



BOB KATAOKA PONDEROSA PINE CIRCA 1982. ESTIMATED AGE 400 YEARS.

RMBS

January 2019

Volume 51 Issue 1

## January President's Message

by Andy Berry

***"The object is not to make the tree look like a bonsai, but to make to bonsai look like a tree."***—John Y. Naka

Congratulations on weathering the maelstrom of the holidays and best wishes for the New Year! I find that as we dedicate significant effort to the festivities of the season, our trees are finding solace in a period of peaceful cold dormancy. ***This balance is never lost on me.*** Entertaining this time of year brings opportunity to showcase your collection in new ways: the calming winter silhouette of a small deciduous tree on a stand adjacent to the eggnog for the evening or a viewing stone causally placed at eyelevel on a shelf to draw a visitor's eye. Most of my family and friends find my "bonsai affliction" amusing, but it is

a joy to talk to them about the art and they always surprise me with unusual questions.

***January and February are a time for preparation and planning for the coming Spring.*** It is the time to inventory and clean tools and pots, identify trees that have lost percolation or require spring repotting. It is time to acquire new containers, sift soils, make top-dressing and identify a few trees that you will work over the year to grace the 50<sup>th</sup> annual RMBS show. This time of year, I tend to look at the photos of my trees and make sketches for those that will get primary branch selection and styling for the first time. I also draw trees in new pots to estimate a new planting angle and potential limitations of root mass (especially with *yamadori*). Certainly, close attention needs to be paid to trees outside in bunkers, cold

frames and unheated garages, to ensure they do not dry out. Protection from desiccating winds is paramount. And some think this is a "slow season" for bonsai! I also work some species heavily during this time, assuming I have made accommodations to keep them from freezing and out of severe elements. Your viewing stones need less attention, but I was amused when I read that a stone should be hand-rubbed with grease from the nose "daily for 30-50 years" to obtain that *wabi-sabi* patina we all cherish. I'm still working on that one.

I am excited to attend our January meeting and it promises to be a unique excursion into the spiritual nature of the trees in the Colorado region. We are fortunate to welcome John W. Anderson who will discuss

***Ute Indian prayer trees and their history in the South Park region.*** The Ute have rich history of modifying trees for medicinal, navigational, spiritual and educational purposes. We are discussing a future outing led by Mr. Anderson for RMBS members to experience these living artifacts in person. The Pikes Peak Historical Society has a nice article online more information on Ute Spirit Trees which I am reading prior to his presentation. Hope to see you there.

