



The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXI, No. 8

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



[facebook.com/eastbaybonsai](https://www.facebook.com/eastbaybonsai)



twitter.com/EastBayBonsai

August Potluck Picnic: August 17, 2013 @ 3:00 pm - sunset
Nelson-Trumm Residence – see below for location and directions

(No regular meeting in August)

President's Note

I could write a whole column of thank you's for the success of July's auction. We met our financial goal thanks to many members who generously donated plants and items. Moreover, we had good trees to auction and a good time doing it. Tom Colby's article gives the details. Thank you all!

Now, I turn my attention to our fall show on Oct. 12 and 13. I have been reviewing my trees and pondering the likely candidates I could have ready to show. I try to estimate my moss needs for soil coverage and from where it will come. I have started looking around for moss on my walks. There will be more discussion on Show prepping at our September meeting.

The next several months look very exciting for EBBS members. Your Board has already scheduled presentations from regional bonsai notables like Gordon Deeg, John Thompson, Bill Castellon, Jay McDonald, and Tim Kong. How much more exciting can it get?

John N.

August Meeting

The August meeting will be our annual potluck picnic which will be held this year on Saturday, August 17 at the home of Janet Nelson and Rick Trumm. The picnic will start at 3:00 and continue until sunset. This is one of the social highlights of the year and should not be missed. Janet and Rick have a large collection of spectacular bonsai which they are happy to show off. The chance to see and enjoy their beautiful bonsai is alone worth your visit. Best of all, the picnic is a chance for members to socialize on an informal basis. The meal is potluck and the food assignments are as follows:

Appetizer -- Last name H-L
Entree -- Last name M-R
Side dish or salad -- Last name S-Z
Dessert -- Last name A-G

Be sure to bring utensils required for serving your contribution. The club will provide wine and soft drinks. The Oakland hills can occasionally be a bit cool and breezy so dress in layers. Also bring hats and sun screen.

Directions are as follows: If coming from the north or the east take Highway 24, or if coming from the south take Highway 580 to Highway 13 (the Warren Freeway). Proceed to the Redwood Road exit and go east (up the hill) on Redwood Road. Take a right onto Skyline Blvd which is at the summit. Make a hard left onto Balmoral Drive and find #5749. The house will be on your left on a corner a short distance up the hill. If lost or you need other information, call 510-482-8428.

See you there!

September Meeting

The September meeting will feature short presentations on how to prepare for our show in October. Bob Gould will show us how to best present your trees by cleaning the pots and applying top dressing. Janice Dilbeck is in charge of the overall show layout and will provide insights of how essential features contribute to the show. Lastly Linda Soliven, our show chair, will discuss show logistics. It will be a full but informative evening.

Auction

The July auction was a great success. Final accounting is in and it is clear that our treasury benefitted from all the efforts of the many club members who helped to organize and stage the event, as well as those who bought and sold plants. Once again Janet Nelson coordinated the event and her efforts made for a smooth operation.

Special thanks to the people who logged the sales and to the cashiers. Both of these tasks require people who can function well during occasionally hectic times.

The success of any auction rests on the auctioneers and our two auctioneers, Jim Gremel and John Nackley, were real pros. Thanks to both.



This year saw the introduction of a new concept. Minimum bid on any item was ten dollars, which allowed the auction to focus on higher value items. This was a great improvement and will be continued as a regular feature of our auctions in the future. Members were urged to hold items valued at less than ten dollars for the sales table at our show.



EBBS owes a debt of gratitude to those members who donated items to the auction. Your generosity will be repaid by the club being able to fund outstanding speakers for future programs. There were also donations from local nurseries. Familiar names were Lone Pine Nursery and Deer Meadow Nursery, as well as less familiar names to the bonsai world, Moraga Garden Center, 1400 Moraga Rd., Lafayette and McDonnell Nursery, 196 Moraga Way, Orinda. All of these nurseries have contributed to our auction in the past with generous donations and it behooves us to go out of our way to patronize them when we need supplies, landscaping plants, pre-bonsai trees or finished bonsai. When you do, please let them know

how much EBBS appreciated their donation. They are all good folks and are worthy of your support.

