



The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXX, No. 2

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

East Bay Bonsai Society Next Meeting: February 8, 2012, 7:30PM

Opinion Poll

The board of directors wants to be sure that the programs presented in the meetings are in line with the needs and expectations of the members. Toward this end the board is polling the members' desires by means of a questionnaire which was presented at the January meeting. The board appreciates the efforts of those members who took the time to fill out the questionnaire. Your voice will be heard. There is a copy of the questionnaire attached to this newsletter and if you have not already expressed your opinions, please do so. Submit your responses either by mail to Pat Cahill along with your dues or at the next regular meeting. Please respond by February 15. The results of the poll will be presented in a future newsletter.

Dues

It is that time of the year when dues for 2012 are payable. They are very important to the continued operation of the club because they help to fund our biggest expenses, meeting room rent and the monthly programs. If you have inadvertently neglected to pay please do so in order to be included in the 2012 roster. Pat Cahill, our treasurer, will still be delighted to take your check at the next meeting or you may pay by mail to EBBS Treasurer at 4933 Cochrane, Oakland, CA, 94618-2701. Dues are \$30 for single memberships and \$40 for couples.

January Meeting

Candice Key and Chris Ross presented a program on Camellias which was the second program in a series of three featuring underused material for bonsai. The format of the meeting was a bit different in that the presenters did not represent themselves as experts but rather served as discussion leaders. They stated at the outset that Camellias are a joy to have in your bonsai collection and should be seen in every show. Camellias present several challenges in becoming classical bonsai but the sight of a Camellia in full bloom more than makes up for the challenges.

Camellias are not often seen in shows in the United States nor are they often seen in shows in Japan for that matter. It is interesting to note, however, that one of the winners two years ago at one of the most important shows in Japan, the Kokufu-ten, was a magnificent Camellia.

There are many hybrids of Camellias on the market representing a very wide variety of choices of flower sizes, flower types, leaf sizes and growth habit. The

best choices for bonsai material are the hybrids with both small leaf size and small flower size as well as restrained growth habit. Many of the sasanqua hybrids fall in this category. Flower shapes range from tubular to single to double with many shapes in between. Flower colors range from white to dark red with many intermediate colors. Camellias bloom from late fall to early spring. Each cultivar has a specific time for blooming but this time can vary a bit depending on the climatic conditions for each particular year.

The biggest challenge for growing Camellias as bonsai is that those features that are most desirable for bonsai, small flowers and restrained growth habits, also include very slow growth. Development of a Camellia for bonsai is at best a five year plan. Photographing your plants periodically allows you to see progress in the trees journey to becoming a fine bonsai. Camellias do not quickly form thick trunks which are usually an important indicator of age in a bonsai tree. Camellias are best suited as informal upright style.

Mature wood is very difficult if not impossible to bend so any curves in branches or trunks which are an important aspect of the informal upright style must be done when the branches are very young. Cutting major branches is a problem since cut wounds do not readily heal over. The bark is very tender and can wire scar very easily so wire must be constantly checked to prevent scarring. Spring is the best time to wire because later in the year the young branches harden off and become much harder to bend. The combined difficulty of bending mature branches, failure of large cuts to heal over and the ready scarring by wire indicate that training of Camellia bonsai is best started with very young plants.

Camellias grow best with some protection from hot sun. They need to be well watered and enjoy a small amount of peat moss in the potting soil which both helps to maintain a moist condition and to slightly acidify the soil. Fertilization requirements are modest and may be accommodated by application of cotton seed meal or fish emulsion every three months. Heavier feeding can result in rank growth and minimal or complete failure of flowering. Limited experience suggests that defoliation to improve ramification may lead to the defoliated branch dying. The presenters speculated that planting their Camellia bonsai trees in the ground for a period will allow the trunks to fatten up faster than in a bonsai pot and further would improve back budding to give denser

trees. EBBS would like to hear from them in the future to see how well this has worked out.

