



## LIVING COLLECTION ENCHANCEMENTS

On October 22, 1999, NBF's new Committee on Living Collections met with representatives of the U.S. National Arboretum to discuss the optimum size and scope of the Living Collections as well as how to enhance those collections. Dr. Tom Elias explained that the Museum now has 141 masterpiece specimens in the three collections, as follows: 57 in the Japanese Collection, 57 in the North American Collection, and 27 in the Chinese Collection. The Museum also has about 60 other bonsai in what is called the "Curators' Collection." It was agreed that the maximum number of trees in all of the Collections should be 225-250 specimens.

Marybel Balendonck then presented a proposal that two saikei specimens from California be

accepted into the North American Collection. The first is **an olive grove from Melba Tucker's collection**. The other is **a foemina juniper and azalea saikei from Mas Moriguchi**. It was unanimously agreed that these two saikei were spectacular and should be accepted.

Dr. Elias then discussed the importance of expanding the Chinese Collection to include different species, styles and schools of penjing. He also emphasized the need to show the historical progression of bonsai, including styles that are no longer popular but that were in the past.

This led into Warren Hill's report on his recent trip to Taiwan, including a slide show. Warren's article on

*(Continued on page 2)*

## New Book On Museum's Viewing Stones

On November 19, 1999, NBF's new Committee on Exhibits and Programs met with representatives of the U.S. National Arboretum. The principal focus was to review the plans for a new book that the Foundation will publish containing top-quality photographs of the Museum's Viewing Stone Collection. At the time of the meeting, a number of the viewing stones were on display in the Special Exhibits Wing of the Museum, and it was an inspiring show. Having a photographic chronicle of the Museum's prize collection is long overdue.

Work began on the book last summer. Jim Hayes, an NBF Director and Publisher of the viewing stone magazine, *Waiting to be Discovered*, agreed to be the art director and creative force behind the project, and Joe Mullan was retained as the photographer. Joe has worked with Jim for a number of years taking the photographs for *Waiting to be Discovered*; Joe is one of the best and most experienced photographers of viewing stones in the world. Photographing each of the 60 stones in the collection was a long and arduous process, brought about primarily by the unusually high standards of quality insisted on by both Jim and Joe. To say they are perfectionists is an understatement.

The photography stage of this project is now complete, and the

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*Melba's Olive Saikei*



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## President's Letter

This issue testifies to the "proactivity" that abounds at the Museum today. From acquiring new bonsai for the Living Collections, to publishing a new book on the Viewing Stone Collection, to disease and pest control—the Museum is highly energized, thanks to your support and that of the volunteers. Your support is paying big dividends: visitors to the Museum love it! When we receive comments like those of Mitchell

White, reprinted on p. 5 of this issue, we know that the efforts are worthwhile.

This issue also salutes Melba Tucker, a beloved teacher of bonsai who, in the sensitive words of Celia Butler (see poem on p. 4), was "one who knows."

If the Museum touches your heart, please continue your support by using the enclosed envelope to send in your tax-deductible donation today. You may also use the envelope to reserve your copy of the limited-edition version of the new viewing-stone book.

## LIVING COLLECTION ENHANCEMENTS

(Continued from page 1)

his trip is on p. 5 of this issue. Jack Sustic then discussed his recent trip to Korea, and showed slides from that trip. Jack's article on his trip on p. 6 of this issue.

Dr. Elias then recommended, and the Committee agreed, that the Museum should accept a number of

azaleas from **Mr. Hirosumi Ishihara, Chairman of the Nippon Satsuki Association**, and a number of bonsai from **Mr. Susumu Nakamura, President of the Shonan School of Bonsai and a Director of the Nippon Bonsai Association**. A more detailed report on these additions to the Japanese Collection will be included in a future issue of the *Bulletin*.



*Mas Moriguchi with Juniper Saikei*

## In Remembrance of Melba Tucker

by Marybel Balendonck

On August 26, 1999, Melba Tucker, a most gifted and ardent lover, practitioner and teacher of the arts of bonsai, saikei and suiseki, bade farewell to this world. I personally miss her terribly. She was my dear friend, teacher, ongoing source of green-thumb assistance in all matters bonsai, and most of all a great example of courage, perseverance and grit when I felt life was dealing me a bad hand.

