



# NEWS NOTES

*Newsletter of the Tucson Bonsai Society*

*David Meyer, Editor*

*Founded 1972*

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## Words from Ray's Woodshed...

Paul Vasquez presented his program in January on the "Basic Principles of Styling", and did a great job as usual. All those pictures of tree styles were drawn by our budding artist, Paul himself. Greg Baumgartner was our presenter at the February meeting on "Spring Pruning, Care and Maintenance", which was very timely presented to get your trees ready for spring.

### IMPORTANT!!!

Yume Japanese Gardens wants to have a relationship with our club. This could be a very exciting marriage. Please read the article by Gay Lynn Goetzke and Steve Willis on two projects we can get involved with right now. Thank you, Gay Lynn, for getting the ball rolling in these endeavors.

I went to the **Matsuri Japanese Festival** in Phoenix at Heritage Square on February 24. It is a lot of fun with all kinds of events. I saw the Phoenix Bonsai Society display of about thirty trees. It was certainly worth the trip, and for those of you who missed it, it will be held next year at the same time and place.

Greg Baumgartner had the second collecting trip at Gardner Canyon on Saturday, February 23. Included are a couple of photos of members who did not come back empty handed. We may have one more trip in the near future. We will send out a special email if it is a go.

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Joe Costante with his haul at the canyon dig--  
"Say it's so, Joe!"

## Congrats to our October '12 class

As our teachers will recall, we had a total of 12 students in our class that followed the show at Foothills Mall. David taught the class, assisted by Paul, Ray, Larry, and Greg, so we had great hands-on sessions. The material was San Jose and Green Mound juniper, and all were put into training pots. Of the 12 enrolled, ten have joined our club, and two others come to meetings when they can. According to our records, this is the highest enrollment retention we've ever had from a class. The class has been invited to bring in their junipers to our March meeting, for more wiring and possible pruning. All the trees are thriving. Way to go!

## Words from Ray's Woodshed (Cont'd)

We were looking forward, and were well prepared, for the Civano Nursery event last Saturday, but the rain did not cooperate. It was drizzly and nasty, and few attended. Our troops carried on, and excellent demonstrations were done by **David, Paul, Gay Lynn, Greg, and myself**, sticking until the bitter end, when it cleared up. All five of the demo plants were donated to TBS by the nursery, and will be offered for auction or raffle in the fall.

The **Phoenix Bonsai Society** is celebrating their 50 years as a club with a bonsai show of trees at the Valley Garden Center, 1809 N. 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Phoenix on April 13 & 14, 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. There is no charge. I attended their event last year, and it was beautifully done in a very nice setting. You are all invited!

Our next meeting on March 17 will be on "**Basics of Wiring**" presented by our mentors and teaching assistants. Brings your trees and nimble fingers and learn to wire if you need any help. Materials will be present to learn wiring techniques, even if you have no tree to bring.

**Ted Matson** was at my house on January 27 & 27. The Saturday workshop was well attended, and Ted did a super job on the demonstration Sunday afternoon. The prostrate juniper he styled was one everyone wanted to win. **Gay Lynn**, as the picture shows, was one excited winner! **Ryan Neil** had a two-day workshop and demonstration in Mesa, sponsored by the **Scottsdale Bonsai Society**. **Steve Willis, Hector and Grace Espinosa, Gay Lynn Goetzke, Frank Harris, Hozy McCarter, Randy McLean, David Meyer** and I attended. Ryan is becoming one of the premier masters in the United States. The entire focus was on junipers. David has an extensive article about the event in this issue that is well worth the read. **Gay Lynn** and I will present some of the information we gleaned from him at our May meeting.

- **Ray Noseck**



## David's blog...

As our trees wake up from a light nap or deep sleep, it's time to think about fertilizer. Now that's a dangerous and confusing word, and some of us get kind of volatile about the subject.

