



The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXX, No. 6

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

East Bay Bonsai Society Next Meeting: June 13, 2012, 7:00PM
At the Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt

President's Note

The East Bay Bonsai Society and the Northern California bonsai community suffered a major loss with the death of Ruben Guzman in November 2011. EBBS would like to recognize Ruben for his significant contribution to the art of bonsai by dedicating a pedestal in the Northern California Bonsai Collection at Lake Merritt in Oakland. The dedication of a pedestal in the garden is \$2500, which exceeds EBBS's financial ability. So the EBBS Board is requesting donations from individuals and the various bonsai clubs who wish to honor Ruben's contributions. Lucky Fung had donated \$100 to the Garden in Ruben's memory which will be the seed money for pedestal.

Ruben Guzman (1929 -2011) had talents that spanned many careers until his short struggle with cancer. During his military career in Hawaii he met his wife, Kay. He obtained his Master of Pharmacology degree and worked for Cutter Lab, subsequently Bayer, until his early retirement. He subsequently became a high school teacher, a financial consultant, and fortunately for us, a bonsai artist.

In the 70's he purchased his first bonsai from a fellow Chrysanthemum club member, and quickly made bonsai art his passion. As a student of John Naka, he and Kay traveled with John on a bonsai tour of Japan. He was also an early student of Kathy Shaner. His scientific inclinations led him to develop the "Ruben soil" mixture designed for the hard waters and dry climate of inner California. He loved to share his knowledge and became a frequent speaker at many bonsai groups in Northern California, lecturing about satsuki azaleas and black pines.

He served as officer on several boards of bonsai associations in the Bay Area, including the Bay Area Satsuki Association, the Bay Area Bonsai Associates, and the East Bay Bonsai Society. Trees of Ruben Guzman are now displayed in the Weyerhaeuser Bonsai Collection in Seattle and in the Golden Sate Bonsai Federation Northern California Collection in Oakland.

He is remembered not only for his bonsai artistry and skills, but for his smile, twinkle in his eye and his sense of humor as well. His critique of my first bonsai efforts was succinct: "Nice pot". He often strove to simplify the complexity of bonsai care schedules into

easily remembered mnemonics, such as: "decandle when you use Roman candles, July 4, and prune hard when you cut your turkey, late November".

His presence is greatly missed. He leaves behind his wife of 60 years, Kay, a daughter, Janet, granddaughter, Noelle, and 2 great grandchildren. Your contribution towards our goal of \$2500 can be made to: GSBF, Collection North, "for the Ruben Guzman memorial". Mail to Andrea Burhoe, Treasure, Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt, PO Box 16176, Oakland, CA, 94610-6176.

May Meeting

The May meeting was devoted to Japanese black pines. Bill Castellon presented a program that was a little different from the usual demonstration. He talked at length on how to maintain pines throughout the year and used a demonstration tree to illustrate the points he was making. His demonstration tree was a field grown tree that was about fifteen years old. It takes a long time to develop a superb bonsai pine tree but the final result is truly worth the effort. Pines have acquired the undeserved reputation of being difficult to manage. However, by understanding their requirements and with steady work, you can develop a very nice bonsai tree in a fairly short time. Bill showed pictures of breathtaking Japanese bonsai pines that have been trained as bonsai for several hundred years to illustrate the ultimate potential that pines offer.

Pines need attention throughout the year. The major efforts involve decandling and pruning. Both of these procedures are a strain on the tree and the tree needs to be in vigorous growth before either can be considered. Health of the tree can be assessed by examination of the needles. The needles of healthy pines are dark green and waxy to the touch. The needles should be stiff. If you place your hand on a foliage pad the needles should feel prickly. Yellow, limp needles signify that the tree is not in good health and should not be worked on until it recovers.

The big key to good growth is fertilization. Bill recommends feeding pines heavily in the spring when the trees start to grow which is usually late February. Use full strength soluble fertilizer such as Miracle Grow every two weeks. During the summer fertilization can be stopped after decandling and resumed in the fall at a more modest rate than was used in the spring.

New growths on a pine tree are called candles. When candles mature, they produce very long needles and branches. Both are out of proportion on a bonsai tree. If the candles are cut off in the middle of the growing season, the tree will send out several new growths from the stub of the candle. These growths will become shorter candles producing shorter needles and branches.

In the Bay Area, cutting the new growths or decandling is done at about June fifteenth. In the fall the new candles are reduced from as many as five on each tip to only two. One of these two will be the new leader of the branch and the other will be a new side branch.

Over years, decandling will lead to short, dense branches. Many people mistakenly think that short dense branches are the result of stress on the tree, but it is actually accomplished by careful decandling.

