

*Our June meeting is a week earlier than usual – June 20<sup>th</sup>.*

***Bjorn Bjorholm to Visit AABS!***



Bjorn Bjorholm will be demonstrating techniques and discussing conifer bonsai at our Wednesday, June 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, from 6:30 – 9 pm. Bjorn spent six years as an apprentice under Master Keiichi Fujikawa at Kouka-en bonsai nursery in Osaka, Japan before receiving certification as a bonsai professional by the Nippon Bonsai Association. His work has appeared many notable exhibitions, including the Kokufu-ten, Sakufu-ten and Taikan-ten exhibits.

On Thursday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, Bjorn will hold a bring your own tree workshop. Participants should bring a tree that they wish to style or refine, as well as tools and wire. This workshop is intended for experienced bonsai growers. The cost is \$50.00 per person and the workshop is limited to 8 participants.

President's Perspective	pg. 1
May Meeting review	pg. 2
Up For Debate	pg. 3
Club Information	pg. 5

***PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE:***  
***Ron Milostan***

It's here, it's here, Summer has arrived, at least summer temps. Wow, trees are growing like mad. We fertilized and watered and leaves are growing - many and large. So, what do we do?? We **defoliate??** Wait a minute let's think this through.

A tree wakes up after a rough winter and uses its stored energy to grow new buds and leaves. This is very important; the tree has stored enough energy to get restarted. Now that energy is used to start new growth. The new growth, when mature, will photosynthesize and send energy back to the roots to grow more roots and store more energy. That's putting it simply. When this happens, we have a very healthy tree. The cycle is complete. If we defoliate too soon we can weaken the future growth of the tree. We need to allow the root system enough time to be replenished.

So, my plan has always been to allow the tree to grow with minimal stress all spring and into the summer months. This way branches will thicken and with wiring they will stay in the position we gave the branch. We may even have to remove the wire in mid-summer to lessen the wire marking the branch. Now if we would like, we could defoliate a healthy tree. This defoliating will accomplish two things. The first and usually the more important reason is to increase ramification by having the tree redo its spring startup. Doing this has shown that you will get many more buds and new shoots when performing this on a healthy tree. The second reason is

because we want to show this tree. We want to present this tree in the best Bonsai form that is possible which means with smaller leaves and more of them. This is very stressful for a tree and must only be done keeping in mind that the new growth will need time to replenish enough energy to the roots for the following years start up. So, if I do a spring defoliation I only partially remove the leaves, usually all the very largest ones. However, if I wait until early July then I feel I can totally defoliate the tree having given time for the energy to be returned to the root system. My main point ..... always consider the health of the tree first. Small leaves are impressive at show time but not to the detriment of the health of the tree. Choose wisely how and when to defoliate your trees.

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## **May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 AABS Notes**

### **Chris Kehrig**

Note that our next meeting is a week early on June 20<sup>th</sup>.

Kurt Smith is supplying a Blue Spruce collected in Colorado for Bjorn's demo. This tree will be raffled off over the next few months and it is well worth buying tickets.

Young Choe, an artist and horticulturist that works at the US Arboretum, did a slide presentation followed by a demonstration on Kusamono - an art form that dates back to 1784 – and can be used as an accent plant with Bonsai displays.

Young explained that she likes to use native plants since the survival rate is much better. She also draws inspiration from nature during hikes and walks. She tries to think of the four seasons and color when creating her Kusamono.

These plantings can be in a bonsai pot or created as a moss ball.

Below are some of the points Choe Young made during her presentation and demo

An accent plant should have:

- Seasonal Effect
- Proportion
- Harmonize
- Habitat
- Maintenance

Young started her demo with many accent plants to choose from. She started with some grasses from Kurt Smith's yard.

Her soil usually consists of 80% potting soil with Akedama however for tonight's demo she used bonsai soil mix. She produced one Kusamono in a bonsai pot and one as a moss ball.

First, she picked out the plants and then she decided on the pot. She uses odd numbers of plants just like Bonsai.

When laying in the plants she sprays the roots with water. The tallest plant goes in first. She uses a lot of soil and a chopstick to press it in – keeping it mounded especially in the middle.

She likes to plan on blooms in the spring and summer / fall – not all at same time.

Moss gets pushed in with chopstick after all of the plants are in place.

She recommends keeping it in the shade for 2 weeks and then partial shade – water every day.

She then proceeded with a moss ball Kusamono.

The base was a 5 x 8 plastic screen with wire in the middle.

She piled on mucky pond soil and added her plants.

After adding moss, she trimmed the bottom grid.