To begin with, let's decide what it is we want to do at this time of year, and then find a product, if we are lacking, to do the job. Maybe our junipers need a kickstart as they show new growth, indicating active roots. If possible, use an organic fertilizer, or chemical with a higher nitrogen count, such as 10, 12, or 15 for the first number. We want to use this while our nights are cool, through April. **READ THE LABEL!** If you use a fertilizer with Urea as a nitrogen source (such as Miracle-Gro and many others), do not use it when your root ball is heating up, as it might burn. It is taken up quickly, and will be gone within a week. Try the Grow-More Orchid fertilizer which is a urea-free 20-10-20.

Never fertilize a dry rootball; it is better to feed often with a diluted formula, than rarely with a strong dose. Feed early in the morning after you water, and apply extra water for a few days after you fertilize.

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**Another happy camper with treasure**

## David's blog, continued

Organics are good, and last longer in the soil, if you do not have critters such as pets or pack rats, which will be drawn to it. If you use chemical products, you will need to fertilize more often, as the products flush out within a week or less. If you do not have any organic material in the mix, chemical is best. I really preach the Dyna-Gro products, since I brought them to Arizona when we had our shop, and still carry them for our members. Apply Pro-Tekt as a spray and additive in April through June, as it improves tolerance to heat and wind, and use Dyna-Gro 7-9-5 with lots of trace elements and minerals, no urea. If you use bark products or humus, or Akadama, I think organics will be more effective.

If you fertilize deciduous or broadleaf evergreen this month or next, I suggest waiting until your new growth is fully extended and hardened off. If you jump the gun here, you will overly extend internodal growth, and you will have over-sized leaves as a result. If in doubt, don't do anything, and contact your mentor or teacher for their advice.

-- David Meyer



Gay Lynn was the winner of the prostrate juniper styled by Ted Matson

## More on Fertilizing

The following are excerpted from a gem of a book, *The Bonsai Book of Practical Facts* by Jerome Meyer (no relation) and, sadly, now out of print:

"There is no mystery to fertilizing and there is no need for the bonsai enthusiast to master the hard core of science and chemistry literature on the subject. A simple and established routine is all that is necessary.

"There are two types of fertilizers, *organic* and *inorganic*. *Organic* fertilizers use natural substances such as blood meal, cottonseed meal, fish emulsion, bone meal, chicken manure, and hoof and horn meal while *inorganic* forms (soluble fertilizers) are chemically formulated. There are supporters of each class, but there are also rational reasons for their choices and uses.

"Organic fertilizers are slow to act, last longer in the soil, must be acted upon by soil microorganisms to become available to the plant and they also contain some natural trace elements such as zinc, iron, magnesium, copper, etc. Chemical fertilizers, on the other hand, act fast, need no action by soil bacteria to become effective and disappear faster from the soil. They do not contain trace elements such as iron unless incorporated in the manufacturing process.

"When soils constructed of fired clay aggregates are used (Turface, Terragreen, Haydite), chemical fertilizers are almost always essential because there is no soil bacteria to break down organic formulations, unless some organic material, such as humus or wood bark, has been added to the mix. Weak solutions of the inorganic forms should be applied more frequently with synthetic mixes than would be the case with organic fertilizers and natural soils since organic fertilizers have a built-in "slow release" feature by their very nature.

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## More on Fertilizing, continued

"Some growers use both types of fertilizers, organic and inorganic, either by alternating the applications or under the following guidance: when air temperature is under 55 degrees, use inorganic; over 55 degrees, use organic. Since soil bacteria are not activated until air temperature is above 55, organic fertilizers at lower temperatures become useless. Whether the choice is organic or inorganic, continuous light feeding is the real secret of the fertilizing regimen.

"Unless synthetic soils using the baked clay additives are inoculated with organic matter (peat moss, fir bark, compost, etc.) to imitate garden soil and provide the soil micro-organisms, chemical fertilizers should be used exclusively until time has had an opportunity to provide the soil bacteria that acts on organic fertilizers and makes them available for the plant to use.