The yearly care cycle is centered on the blooming period. The best time for both heavy pruning and repotting is right after the blooms fade. Later in the spring the tree may be wired. In the summer the branches harden off. During the year wiring should be frequently inspected to ensure that the wire is not scarring the tree branches. Fall should see the emergence of flower buds. Minor pruning of the foliage can be done at this time to improve the presentation of the flowers. If the bloom is heavy some of the buds should be removed for better health of the plant as well as better display of the remaining flowers.

Refreshments

Members who are willing to provide refreshments at future meetings commit their intentions through a sign-up sheet. No one signed up for the January meeting so a call for help was given in the December newsletter. Many thanks are due to those who heeded the call. The January refreshment table was abundant, delectable and enjoyed by all. There are usually three people who are willing to provide refreshments. In the future if there are less than three people signed up, a call for help will be noted in the newsletter.

February Meeting

Craig Thompson from the Marin club will present a program on tropical trees as bonsai which is the third and final demonstration in our series of plants that are not commonly seen as bonsai. One of the frequent questions that beginners ask is whether you can grow bonsai indoors. The answer is that bonsai can and should be taken inside the house to enjoy their beauty particularly if they are in bloom or in fall color, but only for a few days at best. The tropical trees are the exception to this rule and can be enjoyed year around in the house. Craig will inspire us about the joys and challenges of growing tropical bonsai.

Thanks in advance to John Nackley, Karen Nackley and Gaylen Roberts who have offered to provide refreshments.

Prior to the meeting, we'll have dinner at 6:00 with Craig at Ta-Ke Sushi. The address is 357 Grand Avenue in Oakland. If you'd like to join us at this non-hosted dinner, rsvp with Tom Colby at 510-483-0858 or thcolby165@comcast.net.

Peter Tea

A couple of years ago EBBS was fortunate to have Peter Tea as a demonstrator on two different evenings. At the time Peter was considered to be a rising star in the bonsai world. He has since moved to Japan to serve a five year apprenticeship with a bonsai master and at the conclusion of his apprenticeship he will be awarded a certificate from the national bonsai organization of Japan acknowledging him as a bonsai master. Peter documents his experiences every few days on his web site which is www.peterteabonsai.wordpress.com. His postings include pictures of fabulous trees, some of which he has worked on, his life as an apprentice in Japan, pictures of fine old pots and many other items of

interest. The articles on the website provide a glimpse into the Japanese world of bonsai that we seldom get to see and are very much worth your while to investigate if you are not already a Peter Tea follower.

Bonsai soil

In one of the worlds' great epic poems Homer recounts the return of veterans of the Trojan War to Greece. They faced many adventures including sailing through a narrow body of water which had cliffs on each side. On the cliffs were lovely young ladies whose job was to lure with their good looks and sweet singing unaware sailors to their death on the rocks below the cliffs. Bonsai growers also face a similar problem in navigating between two disasters and it involves maintaining a proper moisture level for their trees. If the trees are allowed to become bone dry, death rapidly ensues. If the trees are allowed to become soggy wet, death comes slowly but inevitably due to root rot so the potting soil must be free draining to prevent accumulation of water in the pot. Since the soil is free draining it will dry out quickly which means the tree must be watered frequently. These considerations dictate that the right amount of moisture in the pot must be maintained at all times is the result of a combination of soil composition and frequency of watering.

The choice of the best soil for bonsai is complicated by the fact that there seems to be as many theories of what is the best soil as there are bonsai growers. One local expert uses a soil composed of one third each of pumice, lava and akadama, with more akadama in the soil for deciduous trees. (Akadama is an expensive Japanese clay product.) Another local expert advocates a very different soil which is a mixture of aquarium gravel and lava and about 20% organic material composed of equal amounts of fir bark and Super Soil. The organic component is increased to as much as 40% when the soil is used for broad leaved trees.

Various books on bonsai culture offer yet many more different soil compositions and many of these recommendations use materials which are either unavailable or are hard to decipher just what is meant. As an example, one Japanese book suggests a soil which is 20% sand or river gravel (size?), 60% clay soil (akadama?) and 10% sieved black loam (?).

