



[Schedule](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Forum](#)

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Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society Logo Tree

By Pat Deutschman, RMBS historian

The official logo tree of RMBS is this Ponderosa Pine, collected in the 1950s by Bob Kataoka, most likely in the Rocky Mountains surrounding Estes Park - a favorite place for our early bonsai enthusiasts to find spectacular trees (all collected with permits).



Bob was a Japanese American member of the Denver Bonsai Club which was started after WWII by several other Japanese American men, most of whom had been recently released from a “relocation camp” during the war and then settled in Denver after they were released. Born in Hiroshima, Japan, he came to America at age 17 with the intent of eventually returning to Japan, but he never did. After the Denver Junior Bonsai Club was formed in 1969, Bob became a mentor and teacher to those members for many years.

Bob's bonsai pines, some as much as 600 years old, were reputed to be the finest collections of pines in the United States. Bob's reputation and expertise as an American bonsai master was recognized by such acknowledged teachers as John Naka, Ben Oki and Frank Okamura, as well as being recognized by the Japanese bonsai master Kyuzo Murata who asserted that Bob Kataoka's bonsai were one of the greatest representations of American bonsai he had ever seen!

The logo tree was adopted by the club in 1984 shortly after the club changed the name to the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society. According to Larry Jackel, they selected this tree because it was the best Ponderosa in the club at the time. It was approximately 3' across and had a 2' very twisted trunk.

This image, drawn by Phil Hayward, has been used as the official logo ever since and appeared in the masthead of the newsletters and club publications for many years.



Several of Bob's trees are in the Pacific Bonsai Museum permanent collection and were displayed in a special exhibit honoring those Japanese American bonsai artists who also experienced the same fate of internment during the war. I have written about Bob, his trees, his family and this exhibit in past issues of the RMBS newsletter.

In 1986, after Bob's death, the club dedicated the Artist of the Year award to be called the Bob Kataoka Memorial Award. The Tokonoma was built to honor each year's recipient and to also to remember Bob's contributions to RMBS.

The significance of the logo tree goes beyond its beauty and connection to our local geographic area and native trees. The tree has since died, but its image lives on in representing the spirit and legacy of both Bob Kataoka and the early RMBS club members. Bob and several other Japanese men of the Senior Denver Bonsai Club, from vastly different cultures and experiences as the American members of the Junior club, were able to not only rise above the oppression and discrimination they had been subjected to, but to also reach out in friendship, kindness, and generosity in sharing their knowledge of bonsai freely with all others. This is not only remarkable, but also evident in the beauty and spirituality of the trees that were collected, styled, and maintained as a

result of this collaboration based on sharing their love of bonsai and all they represent. This legacy has lasted beyond the 50+ years of the club's existence and the foundation of many long-lasting friendships.



Bob felt a strong kinship and bond with each of his bonsai. “Bonsai no kokoro” spirit of bonsai means that the true love of nature through bonsai brings love and respect for one’s fellow man. Bob Kataoka was truly possessed of bonsai no kokoro.



Workshop with Michael James

Saturday, June 1st

Classroom 2, DBG

9AM-3PM

Bring your own tree!

\$75/participant - **only 2 spots left!**

\$10/silent observer - **SOLD OUT**

RMBS is pleased to announce the release of our new merch!

With each piece featuring our logo tree, we hope you're able to represent our club with pride!

Please contact info@rmbonsai.org with any questions about sizing or any issues with your order. We've gotten several requests for a hoodie and are working on that. It will be released later this year in time for cooler weather!



Shop

Upcoming Events

Schedule



June Meeting

Monday, June 3

Gates Hall, DBG

7:00 PM

"The collections of the US National Bonsai and Penjing Museum"

-*Michael James, National Bonsai & Penjing Museum Curator*

NEW: Subscribe to the RMBS Google Calendar to stay up to date on upcoming events!

Instructions for: [Outlook](#) [iPhone](#) [Mac](#)

[View Calendar](#)

Membership

Individual: \$50/year

Family: \$75/year

rmbonsai.org/join

Welcome to our new members!

Hana Kundratova - Golden

*Jacob Pierce - Denver
Don Rosenbaugh - Littleton
Chris Shafer - Westminster
Katrina West - Denver

Total Membership - 192!*



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