



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

East Bay Bonsai Society

February Meeting: February 13, 2013 @ 7:30 p.m.

President's Note

In these notes I try to explain EBBS Board operations, and hopefully motivate members' participation. At the same time, this updates our members of Board activities. I have been fortunate to have been guided by a dedicated Board whose members actively steer this club. This article is about one of them, Dennis Hawkins. In January, Dennis Hawkins retired from the Board after his two year term and deserves our gratitude for the time he has given EBBS.

January marks a new year for the Board with a rotation of some members. Dennis retired and Inge Woelfel has returned for another two years. Michael Hylton has joined the Board. A few months back, our newsletter writer, Tom Colby, wrote an article on the different types of bonsai clubs, and how our club is *board directed* versus *sensei* led. For 51 years EBBS has operated this way successfully, because of the good will of our members who give time and materially to sustain our activities. Tom pointed out that the Board does the day to day work of planning and scheduling activities instead of taking monthly meeting time for this work.

Over the past two years, Dennis has been an important part of this process. As he is a member of other bonsai clubs and boards, he brought this broad experience on club operations and guided us in difficult times. In the area of plant sales, Dennis organized a system which made our previous efforts appear amateur. 2012's show went better than previous years because of Dennis' efforts in plant sale. Among his friends he is also known for his mechanical and carpentry as well as bonsai skills. The Board will miss the quiet but powerful presence of Dennis in 2013. Thank you, Dennis. Be sure to thank him yourself at February's meeting.

John N.

January Meeting

Jay MacDonald presented his Decidufest, a program devoted to deciduous trees. His program was unusual in that his demo tree was completely styled,

wired and repotted before the meeting. He discussed the tree at length but did no further work on it. His Decidufest was truly a festival. He brought seven trees as examples of fine deciduous bonsai as well as a pyracantha and an olive. The latter two trees are not deciduous, but Jay treats them as if they were.

Jay obviously has a love affair with deciduous trees. He said that there must be at least some of these trees in every show. At the recent convention there was a display of native California bonsai trees. In his view, the display was good, but not complete because deciduous trees were not well represented. In all fairness, there are not a lot of deciduous native trees that make good bonsai.

The demonstration tree was a variegated Japanese maple which has light and dark green leaves. Variegated maples are not often seen as bonsai so this was a particularly choice demonstration tree. Good examples of maples as bonsai are highly ramified. Trees with multiple twiggy (Jays' term) are hard to find. Jay had wired the tree, partly to shape the branches and also to attempt to separate the branches into pads. As the tree leafs out in the spring, Jay recommended that the leaves under the branches be removed to further delineate the pads.

Many deciduous trees can be defoliated in May or June. This process involves removing all the leaves of the tree. The tree responds with a flush of new growth which increases the number of twigs (ramification). Japanese maples are unusual for deciduous trees in that they do not respond well to defoliation. Jay said the maples can be semidefoliated however. In this case, only a few of the largest leaves are removed which gives more light to the underlying leaves.

Jay used lots of wire to style the tree and advised that the tree be watched carefully in the future to prevent wire scars. The demonstration tree had a branch that had been previously scarred by wire. Jay said wire scars heal very slowly if at all, and the best way to deal with this was to cut the branch off. This could be done with the demonstration tree since there were two branches close by that could be moved to cover the gap formed by the removed branch.

Wiring deciduous trees is best done in the early summer when the big flush of spring growth is over and the branches are growing more slowly. This way the wire can stay on the tree longer. Wiring before the flush



of growth in the spring means that the branches are rapidly expanding and wire scarring is far more likely. An added advantage of wiring in the early summer for trees amenable to defoliation is that the branches are more clearly seen without the distraction of leaves.

Jay uses a potting mix for his deciduous trees consisting of two thirds akadama and one third lava. He does not use pumice in his mix. He fertilizes his trees every 14 to 18 days with Miracle Grow fertilizer which is a solid product dissolved in water. He uses the dilution listed on the box. In fact, Jay confessed that he sometimes uses just a bit more fertilizer than the recommended strength, although this should be approached very carefully. The trees are fed from early February to late October. In some cases, the heavy feeding allows the trees to be defoliated more than one time each year, leading to the rapid formation of a highly ramified tree. The deciduous trees need to be watered every day and in the hot areas of the Bay Area more than once a day.

