

DRAWING BY PHIL HAYWARD

RMBS

March 2019

Volume 51 Issue 3

March President's Message

by Andy Berry

The Music of Nature

"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." –Kai Kawahara

Since our February newsletter contained this quote from Kai Kawahara, I have been thinking about how his words can inform my bonsai practice. In its purest sense, anyone can **experience that feeling** when encountering a well composed bonsai. Everything works synergistically: branch placement, foliage mass, planting angle, the texture and finish of the container, in combination with accent plant and backdrop. The arrangement can have a transcendent power. Not unlike a well

composed piece of music that puts you in a certain mood or conjures up a nostalgic memory. In a larger sense, some of the material with which we work has been shaped and molded by centuries of elemental exposure prior to our influence. In this way, Mother Nature ("Mother" as Larry Jackel refers to her) can be thought of as the composer of a vast symphony of elements that has shaped the tree and imparted a unique story from which it cannot be divorced. I think this is what Kai is driving at: we need to listen to the composer and play our part in each tree's next chapter by respecting and accentuating her work. This might be why engagement with bonsai is a lifelong pursuit filled with surprise, learning, and enrichment. It connects us with nature in our increasingly electronic lives.

Taking this a step further, I feel fortunate that being involved with bonsai cultivation has given me a greater sense of ***how this harmony plays in our natural seasons.*** Perhaps this is the same sentiment that inspired Vivaldi. Within the space of a calendar year, the tasks associated with advancing bonsai design and horticulture take a (somewhat) predictable course of distinct “movements” (keeping with our musical theme). I continue to busy myself with the work of overwintering conifers (cleaning congested areas of growth and assuring containers are not drying out) and wiring and pruning deciduous material prior to the tender bud push. My Japanese maple just began to push out leaves as it always does in late February, despite residing in my unheated garage. I read this as a signal that we are ready for the next verse. I have commenced with the long-awaited spring repotting season, but not without planning. I assure that any bonsai repotted this early has an aftercare plan that will protect it from strong winds and freezing. I find early spring to be one of the most exciting times in bonsai, but also one of potential peril. We all know that March is usually the month with our most significant snow accumulation. Patience is key during this period, despite the crocus beginning to show their delicate shoots in the bed in the front yard. I am, with you, longing for the thaw of late spring and the lengthening days of summer where I can take solace in the routine of watering and fertilizing and being amazed at the growth my trees are pushing. ***I have found***

that patience with bonsai often produces more success than “doing.” This must have been the idea behind John Naka’s response when someone playfully asked him if he spoke to his trees. He replied, “Don’t be silly. I don’t talk to them. I listen.” Learning to listen and “speak bonsai” (if you prefer a Neil-ism) is like listening to the symphony of nature and learning to play along.

Given the ***spirit of patience in the early spring period,*** please join me to wish winter one last goodbye at our March meeting. We will have an informed discussion from senior RMBS members about ***the merits of different winter shelters*** (from cold-frames to full-fledged greenhouses). As Will Kerns notes in our first ever “Artist Spotlight,” learning to effectively overwinter bonsai in Colorado has been one of his largest challenges. Come learn what might be the best strategy for your collection and how to successfully advance your trees every winter. Following this, Mike Britten will leave us ready for spring with a ***discussion of bonsai ecology*** and the ecosystems that exist in each of our backyards and in every bonsai container in your backyard. ***Please come listen.***

Your brother in bonsai,

Andy Berry

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2018 - 2019 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Date and Location	Agenda or Program
<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>
<u>Mt Goliath Bristlecone</u> <u>Pine Field Trip</u> Aug Sat, Aug 17 th 10:00am – 3:00pm Mount Goliath Natural Area, Mt Evans Rd, Evergreen, CO 80439, USA (map)	<u>TED ENGELMANN</u>
<u>RMBS 50th Annual Show</u> Sept Sept 5 th , 6 th , & 7 th Denver Botanic Gardens	

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

March Long Program - Bird pines (and bonsai ecology)

Mike Britten

Feb. 23, 2019

Ecology is the study of plants and animals and how they interact with the non-living and living environment in order to survive and reproduce. As bonsai practitioners, we are all ecologists since we are in a unique position to observe how our domesticated trees interact with water, sunlight, nutrients, and the soil and respond through their growth and development. I've wondered how what I have learned about the requirements of my trees applies to trees in the wild. "Wild bonsai" (naturally dwarfed trees in nature) serve as wonderful models for our trees – I'd consider myself a bonsai master if I could create trees half as charismatic as most of the wild bonsai I see on my ramblings in the mountains. At the next meeting I'll share some of the similarities and differences (through photographs) between the ecology of our domestic bonsai and wild bonsai (including comparisons of horticulture and styling) as well as some interesting interactions wild trees have with competitors and other species.

For example, all of our native trees interact with birds. Usually, the birds benefit, but sometimes the relationship is beneficial to both. Have you heard the phrase "bird pines?" While most species of pine have small "winged seeds" that are dispersed by the wind, about 20 pine species (out of ~111 species worldwide) have large wingless seeds that birds depend on (and that the pines also rely on). In Colorado, we have two bird pines, limber and pinyon. There are two different bird species that rely on them for much of their year-round nutrition.

Clark's nutcrackers favor limber pines while pinyon jays (obviously) favor pinyon pines. Both are "Corvids" or members of the jay family and eat pine seeds directly from the cones. Both also store seeds for future use.



Clark's nutcracker on a limber pine near Allenspark, CO.

