

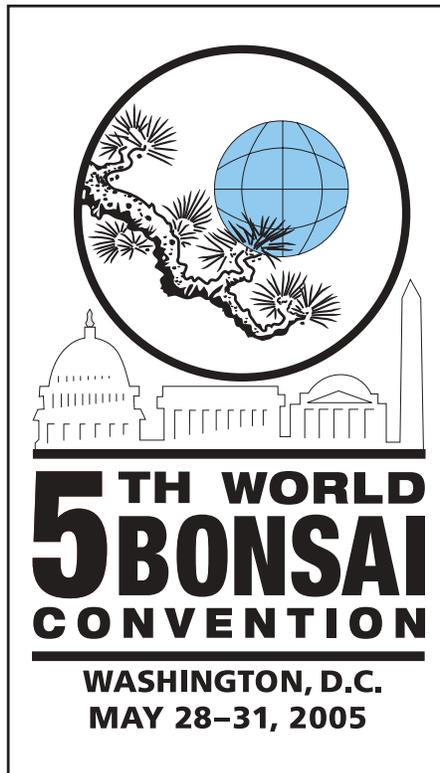


World Bonsai Convention in Washington, D.C.

By Jack Sustic

The dates May 28–31, 2005 are very important for bonsai enthusiasts from around the world. The 5th World Bonsai Convention (5th WBC) will be held in Washington, DC at the Hilton Washington. Please mark these dates on your 2005 calendar and start making plans to attend. This major event, which is held every four years, is hosted next year by the North American Bonsai Federation representing the World Bonsai Friendship Federation, and it is sponsored by the American Bonsai Society, Bonsai Clubs International, The National Bonsai Foundation, The Potomac Bonsai Association and the U.S. National Arboretum.

The opening ceremonies will honor Saburo Kato of Japan and the late John Y. Naka of the United States for their outstanding contributions to the art of bonsai throughout the world. Drawing on an international constituency, the four-day program will feature renowned speakers and workshop leaders from six continents as well as demonstrations by bonsai masters from around the world. Lectures on suiseki, scholar's rocks, bonsai pots, bonsai history, bonsai display and native species for bonsai will be presented by scholars from these fields of study. Workshops will be offered on bonsai, penjing and grass plantings, and there will also be a very special workshop for children. The Joshua Roth New Talent Contest will highlight the creativity of young artists, and the work of the lucky winner will be shown.



Exhibits of fine North American bonsai, outstanding viewing stones and exceptional new and collected bonsai containers will be on display for registrants as well as day visitors. A very special exhibit of traditional Chinese pots will be on view at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institu-

tion throughout the meeting. There will also be ample opportunity to socialize with your fellow attendees at an opening reception on Saturday and a banquet on Monday.

On Sunday evening, the U.S. National Arboretum will host a fantastic evening banquet for the convention. Guests can tour the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum where the winning photos from the World Bonsai Friendship Federation Contest will be exhibited in the International Pavilion and the winners of this contest will be announced in the course of the banquet program. And of course 150 specimens from our own collection of some of the finest bonsai and penjing in the world will be ready for your inspection!

With nearly an acre of space for vendors, the convention will tantalize convention registrants with unusual treasures as well as bonsai essentials. For those who like to play the odds and are looking for bargains, a huge raffle and benefit auction will be held every day of the convention and many unique items will be offered for your bid.

"Bringing the World Together Through Bonsai" is our goal, and it is our sincerest wish that everyone interested in the art of potted plants and viewing stones will join us for this very special occasion.

For more information on the 5th WBC please log onto www.bonsai-wbff.org/wbc5/main.htm or contact me at susticj@usna.ars.usda.gov or my Co-Chair, Glenn Reusch, at ghreusch@aol.com.

I look forward to seeing you in May!

Museum To Exhibit Photos of Bonsai from Around the World

By James J. Hughes

In May 2005, as part of the 5th World Bonsai Convention, the photos from the top 100 winners of the World Bonsai Friendship Federation Contest will be displayed in the International Pavilion of the National Bonsai

& Penjing Museum at the U.S. National Arboretum. Official announcement of the top three winners will be made at an award ceremony held on Sunday, May 29, 2005, during the banquet scheduled on the grounds of the Arboretum as part of the 5th WBC.

