

**NEXT MONTHLY MEETING: Wednesday,  
April 27, 2016, 7 PM**  
**Held in the Auditorium – Matthaei Botanical  
Gardens**

**IN THIS ISSUE**

The April Meeting: David DeGroot	pg. 1
President's Perspective	pg. 1
Up for Debate	pg. 2
March Meeting Wrap-Up	pp. 2-3
Beginner's Mind	pg. 3
Club Information	pp. 3-4
2016 Calendar & Regional Events	pg. 4
Membership Information	pg. 4

Evening Program – Our speaker for the April 28 meeting will be David DeGroot, an internationally recognized bonsai artist. David is the former curator of the Pacific Rim Collection (now the Pacific Bonsai Museum - <http://pacificbonsaimuseum.org/>), a world-class bonsai collection. He has also been acting as a consultant for the Matthaei collection.

His formal education is in music, and he was a percussionist for the New Orleans Symphony before launching his professional career in bonsai. David is a knowledgeable and entertaining speaker, with a vast amount of experience and expertise to share.

**PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE**

Sunday the 17th, what a beautiful day, warm and sunny. It's for real now, Spring is here. I see flight ducks filling the sky and the snowbirds filling the highways. For a lot of Michigan members this is a

second Spring. Many buds started to swell and some trees even sprouted leaves several weeks ago. If you didn't bring them in, they probably lost that first flush of leaves when winter returned. They will most likely recover but will be slower on the restart and possibly a little weaker. We sometimes get very excited after a dark winter and go crazy seeing the first full day of sun, as our trees do. Always be cautious when bringing plants out of winter storage. Best to exercise caution and move trees later. Leaving them on the ground will help keep them cold and delay the growth startup. Spend your early spring days fixing your benches and readying your work area. Clean and sharpen tools.

**Spring Tasks:**

Check your notes from last year and see when you last repotted each tree. Very few trees need repotting every year. Every tree grows roots at a different rate. Repotting is dependent on tree size, foliage amount and size of pot. It really worries me when someone says they do not look forward to spring because they have to repot all their trees. Learn about your tree and save yourself a lot of work and your tree will be healthier for it

I always remove the top ½ inch or so of soil and replace with new. A buildup of last year's debris can hinder water movement in your soil and it also looks messy. Remove any dead or damaged branches and look for signs of last year's bugs.

**Opportunity Time:**

Now is a great time to really look at and study each trees build: branch placement, ramification, damaged bark, and crossing branches. These all are visible before leaf out. Now is also a great time to wire. No leaves in the way... do be careful of wrapping wire

over a new bud. Ok have at it and see you at the next meeting.

--Ron Milostan, President, AABS

## UP FOR DEBATE

By Aaron J. Binns

### Getting Things Started

This is the inaugural edition of a column that I hope becomes a mainstay of our monthly newsletter. The concept is simple, I get to express some view on bonsai or a related subject and then ask the bonsai community to weigh in with other views and opinions. We will use the Ann Arbor Bonsai Society Facebook Page as our medium for discussion. If you have never participated in a Facebook discussion rest assured you are not alone. Personally, I had made it a goal to become the last person on Earth to have a Facebook account, but alas, I can resist no more. I am hopeful that this newfangled technology from 1999 will not best me, and I encourage everyone to join me in giving it a try.

Remember every opinion counts and every idea is worth listening too. There is a basic rule that I have found holds true even within the bonsai community; there is usually more than one right answer. Maybe it would be better to say there is more than one useful answer. I would go so far as to say that even concepts with real flaws can be useful. Bear with me, I am going down a philosophical rabbit hole for just a moment. There is a basic problem given to new physics student studying light and optics; how long does a mirror need to be for a person to see himself from head to toe. The answer isn't hard to calculate if you use the right model of reality. In this case you need to imagine that there is another world behind the looking glass. Sketch two people, the one standing in front of the mirror and another one standing the same distance away from the mirror but on the other side in our imagined other world. Then you draw some triangles, use some basic geometry, and presto you have the answer. Who cares, right? The point is that a model of reality is just that, a model. No one really believes that there is an Alice in

Wonderland parallel world behind every mirror, but since the model helps us to get real answers that are useful in our real world we use it. I think the same can be said for many of the concepts individual bonsai enthusiasts hold to almost religiously. If an idea helps you develop better bonsai, who cares if it is 100% true?

There is only one rule during online discussions; be nice, remember we want to encourage everyone to participate and we aren't looking for perfection. (We veered drastically away from perfection by allowing me to write this column...)

To get everyone warmed up to the idea of sharing I am going to propose a topic that is usually taboo in polite bonsai conversations. No one wants anyone to know about their blunders, but I think learning from other's mistakes is much better than repeating them yourself. So let's air our dirty undergarments for all the world to see... and maybe even learn from. If you can bring yourself to participate in this discussion then future topics should be easy. I'll start. A few years ago I decided I wanted to try pine bonsai, so I bought a starter tree and started styling. Everything was going great until my first repot slash root prune. At this point in my bonsai career I had been mainly working with tropical varieties. Tropicals are great because there isn't much you can do during a repot to hurt them. So, not knowing any better, I repotted my pine the same way I would a ficus. I pulled it from the plastic training pot, combed out the roots, and washed them to get all of the old cheap dirt out... after all I was going to use high end bonsai soil. Well, I didn't know that pines rely on the mycorrhizae fungi that live in and around the roots. Which in my case was in the cheap dirt that I washed away. The fungi help the pine absorb nutrients and develop with the tree. Remove some fungi and the tree will most likely be fine. Remove all of it and your pine bonsai becomes fire wood. The moral of the story; never bare root a pine. Always leave some of the old soil.

So there you are, I told you mine, now tell me one of yours!

