Daitoku-ji Temple
A Search for Understanding
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**ON THE COVER:** Hoshu-in Temple, the extraordinary architecture and gardens. This issue contains an extensive article on the experiences of our Bonsai of Florida speaker Sean Smith.
A Message from the President

It’s the rainy season in Florida and there is fungus among us! Being president of BSF has not saved me from watching one of my best Black Pine trees slowly weaken and die over the past months. Just a reminder to us all to be cognizant of the changes in weather and the impact upon our trees, and that preventive maintenance is better than attempting to turn around a sick plant. Hopefully, you can learn from my expensive bonsai lesson.

The planning of our next convention is proceeding nicely and additional information is contained on page 36 of the magazine. As a change from the past three years, the convention will be once again hosted by a club in lieu of the board planning the event. No one is happier about that then I am and the board will have a well-deserved rest from this intensive activity. I thank the Bonsai Society of Brevard for stepping up to the plate to take on this activity and I remind everyone in BSF to offer their support and assistance to Bonsai Society of Brevard in providing the manpower necessary for a successful convention.

If everyone does a little bit, then no one becomes overwhelmed. Last year’s event was successful and I hope this one will be even better.

I am going to ask your help on an important point of BSF business. Our membership roster is out-of-date impeding our ability to communicate with all of you through e-mail. Our last attempt to send out the magazine gave us a 60% return rate; error messages for unknown e-mail addresses. Our inability to communicate timely also has a great impact upon the
speakers’ bureau which now is based on an e-mail scheduling system. The board has requested our webmaster to create a new membership template/database. It was tested by one district to work out the bugs. We now have a consistent, membership database template that is formatted for ease-of-use.

The new format has been sent out to each club and we are requesting that you work with us and input your membership data into the new format. If you just input five names a week, the entire process will be completed by the end of the year when we receive our membership applications again. Most importantly, please CONFIRM everyone’s e-mail address so that we are not inputting obsolete information into the new database. Please work with us people! Our trustees will be following up with all of you.

Our speakers’ bureau is running smoothly and we are well into next year’s speaker schedule planning. We try to bring back your favorites and introduce new talented bonsai people to Florida.

Let’s remember to show the proper courtesy to our visiting masters and respect each other as we make arrangements to move our guests from one venue to the next.

The old axiom that says “There’s never time to do it right but there is always time to do it over” is certainly true when it comes to bonsai. As I look at my trees towards the end of summer, I am already evaluating what I did wrong and hope to fix next year as I uncover those branches hiding within the weeds! I would expect many of you are doing the same thing right about now. Anyone in bonsai can make an arbitrary decision but it’s making an informed and knowledgeable decision that turns our bonsai from average to extraordinary.

Making better bonsai decisions comes with experience and the eye of those more talented than we are. That being said, I am

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5
This is a special issue of our magazine. Our long-time friend and speaker Sean Smith submitted an extensive article on his travels in Japan and his experiences at a Zen monastery. His travelogue comprises much of this issue. I hope you all find it as interesting as I did. Sean has been a great supporter of Bonsai Societies of Florida and we look forward to his visit with us in November. I hope you have all signed up for his tour of the state – it will be a great experience.

Also starting off this issue is a wonderful story submitted by our Junior Scholarship winner Elsa Johnson. She relates her experience with Jim Vanlandinghman at the DuraStone Nursery in Vero Beach. Thanks Elsa! It looks like you had a great time over your three-day sessions.

In this issue you will find the information on our BSF Convention 2010. This event looks to be shaping up well. Our guest headliner is Robert Steven. Robert is a tropical specialist from Indonesia. I recently saw him at the WBFF convention in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and look forward to seeing more of his talent next May.

We have solidified our relationship with the Ramada in Orlando. After the last convention they were very eager to have us back, and we look forward to further developing this relationship.

The proximity of this central location works well for the majority of our members statewide. I look forward to seeing many more of you next year. We understand that the economy has been a major factor in our success, but even in last year’s bleakness we had great success. I hope that the
economy stays on track and will allow many more of our members to attend the next event.

Also slated for our upcoming convention is a bevy of Florida’s heavy-hitters which include: Mike Cartrett, Toby Diaz, Ernie Fernandez, Dorthy Schmitz, Ed Trout, Jim Vanlandingham and Erik Wigert. With this lineup we should have an excellent time.

I am trying to finish this up prior to leaving for Rochester, New York, to attend Bill Valavanis’ Shohin Symposium. I will report on that event and the WBFF in Puerto Rico in the next issue of Florida Bonsai.

