



# Fujii Notes

Newsletter of the Phoenix Bonsai Society

Vol. 20, No. 1 – Sept. 2015

## Letter from the President

Welcome to a New Year at PBS.

I've been asked to write something for this edition of *Fujii Notes*. I pondered for a while and then thought: "What about Tidbits from my 10 years of learning bonsai?" We have a lot of members who are content-experts in the following areas: picking material, wiring, designing, carving, etc. Reach out and ask if you need help. Tools - You only need a few key tools to start out. Ask and try another member's Concave Cutter, Knob Cutter, Root Cutter, Wire Cutter, Shears, or Root Rake to see what you like. (Keep your tools clean and sharp.) Pots - Learn what type and style pots go with what type of trees. Wire - I like to use wire .5mm or bigger; it's just a little bit stiffer and will hold its position better. Soil - Everybody has their own mix; just make sure it has good drainage. Plant Selection - Every part of the Valley has its own ecosystem; learn which plants will thrive at your location (purchase an inexpensive plant see if it'll live in your area before you purchase the big one). Think about what kind of collection you want, what size trees – small, medium or large? As a *sensei* once said to me, "you can have a lot of material, or you can save and have one nice bonsai." It's taken almost 10 years for this to sink in: it's nice to have a lot of trees to work on and learn from, or you can have that one quality Bonsai in your collection.

Regards,  
Eric Zimmet

## Letter from the Vice-President

Things Can Happen Quickly Around Here.

Hello Everyone! I'm Jennifer (Jenna) Williams, your new V.P. First, I'd like to thank the other upcoming Board members who have worked hard to bring a new and interesting agenda planned for the next two years! I could only shake my head at first and say, "Wow let's shake it up a bit!"

Some of us are newcomers, so I think we have "big boots to fill" based on the success of previous years, but it sounds as if there are a lot of fabulous ideas in this club!

Many of you have said to me, "I don't know who you are?" Well, as one of my goals I would love to get to know each and every one of you! So, let me tell you a little about myself.

I have had an extensive background in the medical field, and I have three daughters and a very patient husband! We moved here almost three years ago from Washington State because of a job opportunity my husband accepted. I've been doing Bonsai for about 14 years now. It's easy for me to calculate because I was 9 months pregnant and sticking out like a sore thumb! Everyone kept telling me "Whoa, Jenna, you need to take it easy!" But it didn't matter, the passion had been ignited, and I have been on the road to learning this ever-changing art-form since I heard those words of caution, which seems long ago now.

Coming from the Pacific Northwest, I have to say, "If you can do bonsai in Phoenix, AZ, you can do bonsai anywhere!" I have been humbled more than a few times down here already, including losing a good majority of the trees I made my husband haul all the way down here. In all honesty, I probably wouldn't have done it differently. Some of the trees I was told would not survive are still here today, and vice-versa.

My hope is that I can bring some of what I've learned in the Pacific Northwest and integrate it into helping others in the club here. I have been privileged to learn from some very good teachers over the years. My intention is to pass along this knowledge and in return, I am also open to learning about new trees and techniques from many of the Phoenix members.

The Phoenix Bonsai Club has a rich and storied history of which I am becoming more familiar with at each meeting. I have been overwhelmed with friendliness and acceptance from people that are passionate about bonsai, but even more about just being friends. For these reasons, I am more than happy to take the position as Vice President. I have a quiet demeanor, but I'm a good cheerleader too!

See you soon,  
Jenna

## Librarian's Report

Greetings, fellow Bonsai Enthusiasts!

Hi, my name is Barbara Miller and I am the club Librarian. I have been a member for a few years. I currently have a small collection that includes one Bougainvillea, one Olive, several Portulacaria, one Juniper pine, and one Lavender Starflower. I have taken Master Leroy Fujii's advise "First, keep the tree alive. Second, cut it back often."

