



DRAWING BY PHIL HAYWARD

RMBS

April 2019

Volume 51 Issue 4

## April President's Message

by Andy Berry

### *The Nature of Seeing*

**"Winter is on my head, but eternal spring is in my heart." –Victor Hugo**

Rebirth, romance and rejuvenation. A promise, a new start. Fertility. The spring season is imbued with much symbolism. Spring has captivated mankind since the dawn of time and the thaw of our first frigid winter. ***Spring is revered in nearly every culture and religion known throughout the modern world.*** Christians celebrate the Easter holiday and the resurrection of Christ, by donning fresh garments which are said to bring good luck for the coming year. The Shinto religion has numerous spring festivals (*Haru Matsuri*) which exalt the planting of crops and ask fortune in their yields. Islam considers the rainbow a symbol of spring and rebirth, and union between mankind and the cosmos. The

Jewish holiday Passover exemplifies redemption and hope. Many Native Americans recognize the Kokopelli as a symbol of earth's fertility and the coming spring rain which will allow crops to flourish. Astrologically, the vernal equinox (first day of spring) occurs when the daylight hours exactly balance the darkness of nighttime. On my strolls through the neighborhood and out in the yard to water my bonsai I see signs of the lengthening daylight and a new chapter beginning for my trees.

As you know, spring is a busy time for the bonsaiist. I have commenced with repotting much of my collection, which always involves a critical appraisal of each tree and analysis of how a new container or planting angle will improve the image or advance the style. It was during one such appraisal that I had this realization: ***I heavily focus on my bonsai's***

**flaws and imperfections, constantly evaluating how the tree could be better.** This often leaves me with a sense of inadequacy and occasionally outright failure. I understand that bonsai composition is learning to minimize flaws and showcase attractive or valued aspects of the tree, but for me the bad seems to outweigh the good. Reflecting on this thought, I sat with the Japanese maple I had repotted and decided on the spot to change my mindset. I focused on how the tree felt serene and appreciated the overall way the new composition made a convincing image of an ancient tree in a calm meadow. This sounds simple, but for me it is difficult not to walk around my garden benches and think “that tree will be so much better when \_\_\_\_\_.” This got me thinking further. **Do I see my trees differently than others?** Maybe. Is that because I have a detailed knowledge of their cultivation and history, or do bonsai artists see their trees differently from those who merely encounter and appreciate them?

An accepted concept in neuroscience could be summarized as **“artists see the world differently from others.”** An editorial from the *American Psychological Association* (Feb. 2010 Vol 41 No.2) supports this notion. Artists’ special way of seeing translates into eye scan patterns that are markedly different from those of non-artists, according to a study by Vogt in *Perception* (Vol. 36, No. 1). In her study, she asked nine psychology students and nine art students to view a series of 16 pictures while a camera and computer monitored where their gazes fell. She found that artists’ eyes tended to scan the whole picture, including apparently empty expanses of ocean or sky, while the non-artists focused in on objects, especially people. Non-artists

spent about 40% of the time looking at objects, while artists focused on them 20% of the time. This finding suggests that while non-artists were busy turning images into concepts, artists were taking note of colors and contours, Vogt says.

Perhaps it is this unique visual processing method that allows bonsai artists to value negative space in relation to foliage masses and trunk line; appraise symmetry and balance and evaluate how the texture and color of the pot relates to the entire composition. Does this mental deconstruction of each aspect in relation to the whole detract from seeing the tree and a discreet “object” or a “concept” embodied by the entire composition (as Vogt suggests)? Could this be why when others say, “What a beautiful bonsai” you think “yeah, its ok.” Perhaps **“stop appraising and start appreciating”** could be a mantra to change our mindset and the way we feel about our bonsai, allowing us to experience them anew.

**Please join us for our April meeting to welcome spring!** We will be discussing bonsai stands in formal display and how pairing stand and tree can enhance your composition and enjoyment of the art. What better topic to embody the “rebirth of spring” than a discussion of Bougainville as bonsai: a wonderful flowering bonsai species that are often coming into bloom this time of year.

