



Welcome to the ABS Newsletter for April 2017. Whew, I can't believe we're heating off to Mid-Atlantic in three days, and the Combined 50th Anniversary ABS + BSF convention is coming up soon! March was colder than February, so much for getting ahead of things. Despite being colder, it was still a crazy month for many areas. The folks in the South and out West were busy repotting, wiring, and getting their growing season into full swing.

A huge thanks to those who have submitted articles and feedback! We're at a bit of an empty bin of articles. If you can contribute or if you have an idea for an article you think would be of interest, please email me at: dave.paris@w3works.com We desperately need a cache of articles to chose from so we can make the newsletter interesting!

May 25 – 29, 2017
Moving American
Bonsai Forward
The Florida Hotel,
Orlando Florida

Presented by the American Bonsai Society

And the Bonsai Societies of Florida

Thursday – All Day Joshua Roth New Talent Competition and BSF Scholarship Competition

Friday – A Day of Demo's, in fact 14 Demo's: Morning afternoon and evening

Saturday & Sunday – 41 Learning Seminars & workshops accommodate all instructional levels!

ABS 50th Anniversary Celebrations throughout the weekend

Go to absbonsai.org and click on 2017 Convention for registration and more information. If you have any questions, email ABS@pfmbonsai.com or call Pauline (518) 882-1039
Register sooner rather than later!

Join us in this very special event - the joint 2017 ABS/BSF Convention. Help us celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the American Bonsai Society. This sort of National Bonsai Event happens in the State of Florida only once every 12-15 years. Don't let this opportunity pass you by!

List of Outstanding Seminar Teachers

Juan Andrade, Jim and Linda Brant, Randy Clark, Yamil Collazo, Jim Doyle, David Hodgetts, David Knittle, Mike Knowlton, Boon Manaktivipart, Frank Mihalic, Pauline Muth, Jason Osborne, Budi Sulisty, Ed Trout

Talented Florida Artists

Randy Clark Retired - Bonsai Learning Center, North Carolina
Mike Lebanik 2016 BSF Scholarship winner
Hiram Macias OliCata Bonsai StudiMary Madison Internationally known as the 'Buttonwood Queen'
Stacy Muse 2014 BSF Scholarship winner
Jason Osborne BSF Scholarship winner

Mike Rogers Mike Rogers Bonsai Studio

Donated Trees to be auctioned at the Convention – Don't Miss it!!



Exhibit Submissions no later than 2/28.
Email Contact – luluquilter@gmail.com

The Turkey Tree

By Andrew Smith (South Dakota)

If you was, say, to make a bonsai grove of gnarly-looking old pines, with rugged bent trunks

and low spreading branches with needle tufts that sighed like a distant river in the ceaseless wind; and you could imagine walking under these old green pines at sunset up on some mountain ridge and admiring the orange sky below; and then you were to leave your imagination behind and come back home, and you were me, there's a good chance that your wife, Judy, would not let you in the door.

And that's because if I let my imagination take me to such a place there would undoubtedly be wild turkeys roosting in the pines at night, and I would undoubtedly get imaginary turkey droppings all over my boots, and Judy says she has flat-out had enough of that on the carpet, imaginary or not.

I think she's being over-sensitive.

When we are marking timber we are always instructed to locate and/or create, turkey roosts. Turkey roosts are where wild turkeys sleep at night, so they can be safe from predators. The ideal turkey roost is a group of between five and fifteen gnarly old pines, with flat tops and low heavy branches, on the east-facing slope of a ridge, and hopefully with an aspen grove in the draw below it. It's exactly like a group of old bonsai pines, except you can walk under them instead of look down upon them.

In actual fact though, you can't tell turkeys where they will roost. Sometimes they just pick out a single favorite tree to roost in. Sometimes they pick a group of young trees, or trees in an odd location. But generally they like old pines with low branches that face the sunrise. What I've learned is that if you are getting a lot of turkey droppings on your boots you might be standing under a turkey roost tree.

I really like wild turkeys. When I was a kid growing up in Ohio I saw exactly one wild

turkey in 18 years. I was thrilled. Here in the Black Hills they are nearly as plentiful as robins, and I can easily see 40 in a day. And I'm still thrilled.

And now that spring has come I should be hearing the toms gobbling in the woods about any evening now.

About 20 years ago I started putting out birdseed for wild turkeys in our front yard. I did this every fall for several years. And as soon as the weather got cold they'd show up every morning to get their fill of whatever I had left them. So, all winter long I had a yard full of wild turkeys right outside my front window. It was great.

But, the turkeys did what turkeys will do, all over the lawn, and I got busted again and again for tracking it all over inside the house. I was a repeat offender and the law came down hard. However, I was able to prove that it was just negligence, with no aggravating circumstances, so I got Judge Judy to reduce the charges.

But, as part of the plea-bargain; I had to quit feeding the turkeys.

So I quit, and that's when things got interesting. Because every fall, year after year, after year, the turkeys would show up again, looking for their free food. They'd poke around the front yard every morning for a week or so, and then they'd move on. And the next year they'd come back and try again. They did this for a decade after I had stopped feeding them.

