



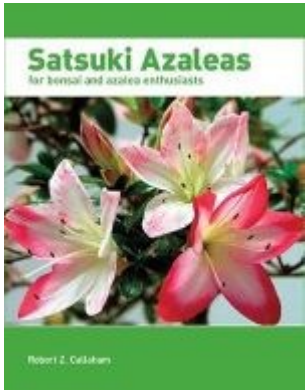
March Meeting : Member Social/Book Sale

Meetings

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.

Traditionally the AABS likes to host a meeting or two dedicated to working on our trees. The March meeting (3/26) will be such a meeting. Bring a tree, bring your questions, and join together for some great mentorship. Refreshments will be provided as well as great advice.

This year the club will be simultaneously holding a book sale. Over time we have amassed a number of nice volumes on the art of bonsai and related topics. The sale will be from 6:30 to 8 pm with most books tagged at \$5.00. A few of the more collectible or scarce books will be priced accordingly. After 8 pm you may fill a paper bag of \$5.00 books for \$20.00. All funds will support AABS programming and events.



Satsuki Azaleas, by Robert Calahan. Published in 2006. A collectible for sure!

Membership Update

As of March 1st the AABS has 60 member households! Thank you to everyone who has been prompt about paying your dues (due by March 31st). It is very important for the AABS to receive your membership

dues — \$30 per household — in a timely manner so that we can budget for this year’s events and programs. Paying your dues allows you to:

- Participate in the annual auction (selling is reserved for members only)
- Receive email alerts to members announcing special events
- Hold AABS office
- Vote in the annual election
- Purchase supplies from AABS
- Sell and offer for sale bonsai and bonsai related item at meetings

Dues may be paid via PayPal (QR Code above right), or with a check, cash or card at meetings. If you would like to mail me a check (made out to AABS) you may do so at 907 Hillside Ct., Ypsilanti, MI 48197 please include a phone number on your check. — Anne



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President's Perspective

Don Wenzel

We're starting to see some warmer weather and I'm sure many of you are taking advantage by getting started doing pre-spring work where you can. In my case, as of yesterday (3/9), the pots were still mostly frozen in. At this point, I'm just hoping I'll be able to pull something out in time to bring to our 'Bring your own Tree' meeting and social this month. This is a great opportunity to get some other views and perspectives about your trees. More experienced club members will be available to discuss your tree with you.

This meeting we will also be holding a bonsai book sale fundraiser. Over the past several years we've accumulated, via various means, around 100 bonsai books. So we're hosting a sale of these books at the March meeting, the idea being to get them into the hands of the membership where they can be used, instead of sitting in storage somewhere. You'll find details about the sale elsewhere in the newsletter.

The AABS regularly gets email notifications about various Bonsai events around the country. We recently received details about the 9th US National Bonsai Exhibition to be held in Rochester New York on September 13-14th this year. This show is held every other year and is one of the premiere shows in the US. Several AABS members have had their trees accepted to this show in the past. Unlike many shows, you need to submit your tree (via photos) for acceptance.

In my bonsai journey, I was slow to put my trees in shows (imposter syndrome was probably the main reason), but in the past couple years I've started putting my trees in shows other than our show. In 2023 I submitted a tree for the 8th US National Bonsai Exhibition at the urging of experienced club members I respect. I was very fortunate, my tree was accepted and it was a great experience. I recommend members who may be thinking about displaying their trees at other shows to take the step and do it. In my case I found doing so just heightened my desire to have my trees be the best I can make of them.

In Bonsai
Don

"A bonsai tree can be understood as a physical sculpture, a stationary image, yet its very being as a living tree is ephemeral like a performance or a dance."—Ricardo Nagaoka



Prizes for the Raffle: We are always 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 Rick McCoy at any meeting or email him at imrickmccoy@yahoo.com

February Meeting Minutes — February 26, 2025

Chris Kehrig

Don's Comments:

- Thanks to Mark and Becky Hanner for all their work.
 - Andy Smith procured for the AABS show.
 - 3 new members in attendance.
 - There will be a future book sale for all the books that have been brought in.
 - Anne is collecting the \$30 dues.
-

Our presenter was Carmen Leskoviansky:

She completed a 3-year apprenticeship in Oregon last year.

Thanks go to Jack Sustic who curated the Matthei collection during Carmen's absence.

Carmen has a horticulture degree from MSU.

In 2011 she started managing the Matthei bonsai collection.

2018 she would go out for seasonals with Michael Hagedorn.

2021-2024 was the apprenticeship with him.

Life at the apprenticeship involved watering, seasonal tree work, client work, and teaching seasonals.

Carmen then shown some client tree pictures with wire biting in and heavy clean up required.