The long list of possible soil compositions is topped off by a Japanese master who is reputed to have bins of soil components and when repotting his trees prepares soil for each individual tree by adding a shovel full of this and a handful of that, depending on what the tree tells him that it needs. It would be great if our plants talked to us. This method of soil preparation indicates that each one of his trees is potted with a slightly different soil composition. And, by the way, he grows some of the finest trees in existence.

So what does one make of all this? The one common denominator is that all of these soils is that they are rapid draining. To achieve this, the inorganic components should be screened so fines are removed and coarse particles (greater than ¼ inch) also removed by screening. Returning to the two compositions recommended by the local experts the apparent

difference in actual application of the two soils is not great. The soil using 20% organic material is less costly to prepare than the one using akadama and the organic material probably dries out somewhat more slowly which is an advantage in areas experiencing high heat in the summer. A disadvantage of the presence of organic material is that decomposition over time may form fine material which can not only increase the water retention capability of the soil but may plug the drainage screens in the bottom of the pot.

The apparent conclusion of all this is that there is no really best choice of soil. They all work well. However, since different soils dry out at different rates, adjusting the frequency of watering to the particular composition you use is critical. As you probably have noticed at the recent bonsai shows, superb trees can be grown in both of the local soil compositions as well as many others underlining the assertion that there is no best soil for bonsai.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

The only way you can become truly an expert as a series of workshops available to all EBBS members. Training is available at the Merritt College Bonsai Club which is open to all experience levels from beginner to bonsai grower is by actually working on your own trees in a workshop setting. Fortunately there is a continuing advanced and is an opportunity which we all should take advantage.

Leading the workshops are two distinguished artists who are members of EBBS, Bill Castelon and Randall Lee. The meetings are on every 4th Monday except when the college is not in session. Meetings start at 7:00pm at the Landscape Horticulture Building. The college is located off Redwood Road in the Oakland Hills. Members who have questions about the workshops can contact Bill at 510-569-8003 or Randall at 510-864-0841.

The Newsletter

The newsletter is really the voice of the society, that is to say, your voice. If you would like to be heard on any subject, please feel free to write an article for the newsletter. Our editorial board reserves the right to gently edit your copy but beyond that your contribution is most welcome. The January newsletter featured a splendid article on winter care of bonsai that was submitted by Don Meeker who is not a club member. Watch for more of his fine articles in future newsletters. The publishers of the newsletter will continue to solicit articles from outside the club. The newsletter now is the combined efforts of a reporter, an editor/publisher and a distributor. If you would like to be part of the team, let our president John Nackley know. It is a lot of fun and you would be most welcome.

Newsletters and Rosters by E-mail

For each member, annual costs to produce and deliver monthly newsletters and a roster average approximately \$7. To save that cost, 21 members have notified your editor that they will accept their newsletters and rosters via e-mail. If you want to receive newsletters via e-mail, notify janicedilbeck@comcast.net.

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.

February 3-5. Santa Nella, California. California Shohin Seminar 2012 at the Hotel del Oro. Registration forms and information will be available starting October 30, 2011. Visit the website at www.calshohin.org or email calshohin@yahoo.com.

February 25-26. Oakland, California GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt: Mammoth Fundraiser, 2012 at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue. On Saturday an auction of fabulous bonsai will be from 1-4PM, with preview at 12Noon. Sunday hours are from 9AM-4PM and will feature demonstrations by Collection Curator, Kathy Shaner and Team, many vendors, a large consignment sale of bonsai and bonsai related items and several raffle drawings throughout the day. For general information email www.bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com, visit www.gsbfbonsai.org/lake-merritt/NewHome.htm or phone Randi Keppeler 650-598-0127

February 25-26. San Marino, California GSBF Bonsai-A-Thon XVI at The Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Road. This is the annual fundraiser for the GSBF Collection at The Huntington. Admission to the event and to the Huntington Gardens is free with Bonsai-A-Thon "Early Bird" Registration. Hours are 7:30AM-4:30PM, both days. A pancake breakfast, a tour hosted by Jim Folsom (Director of the Garden), demonstrations, lunch, bonsai exhibits, large sales area, raffle, and an auction will all be featured. For more information contact Marge Blasingame, 626-579-0420 or margeblasingame@att.net.