The big surprise of the evening was the donation of food by Becheesos. Those of you who enjoyed their offerings know just how good their cooking really is. Do drop into this restaurant before an EBBS meeting or, better, whenever you are hungry for some good food. When you do, please let the management know how much we appreciated their donation. Becheesos Restaurant is located at 246 Grand Avenue in Oakland, across the street from Fairyland and very convenient to the Garden Center.



A very special thank you goes to our president, John Nackley, who singlehandedly rounded up donations from commercial sources. John has been amazingly successful in his donation quest. You have set the bar very high, John. The club thanks you for your efforts.



Redwood Empire Bonsai Society Show

The REBS show is the last weekend of August in Santa Rosa and is really worth the trip. Details of the show are presented in the ***Events by Others*** section of this newsletter.

The show typically has over 200 fine bonsai on exhibition. Kathy Shaner is the club sensei so you know that all the trees on display will be of high quality. Trees will range from masterpieces to trees that are a few years away from being a masterpiece. The REBS show is arguably the largest and best club show in the whole country and is only a pleasant drive away.

The show features a large vendor area and you will see many of the same vendors that were at the Lake Merritt Bonsai Garden fundraiser last winter. Here is the place to pick up anything that you might need for the EBBS show this fall.

In past shows there have been vendors of stands as well as inexpensive slabs that can serve in place of a stand. There will be a large number of pots for sale. If you are in the market for a stand or a pot, be sure to measure your tree before you leave for the show to ensure that your selection will be the right size. Need an accent plant? There will probably be a huge variety available. As a matter of fact, there will probably be even some finished bonsai for sale, although, as you can imagine, these trees are not inexpensive. The REBS show is a nice days outing and there is a lot to see.

Bonsai Basics

The goal of bonsai is to grow a tree in a pot that captures the essence of nature and is in perfect health. This sounds simple, but on close inspection, combines two very different challenges. These challenges both make growing bonsai an exciting endeavor as well as a source of bafflement for a person new to the field. The first of the challenges facing the new enthusiasts is the problem of growing a healthy tree in a pot, and the second is capturing the essence of nature.

Most trees are planted in the ground and they grow well even when they are pretty well forgotten. The tree will gladly respond to a little tender loving care with even better growth. However, when the same tree is placed in a pot, the situation becomes vastly more complicated. The tree will grow more slowly in a pot which means that it recovers slowly, if at all, from any error in cultivation. There are many different aspects of cultivation that must be managed.

Proper watering is usually not a problem for a tree planted in the ground, but becomes crucial for a tree in a pot. The limited root space in the pot can quickly dry out leading to the death of the tree. On the other hand, over watering can cause root rot which may also kill the tree.

The best choice of soil is a little different for each tree and also depends on how much water is applied and how long between repotting. The best time to repot and the best time to trim your tree can be different for

each species of tree. The trees need to be fertilized and there are several choices of fertilizer available.

These considerations are complicated by the fact that many different species of trees are used for bonsai and each species has their own specific horticultural needs. So what works for one tree may not be the best for another. What a tree needs is also dependent on your location. What works in a hot, dry climate may not work well in a cool, humid climate.

The bonsai world is flooded with either misleading or incomplete information. As an example, one frequently now hears that there must be no organic material such as fir bark in a potting mix. The rationale is that the organic material will break down over time and thus the composition of the mix will change over time. The decomposition of the organic material will increasingly make the mix both drain more poorly and hold more water which, in turn, can lead to root rot.

The all-inorganic potting mix idea is a relatively recent development. Older bonsai literature is filled with recipes for potting mixes which contain organic material and, in some cases, a lot of organic material. These sources also reveal pictures of many bonsai grown in these mixes that are true masterpieces. In spite of the probable presence of organic material in the potting mix, the trees are superbly grown. The presence of organic material in potting mixes is therefore not necessarily bad. A more complete answer to the question of desirability of having organics in the potting mix is that it requires you to monitor the mix carefully to see that it continues to drain well, and that you repot a bit more frequently. So if you are willing to do this, organics are fine in your mix. Leaving it out of your mix simply makes life a bit easier because the composition of the mix does not change over time.