Your brother in bonsai,

Andy Berry

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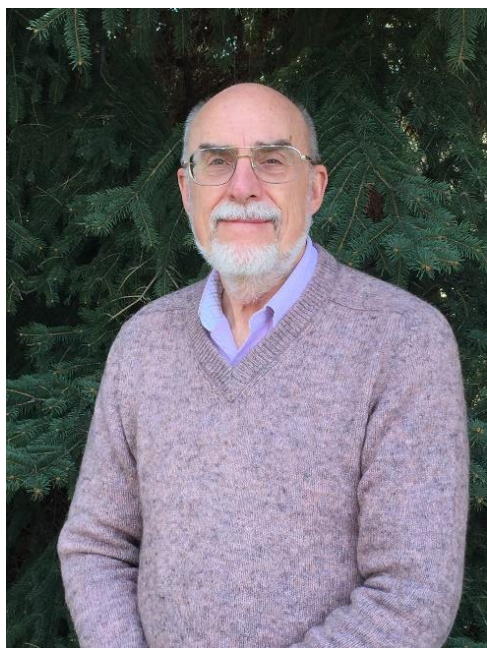
## 2018 - 2019 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Date and Location	Agenda or Program
<b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b> <b>January</b> Tue, Jan 8 <sup>th</sup> , 6:30 – 9:00pm DBG Plant Society Building	<b><u>SHORT PROGRAM:</u></b> Preparing for the 2019 Show <b><u>LONG PROGRAM</u></b> John Anderson - Ute Spirit Trees
<b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b> <b>February</b> Tue, Feb 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6:30 – 9:00pm DBG Plant Society Building	<b><u>LONG PROGRAM</u></b> Lou DeHerrera - Results of Soil Studies
<b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b> <b>March</b> Tue, Mar 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6:30 – 9:00pm DBG Plant Society Building	<b><u>SHORT PROGRAM</u></b> Hoop Houses & Greenhouses - various RMBS members <b><u>LONG PROGRAM</u></b> Mike Britten - Bonsai Ecology
<b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b> <b>April</b> Tue, Apr 2 <sup>th</sup> , 6:30 – 9:00pm Location Pending	<b><u>SHORT PROGRAM</u></b> Patrick Allen - Bonsai Stands <b><u>LONG PROGRAM</u></b> Darell Havener & Patrick Allen - Bougainvillea
<b><u>Saturday Workshop</u></b> <b>April</b> Sat April 13 <sup>th</sup> , 9:00 – 2:00pm Tom Anglewicz' s home	<b><u>WORKSHOP</u></b> Repotting, Pot Sale, & Pot Exchange
<b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b> <b>May</b> Tue, May 7 <sup>th</sup> , 6:30 – 9:00pm Location TBD	<b><u>GREEN ELEPHANT SALE</u></b>
<b><u>Takayama Park</u></b> <b>May</b> Sat, May 18 <sup>th</sup> , 9:00am – 1:00pm 500 South Colorado Blvd, Denver	<b><u>TAKAYAMA PARK</u></b>
<b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b> <b>June</b> Tue, June 4 <sup>th</sup> , 6:30 – 9:00pm DBG Plant Society Building	
<b><u>Guest Artist Workshops</u></b> Sat Jul 6 <sup>th</sup> and Sun July 7 <sup>th</sup> 8:30am – 3:00pm DBG Plant Society Building	<b><u>BJORN BJORHOLM</u></b>
<b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b> <b>July</b> Tue, Jul 9 <sup>th</sup> 6:30pm – 9:00pm Location TBD	<b><u>BJORN BJORHOLM</u></b>
<b><u>Guest Artist Workshops</u></b> Sat Aug 3 <sup>rd</sup> 8:30am – 3:00pm DBG Plant Society Building	<b><u>TODD SCHLAFER</u></b>
<b><u>Monthly Meeting</u></b> <b>Aug</b> Tue, Jul 9 <sup>th</sup> 6:30pm – 9:00pm Location TBD	<b><u>TODD SCHLAFER</u></b>

The entire yearly calendar is online [here](#).

## The Bob Kataoka Memorial Artist of the Year Award – 2018

Each year, the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society selects the Artist of the Year from among the Society's active membership based on the consistently high quality and artistic merit of bonsai that a member has created and displayed at the Society's annual shows and other functions over a period of years. The merit of the Artist's bonsai is such that the Society can take pride in their display in its places of honor. The Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society is pleased to recognize Mr. Leslie Siroky as its 2018 Bonsai Artist of the Year.



### Leslie Siroky

Mr. Siroky born in Lewistown, Montana, grew up on a farm/ranch in the nearby area. After high school, Les attended Montana State University where he earned his Bachelor of Architecture and recently retired Architect with the National Park Service.

While attending university, his knowledge of plants evolved beyond the farm to houseplants. During the winter months when his landlord was off on extended vacations, Les was charged with maintaining the landlord's extensive plant collection. After adjusting to the change in cultivation techniques from the farm to the numerous species of houseplants, Les found the maintenance of houseplants to be very relaxing activity after a long day. This has led to the development of his own plant collection that fills his home and includes a variety of fruiting and flowering trees and bushes in his yard. Friends, and neighbors frequently seek him out for advice on plant care.

As an extension of his interest in plants, Les was encouraged by his wife to add bonsai trees to his plant collection. Even though his initial attempt at caring for a couple of small juniper bonsai received as gifts was unsuccessful, the aspect of a plant as an artistic creation captivated him. In an effort to learn more about the care and creation of bonsai, Les attended the Annual Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society June 98 Show and consequently joined the Society.

Les enjoys creating a starting bonsai from readily available nursery stock so his bonsai collection consists of spireas, cotoneasters, barberries, and junipers as well as a number of other varieties of trees and shrubs obtained from local nurseries.

Les would like to express his gratitude to the members of the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society for sharing their knowledge, enthusiasm, and love of bonsai so freely with him. He is indebted to his family for their understanding and support, as he has become more involved with bonsai.



## RMBS HERITAGE TREES - Pat Deutschman

### What is a Heritage Tree and why is its legacy essential?

Darryl Whitley, at the end of a recent presentation to the RMBS, asked: "where are the old trees in RMBS?". That question inspired David McPeters to propose a series of articles that will appear over the coming months exploring some of the heritage trees that belong to RMBS members and sharing their own unique history and legacy.