Pine trees are top dominant which means that the branches on the top of the tree grow far more strongly than the lower branches. Bill emphasized that the tree should be balanced, that is, the tree should be growing at the same rate from top to bottom. There are several strategies for doing this. One involves fine tuning decandling. The lower branches of the tree are decandled as much as twenty days before the upper branches. In this way the new candles on the weaker lower branches have a longer time to grow in the remainder of the growing season than the stronger new candles at the top. The end result is that by the end of the growing season in the fall, all the candles are about the same size. If the tree is decandled on one day, minor pruning of top branches at the same time can also help balance the energy in the tree.

Another strategy for balancing the tree involves removing old needles. Two and three year old needles are not of great use to the tree and can be removed safely. More of the old needles are removed from the top of the tree than the bottom, which somewhat slows the growth at the top. This is usually done in the fall but can be done any time. Removal of the needles also encourages sprouting of buds found at the base of the needles.

In a fine pine bonsai the beauty lies in the trunk, and especially the bark on the trunk, which gives the tree a very dramatic look. The trunk is best displayed by bringing the foliage closer to it. This is achieved by careful pruning of the branches. Long and strong growths are cut back to smaller growths in the interior of the branch. This not only makes the branch more compact but also allows more sunlight to reach the small growths which hastens their growth. Pines have buds at the base of the needles which can grow into small branches. More light in the interior of the tree can encourage the growth of these buds which leads to more dense pads. Buds on old branches which have formed bark are not likely to sprout indicating that pruning should be accomplished while the branches are still young and actively growing. Major pruning is done in the fall although minor tweaking may be done at any time.

Care of pines is easy. They are generally pest free. A problem occasionally seen is an aphid-like bug which can be hosed off. Occasionally red spiders can also be a problem.

Bill mentioned that one formula for potting soil is 7 parts akadama, 2 parts pumice and 1 part lava. Other ratios including equal parts of each component, also give excellent results. The main requirement of the soil is that it be well drained.

The program that Bill presented certainly gave all the information needed to produce high quality pine bonsai trees. He encouraged those of us who have not yet grown pines to acquire pine seedlings which are generally inexpensive, wire them and follow their growth over the years.

Thanks Bill for a fine program.

June Meeting

The next regular meeting of East Bay Bonsai Society will be held in the Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt rather than our usual meeting place. The meeting will feature a behind the scenes tour of the garden lead by our very own members, Janice Dilbeck and Bob Gould. These are two highly qualified leaders. Janice is in charge of maintaining collected junipers, and Bob has his hand in much of the operation of the garden. Doors will open at 7:00 PM and the tour will start at 7:30. The club will furnish refreshments and beverages. What can be better than seeing a world class bonsai collection with a glass of wine or pop in hand? The answer to that is simple. The chance to socialize with your fellow club members is even better. It is a lot of fun. See you there.

By the way, the meeting has been referred to as our frolic in the park. Actually it is our annual celebration of the summer solstice. For millennia the solstice has been celebrated with wild dancing lasting all night around smoky campfires. For those of us who may be traditionalists and wish to observe the solstice in the age old way, please note that camp fires are not permitted in the garden and the garden will close at 10:00 PM. If you feel the spirit to dance you are welcome to do so, but please arrange your dance choreography in a way which does not endanger either your fellow club members or the bonsai trees.

July Auction

July features our annual auction which is a major fund raising event for the society. If you haven't volunteered to help with the auction, see Janet Nelson who is coordinating it all. She has a few jobs that need filling. Be sure that you have identified items for the auction. It is a great way to pass on to new owners trees that don't quite fit to your vision of your future collection. Note also that any bonsai related item can be offered for sale. As a matter of fact we will even attempt to auction your family dog if he no longer fits your expectations. As usual, twenty per cent of the selling price goes to the club and the balance goes to you.

Linda

Linda Soliven has made several significant contributions to EBBS which are a bit behind the scenes and the Board of Directors would like to publically recognize Linda for these efforts.

Linda suggested that the board poll the members for their thoughts about the topics of the monthly meetings and how to make the club welcoming to all. The poll received a fine response from the members and the Board is continuing to implement the results of the poll.

Golden State Bonsai Federation is the umbrella organization for all the bonsai clubs in California. The principle focus is not the yearly conventions as you might think, but addressing concerns and issues common to all the clubs. Linda has served as a trustee of the organization whose job is to serve as an interface between the clubs and the parent organization and facilitate information flow in both directions. Linda has been a very active trustee and EBBS has benefited from her term in office.

