



American Bonsai Society

Bonsai in America

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John Naka

A Tribute to a Great Master

*John Naka would have been 100 on
August 16th 2014.*

In conjunction with the **U.S. National Arboretum** in Washington D.C., the **ABS** is planning a special commemorative edition next summer. As a huge part of his Bonsai Journey, John was well known not only as a great teacher but also as a friend to many of us.

As part of this special edition, we want to reach out to our membership and beyond **to obtain some of these memories**. We want to hear from all the people that were touched by John during all of his years and travels. **If you have a special story, memory or picture, we would love to hear from you.**

What now seems like many years ago, I was lucky to meet John several times through our local club in Evansville Indiana and I know, he definitely touched my bonsai soul and was instrumental in my bonsai journey. Even though I was at the time a beginner and yes, I had some horrible material John treated me as a friend and he worked very hard to explain and show me how my horrible little tree could in fact become a bonsai. To this day, an old picture of John, my tree and I are among my most memorable bonsai treasures.

After my introduction to John, I purchased his books—Techniques 1 & 2 and I was well on my way to a love affair with my little trees.

Our plan for this occasion is to tell many of these stories and to share our thoughts of a great man who was

instrumental in advancing bonsai in America and doing so in a very personal way.



If you have a story, article or pictures, send them to our **Journal Editor—Bob King.**

Please include—

John Naka Tribute in the subject line.

Send to Bob at
editorABS@shaw.ca

If you have questions, you can also e-mail me—Dave Bogan at
absnewsletter@frontier.com

Lets all join together and make this a special tribute to a very special man.

*In conjunction with this Special Edition, plans are in the works for a **special benefit for all of our ABS members.***

Please watch for special announcements soon.

*Keep in mind, this will be a benefit for members only so **make sure you renew your membership and encourage others to join.***



Holiday Pictures

By Andrew Smith

It's the end of the year. Summer's past, fall's nearly done and winter oozes down from the dark north country to cast its spell of icy stillness on us once again. Waterfalls freeze solid white and lakes turn glassy-eyed with groaning ice a yard thick. Time to sharpen skates and build bonfires in the snow.

Well, almost time. We still have the Holidays to get through, or Black Friday anyway. I love all the seasons but shopping season, though I'm trying to love that one too. But it's not a season of growth, ripening, seed or decay, so I don't know where to place it. It's probably good that we have one anyway, because I don't know when I would ever get around to scheduling Christmas if it was left strictly up to me. I'm sure I would mean to, but just not find the time. A lot of things are that way.

I think I might just have Thanksgiving twice a year instead. Family, friends, food and a bottle of wine, with maybe a football game to watch together: if only it had fireworks it would be perfect!

How would you celebrate Thanksgiving for a tree? We have no end-of-the-season celebration for our bonsai to mark our appreciation for the joy and beauty they add to our lives and to send them off on their long winters sleep. But maybe we should. We could share recipes for holiday fertilizer pellets to put on our bonsai pots as the growing season comes to an end and to help strengthen our trees for the coming spring. We could give them a little feast to tide them through the winter and create a common and proper ritual for putting them away each year.

Around here the growing season is short and the winters are long. My bonsai trees, as well as the trees in the forest, spend more of their lifetime in dormancy than they do in activity. Therefore this dormant period, this time of waiting, is a major function of their life. I have tended to look at dormancy as almost a period of death, of sleep, of non-activity, and winter as a time of non-bonsai, but I'm beginning to see that dormancy is as vital an activity to the tree as growth is. In fact, being dormant is their most common activity.

Of course, what we call dormancy in a tree might just be a form of activity that's too slow or too foreign for us to recognize. Perhaps they don't sleep, as much as they dream. I know that even in the dead cold of winter, when my breath crystallizes in the still air, there is life going on inside my trees. Tiny new buds appear in the heart of winter in preparation for an unseen spring and white root tips are often visible anytime the soil is thawed enough to check. Despite being frozen, the soil dries out more quickly than expected. They still take up water, though not as rapidly as in summer.

In the woods, once the temperature falls much below zero, the pines will freeze so hard that they become brittle as glass. This saves the loggers work because when they drop a tree the branches shear off when it hits the ground, rather than having to be lopped with a chainsaw. I delay shipping my bonsai trees when it's below zero for this reason. In the woods, the tree will first freeze from the outside in, so that the outer wood is frozen like cement but the center of the tree remains unfrozen. But after a time the tree will freeze right through and then the reverse happens: on warm days the outer layers thaw, but the heartwood stays frozen.

