



American Bonsai Society

# Bonsai in America

Written & Published by Dave Bogan

June 2015 Volume 4, Issue 6



## The Internet and Rocky Mt juniper

By Andrew Smith

Our Internet is down so much we call it the Internet, because as often as not, it's not working. We have a super hi-tech satellite dish that's good for gathering rain-water and I haven't figured out what else. I don't know if clouds sometimes get between the dish and the signal, or gnats, or just air, but something does and it sends our signal someplace else. I imagine it's collecting in a giant invisible internet puddle somewhere and everyone who walks through it starts mysteriously thinking about celebrity scandals.

And then my web browser got old, I just learned, so that I can't get any e-mail till I update it. The last time I did this I had to drive into McDonalds because on our system it said it would take 48 hours to download the update. It took 15 minutes at McDonalds and I had some fries. But this time my password is also outdated or changed or forgotten and I can have a new one e-mailed to me, except I can't get e-mail, but I can still have some fries. And all this convenience is only \$60 a month.

So the bright hope of technology is sometimes lost on me. I'd probably like it if it worked as promised, although that's just conjecture at this point. Maybe I wouldn't like it.

Luckily, there is still Wyoming.

There's no wifi, no cell service, no TV. There's even places where you can't get am radio. It's just you and the wind, sighing across mountain and prairie with a song older than any known time. And there are tall stone mountains scattered with wild juniper, sage and pine.

I'm lucky that in just a few hours I can be there. I can leave the Internet behind and not miss it, but I could never leave this wild earth under my feet.

This spring I made two trips to Wyoming to collect junipers and limber pine on BLM land. After a warm, dry winter, it's been a very cool and wet spring. The rain and snow is good for the trees, but it kept delaying our trip because the roads were too muddy to travel on.

But finally, right after Memorial Day, we made it over

there. It was still pretty wet and the air was thick with the scent of cedar and sage. The mountain peaks in the distance were capped in fresh snow and we watched heavy gray storms drift across the open valleys towards us, but never quite reach us. We were many miles away.

The damp sandy soil was perfect for good collecting. We'd found a new spot, a several-hundred-acre plate of broken sandstone cap rock on a low ridge. Usually I avoid trying to collect trees from sandstone because the root systems tend to be very sparse. But in this particular location we were able to find trees with good, dense, root systems, and the high soil moisture helped keep them intact and flexible.

It was an interesting site because it had both Rocky Mt. and Utah juniper, as well as ponderosa and limber pine. Usually, due to elevation, we find Rocky Mt. juniper and limber pine together, and Utah juniper and ponderosa pine together, on separate sites.



From 10 feet away Utah juniper is indistinguishable from Rocky Mt. juniper. Up close though the Utah's have a coarser, thicker needle, more like a California juniper. The berries are bigger on Utah juniper. They also have peeling, papery bark like sagebrush, rather than flaky bark like Rocky Mt. juniper. And Rocky Mt. junipers have red and white aromatic wood that is often used for making cedar chests and furniture. Utah juniper has pungent, yellow wood. They also usually grow at a lower elevation.

I don't know if the two species hybridize, but it's not uncommon to find specimens that seem to have characteristics of both.



The rains had brought out brilliant wildflowers, some of which I couldn't remember seeing before.

(Continued on page 2)



I found an old grave, or at least what looked like an old grave. Someone had pounded a wooden marker in and painted a name, I presume, but the paint had weathered away and I couldn't read it. I wondered who would be buried in such a place.

When night came it rained again and in the morning we decided the roads were too risky. You could describe the road system into this place as "cliff-like." They were exciting enough for my tastes when they were dry. So we headed further west looking for drier ground and spent most of the morning looking for a useable road that would take us back into the mountains. We found one that was washed out, several that were posted and several more that went nowhere. But finally a rancher gave us permission to cross his place and get back to the rocks. On the corner of his road, growing on a boulder, I saw the biggest, coolest skunkbrush sumac I've ever seen and I took a picture. There was a nest and a Northern Shrike sitting beside it.

We stayed three days and we got some good junipers, some fair ones and one really great one. By then we were tired and it was time to go home. After we got back it took me three more days to pot them all up. Now it's time to wait and watch them start to grow. I'm impatient and after a few weeks I usually start digging in the pots to look for new roots. Usually I find them by the end of July, but sometimes not until the next year.

