

Rob Kempinski



Kempinski at the US National Bonsai Exhibition in New York with his Pond Cypress

My interest in bonsai trees started innocently enough when I first spied them in person in 1982 at the Seoul House in Korea. The small microcosms of nature planted a seed, but I was a US Army officer then and couldn't pursue the art. Years later after starting a family and working closely with the Japanese Space Agency, I got acquainted with Japanese language and culture via many trips to Japan. The seed finally sprouted. My first bonsai was a Live Oak acorn that had sprouted in my yard. Thirty years later it is still alive and in a bonsai pot. Many other trees have joined the oak as I have seriously pursued the art.

Living in central Florida, USA, my collection is a mix of tropical and temperate trees that can take the heat of our summers and very mild winters. I especially like Headache Tree (Premna), Buttonwood, Japanese Black Pine, Banyan Fig and Willow Leaf Fig trees. While my collection has many large trees, I have developed an affinity for small trees and have well over 100. Over the years I have displayed trees at many regional and national shows and have participated for nearly 24 years in one of the most viewed bonsai displays at the annual Walt Disney World EPCOT Flower and Garden show. In 2002 I won the inaugural North American New Talent Competition along with other awards such as twice having a tree selected for the Japan Airlines top 100 world bonsai tree.

I've had the good fortune to travel extensively around the US and the world visiting bonsai gardens and exhibitions. I have given demonstrations and lectures all over Florida, Ohio, Texas, Louisiana, Washington, and globally in India, Mexico, Italy, England, Czech Republic, Poland, Malaysia, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan. In 2008 Haskill Press published my well reviewed book "Introduction to Bonsai, Globally Appreciating and Growing Bonsai" now in a second edition on Amazon.com. The book complements the many articles I have written for various magazines.

Due to my career I have had lots of leadership experience and have applied that to various bonsai organizations. I served as the President of Bonsai Clubs International, the oldest global bonsai organization the world and various other positions.