



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

East Bay Bonsai Society

Holiday Celebration: December 12, 2012 @ 6:30 p.m.

President's Note

I was feeling smug on this cold drizzly day in late November because there was nothing to do in my bonsai world. I called Bob Gould who reported how busy he was wiring his azaleas. An old saying of John Boyce echoed between my ears: "good bonsai only results from hard work." At my level, bonsai work is not instinctive. Then I remembered a great guide that I possessed: *The EBBS's Calendar for Bonsai Care*. This \$5 gem is a must have for any bonsai artist at my level. This monthly guide was developed by Bob Callaham in 1997 with an EBBS committee and revised in 2002. Its purpose was to provide monthly bonsai reminders of what the masters have taught us, tailored to the San Francisco Bay Area. It also included recipes for various bonsai soil mixtures, a fertilizing schedule, grafting directions and more. Only the disease control section needs updating as various EPA restrictions have been enforced. If your bonsai skill level is below a master, get this calendar! Tom Colby will provide you with a copy at our monthly meetings.

Tom Colby is the perfect lead into the other half of this note. Since Bob Callaham's retirement as editor of the newsletter, Tom has proven his status as a pillar of EBBS. Very talented in a multifaceted way, Tom has been everyone's right hand man. I have especially benefited from his clear commentaries at our board meetings reflecting the calmness of experience. All of us have enjoyed his clear, concise articles in the newsletter. However, the best bonsai artist will give praise as their trees have been shown on a Tom Colby crafted table. Tom and his wife, June, have served EBBS for decades as club librarians, but I have benefited from his calm, dependable leadership greatly over these past two years and am grateful for his help. Hats off to you, Tom!

November Meeting

Juniper Jubilee

The first annual Juniper Jubilee celebrating the often under rated juniper was a great success. The *show and tell* table featured many examples of junipers. Bob Gould gave a fine presentation on the care and feeding of the trees. The small junipers used in Bob's presentation were raffled, and the evening closed with a workshop on the raffled trees.

The Japanese term, shimpaku, refers to junipers in general. But when used in the United States, we are usually referring to Kishu and Itoigawa junipers which are native to Japan. These junipers are considered choice subjects for bonsai. Many of the superb Japanese shimpaku bonsai pictured in books are, in fact, collected trees and have very much the look of our collected California Junipers, with lots of spectacular dead wood. These collected trees are often from Shikoku Island.

Kishu and Itoigawa shimpaku have finer foliage than our common juniper, and, incidentally, are available in local California bonsai nurseries.



Needle junipers can have prickly needles which makes working on them a distinct pain. In contrast, shimpaku have soft, scale foliage. Shimpaku have flexible branches which allows for a wide range of styling options. What also endears shimpaku to bonsai artists is their simple care. All they want is heat, good water and fertilizer. In Japan, the preferred soil composition is equal parts akadama, coarse sand and pumice. But, soil requirements are modest, and any well drained soil serves the plants well.

Shimpaku grow by sending out long shoots which become branches. These long shoots need to be dealt with in order to maintain compact foliage pads on the bonsai tree. There are two approaches to styling junipers, pinching and cutting with scissors.

Pinching was the primary method used in the past, and involves pulling off the ends of all the foliage to create a dense pad. It has the advantage of being fast, but the disadvantage of constantly pinching is

weakening the tree, causing the ends of the branches to die back. A newer, more conservative approach involves just pinching the ends of the growing branches.

Cutting with scissors is a method also advocated by the current teachers trained in Japan, and generally involves allowing the branch to grow, and then cutting the branch back significantly. There is less die back with this method and a greater chance of getting more new growth inside the tree. This also helps create taper in the branches. Since cutting with scissors means that larger pieces of your tree are removed, it is usually done a bit more thoughtfully, whereas pinching can easily go too far.

Bob showed two of his own junipers, one of which was styled by pinching and the other one was cut with scissors. Both were magnificent bonsai indicating that both methods can work well in the hands of a careful artist. However you trim your junipers it is best done in a period of active growth in the summer or early fall when there is time for the plant to recover with vigorous growth.

Most junipers have short branches growing close to the trunk. These branches are weak and will die off in time. These branches can be removed when you are trimming your Junipers.

EBBS had purchased five small Junipers which Bob used to show different styling opportunities presented by the trees. These were then placed in the raffle. After the raffle, Bob and other club members worked with those who had won one of the little trees in an informal workshop, showing in detail what could be done with each tree.

Over the years we have had a very large number of demonstrators from the outside bonsai community which could lead to the thought that our demonstrator has to be from outside of EBBS to be any good. Bob's presentation at the Juniper Jubilee should clearly put this thought to rest. His presentation demonstrated beyond a doubt the EBBS has plenty of fine talent within its ranks.

GSBF Convention

Bob gave a brief overview of the recent Golden State Bonsai Federation convention in Sacramento. The convention lasted for four days and included many well attended workshops.

