



(Bonsai Yes)

BONSAI HAI!

Prairie State Bonsai Society Newsletter

Prairie State Bonsai Society Newsletter | MARCH 2026



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This month's message from the club president includes messages from both our incoming and outgoing presidents.

From our new incoming president: Alex Surles

Dear Prairie State Bonsai Society Members,

I am deeply honored to serve as your new president. First, I want to express my sincere gratitude to Badar Zulqarni for his exceptional leadership over the past two years. Under his guidance, our society has thrived, and I'm committed to building on the strong foundation he and the board have established. I also want to thank all of our outgoing board members for their dedication and service. Your hard work has made Prairie State Bonsai Society the vibrant community it is today.

We're off to an outstanding start! Our March hands-on juniper workshop with Linda Camp and Larry Magee was a great success. I was excited to see new members attending and actively participating. This is exactly the kind of energy and engagement that makes our club special. Looking ahead, we have an outstanding year planned: our repotting workshop in April, presentations from renowned artist Mauro Stemberger in May, David Kreutz on azaleas in June, our annual picnic on June 14, and show preparation in July leading up to our Destination Asia show from July 31 through August 2. Our Destination Asia show will feature Peter Chan of Herons Bonsai as our judge. This is a world-class opportunity to learn and showcase our work. After the show, we'll continue strong with a workshop in September, our always-popular Iron Bonsai

competition in October, and in November we'll celebrate our 40th year as a society. We're working on something special to mark this milestone, so stay tuned. We'll also have our winter preparation session in November and close out the year with our fantastic holiday party in December.

As we move forward, I'm committed to creating an environment where everyone – from beginners to advanced practitioners – feel welcomed and supported. The enthusiasm from our new members at the March meeting reminded me of my first meeting and how much fun I had. Over the years I have learned so much from this club, the members, and discovered new ways to celebrate this amazing art form with friends. I'm exploring ways to strengthen our partnerships, expand our educational offerings, and create even more opportunities for connection. However, this club belongs to all of us, and your voice matters. Here's what I am curious about: What would make our meetings more valuable to you? What topics would you like to explore? How can we better support your bonsai journey? I want to hear your ideas and suggestions.

Whether you've been with us for years or you just joined us at the March meeting, whether you display at every show or you're still working on your first tree, you are a valued member of this society. You don't need to be an expert to contribute – your perspective matters. I invite and encourage you to participate in our workshops, share your knowledge at meetings, display your trees and volunteer at our shows, and help shape where we go next. Together, we can make this an unforgettable year for Prairie State Bonsai Society.

I look forward to serving you and I look forward to what we'll create together.

With gratitude and excitement,

Alexander Surles

President, Prairie State Bonsai Society

Message from our outgoing president: Badar Zulqarni

Dear Members,

This will be my final letter as President as my two-year term comes to an end. It has been a true pleasure serving you. I will continue to serve the Society as Treasurer for the next two-year term. I ask that you extend the same support to the incoming President that you have generously given me. I look forward to another year of learning, sharing, and enjoying bonsai together.

Thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm. Your involvement is what makes our society active and rewarding.

One of the highlights of the year was our Silhouette Show, held on February 21–22 at the Morton Arboretum. The event was very well attended. The Arboretum also hosted a Train Show that weekend, which brought in many model train enthusiasts who stopped to enjoy our bonsai display.

Our Special Events Chair, Craig Cronquist, will share additional details. Given the strong turnout and positive response, we look forward to hosting future Silhouette Shows at the Arboretum.

Best regards,

Badar Zulqarni



BOARD ELECTIONS

Announcing the new board.

- 1 President: Alex Surles
 - 2 Treasurer: Badar Zulqarni
 - 3 Secretary: Vacant
 - 4 Special Events Director: Craig Cronquist
 - 5 Program Director: Jason Davids
 - 6 Website Director: Doug Bradbury
 - 7 Membership Director: Jim Beck
 - 8 Newsletter Director: PK Ganeshan
 - 9 Publicity Director: Kaitlin Mulligan
 - 10 At Large 1: Nick DeBattista
 - 11 At Large 2: Bhavesh Patel
 - 12 At Large 3: Larry Magee
-

DA guest artist announcement



The Prairie State Bonsai Society is proud to announce **Peter Chan** is coming to Chicago. Peter Chan will be judging our show August 1 & 2, 2026, at The Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois. Peter Chan is known world wide as a master bonsai artist and has been in bonsai since 1967. He is also an author, speaker, teacher and YouTube personality. He owns Herons Nursery, the premier bonsai nursery in the UK. He is well known for his record tally of 21 Chelsea Flower Show Gold Medals. Mr. Chan will not only be judging our show and critiquing the trees, but he will be doing four workshops TBA.

The Prairie State Bonsai Society show is held in conjunction with the Destination Asia Festival held at The Morton Arboretum. More information will be found at both the Prairie State Bonsai Society website and The Morton Arboretum website as it becomes available. Keep checking for updates as workshops will fill fast.