Heritage trees have an important history. Some have won national or international awards or recognition. Some are featured in books or publications as examples of the best in their category. Others have been owned and/or styled by very accomplished bonsai artists and like a fine painting have become great works of art. Some special trees have been collected from a very difficult environment making them even more special as a bonsai. Some have a connection to the very founders of the Denver Bonsai Club many decades ago. There are locally collected trees that are hundreds of years old and have been in training for 20, 30 or 40 years as bonsais in RMBS member's collections. These are the trees we will focus on. If you have a heritage tree and would like it to be included, please let David know.

The ultimate goal for a heritage tree is that the original artist will be honored, and the tree will be kept at its highest form while it keeps progressing and improving.

As you read about the various heritage trees presented here give some thought to how you would like to identify your most valuable trees, preserve their essential history and create their legacy to live on for many more generations to enjoy.

### Heritage Trees 1,2, and 3.

Our first salute to RMS members' heritage trees begins with Todd Schlafer's trees.

## Tree 1. Limber Pine

Estimated age: 400 years

Ownership: Collected in the Rocky Mountains by Mistutaro Tawara early 1970s

Obtained by Harold Sasaki in 1977 and has been training as a bonsai ever since.

Present owner: Todd Schlafer, 2015



History: In July 1987 the National Bonsai Foundation sponsored an exhibition entitled "Outstanding American Bonsai" described as an exhibit of world class bonsai designated as the best in the United States. This Limber Pine was one of the 50 trees shown at this exhibit and is featured in a book (pages 44-45) of the same name as the exhibition. Harold Sasaki is the bonsai artist and was recognized by the National Bonsai Foundation as one of the 100 outstanding American bonsai artists at the time of this exhibit.

The book describes the tree as follows: "The tree stands approx. 31 inches and was originally planted in a brown unglazed Tokoname ware container. Bold use of the deadwood in this bonsai suggests a forest ancient which has died and been replaced by another younger

tree of the same species."

This tree was originally collected in the Rocky Mountains by Mistutaro Tawara, one of the original founders of the Denver Bonsai Club. It then passed on to Harold Sasaki in 1977. It was trained as a bonsai for 15 years prior to this exhibit in 1987. The bonsai artist featured with the tree is Harold Sasaki, recognized for his teaching of bonsai and his studies under masters such as Harry Hirao, John Naka, Ben Oki and Chase Rosade. In 2015 Todd Schlafer acquired the tree from Harold Sasaki and took on the responsibility of preserving and restoring the tree, which he estimated to be a 3-5-year project. He repotted the tree in 2016 with the assistance of Ryan Neil of Bonsai Mirai. His future plans for the Limber Pine are to allow it to grow and flourish and then re-style it, again, with the input and assistance of Ryan. The full circle legacy of this tree is that both Ryan (starting at the age of 12) and Todd studied under Harold Sasaki for many years. Todd, with Ryan's assistance, will continue to work on the limber pine to preserve the tree's "Harold Sasaki legacy" and its connection to the what is referred to as "American bonsai". by the National Foundation. Todd felt that the tree's important history should be part of its future development and life.

## Tree 2: Colorado Blue Spruce

Estimated Age: 350 years old

Ownership: Collected by Jerry Morris 2003

Several years later the tree was obtained by Walter Buck

Present owner: Todd Schlafer 2016

The Colorado Blue Spruce pictured here appeared in a book titled "Best of BCI 50 stones 50 trees 50 years". It features 50 trees from all over the world that they, the Bonsai Clubs International, considered as member's best trees and stones. Walter Buck is the featured designer who is a member of RMBS.

The tree is described in the book as follows: "This Colorado Blue Spruce is unique in its larger size and it's perfect proportions. It has a lot of dead wood that is a key feature of the tree. Colorado Blue Spruce are native to Colorado. Most of the Colorado blue spruce bonsais are collected in South Park Valley that is a micro climate covered in snow 6 months of the year and the only conifer to grow in this area."

'This Colorado Blue Spruce was collected by Jerry Morris at an elevation of 9,300 feet. The newly collected tree was planted in a plastic training tub and was re-potted in the container in photo 1 by Walter Buck in 2008 and displayed at the annual Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society exhibit. It was also displayed at the 2012 American

Bonsai Society/Bonsai Clubs International convention in Denver and won a Best of Show Award."