Even so, the tree is not inactive. On cruising contracts we sample trees year-around using an increment borer, which is a hollow, hand-turned, drill that removes a .17" diameter core from the tree so the annual growth rings can be measured and counted. In winter, when the trees are frozen, we often have to use a mallet to get the bit started in the normally soft pine. Surprisingly, despite the frozen wood, there is a lot of sap flow at this time of year, and it's much more noticeable than in spring or summer. But it's "winterized" sap, thick and white as a milkshake, fortified with a natural antifreeze to keep it flowing.

I wonder what else is going on in my trees at this time of the year? Actually, I wonder what is going on inside them all the time. Do they have any sort of subjectivity, or experience of being? Do they, in some sense, dream? We know they respond to light, temperature, water and wind. But plants have been shown to respond positively to music too. Since they don't have ears, or organs that sense vibrations, how could that possibly be? And what could it possibly mean? We think they sleep, but maybe they are just listening deeply to the silent song of winter.

I don't know and I assume I never will. It's beyond the edge of current knowledge, beyond what we can know. That's good, for knowing cannot quite touch the mystery and I need to feel the mystery to feel alive.

My trees help me do that. They are so different from me, but since we are both are living beings we must have something deep in common. But what?

Can we both feel grateful for a sunny day? Can we share Thanksgiving?

In this hectic season I hope you find much to be thankful for and can keep it in mind when you need to. Don't forget to go out and look at your trees from time to time and watch them dream. Perhaps, in their way, they are thankful that you do so.

Note,

Remember all articles, suggestions, tips and procedures may differ in your area or not be true for all species. Always think through any technique and ensure it is appropriate for your individual trees or area.

ABS News

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we have the correct
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Follow up. The use of Hydrogen Peroxide as an oxygenizer.

I just read the article in the ABS monthly newsletter about hydrogen peroxide for root issues. Just thought I would pass on an experience that I had with a commercial nursery in Albuquerque NM where I resided for 31 years. I worked at a commercial nursery there on the weekends tending some of their trees, and was well aware of the standard practice they had of using hydrogen peroxide on collected specimens of native conifers which were purchased from local collectors for landscaping purposes. Often these trees would come in with a deficit of roots, and in the native soil, which was often 10% caliche clay. It was used to get oxygen to the remaining roots and it seemed to work rather well.

In a related matter, there is also a product which is being used on bonsai in the local area (Portland Oregon) as a fungicide with the product name of Zeritol. As stated on their website May be used as a fungicide on: Bedding plants, Flowering plants, Roses, Poinsettia, Ornamentals, Nursery stock, Trees, Turf, Cut flowers, Bulbs, Cuttings, Seedlings and Seeds, and it may be used as a fungicide and algicide on: greenhouse structures, benches, pots, watering systems, evaporative coolers, storage rooms, ventilation equipment, floors and other equipment. It is basically hydrogen peroxide, and as a fungicide works only when sprayed directly on the affected areas, not as a systemic.

Roger Case

Winter Blues

As Fall approached I'm sure many of you were glad to finally not have to water every day. Now, as winter progresses, we start having withdrawals and missing our bonsai. The best way I have found to change my mood is to pick up a bonsai magazine, book or watch a bonsai video on the web. Check out sites like

Bjorn Bjorholm's at <http://bjorvalabonsaistudio.com/>. go to videos.

Bjorn has produced dozens of great short videos of bonsai and his work.

After enjoying some great motivation, I will typically dig out a tree and spend several hours wiring or at minimum, studying the tree for future work. There is no problem bringing a tree into warmer surroundings for a few hours. Just try not to keep it in over night and make sure it's not frozen when you bring it in. Be careful, if wiring, as some branches may seem stiff and not as flexible as they were last spring. Enjoy your time and dream of spring.

Check out **Andy Smith's Web Site** for great stories, trees and information
<http://www.goldenarrowbonsai.com>

Need Help?

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your**

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The leaf reduction on the Japanese maples was more significant than on the elms. In addition the new growth was extremely more dense and ramified. The new growth on my Shohin Japanese maple was so dense the tree had a clump like appearance. I have just defoliated in the hope that I will get larger leaves and not so dense. I will no longer use the 3-1 on this tree as the leaves are actually too small, many were about the size of an eraser on the end of a pencil. This will be an interesting process to monitor. I do have one cork bark elm with normal size leaves. I will try the 3-1 this coming spring to see if the effect is duplicated.

