



# the **TREE LINE**

the official monthly publication of the **BONSAI SOCIETY of PORTLAND**

December 2012

## Upcoming Events

January 5 10-2pm **OSK Elite Care Center**,  
12353 SW Grant Ave, Tigard

TBA 6:30-8:30 **Penjing Discussion Group**  
Mt. Tabor Middle School, Room 213,  
5899 SE 58th Ave. Portland

January 19 **Mentorship Meeting**  
St. Philip Neri 2408 SE 16th Ave

January 22 7-9pm **BSOP Meeting**  
St. Philip Neri 2408 SE 16th Ave

April 18-20 **2013 Intl Bonsai Convention**  
Yangzhou, China

## What's coming in 2013 and beyond

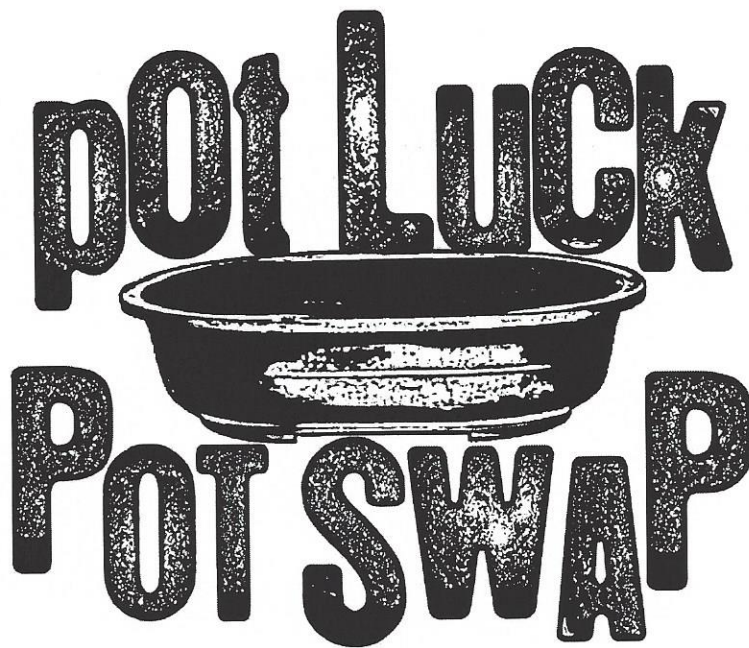
Hi everyone, Al Polito here—your new vice president of programs. I'm thrilled to be taking the mantle from the very talented Greg Brenden, who brought us fantastic programs in 2011-2012 and whose shoes are very hard to fill.

Here's why I'm thrilled: It's going to be fun. And also because Bonsai Society of Portland is uniquely positioned to bring country's very best in bonsai education to its membership and to the community, because of several factors that are hard to duplicate outside of our area:

- We are located in the nation's best growing area for ornamental horticulture, so we have the ability to grow amazing plants.
- We are the largest local bonsai club within the emerging Portland Bonsai Village.
- We have access to some of the West's best teachers and top amateurs—trained in Japan and home-grown alike.
- We have access to several bonsai nurseries, including some of the best-known in the country, as well as a growing friendship with the nation's best Japanese Garden.
- We have access to amazing native materials growing in our own backyard, such as Engelmann spruce, Subalpine fir, Lodgepole pine, Mountain and Western hemlock, Garry oak, Vine maple, and huckleberries, just to name a few.
- We have a fantastic, passionate membership that is supportive, fun and talented, as well as diverse—with bonsai and horticultural professionals, talented amateurs and terrific folks who simply love to be around others who share their love of little trees.
- And finally, we never have to struggle to grow good moss. Lest we take it for granted, ask someone in Tucson about growing moss...

Another thing I'm thrilled about: In coming year Portland will be hosting the Artisan's Cup, which along with the national show in Rochester, NY, will be one of the two most "important" bonsai shows in the country. BSOP will be right in the middle of it.

So what about programs, then? Our programs will leverage all those great things about the club, as it has in the past. And there will be things we've never done before, because we're always looking to do something new, learn something new, to keep it fresh and relevant. So as I'm finalizing our program for February, here's what we're doing in January.



After our the "business" portion of our meeting we'll be having our first "Pot Luck Pot Swap." (Thanks to Scott Elser for the fun logo!) Many of us have a pile o' pots that haven't found the perfect tree yet. And we also have that tree that hasn't found the perfect pot. So bring a box of pots to trade (careful—don't chip 'em, don't hurt your back!) and bring a tree or two that need a pot. You can also buy and sell your pots although swapping is encouraged. (For a 10-percent fee you may avail yourself of the club's credit card system to sell your pots.) We'll have tables set up for bartering pots and getting informal advice as to what pot will match that tree you brought.