Key takeaways:

- Learning to unlearn IE perfectionism and imposter syndrome.
- Know when to stop – still learning.
- How to make something out of nothing – move it around.
- Beware of being too precious.
- Community sport – group creation with various backgrounds.

Tree ranking:

- What qualities can't be changed – trunk and movement
- Consider what characteristics make that species special:
- Juniper – jin and shari
- Ponderosa Pine – jin, shari, and contortion
- Maple – nebari, scarless trunk
- What is the quality of the work done
- Pot choice

Carmen's Advice:

1. **Unlearn perfectionism and imposter syndrome.**
2. **Know when to stop – this takes awhile.**
3. **How to make something out of nothing? Move it around!**
4. **Beware of being too precious.**
5. **Bonsai is a community sport, get other's input.**

February Meeting, Continued from Page 3:

Pacific Bonsai Expo 2024 in Oakland California had so many high-quality trees.

Back at home, the Melvyn Goldstein Bonsai Garden has over 200 trees. Original donation from Dr. Seevers in the 70's. 34 azaleas from Dr. Goldstein. There will be a donation of over 100 trees to come.

Strengths and opportunities of the public collection:

- Different age levels
- Creating and maintaining generational trees
- What's new here
- Cold storage up and running that fits all of the trees
- Azalea workshop June 14 th and 15 th
- Shonin trees coming
- Connections and opportunities
- Medical arts students
- Connecting with students, faculty, and research



Gift of Dr. Melvin Goldstein, *Rhododendron, indicum*.
Matthai Botanical Garden

Beyond MBGNA:

Consortium of bonsai gardens

Joint nationwide exhibit

Improving access to bonsai education

The Purple Pot Society—Bonsai is for everyone. Support and inspire women to pursue bonsai as a hobby, art form, or profession. Symbol of creativity; gender disparity in American bonsai

Carmen's Email: carmentr@umich.edu

AABS Mission Statement:



Celebrating 50 years of promoting knowledge, appreciation, and the practice of the art of bonsai

The purpose of The Ann Arbor Bonsai Society shall be to promote knowledge, appreciation, and practice of the art of bonsai to its members and to the general public through meetings, lectures, workshops, exhibitions, publications or other means.

The Exquisite Cruelty (or Is It Love) of Bonsai

By Jeannette Cooperman

A tiny, gnarled apple tree, its trunk curved. A foot-tall banyan tree, holy as a relic.

Horror vies with love. I want one of these bonsai trees. Every leaf, every strip of bark is perfect. Enchanted, they belong to a fairy world. Each has two ages, one counted from a seedling, the other an illusion. Gardeners wire the limbs into twisted, unnatural positions, imitating a surreal dreamscape rather than nature. They amputate limbs that ruin a carefully cultivated asymmetry; they scrape bark from a trunk to create a century's dead wood, bleaching the exposed area with lime sulphur.



A little gentle persuasion is fine. Encourage a climbing rose in a certain direction; train a pear tree to espalier along a brick wall. But bonsai is as much about artifice as about nature.

You persuade the tree that autumn has come by removing all its leaves, or you wave the leaves smaller by pruning them at the height of the growing season. You spray it with water if it ought to live in a rain forest. You make it look windswept, or as though it is growing over the edge of a cliff. You prune not only leaves but roots to stunt the growth.

No doubt I am making too much of this. I have personally wrested hundreds of unwanted saplings from the ground, their roots screaming. The bonsai have it better. Maybe I only think their existence cruel because it reminds me of foot binding, an entirely unfair comparison.

But if someone wanted to clip my hair and twist my limbs to make me look old, but promised to tend me carefully for the rest of my life? I am not sure I would agree.

“To be successful at bonsai cultivation, you must acquire the perseverance and unconditional kindness normally reserved for devout monks,” I read. Tending bonsai is a life’s work—it outlasts parenting—and it would indeed teach humility.

Whenever we try too hard to control a living thing, we wind up owned by what we have endeavored to possess. We must

guard it, suppress its instincts, watch over it warily, exert a constant coercive force—all while pretending that the result is a state of nature. Wires are removed before the bonsai is seen; the scar tissue from those amputations is finessed until it looks untouched by human hands.

The art of bonsai began in China at least a thousand years ago, but it took shape in Japan, influenced by Zen Buddhism’s emphasis on patience and self-discipline. Kyozo Murata, who has mastered the practice, says bonsai is more than beautiful: It reminds us that life is always changing and we are part of the passage of time, thus have no need to “dread physical waning or loneliness.”