March 24-25. Scotts Valley, CA Santa Cruz Bonsai Kai: 24th Annual Bonsai Exhibit and Show at the Scotts Valley Community Center, 360 Kings Village Road from 10:30 AM - 4:30 PM both days. Demonstration by Mr. Katsumi Kinoshita will be at 2:00 PM each day. Plant sales and door prizes each day as well as raffle of demonstration trees and member prepared, well established bonsai material. For more information call 877-610-9038 or e-mail dakine45@comcast.net

March 31-April 1. Sacramento, California Bonsai Sekiyu Kai of Sacramento: 35th Annual Bonsai Show at the Sacramento Betsuin Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Hours are: Saturday, 12-Noon - 5:00 PM, and Sunday, 10AM - 3:45PM. Demonstrations at 2PM, both days, by Bonsai Master Johnnie Uchida. Amenities include refreshments, light snacks, door prizes, raffles and a Silent Auction. Plant and bonsai tool sales also will be available. For more information contact Dareld Binns, dwbphoto9op@yahoo.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. Members wanting to place either larger or frequent ads should contact the editor. 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

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
Feb 8	Craig Thompson on Tropicals
Mar 14	Fun with Tim
Mar 25	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai
Apr 11	Rick Garcia demonstration on Satsuki
Apr 22	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai
May 9	Bill Castellon – details tbd
May 27	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai
Jun 13	Frolic in the Garden
Jun 26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai
Jul 11	Auction
Jul 22	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai
Aug	Potluck – details tbd
Aug 26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai
Sep 12	Preparing trees for the show – details tbd
Sep 23	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai
Oct 10	No club meeting due to proximity to show
Oct 28	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai
Nov 14	tbd
Nov 25	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai
Dec 12	Holiday Dinner

Special Event

Oct 12-13 Fall Show, John Thompson, featured artist

Dues:

If you will not attend a meeting, or just wish to mail your dues for 2012, make your check for \$30/yr. for an individual or \$40/yr. for a household and mail it with this form to:

Pat Cahill, 4933 Cochrane Ave., Oakland, CA 94618-2701

Name(s): _____

Address: _____ Zip: 94 _____

Telephone: (____) _____ E-mail address: _____

Receive newsletter by e-mail? _____ OK to include e-mail address in club roster? _____

Opinion Poll

Your Board of Directors would like to have your opinion about meeting formats and subjects that are of the most interest to you. Please take a minute to answer the questions below and let them know your wants and desires. Let your voice be heard!

1. Please rank the items below in order of interest with #1 being of most interest to you, and #5 being of least interest to you.

- _____ A demonstration by a noted bonsai artist on care and styling of a particular kind of tree
- _____ A lecture/demonstration on a related bonsai subject such as pots, repotting techniques, and accent plants, etc.
- _____ Work on my tree and get help from more experienced members
- _____ Have less formal meetings and more workshop meetings where members work on their trees and exchange ideas
- _____ Have focused workshops, for example, a short lecture demonstration on pine trees followed by a workshop in which you work on your own pine tree

2. Subjects of presentations that I would particularly like:

Subjects of presentations that I do not like:

3. About how many meetings did you attend in 2011?

_____ Less than 3 _____ 4-7 _____ 8-11

Reasons for missing meetings (mark all that apply):

- _____ Not interested in the topic of the presentation
- _____ Didn't have transportation
- _____ Don't like to drive at night
- _____ Had a schedule conflict
- _____ Other _____

4. How many years have you been a member of East Bay Bonsai Society? _____

5. The Board of Directors wants the club meetings to be welcoming to new members while retaining the interest of experienced members. What are your ideas about how this might be accomplished?
