

The
NATIONAL
BONSAI
FOUNDATION

Annual Report | 2020



Lessons of the Trees

MISSION

The National Bonsai Foundation is a section 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1982 to sustain the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. It collaborates with the U.S. National Arboretum to offer financial support and counsel to the Museum.

This private/public collaboration between the Foundation and the U.S. National Arboretum enables the Museum to promote the art of bonsai and penjing to visitors through masterpiece displays and educational programs while also fostering intercultural friendship and understanding.

Each tree in the Museum is a living saga of the people and events that have shaped it over time. It is the mission of the National Bonsai Foundation to protect that narrative legacy by telling these stories to a world audience.



Bald- Cypress
Taxodium distichum
var. distichum

NORTH AMERICAN COLLECTION –
IN TRAINING SINCE 1987





Dear Friends of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum

As we look back on 2020, I have never been more proud of the National Bonsai Foundation (NBF) and our bonsai community.

The events of last year presented unimaginable challenges for our organization, our country and the world. With the U.S. National Arboretum and National Bonsai & Penjing Museum closed to the public and in-person events on hold indefinitely, we knew we had to think differently about how to fulfill our mission.

Through it all, we continued to support the U.S. National Arboretum staff in caring for the Museum's precious collections, to keep them healthy and looking their best. What's more, we knew that these trees' lessons of resiliency, compassion and peace needed to be shared more than ever before. We stayed connected with you, our supporters, through virtual events like World Bonsai Day and produced a virtual tour of the collections to ensure access to the trees, no matter if the Museum was open or if travel was possible. The spirit of bonsai is very much alive today because these trees give us the opportunity for peace, solace and strength in troubled times.

We didn't know how long COVID-19 closures would last, but NBF was well poised for the Museum's eventual reopening in June 2021. Your generous and unwavering support made it possible to experience the horticultural expertise and artistry on display at the Museum once again. Thank you for standing with us in a time unlike any other.

NBF remains the sole nonprofit organization supporting the Museum, ensuring it flourishes as the first and finest such museum in the world. I hope we can count on your continued support of this vital and beloved cultural institution.

Wishing you peace and good health,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jim". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

James Hughes
*Chair, Board of Directors
National Bonsai Foundation*

NATIONAL BONSAI FOUNDATION

BOARD & STAFF

The National Bonsai Foundation's Board of Directors and Executive Director work to achieve our mission and promote the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum at the U.S. National Arboretum throughout the United States and the world.

The NBF Board of Directors includes representatives from across the country and is supported by one full-time staff person. Together they advance the art of bonsai nationwide while fostering global friendship and understanding by advancing "peace through bonsai."

Combining horticultural expertise and artistry, this living art form evokes profound contemplation of the elegant beauty and fragility of our natural world. No other aesthetic can do this – the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum and the U.S. National Arboretum depend on the work of the NBF in sharing this art with the public. The Board and staff's utmost priority is to preserve the Museum's rich history, protect its peerless legacy and prepare a future for a new generation to appreciate the gift of bonsai.

| | | |
|--|--|---|
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The National Bonsai Foundation extends special appreciation to Co-Presidents Felix Laughlin (NC) and Jack Sustic (MI), and the following Board members who retired in August 2020: Marybel Balendonck (CA), Larry Ragle (CA), William Valavanis (NY) and Jane Yamashiroya (HI).

U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM & MUSEUM STAFF

Museum staff care for the invaluable bonsai, penjing and related artistic objects that have been in the collection since the Museum’s founding, as well as new acquisitions.



Richard T. Olsen, PhD
Director

“As the world was faced with many challenges and the unknown throughout 2020, nature allowed us to experience moments of relief outside the confines of our homes. We reflected on the role of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum collections as symbols of peace and resilience that have lived for hundreds of years, serving as poignant reminders of perseverance. Though the Museum was closed to visitors, U.S. National Arboretum and Museum staff worked diligently all year to protect the treasured trees so future generations can be inspired to the resilience, hope and optimism that buds with each new leaf.”



Scott Aker
Head of Horticulture and Education



Michael James
Museum Curator



Kathleen Emerson-Dell
Museum Specialist



Andrew Bello
Assistant Museum Curator

Additional Museum staff (not pictured):

Pat Lynch, *Museum Gardner* | Rose Behre, *Bonsai Assistant*

When the Museum closed indefinitely to protect both staff and visitors from COVID-19, Museum staff adapted their schedules to ensure the trees that have been lovingly tended to throughout the years would continue to thrive. While their job has always been to dedicate themselves to the well-being of the national collection, staff took the months of a visitor-less Museum as an opportunity to deeply evaluate tree health and style, as well as update the grounds on which the trees are displayed.





