



COLORADO BLUE SPRUCE WILL KERNS

RMBS

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President's Message

by David McPeters

Here we are at the end of 2020. It has been an abnormal, often difficult, and trying year. There are so many cynical jokes about this year and what else could occur I thought I would take a different approach. This year has caused me to really pay attention to the things I am grateful for; things often taken for granted. Health and access to health care (I fractured my kneecap in May which required surgery. I received excellent care from medical personnel working through the pandemic), a place to live, plentiful food to eat, and family to lean on and to support, to name a few. I hope each of you and your families and loved ones are well.

I am retired and oddly that was an advantage because our lifestyle was already

amenable to the precautions needed. But that still left the question of what to do to fill up the day. I realized how much I enjoyed the Wednesday morning workshops at the gardens and the monthly meetings. Like many I suspect, I keep a to do list of all the things I need to do, have been asked to do, and want to do. It is easiest to pay attention to the latter i.e., bonsai stuff. And in normal times those items are often the first that get done. Let's just say some serious progress has been made on the honey do list, the routine home maintenance list, the 'if I had the time' projects list, and of course the bonsai list. I even got around to decluttering the basement a bit. I know by the time spring arrives I will be ready to resume some

normal activities. Hopefully, that will be possible.

Thanks to all who responded to the online survey. Thirty-one members responded and provided valuable input for our 2021 planning.

- 25 members attended one or more of the virtual meetings held this year. Of those that did not attend, they either do not like virtual meetings or had schedule conflicts. Most thought that the pre-recorded videos and slide presentations were of good quality. We will try to stick with these as much as possible recognizing that live streaming from various locations introduces technical issues difficult to overcome. Having the videos on YouTube allowed members with schedule conflicts to view them later. Several members appreciated the meet and greet half hour before the formal meeting. They were well attended.
- There were a wide variety of suggestions for meeting programs in 2021. They ranged from programs on specific species, seasonal care, Yamadori, preparing tools, pots, and materials for spring, repotting, grafting and layering, styling, and Q&A sessions.
- Everyone expressed a desire to resume in person activities when it is safe. Everything from monthly meetings to visiting artists, to Saturday workshops. This is very

understandable. Sometimes bonsai people are viewed as practicing a solitary passion. But clearly the social aspect of participation is important and needed. Stayed tuned.

The board will meet on January 24th to begin planning for 2021. Denver Botanic Gardens has cancelled all meetings at the gardens through the end of March, so our monthly meetings will continue to be virtual through the first quarter of the year. The intent for the year is to continue monthly meetings resuming in person meetings when possible, resuming Saturday workshops when it is safe and members are comfortable participating, scheduling visiting artists virtual and later perhaps in person, and finally the annual show. Planning for the annual show will assume there will be a show at Denver Botanic Gardens and include a virtual component.

The January 5th monthly meeting is an open forum for members to gather and discuss topics of interest. Two timely topics are overwintering of trees and preparing for spring. I intend to have photos of where I overwinter to share through Zoom if there is interest. Consider taking a few photos of your setup and coming prepared to discuss your circumstances.

Happy New Year! Stay safe.

David

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INTERESTING ARTICLES BY OR ABOUT RMBS MEMBERS

Two publications are featuring articles written about or written by RMBS members.

In the Winter 2020 edition of "Modern in Denver" magazine, (on the newsstands now and viewable on-line) a beautiful article called "Small but mighty Trees of Life" features our own Will Kerns with some commentary by Larry Jackel and Hal Sasaki. This 8 page full feature lay out explains the history of bonsai as well as some fundamental tips and discussions about what bonsai is all about. There are some outstanding photographs of a few of Will's trees as well as a detailed list of references for bonsai enthusiasts. It is not only an interesting read; it was beautifully composed and laid out. Will was quite honored to be featured in this contemporary local publication and I highly recommend getting a copy of it.



An Adventure in Virtual Bonsai The Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society Tackles Pandemic Obstacles



For the third time in four years, Bonsai Clubs International (BCI) has agreed to feature the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society in a major magazine article. At the request of its editor, who was impressed with our 2020 virtual show, Paul Koenning and Tom Anglewicz crafted a story about the process and challenges of staging our annual bonsai and viewing stone show virtually. This article, which will include "behind the scenes" images and photos of several trees from the show, is eight pages long and will appear in the 2021 first quarter edition of the magazine. If you do not currently receive the BCI publication, you can subscribe by going to their website, bonsai-bci.com.

The Zen of Bonsai by Tom Anglewicz

For some time, I have been intrigued by the relationship between Zen teachings and the practice of bonsai. While I personally practice *zazen* (sitting meditation) daily, I have no extensive knowledge of the subject, and these observations are based on intuition, not on scholarly research.