I still haven't solved my Internet problems. But I rely on it, just like everyone else, so sooner or later I'll get it all straightened out, probably after spending way more time and money on it than I wanted to.

Till then, I'm just glad there's Wyoming.

Andy



**Coming June 11th—14th,**

**The ABS Convention  
& Learning Seminar**

**Capitol Collections**

**in our Nations Capitol.**

*As part of this convention and in conjunction with the NBF, the National Bonsai Museum will be presenting a reopening of the Bonsai Museum. Recently improved and updated, a tour of this exhibit will be a once in a life time event. The NBF has graciously joined with the ABS and has issued a private invitation to all convention attendees. Many of you may remember a similar invitation and tour which was held at the 5th World Convention several years ago. This was a very thought provoking and enlightening tour. Please plan to attend. Get your reservation for the convention in early.*

*The following is a special invitation from the NBF.*

**To All Attending the 2015 ABS**

**Convention & Learning Seminar:**

On behalf of the **National Bonsai Foundation**, you are cordially invited to attend **NBF's Welcoming Buffet Reception at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum** on Friday, June 12, from 5:30 to 8:00 pm.

Festivities will include the opening of the **3rd National Juried Bonsai Pot Exhibition**. Prizes for the Bonsai Pot Competition will be awarded, and the winning pots and other important American ceramic pieces from private collections will be on display as will **the bonsai and penjing from the National Collection**.

I look forward to

seeing you!

**Felix Laughlin,**

**President NBF**



**The National Bonsai  
& Penjing Museum**



## **Crataegus Bonsai**

By *Bonsai Artist &  
Master* —

**Michael  
Hagedorn**

Reprinted with Michael's permission

**Visit Michaels Blog at <http://crataegus.com/>**

### **And One More Watering Tip**

...since we've been on the subject of watering earlier this month, why not keep at it?

This one is rather simple to relate. Sometimes, when watering our bonsai gardens, we might notice a tree that is always dry. It seems like minutes after we water it, the darn thing needs water again.

*This should set off jangling alarm bells in our heads! Loud, nasty, persistent ones.*

When a bonsai dries out this fast, there is often a very simple reason. The interior of the soil mass is not getting saturated. Very old established bonsai sometimes have this problem.



It can happen with nearly any soil type, but is very common with Turface, Oil-Dri, and any soil containing peat moss. All of these have rehydration problems when dry.

A combination of issues can cause the interior area to become bone dry:

- soil choice
- erratic watering schedule
- compacted interior soil
- 'veneer watering' (watering with only a light pass that does not completely saturate)

Of the issues, an erratic watering schedule and veneer watering are the worst. *Inconsistent watering can cause some pots to get too dry, and then light watering simply runs down the sides of the pots and into the bottom after encountering very dry interior soil.*

Once the interior becomes bone dry it can be hard to rehydrate. The best way to restart hydration is to soak it from the bottom up. In my yard, I might see a couple trees a year that need a soak. After the soak, usually with more attention to watering afterwards, the problem is fixed.

- The reason this is such a serious issue is that eventually all the interior roots will die, leaving only those next to the sides of the pot and the bottom—which are really the worst places for a bonsai to grow roots.

*To rephrase and sum up, when you see a tree that seems always to be dry, consider rehydration with a bottom soak. Usually this only happens with very established, old bonsai that have a mature root system. Most trees that have hydration problems need an extra pass or three with the water hose to keep from revisiting the 'dry death zone', which would be a pretty good title for a bonsai horror movie, come to think of it. Likely somewhat limited audience.*



In a joint effort, the **ABS, PBS and NBF** will be presenting a joint convention in Washington in June 2015. Let's all join in helping the **NBF and The National Bonsai Museum**. Please make it a point this year to **join the NBF** and help support the Museum. Please visit -<http://www.bonsai-nbf.org/sign-up/> for exciting news and to receive their newsletter. Remember, the NBF needs your support and donations to help maintain, strengthen and improve the Museum.

**Lets make 2015 a banner year for the NBF with our donations to the NBF and Museum.**

## Thoughts, Questions and Techniques

*By Dave Bogan*

Bonsai in spring is an amazing and busy time. After all of our hard work over the past couple months, we are now at a point we need to again make several changes. Earlier, we encouraged the new emerging growth, pampered it and in some cases pushed it. Now, comes May and June and we have reached a point where we need to stop it, slow it down and in many cases remove it. Over the last few weeks, I started thinning out foliage on many of my deciduous trees and in some cases, totally removed all the foliage. Now as June approaches, I will turn my attention to my pines and start the same slowing or removing period with them.