"During heavy rain or long periods of rain, nutritional elements can also be leached out of the soil before the plant can get them. This is another advantage of the soluble (chemical) fertilizer forms; they become available to the roots immediately after application since they need no treatment by soil bacteria.

"Finally, fertilizers are formulated for different purposes and these purposes are revealed in the percentages of the elements. High nitrogen, the first number in the sequence, produces vigorous growth, dense foliage and greater disease resistance. For low nitrogen requirements when vigorous foliage growth no longer is desired (hot summer, early fall fertilizing) use fruit, nut, or tomato fertilizers for higher phosphorous and potassium content."

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**Sensei Sayings:** "Most people force a design on the tree, without understanding the strength and innate direction of the tree."

-- Kathy Shaner

## Ryan Neil and "Bonsai Mirai"

by David Meyer

American Bonsai is in the process of undergoing a revolution; if you don't believe this, just watch Ryan at work. "Mirai" translates to "Future", or the Future of Bonsai. I've had workshops with Ryan before, at GSBF and Florida conventions, and it was quite an experience.



Ryan started bonsai training with **Harold Sasaki** in Denver, and soon migrated to Southern California where he worked with **Ted Matson** and **Ben Oki**. He has a degree in Horticulture. His lifelong dream, at the old age of 20, was to go to Japan and apprentice with **Masahiko Kimura**, the grand master of professional bonsai. After two years of writing Mr. Kimura a letter each month, he finally gave in and accepted Ryan. Mr. Kimura spoke no English, and had a stable of several apprentices, all Japanese. Ryan had to learn by observing, persevering, and working long hours.

After five years, Ryan was the only survivor, and had learned enough Japanese to become Mr. Kimura's interpreter. Staying another year, Ryan returned to the U.S., and has been touring the country ever since. He landed in Portland, Oregon, where he began building his nursery and international school of bonsai. He had a meeting of the minds with **Mike Hagedorn** (from Tucson, he was one of our mentors), who also studied in Japan and lives in Portland. **They conceived a bonsai village of artisans in the area, a version of the Omiya Bonsai Village in Japan. Bonsai Mirai is the first step. The next step is the "Artisans Cup of Bonsai Exhibition: American Bonsai Reforged and Refined" to be held at the Portland Art Museum Oct. 4-6, which will be a juried show. Entries will come from all over the country, possibly 150 or more trees, having been carefully screened for selection. The five judges are: David DeGroot, Boon Manikitivipart, and Colin Lewis from the USA; Peter Warren from the U.K.,**  
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## Ryan, continued...

**and Walter Pall of Germany.** First prize will be \$10,000, second \$5,000, and third prize \$3,000. Ryan tells me that the budget for this event is \$160,000, and he has personally invested half that amount. Entry fees, vendor info, and full details about the event can all be obtained at the site: [www.artisanscupofportland.com](http://www.artisanscupofportland.com) Get a virtual tour of Ryan's home and nursery at: [www.bonsaimirai.com](http://www.bonsaimirai.com), and on YouTube. Clearly, these are attempts to establish a home and focus group for professional and wanna-be professional bonsai growers and artists. Their sources of material for culture and display are almost all *yamadori*, or collected specimens.

For us common folk and bonsai hobbyists, you can book a 3-day class session at Ryan's nursery/school and focus on any number of subjects. Further, he plans to have each of the five judges critique and evaluate each of the entries, on camera, and these will be available over the internet for your review and study. At a price, of course.

Some of us from Tucson had the experience of attending Ryan's two days of workshops and a demo sponsored by the Scottsdale Bonsai Society last month. To keep costs down, all events were held in Mesa at the home of **Araxi Hovhannessian**, where a good time was had by all. These were clearly more advanced workshops, with excellent material.



