



The Ann Arbor Bonsai Society meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at the U-M-Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Please join us at 6:30 PM to meet friends and members. Program starts at 7:00 PM.

<http://www.annarborbonsaisociety.org>  
[AABonsaiSociety@gmail.com](mailto:AABonsaiSociety@gmail.com)

**May 2016**  
Volume 13 Issue 4

### **NEXT CLUB MEETING:**

**May 25, 2016**

### **Seasonal Workshop with your tree**

Wednesday, May 25, 2016 is our next meeting for this year. This month's program is a Seasonal Workshop for members and visitors to perform timely work on their trees. If you have questions or want to perform seasonal work on your bonsai, bring it to the meeting. AABS members will be available to give advice, offer suggestions, and answer questions. Plan to bring your own wire and tools. All are welcome.

Join us at 6:30 PM in the MBG auditorium to catch-up with longtime friends, welcome visitors and talk bonsai.

The meeting starts at 7 PM with the evening program to follow.

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### **PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE:**

**Ron Milostan**

Wow! Spring has really sprung. Here it is May already. All our trees should be out of storage and starting to awaken. It's really interesting to me to see my trees bud out at different times.

Not just days apart but weeks apart. I was very worried about my English Oaks and my Korean Hornbeams. Their buds did not break until this very week. I also noticed that the Hickory and Oaks in my yard have only just leafed. The Hickory being several days behind the Oaks. My American Hornbeam is already completely leafed out having started weeks ago. Maybe trees are more like us then we think. So many of us really enjoy the 50 and 60-degree spring weather as we get out and walk and dig into our yard work. Some even wash their cars. Others begrudgingly remove their long johns but keep their parkas on; they are just not ready until the temperatures are in the 70's.

Bit of caution to note here. Let these new leaves and shoots get a good start before we jump into cutting back the long ones. Now is when all the leaves are forming to later allow the tree to build its branches stronger and thicker. Now the roots are feeding the foliage so that later the foliage will feed the root and allow storage for next year's start. We need to allow enough foliage to accomplish this. Be patient, as Karen S Harkaway, ABS President, mentioned adult coloring books in this month's magazine, I say continue with your adult coloring books for another few weeks. Enjoy the spring show of new shoots and flowers.

I am also encouraging all members to submit topics and articles to this newsletter. We would be happy to publish your thoughts and observations. Send directly to [annarborbonsaisociety@gmail.com](mailto:annarborbonsaisociety@gmail.com). This address also welcomes all membership feedback. We welcome your interests and suggestions.

## APRIL'S PROGRAM RE-CAP:

David DeGroot gave an inspired & inspiring tour of the art of bonsai. He pointed out that there is fashion in bonsai, with “formal upright bonsai” on the outs at the moment in Japan. He noted that Western bonsai often is designed around the outline, without much attention to ramification (branching), and the trees may not look like real trees as a result.

He showed us the manner in which trees are displayed for shows in Japan. The display often includes a companion plant that represents the area where the tree might be found in nature and the season or *even a specific month*. The companion plants are often wild grown, rather than nursery grown. The companion can also serve a more abstract role, adding contrast to the texture or color of the main tree

Through a colorful slide show, he took us on an incredible tour of bonsai trees in Japan. In addition, he showed many pictures of beautiful stones. He explained that the stones' display in a recent show was inspired by the tokonoma, an alcove found in traditional Japanese homes. Scrolls exhibited with the stones suggested the season. He also showed exfoliated stones, which are very highly prized.

Among the slides were several photos of professional nurseries in Tokyo. The trees are tied to their pedestals when displayed outside in Tokyo, not because of the wind, but because of earthquakes. The floor of workshops at bonsai gardens in Japan is traditionally made of dirt. This choice is practical, since debris trimmed from trees can become part of the floor.

He pointed out that “a lot of bonsai teachers will tell you that trees in nature don't have a front & back, so why would bonsai?” His answer: it's not a tree in nature. It's a piece of art suggesting a tree in nature. The tree is intended to welcome the viewer, to do a little bow, leaning forward. There are fewer branches on the front, so that you can see the trunk. There are branches on the back that give you depth.