For the last 25 years Melba sort of had one foot in the grave and the other on a banana peel. In 1975 she had the first of two heart valve replacements and shortly thereafter her heart began to greatly enlarge and heart failure set in. But like the song, "I Did It My Way", Melba let nothing—including heart failure and its attendant complications—stop her from living her life her way and doing the things she wanted to do.

Among numerous other activities, she traveled throughout the United States and to many parts of the world, including Australia, South Africa and Colombia, teaching bonsai and saikei in her own direct and inimitable manner. Through her teaching she touched many, many lives in most wonderful ways, sharing her knowledge and love of this living art. (Please see the poem on p. 4 of this issue, which was written by a new student in her last class.)

Melba kept her extensive bonsai and saikei collection in immaculate shape at all times. She explored the desert for suiseki and viewing stones, her third love after bonsai and saikei, and ultimately she authored a book on the subject, entitled *Suiseki and Viewing Stones—An American*

*Perspective*, which also contained Peter Bloomer's photographs of stones from her wonderful collection.

Another of Melba's great loves was the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum. She was on the original board of directors when the National Bonsai Foundation was formed in the early 1980s, and through the years she was more than generous with her personal and financial support of the Museum. Her handsome olive bonsai is presently a part of the North American Collection, and it will soon be joined by her beautiful olive saikei (one of two saikei that will be part of the Collection), which she donated shortly before her death. Also, very fittingly, the suiseki display area at the Museum is named in her honor.

Now that she is gone from our midst, her friends feel that something more is needed to honor her memory, accomplishments and contributions to the world of bonsai in a place she loved.

Accordingly, the National Bonsai Foundation has established the **Melba Tucker Fund**

to build and name in her

honor an arbor-demonstration area planned for the Museum courtyard. I think Melba would be very pleased.

Contributions to the Melba Tucker Fund may be sent (in the enclosed envelope) to:

Chris Yeapanis, Treasurer  
The National Bonsai Foundation, Inc.  
4228 Berritt Street  
Fairfax, VA 22030

Checks should be made payable to the National Bonsai Foundation and marked for the Melba Tucker Fund. All donations are tax deductible as provided by law.



## Melba's Auction

by Mary Bloomer

It was difficult to walk between the tables displaying her bonsai, each with an auction tag attached to it. It was much easier with the pots, but the bonsai and saikei were so much more personal, so much a creation of Melba Tucker, so distinctively and recognizably hers. Now they would all be gone, and several of us had tears in our eyes. *This* was really goodbye—and yet her legacy lives on.

Melba was passionate about bonsai, passionate about her trees, and passionate about sharing the knowledge she had with others. In her final illness she wanted a number of her trees to be donated to public bonsai collections where people would continue to see them and learn. Recognizing this, her daughter asked Marybel Balendonck, Dien Liang, Marge Blasingame, and me to disburse Melba's collection in a way that would best reflect her mother's generosity and beliefs. We

think we accomplished that, and we think Melba would have been pleased.

Nearly a third of her trees were donated to the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum, the Golden State Bonsai Federation Collections North and South, the San Diego Wild Animal Park, the Japanese Garden in San Fernando Valley, and the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Still, about 50 trees were left, plus many pots. It was decided that the Golden State Bonsai Federation Convention XXII in Anaheim was the perfect venue to see that this remainder went to people who would appreciate and care for them. In the spirit of Melba's belief in education, these trees and pots were donated to NBF and GSBF jointly, and the two organizations auctioned them off at the convention.

Over \$10,000 was raised in silent and live auctions and divided equally. NBF's share will go toward

the **Melba Tucker Fund** to build an arbor-demonstration area in the Museum's courtyard. It could not be more appropriate.

If it was difficult to see Melba's trees being sold, there were also heartwarming moments to ease the pain. Many of her students and friends were determined to purchase at least one of her bonsai, and devised various ways of ensuring their success. Standing guard over a chosen tree, making sure the latest bid was theirs, and patiently waiting for that item to close was a favorite. Others, who could not be there to stand guard, had friends with walkie-talkies to bid for them.