*Ryan and Frank Harris defining living vein on tree from Rosemont. The one-seed juniper is over 500 years old.*

## My notes from Ryan's programs

Ryan's opening statement was: **"There are two observations to be made about Bonsai: Bonsai isn't easy, and Bonsai isn't cheap!"** Now he tells me.

The strength of junipers is in the foliage, while pine strength is in the roots. Juniper strength *originates* from the foliage, *so remove minimal foliage!*

Do not style, trim and wire your tree, and pot it at the same time. After working on your juniper, keep it shaded and mist the foliage 2-3 times daily. As weather warms, tree is more sensitive to our work, so back off when you have (1) wind (2) heat or (3) both.



*Looks like the youngest and the oldest, plus middle-aged juniper*

*Deadwood is critical to the styling of junipers; we need to contrast the living with the dead tissue. Best choice for a living vein (older, collected specimen) is the side of the trunk. The live vein continues to grow, deadwood does not, and we need to show this contrast.*

In our design, we choose the best of these features:

- Best base, nebari
- Trunk movement
- The line
- Special features-deadwood, shari, jins, etc.
- Branch placement

Give your tree FLOW – your eye moves and is captured.

Three basic elements:(1) trunk has dominant role (2) main branch is your *defining branch* (3) apex All three elements agree to create HARMONY, or can create CONFLICT OR TENSION. Use these elements differently to add excitement and interest.

Bonsai is not black and white, but shades of grey. The beauty comes from the best features, so focus on these qualities, minimize flaws. Your eye goes to any deviation in angle.

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## Ryan's Notes, Cont'd...



Ryan checks out Grace's *procumbens nana*, while Hector is immersed in deep thought, and whatzizname looks on. Field grown *procumbens nana junipers*, about 25 years old, were shipped in from Plant City in Georgia @ \$125 each by the Scottsdale club.

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The less we bend wire, the more holding capacity we have—less wire to branch, better holding. Use same angle on each turn, same space between coils- NO GAPS. Your mind should concentrate on the hand NOT applying wire for best control (the holding hand). Use single wire only, do not double the wire. The further out we go with wire length, the more leverage we have. When you compact and bend, wire may slack at bend. Use 55-60 degree angle, holds even better than 45 degree angle, and uses less wire.

**COLLECTED JUNIPERS.** Keep root warm, and top COOL AND MOIST. You need to see lots of new growth spiking, both mass and length, before you can do drastic bending or wiring. Let your foliage run, which grows more root, speeding up the healing process. Ryan does not use rooting hormone or Superthrive when collecting.

The more junipers develop, the more time consuming they are. Foliage grows from the inside out, and we need to generate more foliage. If we remove new foliage, we reduce the strength of the tree. Cut back a leader to a strong shoot. Growth auxin is at terminal tip—trim back, and new leaders get energy. Take out weak interior growth, crotch growth. This clean out process should be done twice yearly. The interior growth is shaded, and has no photosynthesis function.

In our hot climate (Ryan's grandparents live in Phoenix, so he has awareness of our Sonoran Desert climate conditions), as growth slows, transpiration slows.



Ryan and Steve Willis style another *Nana*; all were excellent field-grown material



Ryan's demo tree before author took to Mesa for his Saturday night program, supplied by the author, acquired from Henry Haros in Sierra Vista. A prostrate juniper, about 35 years old.

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85% of all moisture moving through the plant will be used for transpiration. Moderate conditions are best in a climate like Oregon (where nearly all West Coast nursery stock is now being grown by Monrovia, Hines, and others). DO NOT PRUNE, WIRE, OR BEND TREES DURING HEAT STRESS! We need to create different angles, spaces, planes. 90% of our bonsai styling is structural, but the 10% of foliage and detail transforms the 90% into an artistic composition.

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## Ryan, continued

OUR SOILS need water and oxygen for balance, and something to bond nutrition. PORE SIZE is critical! Pumice holds more water than cinders, and holds 300% more moisture than perlite. Pumice maintains structure and holds heat. Cinders (lava rock) also maintains structure and provides pore space. Watch CEC (cation exchange rate) which has to do with organic component (bark product or Akadama).