Jay discussed each of the trees he had brought in. He showed two ume (Japanese plum) trees which were extensively ramified. He commented that one of the trees bloomed profusely while the other had not bloomed for several years. An apparent difference between the trees is that the one that bloomed had smooth leaves while the one that did not had slightly fuzzy leaves. It is not clear that the leaf structure correlates with willingness to bloom for these trees but it might be worth taking into account if you are considering the purchase of an ume.



Jay demonstrated with a flowering apricot tree how coarser or thicker branches could be removed to improve the overall ramification of the tree. Among his masterpieces was a large maple tree which demonstrated that extensive ramification gives the illusion of great age to a tree.

Pyracantha and olives are not deciduous trees but Jay grows them as if they were. Both trees can be defoliated and fertilized heavily to increase ramification.

Jay discussed at great length bonsai euphoria which is the feeling that comes with both having and using the skill to create a fine finished bonsai. The skill must be earned by buying good material and working relentlessly on it. He advocates selecting first class material and taking it to workshops given by one of the many bonsai masters in the Bay Area. While fine starting material for a top quality bonsai can be expensive, Jay said that this was the best and quickest way to achieve the euphoria that comes with creating a fine bonsai, and is totally worth the expense. An inexpensive alternative to acquiring fine starting material is to collect material. Jay showed a collected pomegranate tree which had been dug from a garden. It was well on its way to being a fine quality bonsai.

The only pathway to fine bonsai is the long hours spent wiring and trimming your trees. Jay certainly is a wonderful example of a person who exudes bonsai euphoria. His enthusiasm serves as an inspiration to us all.

Bonsai demonstrations typically involve the demonstrator taking a large bush, pruning it as necessary and then wiring it. The result is a more or less finished bonsai which can then be raffled. Wiring generally consumes a major portion of the evening. Sometimes the bush is so crowded that it is not completely clear what the demonstrator is pruning away. These factors tend to make the presentation somewhat less than stimulating for the audience. The January meeting was unusual because the demonstration tree was trimmed, wired, repotted and mossed before the meeting. Jay did not work on the tree at all, but talked at length about the tree, how it was styled and how the lucky winner should care for it. He also talked at length about the care of deciduous trees in general, using examples he had brought. The overall theme of the evening was learning rather than doing. If you liked this format for the meeting, let a board member know so that more can be scheduled in the future.

Each meeting, several different club members volunteer to bring refreshments. The offerings are routinely generous as well as tasty. The folks who brought the refreshments to the January meeting outdid themselves with a particularly nice selection of goodies. A special thanks to these people as well as to all the people who have brought goodies in the past. The presence of refreshments adds to the good karma of the meetings.

February Meeting

Val Monroe will present a program on how to choose a pot for your tree. All too often we select a pot only on the basis that it is the right size for our tree. Val will show us that pots come in many styles and selection of the right style of the pot is very important to effectively complement your tree. Her program is interactive and members will get to match pot styles with individual trees. The program was given a couple of years ago at EBBS and was one of the best programs of the year. Don't miss it! Not only is it a lot of fun, but you will come away with a better understanding of how to choose the best style of pot for your tree.

Bring trees that need pots, pots that need tree choices, and trees with multiple pots that need decisions. Since we will not have a demo tree, please also bring bonsai items for the raffle.

Thanks in advance to Pat Cahill and Ron Reed for providing refreshments for the meeting. Usually we have three volunteers for refreshments and perhaps someone would be willing to fill in for the missing third person. Again, no one signed up for being barista for the meeting. Perhaps some good soul will consent to being the regular barista. The job is not hard and involves heating some water and bringing out the necessities for tea and coffee. Polly Gould will be happy to show you exactly what needs to be done.