The contest was inaugurated by Japan Airlines in 1999 and for the last five years the Nippon Bonsai Association and the Japan Bonsai Growers Cooperative have sponsored the contest to highlight noteworthy bonsai from around the world. In 2004, this contest became the **World Bonsai Friendship Federation Contest** and was supported by the following bonsai organizations:

(Continued on page 4)

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President's Letter



Less than six months remain before the 5th World Bonsai Convention here in Washington D.C. next May 28–31, 2005. As you can image, right now we are a little anxious about all the last minute details. Still, NBF is very proud to be a sponsor—along with the American Bonsai Society, Bonsai Clubs International, the Potomac Bonsai Association and the U. S. National Arboretum—of this quadrennial event for the world-wide bonsai and penjing community. It will provide an outstanding opportunity to highlight the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.

As we plan for the 5th WBC, substantial Museum improvements are underway. In September, NBF presented our contribution of \$250,000 to the U.S. National Arboretum for the renovation of the Chinese Pavilion and the construction of the lower courtyard. We are very grateful to Deborah Rose for her major gift for the Rose Family Garden, and to the many other NBF members who also contributed to the project. Construction started in October, and work is going forward expeditiously thanks to our fine autumn weather. Now, if we can just get through the winter months with the same level of meteorological cooperation, all will be ready for the big events of 2005.

Every season has its joys and laments. One special joy was the Mumtober Exhibit that attracted crowds of visitors to the Museum. Using the Chrysanthemum as the theme, Museum staff and volunteers brought viewing stones, flower arranging and bonsai together for a most festive fall event. The month also brought sadness as we lost a very good friend of the Museum—former Assistant Curator Dan Chiplis, who died after a valiant battle with leukemia. Another wonderful friend, Dave Garvin, moved to Ohio. Dave was a driving force behind the Mumtober Exhibit, and while he will still be helping the Museum from a distance, we have lost a most stalwart Museum volunteer. All of these events and others are reported elsewhere in this Bulletin.

Thank you for your support of NBF and its ongoing efforts to improve the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum—the first museum of its kind in the world. There can be no doubt that the many national and international visitors who will be here for the 5th WBC will find the Museum to be a shining star in the world of bonsai, penjing and viewing stones.

I trust that you are making your plans now to be in Washington, D.C. for the 5th WBC next May. This should be a most significant event in the history of bonsai in the United States, and you might like to tell your grandchildren about it!

Until then . . .

Felix

CALL FOR ENTRIES

FOR THE 5TH WORLD BONSAI CONVENTION EXHIBITS

- CALL FOR BONSAI
- CALL FOR CERAMIC CONTAINERS—*FROM THE HAND OF...*
- CALL FOR CERAMIC CONTAINERS—*FROM THE COLLECTION OF...*
- CALL FOR VIEWING STONES

ENTRIES ARE DUE BY JANUARY 1, 2005

PLEASE SEE THE WBF WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.bonsai-wbff.org.events.htm

Curator's Corner

By Jack Sustic

Construction is underway! The lower courtyard is being transformed before our very eyes. Soon the pavers will be down, the **Melba Tucker Demonstration Arbor** will be up and the courtyard will open once again for visitors. A lot of planning has gone into this project and to see it all come together is very exciting. We offer a special thank you to **Deborah Rose** for her generous donation to NBF for this phase of the project. Her gift and the gifts of many NBF members enabled us to begin construction in October so we can be ready for the 5th World Bonsai Convention in May 2005.

Needed repairs and ventilation improvements to the **Dr. Yee-sun Wu Chinese Pavilion** have also begun. When this work is complete we will be able to more effectively manage and control the temperature in this pavilion and that will result in a better environment for overwintering the bonsai and penjing.

Very soon the three stones that **Harry Hiraio** donated in memory of his wife Alyce

will be on display. Friends of **Alyce Hiraio** donated to the NBF Fund in her memory and these contributions allowed us to purchase the granite pedestals on which the stones will rest. These have now arrived at the Museum and will be installed with the stones by next Spring. All of this progress we hope will make 2005 a year to remember at the Museum.

In this issue of the *NBF Bulletin* you will see pictures of the chrysanthemum bonsai exhibit. An exhibit like this makes me wish each and every member of NBF lived near the Museum. This exhibit was truly outstanding but what made it particularly special was that both staff and volunteers worked on the development of the display. Everyone helped of course but it was the guidance and skill of volunteer **David Garvin** that was most critical to its success. Dave has been growing chrysanthemum bonsai for the past 10 years and has been a volunteer at the Museum for the last 15 years. Under his tutelage we were able to take little cuttings in March and turn them into wonderful bonsai mums in October. Dave recently moved to Ohio and that is definitely the Museum's loss.