And as for the "pot luck" part, feel free to bring a finger food to share if you like.  
May your roots be strong,

*Al*

## BSOP Election

BSOP elected a new Board of Directors at its November 2012 meeting. The officers scheduled to begin their terms in January 2013 are:

- **President: Chas Martin**
- **First Vice-President for Programs: Al Polito**
- **Second Vice-President for Membership: Margie Kinoshita**
- **Treasurer: Robert Wofford**
- **Secretary: Karen VunKannon**

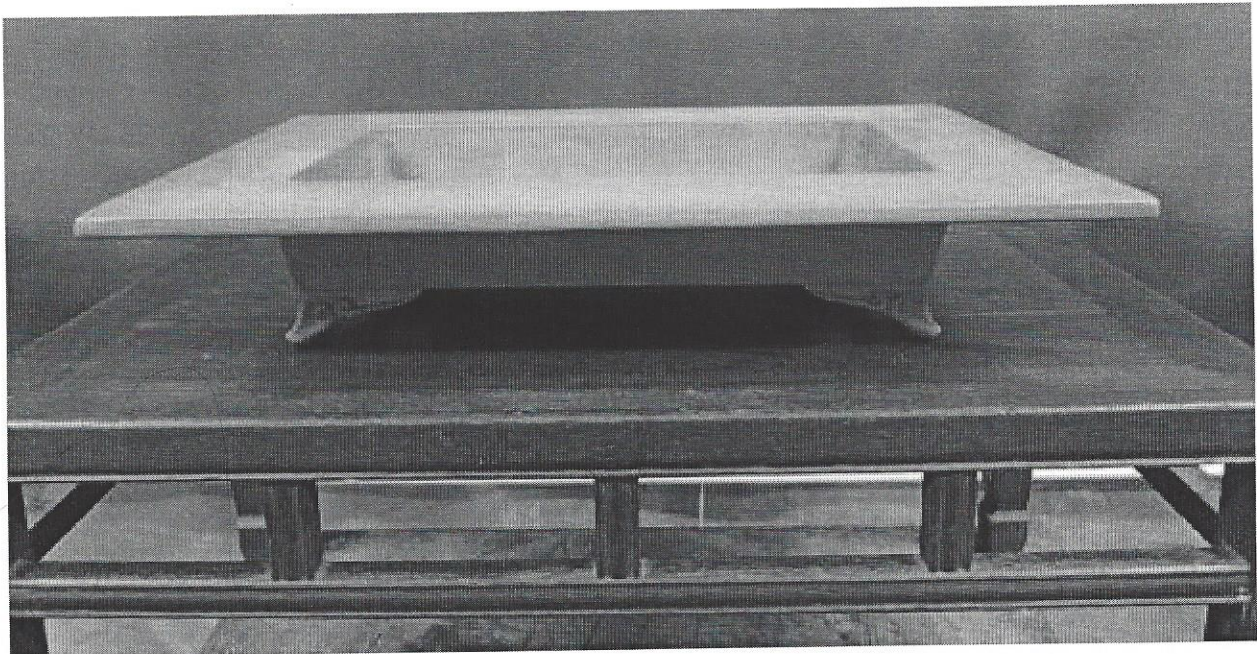
Our current President, Eileen Knox, will serve as Past-President advisor to the Board once the new officers are installed at the January meeting.

## Library Highlights

Instructors call it a “teachable moment.” Others call it “serendipity.” The rest of us call it “luck.” It’s that moment in time when something you need seems to fall in your lap. Recently luck brought me this Highlights article in the form of a door prize: Bonsai Today, Volume 105. Since I am an assistant librarian for BSOP’s collection of 1,000 items, and since I had skimmed every single magazine the library possesses in order to catalog it in the Periodical Index, I thought, “What in the world do I need with another magazine?!” But over breakfast the next day I started rereading it, and there was this beautiful article by Francois Jeker on deadwood.