As the month of June heats up, many of our chores will be done and we will enter a slow down or maintenance period due to the heat and partial dormancy with many of our trees.

Of course, the opposite is true with all of our tropical species which are now ready for their spring work. Tropicals like ficus, buttonwood, black olive and many others are entering a huge growth phase or season. It's actually amazing to see these species awaken and start growing very heavily in the sweltering heat while all the other species are shutting down.

With this in mind, we now will have trees with two totally different types of needs. The deciduous are shutting down and going semi-dormant. These species will now need very close attention to their different needs. With the intense heat many of the deciduous leaves will close up during the day. With this I mean the leaves now turn to a survival mode in conjunction with their moisture needs. They will be working hard to keep from drying out due to moisture loss. During the heat of the day, they will close their pores to retain moisture and only open them in the evenings and mornings. With this in mind, you must pay very close attention to their moisture needs. Many will need watering twice or even more per day. In many cases, our job is also to keep our pots, soil and roots cool. As temperature increase, so do soil temperatures. With warmer or even hot soil, roots shut down and if allowed to continue, will kill off roots.

Now, with all this concern, hopefully you took note earlier this spring and potted your trees in a open soil mixture. We always have a huge debate on soil mixtures. In many cases, people think a little more organic material will help retain moisture but in truth, it clogs up the soil mix which retains heat in summer. Now with the heat, air and moisture exchange is vastly more important. With our additional watering per day to not only water

the roots but more importantly to exchange the air. By exchanging the air, you will more quickly cool the soil down. With increased watering's, you also do not need to worry about moisture build up. Coerce soil mixtures are a win win situation. Water often and when you water, make sure it saturates the soil every time. And while you are at it, always wash the foliage off with a strong water spray. Generally I flush the foliage every morning and some in early afternoon. I do avoid wetting the foliage in the evening if it will not have enough time to dry prior to night fall. Moist foliage can lead to fungus if allowed to stay damp over night. During the day, as well, water logged hot soil can cause roots to die which in rare cases, can cause root borne fungus from the decaying roots and if present organic matter.

A huge benefit to spraying the foliage is to expel insects. Especially mites which thrive in hot weather. Keep a very close eye out for mites as the weather gets hotter. If you notice mites or dull low luster foliage, start spraying immediately with a miticide

## Brussels Rendezvous

As usual, our annual excursion to **Brussels Bonsai** and their annual **Rendezvous** was a huge success and very enjoyable event. For those unable to attend or not aware of this event, it is a 3 day event (actually 4 days including special workshops held on Thursday) with workshops held by several very knowledge and world renown bonsai masters and teachers going on all day, each day. My wife Barbara and I were both lucky to take the all day workshop with Mark Nolanders utilizing a couple of existing trees from our personal collection—a Kokonoe white pine and a Douglas Fir. Both of which when finished totally amazed us based on their original look prior to the workshop. In all honesty, Mark Nolanders is in my opinion, the top Bonsai master of Europe and if he resided here in the U.S. he would also be top here. Having trained with the likes of Kimura and John Naka to just mention a couple, and having close to 30 years of experience in bonsai, he is probably the most versatile master I have even worked with. The most likable quality of Mark is that he doesn't have to tell you he is good, his work and especially his personality speaks for him. Some of the present day masters, seemingly have the need to talk about their abilities or tell you they have Japanese training which makes them a "master". A Real master has no need to tell you where or how much training they have but to show you their skills and just as importantly insure you understand and enjoy their sessions.

Probably my only complaint or concern was, as with most conventions, where some of the workshop teachers have pushed the limits of the trees at this time of year simply to sell their skills. I

saw one where the teacher had pruned an azalea and also repotted some trees (non tropical) in two different workshops which in my opinion is not good in late May early June. Its very important for these teachers to pass on their skills and teach the participants but a good teacher will never sacrifice a tree simply to entertain their students.

The main value of these events is the social interaction between lovers of the same past time. Meeting old friends and talking bonsai is to me more valuable than any tree I have in my collection. I can honestly say, every year, I learn a new little technique or a little more about some of my trees and their care.