This is not only a great show to view our beloved trees but also a once in a lifetime chance to personally work with Peter Chan on trees (as workshops become available). Also the festival is a fun event to enjoy, so plan for a whole day of festivities.

FEATURED ARTICLE

2026 Silhouette Show Report - Special Events Chair, Craig Cronquist

We had a very successful show on February 21 and 22, 2026. We counted a total of 1523 attendees during the two-day show. This compares to the 2025 show with a total of 1075 visitors, over a 41% increase! As in 2025, we scheduled our show to coincide with the Juniper Junction train show assembled by the LGB Model Railroad Club of Chicago and displayed in

the Firefly Pavilion. We try to catch as many of their attendees as possible to also view our show.

We made a profit of \$572 for the weekend. Our results have improved since the 2025 move from Cantigny Park to The Morton Arboretum. We substantially increased our income by adding a raffle to the event. Jason Davids donated an Alberta Spruce for the raffle tree. Doug, Hope, and Kendall Bradbury handled the Membership table, the raffle, and the sale of PSBS-branded merchandise, providing substantial income, six new paid members and 27 new temporary members for the club.

As always with an event like this, I have lots of thank yous for making the show as successful as it was. We had 48 trees and numerous suiseki stones on display. Thank yous go out to:

- Phil Malhiot cleared out his garage or backyard or wherever, and brought 11 trees.
- Charlotte Field brought 7 trees and handled the Saturday morning registration, filling out cards describing each tree in extremely legible fashion, something few of us are capable of doing. Charlotte also contributed her van to move the wooden frames from storage to the Arb and back again.
- Jason Davids donated the raffle prize as noted above, brought 3 trees, and numerous suiseki stones to make sure we had our tables full.
- Jim Beck and Linda Camp brought 5 trees and vended.
- Mark Gordon brought 5 trees.
- Doug Bradbury and his daughters, Hope and Kendall, manned the Membership table for almost the entire two days, as noted above.
- Rick Butkus did the photography of the trees in the show.
- Craig Morse, aka Bubba's Backyard Bonsai, vended and is now a new member. Craig also vended at the 2025 Destination Asia show.
- Our regular setup and tear-down team of Nick DiBattista, PK Ganeshan, Steve Fluett, Bill Imlah, and Mark Gordon, plus others who lent a hand, made that process far easier.
- Many other members brought a couple trees, worked one or more shifts to welcome people to the show, and answered their questions, to make the visitors feel welcome and make the show work smoothly.
- I am sure I am forgetting someone and apologize in advance.

I believe the Silhouette Show provides a huge boost in getting the bonsai year started after a long layoff during the winter. The show is only two weeks after the first meeting of the year, and it is like trying to get an automobile from 0 to 60 mph. The benefit of doing so is that PSBS is far better prepared to accomplish great things in the upcoming year. Hopefully members are more engaged, ready for re-potting season, and will make further 2026 events huge successes. Let's have a great year in 2026!

Don't forget, **the annual PSBS picnic at the Blackwell Forest Preserve (same location as last year) is scheduled for Sunday, June 14th.** I expect to have Chris Baker there to give professional advice on your trees.

The Destination Asia Festival at The Morton Arboretum will be August 1 and 2, 2026. We will set up tables on July 30th and deliver trees to the show on July 31st. Peter Chan will be our

guest judge. Peter is internationally known as an author and as a YouTube star. He will teach four workshops, with details being worked on now. We will advise you when registration opens, and remember, as a PSBS member you get a \$10 discount.

Put all these dates on your calendar!



CLUB MEETINGS

APRIL CLUB MEETING

Repotting Workshop

April 1 | 7:00 - 9:00 pm | College of DuPage TEC 1038B | ZOOM

A hands-on repotting workshop. Members are encouraged to bring trees that need repotting and put into practice the soil preparation and techniques discussed at the February meeting. This is a staple of the PSBS spring calendar — an opportunity for members of all skill levels to get guidance on root work, soil selection, and pot fitting from experienced club members.

RAFFLE Come to the meeting for a chance to purchase raffle tickets and win trees and other bonsai goods!

NEED ADVICE? Bring a tree to the meeting you have questions about. Members are always encouraged to bring personal trees to the meetings for advice on care or styling from our many club artists.

March Meeting with twistable junipers



Linda Camp demonstrating re-potting at the February meeting.



NOT A MEMBER YET? JOIN NOW!

Enjoy all the benefits of membership and special access to videos when you join.

MORE INFORMATION & CONTACT: See our club's website for more sources of bonsai supplies and trees. Also listed on the website are fine bonsai publications to assist you in your bonsai endeavors.

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

Would you like to become more involved in the club? Do you have skills or other abilities that could help the club? Want to just learn more about bonsai? Consider volunteering to help with things such as the website or emails.

Contact PSBS: PSBSPresident@gmail.com

JOIN THE CLUB



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