



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

East Bay Bonsai Society Next Meeting: March 14, 2012, 7:30PM

Questionnaire

Many thanks to the members who took the time to complete the questionnaire about your preferences for meeting programs you would like and for your comments about making the club more welcoming and interesting. The board of directors is analyzing the results and will report on them in the next newsletter.

Dues

This is the last call for dues. If you haven't yet paid your dues, it is time to get it done. For those of you receiving the newsletter by mail, if the address label on this newsletter is highlighted, then you have not paid dues for 2012. Either pay your dues to our treasurer, Pat Cahill, at the next meeting or mail them to her care of EBBS Treasurer, 4933 Cochrane, Oakland, CA, 94618-2701. Dues are \$30 for single memberships and \$40 for couples.

February Meeting

Craig Thompson presented a program on tropical trees which was the last program in our series featuring plants that are not as commonly grown as they should be. His program focused on species of Ficus as the best of the tropical trees for bonsai.

Craig has traveled extensively and showed pictures of tropical trees that he has seen including pictures of huge Ficus trees overgrowing and destroying stone temples in Cambodia. Fear not, these are Ficus species that are not grown as bonsai and further it takes several hundred years to destroy a temple.

He also showed picture of a bonsai nursery in Bali devoted to magnificent examples of Ficus bonsai. This nursery was featured in an article he wrote in Golden Statements a couple of years ago.

Probably most people traveling to Hawaii have seen little Sheffalera trees mounted on lava rocks in gift shops and although they are represented as bonsai, they do not do justice to what the fine bonsai that Ficus can produce.

Craig brought to the meeting a magnificent bonsai which showed the full potential of Ficus for bonsai.

There are three Ficus species to consider as bonsai, F. microcarpa, F. benjamina and the willow leaf Ficus. Of these F. microcarpa is by far the best. It has small leaves and can quickly form a huge nabari. It is not subject to leaf drop which is a real problem with the other two species when growing conditions are modestly changed.

The willow leaf Ficus has very nice bark but is a bit more temperamental to grow than F. microcarpa which is amazingly tolerant of a wide variety of conditions. It is not fussy about soils although Craig prefers an equal mixture of lava, acadama and pumice for his trees. It can be grown out side as long as the temperature is above about 50 degrees which in the bay area is generally from about March to about November. The balance of the year it will happily live in doors in contrast to most bonsai trees.

During the summer it can be exposed to full sun but will also get by nicely at low light levels inside. When you take your tree outside after a winter of low light, place the tree in a shady place to gradually increase the amount of light, otherwise, immediate exposure to direct sun will lead to leaf burn.

Wiring is best accomplished with aluminum wire to reduce the possible scarring of the branches. Ficus can probably be air layered with success but Craig has not tried this. Craig uses Apex slow release fertilizer, but he said that any fertilizer should work just fine.

Management of the trees through the year is easy. The best time to repot is in the summer when the trees are actively growing. The choice of pot depth is strictly esthetic. Pot colors close to that of the bark make for a nice composition.

Ramification can be improved by letting the tree grow for six months and then cutting it back and wiring the branches. Regular defoliation does not hurt the tree. In contrast to most deciduous trees in which a portion of the leaf is left, it is best to completely remove all of the leaf. When grown under relatively low light the tree will produce larger leaves and the space between leaves on the branches will be longer. This is probably a response of the tree to catch the maximum amount of the available light.

Under conditions of high temperature and humidity, Ficus trees can produce aerial roots which are roots coming from branches down to the soil and will eventually serve as a new trunk for the tree. These will probably only be seen on your trees if you grow them in a greenhouse where heat and humidity can be maintained.

Craig's program was a great introduction to plants that many of us have not thought of as bonsai material. The combination of easy culture and fine growth characteristics make these trees a real winner. For those interested in even more details about these very

amenable plants Craig recommends the book ***Ficus: The Exotic Bonsai*** by Jerry Meislik which is available from Stone Lantern or Amazon.

March Meeting

Circle your calendars! The March meeting will feature the Tim Kong show entitled *Fun with Tim*. We are fortunate to present Tim Kong for an evening which promises to be both entertaining and informative. His program will focus on trees brought in by members which present design problems to the owner. The format will be a moderated discussion by the members on what can be done to improve the tree. The emphasis will be on discussion and it will not be a workshop or a demonstration.

Everyone has a tree that they are not quite sure where to go next with and now is your chance to get some great advice. Do bring in your problem tree. The more trees at the meeting the more fun the meeting will be.

Because of the meeting format, there will be no demo tree to raffle. In addition to your tree, plan to bring in an item for the raffle. Let's make a great raffle the climax of what promises to be a great evening.

Thanks in advance to Dennis Miu, Linda Soliven and Randall Lee for providing refreshments for the meeting. Thanks also in advance to Linda Soliven for offering to prepare coffee.

