



**Thirty-eight Years of Bonsai Education and Volunteerism: 1970 - 2009 Vol. 40 Issue 4 Dec. 09**

### President's Corner - Chuck Croft

I would like to start off by wishing everyone a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I hope every one of you enjoys your holiday season and has a safe one.

Dr. Tom Elias, the Director of the U.S. National Arboretum has announced his retirement effective December 31, 2009. Dr. Elias has been a great friend to bonsai, suiseki and PBA. He has always been willing to work with us within the constraints placed on him by the government and specifically the Agricultural Research Service. Dr. Elias and his wife Hiromi, worked closely with PBA and the NBF to make the World Bonsai Friendship Federation IBC 2005 the success that it was. He has also been instrumental in assisting me and other past Presidents find ways around problems we have encountered and in working with us to solve problems. He is particularly supportive of our current efforts to support additional educational efforts through our Spring Festival. Dr. Elias and Hiromi will be moving to California and, on behalf of the PBA, I wish them the best of everything. We will miss them.

We have much to look forward to with our Spring Festival in 2010. The festival will take place on 30 April through 2 May. The activities scheduled this year include: Regional Juried Show, Regional New Talent Competition, 2 beginner and 2 intermediate/advanced workshops, as well as demonstrations. Our keynote speaker this year will be Steven Tolley from England. Steven was a speaker and workshop leader at IBC 2005 and was very well re-

ceived by symposium attendees. A detailed schedule for the Spring Festival will be published in the next issue of the *PBA Clippings*.

The Juried Show, however, is something you want to think about now. This is a regional juried show and is kept regional by requiring all trees to be hand delivered rather than shipped to the Arboretum. I believe that we had a successful first juried show at last year's Spring Festival and I look forward to an even more successful juried show this year. The prizes will be gift certificates that can be taken up to the vendor's tent and redeemed for items each individual needs. The important dates to be remembered are: photos (preferable digital) need to be sent to me by 1 April 2010; the initial selections of the trees to be in the final show will be made (by a committee of three) and the owners notified by April 10, 2010. Trees must be received on Thursday, April 29, 2010 in order to set up the show. All participants in the final show will be invited to the Friday evening NBF reception where the winners will be announced.

You have all heard of the Joshua Roth New Talent Competition, often called the National New Talent Competition. This competition has a somewhat rigorous selection process in which each applicant must submit photos of past work on at least three trees, have been in bonsai less than 10 years and cannot be earning money in bonsai. To compete in our regional competition, you must have been in bonsai less than 10 years and cannot be making money from bonsai. Joshua Roth has agreed to allow the winners of any regional new talent competition to bypass this selection process and move directly into the national level competition which is held at the American Bon-

sai Society Conference each year. Our 2010 winner will be able to compete in the Louisville, KY ABS competition in 2011. I believe these new talent competitions will go a long way toward fostering new bonsai artists' skills and the knowledge of all bonsai artists. We have two sponsors for this competition in Ron Lang and Jim Doyle and are seeking a third. This should be an interesting and exciting effort.

Finally, we will select a new logo tree during our Spring Festival. A committee has been put together to look at all PBA trees in the show as well as those in the Juried Show to select our new logo tree. The selection requirements for this tree will be somewhat different than the requirements for the Juried Show because we need to graphically make a logo out of the selected tree. Therefore, the tree must meet certain graphical requirements as well as quality requirements. In addition, the tree must be a PBA member's tree. Bring your best trees to the show and have them carefully groomed so that good pictures can be taken at the show.

Again, may you all have a safe and enjoyable Holiday Season.

### The Opening of the Kiln

-Thomas Kodiak

On the weekend of October 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 4<sup>th</sup>, Ron Lang held a first of its kind event in the hills of Appalachian Pennsylvania, about an hour north of Harrisburg. This area is known as Amish country and this is readily apparent when driving around town. You have to keep an eye out for the horse-and-buggies, especially at night! The weekend started off on Friday evening with Ron hosting a PowerPoint presentation and discussing the production cycle of the studio which included information on mixing clays and forming techniques such as wheel throwing and slab formation through the loading and firing of the kiln. Jim Doyle of Nature's Way concluded the evening with a slide presentation focusing on Literati Style and aesthetics. He led an open discussion among the group to elicit personal insights and responses to this hard-to-define style of bonsai.