Nutcrackers have a special pouch in their throat which they fill with limber pine seed (up to 100 at a time). They fly off with a full pouch to bury or cache groups of 4-5 seeds on windswept ridges and slopes (they appear to select windswept ridges and slopes that don't accumulate deep snows). They may fly miles (reportedly up to 7 miles) away to cache seeds and can cache up to 500 seeds per hour and as many as 30,000 in a year. Nutcrackers have a well-studied and remarkable spatial memory that allows them to revisit caches and retrieve seeds to eat in winter or anytime food is short.

Upon first consideration, it seems like pines are the losers in this relationship but ecologists believe this is a symbiotic or mutually beneficial relationship. The birds obviously benefit by having a source of high quality food that helps them through winter. But limber pines benefit by having their seeds planted far and wide in exactly the kind of places where they thrive – windswept ridges and slopes. While many of the seed caches are revisited and the seeds eaten, some are not and these seeds are the basis for a new generation of pines. Ecologists speculate that the two species co-evolved with the pines producing larger and larger seeds to attract nutcrackers to spread their progeny into new areas.



Pine seedlings emerging from a probable Clark's nutcracker food cache near Allenspark, CO.

Similarly, pinyon jays have a close relationship with pinyon pine trees which are the source of pine nuts. We rarely see these jays on the Front Range because pinyon pines are also rare in the area (the only population I know of is a small isolated population N of Fort Collins at the NE most limits of its range). Pinyon jays are a very social species; their flocks can include 500 birds. One researcher estimated that one large flock of jays cached 4.5 million pinyon seeds during one particularly productive year for pinyon pine cones/seeds.



Pinyon jay near Lyon's, CO.

While the relationships between nutcrackers and limber pines (and other 5-needle pines like whitebark pine which grows to the north west of Colorado) has been well-studied and publicized, other Colorado native conifers also have "relationships" with birds. I'll highlight some of these at the next meeting.



Naturally dwarfed pinyon pine near Moab, UT.

Do you know which birds focus on which of these native Colorado conifers?

Rocky Mountain juniper	Red crossbill (type 2)
Ponderosa pine	Townsend's solitaire
Lodgepole pine	Red crossbill (type 5)
Spruce	White-winged crossbill

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 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

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 gone 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.

[Densho Encyclopedia](#)

[Denver Public Library](#)



Ponderosa Pine

Collected by Jim Robinson 1987

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.

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.



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

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 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.



RMBS ARTIST SPOTLIGHT – Will Kerns

At RMBS we have developed a diverse, inclusive community of people who are passionate about bonsai, related arts and culture. We hope that learning more about our members and their practice will enrich our society, generate conversation and bring us closer together.

Who are you?

Will Kerns, bonsai hobbyist and part-time bonsai instructor



How did you become interested in bonsai?

While I was growing up in Wisconsin my mother Brooke always had me growing plants and gardens. Once I moved to Colorado and went to college, I realized that I had no place to have a garden or exercise my green thumb. One day a friend of mine brought in a Bonsai Tree and book that he bought from Harold Sasaki at Colorado Bonsai Ltd. I saw the tree and read the book cover-to-cover, I was hooked.

I began studying under Master Harold Sasaki in 1999 and have been studying how to grow and style bonsai with Harold ever since. I also began studying with Ryan Neil at Bonsai Mirai in 2013. I specialize in Colorado Native plant material and collect Yamadori in Colorado.

What was your biggest challenge?

Learning how to overwinter trees and learning how to give proper aftercare to freshly collected trees.

What makes you most proud?

My bonsai journey, looking at my level of knowledge from where I started to where I've come. My acceptance 5 years ago into Ryan Neil's school, Bonsai Mirai accelerated this journey.

What is/are your favorite species?

Colorado native species, my top three are: 1. Rocky Mountain Juniper 2. Colorado Spruce 3. Limber Pine

What surprised you most about the art?

How closely bonsai parallels architecture, design, and structural engineering.

What is your history with RMBS?

I initially was a member of the Northern Colorado Bonsai Society while I was in college at the University of Northern Colorado. Once I graduated college and moved to the Denver area, I joined the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society in 2001.

What does the future hold for your practice?

I teach bonsai lessons, and do work in client's gardens and on their bonsai collections as an aside from my full-time job with Hyperloop Transportation Technologies www.hyperloop.global In the future I'd like to continue to gain garden and bonsai clients.

If you were a bonsai style or type of tree, which would you be?

Informal Upright – Imperfect, interesting, strong, and starting to show some age.

Where / who do you derive inspiration for bonsai?

Inspiration from both senseis Harold Sasaki and Ryan Neil, but also by all the great artists in our club: Todd S., Tom A., Adam J., Patrick D., Bart H., Derek S., Larry J., Allan H., Jackson D., Terril S., Mark M., Dan W., Paul K., Chris and Stephan R., Patrick A., Mike H., Darrel H., Darrel W., and so many others!

What is your bonsai history?

I began studying under Harold Sasaki in 1999, in 2013 began studying at Bonsai Mirai, in 2014 began offering instruction and gardening services to clients. In 2016 I bought my house in Wheat Ridge and began construction of a permanent bonsai garden.

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](#)

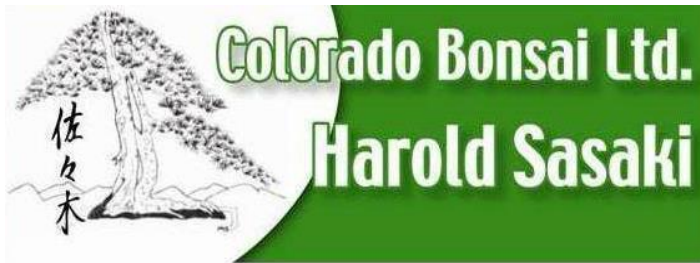
[Colorado Bonsai Ltd.](#)

[First Branch Bonsai](#)

[S&S Bonsai](#)

[RMBS Facebook Page](#)

[Mike Horine Website](#)



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