Over the next 2 years I would like to increase the club's awareness of the many different topics our library holds. We have books about Desert plants, kusamono, Saikei, beginner books of all varieties, and even books written by Bonsai Masters. We also have a large library of periodicals full of colorful pictures. Pictures are helpful for a beginner to use while learning the different styles and shapes of bonsai.

On October 13<sup>th</sup> we have planned a Library Day. There are many books that members don't even know we have on-hand. I recommend bringing along a notebook in order to write down information you'll want to take home with you. I also encourage creating a wish-list of books for your own library. Speaking of your personal library, if you find there are books you would like to donate to our club, feel free to bring them to a meeting.

A few websites I have found helpful:

The Phoenix Bonsai Society - <http://www.phoenixbonsai.com/>

Our website has a large database of articles written by masters as well as by fellow club members. Information about plant zones around the world. A list of Arizona and Non-Arizona clubs that can help you remain connected if you have to be relocated away from our club. The list of plants can help you decided what types of plant you want to work with as well as a gauge of ease of care. This helps keep beginners from getting a bonsai plant that will cause undue stress.

The Phoenix Bonsai Society online shop - <http://www.cafepress.com/phoenixbonsaisociety>  
You can order t-shirts, mugs, calendars, aprons, hats, and so much more with our logo and club name in either color or black and white.

A Beginner's First Bonsai by Brent Walston -

<http://www.evergreengardenworks.com/bonsaibe.htm>

One learns the basics of bonsai best by creating them, even your first one.

How to Grow and Care for Bonsai Trees - <http://www.bonsaigardener.org/>

One link in this website provides bonsai tree types and general care guides.

I am excited to be a part of this club and I look forward to a long-term membership.

Sincerely,  
Barbara Miller      babsinpink@gmail.com

## Golden State Bonsai Federation Convention

Make sure you block out October 29, 30, 31 and November 1 for your visit to Riverside, California for the Annual GSBF Convention. Two years ago we had twenty-four Phoenix Bonsai Society Members attend the event and we would like to make another great showing this year. Visit the GSBF web site for details and registration.

Speaking of the GSBF Convention, members Ken and Carol Roberts graciously created a scholarship to get newer PBS members a chance to attend the GSBF Convention. The value of the scholarship is \$1000 and covers registration, classes, room and board. The scholarship was awarded to our club Librarian Barb Miller. Congratulations Barb!

<http://www.gsbconvention.org/>

For a list of the previous Golden State conventions, please see <http://www.phoenixbonsai.com/Conventions2b.html#GSBF>

## How We Spent Our Summer Vacation:

### June China Chili Pictures



Tuesday June 16<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm, at the China Chili restaurant at Flower and 3rd Street, just south of Osborn Road. The Menu was Hot and Sour Soup, Chinese Chicken Salad, Crab Puffs, House Fried Rice and Chicken, Beef, Pork and Shrimp dishes, Tea and Water. Full meal for this group including tax and tip was just \$20 per head.

## July Movie Night Pictures



GINZA Night Happy Hour and Movie Night, Tuesday July 14<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm, at the Valley Garden Center. It included Sake Tasting, Japanese Beer Tasting, Plum Wine, Melon Liquor, Tea, and Water. Snacks included Japanese Rice Crackers, Shrimp Chips, Wasabi Peas, Crunchy Peanuts, and Nori (seaweed). The 2009 film "Hachi" with Richard Gere was shown.

## August Sushi Station Pictures



Conveyor Belt Sushi, Tuesday, Aug. 11, at Sushi Station, Camelback Rd. and 16<sup>th</sup> St.

## Bonsai Book Report

By Mike Fritz

*Bonsai Techniques I* (1973) and *Bonsai Techniques II* (1982)

Author: John Naka

This dynamic duology is the quintessential tome on American bonsai. Written by the Japanese-American Master John Naka, both books are still the go-to bible for serious American bonsai enthusiasts.

