



Aarin Packard Appointed Assistant Curator

Aarin Packard was appointed the Assistant Curator for Plants in June. A native of California, he grew up in the sunny Southern part of the state and was exposed to the joy of gardening at an early age by his parents, William and Claudia. His father also had a small bonsai collection and he remembers well the sense of intrigue he felt every time he looked at these trees. "Even at 6 years old I knew there was something special about those trees, I just didn't know what it was."

Aarin's true passion for bonsai developed when several of his friends acquired bonsai. This prompted Aarin to begin seriously learning about the art. "One of the things I love about bonsai is its ability to bring people together. Bonsai was something I did with my friends. We would get together and spend hours working on our trees. We had so much fun, talking, joking, laughing, and bonsai was at the center of that interaction."

A highpoint in Aarin's study of bonsai occurred in 2003 when he attended an exhibition by a local bonsai club. During one of the demonstrations it was announced that Bonsai Master John



Photo: James Hughes

Aarin Packard, Assistant Curator for Plants.

Naka had arrived unexpectedly and had agreed to conduct a demonstration.

I had heard of John Naka through my studies but I had never seen him in action. It is difficult to put into words his skill and spirit with bonsai. When the opportunity arose to ask him a question, only one came to my mind: 'What is the secret to bonsai?' John smiled and responded as only a Bonsai Master could: 'You must kill some trees.'

Aarin attended California State University, Fullerton, where his interest in Japanese culture prompted him to major in Anthropology. During his senior year at CSUF, Aarin took several classes in Museum Studies and interned

at a local museum. This experience inspired him to seek formal training in the field of Museum Studies and, after graduation, he enrolled in this program at the George Washington University in Washington, D.C. While at GW he worked as a Student Assistant for the Institute of Museum and Library Services and was also an intern in the Botany Department at the National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution.

Aarin completed his graduate studies in May and now he is very excited to be a part of the staff at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum: "Working here has really given me an appreciation for the broad range of activities involved in running this Museum. My first day on the job, I helped clean out gutters after a record-breaking rainfall and two days later I was unloading bonsai at the White House. I can't wait to see what's next!"

In his spare time Aarin likes to exercise, either in a gym or a dojo, where he studies the Japanese martial art Kendo. He also enjoys cooking, playing on-line games with his friends in California, and whenever possible, snowboarding.



Museum Bonsai Go to the White House

On June 29th the Prime Minister of Japan, Junichiro Koizumi, was a guest of President and Mrs. George W. Bush at the White House. For this occasion three trees from the Museum's Japanese Collection were on display in the Grand Foyer of the State Floor and in the Blue Room.

The trees included: a Japanese white pine (*Pinus parviflora*) donated by Mr. Daizo Iwasaki and in training since



Photo: Shawn Thev

Aarin Packard, Kathleen Emerson-Dell and Jim Hughes preparing the bonsai for display.

1855; an Ezo spruce (*Picea glehnii*), a gift from Mr. Tokuei Tanaka; and a small Eurya (*Eurya emarginata*) given by Mr. Susumu Nakamura.



Photo: Shawn Thev

Eurya bonsai on display in the Blue Room.





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President's Letter



Museum is now fully staffed with outstanding professionals. Throughout most of the past year, the Museum Curator, **Jim Hughes**, with the assistance of the Museum Gardener, **Christy Hilberg**, maintained the Collections by themselves because there were two assistant curator positions unfilled. So we extend to Jim and Christy our deep gratitude for carrying the entire burden of keeping the Collections and grounds in such excellent shape during this period. Now, with Aarin on board and the earlier appointment in February of **Kathleen Emerson-Dell** as Assistant Curator for Artifact Collections, the Museum has its full curatorial team in place.