Your brother in bonsai,

Andy Berry

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## 2018 - 2019 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Date and Location	Agenda or Program
<p><b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b>                      <b>April</b>                      Tue, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6:30 – 9:00pm                      DBG Plant Society Building</p>	<p><b><u>SHORT PROGRAM: BONSAI STANDS</u></b>                      Patrick Allen &amp; Dan Kingery  <b><u>LONG PROGRAM: BOUGAINVILLEA &amp; TROPICALS</u></b>                      Patrick Allen &amp; Bob Randall</p>
<p><b><u>Saturday Workshop</u></b>                      <b>April</b>                      Sat April 13<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 – 2:00pm                      Central Christian Church                      3690 Cherry Creek S Dr, Denver, CO 80209</p>	<p><b><u>WORKSHOP</u></b>                      Repotting, Pot Sale, &amp; Pot Exchange</p>
<p><b><u>Fieldtrip</u></b>                                      <b>April</b>                      Sat April 27<sup>th</sup> 9:00 – noon                      Fox Run Regional Park</p>	<p><b><u>FIELDTRIP</u></b>                      FIELDTRIP TO SEE CULTURALLY MODIFIED TREES                      JOHN ANDERSON</p>
<p><b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b>                      <b>May</b>                      Tue, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 9:00pm                      Central Christian Church                      3690 Cherry Creek S Dr, Denver, CO 80209</p>	<p><b><u>LONG PROGRAM: SHOHIN BONSAI</u></b>                      Les Siroky</p>
<p><b><u>Guest Artist Workshop</u></b>                      <b>May</b>                      Sat May 11<sup>th</sup> 10:00am – 1:00pm                      Central Christian Church                      3690 Cherry Creek S Dr, Denver, CO 80209</p>	<p><b><u>SHOHIN WORKSHOP</u></b>                      Les Siroky</p>
<p><b><u>Takayama Park</u></b>                                      <b>May</b>                      Sat, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 9:00am – 1:00pm                      500 South Colorado Blvd, Denver</p>	<p><b><u>TAKAYAMA PARK</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b>                      <b>June</b>                      Tue, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 9:00pm                      DBG Plant Society Building</p>	<p><b><u>GREEN ELEPHANT SALE &amp; AUCTION</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Guest Artist Workshops</u></b>                      <b>July</b>                      Sat Jul 6<sup>th</sup> and Sun July 7<sup>th</sup> 8:30am – 3:00pm                      DBG Plant Society Building</p>	<p><b><u>BJORN BJORHOLM</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b>                      <b>July</b>                      Tue, Jul 9<sup>th</sup> 6:30pm – 9:00pm                      Central Christian Church                      3690 Cherry Creek S Dr, Denver, CO 80209</p>	<p><b><u>BJORN BJORHOLM</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Guest Artist Workshops</u></b>                      Sat Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> 8:30am – 3:00pm                      DBG Plant Society Building</p>	<p><b><u>TODD SCHLAFER</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b>                      <b>Aug</b>                      Tue, Aug 6<sup>th</sup> 6:30pm – 9:00pm                      Central Christian Church                      3690 Cherry Creek S Dr, Denver, CO 80209</p>	<p><b><u>TODD SCHLAFER</u></b></p>

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

## Update on the RMBS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Show – Mike Britten Show Chairman

### Friday night celebration

Our goal for the evening (and the show overall) is to make this a very memorable occasion to recognize and commemorate 50 years of RMBS shows and history. A big part of that is the Friday celebration of 50 years of RMBS history and annual shows.

Current planning includes an opening performance by Denver Taiko Drummers. Taiko drumming is a traditional artform in Japan (but it continues to evolve and develop and has spread to many countries). You can check out Denver Taiko at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORz3VKny2Wo>. CBS Sunday Morning featured Taiko Drummers of Japan recently:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPSAznr4Ooc>. I was amazed at the choreography and athleticism of the performances (in addition to the beat). Realize that the latter group consists of professionals who dedicate their lives to their art (much the same way as bonsai professionals in Japan are committed to bonsai).

Later in the evening, we are exploring the possibility of including a koto performance. The koto, a 13-string dulcimer-like instrument, is the national instrument of Japan and is played by plucking the strings with 3 finger picks. You can see a performance on-line at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImvrPNHVtI8>.

The evening meal will be semi-catered; we are working with a well-regarded Japanese restaurant on entrees. We will ask RMBS members to contribute supplemental food (e.g., side dishes and desserts) and possibly beverages. We will include a vegetarian food option(s).

