



Welcome to the ABS Newsletter for October 2017. There was no September issue due to a lack of articles. Summer has ended for most of us, and a busy season getting junipers wired, flowering quince repotted, and doing general cleanup tasks like weeding and feeding is in full swing. Now is also when you should check your satsuki and azaleas for the development of flower buds. If you can lightly squeeze the tip of a branch and feel a firm center, your flower buds are all set for next year and it's time to fertilize them heavily until early November. Just wait until they're dormant to prune or wire.

As always, a major thanks to those who contribute articles and ideas. The contributions are greatly appreciated and always in need. I'd like to welcome Michael Ryan Bell to the regular contribution crew. His horticultural and design insights are consistently excellent and few, if any westerners know more about Japanese and Chinese bonsai pottery. The standard plea of the month; 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](mailto:dave.paris@w3works.com) We always need a cache of articles to chose from so we can make the newsletter interesting! We can handle the writing if we know what the membership would find interesting.

### **Bonsai Pottery Basics: Classical Glazes 101**

By Michael Ryan Bell (Mississippi)

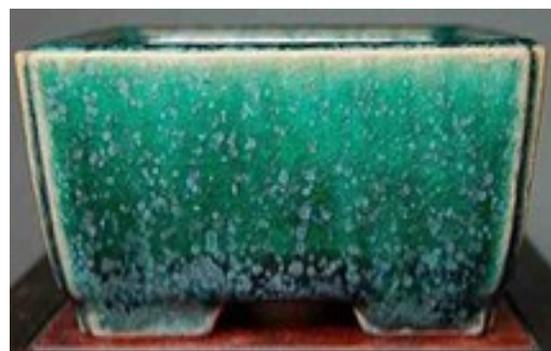
With the significant rise in interest in higher quality bonsai containers over the last decade, you have probably begun to notice that more and more sellers are using Japanese terminology to describe their wares. I've heard more than a few enthusiasts say that this is just snobbish jargon, but in many cases it is necessary, as there are no sufficient terms in English that convey the same meaning as their Japanese counterpart. Classical Glazes are just one of the many examples of this

trend. You're more likely these days to see terms like 'oribe' used instead of 'green', so here's a simple primer with a few of the most common glaze terms you're likely to see used.

**Namako-** literally, 'Sea Cucumber' Glaze. Dark blue to brown with flecks and streaks of white and black. Classically, this glaze was produced in several regions in China. Modern examples of the glaze can involve multiple color palettes, and many potters have their own signature version.

**Shirocochi/Cochin-**white to cream colored glaze. Originally from Southeast Asia. A classical color for maples and many other Deciduous species.

**Oribe-**Copper glaze invented in Mino, Japan that traces it's roots back to old Canton ware. A highly variable glaze, changes in technique and recipe can change the glaze dramatically. Oribe Glazes are typically Green(oxidation firing) with surface microcrystals, but can be red(reduction firing).



Oribe glaze with significant microcrystals from Shukuhō

**Ruri-**originally from the Canton and Shiwan kilns on the South China Sea in Guangdong province. A deep, rich blue that is just slightly lighter than indigo. A traditional glaze for Satsuki and red flowering and fruiting bonsai.

**Kinyo**-a powder blue glaze that originated in the Yuzhou Kilns of Heian province in China. A very popular glaze color for Deciduous bonsai, most contemporary artists make some version of this glaze.

**Tenmoku**-an Iron based glaze with a wide variety of appearances. Commonly seen with a running 'hare's fur' or 'oil spot' pattern. Tenmoku ranges from yellow to brown to black.

**Sango Yu**-Coral red glaze. You may be familiar with the Acer Palmatum cultivar, Sango Kaku, it is a similar color to this cultivar's light red twigs.

**Keichi**-Chicken Blood red. As the name suggests, a deep rich crimson.

**Yohen**-Glazes that are changed in the kiln through firing process. Natural ash Glazes, running 'hare's fur', crystals, and oil spots are examples of Yohen glaze.

**Takatori**-A glaze originating in the Japanese region of of the same name. Reds, yellows, blacks, and whites often intermingled in running and dripping patterns.

**Celadon**-a porcelain glaze. A very pale, light green, most often seen with relief carved or painted bonsai pottery.

Hopefully this short primer leaves you a little less confused about the terms being bandied about lately. For pictures and examples of these glazes, and many more, check out my website and blog at <http://Japanesebonsaipots.net/>

## A Scent of Autumn

By Andrew Smith (South Dakota)

Suddenly it was fall.