April Meeting

Rick Garcia will present a program on Satsuki azaleas. There is no more spectacular sight than a Satsuki azalea in full bloom. While they are not difficult to grow, the conditions for growing them are a bit different from the usual trees we grow as bonsai. This meeting will focus on how to maintain these drop dead gorgeous trees in perfect health.

Fertilizer

We plant our bonsai in soils that are formulated to rapidly drain water. These soils are mainly composed of rocky materials which are very deficient in nutrients. To get the best growth out of our trees they need added nutrients, i.e. fertilizer.

The most popular fertilizers fall into two groups, inorganic formulations and organic material derived from living tissue. Miracle Grow is an example of the former and fish emulsion represents the latter group. The question immediately arises as to which is best?

There are no known scientifically valid studies of fertilizers on bonsai and so one hears comments like "I feed my trees alternately between the two types of fertilizer. I don't like to eat the same meal every day and I assume that my plants don't either". These comments fall into the category of feel-good philosophy which, while not necessarily based on fact is not altogether bad. After all, don't we grow bonsai for the warm cozy feeling they give us? Nothing is wrong with feel-good philosophy as long as it is not confused with facts.

There is a study by a university which does deal with the effect of fertilizer on the growth of radish and cucumber seedlings. This study shows that there is no difference between the two fertilizer types when

adjusted for nitrogen content. The study also shows that there is no magic ingredient in either fertilizer beyond nitrogen. Does this study extend to bonsai? It most probably does. The rapidly growing seedlings would show differences much more quickly than slow growing bonsai. The conclusion is that both types of fertilizers give equal results.

Close examination suggests that there is a major difference in the two fertilizer types beyond nutrient content, and that is the problem of possible root burn. To understand this, one first needs to understand in detail how a plant absorbs water. The entire mechanism is complicated but the essential feature involves osmosis. When water containing dissolved solids is located on one side of a porous membrane such as a cell wall and plain water is on the other, osmosis causes a flow of water through the membrane into the side with the solids. Normally when we water our plants, the cells of the feeder roots contain more dissolved solids than the water we apply to the plants so water flows from the soil into the cells and then on to the rest of the plant.

Inorganic fertilizers are mainly salts which have a strong effect on osmosis. If we think that a little fertilizer is good, isn't it all right to add a whole lot? What happens is that the fertilizer solution has more dissolved solids than the cell so there is a net flow of water out of the cells. The cells become dehydrated and die. This is the mechanism behind root burn.

Inorganic fertilizers work very well with bonsai but must be used with very careful attention paid to the concentration of the solution. Use only the concentration listed in the directions (or lower) to avoid root burn.

The organic fertilizers also have dissolved solids but these solids do not have a large effect on osmosis and the result is that high concentrations do not burn the roots but probably delight the neighborhood cats with the solution draining from the pots.

Books

There are a lot of books available on bonsai but many of these are of limited value since they are directed to beginners. Recently two inexpensive and readily available books have been issued that are worthy of note. Both are written in conjunction with noted bonsai masters.

The first is entitled ***Bonsai by Kobayashi and Tajima*** and is a catalogue of a large number of plants owned by Kobayashi. Major problems faced by all bonsai growers designing a tree are: what is the best branch placement, what should be the final shape of my tree and what type of pot should I use for my tree. The value of looking at a collection of images of bonsai grown and exhibited by a master is that it is a reference source for the best in bonsai design. The trees in the book are arranged by season so all stages of growth are represented.

The second book is ***The Beauty of Bonsai by Yamamoto*** and illustrates many of Kimura's trees. Particularly note worthy is a presentation of the combination of formal bonsai appreciation and tea ceremony by the Keido school, which is a relatively recent development. The book has illustrations of fine

pots for bonsai, ideas on proper display and best of all, several of Kimura's trees. Both of these books would be fine additions to your library.

Learning About Trees

We study the styles of bonsai, see the shows and literature, and see how others are styling and developing their trees to help us improve our understanding and appreciation of bonsai, and develop our ability to see with the artist's eye. Nonetheless, we should also keep in mind that what we are working with are trees, and we should look to see and study trees in their natural settings. The best models and guides are the trees growing under the influences of nature and not shaped by the hand of man.

In addition to being beautiful to see and be near, trees have had a major part in the lives of humans, both as they grow in nature and in the wood, food, and shade they provide us. From the earliest times, trees have been of great value and importance to man and have been held in great awe in all cultures and places. This is particularly true of the oldest and largest trees. There is evidence that potted trees were used in the temples and palaces of the rulers from the earliest times of recorded history. People could be close to these marvels of nature even if they couldn't be out in nature.