Linda has been the motivating force behind the *Introduction to Bonsai* program at the Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt. This program is directed to members of the community who would like more information about bonsai. The program consists of informal discussions about bonsai, and often includes a walk through the garden. These talks are presented by members of EBBS and are the contribution of EBBS to the garden. The program raises the visibility of the garden and EBBS to the community. EBBS has also benefited when a few of the attendees of the program became hooked by the world of bonsai and became members of EBBS.

Thanks Linda for all that you do for the club. It is much appreciated.

Suiseki

Frequently stones known as *suiseki* are seen in bonsai shows as part of a *tokonoma* display or in place of an accent plant. These stones are displayed much in the same way as bonsai. They have as a base a low wooden structure which closely follows the contours of the stone and is called a *daiza*. The *daiza* compliments the stone in both color and shape and has the same function as a pot does for a bonsai tree. The *daiza* serves the stone much as a picture frame does for a picture. The stone (with *daiza*) is placed on either a low bonsai stand or a simple black board to complete the composition.

The question arises about whether it is appropriate to show stones with bonsai and the answer is an emphatic yes. These stones are indeed appropriate to show with bonsai. The Japanese have a great reverence for nature and bonsai trees are an expression of this reverence. Nature is represented not only by live plants but also the landscape itself and the stones reflect the landscape.

Have you ever flown on a plane and viewed the ground below you? Particularly when the plane is flying over a mountainous terrain you can see rivers, valleys and the very mountains themselves. Have you ever been in the mountains and seen a thundering waterfall? How about on the seashore and watched the waves break over a low group of rocks that extend from the land into the water? All of these different aspects of nature and the landscape are what *suiseki* attempt to

capture. Successful *suiseki* will point the viewer toward scenes that the viewer has experienced or would like to experience.

Next time you see a stone in a show look closely to see what it could represent. Mountain stones display mountains as seen from above and from a distance as, for example, the vantage point from a plane flying a few thousand feet above the mountain and a mile or so away. Another stone may display a waterfall and yet another stone might show a seaside rocky area. Some may represent a large stone in a pond. Just as bonsai are idealized aspects of nature the stones are also idealized representations of the natural landscape. Good *suiseki* present the viewer with far more than the stone itself.

Suiseki are very different from viewing stones which are commonly available. These stones are frequently breathtakingly beautiful but meant only to be beautiful objects. There is no attempt for these stones to signify anything more than what you see in front of you. What you see is what you get although in some cases it can be a lot. These stones are certainly not meant as representations of nature in sharp contrast to *suiseki*.

The beauty of viewing stones is frequently enhanced by application of oil which brings out the color of the stones. This practice should be approached carefully since, contrary to what you might think, even the hardest stone is actually porous and can absorb the oil. Over time the oil can oxidize by the action of air and turn a dull brown. Since it is deeply embedded in the stone, the stone will turn dull brown and the color of the stone cannot be restored.

At bonsai show there is much to see and understand. Do take a moment to look at stones that are displayed and see how they portray landscape features.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

The monthly workshops at Merritt College have been suspended for the summer since the college is not in session. They will resume in August. Questions can be directed to Bill Castellon at 510-569-8003 or Randle Lee at 510-864-0841.

Newsletters and Rosters by E-mail

The cost of mailing a newsletter to a household is about \$7.00 per year. When a goodly number of members desire a paper copy the cost to the club becomes significant. If you would like to try receiving the newsletter by email, contact Janice Dilbeck either in person or at Janicedilbeck@comcast.net. If you find that an emailed copy does not meet your requirements you can always switch back to a paper copy.

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.

June 23 - 24, Jackson, Amador Bonsai Society's 15th Annual Show will be held at the Amador Senior Center, 229 New York Ranch Rd. The hours are Saturday 1PM - 5 PM and Sunday 11 AM to 4 PM. There will be a My First Bonsai Class from 9 AM to

11 AM both days for \$30.00. There will be many demo's both days during the show and Main Demo both days at 1:30 and a daily raffle. Admission is Free and we ask that you bring a non-perishable donation for the Amador Interfaith Food Bank. If you have any questions, please call Dan Balsley at 209 603-1823 or email dbalsley1@gmail.com.

June 24, Oakland, GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt: BGLM Introduction to Bonsai. 1-3 PM.

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
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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

Jun	13	Frolic in the Garden
Jun	24	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai with JD Lin
Jul	11	Auction
Jul	22	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai with John Nackley
Aug	11	Potluck
Aug	26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai with Janet Nelson
Sep	12	Preparing trees for the show
Sep	23	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai with Tom Colby
Oct	10	No club meeting due to proximity to show
Oct	28	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai with Bob Could
Nov	14	Junipers
Nov	25	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai with Dennis Hawkins
Dec	12	Holiday Dinner

Special Event

Oct 13-14 Fall Show, John Thompson, featured artist
