



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)

**June 2016**  
Volume 13 Issue 5

## **NEXT CLUB MEETING:**

**June 22, 2016**

### **Kusamono artist: Young Choe**

Our June 22 monthly meeting will feature talented Kusamono artist, Young Choe. We are fortunate to also have her conduct a workshop Thursday, June 23 at Matthaei Botanical Gardens from 5:30 to 9:00 p.m. She has received rave reviews from participants far and wide across the United States. Young Choe studied horticulture at the University of Maryland, calligraphy and ink painting in Korea, in addition to her training with Kusamono master Keiko Yamane in Japan. She has been involved with the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum for many years, and exhibits her work there. She is considered by many to be the foremost Kusamono artist in the country at this time.

Kusamono is a botanical art that developed as a complement to bonsai in Japan. Kusamono are uniquely potted arrangements of natural wild grasses, flowers and native plants reflecting a season or suggestive of a designated location. The name Kusamono derives from two Japanese characters, one for grass and the other for thing. Originally, this was the name for the tiny accent plants used in bonsai display, to enhance the beauty of the bonsai as a tree in its natural setting. Over time, the practice has become an admired art form in itself. Compositions have a seasonal theme and often represent a habitat as well. For example, a fall Kusamono may also suggest a woodland, while a spring planting might evoke a meadow. Although some compositions may seem timeless, Kusamono do not have the staying power of bonsai, and may require rearranging after a while. There are three basic arrangement styles: out-of-pot, moss-ball, or container. Bonsai lovers will understand the significant effort that goes into achieving a natural, even random effect. Every selection for a Kusamono must be carefully considered. The container, type of soil, plants, and moss must work together synergistically to be both sustainable and artistic.

You will want to sign up early to be assured of a spot in this workshop. Supplies are included in the sixty-dollar fee payable to Tamara Milostan 4228 Highcrest Dr. Brighton, MI 48116. You will enjoy working with Young Choe to design your own Kusamono. The knowledge you acquire at the workshop will be invaluable in creating accent pieces for your bonsai displays in the future! However, I am sure you will admire your Kusamono creation as a work of botanical art in itself!

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, a lot has happened since last month. Trees are growing like crazy, birds are chirping like crazy, frogs are croaking like crazy and all of this is driving us crazy. We are having spring into summer fun.

I attended the 2016 Show in Grand Rapids this past month. Meijer Gardens, ABS Show and Michigan All State Bonsai show all in one. Many great bonsai trees were on display. The weather was a bit cool and wet but indoors we were enjoying tropical weather. Lots of vendors were doing a very brisk business. I attended all the pine demo's and pine workshops. Even after 20 yrs. of practicing bonsai, I still have so much to learn. I spend most of my time practicing on Kurt Smith's trees at The Flower Market in Dundee and also some time practicing on your trees the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of every month. I do thank you all for allowing me to practice on your trees.

Matthaei Botanical Gardens hosted Dr. Melvyn Goldstein and his Satsuki Azalea Bonsai on Saturday May 28<sup>th</sup>. This was a well-attended event with Dr. Goldstein talking bonsai and explaining the particular artistry involved in designing azaleas. I was particularly struck by a point he made about great works of art. He said that when a great painting or sculpture is finished, it is placed in a museum or gallery and it can be viewed forever. It is a finished masterpiece and will always be the same. He went on to say that the bonsai masterpiece is NEVER finished it is ALWAYS a work in progress.

As a living piece of art, our works are always changing growing and losing branches, growing and losing leaves, flowers, and fruits. Our pieces can also be displayed and admired. However, they can also be rewired and repotted, trimmed and tilted and become a new work of art, and displayed again. Bonsai is a forever growing and changing artistic endeavor.

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### **MAY'S PROGRAM RE-CAP:**

The May meeting was a time to bring in trees and work on them together. Experts helped those with less experience to plan the design of their trees, and many great ideas were exchanged. In addition to providing an opportunity for expert input, the meeting was an opportunity to build new friendships and strengthen old ones.



Joan Wheeler



Don Wenzel





Tom Phardel



Chris Kehrig –Washington Hawthorn



Nathan Thomason –Korean Hornbeam



Ed Hughes –Hornbeam Maple



Brian Kritzman –Black Pine



Leslie Olsen –Costal Redwood



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***UP FOR DEBATE: My Tree is Better  
Than Your Tree  
Aaron J. Binns***

Have you ever watched two young boys argue about whose dad is best? Maybe listened while two young ladies discussed the merits of their doll collections? The conversations can get heated and sometimes end with hurt feelings or black eyes as each side embellishes their own position to the point of absurdity. You would think that as we aged we would naturally grow up and stop being so concerned about who is right and who is wrong

or who has the best thing-a-ma-jig. No such luck. Even our politicians have joined in the chaos. You have only to turn on the television to your favorite news station to see clips of “leaders” from both sides of the aisle acting like children. We have become accustomed to their bad behavior and most of us have simply stopped listening. The politicians can’t handle not being in the spotlight so in response they have sunk to new levels of depravity to recapture our attention. It can be difficult to determine if you are watching political news or the latest teaser for the next big WWF wrestling championship. And of course, the promises keep getting bigger.

