the art of *niwaki*.

Principles of Bonsai Design: David DeGroot (\$30 Stone Lantern)

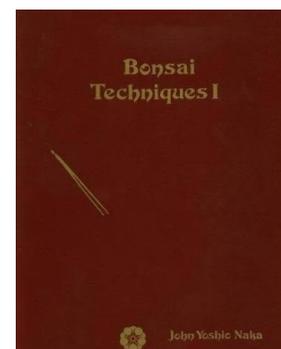
Bonsai design is only one component addressed in this tribute by Mr. DeGroot (prior curator of the Pacific Rim collection). A more apt title might be extended bonsai



fundamentals. This book is an excellent walk through the bedrock of design, container selection, material, refinement and display. He achieves a nice balance of tradition while also addressing contemporary design and display techniques. **This volume should be one addition to every English-language bonsai artist's library** and is a great reference tool to review when tackling future projects.

Bonsai Techniques I: John Naka (harder to find, probably eBay about \$100 or more)

One of the classic American bonsai texts from Mr. Naka, who some consider the father of bonsai in America. This book is packed with useful information and reads like an

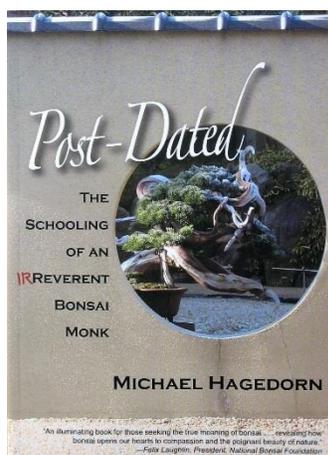


instructional manual for bonsai design and horticulture. This book explores design, repotting, seasonal work (albeit California based), soil mixtures, forest planting, grafting and more. This is quite a useful book, and a good reference for planting considerations and bonsai skills. At times

the seasonal issues are somewhat different from what we encounter in the Rocky Mountain region. Some of the horticulture techniques also seem a bit dated. Great tome, none the less. My copy is signed by Mr. Naka, and I'm told that he tried to sign most of them.

Post Dated: The schooling of an irreverent bonsai monk: Michael Hagedorn (\$15 Amazon, also available directly from Michael on his website.

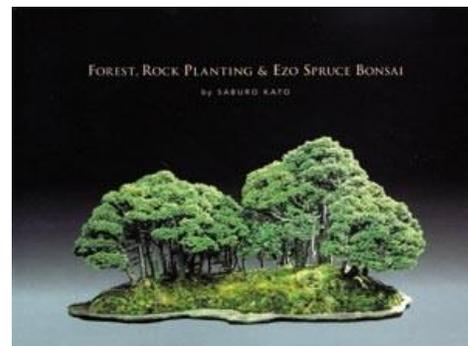
A truly inspiring book which is not about bonsai *per se* (although knowledge of aesthetics and techniques are obtained along the way). A collection of thoughts, musings and antidotes from Mr. Hagedorn's extended apprenticeship under Master Suzuki. Michael is a magnificent and engaging writer and I devoured this book in two days (then subsequently picked it back up again). This book was exactly the inspiration I sought for this season. Given the bite-sized nature of the passages, it is easy to pick up daily and absorb a few pages to marinate on. The commentary on the apprentice / master relationship, Japanese sensibility and tradition and how this informs the practice and philosophy of bonsai were fascinating. I especially enjoyed the "afterwork" experiences Mr. Susuki's apprentices were "treated" to by clients, discussion of national exhibition culture and the bit where Michael argues with Henry David Thoreau in his



mind. **If you pick up one book relating to bonsai this season, this should be the one.** I appreciated Mr. Susuki and Hagedorn's philosophy on bonsai, respect for the tree and *gently* advancing the style (which seems to be a foil to the radical Kimura transformations we have grown to admire).

Forest, Rock Planting and Ezo Spruce: Saburo Kato (\$16-35 Stone Lantern)

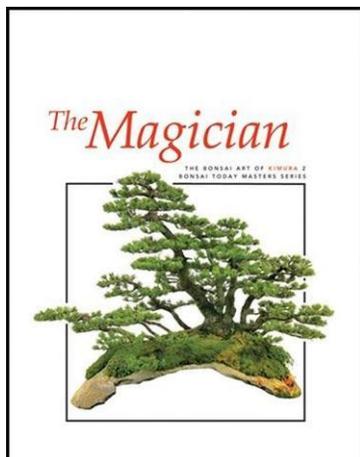
The book arrived a much smaller size than I had anticipated, but with great color



photographs of Master Kato's work (many of these trees were collected from remote Japanese islands with his father in the 1930's). A comprehensive study of forest and rock planting composition, techniques, and considerations. I especially enjoyed the "mixed-species" forest compositions which Mr. Kato helped to pioneer. His original line drawings and discussion of plant placement, scale, harmony, root management and tiedown fastening are highly informative. This book has inspired me to attempt a few forest plantings of my own next season, and Mr. Kato's discussion of material selection I am sure will be useful in the coming year.