Photo: Shawn Theiv

Jack Sustic

His personality at work, his friendship with colleagues and his love and support for the Museum will be sorely missed by all those who know him. Dave, when you read this please know that I am still looking for a good frequent flier program so we can bring you back!

Volunteer Bob Drechsler

By Janet Lanman

Bob Drechsler first started working at the U.S. National Arboretum in 1959 as a plant technician working under the renowned plant scientist Dr. Donald Egolf in the Plant Breeding Program. Before coming to the Arboretum, Bob obtained a B.S. degree in Floriculture and worked as a flower arranger for a florist—these design skills would stand him in good stead for his future work.

On April 1 1975, Bob was appointed the first Curator of the National Bonsai &



Bob Drechsler in the U.S. National Arboretum Herbarium at the beginning of his career

Penjing Museum. This was the day that the Japanese bonsai, a gift from the Japanese people to the citizens of the United States arrived in Washington.

In 1977, under the auspices of the Nippon Bonsai Association, Bob had the opportunity to go to Japan to study with **Fusazo Taskeyma** and **Saburo Kato**. This experience, which included visiting bonsai nurseries and private collections in Japan, provided Bob with a new understanding about the art of bonsai and allowed him to hone his bonsai techniques. Under his care the bonsai from the original acquisition prospered and the success of the Museum brought about expansion with the addition of the Chinese penjing and North American collections into the Museum.

For over 20 years, Bob cared for the collections and then in 1996 he retired. Finally, in 1999 he returned to the Museum as a volunteer. Although once the Curator of the Museum himself, he clearly understands, as all volunteers should, that carrying out the current curator's wishes is the first responsibility of a Museum volunteer.

As Museum volunteer, he is always thoughtful of others, cooperative with staff and other volunteers, quick to take on a new

task and most important of all he has a great sense of humor!

It is our honor to have this former curator as a fellow volunteer.

Ernesta Drinker Ballard Joins NBF Board

Ernesta Drinker Ballard of Philadelphia, wife of the late **Frederic Ballard**, the first President of the National Bonsai Foundation, will join the NBF Board of Directors in 2005.

She served as Director and President of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society from 1963 to 1981 with responsibility for the renowned Philadelphia Flower Show. She was a member of the Fairmont Park Commission for over 20 years and initiated the acclaimed community gardening program, *Philadelphia Green*. She has also been named a Distinguished Daughter of Pennsylvania.

Mrs. Ballard was the author of two important horticultural books: *Garden in Your House* and *The Art of Training Plants*. The latter was one of the first books published on bonsai in the United States. She studied under **Yuji Yoshimura** and was instrumental in introducing **John Naka** to the East Coast bonsai community.

MUSEUM TO EXHIBIT PHOTOS OF BONSAI FROM AROUND THE WORLD

(Continued from page 1)

- American Bonsai Society
- Asia Pacific Bonsai Friendship Federation
- Australian Associated Bonsai Clubs
- Bonsai Clubs International
- European Bonsai Association

Japan Airlines is the main corporate sponsor and is supported by Hazaka Plant Kogyo as a co-sponsor.

Bonsai enthusiasts from all countries, except Japan, were once again asked to submit up to five entries in the form of photographs. The deadline for submission was October 31, 2004.

Winners in the contest were decided by a screening committee in November, 2004. The entries were judged on the beauty and health of the bonsai tree and the technical skill of the bonsai artist as displayed in the photograph. The screening committee was comprised of:

- Saburo Kato (Former Chairman of WBFF and the Nippon Bonsai Association (NBA))
- Hiroshi Takeyama (Chairman of NBA)
- Hatsuji Kato (Chairman of the Japan Bonsai Growers Cooperative (JBGC))
- Jiro Fukuda (Former Chairman of JBGC)
- Shinichi Nakajima (Executive Director, JBGC)
- Yasuo Ito (Board Member, NBA).

There will be one Grand Prize which includes a round-trip Executive Class ticket on Japan Airlines to/from Japan. The two Runner up Prizes are round trip Economy Class Tickets on Japan Airlines to/from Japan. There will also be 50 International Winners based on nutrition, technical skill and beauty of the trees. Finally, there will be 47 Honorable Mentions highlighting the best entries representing the participating countries and regions of the World Bonsai Friendship Federation.