The NBF Board of Directors has elected two new Directors: **David Bogan** of Indiana, and **Ron Lang** of Pennsylvania. Each brings a new dimension to our Board represen-

tation. Dave has been very active in promoting the Museum and NBF in the Midwest region, an area that is under represented on the Board. Ron, a well-known bonsai ceramic artist and Curator of the Museum exhibition: *Bonsai inSites: Collaborations Between Tree and Container*, will bring to the Board the perspective of a bonsai potter. We welcome them both!

This year we are expanding the number of annual issues of the *NBF Bulletin* from two to three, in order to keep you better informed about the Museum's events and activities. We also have been working hard on the redesign of the NBF website, and we hope to have that up and working by the beginning of November. My thanks to NBF's Executive Director, **Johann Klodzen**, for her efforts in bringing about these improvements in NBF's communications with our members. We will have more news about NBF's new website in the Winter issue of the *Bulletin*.

Until then, best wishes and thank you for your support!

Felix

Museum Notes

Michiko Moriguchi, daughter of Mas Moriguchi who donated the *Juniperus chinensis* 'Foemina' forest planting in the John Y. Naka North American Pavilion, visited the Museum with her husband and daughter in July.



Photo: James Hughes
Michiko Moriguchi with her daughter, Lauren Baker, and husband, Dean Baker, in front of Mas Moriguchi's forest planting.



Photo: Larry Ragle
Harry Hirao

NBF Honorary Director, **Harry Hirao**, age 89, was photographed this summer by Larry Ragle, pruning the top of a large tree on a tall ladder.

National Bonsai & Penjing Museum (Washington, D.C.) And National Bonsai Garden (Tokyo): Similarities and Differences

By Thomas S. Elias

The National Bonsai Garden (“The Garden”) in Tokyo and the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum (“The Museum”) in Washington D.C. share noteworthy similarities and differences. The Museum was dedicated on July 9, 1976, and the Garden was dedicated on November 3, 2004.

The similarities are striking. First, the Museum and the Garden are each part of its country’s national government structure. The Museum is on the grounds of the U. S. National Arboretum, while the Garden is located within the National Japanese Garden in the Showa Kinen Park. This affiliation provides each installation with the beneficial stability associated with government funded operations.



Photo: Thomas Elias

Information panel in the Garden.

Secondly, in both the United States and Japan, the institutions trace their origins to a strong private sector group that offered support in the beginning. The National Bonsai Foundation was established in 1982 to help support the Museum, while the Nippon Bonsai Association played a key role in the founding of Garden. These non-profit organizations each now work closely with their respective governments to help maintain and guide the development of the Museum and the Garden through private contributions. Also, the collections of both the Museum and the Garden, were selected by these organizations from trees offered by individual citizens.

There are also striking differences between the Museum and the Garden. This is most evident in the range of



Photo: Thomas Elias

Garden display of the development of a Bonsai.

the collections and their different approaches to display and education. The Museum collections have expanded from the original Japanese collection to include collections of trees from China and North America. The Garden, on the other hand, focuses solely on Japanese bonsai.

In addition to the tree collections, the Museum has a collection of Japanese suiseki and viewing stones from other regions of the world, while the Garden does not possess or display any stones. The Museum also maintains a library of bonsai and suiseki-related publications in many languages, whereas the Garden has but a small set of reference materials, all in Japanese. The Museum maintains extensive collections of pots, tables, scrolls and wood block prints that are used in conjunction with bonsai display. But the Garden, with many of these Japanese items close at hand in private collections, does not have a permanent collection of them.

The Museum has separate walled pavilions for each collection and a uniform series of wooden benches for display of all the tree collections. In comparison, the Garden is within an enclosure and the trees are displayed in the open on varying styles of benches and plinths. The Garden also elected to use a wide variety of display techniques rather than a singular bench style. These are of varying heights and composed of different materials. This creative approach adds considerable interest and appeal to the displays of the Garden.

In the area of visitor education, the Garden has a series of illustrated information panels at the entrance informing visitors about bonsai and the different styles of the art. There are also multiple displays explaining the evolution of a bonsai over a period of years. This includes an innovative exhibit of live trees of the same species and style, but of different ages (two years, four years, eight years, 12 years, etc.) to show how a bonsai will look and develop over a period of many years.

