We are excited to thank you for ensuring Pacific Bonsai Museum, a national treasure, flourishes here in the Puget Sound region. With a mission to connect people to nature through the living art of bonsai, we are committed to stewarding this world-renowned collection for generations to come. Looking back, it’s been quite a journey. Looking ahead, we are invigorated by our bold vision for the future.

Led by George Weyerhaeuser, Sr., the Weyerhaeuser Company opened the Collection in 1989 on its corporate campus in Federal Way, Washington to honor Washington State’s Centennial. The Collection was established to symbolize Weyerhaeuser’s long-term commitments to its trading partners, its community, and its forest resources. Over 24 years, the collection grew to number more than 100 bonsai.

In 2014, The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation stepped forward to lead the transition of the Collection to community ownership by forming a nonprofit corporation, organizing start-up financing, creating a Board of Directors and managing day-to-day operations until an executive director came on board. After a celebrated career, David De Groot, curator of the collection for its first 25 years, retired and handed his pruning shears to incoming curator, Aarin Packard.

Major milestones in 2015 included the donation of the Domoto Trident Maple, marking its 100th year in the United States; the Museum’s first major exhibit, Wireless: Cut Loose; and our first bonsai acquisition as a museum — a Sierra Juniper nicknamed Captain Hook by renowned bonsai artist Ryan Neil.

Setting our sights on the future, we are dedicated to being the preeminent bonsai museum in the world. We will honor the traditions of bonsai by pushing the evolution of the art form and actively engage in defining American Bonsai. Look to us for groundbreaking exhibits like Decked-Out: From Scroll to Skateboard, opening April 30, 2016 and much, much more.

We invite you to join us on the journey. You champion Pacific Bonsai Museum’s success.

Thank you!

Kit Severson   Kathy McCabe
Board Chair   Executive Director
Pacific Bonsai Museum Welcomes Curator Aarin Packard

What brought you to Pacific Bonsai Museum?
The Pacific Bonsai Museum is extremely unique. From an institutional standpoint we are the only autonomous bonsai museum in North America. The Museum’s environment and the consistent quality of our bonsai are second to none. Our bonsai collection contains trees from six nations, making it the most geographically diverse in the country. All of this set in a towering grove of firs and hemlocks makes the display feel like an open-air art gallery. I have never seen a bonsai display allow you to simultaneously appreciate nature on such grand and small scales.

What’s your artistic direction for the Museum?
Bonsai is extremely powerful in connecting people with the natural world, bridging generational divides, and inspiring artistic creativity. I’m committed to honoring the traditions of bonsai while being a worldwide trendsetter in advancing the art form in the 21st century.

What are your goals as Curator?
True museums do more than preserve objects, they interpret their collections in creative ways. We aim to interpret and present the museum’s collection through bold and groundbreaking exhibitions that engage longtime admirers as well as attracting new ones. We also strive to maintain our collection at the highest level of quality while expanding it to reflect the current state of the art form with an emphasis on American species created by American artists. This emphasis on artistry will distinguish the Pacific Bonsai Museum as we help to turn bonsai into a genuine American art form.

What can we look forward to next year?
Our 2016 exhibit, Decked-Out: From Scroll to Skateboard, features 16 tokonoma style displays, each with a custom skate deck painted by the most talented northwest graffiti artists. This groundbreaking exhibit combines the ancient beauty of bonsai with the emerging street art movement for the very first time.

Decked-Out aspires to reinterpret the traditional hanging scroll used in bonsai displays with modern skate deck art. Artists will be paired with a bonsai to create a work that combines traditional motifs and modern graffiti styles, as a new interpretation of bonsai display is established.

The concept for Decked-Out has taken nearly four years to become a reality. I am extremely excited to see my vision realized, as my love for bonsai and skateboarding are brought together for the very first time. I am hopeful that this exhibit will further establish the artistic merit of both bonsai and graffiti art within the 21st century.

Aarin Packard served as the Assistant Curator of the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum in Washington D.C. for eight years after receiving his MA in Museum Studies from George Washington University.

EXHIBITS & COLLECTIONS

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EXHIBITS & COLLECTIONS
What is bonsai?
Bonsai is a representation of many things: of the environment from which the tree comes, of the person who styles it, and most importantly, bonsai is an expression of culture.

Why American bonsai?
The concept that bonsai is a reflection of the culture in which it is created came to me at a pivotal point in my first year of building Mirai. I was still fresh off of my apprenticeship in Japan, and I was working hard to apply the techniques I learned in Japan to the American material I had available to me. I was frustrated with the work I was producing. My designs felt forced and rigid; it felt like I wasn't doing justice to the beauty of the American species. I wasn't capturing their natural shapes and the unbridled beauty they possess in the wild. After much reflection, I realized that I was still trying to conform my work to the Japanese bonsai aesthetic. As I teach and lecture both in the United States and abroad, I encourage every culture to look inward and define for themselves - what makes us unique? What is our story? What native material can we work with?