Japanese White Pine *Pinus parviflora* 'Miyajima'
JAPANESE COLLECTION – IN TRAINING SINCE 1625

Stories of Strength and Triumph from the Collections

Trees Spark Hope During Unprecedented Times

The challenges of 2020 at times seemed unsurpassed. The raging pandemic, social divide and political unrest left many of us feeling demoralized, searching for hope and strength to keep us going. We often look to our past during challenging times like these to offer lessons for our present and future, and museums, which store our collective history, become even more important. The collection of nearly 300 trees at the U.S. National Arboretum's National Bonsai & Penjing Museum are no exception to this – many of these trees carry stories of triumph despite seemingly insurmountable difficulties. We invite you to learn or to be reminded of the lessons of the trees that follow.

Yamaki Pine

A Lesson of Survival

Perhaps no other tree serves as a greater example of survival than the Yamaki Pine. This white pine, which stands approximately 44 inches and weighs more than 400 pounds, has endured nearly 400 years, surviving the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, countless relocations, and now, another global pandemic.

Since 1625, the tree had been passed down through the Yamaki family. For several generations, the pine resided in a commercial bonsai nursery in Hiroshima, Japan, at the family's private nursery. In 1945, the United States dropped the world's first atomic bomb less than two miles from the Yamaki residence. Incredibly, a wall constructed around the family's bonsai protected their collection from any harm the blast could have caused – and the Yamaki pine continued to stand strong.

In 1976, Masaru Yamaki generously offered his family's white pine to be included in Japan's gift of 53 bonsai to the United States, launching the beginning of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. Under Museum staff and volunteer care, the tree has thrived, serving as a living tribute to the idea of forgiveness and a desire for peace.

Although the Museum was closed for most of 2020, staff continued to care for the trees, including a necessary and intensive repotting of this magnificent Yamaki pine. While a stressful process for the tree, the repotting ultimately strengthened it, reminding us that difficulty and change can lead to growth.

As we personally and collectively rebuild in the wake of the pandemic, we look to this centuries-old Yamaki pine as a beacon of resiliency. May we all encompass this tree's capacity to survive and thrive thanks to strength, peace and human connection.

Photo taken by Museum Staff





Buttonwood
Conocarpus erectus
NORTH AMERICAN COLLECTION –
IN TRAINING SINCE 1975

A Lesson of Perseverance

This bonsai started from one of Mary Madison's post-hurricane outings to gather trees that had been uprooted.



Japanese Maple
Acer palmatum 'Kiyohime'
JAPANESE COLLECTION –
IN TRAINING SINCE 1946

A Lesson of Determination

The Japanese Maple 'Kiyohime' is root over rock style, an example that a seed may land on infertile soil, such as a stone, and still thrive due to its roots' determination to find better soil.

*These inspiring legends
of living art
exemplify the ability to
overcome challenges
during difficult times.*



Pitch Pine *Pinus rigida*
AUXILIARY COLLECTION – IN TRAINING SINCE 1967

A Lesson of Endurance

Collected from New York in 1967 and trained by Muriel Leeds and her teacher Yuji Yoshimura, this tree's unique deadwood is a sign of its endurance. At one point, too many of its roots were removed, so the main trunk died. New shoots sprouted below the dead trunk, and the current tree formed.



Coast Live Oak *Quercus agrifolia*
NORTH AMERICAN COLLECTION – IN TRAINING SINCE 1986

A Lesson in Persistence

Collected by John Naka from the famous Bixby Ranch in Santa Barbara, CA, the shape of this oak's trunk shows that it was knocked down more than once but is still growing upward.



California Juniper
Juniperus californica

NORTH AMERICAN COLLECTION –
IN TRAINING SINCE 1960

A Lesson in Durability
Collected by Harry Hirao from the Mojave Desert, this juniper's deadwood was twisted by wind and desert sun.



Sargent Juniper *Juniperus chinensis var. sargentii*

JAPANESE COLLECTION – IN TRAINING SINCE 1905

A Lesson in Fortitude
Known as the logo tree (having inspired the Museum's logo design), the Sargent Juniper was collected from the Itoigawa region of Japan. Its beautiful deadwood reflects the harsh environment from which it grew.



Bougainvillea
Bougainvillea glabra

CHINESE COLLECTION –
IN TRAINING SINCE 1936

A Lesson in Resilience
From the Dr. Yee Sun Wu collection, this tree's three trunks are remnants from its original, which was almost a foot in diameter.

NBF Shares Lessons of Strength and Hope

When the turmoil of 2020 began, we knew that the lessons the trees offer about survival, resilience and perseverance needed to be shared more than ever before. Below are some examples of these efforts.

A Virtual Tour: When the Museum was closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, we produced a virtual tour of the collections to ensure access, no matter the Museum's status.

World Bonsai Day: We created a plethora of digital ways to celebrate the "brotherhood of bonsai," as Master Saburo Kato coined, sharing lessons of the trees and the joy of practice to nearly 1,000 virtual visitors in one day alone.

Increased Online and Digital Content: NBF ramped up its online content, regularly sharing the stories of the trees through our blog and social media channels, as well as our e-newsletter titled "Museum Messages."

2020 DONORS

The National Bonsai and Penjing Museum could not make the claim to be one of the finest museums in the world for this art form without your continued support. We express our sincere appreciation to the donors who have given so generously to the Museum.