*Techniques I* is a weighty 263-page masterpiece on topics ranging from tools to wiring, from trimming and pruning to repotting. The hundreds of illustrations are all drawn by Naka himself and clearly relay information along with dozens of black and white photographs. A perfect balance of words and visuals. Pages 123 through 247 cover 12 different bonsai styles and care of Black Pines, Junipers, and deciduous evergreens.

I re-read a portion of this book every week and have for several years. Before going to a nursery or out to purchase a new tree I refocus my minds' eye on the styles and possibilities highlighted by Naka in this book. In the section on CHIKKAN (Straight Upright) style, Master Naka includes 16 separate illustrations of variations on this style. The chapter on BUNJIN (Literati) style is superb. The 16 illustrations help demystify this sometimes nebulous style.

*Techniques II* is a much larger book at 430 pages. It covers topics from root placement up to discussions on trunk, branches, apex and styling those elements to make a cohesive bonsai. The section on collecting indigenous trees is a great starting point for information on this topic. The chapter on pots is the *filet mignon* of this book. A prime cut of great information on styles, colors, glazes, and sizes. It's a great launching point to learn the lore of bonsai pots from a master. Like *Techniques I*, this book is peppered with hundreds of Naka illustrations and black and white photography that helps crystalize the words into easy to understand concepts.

John Naka's *Bonsai Techniques I* was last printed in 1980. *Bonsai Techniques II* was last printed in 2006. *Techniques I* can be found on-line at ABE Books, Amazon, and EBay. Prices range from \$45 to \$500 depending on condition, if it is signed, or if it is still in plastic wrap. *Techniques II* can still be found on sale at bonsai conventions, trade shows or on-line. I bought *Techniques I* for \$45 on-line and *Techniques II* at a trade show for \$70 (plastic wrapped, mint condition). The Phoenix Bonsai Society has several copies of each book and I highly recommended you borrow them at your earliest convenience.

If you are serious about learning the art, history, and techniques of bonsai from an American Master's view point, these are the two books you need to study regularly.

## Bonsai on a Dime

By Mike Fritz

After re-entering the bonsai world after a 40 year hiatus and moving to Phoenix, I quickly learned that everything I had known about bonsai in the Midwest did me no good here in the desert. I killed at least 25 trees when I tried my hands at bonsai again. This all changed when I joined PBS and was able to feast on the 53 years of knowledge concerning bonsai techniques offered in print and in presentations by the club members.

I have been able to move from the ranks of "Prince of Death" to "Bonsai Cheapskate." For a novice, bonsai from the outside looks fun, cute and pretty. Once you dig deeper, however, you start learning about the thousands of years of bonsai history behind this art form. You also learn that many people spend great sums of money to be a part of the bonsai world. Trees costing in excess of \$1000, antique pots costing thousands of dollars, pure copper wire, \$200 stainless steel concave pruners, expensive turn tables, etc., etc. A very daunting checklist, especially for an art form started by penniless Buddhist Monks!

Being closer to the income of the Monks, I have taken the path of trying to practice bonsai and produce decent trees on a teacher's salary. Over the next few newsletters I will share with you ways to save money and still own quality trees at a discount price. This article's focus is about acquiring good nursery and pre-bonsai stock at a discount price.

### *1. Nurseries – Local*

In Phoenix, one of the major hurdles for a bonsai hobbyist is acquiring stock to work on. The “Big Box” hardware stores are barely worth visiting because of the lack of plant material of a size, age or shape that will lead you to anything other than a stick in a pot. Some of the local nurseries are better. Plus they are giving discounts to all the PBS members. Check out the nursery discounts in the new 2015-2016 Membership Book you will receive in September. At local nurseries you can regularly find Bougainvillea, Boxwood, Vitex, Emu Bush, Baja Fairy Duster, Ficus, Olive, Pyracantha, Yaupon Holly, Myrtle, Crepe Myrtle, Natal Plum, and other plants.

