



The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXI, No. 4

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

East Bay Bonsai Society

April Meeting:

April 10, 2013 @ 7:30 p.m.

Sad News

Our long-time friend and bonsai colleague Ron Reed passed away on Saturday, March 30, 2013 at Alta Bates Summit Hospital in Oakland, Ca. at the age of 78. We are hoping to have a memorial service in the near future at the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt where Ron devoted many hours as a volunteer docent and helped maintain the trees. In the meantime, condolences may be sent to Ron's cousin at the following address:



Ms. Billy Adams
P. O. Box 221
Burson, Ca. 95225

President's Note

"As a twig is bent, so the tree is inclined." I thought of this proverb as I watched Tim Kong orchestrate our March meeting. He had stated that three veteran artists would be needed for his program. Then, at the onset, asked these three to choose three young artists from the audience. Then the three teams worked to form a bonsai from their tree challenge. So, not only was a tree being given hope of becoming a bonsai, but our club given hope of sustaining itself by the encouragement of a young member by their veteran partner, by Tim and the audience. This view of the long term growth of a club is so crucial where its core members are mature and aging. If the younger members are not nurtured in our art, the club's survival is jeopardized. So Tim had the vision to see this need of every bonsai club and performed a service to our club and to the art itself.

We as members of EBBS need to do the same with encouragement of other members, especially the newer ones to the art. There are several simple things we can do: from our greeting of each other and newer

members at the meetings to inquiring what these members are working and struggling with in their work. Do you have redundant tools and plants that they might use? We often forget what it was like when we first started to deal with the requirements of bonsai. There have been so many generous members in my start that I can look back gratefully to their help. What a nice legacy for them.

As an additional thought, I add:

May, June, and July, bring auction by.
Plants, Pots, and Tools, don't get shy.

John N.

April Meeting

The April meeting will feature a critique of members' trees by Michael Hagedorn. Michael has completed an extensive stay in Japan as an apprentice to a master bonsai artist and is currently living in the Pacific Northwest. He will offer suggestions on how the styling of the tree might be improved and will also offer comments on more general subjects such as culture of the tree. Here is your chance to get great advice about your tree. Do bring in trees that you want help on or have questions about. Finished trees that you would like to brag about are also welcome. The more trees he has to discuss, the more informative the evening will be for us all. Michael's visit to EBBS will be funded in part by a grant from the Golden State Bonsai Federation.

There will be no demo tree to raffle, so please be generous in donating raffle items.

Thanks in advance to Bet Neary, Dennis Miu and Grant Foerster for offering to provide refreshments for the evening.

March Meeting

The evening started with a show and tell of members' trees. Particularly noteworthy was a spectacular crabapple which was over thirty years old. The tree was brought in by Ernest Katler. Several members who participated had questions about their trees, either directed to specific people or to the membership at large. The aspect of show and tell providing a way of gaining information about your trees is very valuable, not only to the person who brought the tree, but to the membership at large, and is highly

encouraged. Thanks to all who brought trees for show and tell.

Tim Kong presided at our March meeting. He brought three junipers that were virtually identical. They all were about fifteen inches high and wide, had sturdy trunks and many branches. Each was assigned to a team of artists who had the problem of creating a bonsai out of their tree. The teams consisted of an experienced member and a relatively inexperienced member. The teams were Bob Gould and Gaylen Roberts, Rick Trumm and Carly Mitchell, and Randall Lee and Jeff Clarkson. At the end of the evening the



best tree was selected by vote of the membership by placing raffle tickets in a container by each tree. The tickets for each tree were counted and the winners of the and prize (Tim's blessing for fame and fortune) were Rick and Carly.

An interesting sidelight of the "competition" was that the three trees at the end of the evening were well on their way to being quite different finished trees. Bob's team saw the finished tree as an elegant small tree with many beautiful curving branches. Rick's team saw their finished tree as a rugged tree emphasizing lots of dead wood and great age. Randall's team visualized a broom style tree. These trees all came from nearly identical raw material which certainly makes the point that there are many possible ways to create a fine bonsai from a single starting material.