For the first time at the convention there was a judged bonsai exhibit. There were a modest number of entrants, but the trees were spectacular! There was also a second exhibit of native California trees. This show featured the expected Sierra and California Junipers, but also included other trees such as oaks, Mendocino cypress, and California nutmeg. EBBS members contributed about eight trees to this exceptional exhibit.

Bob said that the convention was well worth attending. The GSBF conventions alternate locations between northern and southern California. When it returns to our area in two years, we should all make an effort to participate.

December Meeting

The December meeting is our traditional holiday season celebration with a potluck dinner. Do plan to come and be part of the festive occasion. Set-up starts at 6:00 pm, and we begin the festivities at 6:30 pm with appetizers and beverages. Note that we start one hour earlier than usual.



The club will furnish ham and turkey as well as beverages. The rest is provided by club members as follows:

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

Be sure to bring your own plate, eating utensils and place mats to make a decorative setting for the meal. Also bring appropriate serving utensils for the dish you bring, if required. In past years the dinners have been memorable due to offerings of the many fine cooks in the club.

People are also encouraged to bring bonsai trees decorated for the season as centerpieces, which greatly adds to the ambiance.

A special highlight of the evening will be a slideshow of pictures from our October show, photographed by Rick Trumm. The trees in the show were spectacular, and revisiting them will provide a fine cap to the holiday festivities.

January Meeting

The January meeting will feature a presentation by Jay MacDonald on deciduous trees. Those of you who have seen past presentations by Jay know that the evening will be special. Jay is a dynamic speaker and his program will be great start to the new year.

Dues

It is that time of the year that you need to be thinking about paying your annual club dues which are \$30 for single memberships and \$40 for couples. Membership includes a subscription to the Tree Shrinker newsletter by email. If you prefer to receive a hard copy of the newsletter by snail mail, there is an additional \$5 charge.

The dues are the major source of income for the club and are mainly used to fund our biggest expenses of the year, which are the costs of the meeting room rent and the monthly programs. Our treasurer, Pat Cahill, will

be delighted to take your check for dues at the holiday dinner or at an upcoming meeting. Dues can also be mailed to: EBBS Treasurer, 4933 Cochrane, Oakland, CA, 94618-2701.

EBBS Board

EBBS is governed by a Board which is made up of the club officers and several directors, all of whom are elected by you. The Board is responsible for the business affairs of the society which includes scheduling the upcoming meetings, handling the finances, reserving the room for the meetings, setting policies of the society and interacting with the outside community.

The behind-the-scenes work of the Board allows the regular meetings to be devoted to the study of the fine art of bonsai and fellowship with like-minded bonsai enthusiasts, rather than the business details of the club.

At the November club meeting, elections were held for three vacancies on the Board. Michael Hylton was welcomed as a new director. Inge Woefel was elected to another term as a director. Linda Soliven became the vice president for the coming year.

Linda was particularly welcomed because the office of vice president has been vacant for several years. Traditionally the vice president manages the annual show and, with no vice president, the Board has managed the show under the guidance of our president, John Nackley.

Remaining officers are John Nackley as president, Pat Cahill as treasurer, Janice Dilbeck as secretary and Jim Blanton as past president. Continuing directors are Tom Colby and Bob Gould.

The club would like to thank Dennis Hawkins as outgoing director for his service to the society.

All members are welcome to the Board meetings although only Board members are allowed to vote on issues under consideration. Each member should consider placing their names in nomination for Board positions in the future since this would allow a direct voice in the affairs and direction of the society.

Bonsai in China

Most of the activity on bonsai in the United States is focused on Japanese esthetics. When we visit a bonsai show, it is easy to overlook the fact that the art of bonsai is admired in much of Asia, and particularly in China, and that the esthetics there might be a bit different than those of Japan. As a matter of fact, the art of bonsai originated in China and was brought to Japan along with Buddhism at about the year 750 of the Common Era.

With the very long histories of an art form in the two areas, it is not surprising that the esthetics in the two countries have somewhat diverged. The Japanese view is that a bonsai is an ideal form of what a tree should look like. Every branch is perfectly placed and every imperfect leaf is removed. The result is a tree that is more perfect than is to be found in nature.

The Chinese take the view that the bonsai is a model of trees actually found in nature. Any tree in nature grows somewhat at random and is subject to insect attack and broken branches. The result is a less than perfect tree. Many Chinese bonsai appear to have a more casual form than the sleekly elegant Japanese bonsai.

The quality of each tree in both Japan and China really depends on how well the tree reflects the particular esthetic goals of that country.

One of the very popular styles of trees admired by the Chinese is one or more Junipers mounted on a thin spire of rock. This style is related to the root over rock style that we are familiar with, but is distinctly different in form. The source of this style may well rest in a style of classical brush painting that was popular in China for hundreds of years.

About 100 miles south west of Shanghai is a group of spectacular mountains collectively labeled as Huang Shan. The mountains have many steep rock faces and very deep gorges. There are small pine trees growing in cracks in the rock. The pine trees are endemic to the area and have a characteristic shape with very broad branches and relatively flat tops. They resemble in form our Monterey Cypress, although the two trees are in no way related.