I was in an aspen stand, surrounded by snowy white trunks and blue sky and I was too hot. Sweating. Then the wind blew, the air turned brisk, summer was gone, and thousands of bright yellow leaves came swimming down from the sky like a hurricane of tiny golden koi.

They darted, zigzagging, to the forest floor and lay there to dream the winter away and turn into sweet wine under the white snow. And I breathed in the first faint perfume of that aspen wine, musky and soft, knowing that soon it would fade, and then be covered with snow for many long months. But I also knew that when spring came, and the snow finally melted away, then the warm sun would release the last draughts of that perfume, and if I was lucky enough to be there on that day, then I could breathe it in again. Maybe for just an hour.

It's not a scent you can put in a bottle, though I wish you could. But I bought some aspen cologne one time and it smelled like industrial solvent by comparison. I'm not a big cologne user anyway. A long time ago I tried dabbing my cheeks with whiskey, because I read that's what Ernest Hemingway did, and if it was good enough for Papa, it was good enough for me. But then I smelled like a drunk, which didn't always work in my favor. And I'd rather drink the whiskey, and actually be a drunk, than waste it on my cheeks and smell like one.

Anyway, you don't often see an aspen bonsai, and never a good one. That's a shame, I think, because aspen, *populus tremuloides*, is such a fascinating and beautiful tree. But it's true it doesn't really lend itself to bonsai cultivation. It's too primitive and wild and it only wants to grow the way it wants to grow. Not the way you

want it to.

But I have one, nonetheless, and I like it quite a bit. I don't try and wire it, or even shape it. I just like the fluttering yellow leaves. And it already is a tiny tree.



It's in a Sara Raynor pot that comes with a tale of woe. Sara sold me the pot with a magnificent shefflera in it that she'd worked on for many years. And, it was the best shefflera I'd ever seen. It had about a 4" diameter trunk and was maybe 20" tall and she gave me a discount on it because she liked the tree and she said she knew that at least "I wouldn't kill it."

And I wouldn't, but I did, in short order. I think when she said that, it was like some kind of curse, or challenge, that fate couldn't resist.

I took the tree home and it did great. It was beautiful. A few weeks later, on a hot autumn day, I decided to put it in the shower and give it a little rain, thinking it would enjoy the humidity. So I gave it and a ficus a shower and then left them in there overnight to drain.

The thing about our house is, it's old, and didn't benefit from what we would call "planning." So there is a picture window right next to the bathtub. It can be fun to sit there and watch the neighbors cook out while you are taking a bath, but the problem is that they can watch you back and their stories of the event will nearly always be better than yours.

So we put a shower curtain across the window so it wouldn't seem like such a window. That modified the view, but did nothing for the draft. And that hot autumn day suddenly turned into a very cold autumn night, and both trees froze, to death.

So things did not go according to plan, which should always be the plan, since it is nearly always the case.

So the tree died, under my watchful eye, and now I had a beautiful pot that I was afraid to use lest it give the horrible truth away. But the horrible truth came out anyway and eventually I put my aspen tree in the pot. It fits. It's a good match. And it helps me stay humble, at least it should.

I love wiring bonsai trees, but I have not tried wiring this one. My feeling is that aspen branches are not really strong enough for wiring. And, in fact, as I walk through the woods I see that not only do aspen shed their golden leaves every autumn, but they shed small branchlets as well. And the ground is covered not just with fallen leaves, but with fallen twigs that still have two or three leaves attached. And that's normal. So I have doubts about how well the branches would stand up to wiring.

Still, it's a fascinating and iconic tree. Aspen is the most widely distributed tree species in the world. It is a clonal species, meaning that a whole aspen grove is a single plant with many

separate stems, which we call trees. But they are all connected underground to a single root system and are genetically one individual.

Technically an aspen clone, or grove, is called a *genet*, and each separate tree, or shoot from the genet is called a *ramet*. But, though the terms may be correct, in over 30 years of working in the woods I've never heard anyone use them. Not even once.



Aspen is a dioecious species, so each genet, or clone, will be either all male or all female. They dress alike though, so it's hard to tell them apart. Trees these days!

Many botanists think that aspen may be both the largest and the oldest living things on earth. A single aspen clone in southern Utah covers 107 acres and has over 47,000 individual tree stems. The age may be over 80,000 years. And it weighs a bit. Another aspen clone in a high isolated Rocky Mountain valley has leaves that are shaped like those of aspen found only in the fossil record. Scientists speculate it could be over a million years old.

But it's impossible to tell. Although the clones may live for many thousands of years the individual trees usually live just over a century.

