

## THE GSBF CLARK BONSAI COLLECTION IN SHINZEN VISITING MASTER PROGRAM

The Clark Bonsai Collection VISITING MASTER PROGRAM has a two-fold objective: Education and Aesthetic enhancement. These objectives are achieved by inviting Nippon Bonsai Association certified Bonsai Masters, to teach Clark Bonsai Collection staff, interested bonsai practitioners and the general public current professional level bonsai techniques and methodology and to upgrade or restore selected Clark Bonsai Collection holdings to a higher level of aesthetic quality. During its seventeen year history both at the Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture and now at the Clark Bonsai Collection In Shinzen Friendship Gardens the Clark Bonsai Collection has hosted such notable Bonsai Masters as Kenji Miyata, Kathy Shaner, Peter Tea and Ryan Neil, our Professional Advisor and Visiting Master for two years. Our current visiting master is Todd Schlafer from Colorado who came highly recommended by Ryan Neil. The program has been suspended due to necessary safety restrictions because of Covid-19 and the risks associated with airplane travel and gatherings.

Bonsai, and the museums that house, maintain and exhibit them, demand a much more dynamic and labor intensive approach to care, preservation and display than almost any other art form. Bonsai are, after all, living entities that must be furnished with the necessities of life on a daily basis. They require specialized care to assure vibrant health, constant attention to changing form due to their botanical nature and occasional restoration to maintain their aesthetic appeal. In order to meet the necessities of operating a major public bonsai collection the Clark Bonsai Collection employs a small army of experienced, knowledgeable, motivated and talented bonsai practitioners, most of which are volunteers. The VISITING MASTER PROGRAM provides the opportunity for Clark Bonsai Collection Curatorial Team volunteers to attain and maintain the professional skill level needed to meet the demands of caring for a major public bonsai collection.

Bonsai, as living entities, are unique in that they are subject to the laws of nature. They grow and therefor change. In order to maintain their beauty bonsai are subject to continuous adjustment of scale, proportion, line, form and a host of other aesthetic values. Often a particular bonsai will lose its beauty for a variety of reasons. Some mediocre bonsai have the potential to be reformed into masterpieces. The Clark Bonsai Collection, to perhaps a greater degree than most other public bonsai collection, makes use of our VISITING MASTER PROGRAM to upgrade poor or unremarkable holdings to fine examples of contemporary bonsai art and to restore languishing masterpieces to former glory.

The commitment to employ visiting masters allows the Clark Bonsai Collection to continue the relentless march toward excellence that began long ago with Bill and Libby Clark .