That's pretty incredible because turkeys in the wild probably live an average of 2-3 years. So older birds who had actually eaten the food I had put out were able to teach younger birds in their flock that my yard was a possible source of food, and those birds, who had never seen the food

themselves, were able to pass that knowledge on to birds of a later generation, and those birds passed the knowledge on even further.

That's practically a culture! I wonder if they have turkey memes? I just got a smart phone, but I don't think it's as smart as a wild turkey. Judging by the way it corrects my spelling, it can't be that smart.

Anyway, I finally got smart myself and set up a new turkey feeding station down by my greenhouses, much farther from the house. It took the turkeys a while to find it, but now I can see them everyday and the dog can chase them anytime he wants, to help them stay wild, and they got plenty to eat in this cold, snowy winter; so everyone is happy, I think.

Meanwhile, Judy has this old pine she found and collected one day while cruising timber a few years ago. She actually collected it for me, and she was so happy with it that she stopped and bought herself a bottle of wine on the way home. And the tree was so great I helped her drink the wine to celebrate, though, honestly, I'd have pitched in and helped her drink it even if she just collected me a dandelion. I'm generous that way.

Anyway, I thought it was such a wonderful old pine that rather than selling it we should keep it and someday I'd help her wire it and it would be her tree. Judy got me started in bonsai, accidentally, by buying me one, and she helps me with everything from watering, to potting, to lifting, to even going out in the woods and doing real work with big trees so I can stay at home and play around with little trees. But she doesn't have a bonsai tree of her own, and she's never tried to wire one.

So, someday finally came, and it was the right time of the year, and the tree seemed ready. So I gave Judy a few seedlings to try her hand at

wiring, which she did, and after discussing the results I brought the old pine in the house for her to look at. She made a sketch of what she imagined it would look like as a bonsai and then we began exploring various possibilities for making it look that way.

The first thing we realized was that while the trunk was really pretty good, the branching was essentially like an octopus having a seizure, with the foliage mostly out at the branch ends. This is not an uncommon condition in a collected ponderosa pine, but it's not an especially desirable one either. Luckily though, the branches are flexible enough that a lot of flaws can be overcome with wiring.

We worked on the tree, after everything else was done, every night from ten to midnight for a week. I let her do, and re-do, all the wiring, and just helped with some of the bending and suggestions and ideas. Although she had not really done any wiring or tree designing before, she had seen a lot of it over the years and she did great. After bending the first big branch the whole thing was looking pretty dubious, but after bending the last one it was looking pretty fantastic. At least I thought so.



Once we were finally done, I stepped back to really look at the tree for a while. There was something familiar about it that made me smile. It was a gnarly old pine, with a flattened top and low, spreading branches.

Ah! We had created a perfect turkey roost tree!

The Madness of Selecting The Right Container by Dave Paris (Rochester, NY)

Welcome to Repotting Season, or as I occasionally refer to it as “I have a metric tonne of containers and none of them feel right! Gah!!”

So the time has come when it's time to move a tree you've been working on into more , shall we say, “attractive accommodations.” Or maybe we want to change the feeling evoked from the composition the tree and container. Some of us have something of an affliction / addiction / compulsion to collect containers. The upside is that our other half (if we have one) will *never* notice one more container. The downside is we have another container to choose from when it comes time for a new home for a particular tree.

There are, of course, the very basics of harmony that we need to keep in mind. A feminine tree should have a container that enhances that feel. A stocky, rough or angular tree should have a container that lends itself to that feeling. Now we've at least winnowed our choices a bit. Now come the hard decisions. Do we go traditional or do we want to step outside the box a bit. Maybe a tall cascade container that would turn a cascade tree into a semi-cascade. Or a shorter, almost cubic container that turns a semi-cascade into a cascade?

If we're working with a conifer, do we want to go with a burnished, unglazed container

or would a high-grog content, rough container be a more interesting fit? How about color? Red? Brown? Gray? Tan? Perhaps even a marbled clay?

If we're looking for a home for a deciduous tree, do we want to compliment the foliage color in spring? In fall? In the summer? If the tree flowers, do we want to compliment that flower color for the brief period of blossoms? If it fruits, do we want to try to compliment the color of the fruit and at least some other attribute of the tree? Does the tree have a special requirement for depth due to the growth rate of roots or an especially high need for water? Can we get away with a shallow container and more of a mounding of the tree in the container? What about shape? Would a soft-corner rectangle work? Do we need an oval? Hmmm.. maybe a mokkou? The decision process helps us winnow our choices even further. Just when we think we've got a good image in our head of what the composition is going to look like is right about the time we realize for all the containers in our collection, we still don't have just the right one.

It's just about this time that we appreciate those who enjoy shohin and mame bonsai where the overall composition isn't as important and the avant garde appearance of a container isn't as much of a detractor. In some cases, an otherwise outrageous composition could be viewed quite favorably!