A small building just inside the entrance to the Garden provides visitors with many opportunities to see how a bonsai should be properly displayed with scrolls, tables and companion plants, in both a home setting and in a tokonoma. The Museum, in the Mary E. Mrose International Pavilion, has a tokonoma, as well as a Chinese Scholar’s studio to show visitors how Chinese penjing can be displayed. The Museum also has a Special Exhibits Wing within this pavilion for changing exhibitions and special events that bring visitors back again and again.



Photo: Thomas Elias

Bonsai benches in the Garden.

Overall, the Garden may have a more comprehensive educational focus and more innovative ways of displaying bonsai than the Museum. However, the Museum has a more comprehensive approach to display and is a larger complex. With its enclosed courtyards it has open space that allows for special demonstrations and functions that would be difficult to hold in the Garden.

Regardless of the similarities and differences, both the Museum and the Garden are among the best institutions in the world for visitors to understand and enjoy the art of bonsai.

Capital Improvements in National Bonsai & Penjing Museum Pay Off

By James Hughes

The normal average rainfall in Washington for June is typically three inches. Yet in June of this year the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area received over 14 inches of rain, and most of this fell in one 24-hour period. Such a heavy downpour put to a test the limits of the Upper Courtyard, dedicated to the memory of Maria Rivero Vanzant, and the Lower Courtyard, dedicated to honor the Rose Family.

I am pleased to report that the new stone paving surfaces and drains, as well as the flower beds and the area underneath the Melba Tucker Arbor, all functioned as designed for this type of occurrence. No water damage occurred anywhere in the Museum. The bonsai office, which used to get "flooded" when three or four inches fell, was completely dry. And the new roof on the Mary E. Mrose International Pavilion, which used to leak chronically, kept the library, and everything else inside the pavilion, dry and safe.



Photo: Kathleen Emerson-Dell

Visitors enjoy the tree display in the Maria Rivero Vanzant Upper Courtyard.

The funds from NBF and the federal government that provided the improvements to the courtyard drainage and made this area handicapped accessible were a sound long-term investment for aesthetic, as well as practical reasons. Today, visitors with strollers, people in wheel chairs, or anyone whose walking ability is compromised, can now savor this beautiful space in comfort.

We look forward eagerly to the final stage in this project, when the gravel in the John Y. Naka North American Pavilion, the Kato Stroll Garden, and



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the Japanese Pavilion, will be replaced by a smooth and pleasing surface. Then the entire Museum will be completely accessible and possess aesthetic continuity. It will be place of beauty that all visitors can enjoy.

California Viewing Stones Displayed for FONA Dinner

By Kathleen Emerson-Dell

"A California Festival" was the theme this year for the Friends of the National Arboretum (FONA) annual fund-raising dinner. Over 500 guests, including eight members from Congress, gathered under a big green-and-white striped tent in the great meadow to enjoy a California-inspired cuisine. Before dinner, guests were invited to stroll through the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum pavilions while they sipped California wines. In the spirit of the occasion, the Museum featured bonsai from California on the upper terrace pedestals and an exhibit of viewing stones, also exclusively from California, inside the Mary E. Mrose International Pavilion.

The viewing stone exhibit was on display from June 10th through the 25th. All together there were 39 stones in the exhibition. Some of these stones were from

the permanent collection and 8 others were loaned for the exhibit by California collectors: Nina and Larry Ragle, Bruce McGinnis, and Barry and Sandy Josephson. The stones were divided into three groups to emphasize the different geological collection sites: California Deserts, Rivers, and Mountains.



Photo: Kathleen Emerson-Dell

Waterfall Stone from the Eel River in California, collection of Bruce McGinnis.



Photo: Kathleen Emerson-Dell

Poster for the Exhibit with Desert Stone donated by Melba Tucker