For those of us who are still novices and feel some trepidation about creating deadwood, this article is very instructive. It is Part 3 of a series on deadwood (Parts 1 and 2 are in Bonsai Today Volumes 103 and 104.) In volume 105, Jeker takes on the task of creating deadwood in the very, very hard trunk of a boxwood that is between 450 and 500 years old. It’s the photographs that really caught my attention: Every tool is separately photographed and accompanied by a caption that tells a novice like me what it is used for. Every stage of the process is painstakingly photographed with the details magnified. All of this is supplemented by sketches that show the beginning texture of the trunk area, how beginners usually elaborate on that texture, and finally how an expert would treat the same texture. Talk about a teachable moment from a master teacher! It really pays to reread these bonsai magazines; one never knows when something that was passed over before will turn up again at just the right moment. Now I have to check out the other two volumes...

*Karen VunKannon*



Maruhei pot that was made in the Tokoname area  
For more information see Peter Tea blog 11 April 2012

## In Our Own Backyard...

### Michael Hagedorn

Tea and chocolate in the garden...thoughtful discussion...an afternoon spent with my gracious host Michael Hagedorn sent me home wanting to sink deeply into the contemplative experience of bonsai. For Hagedorn, bonsai is an ethical endeavor, a way to honor life, artistry, and connections with people. It is also about trust—the trust of the student for the teacher, and the obligation incurred by being entrusted with the care of an ancient living being that embodies the spirit and gifts of bonsai artists who have cared for it and created its image throughout the years. Bonsai is about more than bending a branch. Michael feels firmly that bonsai cannot be learned from reading, but only from the trust and commitment that is shared by the student and the teacher.

Michael's outlook on bonsai appears to be greatly influenced by his apprenticeship in Japan, an experience he referred to as “seismic.” For him, the apprenticeship was not primarily a quest to acquire skills, but a search for a master who could share a certain sensitivity and sensibility about the essence of bonsai. He found what he sought with Shinji Suzuki. He graduated like many apprentices with career goals in mind, but without a fully-realized personal style. After intensively doing his master's work, he took another three years to develop his own vision of bonsai style, a vision that continues to evolve.

He also found in Suzuki a model teacher. Michael is as thoughtful about the art of teaching as he is about the creation of bonsai, because he loves to teach. He loves that moment when the light of epiphany sparkles in the student's eyes, the moment when the teacher need say no more. In bonsai education, teaching is almost more of a visual demonstration than a verbal explanation.

His own garden reflects three passions: First, there is his delight in what he calls “seasonality.” Throughout the annual cycle, trees of many different species in his garden alternate in moments of special beauty, and Michael falls in love with them all again and again as they reveal themselves in those moments. So his garden is a kaleidoscope of diversity. Second, he collects older trees that other masters have worked on (trees that are rare in the United States since our bonsai culture is still young). He takes me to a favored quince and gently touches the many curves in the twisting, seemingly ancient branches, showing me where each artist in the lifetime of the tree has created the curves with scissors. There is a deeply-felt connection to and reverence for those older artists. The tree is the living connection, the vehicle that transmits the spirit of the older artists to the younger. It is a connection to be cherished and protected. It is also incumbent on the current owner of the tree that he or she continue to collaborate with the tree in the creative process. Trees are not photographs of a moment in time, but living, always-changing creatures. A bonsai artist must honor the tree by participating in the artistic life of the tree as it continues to develop. Third, Michael has undertaken an ethical work through his garden. It is perhaps the bonsai equivalent of “pay it forward.” Having had the good fortune to receive an older tree from another master artist, he then starts a young tree on a similar journey, so that it too can be passed on to the next artist. This is how to grow a bonsai culture in the U.S. It grows with the individual artist and the individual tree, in gardens scattered across the country, using the wealth of vibrant native materials with which Americans have been blessed.

Our discussion lingered for a while on western cultural values and the effects of technology on both our attitudes and the practice of bonsai. With an abundance of natural materials available, much of the current emphasis is on collected trees. Michael sees these as only half of the bonsai "equation." We need both collected and pot-grown trees to have a balanced bonsai culture. He explains that in Japan, a cultural preoccupation with the ephemeral nature of life has led to a reverence for old pot-grown trees. Many of the trees that are exhibited there are not collected, but grown to be bonsai. Michael says, "An old pot-grown tree is a dialogue and is a connection to another person, while a collected tree is a canvas and connects us to the wilderness. These are two distinct experiences, and both should be encouraged."