He also provided helpful comments on several trees from the Matthaei Botanical Garden's collection.

The audience was excited about the talk & was grateful to learn from such a skilled artist & expert.



Jay Sinclair (left), Ron Milostan, David DeGroot, and Carmen Leskoviansky (Right)



Jay Sinclair and David DeGroot examine a European Beech at the Workshop



Aaron Binns (Left), Jay Sinclair, Don Wenzel, Louise Neuman, Andy Miller, Joan Overtire, David DeGroot, Carmen Leskoviansky, Leslie Olsen, Kurt Smith, and Dave Glover (right) all participants of the DeGroot Workshop

## UP FOR DEBATE: Jack & Jill

Aaron J. Binns

Last month's column asked the question, "What mistakes have you made that we can all learn from?" I posted the question on Facebook in the beginning of May and waited. What I learned was absolutely amazing. As it turns out, I am the only person in all of bonsai to have ever made a boo-boo. In all honesty, I knew the subject would not lend itself to full participation so I will keep trying.

Jack and Jill went up the hill  
To fetch some bonsai water.  
Jack refused to use anything but  
collected rain water and only after  
he assured it was between 69 to 72 degrees  
Fahrenheit.  
And Jill decided not to bother.

I don't care who you are, that's good poetry! It also introduces the topic of this month's article, Is there a better source of water and does the temperature of the water you use effect the health of your trees? Here are the arguments that I have heard in the past. "Don't use city water; the chlorine in the water is bad for your trees." "Don't use softened well water; the salts added by the softening process are bad for your trees." "Don't water your trees with water straight from the tap, it is too cold, let it reach room temperature because cold water is bad for your trees."

The truth is most of us have a single source of water and a limited amount of time to care for our personal collections so whatever source of water we have is what we use. As far as letting the water reach room temperature, that is fine if you only have a tree or two. Simply keep a jug of water on the counter so you always have a source of room temperature water. If you have 20 or 30 trees, then keeping 10 jugs of water on your kitchen cabinet isn't a legitimate solution. I suppose you could use a rain collection system that drains into a large barrel but so far, I don't know anyone who actually does that.

My opinion has been to use whatever source of water you have available. Like Jill in our poem, I didn't have time to bother with acquiring the perfect water source. This is still my default position; however, I have recently had a series of experiences that led me to believe there may be something real behind some of the concerns.

My wife and I just moved from a subdivision serviced with city water, sourced from Lake Erie and purified with chlorine and other chemical additives. That meant that unless I went to extreme measures I was using water that contained chlorine all year long. This was exacerbated during the winter months when my tropical bonsai were moved inside and no longer got the occasional dose of rainwater. This was my water source for nine years and I had little difficulty. Any health decline that I noticed in my tropical bonsai during the winter months I attributed to the complete lack of sunlight that characterizes a Michigan winter day.

Last fall was decidedly more interesting. We moved... twice. First to a temporary apartment and then to what I hope is the last home I will ever own. During the transition, my tropical bonsai went with me to the apartment while my hardy trees were stored on a lot and watered from a nearby pond. The pond water was a big hit and my hardy trees seemed perfectly content. My tropicals had a different experience. The apartment was dark and dry. I did my best to supplement with fluorescent light but I saw a noticeable decline in health. When we made the move from the apartment to the house, I thought things would rapidly improve. I purchased a better light system (T5's), controlled humidity, and in general gave the trees a much better overall environment. I didn't see the improvement in health that I thought I would. Again, I wasn't thinking that my water source might be playing a role.

I thought the most probable reason the trees were not recovering was simply that their metabolism had slowed naturally due to partial winter dormancy. Then I found out a couple of interesting things. First, Howell city water is derived from wells and is in fact softened. So, the apartment water I had been using to water the trees was in fact softened well water. I also found out that the softener in the home we moved to was using twice as much salt as it should have been... hmm. I still believe my trees were affected mainly by the dry low light conditions of the apartment but I can't shake the feeling that maybe, just maybe, water source really does play a role in tree health.

What do you think, are you a Jack or a Jill? Does water source matter or should we just not worry about it? It's up for debate.