Despite not having repotted it yet, I went through this insanity this past weekend. I have a female persimmon that I've been developing for the past several years. Due to its relatively young age (though it doesn't look young – persimmon generally won't fruit until they're older), it should start fruiting this year or next. It doesn't have a traditional right, left, back, right, left, back, etc. branch arrangement. It's a bit more free-form, but with more branches and foliage than would suit a literati tree. That helps us right there. It frees up

our choices for potential containers. Shape can now become less conventional and push boundaries a bit more.

The next decision was fairly easy. As a deciduous tree, it doesn't have any particularly unique foliage color in the spring or fall. Just a nice, healthy green from spring onward. That removes another potential decision point. So now we have flowers and fruit to think about. As far as flowers go, there's nothing terribly remarkable about persimmon flowers. That leaves us with the fruit. Depending on the species or cultivar of persimmon, the size, shape, and color of the fruit is highly variable. There is one commonality shared by each though – the fruit persists after the leaves have fallen. Right there is our “Ah HA!” moment. A mental image starts to form.

Our persimmon, bejeweled with fruit, with the backdrop of the first snow of the season. Accentuating the blank canvas of the white snow with the smooth, almost glossy, jewels of fruit ...yes, now we're getting somewhere. Let's be daring and choose a less-often seen shape, a mokkou shaped container. But let's at least give some harmony here with the bare branches, temporarily discounting the fruit. So we want a white, mokkou-shaped container, with a crackle glaze. Yes. Yes indeed. This is a combination that will work well when displayed after the first snowfall of the season has taken place, just before our trees are safely sheltered for winter.

Now, let's go to the stash of containers and see if we can find an appropriately sized container that fits the description we've decided upon. No, not among the unglazed .. nor among the more rugged, but glazed containers. There. Sitting among the glazed containers .. the right color, with a beautifully crackled glaze, a mokkou shape, in the right size. We've lucked out! The perfect compliment to the persimmon, a Roy Minarai piece. This will be a truly beautiful

combination when the persimmon decides to fruit! Such a relief!

And now, the akebia, with its darker green foliage in groups of five leaves, but more importantly, the gorgeous split fruit in the fall. Oh man .. here we go again!

Board Election Time!

By Karen Harkaway, ABS President

Please vote for up to 8 of the following candidates

Andrew Robson, Oregon (new board candidate)

Full-time apprentice to Michael Hagedorn, Andrew Robson is an emerging talent to the American bonsai community. Andrew started his apprenticeship with Michael Hagedorn in June of 2016, after graduating from Yale University, with his Master's Degree in Music. In addition to his apprentice duties, Andrew has been serving as the Director of the Portland Bonsai Village. Andrew has a passion for developing deciduous material, as well as working with the native conifers of the Pacific Northwest.

Stu Charlesworth, Massachusetts (new board candidate)

My name is Stu Charlesworth. I became a bonsai enthusiast in February 2010 after visiting Bonsai West in Littleton, MA. Never did I imagine that I would love the hobby as much as I do, and since then I have created a collection of more than 60 trees. I was honored to have two of my bonsai

accepted in the 2016 US National Bonsai Exhibition. Currently, I volunteer at Bonsai West teaching beginner classes. I enjoy teaching new students and exposing them to the joy of bonsai. I am looking forward to helping to expose more people to the art of Bonsai through my contributions to the ABS board.

Doug Hawley, Ohio

David Hodgetts, New York

Martin Schmalenberg, New York

Andrew Smith, South Dakota

Dan Turner, Illinois

Paul Stokes, Wisconsin

Please visit the ABS website to submit your nominations.

<http://www.absbonsai.org/ballot2017>

A SPECIAL INVITATION

If for some reason you cannot attend the very special 50th Anniversary ABS/BSF Convention, you can still enjoy a part of history. Purchase a commemorative book, *New World Bonsai 2017*.

Along with comments by a number of world class seminar teachers, the book will include professional portraits of 50 displays of beautiful

bonsai that have been chosen from over 100 submittals for exhibit at the Convention. Enjoy in hard copy the beauty of equal numbers of both tropical and temperate trees.

Pre-order in advance of the Convention and pay only \$20 per book plus shipping and processing. Click [HERE](#) to pre-order *New World Bonsai 2017*.

Join your fellow ABS members
To Celebrate 50 years
of
Moving American Bonsai Forward
with the Bonsai Societies of Florida
May 26-28, 2017
at the Florida Hotel & Conference Center
Orlando, Florida, USA



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REGISTRATION FORMS AT
[http://www.absbonsai.org/
PDF/2017-reg.pdf](http://www.absbonsai.org/PDF/2017-reg.pdf)

Reserve the dates now and call in your
hotel reservation to
1-800-568-4656
Rooms are \$106 + tax
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Upcoming Events

April 7-9 2017 – MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies
Annual Spring Festival
<http://midatlanticbonsai.org/>

May 25-29 2017 – ABS / BSF Convention
Moving American Bonsai Forward – ABS 50th
Anniversary.
http://bonsai-bsf.com/?page_id=3103

June 23-25 2017 – U.S. National Shohin
Exhibition. Kannapolis, NC

**U.S. National
Shohin Bonsai Exhibition**

June 23-25, 2017
North Carolina Research Campus
Kannapolis, North Carolina

**Exhibition
Demonstrations
Workshops
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