The 100 photos of the 2004 winners will be on display at the Arboretum from May 28 through December 31, 2005. The winners for 2003 can be seen on the website www.worldbonsaicontest.com.



Museum Gardener Attends International Symposium on Japanese Gardens

By Christina Hilberg

As the gardener for the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, I was asked to attend the 2004 International Symposium on Japanese Gardens in Seattle, Washington from August 28th through September 1st. I never imagined that this conference would have such an impact on the way I now view and feel about Japanese gardens. Almost every talk, workshop, and tour inspired me and gave me new insights.

There were about 160 people in attendance and about one third of these were from Japan. Luckily there were many interpreters and some participants were fluent in both Japanese and English.

The first and third days of the conference were devoted to lectures and panel discussions. I gained a sense of why Japanese gardens were created in North America and in Europe. As the Japanese began to participate in world expositions and world trade, westerners became exposed to the art of Japanese gardens. Another interesting thing that I learned was that, while the Japanese tea house is a traditional and prominent feature in the garden in Japan as the setting for a ritual ceremony, it was featured at world expositions as a way to promote tea importation.

I especially enjoyed a talk given by **Christian Tschumi** about **Mirei Shigemori**. Mr. Shigemori was an artist, garden designer and author. I literally had goose

bumps as Mr. Tschumi walked us through Mr. Shigemori's life and works while displaying photos of gardens that brought together deep symbolic meaning with elegant beauty. My favorite garden designed by him is called *Sekizou-ji Shishin Souou no*



Photo: Michael James

Museum Gardener, Christy Hilberg

Niwa in Ichijima-cho, Japan. This is a sand and stone garden in which the four directions are each represented by a stone in the form of an animal. The red phoenix, blue dragon, white tiger, and black tortoise rocks are positioned so that they are chasing each other while the raked gravel shows the flow of their motion. It was quite incredible to see!

The middle day of the conference was spent at Kobuta Gardens just south of Seattle. Its website is at <http://www.kubota.org/>. There were on-site workshops which included the setting of a large stone with heavy machinery, a pond reclamation project and pine-tree pruning. My favorite part was the session with professional Japanese garden masters pruning a group of pine trees. Through interpreters, they explained pruning practices and techniques and even included some lore about the pines. I was so impressed by their patient and meticulous work while cheered by their easy-going camaraderie and light-hearted spirits.

On the final day, we toured the Washington University Japanese Garden, the Welch Sanctuary Garden, the Waterfall Garden in downtown Seattle, and Bellingham Gardens in Bellingham, Washington. The Washington University Japanese Garden was exceptionally beautiful and I was most taken by its breathtaking pines. The trees had structure and definition yet their branches were like clouds that seemed to float in the air.

Back at the Museum I feel that I am just beginning to learn about Japanese gardening. Like the pines I am still in the clouds over this conference but I hope that what I learned there will be a real inspiration for me in my work maintaining the well being and beauty of the gardens at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.



John Naka's Last Sketch

By Cheryl Manning

Throughout his life, John Naka took pen to paper and sketched bonsai. His two bonsai books are full of his drawings. And all over the world hundreds of individuals are fortunate enough to own originals sketches of his bonsai designs for their trees. These drawings were intended as a guide for future development of the trees. And if the tree died then at least the owner was left with a two-dimensional treasure.

In October 2003, a group of John's students gathered at Larry and Nina Ragle's home for the monthly Nanpukai meeting. This is a club that John created. Its members were his students, those lucky ones that he personally invited to join. Once a month, we gathered at a member's house and a tree of the host's choice would be ready for the group to work on. John would examine the tree and decide on a plan of attack. John's army of members would carry out his orders—at least until it was time to eat!



Sherwin Amimoto, Kaz Yoneda, and John Naka look for a bonsai in the bush

For this meeting, Larry brought out a medium-sized prostrata juniper. But after an hour, the group was still deep in discussion and John was extremely relaxed in a comfy chair on the patio. Some of us thought the tree would not be touched. But after a particularly delicious potluck meal, John was energized to turn a green bush

into a beautiful bonsai. As always, he was surrounded by his "groupies" who enjoyed every morsel of the wisdom he offered. Working together, a raw piece of nursery stock was transformed. Wire was applied and branches were shaped. The result was immensely different and improved, but John also had a plan for its future.