I will get the debate going sometime in the first week of June on the Ann Arbor Bonsai Societies Facebook page. If no one joins the conversation, I will be forced to write



more poetry for next month's newsletter so make sure to participate!

## BEGINNER'S MIND

*J.Brian Byrd & Carmen Leskoviansky*

Our Facebook page recently featured the question:

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

This question is an example of many questions that pop up in the mind of a beginner in the art of bonsai. We will continue to post these types of questions on our Facebook page and hope to engage you to reflect and send in a response. We will share members' responses with the hopes it can help inspire and support all bonsai artists in our group.

Here are two responses received from members:

*I feel the wildness (defined as the condition it's in due to environmental factors) can be artificially imposed upon a tree. To have this refinement emphasized, without showing as artificially enhanced, should be the goal of the bonsai artist.* - Ron Milostan

*I am a beginner myself, but I am beginning to believe that a bonsai's beauty is reflected in both of these elements. The more it conveys the intrinsic qualities of a tree in its natural grace and dignity, the more beautifully the artist presents it. Still, the artist must often work diligently to project the magical, almost spiritual qualities the best bonsai capture. Each tree is unique. It is the artistic element and design, as well as the health of the tree that creates and enhances the compelling nature of the best bonsai* -Peggy Kubitz

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2016

### May 25 - Monthly Meeting

This is a Seasonal Workshop for members and visitors to perform timely work on their trees. If you have questions or want to perform seasonal work on your bonsai, bring it to the meeting.

### June 22 - Monthly Meeting

Young Choe will discuss and demonstrate the creation of a Kusamono. Kusamono refers to a Japanese botanical art that developed alongside bonsai. Kusamono are potted

arrangements of wild grasses and flowers in unique pots or trays selected to suggest a season or place.

### June 23 – Workshop

Young Choe will conduct a workshop assembling kusamono.

### July 27 - Monthly Meeting

Jane DeLancey will discuss the application of artistic concepts to the art of bonsai.

### Aug 24 - Monthly Meeting

A Discussion of Seasonal Topics.

### Saturday & Sunday, August 27 & 28

Our Annual Bonsai Show at Matthaei Botanical Gardens

### September 28 - Monthly Meeting

Our Annual Auction of Bonsai.

### October 26 - Monthly Meeting

Aaron Wiley will discuss the reasons, goals and objectives of fertilizing, timing fertilizer application and fertilizers.

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## FUTURE WORKSHOPS- 2016

You can reserve a position in these workshops by paying the workshop fee. Your check, covering the cost of the workshop, should be made out to *Ann Arbor Bonsai Society*. If you are interested, you can contact Jay Sinclair at [aabonsaisociety@gmail.com](mailto:aabonsaisociety@gmail.com) (put **WORKSHOP** in the subject line) and I will provide you with mailing instructions OR you can reserve a spot in the workshop by paying the fee at the monthly meetings.

### Workshop With Young Choe – A Kusamono Workshop

Kusamono refers to a Japanese botanical art that developed alongside bonsai. Kusamono are potted arrangements of wild grasses and flowers in unique pots or trays selected to suggest a season or place.

Young Choe will lead this workshop on **Thursday, June 23, 5:30 PM - 9 PM**. The workshop will take place at Matthaei Botanical Gardens. The workshop is limited to ten participants. Plant material, a container and the expertise of Young Choe are provided for \$60.

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## REGIONAL BONSAI EVENTS - 2016

### August 6&7 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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## 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 [wm.struhar@mail.com](mailto:wm.struhar@mail.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 five garments per order)

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## 2016 EXECUTIVE BOARD

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Director 2016-2017 ..... **Aaron Binns**

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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

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Membership dues are \$25. Please pay by check, written to Ann Arbor Bonsai Society or bring your credit card to the meeting and pay! AABS now accepts credit cards for membership fees and other AABS activities. Please talk with the Treasurer at the next meeting.

Tamara Milostan – Treasurer AABS  
4228 Highcrest Dr.  
Brighton, Michigan 48116

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



Tamara and our new Square

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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>




Ann Arbor Bonsai Society  
 1800 North Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-9741

*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  
 CLOSED: Sunday, Monday & Tuesday  
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