Ryan's basic mix formula:

1 part Akadama

1 part pumice, 1 part cinders



*Ryan commences work on the tree; he has selected the front, and will address a "pigeon's breast" problem next.*

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Large particle sizes do NOT produce finer roots. Small and finer particles hold too much water. Discard what passes through window screening, and use that 1/16" size up to 1/4". The bottom layer in your pot should be no more than one particle size deep of coarse material; the purpose of which is to provide oxygen. Your pH should be neutral. DO NOT mix particle sizes in your container. *If you use a medium particle size, don't mix in anything smaller, as this fills up your pore space.*

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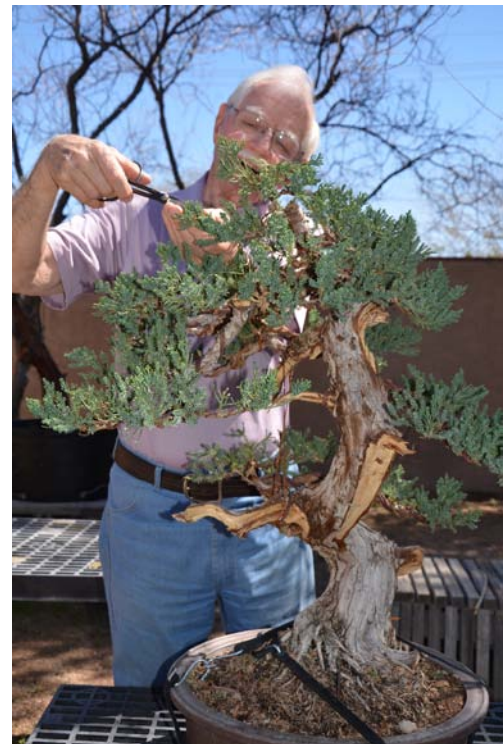
Photos and text by author, all rights reserved. This article will be adapted for submission to *Golden Statements*, official magazine of the Golden States Bonsai Federation. Ryan will be one of the headliners of the GSBF Convention in Riverside, CA in late October of this year.

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**"Wiring is the paintbrush of the bonsai artist."**  
**-- Ryan Neil**



*This is the front; note that a shari has drawn our attention to the pigeon's breast, rather than try to minimize it. More carving will be done to show more indentation and grain of the wood.*



*The proud owner of Ryan's handiwork.  
This is not the end of the story,  
but the beginning!*

## Calendar of Events

Meetings begin at 12 noon at the Catalina United Methodist Church, 2700 E. Speedway, Bldg. H - Room 230.

**March 17, Sun.:** "Let's Get Wired!" Learn wiring with the mentors and assistants. Bring your trees. If you don't have one to bring, practice materials will be provided. Workshop follows.

**April 21, Sun.:** "Itsy Bitsy Bonsai" program on Shohin size trees. Sources of material, training, culture, refinement, with mini-show by **Grace Espinosa** and **David Meyer**. This is a style-off, with four trees to be raffled. Bring that material and stay for the workshop.

**May 19, Sun.:** "What We Gleaned from Ryan Neil's Workshop" by **Gay Lynn Goetzke**. Workshop to follow - bring trees!

**June 23, Sun.:** "Our Desert Plant Candidates for Bonsai Material" by our guest speaker, **Eric Clark**, horticulturist at Civano Nursery. Workshop follows.

**July 21, Sun.:** "Tropicals for Bonsai" program by **Greg Baumgartner**, with show and tell. Bring tropicals and sub-tropicals for the workshop to follow.

**August 18, Sun.:** To be announced.

**Sept. 15, Sun.:** Annual Swap & Shop event and auction.

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**Reminder:** Please do not be talking and/or working on trees during our speaker's program. That's what our break and workshop is for!

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