### *2. Other Plant Sources*

Most bonsai enthusiasts quickly learn that they will have a hard time finding trees in and around Phoenix of any desirable age or size. Luckily, a brief trip to the Greater Los Angeles area gives us a chance to visit the epicenter of West Coast bonsai culture. Many LA regional nurseries will offer PBS members a discount, and several others are open to doing “a little better” because of the time you took to drive to their nursery. (GAME CHANGER:) Keep an overnight bag packed at all times and be ready to drop everything for “Special” opportunities in California. At any given moment a bonsai nursery may decide to go out of business, or a bonsai enthusiast will hold a sale to thin out their collection, or a known hobbyist will pass away and his estate will sell his collection of trees. Several times over the past few years these non-traditional opportunities have arisen, and you have to be ready to make a move when they do. Conventions, Trade Shows, Tree Shows, Bonsai-a-thon at the Huntington, Club Auctions in San Diego and the LA area yield great trees at great prices. In the past 2 years I have gone to California for the liquidation of a closing nursery, attended the sale of a bonsai master's collection of 700 trees, etc. But the best trees at the best prices are at the annual Bonsai Swap Meet in Recida, California, usually in late March or early April. I have gone twice and will try to make this event every year. It is free and starts at 9:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning at a little pocket park near Ventura Boulevard. The first year I bought a beautiful Liquidambar with a 4 inch trunk in a bonsai pot, 32 inches tall for under \$60. A bonsai nursery on San Gabriel Boulevard was selling a smaller tree for \$500! Shohin elms for \$35. A great Ficus for \$35. The second year I bought a 17 year old collected Winged Elm in a bonsai pot for \$100. Again, the value of a similar tree at the aforementioned nursery was in the \$500 range. A triple-trunk Willow Leaf Ficus about 24 inches tall for \$60 and a Juniper Literati for \$40. It has, by far, the best-shaped trees for the best prices for novices and intermediate bonsai hobbyists, hands down.

### *3. Yamadori – Free Goods*

Whether you dig up that old bougainvillea in a neighbor's yard or travel to Patagonia to get a centuries-old native Juniper, free is hard to beat. Some of the better-presented trees shown at a PBS meeting, Matsuri or our Tree Show were all collected. Whether you are doing urban prospecting or hitting the wilds of Arizona, yamadori is an excellent way to acquire old impressive stock for little or no money. (Sometimes, for just a lot of sweat!)

So, now you know how to acquire affordable trees. In the next newsletter I will cover how to obtain tools, wire, turntables, and other ephemera at a budget price.

## **Q & A With PBS Club Member Cheryl Sykora**

### *1) WHAT IS YOUR BIRTH NAME?*

Cheryl Ann Sykora.

2) *WHAT IS YOUR SPOUSE'S NAME?*

William Welbes.

3) *WHAT IS YOUR HOMETOWN?*

Boyceville, Wisconsin - it is in western Wisconsin close to Menomonie and not far from Eau Claire, for those who are familiar with the state.

4) *WHERE DID YOU GO TO COLLEGE AND WHAT WAS YOUR MAJOR?*

Initially chemistry from UW River Falls, then Environmental Health from University of MN.

5) *WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR PROFESSION/CAREER?*

Worked as an analytical chemist early on in my career for Land O'Lakes, then went back to school and became an industrial hygienist. Since then, I have always been in consulting doing a variety of different things from writing safety data sheets to evaluating buildings for hazardous materials and IAQ [indoor air quality] issues.

6) *WHEN DID YOU START IN BONSAI?*

I started in bonsai in late 1999 after visiting the MN state fair show and seeing them. I gradually learned to keep them alive and became successful at it around 2003.

7) *WHICH SENSEI HAVE YOU STUDIED WITH?*

I completed Boon Manakitivipart's intensive series of bonsai training in 2007. I am currently attending Ryan Neil's elongating species classes. A person never stops learning things. Just recently I learned how to keep buttonwoods alive after repotting and azaleas from dying in our northern area. Both were problematic for me.