The oldest known ones are around 300 years old. Currently there is no known way to accurately measure the age of a whole clone. So it's a mystery. But it's fun to think about. Most of the aspen clones in the Black Hills are believed to date to the end of the last ice age, eight to ten thousand years ago. So an earlier part of my tree might have been nibbled on by a mammoth.

Aspen also walk, though very slowly. Since they are clonal, as environmental conditions change they can send out new shoots towards a more favorable environment and shed off shoots where the environment is less favorable. In this way they can ooze across a mountainside to meet that cute girl aspen clone down in the valley. It might take them 600 years, or more, to get there, but what's the hurry? She isn't going anywhere, at least not fast.

In fact, if they go out for a jog they can watch the snails go racing by and the moss leaping from stone to stone. For all we know they may all have been aspen break-dancing, or playing a wild game of aspen rugby, for hundreds of years now, and no one has noticed yet. Because they have barely moved.

But the best thing about aspen is those fluttering yellow leaves that shimmer in the slightest breeze. The old hands in the Forest Service always called them "quakies" because of that. And the perfume they make! That finest wine of autumn, fermented from golden leaves. There's just nothing else like it. And they haven't managed to put it in a bottle yet.

## Climate Change? What Climate Change?

Dave Paris (Rochester, NY)

So here we are at the beginning of October in Rochester. We had a wet spring followed by dry, mild summer that cooled off significantly in

late August, and then a September that started cool and ended in record heat.

Honestly, my flowering bonsai (and landscape plants) don't know which end is up right now. I have Fuji Cherry (*Prunus incisa*) that are blossoming, I have a Buttercup Winter Hazel (*Corylopsis pauciflora*) in full bloom, a white chojubai quince just finished flowering, and now I've got two different flowering quince either ready to burst buds or flowered out. All this along side the swollen, ripe purple drupes of berries on Japanese Beauty Berry, the full range of colors and dots on Porcelainberry, and the fire red berries that adorn Winterberry this time of year.

On the upside, at least the junipers, pines, and azaleas seem to know what time of year it is, with nice plump buds on the pines, a plethora of flower buds on the azaleas, and the slowing of growth on the junipers. Freshly repotted flowering quince at the beginning of September are happy with their freshly trimmed roots, fresh growing media, and putting out a quick flush of leaves before it's time for them to nap over the winter.

While flowering quince are known to produce a fall flush of flowers from time to time, the Fuji Cherry and Buttercup Winter Hazel are definitely confused. They're confused and I'm wondering what's going to happen with them in the spring!

Just don't try to tell me there isn't a climate change happening, because I'll only point you to my benches.

## A SPECIAL INVITATION

If for some reason you weren't able to 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 submissions for exhibit at the Convention. Enjoy in hard copy the beauty of equal numbers of both tropical and temperate trees. Click [HERE](#) to pre-order *New World Bonsai 2017*.

## Upcoming Events

**December 2-3, 2017** Winter Bonsai Silhouette Expo – Kannapolis, NC  
<https://www.winterbonsai.net>

**April 13-15, 2018** MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies Spring Festival (MABS) – Cromwell, CT

Guest Artists:

Daisuku Nomoto (Japan), Tony Tickle (UK), Matt Reel & Tyler Sherrod (USA)

**April 19-22, 2018** “Gateway to Bonsai”

Guest Artists:

Marc Noelanders, Bjorn Bjorholm and Matt Reel

Bonsai Workshops and Learning Seminars hosted by The American Bonsai Society and The Bonsai Society of Greater St. Louis.

37 workshops and classes offered for your learning experience. 3 Critiques, Juried Bonsai and Ikebana Exhibit, Large Vending Area, Joshua Roth New Talent Contest, Raffles, Auctions and Demonstrations by Marc Noelanders and Bjorn Bjorholm

Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive  
Collinsville, IL 62234  
(10 minutes east of St. Louis)

### Newsletter Submissions:

Please send submissions, upcoming events, article ideas, raves, rants, and so forth to [dave.paris@w3works.com](mailto:dave.paris@w3works.com)

### ABS Newsletter Staff:

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**September 8-9, 2018** - 6<sup>th</sup> US National Bonsai Exhibition. Rochester, NY

**September 14-16, 2018** – NW Bonsai Rendezvous. Portland, Oregon. Hosted by BSOP and PNBCA Visit <http://portlandbonsai.org> for more information.

**June 21-23, 2019** - 2<sup>nd</sup> US National Shohin Bonsai Exhibition. Kannapolis, NC