I hope everyone enjoys this issue and look forward to hearing from you with your comments or better yet, your submission of articles.

looking forward to our next speaker on tour, Sean Smith, who has a wonderful eye for detail and is a wealth of information. Be sure to participate in Sean’s Florida tour and take advantage of all of our speakers in order to turn all of your trees into extraordinary bonsai.

Thank you for your support as I have worked through the first months of being President; there is a lot left to learn.

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A Message from the President

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3
Walking into the nursery that first day, I had a bad case of butterflies. I was about to meet two of Florida’s best bonsai artists. Not just meet, but spend three days with them. But, as Jim V. took my dad, Blaine, my sister, Eva, and me to the Tree of Knowledge and began discussing favorite dinners, I began to relax.

We began with the basics. Jim told me about his little saying, **R, S, T, L, N, and E.** These six letters provide a framework for creating and choosing bonsai. **R** for roots. Roots take the longest but everything relies on the roots for growth. **S** is for spread, at the bottom of the tree. Spread makes your tree look older and makes the tree visually appealing. Next is **Taper,** the most important. Without taper, the tree looks juvenile. **L** ine defines the type of tree. Then, **N** for “needs” a triangle. And last, you “**E**ven” need branches. Jim says, never put the branches first.

Following this quick lesson, we took the tour of the nursery. After learning about what to look for, I began seeing the trees in a
whole new light. He took me to a row of trees that looked like they were ready for a show. For each of the six qualities, we gave a rating of one to ten. To be honest, this made me a little nervous. Who am I to tell Jim that this tree has little or no spread? But Jim quickly put me at ease when he gave himself twos and threes.

Now it was time to work on my trees. Now that I had some thoughts on what to look for, it was easier and more enjoyable to make cuts and to trim. Jim even made a big cut to one tree that I was too scared to do before. He told me, “Know what you’re doing.” This statement helped me realize that I needed to be more confident in my decisions.

After helping trim some nursery trees and a little more chatting under the Tree of Knowledge, it was time for me to go home. The next day I came back, eager instead of nervous.

We started the day with some talking. Jim explained that, “trees tell a story.” Everything should move so the story does not get boring. Also included in our
My winter journey takes me to Kyoto, Japan. It is now 3:00 P.M. and Senji Morimae has me in the hands of Sokushya Akiyoshi, Master of the temple. Akiyoshi-san has showed me my room where I am staying for the next eight days and nights. To my dismay he speaks very little English, his only English word so far has been “Sean.”

The room is simple, 9’ x 9’, or four and a half tatami mats, with a very small dresser and a low tea table. Best of all, there is a heater on the wall – thank Buddha.

He tells me to change my clothes. For the duration of my stay my favorite color is black – sweatshirt, pants, socks and even shoes.

I am told by my teacher Senji Morimae that I need to clear my mind, to better understand the art of suiseki. How am I going to do that? I don’t know what the Master expects of me. I don’t even know where the bathroom is.

I hear the Master outside, so I change and go out to see what he is doing. He is stacking firewood. I start to help him and he tells me “No thank you.” Wow, more English! However, I insist, and start to carry the firewood. We finish in about an hour and he motions me to follow into the main building. I follow him inside and we walk into the kitchen where I meet his lovely wife, Kanako and have tea. More good news – she speaks a little English, and tells me that I am to be a part of the family. I have the freedom to walk all around the temple grounds. “But, never leave unless you ask us,” she adds.
Entrance to the Daitoku-ji Temple complex and the path that leads to Hoshu-in.

Editor’s Note: Hoshu-in is the Maeda family temple, and one of the many sub-temples of Daitoku-ji. It was originally built in 1608 at the request of Maeda Toshiie’s wife. The garden was created by Kobori Enshu in 1617 for Toshiie’s son, Toshnaga. It was meant to evoke the atmosphere of Kinkaku-ji and Ginkaku-ji.

Daitoku-ji is a huge Rinzai monastery which includes 22 sub-temples. It was founded in the early 1300’s by Shuho Myocho in what is now the Kita-ku area of Kyoto. The temple complex is linked to a variety of important historical figures. Hideyoshi erected a grave for Oda Nobunaga at Soken-in. There is also graves dedicated to Hosakawa Gracia, and Nohime on the premises. The complex is also famous for its connection with tea ceremony master, Sen no Rikyu.

Map of the Daitoku-ji Temple complex. In the upper right is the Hoshu-in Temple. The arrows point toward the entrance of Hoshu-in.
After three years of the BSF sponsoring the annual convention, the Bonsai Society of Brevard Club volunteered to host the convention for 2010. I would like to share with you where we are so far, in the process of setting up the convention. First, I am very honored to announce that we have secured one of the world’s most renowned bonsai masters, Robert Steven, to headline the convention.