8) *HAVE YOU BEEN TO JAPAN AND WHEN AND WHAT BONSAI ACTIVITIES DID YOU DO?*

I have never been to Japan but would like to go to see the Kokofu [the world's premier bonsai show in February in Tokyo]. I disagree with going to Japan for the short stints of training that some go for - three months or less. You can learn more in the U.S. with people already trained in Japan. There is no need to go to Japan to learn.

9) *WHEN DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE PBS?*

I got involved with PBS around 2000 after looking them up on the internet. Leroy had already died when I started with PBS.

10) *WHEN DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH NATIONAL BONSAI ORGANIZATIONS AND WHAT OFFICES HAVE YOU HELD?*

I have been a member of the American Bonsai Society for a long time. I just recently got on the board and am a Vice President. I work primarily on getting articles for the *Journal* and compiling the regional series articles.

11) *DID YOU EXPECT TO GET CHOSEN FOR THE ARTISANS CUP IN PORTLAND?*

I shouldn't be so smug but, yes, as the ponderosa pine that was selected is very unusual and has been a bonsai for 8 years allowing for it to fill out and look really good. It is a good tree.

The trees are selected and not the people – which is the way it should be. Have no expectations of winning. It is enough to get in.



*12) HOW MANY TREES DO YOU HAVE, WHAT SPECIES AND WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITES?*

I have in excess of 200 trees. My favorites are black pine, ponderosa pine, and ume. I am starting to really like Colorado spruce -- unfortunately none are good in Phoenix. I like pomegranates and California junipers and coastal live oaks for Phoenix.

*13) DO YOU THINK ABS WILL WANT TO HOLD A CONVENTION IN PHOENIX?*

I think probably, once they get past their tendency to always hold them in June and stick with the East Coast. Phoenix has a lot to offer with respect to an affordable venue, its proximity to CA where there are many bonsai enthusiasts and different types of trees. Like everything else, ABS is comfortable in its sameness. Wouldn't be until 2018 at the earliest, though, as ABS has venues for the next couple of years - Michigan in 2016 and Florida in 2017.

*14) WHAT FUTURE GOALS OR CLASSES OR OTHER IDEAS DO YOU WANT TO PURSUE IN BONSAI?*

Thin my collection down to the really good trees. I still grow things just to grow things and have too many.

*15) ANYTHING INTERESTING OR FUN YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?*

I think people should stay with trees that grow well in their climate(s) until those are mastered, and then move on to other species. Most people want too many different species and end up killing too many trees before they understand how to keep them alive. The most important thing is first mastering keeping them alive. Styling can come gradually with time. A completely-refined bonsai is frequently a dead bonsai.

And, no, I do not do Facebook or any of the other social media. I prefer to communicate via email and I don't waste a lot of time posting things and looking at postings. Use the time to study your trees and hand-water them, if you can. Looking at trees frequently is how you best understand what to do with the tree. They all grow differently. You need to understand them to really style them.

## Phoenix Bonsai Society Upcoming Calendar

Sep 1 Tuesday, **STARTING AND CELEBRATING OUR 53rd CLUB YEAR!** Welcome New Members, Club Business Review, and Open Workshop. NOTE: all members need to pay their membership dues for the 2015/2016 season at the meetings during this month.

Sep 8 Tuesday, Style lecture: Cascade and semi-cascade by Mike Fritz.

Sep 15 Tuesday, Open Workshop and Fall Junk Sale.

Oct 6 Tuesday, Critique of Trees.

Oct 13 Tuesday, Library Day: Education art/club properties by Barbara Miller.

Oct 16 – 18 Friday – Sunday, participation in Phoenix Art Museum Art and Flower Event.

Oct 20 Tuesday, Open Workshop and Mystery Box.