The kiln, built by Ron in 2003 and early 2004 is known as a Phoenix Fast Fire Wood Kiln. The kiln is fired using local Amish milled slabwood of white pine and hemlock and some white oak. It is fired on average for 16 hours, burning a cord and a half of wood to bring the temperature to approximately 2380 degrees Fahrenheit.

The kiln is typically then cooled for 3 days before it is opened.

## Spring OPEN HOUSE & SALE

May 6, 7, 8, 2010

9am-6pm

guest artist Kathy Shaner

- free bonsai demonstrations
- 40% off landscape stock
- sales, refreshments



1451 Pleasant Hill Road  
Harrisburg, PA 17112  
717-545-4555  
natureswaybonsai.com

**Lang Bonsai**  
containers

Highest quality wood fired stoneware  
Individually crafted and custom design orders.

- Bonsai Pots: Round, Oval, Rectangle, Cascade
- Slabs for Forest Plantings: Organic or Geometric
- Kusamono and Accent Planters
- Suiban
- Tea Bowls - Tea Ware

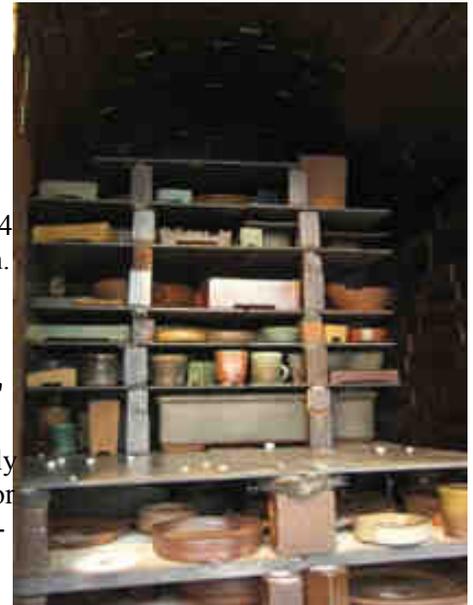
Get exactly what you need - Order your  
Bonsai Pot, Suiban or Accent Planter  
custom made to your specifications.  
There is absolutely no additional charge.

Ron Lang  
Sharon Edwards-Russell

Please visit our website: [www.langbonsai.com](http://www.langbonsai.com)  
email: [ronlang@embarqmail.com](mailto:ronlang@embarqmail.com)



The actual stack-able area inside is 80 cubic feet or roughly 4 feet by 4 feet by 5 feet high. High temperature kiln shelves are spaced or separated into "stacks" by brick stilts which are normally 9" tall but often for bonsai pots a half-brick or 4 1/2" spacer is used.



Shelves for the kiln are 24" x 24" and 18" x 18" in surface area and are really heavy! In this firing Ron had 8 layers.

The unloading process itself started a bit after 9am and finished probably a bit before 11:00 am. But for the 25 spectators, the fun would continue as most of the people couldn't put the pots down. Once you finished examining one, there were a dozen more close at hand to examine. What was amazing was that the pots were still warm from the firing even though it was days later! I felt I did pretty good keeping my purchases under \$200.00 as there were so many fine specimens and many original first time pieces that were the first to go. I took inspiration from those designs however and tested my own personal skill the next day to see if I could complete a similar piece at the Pottery Workshop.

## Kiln Opening

Saturday morning was the grand kiln opening. Although a nominal fee was required to join the event, that fee could be applied to the purchase of any of the pieces that would be pulled out of the kiln. The kiln itself was huge and one could easily stand inside, and in fact needed to stand inside in order to pull the pots out from the top "stacks". Ron Lang found the original design for the kiln in a 1970's Ceramics journal that he modified by doubling its size.



Roughly 200 pots were fired for the Kiln Opening Weekend.