While the teams were furiously working on their trees, Tim carried on a discourse on bonsai which was in part responses to questions and partly on the world of bonsai according to Tim. He touched on many subjects, some of which are summarized below.

Tim is a great advocate of urban collecting which focuses on garden plants that are no longer wanted. With the owners' permission he digs the trees, pots them and eventually styles them as bonsai. The three junipers he supplied for the evening were examples of former garden plants that were marvelous material for bonsai. Urban collecting provides an inexpensive source of bonsai material that would otherwise end up

in the dump and is an excellent example of recycling a valuable resource.

When Tim digs a tree, he cuts off roots larger than $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch, and then combs out the soil from the remaining root ball with a chopstick. He plants the tree in a nursery container that is filled about half way with plastic peanuts. The presence of the peanuts make the finished potted plant lighter in weight and encourages a relatively flat root ball which can eventually be readily potted in a bonsai pot. The balance of the pot is filled with recycled bonsai soil which has been previously sterilized by covering the soil with clear plastic, and then exposing the soil to the sun. The heat generated "cooks" the soil to temperatures which are lethal to the bacteria and fungus that might be lurking. Tim settles the soil around the tree with a chopstick by inserting the chopstick into the root ball and wiggling the stick sideways near the trunk. The tree is then placed in the shade until new growth starts.

A feature of very old trees in nature is that their branches come sharply down from the trunk. Tim achieves this with two techniques. In the first method he cuts a shallow notch under the branch at the junction of the branch and the trunk which allows the branch to be bent sharply down. This procedure works best with larger branches. A second approach is to drill a hole the size of wire you intend to use in the trunk just below the branch. The end of the wire is then inserted into the hole and the wire is then brought over the top of the branch close to the trunk which allows the branch to be bent down.

Tim had some general comments on styling bonsai. As you style a tree, let the tree tell you what to do rather than you imposing a preconceived plan for the tree.



When choosing a tree for a bonsai, the most important feature is the shape of the lower trunk and the spread of roots from the trunk (the nebari) since these features cannot be easily changed. The big branches and their movement should be on the bottom of the tree and smaller branches and their movement should be in the upper portion of the tree. The apparent age of the tree is

all important whereas the actual age of the tree does not matter.

You should have respect for your tree just as the tree should have respect for you. The apex of the tree should slightly bow to you as a sign of respect and it does this by leaning toward you.



Tim's last statement of the evening was "any technique in bonsai is acceptable if it works" which is the gospel according to Tim. As advertised, Tim provided an evening that was lots of fun and, if you were paying attention, an evening filled with a lot of great information about bonsai. Thanks Tim. You are truly unique.

May Meeting

The May meeting will be devoted to bonsai basics and will feature presentations by four distinguished speakers. Bob Gould will discuss the mechanics of wiring. Linda Soliven will share her expertise on bonsai soils. Janice Dilbeck will show us how to securely fasten your tree into the pot when you repot and Tom Colby will discuss tools for bonsai.

More Wire

Probably the most mysterious thing about bonsai to those outside the art is the fact that the little tree is covered with wire. Perhaps someone might even have thought that the tree with all the wire actually serves as a snazzy television antenna. Those of us inside the art know that the purpose of the wire is to change the shape or direction of a branch to one more in line with our vision of what the tree should look like. Wrapping the branch with wire makes the branch sufficiently stiff that it can be held in a new position. As the tree grows the branch will eventually hold the new position without the aid of the wire.

So what kinds of wire are available to us? There are only three basic types of wire that are readily available, copper, steel, and aluminum. Steel or iron wire is not a good choice for two reasons. First, it generally is so stiff that it would be hard to bend around

a branch without breaking the branch. Secondly, it will rust which reduces the strength of the wire over time. Further, the rust products will stain the bark of the tree. This leaves us with a choice of copper or aluminum. Which is best? The simple answer is that they both work well, although each has unique advantages.