Oct 29 – Nov 1 Thursday – Sunday, [Golden State Bonsai Federation's 38th Convention](#) Bonsai Fusion: "Where Tradition Meets Innovation" at the Hyatt Place in Riverside, CA. Headliners: Bjorn Bjorholm and John Wang; Guest artists: David Nguy and Tak Shimazu; five workshops by these four artists.

Our full and updated calendar is available at <http://www.phoenixbonsai.com/PCalendar.html>.

## Current Officers

President	Eric Zimmet	Event Chair	Mike Fritz
Vice-President	Jenna Williams	Education Chair	Elsie Andrade
Treasurer	Liz Mantsch	Raffle Chair	Barbara Gray
Librarian	Barbara Miller	Webmasters	Robert Baran, Eric Zimmet

## Current Mentors

Elsie Andrade	Joan (Hozy) McCarter
Penny Schneck	Robert Gustafson
Frank Harris	Jamie Sims
Alex Gray	Jim McEown
Ken Roberts	Ernie Hasan
	Susie Kingston

## Internet Musings, All Things North American, plus

If you have not already visited these sites, they are a must view:

<http://crataegus.com/>

<http://bonsaimirai.com>

<http://www.absbonsai.org>

<http://www.ibonsaiclub.forumotion.com/>

Michael Hagedorn

Ryan Neil

American Bonsai Society

Internet Bonsai Club

## Other Arizona Clubs

- **Scottsdale Bonsai Society** (est. 2000, <http://scottsdalebonsai.weebly.com/>) activities are held on the FIRST Saturday of the month from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Via Linda Senior Center, Room 8, 10440 E. Via Linda, Scottsdale, AZ 85259. And on the THIRD Saturday of the month (except in June, July, & August) from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Granite Reef Senior Center, Room 10, 1700 N. Granite Reef Rd. (cross streets are McDowell and Granite Reef), Scottsdale, AZ 85285. Contact Araxi Hovhannessian to check the schedule at (480) 965-0030 or Mike Grier at (480) 948-5836.
- **Tucson Bonsai Society** (est. 1972, <http://tucsonbonsaisociety.org/>) meets at 12 noon on the Third Sunday of every month at the NEW location of Catalina United Methodist Church, 2700 E. Speedway, in Building H, Room H230. Turn in on Treat Avenue, park in lot on your left, and just follow the signs a short ways. Contact David Meyer @ (520) 749-4155, [d.meyer11@yahoo.com](mailto:d.meyer11@yahoo.com).
- **Southern Arizona Bonsai Enthusiasts** (est. 2001) is a study group which generally meets on the SECOND Saturday of each month, 10:00 am (until about 1:00 p.m.) at the Desert Gardens Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 10851 E. Old Spanish Trail (cross streets S. Avenida Los Reyes and E Old Spanish Trail), Tucson, AZ 85748. These meetings are usually hands-on workshops and/or viewing of bonsai-related videos. For information contact: Doris Cavanaugh, (520) 290-0522, [doris\\_c6@q.com](mailto:doris_c6@q.com) / (520) 290-0522 or Loveda Petrie, (520) 886-2446, [veda27@earthlink.net](mailto:veda27@earthlink.net).



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Phoenix-Bonsai-Society/140522462639157>



Follow us on

<https://www.youtube.com/user/Phoenixbonsai>

This newsletter is named in recognition of Hideo "Leroy" Fujii (1925-1998), student of bonsai for nearly fifty years, a founding member of our club, and our *sensei* / teacher for more than twenty-five years. Our club logo, courtesy of grandmaster John Y. Naka (1914-2004), is based on one of Leroy's trees. Two pages of some of Leroy's other fine creations can be found on our web site at <http://www.phoenixbonsai.com/LeroysTrees.html>.

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**"Learn from your trees: they are a reflection of you."**

-- Leroy Fujii

## **PHOENIX BONSAI SOCIETY**

Valley Garden Center  
1809 North 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