Todd has repotted and styled the tree as seen in the next photo. Todd intends to feature this tree in future shows.







### Tree 3: Lodge pole Pine

This tree was styled by Kai Kawahara, one of the founding members of the Denver Bonsai Club in the 1950s (with seven other members of the Japanese community) and was their bonsai instructor for several decades. He became the gardener of the Sho-fu-en garden at the Denver Botanical Gardens from 1980-1993, working to maintain the garden in the Japanese tradition as well as to incorporate into it trees native to the Colorado Mountains. In 1983 he received the title of "Master of Bonsai". Kendall Condiff (former RMBS member) won it in an RMBS auction! Todd Schlafer has had the tree in his collections since 2018.

This tree is considered a "future" as Todd maintains it in his collection and contemplates what he will do with it next.



## Heritage Bonsai owner

Todd Schlafer

Todd's interest in bonsai began on a trip to Spain in 2002 where he purchased a bonsai seed kit. When it didn't grow to be a great bonsai in a few months he began to explore nearby nurseries for older material, which led him to Harold Sasaki, owner of Colorado Bonsai. Todd volunteered at Harold's nursery doing everything from pulling weeds to styling trees. His obsession with collecting trees started by going on a collecting trip with Jerry Morris. In 2012 he began his studies with Ryan Neil at Bonsai Mirai to learn how to style and develop material focusing on advanced techniques of setting tree structure which is the most difficult skill set to achieve in bonsai. This inspired him to pursue bonsai practice full time and he also began to instruct professionally as others sought him out for his expertise. His new profession has taken him all over the country and several trips abroad. Todd is a former president of the RMBS and an active member when he is in town, often providing demonstrations and workshops for club members. He has also been a featured artist on the Bonsai Mirai live stream.

Todd has an extensive collection of native trees, many that he personally collected. He has exhibited his own trees in the Artisans Cup in Portland Oregon, won the Best North American Species award at the National Exhibition in Rochester NY, is a recipient of the Malcolm Corel Award, and has a tree featured in the "Best of BCI 50 stones 50 trees 50 years" book.

Todd finds setting the initial structure of a collected tree, when done correctly, is one of the most fulfilling aspects of bonsai design. He says watching the tree flourish following such work can be unbelievably rewarding. "Good wiring...it's like a puzzle. Your brain hurts. It's not mindless and automatic. It's a game that never ends because the tree is continuously growing. It is chaos, beautiful chaos, taking that and turning it into something that makes sense is really one of the things that drives me".



## NEWS FOR MEMBERS

### Membership Renewal:

RMBS has adopted a policy where all membership renewals occur on July 1, and cover the succeeding 12 months, ending on June 30<sup>th</sup>.

All memberships renew this summer on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. Individual memberships are \$35 per year and family memberships are \$50 per year.

You may pay via cash or check at any monthly meeting or mail your check to the address below. If you mail your check please be sure to include your email address and telephone number.

#### PAYMENT ADDRESS:

Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society  
c/o Membership Renewal  
PO Box 271043  
Louisville, CO 80027

### Discounts Available to Members:

We have an account established with Way to Grow Gardening Supply in Denver. You can receive discounts on some items up to 15%. You will need to tell them you are a member of RMBS.

### Resources for Members:

Other internet resources:

[RMBS Web Site](#)

[Colorado Bonsai Ltd.](#)

[First Branch Bonsai](#)

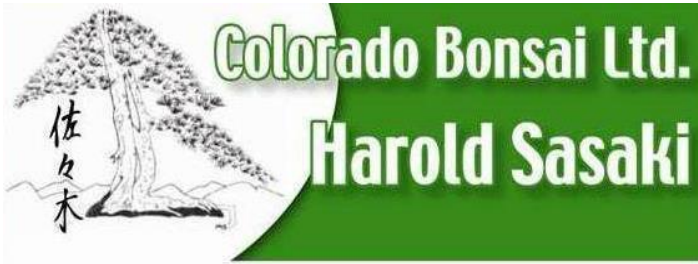
[S&S Bonsai](#)

[RMBS Facebook Page](#)

[Mike Horine Website](#)

### Gallery of Annual Show Photos

Check out these photos of trees that Mike Horine contributed. They are show trees from the early to mid-1980s. [Link](#)



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