## Literati Workshop

Saturday afternoon Jim Doyle led a group of 10 of us for a Literati Workshop. Along with a tree, the workshop price included a Ron Lang pot! He first introduced the style to us as well as described the trees which we could choose from. We had 15 trees to choose from for 10 people, so the easiest way to determine who chose first was through lottery. I was lucky and drew a 2 giving me the second choice for the group. We could choose either Japanese Black Pines or Scots Pine, all of which were roughly 10 years old. Jim started out introducing Scots Pine to the group speaking about its characteristics and care.



Chuck found a new friend.

Afterwards Jim talked about Literati or the Japanese style Bunjin which is often characterized as a style that is rather difficult to describe. Bunjin style typically has a very tall and fairly skinny trunk with almost all of the branches at the apex of the tree. Less often seems to be more in Bunjin style. After working on styling our trees and getting help from Jim when necessary, we had the opportunity to draw again, this time for our choice of container. There were many to select from but for Literati style, most trees go into a round pot with a low height.



Jim Doyle shows that bonsai aren't limited to just trees!

That evening a group of us decided to meet up at a restaurant in town for what I was imagining would be a rustic home-style cooked dinner. It was

anything but! It turned out that the chef of the restaurant had worked in New York and Pittsburgh at some very fine restaurants and as such treated us to an exotic array of dishes mostly focused on seafood which included tastes of Thai and Italian and a bit in-between.

### Pottery Workshop

Sunday's event, starting at 9:00 am was the highlight of the weekend for pottery enthusiasts. It involved a chance to learn how to make bonsai pots from the master Ron Lang and his wife, Sharon. They introduced us to the intricacies of four different forms of pottery building. The first was a basic pinching technique used to hand form a simple pot from a baseball sized lump of clay. Second, we rolled slabs of soft clay, these were to be supported and shaped over an internal form. For this we gathered stones of various shapes from outside the studio that



Ron Lang shows participants how to throw a slab.

were covered in paper and then in the soft clay. Left to stiffen outside in the sun we were able to remove the stones and finish detailing the natural concave shapes and add feet and drainage holes. Using much firmer slabs that were prepared in advance we learned "leather hard" slab building techniques where we worked on oval and rectangle shapes where more precise forms were possible with careful "scoring" or the scratching into the areas to be joined with a needle tool, dampening with water and firmly pressing all parts together. From complicated slab building to simply draping a slab into a support "hammock" of

canvas to achieve a graceful curved slab planter, a lot was covered in a short time.

Many of the participants had never worked with clay but everybody was pleasantly surprised with many of the pieces that they were able to create. Although scheduled to last only through noon, Ron and Sharon were willing to stay until nearly 2:00 pm to help many of the students finish up their pieces. I am eagerly waiting to see my results after they are due to be fired the second week of December. I hope that the next time this event rolls around more people will be able to join!

To contact Ron: [ronlang@embarqmail.com](mailto:ronlang@embarqmail.com)  
Website: <http://www.langbonsai.com/>



Close up of roots and ties.

on a grand display each May. Planted as a mail ordered twig, its enormous mass now spans the entire length of Jesse's rambler and is coveted by many, including me. Jane Ashley Fennel and I took air layers from that magnificent plant a few years ago with the intention to grow them as bonsai. Jane was an active member of and valued contributor to PBA. Jane died in May, but my air layered wisteria is vigorous and beautiful. That is how I will remember Jane.

About three years ago, I was driving past another wisteria that had grown untended for many years in a public space in Bowie. Having nothing to climb on, it had formed a tangled mound about twelve feet in diameter. Its only appeal was the reliable bloom which identified it as the same species, and possibly the same variety as Jesse's. The city's street maintenance crew was in the process of removing what someone in authority considered an eyesore as the tangle of shoots had already been removed and the battered stump with a few roots was about to be hauled away to the landfill. The maintenance crew had no problem with giving it to me, but did so with universal grins and shaking heads. The bad news is that their doubts were well founded. The massive trunk, planted in a fifteen gallon nursery container, quickly rotted to the ground. The good news? Multiple sprouts, thirteen to date, just as quickly emerged from below the soil line. I suppose I could have chosen one, eliminated the rest, and grown that one sprout for many years to develop suitable girth. The alternative and more interesting solution was to gather all thirteen vines into a bundle using plastic cable ties. Cable ties are available in various lengths and can also be pieced together when greater lengths are required. They are quick and easy to attach, and secure things reliably. I



## Commune with Sensei Sam

by Jim Sullivan (Baltimore)

This column invites questions, or contrary experiences, methods, or information. Send your thoughts to Sensei Sam at [jvsullivan@aol.com](mailto:jvsullivan@aol.com). Your questions or responses can appear in *Clippings* anonymously if you prefer.