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MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS & APPRENTICESHIP

Museum Volunteers

Resiliency is often something we do not experience on our own. The Museum and its collections would not be as breathtaking and historic as they are today without support from the volunteers who tirelessly offer their time to maintain the beauty and reverence of the trees and artistic displays. While COVID-19 guidelines prevented volunteers from being onsite for most of 2020, we look forward to their return in 2021 as our mission would not be possible without them.

Jennifer Amundsen
Josh Berer
Ross Campbell
Jack Chapman
Sundara Chintaluri
Young Choe
Scott Clinton
Olivia Cook
Chuck Croft
James Dail
Elizabeth Dame
Robert Drechsler

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Richard Winchester

The First Curator's Apprenticeship

The First Curator's Apprenticeship aims to support the Museum by training the next generation of bonsai leadership. The position was established in 2011 to honor Robert Drechsler, the first curator of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. Grants from companies or foundations have typically sponsored the apprenticeship each year, but the unprecedented events of 2020 led those funding sources to be temporarily paused. NBF has been financing the position to ensure future bonsai artists can continue to train among the historic national collection while potential sponsorship sources are explored.

Sophia Osorio was the 2020 First Curator's Apprentice. Before joining the Museum's staff, Sophia worked in New York at the Central Park Conservatory and New York Botanic Gardens. Sophia's time at the Museum was intermittent in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions and her time was extended into 2021 once restrictions were lessened.



“To say that I’m grateful for the Arboretum and the incredibly generous support of the National Bonsai Foundation for everything they have offered me is an understatement. This experience has gifted me with the knowledge of the art of bonsai, the dedication it takes to achieve and the many skills I will be able to now practice. I am beyond thankful for everyone who has been a part of this journey, and I intend to continue working with my passion for trees for years to come.”

— Sophia Osorio

FINANCIALS 2020

NBF strives for the best possible stewardship of your gifts. We are pleased to report that donations and net assets both increased in 2020 over 2019.

| <i>Revenue, Gains & Other Support</i> | <i>2020</i> | <i>2019</i> |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| <i>Unrestricted donations</i> | \$285,306 | \$164,088 |
| <i>Donations with donor restrictions</i> | \$250,000 | \$141,500 |
| <i>Program income</i> | \$264 | \$7,855 |
| <i>Net investment income</i> | \$266,700 | \$316,273 |
| TOTAL REVENUES, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT | \$802,270 | \$629,716 |
| <i>Expenses</i> | | |
| <i>Museum redesign expenditures</i> | \$137,443 | \$186,105 |
| <i>Program services other than museum redesign</i> | \$219,571 | \$127,057 |
| <i>General and administrative</i> | \$138,236 | \$72,569 |
| <i>Fundraising</i> | \$44,816 | \$23,063 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | \$540,066 | \$408,794 |
| <i>Net Changes in Net Assets</i> | \$262,204 | \$220,922 |



Each tree in the Museum has a story and is a living saga of the people and events that have shaped it over time. Through donations we are able to keep the trees alive and sustained for future generations.

Preserving a History. Protecting a Legacy. Preparing a Future.

Stay with us on our journey to safeguard
the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum —
your museum.



Visit

**National Bonsai &
Penjing Museum at the
U.S. National Arboretum**
3501 New York Avenue NE
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Connect

www.bonsai-nbf.org
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For your reference

Higo Camellia
Camellia japonica
(Higo Group)
'Yamato-nisiki'

JAPANESE COLLECTION –
IN TRAINING SINCE 1876
—page 14, top left

Satsuki Azalea
Rhododendron

JAPANESE COLLECTION –
TRAINING AGE UNKNOWN
'Nikko' (Satsuki Group)
—page 14, second row

Bougainvillea
Bougainvillea glabra

NORTH AMERICAN COLLECTION –
IN TRAINING SINCE 1985
—page 14, top right

Viewing Stones

Donated by Harry Hirao in memory
of his wife Chiyoko Alyce Hirao
—page 14, middle

From the Shohin Collection

The trees displayed here represent
some of the Museum's Shohin
collection. Shohin is a Japanese
word for a *tiny thing*. Although these
trees are smaller than most bonsai
(10" or less), they can evoke the
same natural beauty and power
of a larger bonsai.
—page 14, bottom left

Yamaki Pine
Japanese White Pine
Pinus parviflora 'Miyajima'

JAPANESE COLLECTION –
IN TRAINING SINCE 1625
—on the cover and page 6

To note

The term "in training"
refers to all the techniques
collectively that keep
bonsai and penjing trees
miniature. It begins by
putting the plant into a
training vessel. The vessel
can be anything from a raw
stone, carved marble, to
glazed earthenware. Other
training techniques include
how the tree is watered,
fertilized, pruned, wired, and
repotted. All the techniques
used in conjunction create a
specimen that is healthy yet
grows compact with small
sized leaves and twigs.



Chinese Juniper
Juniperus chinensis 'Femina'

NORTH AMERICAN COLLECTION –
IN TRAINING SINCE 1970



*Sustaining and advocating for the
National Bonsai & Penjing Museum
at the U.S. National Arboretum*