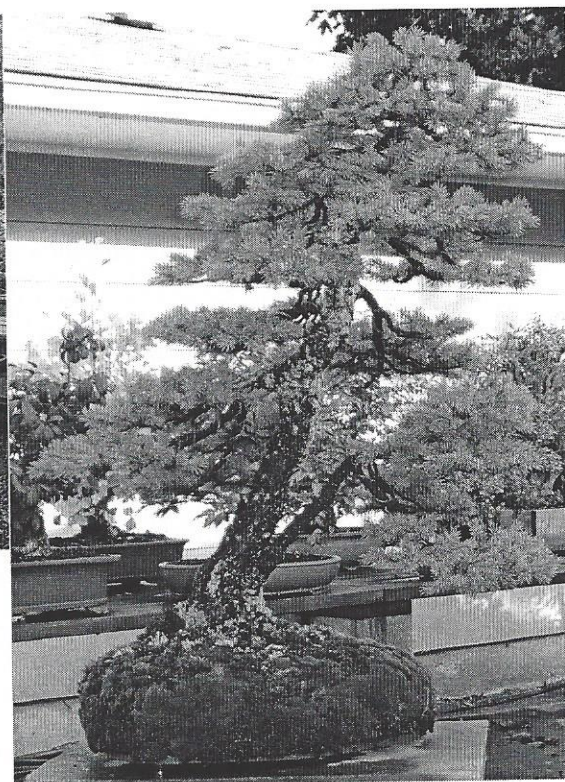
In the Pacific Northwest, the strength of environmental awareness provides a cultural haven for the growth of bonsai culture. Michael hopes to use his training in Japan to help produce a very American bonsai culture here, specifically through his idea for the Portland Bonsai Village. It will encourage collaboration over competition among regional artists, will try to promote public interest in bonsai (including group tours of studios and nurseries in Oregon and Washington), and will emphasize the production of locally grown or manufactured bonsai products. Michael's larger goal for the organization is to help people experience professional teaching and high-quality trees outside of conventions, and to create a viable bonsai economy independent of Japan. He feels the time is right, since interest in higher quality bonsai is increasing in the U.S.

Now that I have had time to contemplate all that Michael and I discussed, I feel an irrepresible urge to hurry back to his studio and ring his "Epiphany Bell." Thank you so much, Michael, for the gift of a wonderful afternoon.

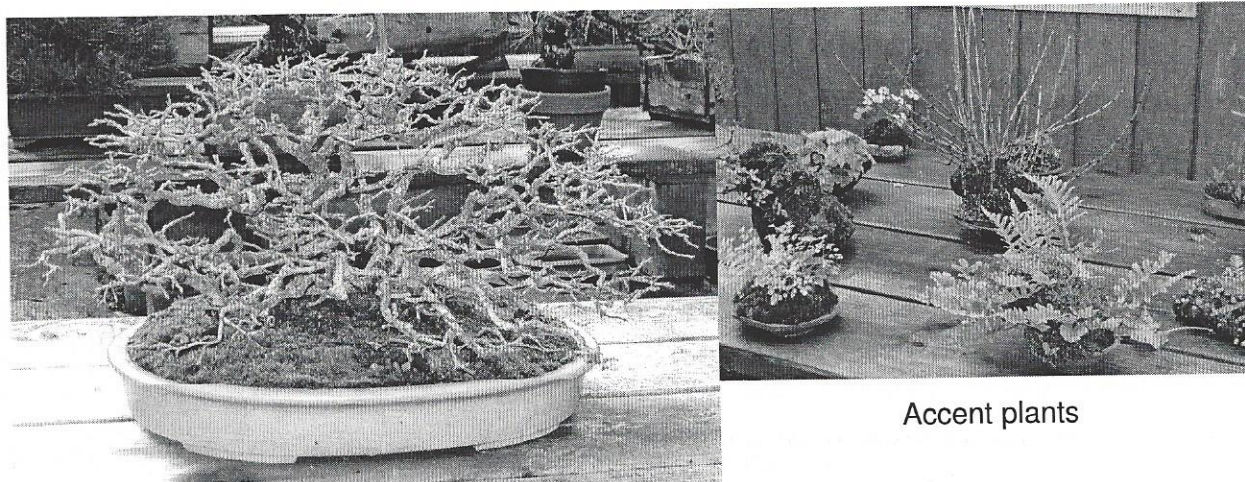
Here are pictures of Michael's studio and some examples of his work.



Michael's studio



Spruce



Quince

Accent plants

Michael's website is <http://crataegus.com>.

