

The Tree Shrinker

East Bay Bonsai Society • Dec 4, 2025

Highlights

Holiday Party, President's Message, Survey, Soil Update, November Meeting

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Holiday Party Details

What a great year 2025 has been! To celebrate our community and our successes as a club, our final meeting of the year will be a holiday dinner where we get to share and remember events of the past year. A committee of members has been cooking up a special slideshow of our year in review. **We will begin the festivities at 6:30 pm on December 10th** with beverages and appetizers. Note that we start one hour earlier than usual. Doors will open at 6pm — we could use help in setting up!.

The club will provide ham, chicken and non-alcoholic beverages. EBBS has purchased a permit for beer and wine for this event and members are free to bring their own to enjoy.

The rest is provided by attendees as follows:

Last name A-F	Side dish
Last name G-L	Appetizer
Last name M-R	Salad
Last name S-Z	Desert

The appetizer-people should plan to arrive early so food is available at the beginning of the evening. Please supply an appropriate serving utensil for the dish you are furnishing. Also, be sure to bring your own plate, utensils, and glasses. A decorative place mat would make a festive setting for the meal. People are also encouraged to bring a small bonsai decorated for the holiday season as table center pieces. This greatly adds to the ambiance of the evening.



President's Message

Thank you everyone for an amazing 2025! I have been consistently floored by how this club comes together to support each other and how community driven we are. A big focus for the board this year was to respond to our 2024 survey feedback and try to bring targeted improvements to the club experience that aligned with member expectations.

This led to decisions like implementing a pre meeting workshop to help folks get more hands-on experience, as well as targeting specific species discussions for monthly meetings. Thanks as well to everyone who made our field trips and engaging presentations possible.

I wanted to give a special shoutout to everyone involved in our annual show, especially our Vice President, Michael Szabo. I felt our show truly took a leap forward this year and was the best it's ever been. We crushed it in many metrics like number of trees displayed, quality of trees displayed, and engagement from both club and the general public. Michael had multiple new ideas that really made this a richer experience for all.

We're looking to keep the momentum going into 2026, please fill out our annual survey and share any ideas you have for making the club a better place to foster the growth of bonsai and the growth of our members.

I want to continue to balance the social aspects of the club while also making sure folks have the ability to utilize the club to advance their bonsai practice.

Bulk Soil Purchase Update

The soil shipment has been delayed until mid January, so we have not yet sent out a form to collect bulk soil purchase requirements. For those unaware, we usually do a bulk purchase at wholesale price of soil products from Bonsai Tonight to provide lower cost soil to members. We still plan to do this for 2026, but it will likely be distributed in early February. Sorry for the delay!

Eric Schrader Cedar Presentation

Eric Schrader returned once more to give us an interesting presentation on cedars. He emphasized that he was referring to the true cedars (Cedrus) as many unrelated trees including:



Calocedrus, Thuja and Chamaecyparis or 'false cedars' share common parlance.

The taxonomy is still evolving but there are generally four Cedrus Species.

Cedrus deodara from the western Himalayas is rarely used for bonsai but is commonly used as rootstock for grafting of the other species.

Mediterranean Cedars include:

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Cedrus Atlantica from the Atlas Mountains of Morocco and Algeria
Cedrus Libani with variants C. Libani (Lebanon Cedar found in Lebanon and Syria), and C. Stenocoma (Turkey)
Cedrus Brevifolia (Cyprus Cedar)
Because they are so similar to each other, hybrids are notoriously difficult to identify.

The popular C. Atlantica Glauca (Blue Atlas Cedar) cultivar has short blue needles and is often used in many styles, including cascade style. Unfortunately, seedlings generally turn out a paler blue green color. Thus, this and most interesting dwarf or small needle cultivars are grafted.

The grafts are often ugly, thus most bonsai with these end up being larger trees, where the bad graft is less noticeable.

Eric has grown plenty of small-needled cedars from seed, skipping the ugly nebari, and taking time to get very proximal movement and some beginning root work. These are ideal for smaller (shohin/mame) bonsai. He has also grown some of these up into larger specimens and he performed the initial styling on one. They don't back-bud very well, so he cautioned cutting off any interior buds that are present. They are vigorous and tend to develop reverse taper at junctions unless you stay on top of them. 'Cut back to two.'

He worked on a seedling green atlas cedar from Cedar Rose Nursery. It had some root work done, then was

ground grown for a few years before being put into an Anderson flat.

He cut off the 'sacrifice branch top'. He noted that cedars in nature tend to be tall and straight with a flattish top. He has tried to create very flat tops but they 'don't actually look good'. He settled on going for a more classical 'bonsai shape'.

He removed many larger branches that were contributing to reverse taper and wired smaller more pliable branches. Cedars are springy and can require wiring until 'just before the wire cuts in', then taking the wire off and re-wiring, often on a repeated basis. He sees a couple of flushes per year but lets the shoots run on younger stock. He usually has a sacrifice branch but saves plenty of shorter proximal branches to cut back to.

Cedars are naturally from the coastal mountains around the Mediterranean, and grow quite happily in our mediterranean climate, both on the coast and in the hot drier valley.

Appropriate watering is important, as cedars are susceptible to root rot if too wet, and they can pout if too dry. Although many can grow happily in hot dry mediterranean climates, in a bonsai pot they seem to thrive with more water. Use well-draining bonsai soil and water well.

Cedars are fairly pest free when healthy, but can get aphids, scale, spider mites and various fungal diseases.

The winner of the demo tree was Jason Coon!

Eric has cedars available on his website, bonsaify.com and you can see his demos on YouTube. I picked up a stubby small C Brevifolia with a great proximal bend. In my opinion, with its short dark green needles and good growth, it is the best for a general starter. Don't hesitate to take Advantage.

Cedars can come in many styles. Most commonly, large straight trunk nursery stock require the 'broken top' method (a la redwoods), Cascades are often seen with 'glauca' varieties. Informal upright are great if you get a tree with some trunk movement. Shohin are uncommon, as the small needle varieties are almost always grafted, but this is now a great area for exploration.

-Written by Michael Jensen Akula

Mark your calendar!

List of upcoming events and meetings.

Event	How to participate	Contact
1/14/2026	Repotting Party - Bring a small tree and supplies to repot! Soil will be available for purchase.	barcalod@gmail.com
2/11/2026	Leslie Buck - She will be presenting on her landscape gardening apprenticeship experience in Japan.	barcalod@gmail.com