March Meeting



Tim Kong is our featured speaker for the March meeting. He has given many programs for EBBS in the past and they all have been a lot of fun as well as informative. The title for his upcoming presentation is The War of the Bonsai Chefs. Whaaat??? Tim is an irrepressible speaker, but this one may be over the top. Knowing Tim it will certainly be an interesting evening. Stay tuned.



Bonsai Sale

Chuck Gallagher, a longtime member of EBBS, is reducing his collection. He has a wide variety of trees for sale as well as pots and stands. Access to quality stands for sale has always been a problem, and Chuck has some splendid stands which are available. Here is the chance to purchase a stand or two which can be used to make an outstanding display of your trees in our upcoming show in October. Chuck has also long been interested in suiseki and has some fine stones for sale which are on the cutting edge of the art of suiseki. These stones are not only beautiful for display by themselves, but can be used in place of accent plants in tokonoma displays, or in simple displays of trees. Last but not least, Chuck has cactus and garden ornaments for sale.

Here is your chance to make some splendid acquisitions to your bonsai collection. Call Chuck at 925-937-9936 for an appointment.

More Cut Paste, Part two: The Plot Thickens

Last month you were left standing back and admiring your handiwork. You had purchased a large bush and had styled it into a potential bonsai masterpiece. In the process, you had removed a large branch, carefully trimmed the ragged edges of the cut, and then sealed the cut with cut paste to keep the raw wood moist in order to encourage callus formation. Now all you had to do was to wait for the cut to heal over to completely hide the place where the branch was removed. However, the story does not always end there.

In some species of trees, large cuts heal over relatively quickly. For example, trident maples can heal cuts as large as an inch or more in diameter in as little as a couple of years. During all this time the raw wood exposed by the cut must be kept sealed with cut paste. But once the callus completely covers the raw wood the cut paste is no longer needed. If the callus is growing slowly or has stopped growing, sometimes lightly trimming the inside edge of the callus with a sharp knife can stimulate growth. The sad fact is that some species of trees such as oaks and hornbeams heal very slowly if at all, and raw wood is exposed permanently.

The presence of a lot of water and air, with some help from friendly bacteria, causes the cellular stickem which holds wood fibers together to become unstuck, and the wood dissolves into mush. This process affects

all wood, although the process works faster in some cases than others. Examples of the two extremes are teak, which endures for many decades soaking wet in hot humid climates in South East Asia, and oak, which is a very hard and tough wood but can extensively decay in as little as two or three years when kept wet. The objective for bonsai artists is to keep the raw wood of these trees sealed to keep the excessive moisture and air out.

Cut paste can be used to protect the wood, but better alternatives are products which penetrate the wood and then cure to a permanent water impervious seal. One such product is Wood Hardener made by the Minwax Company. PC-Petrifier is a newer wood hardening product which is water-based. Both of these products are widely available in hardware stores.

The consequences of wood decaying into mush can vary depending on your vision of the finished tree. Most deciduous trees emphasize the bark and the line of the trunk. A large scar resulting from the decaying process would greatly detract from the tree. On the other hand, on a conifer with lots of jins and shari, there is a possibility that decaying wood where a branch was removed could add to the look of the tree. In this case, the decay could be allowed to proceed and then at some point, the decayed wood would be removed and the remaining wood would be sealed to stop the process. This technique involves a bit of brinksmanship and is not widely practiced in the United States. However, it is practiced occasionally in European bonsai circles. In fact, there are advocates to letting all the wood of the tree decay which leaves a hollow core.

Needless to say, using the decay process to style a tree has problems, the biggest of which is that you really have no control of the process. You cannot direct with confidence where the decay will go, nor can you stop the decay just at the right point to prevent the remainder of the tree from collapsing. The best procedure by far is to carefully protect exposed wood to prevent the decay process from starting. If you want to enlarge the place where a branch was removed, best to carve the raw wood and then properly seal the cut.

