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RMBS

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## March President's Message

by Tom Anglewicz

### The Art of Repotting

Within the past three weeks I have spent quite a bit of time repotting trees in my greenhouse, some of which are among the best in my collection. When I was less experienced, I used to think that repotting trees was just a routine chore that needed to be done once in a while to replace old planting medium with new. That was before my studies at Bonsai Mirai opened my eyes to all of the dimensions inherent in the art of repotting.

In many ways, repotting bonsai is an act of discovery. If we do it carefully and mindfully, we discover the potential of the tree, identify its best attributes, and determine how we can enhance those attributes by combining it with a container that accomplishes that goal. The sum is truly greater than the collection

of the parts because bonsai is the creative combination of "bon," the container, and "sai," the living plant.

This is especially true when we are dealing with the repotting of yamadori, or collected trees, that have spent the last two or three years in growing boxes or Anderson flats. We don't know what the potential of these trees is until we remove them from their growing containers; examine their trunk and surface roots, which may have been buried; consider the health and strength of the subsurface roots; and evaluate alternative ways in which the tree might be displayed in a bonsai container.

That's why the first thing we should do when repotting yamadori, or even nursery stock or a tree in our own collection, is to carefully and delicately explore the surface of the soil

to discover what's happening at the base of the trunk and to identify the potential to enhance surface roots, or nebari.

In January I repotted a beautiful Ponderosa Pine, collected by Randy Knight, under Ryan Neil's watchful eye at Mirai. As I explored the base of the trunk, we both realized that there was a flare of surface roots that had been disguised within the growing container. Ryan's reaction was to remark that I had just added significant value to that tree. I was pleased, since it was my tree, but the important point was that this discovery also impacted the way we would plant the tree in its new container, the selection of that container, and how the tree would be displayed.

As I repot trees in my own collection, I try to keep these principles in mind. I don't assume that I will retain the same angle or orientation of the tree because that's the way it has been growing for the last five years. Instead, I look for other ways to enhance what the tree has to offer, or will have to offer when its design is altered or refined.

Another common mistake in repotting, which I was guilty of for many years, is to plant trees in containers that are simply too large. It's easy to understand why we do this – it's the path of least resistance. Why not use that container that is too deep, or too wide, because it will readily accommodate the entire root mass that we find ourselves confronting? But that is not bonsai.

Bonsai is the art of discovering an aesthetically pleasing combination between the scale of the tree and its container, while obviously keeping the tree alive and healthy. This is "pushing the envelope." This is much harder than simply placing the tree in an oversized container because it means that we must carefully examine the root mass when we are repotting, determine which old roots can be removed, whether there are areas of resistance to a new potting configuration that can be modified, etc. This is all part of the "art" of repotting, but it also requires an understanding of how far we can go and still keep the tree healthy, which is inevitably species specific.

In summation, I encourage you to look at photos of outstanding bonsai, for example from the Japanese exhibitions, such as the Kokofu-Ten, or the American ones, to see how trees are exhibited and to carefully consider the relationship between the container and the tree. Bear in mind that some of these trees have been in an appropriate container for decades, but it still gives us some guidance. As a Japanese American bonsai artist told me a long time ago, "Bonsai is a process; you are only here to care for the tree. If you are successful, the tree will be here long after you are gone." That forever changed my mindset toward bonsai!

Tom Anglewicz

## 2016 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Date and Location	
<p><b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b>      <b>March</b>                      Tue, Mar 1<sup>st</sup>, 7:00 – 9:00pm                      DBG Plant Society Building</p>	<p>Short Program – <b>Artisans Cup Retrospective</b>                      Presenter: Todd Schlafer                      Main Program – <b>Shohin Bonsai</b>                      Presenters: Les Siroky</p>
<p><b><u>Community Outreach</u></b>      <b>March</b>                      Fri, Mar 4<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 – 5:30pm                      Sat, Mar 5<sup>th</sup>, 10:00am – 5:30pm                      Sun, Mar 6<sup>th</sup>, 12:00 – 5:30pm</p>	<p><b>ECHTER’S GARDEN CENTER</b>  <u>Echter’s Spring Gardening ECHXPO</u>                      Info Booth (2 Days) - 2 RMBS Members                      Sat. &amp; Sun. Demo “<u>Making a Bonsai</u>”</p>
<p><b><u>Saturday Study Group</u></b>      <b>March</b>                      Sat, Mar 19<sup>th</sup>, 9:00am – 4:00pm                      DBG Bill Hosokawa Bonsai Pavilion</p>	<p><b><u>REPOTTING OF DECIDUOUS BONSAI TREES</u></b>                       Workshop Lead: Darell Havener</p>
<p><b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b>      <b>April</b>  <b><u>Visiting Artist</u></b>                      Tue, Apr 5<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 – 9:00pm                      DBG Plant Society Building</p>	<p><b><u>Visiting Artist</u></b> – Mr. Paul Gilbert   <b><u>The Art of Suiseki</u></b>                      Paul Gilbert (RMBS Past President)</p>
<p><b><u>Saturday Study Group</u></b>      <b>April</b>                      Sat, Apr 23<sup>rd</sup>, 9:00am – 4:00pm                      DBG Bill Hosokawa Bonsai Pavilion</p>	<p><b><u>REPOTTING OF YAMADORI</u></b>                      Workshop Leads: Bob Randall, Tom Anglewicz &amp; Todd Schlafer</p>
<p><b><u>Visiting Artist – Matt Reel</u></b>  <b><u>Registered Members Workshop</u></b>                      Sun, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 9:00am – 4:00pm                      DBG Bill Hosokawa Bonsai Pavilion</p>	<p><b><u>Visiting Artist Workshop</u></b>                       8 Participants @ \$65                      Unlimited Silent Observers @ \$10</p>
<p><b><u>Visiting Artist – Matt Reel</u></b>  <b><u>All-Day Individual lessons for Registered RMBS Members</u></b>                      Mon, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Time “Open”</p>	<p><b><u>Individual Artist Lessons</u></b>                      Matt is available all day on Monday for individual lessons</p>
<p><b><u>Visiting Artist – Matt Reel</u></b>  <b><u>Morning Individual lessons for Registered RMBS Members</u></b>                      Tue, AM, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Time “Open”</p>	<p><b><u>Individual Artist Lessons</u></b>                       Matt is available on Tuesday morning</p>
<p><b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b>      <b>May</b>  <b><u>Visiting Artist</u></b>                      Tue, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7:00 – 9:00pm                      DBG Plant Society Bldg.</p>	<p><b><u>Visiting Artist</u></b> – Mr. Matt Reel   <b><u>The Art of Bonsai</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Community Outreach</u></b>      <b>May</b>  <b><u>Saturday Study Group</u></b>                      Sat, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 9:00am – 12:00                      Location: 3875 Cherry Creek N Drive</p>	<p><b><u>TAKAYAMA PARK CLEAN-UP</u></b>  <b><u>SATURDAY STUDY GROUP</u></b>                       Event Lead: Darell Havener</p>