*Karen VunKannon*

## How to Renew Library Materials

If you have library materials checked out and will not be at the meeting when they are due to be returned, you can renew them. Simply call or e mail Barbara Devitt ([bbd.jcgroup@yahoo.com](mailto:bbd.jcgroup@yahoo.com) or 503-764-8242) BEFORE THE DUE DATE and tell her you want to renew your items. That's all it takes. Just say "renew" and you are good to go!

## Recycle Wire

Please bring your used copper wire to the monthly meetings. Roger Case will have a five gallon bucket available to collect used copper wire to turn in for cash for the club. Take advantage of the fact that he has volunteered to do this for the club to generate income for BSOP.

## December Oregon Shohin Kai

At our December meeting, we had a real treat. Dennis Vojtilla brought some of his rooted grape cuttings. These cuttings have heavy, gnarled trunks. We practice wiring and styling with them. Dennis was, as always, a patient good-humored teacher, who worked with us individually. This was a rewarding class for those who were still fairly new to bonsai. For the more experienced members, it was a chance to work with a species not often used as bonsai. It was fun to design with these plants. The windswept grape made a convincing and interesting specimen.

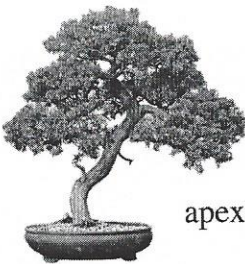
Next month's meeting will include the continuation of our organizational meeting. We plan to elect a Chairperson and further discuss programming and fund raising ideas.

*Karen VunKannon*

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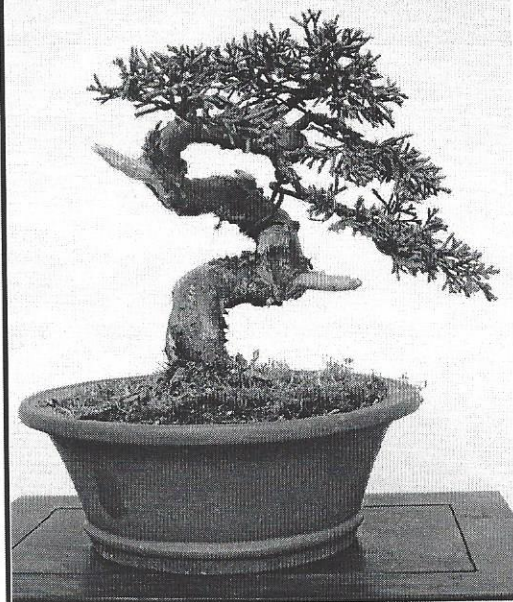


Steve & Deb Wilcox

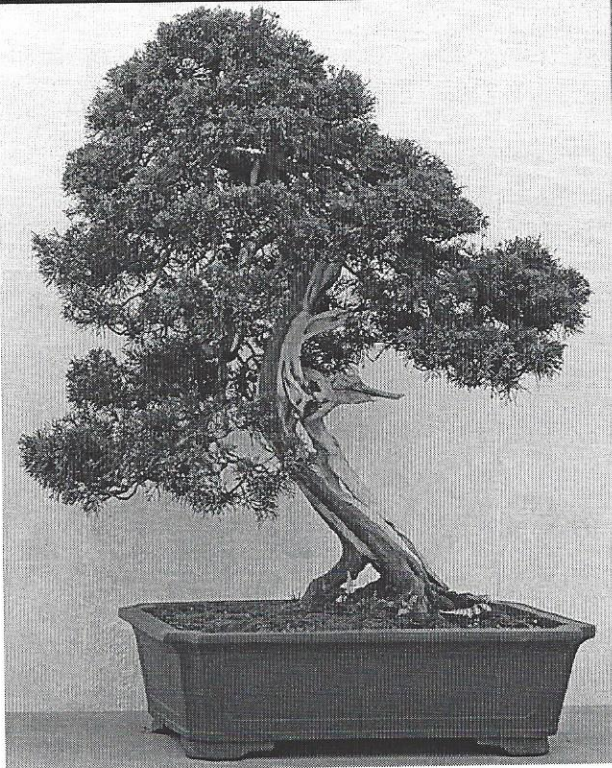
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Shohin Juniper



Japanese Black Pine

The Omiya Tree, a 250 year old *Juniperus chinensis* in the informal upright style, National Bonsai Collection, Birmingham Botanical Gardens & Glasshouses, UK

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The Bonsai Society of Portland meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month except in summer, when other group outings are arranged.

St. Phillip Neri Parish

2408 SE 16th Avenue, Portland OR

Northeast corner of SE Division and 16th Avenue

Visitors are always welcome!

**Board of Directors**

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