Robert Steven has been involved in the art since 1979 and has won more than 50 competition awards nationally and internationally. He is also very active in national and international bonsai organizations. His recent book *Vision of My Soul* brings his thoughts and his love for the art of bonsai into the light it well deserves. The following, taken from the ‘Art of Bonsai’ website, highlight his remarkable talent:

- Married, wife (Beatrice A. Yun) with one son (Ongston Bearto) 21 years and one daughter (Queency Luvry) 12 years.
- In Giftware business (fine-art sculptures), Chinese antique furniture & memorabilia, Bonsai appliances, Stamps & marking devices, 3-D Software & Training and Internet Marketing.
- Other hobbies beside Bonsai: reading & writing, collecting antiques and unique memorabilia, taxidermy, magic-art, sculptures, Chinese flute and practicing Qi Gong.
- Started collecting and creating Bonsai in 1979. Has a permanent exhibit center with a collection of over 500 bonsai in a wide variety of species.
In lieu of *Vision of My Soul*, the theme of next year’s convention will be *Soul of Bonsai*. Rob Kempinski has designed the logo for the convention from the leaf on the cover of Roberts’s book.

We have secured the Ramada at Celebration Convention Center for next year. This is the same venue as the 2009 convention, but with some added benefits for guests. Guests of the hotel will receive a buffet breakfast each day included with the room. Additionally, the hotel is trying to get a Beef ‘O’Brady’s outlet in the hotel which should add convenience for those not wanting to leave the premises for lunch or dinner. We have also negotiated a very favorable room rate of $89 per night for a double room.

The materials committee has been busy getting some great trees for workshops. So far, we have been extremely fortunate to obtaining some great material from Robert Pinder at Dragon Tree Bonsai. He has some old Bald Cypress trees that are the big brothers of the trees at the March 2009 convention. They have been in pots for more than 20 years and have great branching, thick trunks and abundant root systems. Additionally, we procured some large Drake Elms that Robert has been nurturing for many years. He also showed us some large Hackberry’s that will make great bonsai.

We are also very grateful to obtain some great *Bouganvillea* and *Campeche* from Wigert’s Bonsai Nursery that are going to be available for a workshop. Erik
has done a lot of work on these trees and they promise to be superb material.

The shohin workshops at the March convention were a great success. Therefore we will have some shohin workshops next year also. Jim Vanlandingham has personally selected some incredible small *Ficus nerifolia*, *Ficus retusa ‘Kingmon’*, and Dwarf *Wrightia religiosa* from Jim Smith’s nursery for shohin workshops. Jim has been working on these trees for over two months now to insure that the people that take one of these workshops will have a shohin worthy of showing.

Due to the success of the “bring your own tree” workshops in the past, we have decided to have one with our headliner Robert Steven.

As far as the vendor area, we have many promises from vendors that should extend the vendor area to be at least twice as large as the March convention.

We will be having our Florida artists who are going to participate in demonstrations and workshops. Some names that we have so far to star with Robert, are Mike Cartrett, Toby Diaz, Ernie Fernandez, Dorothy Schmitz, Ed Trout, Jim Vanlandingham and Erik Wigert.

This is the first update on the progress of the convention and the team has lots of work to do.

The convention committee is still working on the workshop and demonstration schedule at this time. As soon as it becomes available, we will get it out to everyone for early sign up.
Bob Mahler discovered his passion for bonsai at an early age. As a teen, he was fortunate enough to apprentice under the direction of Chase Rosade of Rosade Bonsai Studios in New Hope, Pennsylvania. From there he traveled to Tochigi-Ken, Japan, where he would spend the next four years under the exclusive direction of world-renowned bonsai master Susumo Sudo. He returned to the States in 1993 and soon thereafter became the curator of bonsai at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden in Brooklyn, New York.


Robert will be on our Speaker’s Tour in November 2010. For those interested his fees are $300 per session, or a full day (2 session) for $500. Email notifications will be sent out once availability dates have been secured and we will post this information on the BSF website.
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  - with root spreads up to 9"
- **Chinese quince**, muscled bases up to 8", root spreads to 12"
- **Crape myrtle**, good tapered trunks to 12", root spreads to 18"
- **Hornbeams** with root spreads to 24"
- **Junipers**: foemina, shimpaku and
  - J. procumbens nana, trained uprights to 38", cascades to 40"
- **Podocarpus** with tapered bases up to 16"
- **Sageretia** with trunk bases up to 7"
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