Is bonsai fine art?
The biggest challenge with getting bonsai to be recognized as a fine art is presenting it as such. Bonsai practitioners tend to believe that bonsai is an art form, but do not go the extra mile to actually create art that is bonsai. Just making a tree doesn't make you an artist; there must be intentionality, a thought behind the process, emotion, reflection, and a greater meaning carried within each piece of art a true artist creates. We have to work harder, as any art form does, before it's ever recognized as an art form. We have to explore our boundaries and push the limits.

What's the future of bonsai in America?
I hope bonsai evolves to something beyond “bonsai” and into something identifiable American in form and context. As we continue to evolve and use our natural surroundings as a reference, bonsai has no choice but to transform into an iconically American art form. Someday, I see a moment where our rendition of bonsai is called something else entirely.
WE ENGAGED OUR AUDIENCE LIKE NEVER BEFORE

Last year, there were more ways to interact with Pacific Bonsai Museum than ever. We continued some of our most popular programs such as the monthly Saturday demos and free museum tours every Sunday at 1pm. Staff and volunteers fielded numerous questions from eager visitors. We also launched many new and exciting programs. We held a Kusamono demo with artist Young Choe and a wire bonsai sculpting demo with artist Ken To. We introduced our Third Thursday program where from March through September the museum remains open until 7pm on the Third Thursday of the month. We were thrilled with the response! We also held our first ever "A Bonsai Solstice" in December, inviting guests to enjoy the museum by candlelight and BYOF: Bring Your Own Flashlight. This event was so successful that it has now become an annual tradition!

Our partnerships exceeded expectations this year. In an effort to reach new audiences we partnered with the Seattle Asian Art Museum to bring a bonsai to their collection for one weekend a month. We loved the opportunity to showcase our trees in such an iconic venue. We also collaborated with the Puget Sound Bonsai Association to bring you events such as the Stone Images VI exhibit and the PSBA spring show.

We expanded our social media presence, joining Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, offering visitors a way to connect with us whether from near or afar. We also launched a monthly newsletter which now boasts over 1,000 subscribers. Thank you for making the Pacific Bonsai Museum community such a rich and dynamic place!
July 2014 - June 2015

30,529 Visitors

From 24 countries
And 46 states

Days at Seattle Asian Art Museum 16
Demos & Tours 35
Bonsai on Display 60
Bonsai in Collection 125
3rd Thursday Visitors 296
Volunteer Hours 668

REVENUE

$177,000 Endowment Payout
$4,338 Gifts in-kind & other revenue
$177,000 Foundation Grants
$15,578 Individual Gifts
$47,050 Donated Assets

Total Operating Revenue: $420,966

EXPENSE

$186,249 Collection, Grounds & Facilities
$172,399 Administration
$82,859 Marketing
$50,256 Exhibitions & Education
$29,753 Development

Total Operating Expense: $521,515

NOTE: The Museum also recorded $46,349 in other income from donated land, $225,000 in transfer from reserves and $281,113 in other expense from depreciation, asset disposal and land lease expense. The release from reserves is part of the Museum's plan to allow fundraising to ramp up over time.

144. Bald Cypress (Taxodium distichum)
Artist: Vaughn Banting
Bonsai Since: 1972
Thank you!
July 2014 - June 2015

DONORS

American Bonsai Tool & Supply, Co.
Bonnie Jean and Stephen Anderson
Donald and Rosemary Bennett
Lynne Blackburn
Alan Dahl
Dardas Family
David and Pat De Groot
Douglass Domoto
Marilyn Domoto Webb
Devon and Katherine Elstun
Ruth Fast
Kay Furin
George, Tallis and Gilbert
Doug Herrick
Ikebana International, Chapter 147
Rick Klauber
Chris Koehler
William and Terry Krivan

Nate LeJeune
Ian and Mary Jane MacKay
Victoria and Andrew McDonald
Frances and Peter Meyers
Microsoft
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Anderson Quach
Millie and Craig Russell
San Diego Bonsai Club
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The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation
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Kim Wilkerson
Dawn Yoshimura-Smith

VOLUNTEERS

Dick Benbow
Blanche Bollert
Bill Brouhard
Ron Cascisa
Roger Case
Annette Clark
Elsa Durham
Don Guillams
Jan Hettick

Ann Hobson
Gary Kiyonaga
Bob Laws
Dan Laxdall
Pat Negron
Joel Schwarz
Tim Taylor
Eric Ridgeway
Victrinia Ridgeway

115. Tucker Oak (Quercus john-Tuckeri)
Artist: Sadao Yukimaru
Bonsai Since: 1940