I smiled to see these determined souls and thought how lucky Melba was. Not only did Melba have such good friends, but also it was now clear that her beloved bonsai would be seen, loved and appreciated for many years to come.

### Melba

*What did you see when you gazed at my tree?  
A straight tall pine left to grow in a plastic pail  
Strong, rough variegated colors of brown on a trunk that  
reached straight for the sky  
Branches that grew outward and upward in longing for  
the sun.  
Green needles covering all  
A likely tree for Bonsai  
My first class and tree  
Both of us waiting for your touch.  
You looked and saw its beauty and my wish  
With my new tools you cut and trimmed  
With your hands you dug at the roots to  
Uncover them.  
Your students said—too much, too soon.  
Go slowly.  
Trustingly, I gave my tree to you.*

*Few words spoken, our souls vibrated together  
The tree gave itself to one who knows.*

*My first class was to be your last.  
My little tree your final earthly work.*

*A few days later you fell, a few weeks after that  
You crossed the final bridge.*

*My friend felt sad I had not known you sooner  
I met you old and frail, unsteady with eyes  
Already turned within  
We met, you gave one final gift.  
Your earthly cycle completed.  
Your next great journey begun.*

*My tree grows in beauty.  
And,  
We remember.*

*Celia A. Butler  
September 10, 1999*

## Bonsai in Taiwan

by Warren Hill  
Curator of Bonsai

From September 30 to October 10, I had the pleasure of visiting Taiwan to attend the 5th Asia-Pacific Bonsai Convention in Taipei. I also had the opportunity to acquire artifacts for the Museum, and to determine the availability of new trees for the Chinese Collection.

The trip was a tremendous success in all respects. Notwithstanding that Taiwan had suffered a major earthquake two weeks before the convention began (with aftershocks that continued even after the convention), the convention was extremely well attended by bonsai enthusiasts from all over the world. I was given a chance to meet the Taiwanese bonsai leaders, including **Dr. Chiang Chin Tsun**, **Mr. I.C. Su** and **Professor Amy Liang**. All of them were most gracious hosts and were extremely interested in the development of the Museum. Prior to visiting Taiwan, I had also had the opportunity to meet **Mr. Jieh Jow Liou**.

In terms of artifacts, I was able to acquire a number of beautiful display stands and scrolls. The Taiwanese have some of the best stands in the world, and I bought three antique and seven new stands for the Museum. They also have wonderful scrolls, and I purchased a number of scenic scrolls, as well as a set of four calligraphy scrolls from the famous Taiwanese calligrapher **Professor Ko-Chin Chang** (pictured above).



Opening Ceremony in Taipei



Ko-Chin Chang at Work



Warren with a Favorite

The level of bonsai artistry in Taiwan is very impressive. I visited a number of private collections—each had wonderful bonsai. Perhaps the most impressive species were the native junipers (*Juniperus chinensis* var. *procumbens*). A masterpiece bonsai can be achieved within two years using field-grown junipers. The Taiwanese are experts at shaping these trees and in carving

jin and shari. In the photograph on the lower left, I am standing next to one of these extraordinary junipers.

Other outstanding species of bonsai in Taiwan included hackberry (*Celtis sinensis*), fig (*Ficus microcarpa*) and *Premna microphylla*.

During the convention, Mr. Su announced from the podium that he is offering to donate an outstanding ficus to the Museum. In addition, a number of other bonsai leaders made very generous offers to donate special bonsai. We are in the process of following up on these offers at this time.

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### Visitor Comments

The Museum recently received the following comments from Mitchell White who lives in New York City:

“If only words could convey how inspired I was to make this visit [to the Museum] a part of my day! By far the most magnificent show of bonsai sculpture for me to date. With a background as an architect and art dealer for 20 years, at this point it is only experiences such as this that truly inspire or impress me. Very, very high visual calories. I found it hard to have a favorite. I wish the Curator and staff only the best for the future.”

Thank you, Mr. White! Please come again.

## NEW BOOK ON MUSEUM'S VIEWING STONES

(Continued from page 1)

images are stunning. Larry Ragle, an NBF Director and a foremost authority on viewing stones, is putting the finishing touches on the text introducing the collection, and Jim is completing the design of the book. Although much work remains to be done, the book is scheduled to be available in March of 2000.