So how does a newcomer navigate all this? First understand that for each tree there are specific horticultural requirements, but there are many ways to meet these requirements. There is no single book, person or web site that will tell you *the one and only way* to grow bonsai well. But each of these sources will tell you *one of the many approaches* to grow bonsai. You have to sift through a lot of information to find the requirements of your tree, and the method that works best for you in meeting these requirements.

To help in this process, start by regularly attending a club such as EBBS which has a different program each month directed to some aspect of bonsai. Each EBBS meeting also features a "show and tell" table where members display a number of very well grown trees, and sometimes problem trees. Discussions at the meetings often lead to solutions of common problems. EBBS shows always feature a large number of superbly grown trees, and you can ask their owners how they keep them healthy.

Much of the written literature is either so general or is applicable for a very different climate such as the east

coast, and is not particularly helpful. An exception is the bonsai calendar offered by EBBS which lists the month by month activities for growing bonsai at their best in the Bay Area, as well as other information on general bonsai needs. This publication should be on every local bonsai artists' bookshelf.

Workshops are also a great source of information through one-on-one conversation with a qualified instructor. Also, talk to fellow enthusiasts who are always willing to share their experience.

Most important of all is not to give up in despair. Good care of your tree is not all that hard.

We'll leave the essence of nature bit for a later time.

New Club Member

Beverly Martinez is our newest club member. While new to bonsai, she is an avid gardener. If you haven't met her already, please introduce yourself at the picnic or our next club meeting. To add to your club roster, her phone number is (925)437-2347, and e-mail address is martinez_bev@yahoo.com.

EBBS Is Social

The East Bay Bonsai Society has embraced several online social media outlets to broaden the exposure of the club as well as attract younger members.

The EBBS can be found on Facebook at facebook.com/EastBayBonsaiSociety. If you're already a member of Facebook, head over to the link and click the "Like" button. Your personal wall will now feature articles, pictures, and information about the club and its events.

Additional, EBBS has a Twitter account at twitter.com/EastBayBonsai where we tweet many of the same articles that you find from the EBBS' Facebook page. If you already have a Twitter account just "follow" us to get EBBS information via Twitter.

There also a wealth of information on our website, www.eastbaybonsai.org. Besides the existing content, you can also find articles on bonsai and tree care by clicking the "Spotlight" tab towards the top of the home page.

So join the EBBS' virtual social activities and "Like" us on Facebook, "follow" us on Twitter, and read the Web site blog.

Great Opportunity For Hands On Guidance

While new to bonsai, I recently took the opportunity to attend two bonsai workshops with Randall and Bill at Merritt College. When I got there I realized I wasn't the only one, which gave me reassurance I was at the right place. I was seeking help and hands on assistance for my trees.

The two hours I was there was a great experience to get some dedicated time with my trees, and a valuable learning experience for me. I not only learned about what to do with my trees, but also watched as

Randall and Bill explained what to do with the trees that other bonsai enthusiasts brought to the workshop.

I highly recommend spending the time at the workshops. I learn more each time I attend. I can't wait until August to bring more trees to the Merritt College bonsai workshop.

Michael Hylton

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

Regular bonsai workshops will resume this August. These workshops are available to all EBBS members and are an opportunity to work on your own trees under the guidance of fine teachers. They are also the place to get specific answers to the care and maintenance of your trees. Clearly they are the best deal in town for increasing your knowledge of 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) and 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.

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.

August 24&25, Santa Rosa: Redwood Empire Bonsai Society 30th annual Show at the Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building, 1351 Maple Ave, Santa Rosa, California. Hours are 10:00 to 5:00 Saturday and 10:00 to 4:00 on Sunday. There will be demonstrations by Kathy Shaner at 1:00 to 3:00 both days. The demonstration trees will be raffled. The show features a large number of trees, a large vendor area and an extensive member sales area. There is also a silent auction. For more information contact Bob Shimon at 707-884-4126 or at shimon@men.org.

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

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

Meeting **Program**

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 – Tom, Bob, Inge, Janice, Linda
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 – Rick Trumm
Nov 24 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Dec 11 Holiday Dinner

Special Event

Oct 12-13 Fall Show – Peter Tea