Annealed copper is soft, initially making it easy to wrap around a branch. It is also subject to work hardening as it is bent, making it stiffer as the wrapping proceeds. Work hardening copper wire can increase the rigidity of the wire by as much as a factor of two. Surprisingly, aluminum is also subject to work hardening, although the degree of stiffening is far less than that of copper. As with copper, aluminum can also be annealed, although the softening resulting from the annealing process is far less than that observed for copper.

Copper wire is about three times stiffer than aluminum for a given size of wire in the finally wired branch. Successful wiring of a branch requires that the branch be held securely in the new position for an extended period of time. A rough rule of thumb is that the size of copper wire required to securely hold the branch in the new position should be about one third the size of the branch. Since aluminum is softer than the copper wire, the size of aluminum must be substantially larger than the copper wire to securely hold the branch. Copper is generally preferred for wiring heavy branches because of the greater rigidity. On the other hand, aluminum wire is frequently preferred for wiring small brittle branches on trees such as azaleas or elms. This is because it is soft and less likely to break the branches, and yet is strong enough to hold the branches in place.

Regardless of the type of wire, scarring always lurks in the background. This comes about from the fact that as the tree grows, the branches become thicker. The wire, be it copper or aluminum, does not significantly stretch, so the wire will cut into the bark of the branch as the branch grows in diameter. Wire scars are nearly permanent and disfigure the tree. The beauty of deciduous trees is in the quality of the bark and wire scars are particularly unwelcome. Wire scars are less of a problem with conifers with lots of jins and sharis, but still should be avoided. The wire on trees needs to be checked frequently, and at the first sign of scarring should be removed. The branch must be rewired with fresh wire if the branch does not hold the desired new position. Since aluminum wire is larger in diameter than copper wire of equivalent stiffness, it may scar a little more slowly than the copper, although it should also be watched carefully.

October Show Vendors

The EBBS fall show will feature three vendors, Jim Gremel, Peter Tea, and Jerry Braswell. Jim usually brings both copper and aluminum wire, pots, and bonsai tools. Jerry makes bonsai stands to custom order. He has a backlog of orders and suggests that if you need a stand for the show, now is the time to place your order to be sure your stand is completed for the show. He can

be reached by phone at 209-295-1717 or at his web site, www.artofthediaza.com.

Bonsai Instruction

Bonsai workshops are held Merritt College and are available to all EBBS members. These workshops are not only an opportunity to work on your own trees under the guidance of fine teachers but also to get specific answers to questions about the care and maintenance of your trees. Clearly they are the best deal in town for increasing your knowledge about the fine art of bonsai. Leading the workshops are two distinguished artists who are also members of EBBS, Bill Castelon and Randall Lee. The meetings are held 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 about the workshops may be addressed to either Bill at 510-569-8003 or Randall at 510-864-0841.

Bonsai Competition

The Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture has announced their fourth Kazari Bonsai Competition on April 27. The competition focusses on the harmonious display of hanging scroll, bonsai tree, and adjacent accent plant or stone in a tokonoma setting. Kazari is a judged competition and prize money for the best display is \$2500, \$1000 for the second place and \$500 for the third place. Details about the competition may be found in the GSBF website at <http://www.gsbfbonsai.org/2013/03/19/kazari-bonsai-display-competition/>.

The Golden State Bonsai Federation is fostering competitions as a way of improving the general quality of bonsai throughout the state. Currently the only major competition in California is the Kazari competition and the GSBF strongly encourages your participation in this competition.

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.

April 6 & 7, Sacramento: Bonsai Sekiyu Kai 36th Annual Bonsai Show at the Sacramento Betsuin Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Hours are: Saturday Noon – 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM. Demonstration 2 PM both days by Bonsai Master Johnny Uchida. Amenities include refreshments, light snacks, door prizes, raffles, and a Silent Auction. Member and vendor sales of plants and bonsai-related items will also be available. For more information contact Chris Pfeifle at mesoey@aol.com.

