



The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXX, No. 5

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

East Bay Bonsai Society Next Meeting: May 9, 2012, 7:30PM

President's Note

As we have started planning for our July auction, our biggest fundraiser, I would like to review the EBBS finances. New members and some old may have little understanding of how EBBS operates, as I did when first joining. Basically, our total yearly activities are financed by a couple thousand dollars of revenue, balanced by nearly an equal amount of expenses. There is a small cash reserve to cushion the years when expenses exceed income.

Income is generated through membership fees, benefit drawings, our plant sale, and our July auction, the auction being our single largest source of income. *Expenses* are the monthly rent of our meeting room, the cost of producing the October show, and the cost of demonstration trees and sometimes speaker's fees. Other minor expenses are the cost of newsletter production, website costs, drinks for refreshments, and annual contributions to the Golden State Bonsai Federation, the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt and similar nonprofit groups.

As the July Auction approaches, the members will have an opportunity to recoup some of their personal bonsai expenses through auctioning off some of their plants. It is also an opportunity to give back to EBBS by actively participating. The auction is quite a beehive of activity. Being a worker bee will enable you to enjoy the experience even more.

April Meeting

The March meeting presented a lecture demonstration on the care and management of azaleas by Rick Garcia. The demonstration tree was a shohin sized plant with a flush of new growth. Rick stated that he preferred a more natural look to his trees so he visualized the overall finished shape of the tree that would be somewhat wider than high. At the outset Rick made the strong point that whatever was done in any demonstration to any tree regardless of species should emphasize the health of the tree above all else rather than production of a dramatic finished product and his presentation continually reflected this point.

The time for both severe pruning and repotting Azaleas is late winter-February and March. A tree was shown that had been severely pruned as an example of what this would entail. All branches had been shortened to no more than two inches and the tree was completely defoliated. Cutting the tree back heavily stimulates growth and budding back of the branches

leading ultimately to increased ramification. Many leaf buds were just showing on the trimmed branches, somewhat to the surprise and relief of some of the observers who worried that the tree would even survive such drastic pruning.

Because it was too late in the year for heavy pruning, the demonstration tree could not be treated as severely. Some heavy upright branches were shortened to bring the tree into proper proportions. Removal of heavy branches is made in two steps because complete removal in a single cut could leave a scar which will not heal over. Stubs of these branches were left and will be removed next year with cuts made flat to the trunk with a sharp knife. It was stressed that all cuts should be sealed. Sealing cuts prevent the tree from bleeding water from the open cuts, and moreover, the open cuts could invite rot. The rot would proceed to the trunk and to the roots seriously impacting the health of the tree. Terminal leaves on longer remaining branches of the demonstration tree were trimmed to induce budding along the branch. Removing heavy branches and leaving smaller ones is exactly the opposite of the procedure for pruning bonsai other than Azaleas.

Proper management of water is essential to success, and failure to recognize this can lead to death of the tree. Azaleas have distinctly different growth patterns from most of the trees grown as bonsai. The roots on most trees try to descend to the bottom of the pot whereas the fine feeder roots of azaleas are close to the surface. Drying out of the surface of the potting soil kills these fine roots to the detriment of the health of the tree.

Rick prefers kanuma as a potting media. Kanuma is a specially treated clay product from Japan and comes in several size particles. Rick uses the coarser particles in the bottom one third of the pot, medium size in the next third and the fine particles in the top one third. The rationale for this layered arrangement of the potting medium is that the larger particles in the bottom promote drainage and the finer particles on top maintain the fine surface roots.

Azaleas are frequently top dressed with a layer of Japanese moss known as yamagoki. The moss serves several functions. Kanuma is relatively light in weight and the top particles can be washed out of the pot during watering. The moss helps to stabilize the surface and protects the Kanuma from being disturbed. It also helps to keep the potting soil cool on hot days, it prevents dirt

from accumulating on the surface of the pot which would impede drainage and lastly, and somewhat counter intuitively, it wicks excess moisture from the potting media.

Azaleas require constant moisture but resent soggy media. Most bonsai trees are watered heavily until water flows freely from the pot and then are allowed to become relatively dry before again watering. Azaleas resent this boom and bust water cycle and are watered more frequently with less water to maintain a moist but never soggy wet potting media. During periods of heavy rain the pots can be raised on one side which helps to drain the excess water and prevent oversaturation.

Rick strongly prefers organic fertilizers, stating that inorganic fertilizers may lead to leaf burn. The choice of fertilizer also effects the growth of the branches of the tree. Branches on trees fertilized with organic fertilizers tend to be more flexible and can be more easily wired whereas inorganic fertilizers lead to much stiffer branches which are more easily broken when the tree is wired. He puts the solid fertilizer in tea bags which he places on the potting media. Direct application of the solid material to the pot is avoided because it can cause poor drainage. Fertilizer is applied as soon as growth is seen in the spring and continues through May or until the temperature reaches 85 degrees.

