



# The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXI, No. 5

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

## East Bay Bonsai Society

### May Meeting:

May 8, 2013 @ 7:30 p.m.

#### President's Note

Does EBBS serve its members? Membership in an association should be rewarding because the give and take of joining makes it worthwhile. Otherwise, we would all be lone artists, puttering away in our own yards and consulting journals for any personal expansion.

Last month's meeting was revealing in why we come together as a club to share with fellow members. Michael Hagedorn's presentation was wonderful in terms of expanding individual knowledge of the finer points of bonsai. Yet, it would not have happened without the work of many individuals.

First attention goes to the members who gave up personal time to set up for Michael's critique. This was Bob Gould and Polly, Roger Brady, Dennis Mui, Dennis Hawkins, and Joan and Jim Heady, who were there a good half hour early to set up the facility.

Several Board members entertained Michael at a no host dinner at a local restaurant. Janice Nelson and Rick Trumm generously provided overnight accommodations for our guest thus saving the club the cost of providing a hotel. Michael Hylton took photographs of the presentation needed for an article in *Golden Statements*. Tom Colby took notes and will author this article. Thanks to all of you who helped in the clean up.

Lastly, I appreciate Bob Hilvers of the Educational Fund of GSBF for selecting our submission as a project to fund. GSBF's grant made the whole thing possible.

Michael Hagedorn had such a good impression of our club's *esprit de corps*; he commented that we seemed a healthy club. I hope we can all take pride in our accomplishment and aim for more of the same in the future.

Save this date: Saturday, June 22, 2013! The EBBS Board has organized a field trip to one of the bonsai oriented nurseries of Northern California, Lone Pine Garden and Nursery in Sebastopol. Last year this trip was one of our club's highlights, with picnicking and bonsai shopping. More details will be in June's newsletter regarding ride sharing and caravanning.

John N.

#### May Meeting

The May meeting will be devoted to bonsai basics and will feature presentations by four distinguished speakers who are club members. 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 our trees into a pot when repotting, and finally, Tom Colby will discuss tools for bonsai. While the meeting will be primarily directed to people new to bonsai, there are always new things for us all to learn.

Thanks in advance to Janet Nelson and Rich Trumm, Ruth Clifford and Randal Lee for offering to provide refreshments for the meeting.

#### April Meeting

The meeting opened with the show and tell table. Bob Gould brought in a large satsuki azalea as a preview of the satsuki show coming up in May. Details of the show are in the "events by others" section of this newsletter. The plant was blooming very early and as a result, was not at its' best, but nonetheless was spectacular. Bob also brought in a small Korean Lilac which was covered with fragrant blooms. It was an altogether satisfactory plant that should be grown more frequently.



The featured speaker was Michael Hagedorn whose presence was in part funded by a GSBF grant for education. Michael was a potter for ten years and as time went by, he developed an interest in bonsai. The

interest became so strong that he found that he was thinking more about trees than his pots. His many questions about the techniques applicable to bonsai lead him to apply for an apprenticeship in Japan. A Japanese master, Shinji Suzuki, accepted him as a student and, after three years of study, Michael was recognized as a Certified Bonsai Master. He wrote a book entitled **Post Dated, The Schooling of an Irreverent Bonsai Monk**, which describes his apprenticeship. It took five years of practice back in the United States before he fully appreciated and understood all that he had learned in Japan.

The focus of the meeting was a critique of members' trees. Members brought more than two dozen trees and Michael's comments extended far beyond styling.



On consideration of a fine California juniper, Michael mentioned that the flow of the trunk should extend to and include the branches. This would create an overall dynamic flow of the tree and would define the direction of the tree. In response to a question about possibly dropping one of the branched into a lower position, the reply was that this would not be desirable because it would distract from the flow of the tree. Since the tree had a basically simple form as well as a wide trunk, the tree could be positioned so it came directly toward the observer. This would make the tree even more dynamic.