Think what trees have provided us, food, fire for warmth and energy. Wood for our homes, churches, commercial buildings, boats and carts, weapons, and implements for our homes, our beds, tables and chairs, as well as decorative elements in our lives. All of that in addition to shade, protection and their ability to absorb and use carbon dioxide and add oxygen to our air. Virtually every day of our lives are touched and enhanced by these silent giants and the wondrous gifts they share with us.

To improve the quality of our bonsai trees, perhaps nothing can aid us as much as improving our understanding and appreciation of the trees around us in nature. In addition to visiting and spending time studying the trees around us, in the mountains, along the coasts, in the plains, and in the valleys, we can learn from the literature about trees.

Ortho Books has published a book ***All About Trees***. It is well organized and has excellent photos and illustrations. I recently found a book by a French writer Marie-France Boyer, ***Tree Talk***, subtitled *Memories, myths and timeless customs*. She has photos of many old and fabled trees, as well as of many old works of art with pictures of trees. This is also an excellent book and I recommend them both. They have added to my understanding and appreciation of trees.

Trees are what bonsai is about, not cute little potted plants. For that a geranium will do, with a lot less effort.

Special Thanks

At the conclusion of each meeting a number of members help to put away the chairs and tables. Set up for the meeting is mainly the responsibility of Bob Gould who already contributes a lot to the club. At the February meeting the chairs and tables were all arranged by Dennis Miu. The board was very

appreciative of Dennis' efforts and wants to publicly thank him. Perhaps other members will follow his lead in setting up for the meeting.

Seasonal Care of Bonsai

Folks have been asking for information on the seasonal care of bonsai. We have a calendar with instructions on seasonal care which we sell for \$5. If interested, please contact Tom Colby at 510-483-0858 or thcolby165@comcast.net.

Another great source of seasonal care is available through the GSBF publication, ***Golden Statements***. Free access to this publication is available online at: <http://www.gsbf-bonsai.org/gsbfmag.html>.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

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

Leading the workshops are members of EBBS, Bill Castellon and Randall Lee. The meetings are on every fourth Monday 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. Members can contact Bill at 510-569-8003 or Randall at 510-864-0841.

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.

March 24-25. Scotts Valley, 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

Mar 25. Oakland, GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt: BGLM Introduction to Bonsai. 1-3 PM.

March 31-April 1. Sacramento, 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

April 11-15. Garden Grove, California Bonsai Society: 55th Convention and Show at the Crown Plaza Anaheim Resort, 12021 Harbor Blvd. and starring the iron men of Naka, Frank Goya, Harry Hirao, Shig Miya, Ben Oki and Richard Ota. Also featuring Tomohiro Masumi, Ryan Neil, Cheryl Manning, Kenji Miyata, David Nguy, Kathy Shaner and the members of CBS. There will be workshops, demonstrations, auctions, drawings, a huge vendor area and prizes & awards for early registrations. For registration information contact Elizabeth Partch at elizabethpartch@yahoo.com

April 14-15. Sacramento, American Bonsai Association, Sacramento: 53rd Annual Spring Show at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Ave, Sacramento, CA. Show hours are Saturday 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Sunday 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM. Demonstration each day at 1:30 PM by John Thompson followed by a raffle of bonsai (includes the demonstration tree) and bonsai related material. There is a large vendor area with club member trees, pots, etc. For information contact Greg McDonald at 530-62-2521, or Gregandleeanne@comcast.net, or visit our website at <http://abasbonsai.org/>.

April 21-22. Palo Alto Kusamura Bonsai Club: 52nd Annual Show at the Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road. Admission is free. Show hours are Saturday: 12 Noon - 5PM, and Sunday: 11AM - 5PM. There will be demonstrations, raffles,

and club member tree sales both days. Guest demonstrator to be announced. For more information, contact Rita Curbow at 408-732-4957 or kusamura@gsbf-bonsai.org.

April 26-29. 2012Costa Mesa, Orange Empire Bonsai Society: Bonsai Exhibition at the 23rd Annual Spring Garden Show at the South Coast Plaza, 3333 Bear Street. The show dates and times are Thursday and Friday from 10AM-9PM, Saturday from 10AM-8PM and Sunday 11AM-6:30PM. There will be a traditional display of bonsai trees with accent plants, along with an ongoing bonsai trimming demonstration. Al Nelson will conduct a saikei workshop seminar. The date and time are forthcoming. For more information please contact David Nadzam at dnadzam@socal.rr.com or 714-345-6966.

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

Mar 14	Fun with Tim
Apr 11	Rick Garcia demonstration on Satsuki
May 9	Bill Castellon – details tbd
Jun 13	Frolic in the Garden
Jul 11	Auction
Aug	Potluck – details tbd
Sep 12	Preparing trees for the show – details tbd
Oct 10	No club meeting due to proximity to show
Nov 14	tbd
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? _____