Mel Ikeda helping John wire the tree

He asked for pen and paper so he could finish his design with ink. The vertical trunk was angled into a slant-style bonsai. More jin and shari would be added. The tree would be potted into a rectangular pot. John began the afternoon with a less-than-ordinary piece of material, but he ended it with a spectacular sketch. Everyone understood exactly how this tree should look.

Last spring, the tree was repotted into a Japanese bonsai pot similar to the one in his sketch. Over the summer, the tree was nurtured and allowed to become lush in preparation for further refinement. Most recently, jin and shari were created or refined, and branches were rewired. At last, this tree is beginning to resemble John's design—the last sketch he ever drew.

That sketch and over eighty more will be published in book form as *John Naka's Sketchbook* by the National Bonsai Foundation and this book will debut at the 5th World Bonsai Convention in May, 2005. It will be an enduring tribute to John's talent, artistry, and vision.



John's sketch—October 2003



Tree—one year later

Visit NBF's Website:
www.bonsai-nbf.org

Memorable Montezuma

By Cheryl Manning

We end at the beginning: the last bonsai that John Naka donated to the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. was his very first bonsai. Our story begins at the end of 1946 when John moved his family to Los Angeles from Colorado. The mild climate of southern California gave John the opportunity to work as a landscaper year round. Several months after settling his family into their new home, John decided to resume the art of bonsai, which he had learned from his grandfather in Japan. In the winter of 1947 he went shopping for material.



John working on his Montezuma in the late 1950's

John knew that his first tree should be a formal upright—the perfect style to practice basic elements of bonsai design and techniques. But what kind of material should he use? The foemina juniper with its naturally straight trunk would be perfect. And in the years to follow, he worked on many foemina junipers, eventually combining several to create *Goshin*. But one aspect of the evergreen foemina is its “sameness” throughout the year. For his first tree, John wanted a tree that would express all the seasons.

John fondly remembered the seasonal changes that accompanied the more dramatic weather fluctuations he experienced in Colorado and Japan. But the mild weather in Los Angeles left most of the landscape green all year. He therefore sought out material suitable for a formal upright, yet with the characteristics that would give his first bonsai



On display after 11 years in training

greater visual interest throughout the year. The Montezuma cypress was the perfect material—pale green spring growth, turning deep green in summer, bronze foliage in the fall, and the barren winter silhouette showing off the structure of the tree.

John found his treasure in the back of a nursery, amid overgrown and unwanted stock. This particular tree caught his attention for three reasons: the straight trunk, the interesting rootage, and the hollow that gave the tree more character and evoked age. Over the years, the size of the trunk and the height of the tree remained the same, but the trunk was enhanced with



In 2001, after 54 years of refinement

development of the most beautiful rough bark. For the next 57 years, John shaped and refined the apex and branches, and the tree developed the majestic quality that only time can create.

But John was always looking to the future... always driven to improve his trees... always mindful of the ever-changing aspect of this art. At 89 years young, John decided to re-develop the apex and branches. The old apex was removed, an upper branch was positioned in its place, and most branches were cut back to just a couple of inches. Although it will take many years of development, John's vision of better taper and refinement will eventually be realized.

In Japan, bonsai are passed from generation to generation. John learned about this



The last photo of John, with Marybel Balendonck, bidding farewell to his very first bonsai

Photo: Cheryl Manning

art from his grandfather—and so he passed on not only his love of bonsai to his own grandson Mike but also his whole collection of trees. So it was Mike who wisely understood the significance of this very special tree. He believed that the proper place to display John's legacy was in the John Y. Naka North American Pavilion, where five other cherished Naka bonsai live.

Last spring, I took home both the Montezuma cypress and John's *Eleagnus* (profiled in “Elegant *Eleagnus*,” *NBF Bulletin*, Summer 2004) to my home to prepare them for shipment to the Arboretum. Then on April 26th, **Marybel Balendonck** brought John and Alice Naka to my home. John examined both trees, gave some last-minute directions before the trees were to be crated, and bid them farewell. At that time, I took a few pictures of John saying goodbye to his very first bonsai. Little did I know then that these would be the last photos taken of him. Two weeks later, John went to the hospital—and on May 19th we began grieving.

John is no longer with us, but his trees are. The charm, the wisdom, and the dedication of John Naka lives on in his bonsai, in his books, and in our hearts.