Mammoth Fundraiser

The excitement is building for the Mammoth Fundraiser which will be held on Saturday, February 23, and Sunday, February 24, at the Lake Merritt garden center. The Fundraiser is one of the main sources of income for the bonsai garden.

Saturday features an auction of everything from very affordable starter trees to finished bonsai projected to sell for many hundreds to a few thousands of dollars. Some exceptional pots, stands and suiseki will also be offered. There will be something for every taste and budget, and there is nothing better to get the adrenaline flowing than a good auction. Preview of the auction items starts at 12:00 pm and the auction starts at 1:00 pm. Auction items may also be seen in advance on the gardens web site (www.gsbf-bonsai.org/lake-merritt).

Sunday will feature sales by a number of vendors starting at 9:00 am. Consignment sales start at 10:00

am. If you have bonsai related items that you would like to sell with the understanding that a percentage of the selling price goes to the garden, bring them to the sales area before 10:00 am. Details on the sale can be obtained from Linda Soliven or Bob Gould.

The garden needs two volunteers from EBBS to help with dispensing food on Sunday. The shift is from 12:30 to 2:30 pm and the job mainly involves making sure that the lunches are only given out to people who have volunteered their time in other capacities. If you would like to be part of the team making the fundraiser a success, here is your chance.



Dues

Hear ye Hear ye! If you haven't paid your annual dues yet, best to do so. Shortly, non dues paying members will be dropped from membership and will no longer receive the outstanding EBBS newsletter either by email or snail mail. The annual dues are \$30 for single memberships and \$40 for couples. If you prefer to receive a hard copy of the newsletter by snail mail, there is an additional charge of \$5. Our treasurer, Pat Cahill, will be delighted to receive your check for dues at the next regular meeting. Dues can also be mailed to: EBBS Treasurer, 4933 Cochrane, Oakland, CA, 94618-2701.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

Bonsai workshops are held at Merritt College and are available to all EBBS members. These workshops are an opportunity to work on your own trees under the guidance of fine teachers. Clearly they are the best deal in town for increasing your knowledge about the art of bonsai. Leading the workshops are two distinguished artists who are also members of EBBS, Bill Castelon and Randall Lee. The meetings are 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 may be addressed either to 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.

February 23 & 24 - Oakland: Mammoth Fundraiser 2013 at Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave, Lake Merritt. This is the annual fundraiser for the GSBF Collection Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt (BGLM). Auction of fabulous bonsai on Saturday. Preview items at 12 Noon; auction starts at 1 PM. RSVP Club Connection Event at BGLM 4 – 7 PM. Scheduled Sunday events: Vendor sales 9 AM – 4 PM. Bonsai and Pre-bonsai sales 10 AM – 4 PM. Demonstrations by Kathy Shaner and team 11:30 AM – 3 PM. Raffle drawings at 1 PM, 2 PM and 3 PM. Contact Randi Keppeler 925-776-2342 or bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com.

March 30 – Oakland: Lakeshore Avenue Free Neighborhood Plant Exchange, 3811 Lakeshore Ave (easy parking). Want an instant new garden? Bring your own plants and pick up new ones! All types and sizes of healthy plants are welcome, from small cuttings up to full size. Saturday from 12:00 noon to 4 PM. Admission is Free. For more details, go to www.plantexchange.wordpress.com.

Articles or Services for Sale (or give-away)

Wanted to Buy (or for free)

Chuck Gallagher has a wide variety of trees for sale as well as pots and stands. He has some fine stones for sale which are on the cutting edge of the art of suiseki. He is also selling cactus and garden ornaments. Call Chuck at 925-937-9936 for an appointment.

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. 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
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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>

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

Feb	13	Selecting Pots for Trees – Valerie Monroe
Mar	13	War of the Bonsai Chefs – Tim Kong
Mar	24	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould
Apr	10	Michael Hagendorn – details tbd
Apr	28	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
May	8	tbd
May	26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Jun	12	tbd
Jun	23	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
Jul	10	Auction
Jul	28	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Dennis Hawkins
Aug		Potluck picnic – details tbd
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

Oct 12-13 Fall Show