To help pay for evening celebration we will hold an auction (see below), explore grants to pay for the entertainment and ask members to

purchase tickets. We are developing a budget for the show overall (and the Friday celebration) and don't know the cost yet but tickets will likely be from \$10-20 per person.

### Silent auction

The RMBS Board agreed that we will hold a silent auction on Friday evening so we can focus on the celebration and our heritage rather than our usual live auction. We hope members will donate 15 or 20 (total) quality items such as trees, stones and pots for the silent auction. Items will be displayed during Friday afternoon and evening so members can view and bid. Please consider whether you have an item you would like to donate. The auction will help defray the cost of the show and help RMBS continue to maintain resources needed for other activities such as bringing in guest artists.

### Heritage trees

Hopefully you have been reading the great newsletter articles on RMBS heritage trees. We plan to prepare and include ~3 heritage trees in a prominent location during the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary show as a nod to the legacy of past RMBS members and their contributions to RMBS in the form of these venerable bonsai.

### Next steps

The RMBS Board meets again in early April to continue planning for the show and finalize the budget. We are evaluating needs and costs. Please let me or Andy know if you have ideas or suggestions or to help make this a great 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary RMBS show. And remember, there will be abundant opportunities to contribute to the success of the show in the coming months and at the show itself.

Mike Britten ([brittjohns@msn.com](mailto:brittjohns@msn.com))

Andy Berry ([andrbo304@gmail.com](mailto:andrbo304@gmail.com))

**Annual Show Workgroups:**

**1. Heritage Trees**

- Pat Deutschman – 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 Deutschman
- Fred Deutschman
- Wayne Berve
- Adam Johnson

**4. Organization of Volunteers and Demonstrators**

- Connie Garrett – 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

### RMBS Heritage Trees at the Pacific Bonsai Museum – a field trip

There are two Heritage trees having RMBS beginnings currently in the permanent collection of the Pacific Bonsai Museum and they both are Bob Kataoka bonsai. The museum acquired the trees in 1989, and they have become part of their permanent collection; they were both on display as part of the yearlong "Natives" exhibit in 2017. This special exhibit celebrated North American native trees as bonsai subjects, combining art and nature and is featured in the "Natives" catalog of the exhibit. The goal of the exhibit was to display bonsai alongside elements of their natural environment, the connection between a bonsai and its habitat being reestablished. It also exemplified the true "American bonsai" that emphasizes the plants, geography and culture of the United States and reflects the spirit of the American wilderness.

Young Choe, who visited the RMBS last year, discussed with the club her challenge of finding local native material for each kusamono that was from the same environment of its accompanying bonsai.

Interestingly, my husband Fred and I visited the PBM and the "Natives" exhibit in October 2017 and photographed the trees in this article not realizing that the Bob Kataoka trees were some of those we viewed and admired! Thanks to Dan Widerrecht of Backcountry Bonsai for the information.



Special thank you to Kelsi Dunn, coordinator of the PBM for the following information on the trees featured in this article.

#### Tree 122

Rocky Mountain Juniper  
In training since 1964

This old specimen was collected as a natural dwarf at an elevation of about 8,000 feet near Raymond Colorado. The late artist Robert Kataoka collected the tree and began training it in 1964, orienting it to show off a large piece of deadwood, and keeping a broadly rounded, shrub like crown. In 1997, PRBV curator, Dave DeGroot, restyled the tree using a new front and a single leader. In 2015 curator Aarin Packard restyled the tree changing it back to its historic front to show off the natural deadwood while changing the angle of the tree."

The photograph shows the tree displayed in a Victoria Chamberlain container along with accent kusamono styled by Young Choe. The backdrop is a painting depicting Mt. Wilbur painted by Luna Tinta.



Photos Pat Deutschman or "Natives" catalog, PBM

### Tree 123

Subalpine Fir

In training since 1960

This forest planting was created by artist Robert Kataoka from roadside seedlings he collected near Echo Park, Colorado in 1960. About 80 small trees had been collected over a period of three weekends, of which 47 were selected to plant on a sandstone slab. This bonsai has been titled "Ronin" by the artist, in reference to the Japanese legend of the 47 Ronin or samurai without a master. In the legend, the samurai's beloved master was unjustly forced by an evil royal official to commit seppuku (ritual suicide). The Ronin avenged their master's death with the certain knowledge that they would themselves be executed. The legend and this bonsai celebrate dedication, courage and loyalty in the face of death, and the trees in this bonsai - like the Ronin of legend - have succumbed until the forest has become a grove. Since the forest was built in 1960 it has died back to the 14 remaining trees.