Chinese artists for the last thousand years have considered these rock faces with their pine trees as a quintessential statement of what nature is all about. Because of the high regard the Chinese have had for nature, these cliffs have been very frequently featured in landscape paintings for hundreds of years.

Just as nature is a focus of Chinese classical painting, a bonsai tree is also a statement about nature. Because of the common basis on nature, it is easy to see how the bonsai on the rock spires could be a reflection of the subjects of the brush paintings. We talk about the art of bonsai and it truly is an art form in Japan, but is focused on the composition of the tree, pot and stand. In the case of the Chinese tree on the rock spires, the art is based on not only the tree, but also the very old art of brush painting.

Nature is also a frequent theme in Japanese art, but often focuses more on the feeling of a particular scene. For example, a heron standing in dry grasses under a cloudy sky under a pale moon partially covered by clouds connotes the feeling of a winter scene.

It is difficult to see a direct carryover of Japanese classical art to Japanese bonsai, but the emphasis of feeling in classical art does have a direct, although subtle, influence on Japanese bonsai. For example, we want our trees to give the feeling of great age. Perhaps there is more of a tie in between classical art and bonsai in Japan than we might suspect.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

The workshop at Merritt College will not be held in December because the college is not in session, but will resume in January. The workshops are available to all EBBS members and are one of the best deals in town. These workshops are an opportunity to work on your

own trees under the guidance of fine teachers and are open to all experience levels. Leading the workshops are two distinguished artists who are also members of EBBS, Bill Castelon and Randall Lee. The meetings are every fourth Monday of the month except when the college is not in session. Meetings start at 7:00 pm at the Landscape Horticulture building. The college is located off Redwood Road in the Oakland hills. Questions? Contact Bill at 510-569-8003 or Randall at 510-864-0841.

Newsletter Articles

The newsletter is the voice of the club and that means that it is your voice. Articles on any aspect of bonsai from members as well as from outside the membership are enthusiastically welcomed. If you have something that you would like to share with the rest of us, jot it down and send it to our editor, Janice Dilbeck, who reserves the right to gently edit your offering. When your article appears in the newsletter you can then tell all your friends that you are a published author.

Events by Others

GSBF's Bonsai and Suiseki Garden: open Wed., Thurs., Fri. 11:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m., Sat. 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Sun. 12:00 noon–4:00 p.m. Enter at gate across from Boat House.

January 14 – 17, 2013: Fresno: "Bonsai in Winter Silhouette Displayed with Contemporary Art" - Thirteen displays by the Fresno City College Art Department and the Fresno Bonsai Society will be

presented at the Art Space Gallery located on the Fresno City College Campus, 1101 East University Drive. The Gallery will be open from 10 AM until 4 PM, Monday and Tuesday and 10 AM until 7 PM Wednesday and Thursday, with reception from 5 – 8 PM on Thursday. Admission is free. Contact Steve DaSilva at treekutter@hotmail.com for details.

January 19-20: Oakland: Bay Island Bonsai: Annual Bonsai Exhibit. Oakland Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave. Auction on Saturday, with preview at Noon and auction at 1 PM. Bonsai demonstration by Boon on Sunday at 1PM. Guided tours of the exhibit both Saturday and Sunday. Vendor sales, Club sales, Educational bonsai material for sale. Hours: 10AM – 4PM Saturday and Sunday. Entry to exhibit is free, donations accepted. For more information: (510) 919-5042 or www.bayislandbonsai.com

Articles or Services for Sale (or give-away)

Wanted to Buy (or for free)

SOMETHING you need or want? Call or write to place an ad.

Each membership household, free of charge, may place a five-line ad related to bonsai in two newsletters each year. Send a copy of ads to your editor by the fourth Monday of the month to appear in the next publication. To place an add call (925) 458-3845.

East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2012 - 2013

Regular Meetings: Second Wednesday, every month (except August and October) @ 7:30 p.m.

Place: Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland.

Visitors welcome—for more information: call: (925) 431-0452

Visit EBBS' web site: <http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>.

Website for Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt: <http://www.gsbf-bonsai.org/lake-merritt/NewHome.html>

Meeting Program

Dec	12	Holiday Dinner
Jan	9	Deciduous Trees – Jay MacDonald
Jan	27	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – JD Lin
Feb	13	Selecting Pots for Trees – Valerie Monroe
Mar	13	War of the Bonsai Chefs – Tim Kong
Mar	24	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
Apr	10	tbd
Apr	28	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
May	8	tbd
May	26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Jun	12	tbd
Jun	23	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould
Jul	10	Auction
Jul	28	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Dennis Hawkins
Aug		Potluck picnic – details tbd
Aug	25	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – JD Lin
Sep	11	tbd
Sep	22	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
Oct	9	No club meeting due to proximity to show
Oct	27	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
Nov	13	tbd
Nov	24	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Dec	11	Holiday Dinner

Special Event

Oct 12-13 Fall Show