In my younger years I remember reading Alan Watts's seminal book, *The Way of Zen*, in which he attempts to explain Zen thought and philosophy to the Western mind. I was fascinated with two key ideas that it presented: the notion of "being in the present," and the idea of "being at one" with whatever you are engaged with. In a way these two concepts are complementary.

Being in the present is the notion that we are totally focused on who we are and what we are doing at a given point in time. Not thinking about what happened yesterday, where we need to go later in the day, or trying to answer questions or solve problems of the future. Just being totally present in the moment.

Being at one with an activity means that I am mindfully and unselfconsciously connected with what I am doing in the here and now. This concept can apply to any activity: cooking, exercise, meditation, walking the dog, washing the dishes, playing baseball, etc. In fact, there are some activities, especially sports related, where "thinking about" what you are doing actually screws up your ability to do it. For example, hitting a fastball or making a difficult golf shot. So "being at one" with an endeavor is essentially intuitive and absent self-reflection. In my opinion it can also involve a certain level of expertise that has been so thoroughly absorbed that it becomes "second nature" and does not interfere with the creative process or performance.

As we achieve a level of technical proficiency and self-confidence in bonsai, it seems to me that its practice becomes more Zen-like. We face the subject of our work, whether it be a raw piece of yamadori or a tree that we have nurtured for twenty years, and we effectively become one with it. We try to understand what the tree is telling us, to understand the most appropriate design direction, or, in Ryan Neil's terms, to understand "what the tree gives us."

We begin to work with the tree perhaps having a general idea of where we are going but realizing that the process of the work will reveal opportunities and challenges that we did not foresee. It is a process of discovery and evolution. And this applies, I believe, whether we are repotting a tree, cleaning the foliage, wiring or rewiring, or pruning. It applies to trees under development and those in refinement.

As we work in this fashion, we become one with the tree. We achieve a symbiotic connection with it. We begin to understand its potential, now and over time. At the same time, we are totally in the moment. We can work for four, five hours and hardly be aware that time has gone by, until we realize that we are tired and it's time to take a break.

In our hectic and chaotic world it is very difficult to achieve this Zen state of mind, not just for bonsai but for all aspects of our existence. I find that it helps to *slow down*. If I am rushing around and juggling many tasks it is extremely difficult to focus on the here and now. Multi-tasking is extremely overrated and possibly unhealthy, in my opinion. Maybe one positive aspect of our current pandemic is that, at least for some of us, it places us in relative isolation and forces us to slow down and take one thing at a time. In that way it can enable us to be more in the moment, whatever we are doing.

Like many others, I find bonsai to be a very introspective and contemplative activity. It is an art form, but it is an art in which we must interact with a living, growing entity. Trees are never "finished" because they are constantly changing and growing. Lose a branch? We need to study and reevaluate the design to compensate for that loss and to determine how best to respond. Lose a tree? That is a very frustrating experience, especially when we don't know the reason; but it also is potentially part of the learning experience.

In one of my many conversations with Ryan and other students at Mirai, I referred to a late book by the famous Swiss/French architect LeCorbusier, published in 1960. Its title is *Creation is a Patient Search*. As we contemplate the design process, the mindset and the state of consciousness that we bring to the practice of bonsai, perhaps that idea is relevant to our efforts. Enjoy the search!

2021 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Date and Location	Agenda or Program
<u>January Monthly Meeting</u> Tuesday, January 5 7PM Zoom online	<u>LONG PROGRAM</u> DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN MEMBERS ON SUGGESTED AND REQUESTED TOPICS OF INTEREST TROUBLE SHOOTING ADVICE, SEASONAL CONCERNS ETC
<u>February Monthly Meeting</u> Tuesday, February 2 7PM Zoom online	<u>PRESENTATION BY BJORN BJORHOLM</u> BROADLEAF EVERGREENS AND Q&A
<u>March Monthly Meeting</u> Tuesday, March 1 7PM Zoom online	<u>TOM ANGLEWICZ AND ADAM JOHNSON</u> REPOTTING TECHNIQUES PRESENTATION AND DEMO
<u>April Monthly Meeting</u> Tuesday, April 13 * 7PM Zoom online	<u>SERGIO CUAN</u> DECIDUOUS TREES
<u>May Monthly Meeting</u> TBD	
<u>June Monthly Meeting</u> TBD	
<u>July Monthly Meeting</u> TBD	
<u>August Monthly Meeting</u> <u>TBD</u>	
<u>September Monthly Meeting</u>	
<u>RMBS annual show</u> Friday-Sunday September 3-5 Denver Botanic Gardens	

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](#)

[Colorado Bonsai Ltd.](#)

[First Branch Bonsai](#)

[S&S Bonsai](#)

[RMBS Facebook Page](#)

[Mike Horine Website](#)



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Gift Certificates!! Use them for *anything* (supplies, classes, etc.) and at *any time*.

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

BONSAI
CREATIONS
COLORADO

BY ROBERT 



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