An interesting trick was black thread wrapped around to hold the planting together.

Young showed it could go on a slab pot if desired.

For winter she recommends storing in a garage or unheated porch.

The meeting was ended with an auction of the demo Kusamono pot planting. There were 5 raffle winners.

Here are a few photos from the May meeting, provided by Michael Field:



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### ***Up For Debate*** ***Aaron Binns***

Cinder Blocks, Spray Paint, Fertilizer, and Cookies

Bonsai enthusiasts have more problems than just how to grow and maintain trees. Once your collection begins to multiply you are faced with the daunting question of where and how to display your trees. When considering

how to go about this remember that you should consider both practical aspects as well as esthetics. You need to be happy with how your display looks because no one wants to place beautiful trees in a less than beautiful setting. You will also have to hold to some kind of budget, at least most of us do. When considering your budget remember that as your collection grows, so will the space that you will require to display in. So count on building displays more than once in your bonsai career. One of the easiest displays can be built of cinder blocks over top of which is laid two 2x4 boards. This is actually a very good practical decision because it can be moved, easily built, and costs very little. (By the way permanent stands are great but depending on how your collection grows you may find that some trees want a sunnier or shadier location than the stands you originally built. I have both permanent and movable stands for this reason.) While cinder block benches are economical and mobile I have never been a big fan esthetically. Pretty a cinder block is not. Solution: Buy a can or two of spray paint. In the picture below I chose black but express yourself. If you buy the contractor size spray paint bottles you can get away with 2 for about \$5.00 each. It completely changes the look of the bench. You can get the cinder block for a couple of dollars each, so since I used 6 blocks that is about 12 dollars per bench. If you use pine 2x4 boards each will cost you about \$4.00. So the entire project will cost you about \$26.00 per stand and you get 8 feet of bench space. Full disclosure, I sprung for cedar in place of pine, those are \$18.00 a piece so my total cost for a single bench just like the ones below was about \$58.00. I still need to seal the cedar, so round to \$60.00. That's not so bad.



Now let's consider fertilizer. I am horrible about checking the face book page. However, I glanced at an old post recently and saw a question about fertilizer. I didn't love the answer. Almost every bonsai enthusiast that you ask will tell you to look at the directions on the fertilizer

package and use half the amount but fertilize twice as often. I don't do that and it isn't because the advice is bad it is because there are no firm rules in bonsai. The trend over the last few years in bonsai soil is to go with looser soil with little to no organic components. When you feed with liquid fertilizer the components of the fertilizer will saturate the soil in the pot and the soil can and will "hold on to" the fertilizer. However, the next time you water you begin to rinse out the remainder of the fertilizer that your soil is trying to hold on to. The looser your soil the more often you water and you are depleting any stored nutrient much faster simply because you are watering more often. I also believe that thicker (more potting soil like) mixes will hold on to the fertilizer better than a mix with components like crushed granite. When you water my trees the pot drains almost immediately and daily watering is a must. I use full strength fertilizer. I don't use weak fertilizer either. I am using a liquid feed that comes in a bottle that attaches to a spray nozzle, 12-4-8 and I fertilize as often as the directions indicate. (There is nothing magic about the 12-4-8, I use it for convenience because it is pre-mixed. Point and shoot, you can fertilize everything very quickly.) I also use a small amount of granular fertilizer so that as I am washing away the last feeding I am replacing just a little of the nutrients. Just a note for reference, I am using a potting mix that is very similar to the Flower Market. You can cut down on fertilizer to reduce leaf size in many cases but I prefer to push vigorous growth most of the time. It keeps the tree healthy. If you are using something like 0.2-0.2-0.2 and only at half strength and your soil is free draining with no organic components you are probably under fertilizing. Disclaimer: if you aren't having issues don't change your fertilization routine. If you do try to increase your feedings do so very slowly; you can kill a tree quickly if you over feed.

Now finally let's discuss cookies. What do they have to do with bonsai? Nothing, but my wife was kind enough to make me home made chocolate chip cookies and I was partaking the whole time I wrote this article. Be jealous!

Here are a couple of pictures of the tree that Bjorn will be styling at this month's meeting. (Pictures provided by Kurt Smith)

It is a collected Colorado Blue Spruce.  
Collected by Todd Schlafer

Pot it is in is the finest dish pan available these days.

The tree will be raffled, drawing date has not yet been announced.



### **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 \$12 (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 border on both combinations and AABS lettering and Chinese characters with 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 may require a minimum of five garments per order)

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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:** Bob Bauer

**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)

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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>

*Visit us on the Web:*

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