### *Ties That Bind*

Jesse, a longtime, successful gardener, planted her Japanese wisteria at her front porch soon after she moved to Bowie, Maryland over forty years ago.



13 Wysteria branches held together by cable ties.

That wisteria, now with a trunk as thick as a weightlifter's thigh and with as much definition, puts

introduced taper and curves to the assembly by strategically placing the ties. The planting is supported by a metal tube. Eventually the shoots should fuse as they thicken. I'll allow it to grow 'wild' until mid September and then prune back the branches to three buds in an attempt to induce blooming the following spring. I have been growing this plant with the cable ties for two years. I believe two more years of unrestrained growth (except for the September pruning) should result in the union of the multiple trunks. When they are fused, I will reduce the height to about 30". The base should be about 12" in diameter by then, with interesting definition created by the multiple trunks; not as impressive as Jesse's wisteria, but not bad for something headed for the city landfill.

- Sensei Sam

# Your Source for Quality Kiku Tools, Workstands, Wire, Supplies & Pots.

*Originator &  
manufacturer of the  
workstand and wire  
caddy*



We have a full line of bonsai supplies in-stock & ready to go. Come visit our walk-in showroom or our online store at:

[mecobonsai.com](http://mecobonsai.com)

1-866-256-1492

## MECO BONSAI

Workstands Kiku Tools  
Wire Supplies Pots

### Joshua Roth New Talent Bonsai Competition Supported by ABS at MABS

The New Talent Bonsai Competition that was featured, for the first time, at the 2002 American Bonsai Society Symposium in Milwaukee, has become an annual event. The Joshua Roth Company of Albany, Oregon now sponsors the Competition.

The 2010 Competition will take place at the "MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies 2010 Spring Festival", which will be held at the Hudson Valley Resort and Spa, Kerhonkson, New York on April 16, 2010. The competition is aimed at discovering and promoting new talent in the art of bonsai and is the first of its kind to be held in North America. The concept of the Competition is very simple. Phase one, judging of previous work, is used to select the contestants for the second phase. In the second phase, each participant will be given eight hours to create the very best bonsai they can produce from specially selected material. After the entrants have completed their work, four of the Festival headliners will judge the bonsai that have been created. All full registrants at the Festival will

also have the opportunity to vote for their choice. The winner will be announced Saturday night at the banquet.

The Grand Prize for the Joshua Roth New Talent Bonsai Competition is an exclusive course of study with an approved bonsai teacher and hotel accommodations if the teacher is not in the winner's home town. The winning artist will also be profiled in the Journal of the American Bonsai Society under the title of "Best New Bonsai Talent of 2010."

If you have someone in your club that has the talent and the drive to become one of North America's top new bonsai talents, please encourage him or her to enter the competition. Your club could be the "home club" of the best new bonsai talent of North America in 2010. If you feel very strongly that your club member has the talent to win the Competition, your club may even wish to sponsor his or her participation. Please publicize the Competition in your club newsletter and persuade the club's most talented members, who meet the requirements, to enter the Competition.

**Meehan's  
Miniatures**  
Rohrersville · Maryland · 301-432-2965  
www.meehansminiatures.com

Growing & Propagating  
Bonsai • Pre-Bonsai • Starters • Accents

We are very excited about this competition, and hope that it is exciting to you as well. We look forward to seeing the work of your club members in the competition.

Information and registration forms are posted on the ABS web site at [www.absbonsai.org](http://www.absbonsai.org).