April 13 & 14: Sacramento: American Bonsai Association, Sacramento: 54th Anniversary Show will feature our best trees with demonstrations by Japanese trained bonsai artist, author, and Artisans Cup co-chair, Michael Hagedorn. Show hours are

Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM with demonstration at 1:30 PM both days. Location: Shepard Garden and Art Center (in McKinley Park), 3330 McKinley Blvd. Free admission. Member and vendor sales area and benefit drawing. To learn more or to sign up for a beginner's workshop visit: www.abasbonsai.org.

April 13 – 14: San Jose: San Jose Betsuin Bonsai Club: 43rd Annual Bonsai Exhibition and Demonstration at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin 640 North Fifth Street. Times: Noon – 5 PM Saturday and 11 AM – 4 PM Sunday. Demonstrations on both days by Harry Hirao, Mr. California Juniper, at 1 PM. Plant and vendor sales on both days. For more information visit our website at www.gsbfbonsai.org/sjbonsai/ or contact Ken Azuma at kennethazuma@sbcglobal.net

April 20 & 21: Palo Alto, California: Kusamura Bonsai Club: 53rd Annual Show at the Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road. Admission is free. Show hours are Saturday Noon – 5 PM, and Sunday: 11 AM – 5 PM. Guest demonstrator Kathy Shaner Saturday at 1:30 PM, and club members Sunday at 1:30 PM. Club member tree sales and benefit drawings both days. For more information contact Mark O'Brien at 650-327-0450 or mobrientrees@hotmail.com.

April 20: Napa: Napa Valley Bonsai Club: Annual Show, Napa Senior Center, 1500 Jefferson St. Hours: 11 AM to 4 PM. Demonstration at 1:30 PM. Silent Auction, Member Sales, Vendor Sales, and Raffle Drawing. Free admission and parking. For more information call 707-255-8822 or jd Kahn@sbcglobal.net or visit our website

May 4 & 5: Sacramento: Sacramento Bonsai Club: 67th Annual Show at the Sacramento Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Show hours are Saturday 12 – 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM. Demonstration both days at 2 PM by Boon Manakitivipart. Refreshments, benefit drawings, plant & tree sales. Free Admission. For more information, please contact Gary Judd at 916-622-8048 or visit our website at sacramentobonsaiclub.com.

May 5: Watsonville: Watsonville Bonsai Club: 40th annual Bonsai Show from 10 AM to 4 PM at the Watsonville Buddhist Temple, 423 Bridge St. Fine exhibit of local bonsai artist's creations. Over fifty trees will be on exhibit, both Daiza and Shohin, ancient and young. A demonstration by the renowned bonsai artist Katsumi Kinoshita will be held at 1:30 PM. A raffle of bonsai items and plants, including the demonstration tree, will be held after the demonstration. Tea and cookies will be served. Parking is available for bus size vehicles, so come as a group or club. Plant sales will provide plenty of material for the creative eye. For more information contact: Don White @ (831) 724-9283 or whiteslib@aol.com; or Dave Dierking (831) 338-2771 or dcdierking@yahoo.com.

Articles or Services for Sale (or give-away)

Wanted to Buy (or for free)

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 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>

Also find EBBS on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/EastBayBonsaiSociety> and on Twitter at

<http://www.twitter.com/eastbaybonsai>

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

Meeting Program

Apr 10 Tree Critique - Michael Hagendorn
Apr 28 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
May 8 Bonsai Basics – Tom Colby
May 26 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Jun 12 Organic Bonsai 101 – Jane Wirth
Jun 23 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
Jul 10 Auction
Jul 28 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Dennis Hawkins
Aug 17 Potluck picnic – hosted by Janet Nelson and Rick Trumm
Aug 25 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – JD Lin
Sep 11 Preparing Trees for Show
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 Juniper Jubilee
Nov 24 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Dec 11 Holiday Dinner

Special Event

Jun 22 Field Trip – details tbd

Oct 12-13 Fall Show – Peter Tea