Photo: Cheryl Manning

The Month of Mumtober at the Museum

By Michael James

This past October was known as Mumtober around the U.S. National Arboretum. Throughout the month the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum featured three special exhibits that put chrysanthemums in the spotlight.



Photo: Michael James

David Garvin

Our hats go off to you, David Garvin and Museum volunteers, who made the chrysanthemum Mumtober such a special display.



Photo: Michael James



Photo: Michael James

The first exhibit was a display of chrysanthemum viewing stones. Many of these were on loan from collectors around the country.



Photo: Michael James



Photo: Michael James

The beautiful stones gave their space to Sogetsu flower arrangements made by members of Sogetsu Maryland. Each composition featured specimens of chrysanthemums, of course.



Photo: Michael James



Photo: Michael James



Photo: Michael James



Photo: Michael James

Finally, Chrysanthemum bonsai filled the exhibit hall wing at the end of the month. They were all grown and trained from cuttings at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.

Daniel J. Chiplis 1952 – 2004

Daniel J. Chiplis, former Assistant Curator of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, died on September 29th after a long struggle with chronic lymphocytic leukemia. Dan worked at the Museum from 1984 until 1998 when he took a position at the Smithsonian Institution where he was the primary designer of the gardens surrounding the new National Museum of the American Indian. Dan maintained his own private collection of bonsai, and this year one of his trees was accessioned into the North American Collection (see *NBF Bulletin*—Summer 2004).

Felix Laughlin, President of NBF, described Dan as “a central figure in the transformation of the Bonsai Complex at the U.S. National Arboretum into the world-renowned National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. As a curator he was beloved by all who had the good fortune to know him. The Museum, having been nurtured by his gentle spirit, grew into what it is today—a place of serenity and beauty. We are all deeply grateful

to Dan for all of his efforts on behalf of the Museum and for placing his indelible imprint on the world of bonsai.”



Dan working on Goshin

On October 23rd, family and friends had a Celebration of Dan's Life. The ceremony was held on the grounds of the National Arboretum across the road from the Museum and the bonsai that he loved. On that occasion, his good friend **John E. Atkinson** of San Francisco, California read a haiku he wrote for Dan:

*Strong yet gentle roots
dormant but never deceased
a human bonsai*

Dan is survived by his wife Paula and his two daughters, Julia and Anna. Contributions in his name can be made to:

Committee for the Relief of Poor Children in Vietnam (CRPCV)

10413 Adel Road
Oakton, VA 22124

Hopkins Plunge for Patients (Johns Hopkins Medicine)

19196 Middletown Road
Parkton, MD 21120



Photo: Michael James

Dan's Chinese Hackberry (*Celtis sinensis*) on display at the Museum on October 23rd

Museum Notes

- **Jack Sustic** traveled to Korea and China in September. The Korean portion of the trip was primarily vacation but he also had the opportunity to promote the 5th WBC in Seoul and on Jeju Island. In China, in addition to promotional work for the 5th WBC, he also went to Shanghai and visited the **Shanghai Botanic Garden** in preparation for **Jim Hughes'** anticipated study trip to that garden in early 2005. Jack also attended the 2004 BCI Taipei Taiwan tour.



Photo: Michael James

Lower Courtyard Construction

- In September NBF gave the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Agricultural Research Service a check for \$250,000 for the renovation of the **Dr. Yee-sun Wu Chinese**

Pavilion and the construction of the **Rose Family Garden** and the **Melba Tucker Demonstration Arbor** as part of the lower courtyard project. This is Phase Two of the three phase project to make the entire Museum complex accessible to all visitors. **Joseph L. Krewatch** is NBF's Construction Manager for this phase of the project, which will be completed by the Spring of 2005.

- In October, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary, **Anne M. Veneman**, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with **Yang Jiechi**, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the United States, for the construction of a classical Chinese garden at the U.S. National Arboretum.
- Beginning in 2005, NBF will sponsor an annual memorial lecture in honor of the contribution to the art of bonsai by **Yuji Yoshimura**. The inaugural lecture will be part of the 5th WBC program in May.
- **Bonsai Clubs International** presented a Meritorious Service Award for 2004 to NBF President, Felix B. Laughlin.
- In January 2005, there will be a special mailing to the NBF membership of a poster:

Program of Events—2005
The National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.



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César Portocarrero
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