If you have any questions please contact me directly: Harold Johnson, Competition Coordinator, Joshua Roth New Talent Bonsai Competition [haroldjrnbc@yahoo.com](mailto:haroldjrnbc@yahoo.com)

### **Calendar of Events** *Compiled*

*by Arschel Morell (BBC)*

Send your club's input to Arschel at [ajmorellsr514@aol.com](mailto:ajmorellsr514@aol.com); or snail mail to: 9 Six Notches Ct., Baltimore, MD 21228



### **Fourth Quarter 2009 & First Quarter 2010**

### **Spring Bonsai Festival**

April 30-May 2: Mark your calendars!

### **Baltimore Bonsai Club**

January 24: Workshop with Michael Persiano Yews and Pines. Will be written up in Bonsai

Focus Magazine - Towson Library

February: Regular meeting 4th Sunday at Towson Library

March 12, 13 14: 3 day demo, workshop and display at Maryland Home and Garden Show in Timonium

March 4: Sunday regular meeting at Towson Library

### **Brookside Bonsai Society**

December 17: Thursday at 6:30 Holiday Dinner at Mandalay Restaurant in Silver Spring

January 21: Thursday 7:30 – 9:30. Chuck Croft will share Dave DeGroot critique notes on the winners of the 2009 PBA Bonsai Festival Competition.

February 21: Sunday 2- 4 Aarin Packard, Assistant Curator at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum

March 18: Saturday 10 - 2 Boon Manakitivipart, "Bonsai Boon" from northern CA

April 15: Thursday 7:30 – 9:30 Julian Adams from Lynchburg VA Location: North Chevy Chase Recreational Center @ 7:30

### **Chesapeake Bay Bonsai**

Contact Sharon Katz (410) 263-3307 [sharonlkatz@gmail.com](mailto:sharonlkatz@gmail.com)

## **Northern Virginia Bonsai Society**

January 9: Bonsai Gifts/ Pot Selection  
Potting Mixtures

February 13: Repotting/Root Pruning,  
Collecting Bonsai

March 13: Grafting Azaleas

April 10: Roy Nagatoshi Workshops

## **Kiyomizu Bonsai Club**

December 5: Potluck Dinner - 3:00 p.m. –  
Dues collection and 2010 Calendar Planning

## **Washington Bonsai Club**

December 12: Continuation of planting on  
"feather rock."

January 16: Soil mixing

February 20: Workshop with Martha Meehan

March 28: Repotting club trees with Jim  
Hughes. At Jim's home. Call Ross Campbell  
for details. Note change in date.

## **PBA Officers**

President: Chuck Croft  
crcroft@mindspring.com

President Elect: *Vacant*

Educational VP: John Ruth  
Entdr@verizon.net

Secretary: John Hudson  
John556x@gmail.com

Treasurer: Ross Campbell  
Campbellr@gao.gov

### **Additional**

Webmaster: *Vacant*

Newsletter Editor: Thomas Kodiak  
Thomaskodiak@gmail.com

Membership Sec.: *Vacant*

Contributing Author: Jim Sullivan  
Jvsullivan@aol.com

Calendar Coordinator: Arschel Morell  
Ajmorell514@aol.com

## Potomac Bonsai Association Membership Application

Welcome! PBA is composed of the clubs listed to the right. Join one and be eligible to attend any club's meeting in addition to receiving the *PBA Clippings* on a quarterly basis. We present a Spring Bonsai Festival and an annual auction, as well as other events. Residents of club communities are expected to join a club to receive all membership benefits, including *PBA Clippings*.

**To become a member**, call the contact person of the club convenient to your location for the current rate and where to send this application and the dues (Please make the check payable to the club you are joining). Individual clubs set their own dues. Check for Beginner's hour and other functions. Meeting locations, times and club contact numbers (for additional information) are subject to change. We suggest that you call before sending in your membership application.

**Individuals residing beyond commuting distance** of a club are invited to subscribe to *PBA Clippings*. For a subscription only (does not include entitlement to participate in club events), complete this application and mail with a check payable to PBA to Ross Campbell, 728 Guilford Ct., Silver Spring, MD., 20901-3218.