Rick recommended that anyone interested in azaleas visit BASA, a group of bonsai enthusiasts who focus on satsuki azaleas. The group meets on the fourth Thursday at the Lakeside Garden Center. Bob Gould can provide more information on the group. Rick also modestly stated that he operates a nursery devoted to azaleas and is a source of both fine plants and supplies. He can be contacted at www.nasbc.com.

See our website, www.eastbaybonsai.org, for photos and more details.

More on Azaleas

Satsuki azaleas generally bloom between the middle of May and the middle of June and the exact time depends on both the variety and the spring weather. There will be a show of azaleas at the Garden Center on the weekend of June 2 and 3 which should be the peak of the blooming season. More details on the show will be given in coming newsletters. By all means put this show on your must do list. It is always spectacular.

Still More on Azaleas

For those members who want to know more about azaleas, there is a definitive book on the subject written by our very own Bob Callaham entitled *Satsuki Azaleas for Bonsai and Azalea Enthusiasts*. This book is the finest and most complete book ever written on a single bonsai subject and will tell you all you need to know about the care, styling and display of these beautiful trees as well as an extensive listing of the available cultivars. Dave DeGroot, a noted bonsai artist, declared in a formal review of the book that it is "a classic". The book is available from the publisher,

Stone Lantern Publishing and they can be contacted at www.stonelantern.com.

May Meeting

Pines, maples and junipers are overwhelmingly the most commonly seen trees as bonsai. The May meeting will feature a program on one of the big three, pines, given by Bill Castelon. For many years Bill has had a special interest in pines and he will share his extensive knowledge with us. Bill also has been an instructor for workshops for beginners and he has a special ability to impart his knowledge to all comers. People new to bonsai are frequently intimidated by pine trees. This meeting will be particularly important for those of us hesitant about growing pines as bonsai as well as for all of the rest of us aspiring bonsai artists.

Thanks in Advance

Thanks in advance to Brian and Cheryl Tada and Rick Trumm for offering to bring refreshments to the April meeting and to Janet Nelson for being our coffee barista for the evening.

July Auction

Spring is the time of year that is most fulfilling for bonsai growers. All of your trees should be showing new growth and it is a time for planning the activity for the year with your collection. It is also a time for reviewing the role of each tree in your collection. If you find trees that don't seem to fit in your overall game plan, the EBBS July auction is a great way to pass the tree on to more appreciative owners. Also if you want to round out your collection with a particular type of tree, the auction is a place to look for good trees at reasonable prices. The auction is our big fund raiser for the year and as usual, 20% of the selling price goes to the club. If you wish to donate your trees to the club, the entire selling price goes to the club. Trees aren't the only items sold. We all have pots that don't fit our current trees and can be passed on. In fact, anything related to bonsai is welcome at the auction. Don't miss the auction---it is a lot of fun.

Field Trip

EBBS's recent survey demonstrated a desire of members to have field trips. The EBBS board responded and scheduled a trip to Lone Pine Gardens in Sebastopol on April 21. Approximately 12 members took advantage of the fine weather and toured the wonderful nursery there. Most came away with some new bonsai material. A picnic lunch and social visit with the owners, Ian and Janet and Steve Price was enjoyed after our shopping. Some also went on to Jim Gremel's nursery nearby to view his offerings. All were pleased with the days outing and look forward to another field trip in the future. And to those who didn't go, you missed a good time. But not to worry, as we will do it again!

See our website, www.eastbaybonsai.org, for photos and more details.

Tokanoma

Most bonsai shows feature tokonomas which are displays placed on a single eight foot long table. They include not only a tree but also other items such as a suiseki stone, an accent plant or a scroll. Have you ever wondered where the idea came from?

The concept of a tokonoma is actually very old. Up until about 1300 CE the Japanese rulers were hereditary, that is the emperors son became the next emperor. These rulers lived in palaces that were a series of rather small buildings interconnected by covered walkways. In about 1300 CE the military took over. The military were deeply into zen Buddhism and built palaces which were heavily influenced by temple architecture. Temples were single large buildings which stood alone. Head abbots in the temples had small areas in their living quarters where items were placed for meditation. The military rulers also incorporated these areas from the very start into their new palaces and these became known as tokonomas.

Originally ceramic pots and candleholders were featured in the tokonomas, but in a short time flower arrangements became popular. Only much later were bonsai trees used in tokonomas. The flower arrangements led to the Japanese art of ikebana which is now very much alive in Japan and has many schools teaching the art. As a matter of fact, today in Japan many more tokonomas feature flower arrangements rather than bonsai.