Of course, somewhere in my priorities is also obtaining new bonsai. As always, Barbara and I came home with a couple new specimen trees and several that need our special touch or ideas. We obtained a very unusual raft style azalea which was obtained from a private collection in Japan, the likes of which I have never seen before. New treasures, new ideas and renewed friendships, it never gets any better.

### Old Trees

#### Don't be fooled or caught up in the moment

Over the last couple years, there seems to have been an increase in the number of collected trees here in the U.S. Many of them seemingly are very old or so says the seller. One issue I have, is many are bought simply because the buyer is intrigued wanting a collected or seemingly old trees. You get them home and after the initial intrigue due to their proclaimed age or that they were collected wears off, then you see there is honestly not a quality bonsai within the structure of the tree and you are now stuck with a tree that has very little potential or its going to take ten years to even have a marginal tree. So many older trees have numerous faults—chopped off trunks, huge branches, very sparse foliage, absolutely no taper or worse, reverse taper, huge roots or even non existent nebari. Next, you find that the tree has only been collected last year. To do things correctly and to save the tree, you should probably wait another 3 or more years before you can even touch the tree. Remember, just because a tree is old, it doesn't mean it will be a great bonsai or if it does have potential, it may be 10 years before it's even close to being ready for the correct pot or even considered show worthy. When looking, know the species, find out when it was collected, what soil its now growing in and where it was growing. If it hasn't been collected for a minimum of 2—3 years, definitely pass it up. Don't let a huge trunk with sparse foliage influence you unless you know the species can be developed and increased ramification obtained. Be especially careful with conifers, junipers, pines, etc. Remember, these species rarely ever bud back and what you start with may be it for years. Any time you see an interesting tree, stop and think twice and do not let your bonsai emotions take over. Remember, with great bonsai, it's not how old it is but rather how old and mature it looks.



The **American Bonsai Society**

## Bonsai Resource Directory for 2016.

This directory will be sent out with the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition of the Journal in 2016. They will also be distributed at conventions and offered in our bookstore. The directory will be 9 x 4", a handy size to keep on one's desk, pocket or car. The directory will include vendors, clubs and bonsai artists.

If you are vendor or know of any in your area, please let me know so I can contact them to be listed.

If you are a member of a club, please make sure the club information is updated on our website.

Bonsai artists will be listed. If you want to be listed as a bonsai artist/instructor, please let me know, so I can send you a form to complete.

**If you have any questions, call me at**

**812-922-5451**

**or e-mail me at**

**[abssecretary@frontier.com](mailto:abssecretary@frontier.com)**

**Barbara Bogan ABS Executive Secretary**

### Prairie State Bonsai Society Show

The show will be once again held at the beautiful  
**Morton Arboretum in Lisle, IL.**

The show will be held on **August 1 - 2, 2015.**

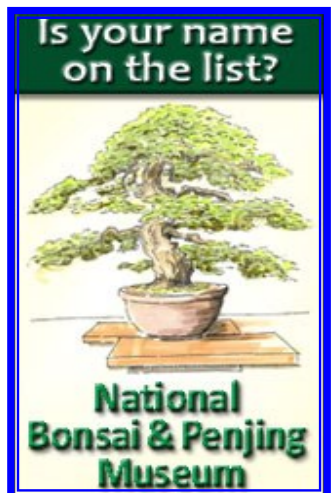
Our featured artists will be Jim Doyle, Brian Ciskowski, and kusamono artist Young Choe.

Show hours are 10 am to 4 pm both days. The show will feature a display of members' trees as well as several vendors.

Please visit **[www.prairiestatebonsai.com](http://www.prairiestatebonsai.com)** for information on workshops and demos.

Email:

**[snipologist86@gmail.com](mailto:snipologist86@gmail.com)**



## Mid America Bonsai Alliance— MABA Convention JULY 10–12, 2015

*Featured Artist*  
**Suthin Sukosolvist**

### *Workshops, Seminars & Demonstrations*

<b>Bill Valavanis</b>	<b>Pauline Muth</b>
<b>Jim Doyle</b>	<b>Frank Mihalic</b>
<b>Mark Fields</b>	<b>Paul Weishaar</b>
<b>Ken Huth</b>	<b>Brian Ciskowski</b>
<b>Mike Thiedeman</b>	<b>Scott Yelich</b>

*The American Bonsai Society (ABS) will be presenting a special National award for the best indigenous species*