---

### Type of Membership:

- Individual club membership (includes *PBS Clippings*)
- Family club membership (One *PBA Clippings* subscription per household)
- PBA Clippings* only, US \$20.00 (does not include club activities)
- PBS Clippings*, International subscription, US \$35.00 (E-mail version, \$15)

---

Circle one of the following Association activities with which you can help:

Membership	Club Library	Exhibit Planning	Newsletter Staff
Publicity	Raffle Table	Exhibit Construction	Hospitality
Web Page	Meeting Clean-up	OTHER	_____

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Nation \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Home: ( \_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ Office: ( \_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

How did you find out about PBA? \_\_\_\_\_

## 2010 PBA Board Meeting Schedule

The schedule of PBA Board Meetings is listed here. Please note that these meetings are **open** meetings and that every PBA member is invited to attend. Normally, each member club is represented by the club President or their designated representative. The schedule for 2010 then, is: January 10, 2010; March 14, 2010; April 11, 2010, and July 11, 2010.

Meetings are held in the administrative office of the National Arboretum.

## PBA Member Clubs

**Baltimore Bonsai Club**, 4th Sunday, 1 pm, Towson Branch of Baltimore Public Library; Arschel Morell, (410)744-6478, ajmorellsr14@aol.com

**Bonsai Society of the Eastern Shore**, 1st Wednesday, 7 pm, Talbot Hospice, Easton, Susan Jones-Armari, (410)943-9886, susanja@bcctv.com

**Brookside Bonsai Society**, 3rd Thursday, 7:30 pm, North Chevy Chase Rec Ctr, Bethesda, MD, Jim Hughes, (301) 779-2891, jim6909@msn.com

**Chesapeake Bonsai Society**, Call for meeting time and location, Sharon Katz, (410)263-3307, sharonkatz@gmail.com

**Kiyomizu Bonsai Club**, 4th Sunday, 2 pm, Clearwater Nature Center, 11000 Thrift Rd, Clinton, MD, Essie Wilson, (301)839-2471, wilsone@howrey.com

**Mid-Shore Bonsai Society**, Saturday meetings TBA, Adkins Arboretum, Ridgley, MD, Kris Doherty, (410)778-6662

**Northern Virginia Bonsai Society**, 2nd Saturday, 9 am, Walter Reed Community Center, 2909 16th St South, Arlington, VA, Jack FitzSimons, jfitzsimons@verizon.net  
jmschwartz@comcast.net

**Potomac Viewing Stone Group**, Meets irregularly (~ 6 times per year), Glenn Reusch, (540)672-5699, Ghreusch@aol.com,

**Rappahanock Bonsai Society**, Call for meeting time and location, Todd Stewart, (804)448-4499

**Washington Bonsai Club**, 3rd Saturday, 2 pm, Call first (no July or August meetings), U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, D.C., Ross Campbell, (301)587-6898

---

---

### *PBA Clippings*

#### Newsletter of the Potomac Bonsai Association

The PBA Clippings (ISSN 0160-9521) is published by the Potomac Bonsai Association, Inc. (PBA), a nonprofit organization, in the interests of its affiliate member clubs and societies. Copyright 1996 PBA. The views/opinions herein do not necessarily represent those of the Association or its governing board.

**Subscriptions:** PBA member Clubs/Societies: Annual subscription is included in the membership dues paid to the PBA club or society of your choice. Telephone numbers of points of contact for information about any member club or society and its annual dues are listed above.

**Non-member Subscriptions:** Individuals residing within the metropolitan areas of our clubs are encouraged to become members of a club to receive the newsletter. Annual subscription for 4 Quarterly issues of the PBA Clippings only is US \$20.00 (US \$35.00 for international mail) which should be made payable to the Potomac Bonsai Association and sent to Ross Campbell, 728 Guilford Ct., Silver Spring, MD., 20901-3218.

**Advertising Rates:** Annual rates: 1/4 page, \$100.00; Larger than 1/4 page are accepted. Direct inquiries/payment (make checks payable to Potomac Bonsai Association) to Thomas Kodiak, see below. Please send paper ad copy or articles to the editor: Thomaskodiak@gmail.com  
Thomas Kodiak. E-mail contributions are preferred and can be sent in Word, WordPerfect, or text documents to Thomas Kodiak. Pictures need to be in jpg format.