As a general statement, collected junipers have the potential of being very dynamic. Because of this, many of the usual criteria for good bonsai can be ignored. The junipers generally do not have good nebaris. They may also have bar branches or a pigeon breast trunk (in which the trunk comes toward the viewer and then bends backward away from the viewer), which are usually considered faults in other types of bonsai. The important features of collected junipers are the movement of the trunk and visibility of the live vein from the front of the tree.

Very important considerations when repotting are the careful choice of the front and the inclination of the tree, to best show the movement. Here, small adjustments can make a big difference. When styling

the tree, the foliage should be away from the jins if there are a number on one side of the tree. These jins would have been the result of a natural catastrophe which would have spared the foliage on the other side of the tree.

An old adage is that you should continually pinch the foliage of junipers to create tight pads. Michael made the point that current thinking no longer supports this. Pinching would weaken the tree since the strength of these trees is in the growing tips of the branches. A far better approach is to let all the branches grow and then remove the weaker branches by cutting them just inside the pad with scissors. This operation may be repeated in a few months on subsequent growth. Needle junipers are an exception in that all growing tips can be removed, but by cutting with scissors and not pinching.

In contrast with most junipers, pines derive their strength from their roots, and all the growing tips of the branches can be successfully removed from healthy plants in the decandling process.

Michael made the general observation that currently popular bonsai soils are relatively coarse. The components of many of these soil mixtures are relatively large chunks of lava, pumice and akadama. The soils drain very well and are generally excellent for growing bonsai, but also dry out quickly at the surface. The nearly continually dry media near the surface prevents roots from growing in this zone. In essence, only the lower fraction of the pot provides a good habitat for root growth. Attempting to alleviate this problem by increased watering can lead to weaker roots and does not really solve this problem.

In Japan, many trees have a thick layer of moss growing on the potting media, and root activity occurs in the entire depth of the media, even into the moss itself. Somewhat contrary to popular belief, Michael stated that our trees would benefit from a layer of moss on the



surface of the potting media to allow the medium to dry out at a uniform rate. The moss could either be a layer of shredded sphagnum moss (pushed through a sieve), or some naturally growing moss. The best moss to grow is very short napped. Coarser growing moss should be

avoided since it can quickly grow up the trunk of the tree causing the trunk to rot.

Examination of a pine tree indicated that the tree was not growing vigorously. Brown tips on the needles suggested that the tree was not receiving as much water as was needed for healthy growth. Trees can lack water for two completely different reasons. First, and most simply, they are just not watered enough. Secondly, and less obviously, they are either watered too much or the potting soil drains poorly which has led to root rot. In this case, the tree lacks water because there are not enough roots left to absorb the water. It was left to the owner of the tree to see which of these possibilities applied.

In discussing the styling of the pine, it was noted that conifers generally grow in harsher environments than deciduous trees, and, as a result, branches are usually shorter and growth is more compact. Applying this notion to the pine in question, reducing the length of the branches would improve the appearance of the tree.

A member apologized for bringing in a very young Japanese maple for comments. Michaels' reply was both gracious and thought provoking. He said that young trees have unlimited potential, but older trees have only limited potential since their trunks and branches can only be repositioned with great difficulty.



He mentioned that Japanese maples require a strong nebari. The best way to develop a good nebari on this young tree was to plant it in a large and deep pot. A disk of impervious material should be placed directly under the trunk to cause the roots to spread out over the barrier before growing down into the soil. This would eventually result in a fine nebari. The tree should be allowed to grow unchecked for one year and then cut back. The next year the tree should be repotted. By alternating yearly cut back and repotting, the tree should develop quickly into a fine bonsai.

A potential tokonoma display led to a discussion of the fine points of display. All elements used in a tokonoma generate one of three feelings, "shin", "gyo", or "so". "Shin" is powerful or dynamic, and is characterized by powerful trees and black lacquer,

square corners and dark wood for the stand. "Gyo" is stable, maternal or majestic and is characterized by red lacquer, round corners and bright wood for the stand. "So" is childlike. This feeling is represented by less formal elements such as mats used in the display instead of stands. For a particular display, all elements should have the same feeling.