The Magician: Bonsai of art of Kimura 2 (\$20-30 Stone Lantern)

Master Kimura has become known as “the magician” based on his adventurous, avant-garde style and willingness to break with tradition to create



radical compositions that have inspired a global generation of bonsai artists. This book is a compilation of specimen studies focused on these fascinating transformations. Each has a theme or objective which makes for useful focused study. Pictorials are comprehensive and illustrative. Kimura’s vertical rock-plantings

are mystifying and evocative. The last section has a nice conversation with Kimura, including photos of his garden and words of wisdom.

Finally, please join us Tuesday November 5th for our monthly program. In line with the pursuit of meaning we will be discussing and evaluating an “inspiration tree” for our short program. Then join us for the rest of the evening when we will expand our knowledge of soil science with Paul Koenning (next-year’s show chairperson). Come share in the inspiration!

Your brother in bonsai,

Andy Berry

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2018 - 2019 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Date and Location	Agenda or Program
<p><u>Pottery Sale – Bruce Murdock</u> Sat-Sun, Nov 2nd & 3rd 9:30am – 4:30pm 425 Mount Vernon Circle, Lookout Mountain I70 exit 256; Paradise Hills Road; First left</p>	
<p><u>Monthly Meeting</u> Nov Tue, Nov 5th 6:30pm – 9:00pm DBG Plant Society Building</p>	<p><u>SHORT PROGRAM: INSPIRATION TREE</u> <u>TOM ANGLEWICZ</u> <u>LONG PROGRAM: AEROBIC PLANTS SOILS & MICROBES</u> <u>PAUL KOENNING</u></p>
<p><u>Annual Holiday Party</u> Dec Sun, Dec 1st 10am – 2pm Hillcrest Condos 9968 Appletree Place Thornton, CO</p>	

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

HOLIDAY PARTY TRADITION – by Pat Deutschman

RMBS- Archives

This past year I have delved into the RMBS history through the legacy of some of the early members, the influences of the original Denver Bonsai Club members who were the Japanese speaking club and highlighted some “Heritage Trees” that still exist.

We have the great fortune of having a complete and extensive collection of every RMBS meeting plus every RMBS newsletter, newspaper articles, photos and personal stories all the way back to the first inaugural meeting November 1969! It is greatly appreciated that we have these artifacts due to some very diligent members who took great care of them while in their possession over the past 50 years.

To start the journey into the past I will begin with the tradition of the “RMBS Holiday Party”.

RMBS Hillcrest Condo Clubhouse Holiday Party history.

In its early years, the RMBS, formerly the Denver Junior Bonsai Club, had a tradition of hosting an annual dinner, inviting the members of the Senior Denver Bonsai Club. This was to thank them for their help in organizing the Bonsai show, teaching through demonstrations, and working with club members to develop their skills. Eventually this evolved into a Holiday Party and, at times, was held at the mansion on the grounds of the Denver Botanic Gardens! (Wouldn't that be fun today).

In 1981, one of the members lived in the Hillcrest community and helped arrange the party in their clubhouse – a tradition that continues to this day! The first time we attended the party a few years ago we were warned... “it's hard to find, we always get lost”. Apparently, this is also a long-standing tradition! Various references to this problem before GPS appear in the newsletters.

1985- “The place is the same as last year, I usually get lost off to the west somewhere as we try to come from Boulder, so this year I plan to come from the east”

1986- “Holiday Party- the place will be the same as for the past several years – Applewood something or other up there in the north – and a map will come later.

We always have a great time”.

“Members, spouses and guest don't want to miss this event. This may be one of the few occasions where your conversations may span the depths of bonsai, physics theories, rock formations, stocks and bonds and you will still enjoy the company.”

1991- “The Site of our Holiday Party Since the neighborhood surrounding the HCA is rather mazy, cul-de-sacky, and no-outlet-streetzy, let me make a few suggestions.....if you get out of the rectangle delimited as above you will need to call for a Native American guide.”

As you can see, the RMBS has been a group of enthusiastic members who didn't hesitate to add some humor to their newsletters! Let the traditions live on.



Photos from the 1991 Holiday Party

CREATION OF A STAND

(This two-part article describes the history behind an heirloom box that was repurposed by Dan Kingery into a bonsai stand.)