**Clarian Hotel Waterfront Plaza & Conference Center Indianapolis, Indiana**

**Visit our website : [www.maba2015.com](http://www.maba2015.com)**



### **Bonsai Stolen from Pacific Bonsai Museum**

CONTACT: Kathy McCabe, Executive Director, 253-353-7356, [kathy@pacificbonsaimuseum.org](mailto:kathy@pacificbonsaimuseum.org) FEDERAL WAY, WA—

On Monday, May 18, at approximately 4:20 am, a bonsai, estimated to be worth thousands of dollars, was **stolen from the public display at Pacific Bonsai Museum in Federal Way, Washington**. The missing tree, a 60 year old San Jose Juniper, has been a part of the Museum since its opening in 1989. "This is a tremendous loss, not only to our collection but there is a strong likelihood that the tree will perish. This tree has been cared for every day for over 60 years, and if that daily care doesn't continue the tree will die. These living works of art are the result of the care provided by multiple generations. However, it's not too late for it be returned, no questions asked, so we can make sure this tree will be around for another 60 years." Aarin Packard, Curator, Pacific Bonsai Museum. The Pacific Bonsai Museum, located on the Weyerhaeuser Company Campus in Federal Way, WA, is one of the top bonsai collections in the world. Established by the Weyerhaeuser Company in 1989, the Museum is now a nonprofit organization, operating on land leased from the Weyerhaeuser Company. The stolen bonsai was part of the collection on display to the public. The theft took place inside the secure exhibit area. The loss will be greatest for the tens of thousands of visitors annually who were able to experience the wonder of living art by viewing this San Jose Juniper bonsai. Information leading to the recovery of this artwork should be forwarded to

[kathy@pacificbonsaimuseum.org](mailto:kathy@pacificbonsaimuseum.org)



## ***THE ARTISANS CUP***

**September 25-27, 2015**

**The Portland Art Museum**

An event celebrating the beauty of time and the balance of nature

*The Artisans Cup is the premier exhibition of American Bonsai, located in the heart of Portland, Oregon*

The time has come for American Bonsai. A steadily growing subset of the millenia-old art form, American Bonsai honors tradition while pushing the artistic boundaries of what is possible. The Artisans Cup is the leading expression of American Bonsai, showcasing the highest level of craftsmanship and skill in an experimental environment that will engage and inspire. The Artisans Cup welcomes five of the world's premier Bonsai professionals to evaluate

**[info@theartisanscup.com](mailto:info@theartisanscup.com)**



# CAPITAL COLLECTIONS

& COLLECTING IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

★ ★ ★ ABS • PBA • NBF • 2015 ★ ★ ★

**June 11 - 14, 2015**  
**Ellicott City, Maryland**

Four days of lectures,  
workshops, exhibitions,  
vending and more!

## Featured Artists:

- |                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| • Ryan Neil           | • Jack Sustic   |
| • Guy Guidry          | • John Kirby    |
| • Arthur Joura        | • Pauline Muth  |
| • David Easterbrook   | • Ron Lang      |
| • Andy Smith          | • Jim Gremel    |
| • Larry Jackel        | • Young Choe    |
| • Martin Schmalenberg | • David Knittle |

## Workshops, demonstrations, lectures and other festivities

Workshops and demonstrations will feature a wide variety of **high quality, collected material**. Lectures will also focus on collected material and on modern American potters.

Attendees will be transported to a festive reception by the **National Bonsai Foundation**, with cocktails and dinner enjoyed while admiring the **National Collection** and the **NBF Container Exhibition**. The **John Naka Prizes** will be awarded at the reception and **The 3rd Annual Juried Bonsai Pot Exhibition** will follow a call for entries to all American ceramicists, featuring both traditional and novel pot designs.

## Vendors

The vendor hall will be well stocked with collected trees and handmade pots as well as tools, stands, and related items. Onsite shipping will be available.



Limber Pine: collected by Randy Knight and styled by Ryan Neil  
Photo Courtesy: International Bonsai Mirai



## About Turf Valley, Maryland Resort

Turf Valley, located in Ellicott City, MD, is a full service, family-oriented facility, with a championship golf course, tennis courts, and indoor and an Olympic outdoor pools, located within easy striking distance of Baltimore's Inner Harbor, Washington D.C., and BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport.

more info: [www.turfvalley.com](http://www.turfvalley.com)

Get the latest information and register today at:  
[www.absbonsai.org/2015-abs-learning-symposium](http://www.absbonsai.org/2015-abs-learning-symposium)