I have one elm which was purchased from a previous owner. She owned the tree for approximately 30 years. I have had it for 10 years before the small leaf pattern began this past spring. I have a Shohin elm about 8-10 inches tall and I have owned for over 10 years. (purchased at convention so I have no other history). That tree produced small leaves 2 years ago and continues to put out the small leaves. It is very healthy. I have not noticed a significant difference in ramification.



I will keep you posted as I monitor this phenomenon. Below is a sample photo of the shift in leaf size on the 30+ year old tree this spring
Ken Roberts

As for Bayer fungicide, we don't use it at the nursery but Matt Smith the guy that does our EBay sales does. He has used the three in one which I think includes the fungicide. This spring he was wondering why the leaves on his maples and elms was staying so small. Once we figured it must be the Bayer he stopped it for a while and the new foliage came out normal size. I am not sure the trees have suffered any long term growth problems. I will have Matt contact you, as I am sure he has more input than what I am telling you.

Thanks Brussel Martin

I have experienced similar problems with Bayer 3 in one after using it for three years. At first I noticed my elms had very small leaves and looked great and I thought I had discovered the ultimate solution to leaf reduction, without the usual constant pinching and pruning and the end to the seemingly never ending leaf spot problem. The leaf spot and many other problems with my bonsai were eliminated with Bayer 3 in one and I thought I had found the all in one solution. No spider mites, lace bug, leaf spot, scale. etc. But it seems that I have not. This year my Azalea's look as if they are not being fertilized properly and have a pale appearance and leaves are stunted and are not growing as they should. My elms are not growing as they normally do and are losing leaves. The junipers and pines do not seem to be affected by the use of Bayer 3 in one. Also, I have not noticed any problems with my maples but they may be next. I guess if it sounds too good to be true, it is. I will continue to use this product on my landscape plants but not on my bonsai. Maybe someone should contact Bayer to see what they have to say.

Tommy McCurry—Louisville Ky

Tips & Techniques

If you worked on a tree heavily this fall or will do so this coming spring remember to give it a recovery period next year. I firmly believe in allowing trees to recover after either major upper work or repotting. I allow a untouched growing period the next year. Example, in the case of a white pine that I heavily wired, I will not reduce fertilizer during the summer. I fertilize over the growing period even though I know I may push a little longer needle growth. I can always go back to my normal practices the following year. In the case of a deciduous, I never heavily prune or wire the same year that it is potted.

When creating shari, we typically outline the area with white caulk and then carefully cut the area out with a sharp knife. I have found in many cases, using a sharp knife or razor knife, it is hard to cut and remove the bark. When creating these areas, I now use my power carver with a small round bit. Carefully carve away the bark and once done, I now go back and use the sharp knife. I have found this helps eliminate slips and wrong cuts if using the knife. I now allow the area to dry a few weeks and then go back and carve the area to give it some character. Another tip is once you have cleaned up the edges of the wound, apply a thin bead of white wood or Elmer's glue. The glue will help seal the new open edge wound. After a few weeks, the glue will actually start to peel away and expose a nice clean cut that has started to heal. The glue helps to seal in the moisture at the exposed cut edge for a while until the tree seals it off naturally.

Typically after creating an area of exposed wood, many will coat the area with lime sulfur. Personally, I detest the stark white look especially if you have added white paint to the mix as some do. It looks so contrived and fake. In many cases, if I do use lime sulfur, I will coat much of the exposed area with ash or cigarette ashes. Rub it in especially in the lower or indented areas. Now, I brush it off lightly. This will create areas of dark and light. Now apply the lime sulfur. Once dry you will notice a slightly more natural look that is not stark white. You can also rub some on areas after they have been coated with lime sulfur and again it will add darker highlights.

I typically do not reuse wire especially copper wire but occasionally I will reuse some aluminum. To reuse it, I always straighten it. To straighten a piece, grasp both ends of the wire with a pair of pliers. Holding the pliers, push it together and then with a quick pull, yank it outwards. Typically it will straighten in one pull but for heavier wire it may take a couple of try's. You can also clamp one end in a vise and then need to only pull on one end.

Generally I never use a wound sealer except on very large wounds. Instead I simply seal the wound with a pinch of wood or cigarette ash. This will also help the wound blend in. This will keep the wound disease and insect free for a long while.

Want an unglazed pot to have a nice sheen for a show? Rub it a wax type furniture polish and then buff it to a nice sheen

Is your name
on the list?



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