Bonsai Stand with Some History

By David McPeters

As a teenager growing up in the 1960s my family would visit my grandparents in Weaverville, NC. I remember my grandmother telling me I would inherit a plain wooden box we would see while playing in her attic. After my grandparents died in the early 1970s, I was given the box. It moved with me to Indiana in 1981 and finally to Colorado in 2000. At times the box held books and papers or served as a low shelf on which to store things.

Through all those years the memory I carried was my grandmother telling me the box belonged to her great uncle David who had carried it in the Civil War. Curious about its history when I asked Dan to use it to create a stand, I did some genealogical research hoping to learn more about my ancestors and perhaps the box. Either my memory was faulty, or the story was enhanced because I could find no great uncle David from the Civil War time period. Instead, I found my grandmother had a brother named David (1879b – 1945d). I concluded that the box had belonged to him.

In 2017, I began to acquire stands for my bonsai trees to use at the RMBS annual show. I saw several stands that had been made from reclaimed lumber. I liked their appearance and the idea of repurposing used materials. I realized I might have a use for my great uncle's plain wooden box which had been moving around with me for over 40 years.

In 2018, I asked Dan Kingery if he would make a bonsai stand for me from the box. I wanted something simple that preserved the patina and scars the box had acquired over time.

The photos below show the box. At one time, the lid had been attached with hinges, but they had broken off long ago.





Other than the dimensions I left the actual design to Dan. During the process he would suggest things or ask for a decision on one of several choices. One suggestion turned out to be the best feature, in my opinion. I had always thought that the dove tail joints couldn't be used and would be discarded. It was Dan's suggestion to use them as the legs of the stand.

I am very pleased with the final result. I like that the stand preserves the simplicity and the aged look of the original box. I like to think it is unique, a combination of my great uncle crafting a simple box for a utilitarian purpose and Dan turning it into a piece of art a century or more later.

The following photo shows the box, now a bonsai stand, as it appeared in the 2019 RMBS annual show.



Heirloom Box Becomes a Bonsai Stand

By Dan Kingery

When David first asked if I would turn his antique box into a bonsai stand, I was hesitant. The thought of altering, or in this case, completely destroying an heirloom antique made me uncomfortable. It was in opposition to my lifelong appreciation for antiques and their preservation.

However, David explained that while the box was old and had been in his family for generations, it held no real sentimental value. When he added, "why not make it into something that I can use, enjoy and appreciate as opposed to something that sits in a corner gathering dust," I was convinced this was a project to tackle.

When I saw the box the first time, it was, as described, a simple box free of ornamentation. However, it had three unique features that I became excited about:

- The patina of the painted box was very interesting. Over 100 years of use and abuse had resulted in a lot of character.
- The box had been constructed with hand hewed dovetail joint corners with steel cut nails holding them together.
- The front of the box contained an antique metal lock.

After some discussion, David and I agreed these three unique features should be preserved and highlighted in the repurposed bonsai stand.

Here are several photos of the stand during its construction detailing the three features we were attempting to preserve.



The photo on the left shows the top of the stand being constructed from various parts of the box. The challenge was to end up with a top that had no visible saw cut marks and showed only the original wood edges. To achieve this, seven separate pieces from the box were glued together. Building a flat top was tricky because the original builder had used wood of varying widths so the sides, top, and bottom of the box were all different.



The process of transforming the dovetail joint corners into the stand's legs was challenging. As the corners were cutaway from the box, they fell apart into numerous pieces because they were only held together with nails and no glue. Re-assembling and gluing them back together was a real jigsaw puzzle.



The photo on the left shows the metal lock, after it was cut from the box, being integrated into the front of the stand.

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:

[New RMBS Web Site](#)

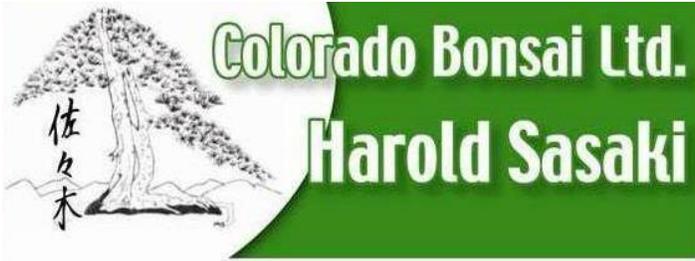
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We're located on the west side of the Denver Metro area, near I-70 and Youngfield.

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

 The logo for First Branch Bonsai consists of two large, stylized, overlapping letters 'B' and 'B' in white with black outlines, set against a black background.

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 The logo for S&S Bonsai features the text 'S&S Bonsai' in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font with a blue outline, set within a blue and yellow oval shape. Below it, the tagline 'Always Growing' is written in a smaller, black font within a white oval shape.

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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.

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 A circular badge with a black and white starburst pattern. The text inside reads '10% Off For Club Members' in bold black font.