Tokonomas reflect the origins in religious meditation which places a high value on nature. All of the items in a tokonoma are related to nature and are intended to be a single composition which denotes a particular time and place. The accent plant should be from the same habitat as the tree. For example, California junipers grow in harsh and arid environments and ferns which grow in moist shady areas and should not be used as accent plants for these trees.

The time of season is important particularly in choice of scroll if one is used. A scroll showing a fall scene such as migrating birds shown against a stormy sky would clash with a flowering plum tree which is a sign of spring. An accent plant in flower does not do justice to a leafless tree displayed as a winter silhouette.

In short, tokonomas are tradition that is nearly 700 years old. A well crafted tokonoma display requires considerable thought to be successful. Next time you go to a bonsai show that features tokonomas, spend a moment in front of each display and see whether it represents a single time and place. If it does, admire the skill of the artist that assembled it.

A Very Special Thank You

East Bay Bonsai Society is fortunate to have many talented members but did you know that we have our own Clark Kent? When Jeff Clarkson sits down at his computer he truly becomes superman. If you don't think so, check out our web site at www.eastbaybonsai.org if you haven't already done so. It is creative artistry at its best and provides a model for other clubs to aspire to. Not only is Jeff a talented artist but he is also a fine reporter. His report on the recent Ryan Neil demonstration is a must read. The club has badly needed someone with the time, talent and interest to maintain our web site and Jeff has filled this need spectacularly. Thanks Jeff for all your hard work which has been much appreciated. You have truly put us on the electronic map.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

The only way you can become 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 comers at all experience levels, from beginner to advanced. It is an opportunity that we all should be aware of and of which we all 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. Questions? Members can contact Bill at 510-569-8003 or Randal at 510-864-0841.

Bring your trees, roll up your sleeves and get involved personally in the wonderful world of bonsai.

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.

May 5. Napa, 34th Annual Napa Valley Bonsai Club Show: Napa Senior Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Napa. Saturday, May 5, 11:00 am to 4:30 pm. Demonstration by Deer Meadow bonsai artist Jim Gremel at 1:30, followed by benefit drawing. Silent Auction, vendor sales, member sales. Free admission and parking. Visit our website: www.napabonsai.org or contact Curtis Richey

May 5. Jackson, California, Amador Bonsai Society: *Peoples' Choice Show* in conjunction with the Sierra Madre Garden Show at the Amador Senior Center, 229 New York Ranch Road. Show hours are 10AM-4PM. Free Admission. A bonsai demonstration will be offered. 707-226-8143 for more information.

May 5&6. Sacramento, 66th Annual Sacramento Bonsai Club Show: Sacramento Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd., May 5 (12-5pm) & 6 (10-4pm). Demonstrations both days, 2 pm, by Boon Manatikivipart, followed by benefit drawings. Free admission, plant and tree sales.

May 12 – 13. Modesto, Modesto Bonsai Club: 31st. Annual Exhibit at the Modesto Centre Plaza, 11th and K St., Opens Saturday 11 AM - 5 PM and Sunday 11 AM - 4 PM. Demonstration both days at 2 PM by Sam Adina. FREE ADMISSION - Exhibit, Raffle and Bonsai Material Sale. For further information please visit us at Modestobonsai.com or please call 209-463-6279

May 27. Oakland, GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt: BGLM Introduction to Bonsai. 1-3 PM.

June 2-3, Oakland, Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai: Annual Satsuki Azalea Show at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue. Hours are 10 AM - 4 PM both Saturday and Sunday. Demonstration at 1 PM on both days, featuring Rick Garcia on Saturday and Johnny Uchida on Sunday. Sales area and benefit drawings. Free admission to the show. For more information, contact Ron Reid, 925-831-2500.

June 2-3, San Mateo, Sei Boku Bonsai Kai 29th Annual Show at the San Mateo Garden Center, 605 Parkside Way, next to Beresford Park. Admission is free. Saturday and Sunday 10 AM - 4 PM. Demonstrations from 1 - 3 PM both days. Saturday demonstration will be by Steve Iwaki and Sunday by Steve Jang. Door prizes, vendor sales, and

member plant sales will be featured. There will also be Dr. Bonsai to answer questions regarding bonsai care

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

May	9	Bill Castellon - pines and their care with a demo
May	27	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai with Dennis Hawkins
Jun	13	Frolic in the Garden
Jun	26	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 – details tbd
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	tbd
Nov	25	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai with Dennis Hawkins
Dec	12	Holiday Dinner

Special Event

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