And we love it.

So do the television newscasters. They all feign disgust but I don’t buy it. They smile too much as they report every single sound bite of bad behavior and they don’t ever move on to anything else more newsworthy. Seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day we are presented with bad behavior.

Why?

Cause it’s entertaining! The real issues are too dry; it’s much more fun listening to people take verbal shots at one another. And if you are concerned that it is only Americans that love to argue, you should spend some time paying attention to European politics... those folks reached the gutters a long time ago. So it must just be human nature.

So, this week I would like to tap into some of this primal human behavior by asking a simple question, “What is the absolute best tree for Bonsai”? This is a question that is posed to all bonsai artists from time to time. Usually it comes from a beginner looking for the best starter tree and I think all of us have our opinions. What then could possibly be a better way to crown a true “King of Trees” than to vigorously argue the merits of our own favorites? I have two.

If you are looking for an indoor tree there can be no better choice than the ficus nerifolia. These trees work great as large trees and equally well as shohin bonsai. I keep mine outside during the summer and bring them indoors during the winter and they never skip a beat making the transition. They are hard to overwater, hard to underwater, you can prune to a stub, and they will regrow. They are the perfect indoor tree. When it comes to outdoor trees, I like junipers. Specifically shimpaku juniper. This tree can also be styled as a large bonsai or

small and always looks in proportion because the scale foliage always looks in proportion. They too are tolerant of watering mistakes, aren’t too picky about winter protection, and perhaps best of all will form attractive full foliage pads even if the branch structure isn’t perfect. This means they can develop quickly.

What do you think? What is the best tree for bonsai? Let’s have some fun with it so bring your candidate and the reasons you think your tree deserves the title. We will keep it friendly though, no reason to stoop to the level of Presidents!

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## BEGINNER’S MIND

*J. Brian Byrd & Carmen Leskoviansky*

Our Facebook page recently featured the question:

***What are your sources of inspiration? Are they from the natural world, or from the world of art?***

Here are some of the responses from our members:

**Dave Tucker:** In addition to giving my free time to little trees, I am a distance runner. As I train for long races, I enjoy running through parks and on single-track trails through trees. I get a lot of inspiration from the trees I pass on these runs. In fact, I sometimes mess up my training schedule to stop and just look at some trees for several minutes, wondering how what I see there would translate into a little pot. More . . . generally when I train and shape a bonsai, I try to make it look like a real tree I might see in the real world.

I often tell people my trees talk to me. I almost never begin working with a newly bought or harvested tree. I try to keep each in sight and mind as much as possible while I wait for some inner inspiration before doing any deep cutting or wiring. I’m not sure I can explain it better than that, but I think you bonsai people will understand the tree really does “talk” to me if I give it enough time.

There is a 50+ foot tree at the end of my street. I have looked at it for 15 years. Yesterday I stood in the middle of the street at dawn and imagined how I would trim and wire it.

**Carmen Leskoviansky:** Great answer, Dave! I find myself stopping to look at trees when I’m out walking or driving. I have seen a few around town that could translate well into a pot. I think these interesting trees I’ve seen in the

wild are more inspirational to me than art, though I sometimes find myself using more of an artistic eye to condone rule-breaking to achieve a certain look.

**Jay Sinclair:** Both, but mostly nature. I spend a lot of time looking at trees in the wild. This sometimes annoys my geology friends, who feel that trees just get in the way of seeing the rocks. Here is a bit of both:



**Ron Milostan:** Chris J Kehrig says... to me, Each tree provides its own source of inspiration. The secret is finding the art that is locked within that tree.

**Dean Bull:** Yes.

**Peggy Kubitz:** The poet Joyce Kilmer said it best, "I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree." Who wouldn't want to capture in miniature the natural beauty of a tree? Bonsai makes it possible. The more skilled the artist the more the tree captures your heart!

**Ron Milostan:** When I purchase a pre bonsai tree I already have in my mind's eye what that tree will look like when I design it. Never is it an immediate bonsai, nor always exactly what I envisioned. My mind's eye certainly favors certain styles. My father had a large interest in Michigan trees spending many hours in these forests. I also grew to see the form and growth habits of these trees. My mind's eye has many images which I can draw from.

Follow us on Face book and get involved in the conversation!

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2016

### 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 \$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 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

President .....	<b>Ron Milostan</b>
Immediate Past President .....	<b>Jay Sinclair</b>
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Directors 2016 .....	<b>Peggy &amp; Barry Kubitz</b>
Director 2016-2017 .....	<b>Aaron Binns</b>

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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  
 Please Call First



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