The photograph shows the tree displayed in a Victoria Chamberlain container along with accent kusamono styled by Young Choe. The backdrop is a painting depicting Aleutian Range, Alaska painted by Luna Tinta.



Photos supplied by Pat Deutschman and "Natives" catalog PBM



**Additional story that appeared on the Bonsai Bark website.**

Danny Coffey is one of the many young Western bonsai artists who spent formative years studying bonsai in Japan. His teacher was Junichiro Tanaka. Pictured here with 47 Ronin he states: "Recently the Pacific Bonsai Museum brought me out to Washington to do some bonsai work. This sub alpine forest was a really fun project".



Photo credit: Bonsai Birch and Stone Lantern

**Biography of Bob Kataoka as printed in "Bonsai Book of Days"**

Robert "Bob" Kataoka was born in Hiroshima, Japan in 1909 and came to America at age 17 with the intent to make his fortune and then return to Japan. He married Hanayo Kameoka in 1937 followed by the birth of his two children and working diligently, established roots in Delano, California.

The attack of Japanese forces on Pearl Harbor in 1941 brought hardship on the Kataoka family as to 120,000 others of Japanese ancestry, by being removed from his home and interned until 1945. Upon their release the Kataoka family permanently settled in Denver where Bob earned his living as an upholsterer.

Bob began collecting mountain trees to create his Japanese gardens at his home that began as landscaping but naturally led Bob's interest to bonsai. He was an early member of the Denver Bonsai Club that would eventually become the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society. His bonsai clearly reflected the style, sentiment and influence of Japanese bonsai upon mountain collected native American tree material. He was a bonsai scholar who sought to adapt the techniques of black pine bonsai culture to the native Ponderosa Pine. He kept careful records of this trials and results. His best Ponderosa Pine became the logo of the Denver Junior Bonsai Club and eventually RMBS. Bob was an expert in grafting all kinds of trees

and his philosophy was pure; you should enjoy the essence of the tree and the effort of the hobbyist rather than look for faults. He explained that bonsai are trained, not tortured - "It is not neglect that creates the weathered look, but the right training."

He was a guiding light for the RMBS as the result of his reading many of the Japanese bonsai magazines and adapting those methods to local native trees. Bob's reputation and expertise as an American Bonsai master was recognized before his death and acclaimed by such acknowledged teachers as John Naka, Ben Oki, Ken Sugimoto and Frank Okamura. Bob's bonsai reputation extended beyond the borders of the US when he was acknowledged by Japanese bonsai master Kyuzo Murata, who, after viewing Bob Kataoka's bonsai garden in Denver, asserted his opinion that Bob's bonsai were one of the great representation of American bonsai art he had seen and his artistry in creating bonsai was superlative and adhered to the purest traditions of the art.

In 1986, the year Bob passed away, the Bob Kataoka Memorial Award "Artist of the Year" was established in his honor and is presented at the RMBS's annual show to a member who had developed a bonsai that is considered outstanding. His daughter, Lily Uyeda, keeps his vision alive in the private garden.

### **Personal observations by Larry Jackel**

Bob was very much like a kind grandfather who wanted his children (anyone doing bonsai) to have all the help they could take. He believed that the spirit of bonsai was to share everything he knew with anyone who wanted to know about bonsai. A kind and generous person, Bob was a model for me as what a human being should be like! Bob's bonsai were wonderful. Almost all had been collected yamadori. His styling and design concepts were advanced beyond what most of the bonsai artists were doing at the time and the trees would be some of the best today.

## 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 30<sup>th</sup>.

All memberships renew this summer on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 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.](#)

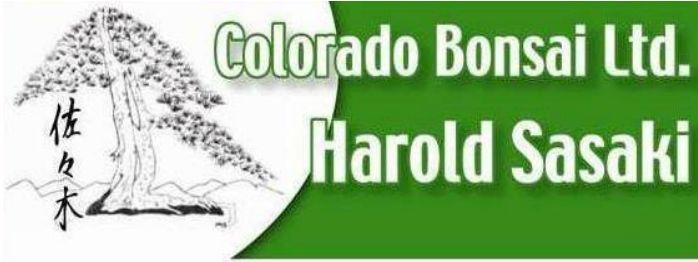
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