*Island Stone*

Most of the books will be soft-bound, but a very small quantity will be produced in a hard-bound, cloth-covered slipcase edition. This limited-edition version is being made available primarily to NBF members. A few copies of this limited-edition version also will be retained by the Foundation to be presented as diplomatic gifts.

Given the quality and content of this new book, and the excitement we believe it will create, there is no doubt that it is destined to become a valued and sought-after treasure for both viewing stone and bonsai enthusiasts.

**The best way to obtain the limited-edition version of the book is to reserve it in advance.** As the marketers would say: "You are urged to act promptly." To reserve the limited-edition book, please send your check (payable to the National Bonsai Foundation) for \$125 per copy to:

Chris Yeapanis, Treasurer,  
The National Bonsai  
Foundation, Inc.  
4228 Berritt Street  
Fairfax, VA 22030

## News from Korea

by Jack Sustic, Assistant Curator of Bonsai

July of this year marked my 5th visit to Korea. I have many ties with Korea but none as strong as the one around my ring finger! My wife Jung is from Cheju-do, a semi-tropical island off the southern coast of mainland Korea. Cheju-do is Korea's largest island with a population of about 530,000. Because of its beautiful tropical climate, it is a popular destination for honeymooners. But what makes it a special place for me are the bonsai (known as "punjae" in Korea).

We all know that bonsai popularity and interest has grown worldwide, and Korea is no exception. Bonsai has a long and rich history in Korea but only in the last thirty years or so has it become popular. If you walk down any well-traveled road on Cheju-do, chances are very good that you will find a bonsai shop along the way. There also are two public collections on the island; both are well worth the visit. (*International Bonsai* covered one of these parks, "The Bonsai Artpia," in a 1997 issue, and featured a famous elm from that collection in the latest issue.)

The earliest reference to bonsai in Korea was in 1237 during the Koryo



*Mr. Kim's Hornbeam*

Kingdom when a man named Yi Kyu Bo wrote a poem called "Six Plants in a Pot," in which he alluded to pomegranate, bamboo and sweet flag. In 1375, the famous poet Chon Nok Saeng composed the following poem (at the age of 8!):

*The yard-tall mountain pine looks  
good in a pot.*

*Wind whispers to my pillow and the  
moon on the branches leisurely  
fills the window.*

*New branches grow in answer to  
human effort and new needles are  
bright with dew and rain drops.*

*Although not certain if it would  
make a main beam,*

*the pine and I appreciate one  
another.*

We paid a visit to **Mr. Kim Sae Won, Vice President of the Korean Bonsai Association**, who showed us some trees that the KBA wishes to donate to the Museum. Mr. Kim is a bonsai master who has conducted lectures and demonstrations throughout Europe and Canada. The offered bonsai are a Korean hornbeam (*Carpinus coreana*), an exposed-root style elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*), and an exposed-root black pine (*Pinus thunbergiana*). The hornbeam is a wonderful specimen in an equally pleasing container. (See the photo on the left.) The two exposed-root styles would help to illustrate an historical aspect of bonsai for the Museum. We are presently following up with Mr. Kim to accept these gifts.

I look forward to my 6th visit and the discovery of new bonsai shops and collections.

Check Out NBF's New Website:  
[www.bonsai-nbf.org](http://www.bonsai-nbf.org)

## NBF on the Web

by Chris Cochran

Since its launching in April, the NBF website has steadily provided continuing and new information to browsers. If you have not visited, please do ([www.bonsai-nbf.org](http://www.bonsai-nbf.org)) and offer suggestions. You might learn something of interest about the Museum, its history and its programming; or you may gain insight from articles on bonsai and viewing-stone practices written by knowledgeable enthusiasts.

One of the great advantages of the web is its ability to disseminate information rapidly. When NBF sees an activity of common interest to the Museum and the bonsai community, we attempt to share some details (even pictures) on the website and inform enthusiasts that monitor the Internet Bonsai Club mail list. Thus, many website visitors saw pictures of the bonsai (donated by Ernie Kuo) and suiseki (donated by Jim Hayes) that President Clinton presented to Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi in May. Photos and descriptions were available within days of the presentation and you can still see them ([www.bonsai-nbf.org/nbf/obuchigift.htm](http://www.bonsai-nbf.org/nbf/obuchigift.htm))!