## March Programs

*SHORT PROGRAM* In September, 2015 there was a premier exhibition of American Bonsai and this inaugural show was called The Artisan Cup. Ryan

Neil organized this show with two main purposes; to be an inspirational and aspirational event that raises the level of practice bonsai nationwide; secondarily, The Artisan Cup will shift the way the general public views bonsai by

displaying it in a curated fine arts context. It will dispel the notion that bonsai is merely an Asian

gardening hobby and show it proudly as living sculptural art. Seventy one trees were entered by some of the best North American bonsai artists, one of these artists is our very own Todd Schlafer, RMBS Past President and former RMBS Artist of the Year. We will show Todd's tree and hear the audio critique from the renowned judges: Boon Manakatvivipart, Colin Lewis, David DeGroot, Peter Warren and Walter Pall. As you listen to their invaluable teachings; an educational opportunity sure to help any level Bonsai practitioner grow as an artist.



## MAIN PROGRAM

In the art of bonsai, there are Shohin bonsai trees.

Shohin means "a small thing", indicating it being even smaller than Bonsai. Although no exact rules were ever formulated, a

tree is considered to be Shohin when under 25 cm (10") tall. Experts believe that you must be able to hold the Shohin tree in one hand, indicating the exact measure of the height of the tree is not strictly important. Former RMBS Artist-of-the-Year, Les Siroky is RMBS' master artist when it comes to bonsai, and especially Shohin Bonsai Trees. Shohin care is more demanding than maintenance of your other bonsai. First of all, their small pots dry out much quicker. It's also more difficult to see pests, unless you pick the trees up individually. Sometimes even one new leaf can make a difference in design, therefore they need more frequent pruning. Les will walk us through what it takes to cultivate a nice Shohin bonsai tree.



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## 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.

All memberships renew this summer on July 1, 2016. Individual memberships are \$24 per year and family memberships are \$36 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

### 2016 Bonsai Classes

The Bonsai Basics classes will be held starting in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter (April or May). Bob Randall and Larry Jackel will be leading the Bonsai Basics class. Stay tuned for more information about the class including scheduling and cost. It promises to be a great class for those seeking a solid base of knowledge in Bonsai. The classes will be held at the Botanic Gardens. Class size is limited, if you are interested please send an email to [rmbquestions@gmail.com](mailto:rmbquestions@gmail.com) to add your name to the list. You must be current on your 2016 dues to register and attend.

Bob asks members to consider donating tools (concave cutters). The tools will be kept by the club

for future classes. Please bring donations to the Tuesday meetings.

### Classified Ads:

//////WANTED///// - bonsai pots made by RMBS member Don Osbourne - I have two and would like more. Prefer to trade yamadori or other pottery. Please email me at [adamhjo@yahoo.com](mailto:adamhjo@yahoo.com) or call/text 303.921.5860 to discuss. - Adam Johnson.

### Resources for Members:

Go here for information on the 2016 Tree Diversity Conference sponsored by DBG and University of Denver

[2016 Tree Diversity Conference](#)

[5th U.S. National Bonsai Exhibition 2016](#)

[Brussel's BONSAI Rendezvous 2016](#)

Other internet resources:

[RMBS Web Site](#) – A members only section is being added to the web site. Stay tuned for more information.

[Colorado Bonsai Ltd.](#)

[First Branch Bonsai](#)

[S&S Bonsai](#)

[RMBS Facebook Page](#)

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