Hard to object to that—and it makes the impulse easier to understand. We fear and hate age, and this, by proxy, brings the aging process completely under our control—and shows us death need not arrive on its heels. Bonsai trees are grown to extend their life span; they may look old, but they live almost forever. You are merely pruning so they will remain happy and healthy in a small pot. The wires can be rationalized as lending stability until the root system strengthens.

But nobody ever wired the giant redwoods for stability.

Continued on Page 6...

Horticulturists speak of growing bonsai as having a long, intimate conversation in which you must also listen to what the plant wants. This mollifies me, as does the tender care they receive.

“A tree that is left growing in its natural state is a crude thing,” wrote the now unknown tenth-century author of *Utsubo Monogatari*. “It is only when it is kept close to human beings who fashion it with loving care that its shape and style acquire the ability to move one.”

So not true.

I am drawn to these twisty, elegant little trees; they are as finely made as carved scrimshaw, or one of Queen Victorian’s shelled cameos. Yet I question the impulse to miniaturize something so majestic. I am also not sure why we needed teacup dogs and miniature horses, adorable as they all are. We lavish more care, or a certain fussy kind of care, once we miniaturize. Because we wield more control? Because the creature depends more on our protection? Shrinking something down make it seem manageable, harmless, fascinating. It makes us Gulliver, our power undisputed.

In the end, I cannot trust a love that makes a doll or a toy of the beloved, keeping it tiny and inhibiting its growth. What would the world look like, I wonder, if every single living being were free to grow as it was meant to grow? Weeds might be treated as interesting, if scraggly and invasive, plantings. Houses would be covered in ivy and Virginia creeper; yards would be dotted with wildflowers; gardens would be wilder. Poodles would look like lambs. No one would be afraid to be smart or afraid to win; imposter syndrome would vanish.

As exquisite as bonsai are, I hate what they remind me of. Art can impose itself on all the canvas or stone in the world. But it should respect nature, not turn into a living taxidermy. We have done too much destroying and called it accomplishment. And we have stunted one another, too, pruning back impulses that alarm us, squishing children into the molds we have chosen, bending the will of anyone who seems to want to grow away from us.

Done right, bonsai offer a serene beauty—to the beholder. Inside the plant, a genetic code is crashing, and a vital impulse—to grow!—still bubbles. It will die only when the plant dies. Until then, this life force must be constantly constrained. The gardener’s fight may be quiet, dignified, and artistic, but it is relentless.

Jeannette Cooperman holds a degree in philosophy and a doctorate in American studies. She has won national awards for her investigative journalism, and her essays have twice been cited as Notable in Best American Essays.

Reprinted with Permission. This essay was originally published Oct. 27, 2021, in The Common Reader: Washington University in St. Louis’s Journal of the Essay.

BOARD EXPANDS...

The AABS Board recently received a nomination to place Jay Sinclair on the Board as a Director at Large. The Board was happy to vote affirmatively on the matter, as we have space according to our By-laws. More importantly Jay has been a past President and past Programming Chair and all around indispensable volunteer. Thank you for your willingness to serve Jay!





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SUPPORT FOR BONSAI MEMBERS' ENDEAVORS

ALL MEMBERS CAN OFFER FOR SALE ANY BONSAI OR BONSAI RELATED MATERIALS IN THE NEWSLETTER WITH NO AD FEES. ADDITIONALLY WE ARE HAPPY TO PROMOTE MEMBER PODCASTS, PUBLISHED MATERIALS, NON-PROFITS, ETC. AS LONG AS THE CONTENT IS RELATED TO THE ART OF BONSAI. ADS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED FOR INCLUSION BY THE FIFTH OF THE MONTH. MATERIALS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED AS A JPEG OR PNG FULL COLOR FILE. ADS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS WILL RUN CONSECUTIVE MONTHS WITHOUT INTERRUPTION IF REQUESTED. PLEASE SEND ARTWORK TO ANNE EVANS AT AEVANS136@GMAIL.COM. THANK YOU!

Ann Arbor Bonsai Society

Written correspondence may be addressed to 907 Hillside Ct., Ypsilanti, MI 48197.

Email us at: aabonsaisociety@gmail.com

We are on the Web and Social Media!

<https://annarborbonsaisociety.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/aabs1970/>

Coming Up....April Meeting and Workshop

Our April meeting on the 23rd will be all about Yews. Please join Don Lindstrom for a demonstration on all things Yew and Bonsai. If your goal is to design a yew like the one on the right, you might want to consider the Thursday, April 24th workshop Don will be running 10 am to 3 pm.

Bring your own yew or there will be a small selection available for purchase. Please bring all tools and wire.

The workshop will cost \$50, limit of 12 seats. Enrollment will be open at our March meeting. As always, cash, checks, credit cards.



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