In October, the NBF site launched pages devoted to commemorative funds for two of its dearest friends. Bill Merritt and Melba Tucker had performed exceptional service to the bonsai community and the Museum, and friends wished to remember them ([www.bonsai-nbf.org/nbf/merrittfund.htm](http://www.bonsai-nbf.org/nbf/merrittfund.htm), and [www.bonsai-nbf.org/nbf/tuckerfund.htm](http://www.bonsai-nbf.org/nbf/tuckerfund.htm)). NBF also reported through its website an auction of Melba Tucker's bonsai-related items to support the Museum and the Golden State Bonsai Federation at the Federation's convention.

In November, the NBF site became sponsor of our webmaster Craig Hunt's extraordinary "View-

ing Stones, Suiseki and Chinese Scholar Links" webpage ([www.bonsai-nbf.org/stonelinks/index.htm](http://www.bonsai-nbf.org/stonelinks/index.htm)). Here a viewing-stone enthusiast can find hotlinks to everything related to this subject on the Internet. It is conveniently broken down into categories (e.g., enthusiasts' pages, vendors, books and articles).

The NBF site is also the new home of the Viewing Stone Mail List, which was dormant for a short while. This is another terrific collaboration of NBF with its webmaster Craig Hunt, who is the original administrator of the Viewing Stone Mail List.

The latest news is that Craig is about to move his "Bonsai, Penjing and Asian Garden Links" page to the NBF site. It has been updated and reorganized to upload faster and speed browsing. For years Craig's site has been THE place to explore any bonsai interest on the web. Soon, you can bookmark this page on the NBF site and use it to launch yourself across the wide world of bonsai on the web.

NBF has other surprises in store for bonsai enthusiasts visiting the site. The best place to pick up the latest information is on the site's "Recent Changes To Site" page ([www.bonsai-nbf.org/changes.htm](http://www.bonsai-nbf.org/changes.htm)).

## New Gardener

Elizabeth J. Phibbs has joined the Museum's staff as its gardener. She succeeds Martha Edens in this all-important role. Her primary duties are to maintain the Japanese, Chinese and Yamaguchi North American Gardens. She also will assist the curators in all other aspects of the Museum.

Elizabeth graduated with honors from the University of North

Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she majored in biology and botany. She has had a number of years of horticultural experience, including a year with Longwood Gardens. She also spent two years as an agroforestry extension agent with the Peace Corps in Senegal, West Africa, where she taught agricultural techniques to farmers in their local language, Pulaar.



Elizabeth Phibbs in Senegal

## Disease Prevention and Control

The Museum's first and foremost concern regarding its collections of bonsai and penjing is their health. A key element in maintaining their health, of course, is disease prevention and control.

As Curator of Bonsai, Warren Hill has taken a very aggressive stance in dealing with this concern. This past year, he passed the Pesticide Applicator Exam, in order to be licensed to apply the necessary pesticides and fungicides to the trees in the collections.

In addition, Dr. Nina Shishkoff is assisting the Museum in monitoring the health of the collections. Dr. Shishkoff is the Senior Research Associate at Cornell's Long Island Horticultural Research Laboratory, where she is involved in plant disease diagnosis. She is known affectionately as the "Bonsai Doctor" by

## DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

(Continued from page 7)

the members of the Internet Bonsai Club, an international computer news-group of bonsai growers with over 500 members. Dr. Shishkoff holds a PhD in Micology from Cornell University and a B.S. in Botany from the University of Michigan. She has grown bonsai since 1987 and contributed articles to the American Bonsai Society and to British bonsai magazines.

## Thanks to the Volunteers

The Museum could not operate without the assistance of a group of dedicated volunteers. Without pay (at least the monetary kind), they work at regular times and help the curators do everything—pruning, repotting, maintaining the library, performing soil tests, watering, etc.

We thank the following volunteers for the **2,841.25 hours** they logged from January 1 through November 15, 1999:

Arash Afshar	David Garvin	Deborah Rose
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If you would like to serve as a Museum volunteer, please contact Warren Hill at (202) 245-4529.

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