## **MARCH MEETING WRAP-UP**

Five items were raffled off. We thank Kurt Smith, proprietor of “The Flower Market” in Dundee, for the donated pre-bonsai trees.

The Web Page is now back in operation having been down for upgrade.

**Guest Speaker:** Greg Afman, lead horticulturalist of the Japanese Garden and Bonsai collection of The Meijer Gardens in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Greg Afman’s workshop was filled and was a success. We should see some of those trees at the April 27 membership meeting.

Greg Afman gave an inspiring lecture on Zen and its role in Bonsai. He asked us to think in a very different way about our art form. He wants us to explore the essence of our bonsai and go beyond putting a tree in a small pot.

Greg’s topic, The Way of No Form, asks us to look but not see. The objects in front of us, bridges, tea houses, and lanterns and bonsai trees are just that, objects. The Way of No Form asks the viewer to look at the relationship between the objects. Seeing the spaces surrounding and within each object defines what we see. Each time you view something, you will see it differently. A bonsai tree will no longer be just a large tree, or a large trunk. It will have a character, a relationship with its pot, a movement in its branches.

During this year I would like all members to view their bonsai as more than a tree in a pot. Working with “Ma” a Japanese word meaning ‘negative space’ and Beginner’s Mind, “Shoshin”, we should try to move beyond “a tree in a pot” and see the tree’s relationship to the pot, as part of the pot. The bonsai artist should try to see the tree and pot sharing a space, its essence.

## **BEGINNER’S MIND**

By Brian Byrd

In this new column, I will take advantage of my ignorance of bonsai to ask questions. In my experience, beginners’ questions like mine are often somewhat different from the questions experts ask.

Shoshin (初心), or Beginner’s Mind, refers to a state of openness, eagerness, and a lack of preconceptions. I hope that the questions I ask this will embody shoshin.

Each month, the question will be posted on the AABS Facebook page so that members may provide their answer. Because of the nature of the questions, I am sure the answers will vary. And the various answers will help me and other beginners – and with any luck experts – learn about the possibilities inherent in bonsai.

This month’s Beginner’s Mind question:

*“Is the beauty of a tree its wildness, or its refinement? Should the constraints imposed by the artist be emphasized, or hidden?”*

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## **FOR SALE OR WANTED:**

**Ads in the Newsletter:** All members can offer for sale any bonsai and bonsai related materials in the newsletter or at the monthly meeting with no sales fee. AABS Society Members’ ads are free to publish in the Newsletter. Deadline for submissions to the Newsletter is the 5th of the month.

**Prizes for the Raffle:** We are soliciting donations suitable for prizes to be raffled during each general meeting, and for the Annual Bonsai Show Raffle. If you have a tree, bonsai pot, tool or anything else bonsai related, that you do not use anymore and is still in good condition, consider donating it to the Society. Please see Bill Struhar at any meeting, email Bill at BillStruhar@michiganderpots.com, or call (586) 468-7169.

**Club Logo Now Available:** we will embroider the club logo on your garment for \$10 (plus modest additional charge for

lined garments). The logo comes in two forms; light green tree on dark green background, or dark green tree on light green background, with a silver border on both combinations and AABS lettering an appropriate contrasting color depending upon the garment color. Bring your garment in a clear plastic bag to a meeting, select your colors, pre-pay Bill Struhar, and your garment will be ready one or two meetings later. (The vendor requires a minimum of 5 garments per order)

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### REGIONAL BONSAI EVENTS 2016

#### May 12-15 2016 American Bonsai Society - *Bonsai in the Garden Learning Seminars* in conjunction with the Michigan All State Bonsai Show

Held at Frederik Meijer Gardens, Grand Rapids, Michigan

#### Early-August Annual Show of the Four Seasons Bonsai Club of Michigan

Held at Bordine's of Rochester Hills, Michigan

#### Mid-August 39th Annual Mid-America Bonsai Exhibit

Held in Glencole, Illinois

#### August 28 & 29 Ann Arbor Bonsai Society - Annual Show

Held at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, Ann Arbor, Michigan

#### September 10-11 5th US National Bonsai Exhibit

Held in Rochester, New York

#### Sunday, September 18, 2016 Art of Bonsai

Held at Hidden Lake Gardens, Tipton, Michigan

#### October (time and date to be announced) Mid-Michigan Bonsai Club - Annual Show

Held at VanAtta's Greenhouse, 9008 Old M-78, Haslett, Michigan

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### 2016 Executive Board

President ..... Ron Milostan  
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### AABS AD-HOC COMMITTEES

The AABS President is an ex-officio member of all committees with the exception of the Nomination Committee.

**Fund Raising:** William Struhar

**Web Administration:** Don Wenzel

**Nomination Committee:**

**Show Committee:** Ron Milostan and Paul Kulesa

**Annual Auction:** Paul Kulesa

### MEMBERSHIP ISSUES – CONTACT THE TREASURER

The annual dues are \$25. You may pay your dues, mailing a check to the treasurer or talking with Tam at the next meeting. Please pay by check.

Tamara Milostan  
4228 Highcrest Dr  
Brighton, Michigan 48116

[AABonsaiSociety@gmail.com](mailto:AABonsaiSociety@gmail.com)

Check payable to: Ann Arbor Bonsai Society

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The Ann Arbor Bonsai Society is affiliated with the American Bonsai Society: <http://absbonsai.org> and the Mid-American Bonsai Alliance: <http://mababonsai.org>



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*Visit us on the Web:*

<http://www.annarborbonsaisociety.org>

### Support Local Bonsai Vendors

Hours: Wed., Thurs. & Fri.; 11:00 am to 6:00 pm Sat., 1:30pm to 5:00pm  
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