The elements considered for the tokonoma all had a feeling of "gyo" and were satisfactory in this regard. However, there was a problem with the display in that it did not reflect a particular place or time. The tree was a juniper which grows naturally in the mountains. The scroll composition was a water scene. The tree and the scroll came from different places and were mismatched. Avoiding this kind of problem requires that you know what kinds of plants and animals live in the environment of your tree.

The placement of the accent plant in a tokonoma display is very important. If too close it is claustrophobic, but if too far the necessary tension is lost. Sometimes a very slight adjustment in placement will make a large difference in the effectiveness of the display.

Michael's presentation was far more than the usual critique where only improving the style of trees is discussed. His comments summarized above reflected his deep understanding of the art of bonsai and were appreciated by all who attended the meeting. EBBS Board certainly hopes that Michael is available for future presentations.

### **June Meeting**

The June meeting will feature a talk by Jane Wirth who is a master gardener and a bonsai enthusiast. She will present a program on organic bonsai gardening. With her background as a master gardener she will provide a new look at how we grow our bonsai. It should be an interesting evening.

### **Our Prez**

Our East Bay Bonsai Society president John Nackley does a lot of things to help the society that are behind the scenes. Recently he outdid himself. He was the one who saw an opportunity for EBBS to get a grant from GSBF to bring in someone from outside the area as a speaker. He contacted Michael Hagedorn and determined his availability as a speaker for our April meeting. He convinced the Board that we could do this, arranged with Michael to come, attended to all the necessary details the visit entailed and finally served as Michael's part time chauffeur.

Those of you that attended the meeting know what a fine presentation Michael gave and it all was due to John's efforts. Thanks for all your hard work, John. You really scored on this one!

### **Questions about Wire**

Is annealed wire storage stable? It turns out that annealed wire is not stable during storage. It becomes harder over time because of precipitation hardening, a process in which impurities incorporated in a metal slowly react with the metal. The products disrupt the

crystal structure of the metal and increase the hardness of the metal. Great! Why in earth do I need to know this and why should I care? It turns out that in the annealing process of both copper and aluminum wire oxygen is dissolved into the metal and the annealed wire slowly becomes harder over time due to the reaction of the oxygen with the metal. The good news is that this process is so slow and so slight under normal storage conditions that it is really not worth worrying about. The rate of hardening increases with temperature so it is probably best not to permanently store your wire in full sun or in a hot attic, but most of us do not do this anyway.

How long do I leave the wire on? The absolute time limit for leaving wire on a tree is that the wire must come off before scarring takes place and this time depends on how fast the tree is growing. Azaleas are a fast growing tree and probably in six months the wire is ready to be removed, particularly because scarring greatly impacts the appearance of the tree. California junipers are very slow growing and wire can be left on for two or three years before scarring is a problem, and even then, slight scarring can add to the overall texture of the tree.

So how do we manage all this? As a rough rule of thumb wire can be left on most trees for about a year, but it is crucial to frequently check on the condition of the wire on your tree to prevent scarring.

How do I get wire off? The best way to remove wire from a tree is to "unwind" the wire in a single piece from a branch. A temptation is to cut the wire off with wire cutters. While this is a bit faster than unwinding the wire, the risk is that it is easy to overlook a loop of wire, and particularly so on the smaller size of wire. This loop will eventually cut deeply into the branch and, in the worst case, will strangle the branch and cause the branch to die.

And then what? The whole idea of wiring is to hold the branch in a new and, in our infinite wisdom, better position. As the branch grows, it eventually does not need the support of the wire to maintain the new position. After a year, in many cases, the branch cheerfully holds the new position after removal of the wire. But this time can vary significantly from tree to tree, and even branch to branch on the same tree. If the branch does not hold the new position when the wire is removed, the branch must be rewired.

A couple of hard cases are spruce and cedars. These trees never quite get the message that their branches should go in another direction, and it seems that when the wire that has been on for more than a year is removed, the branches issue a mighty **sprong** and return to exactly where they came from a year ago before they were wired. Much patience and many years of rewiring are needed for these trees to finally get them to do what you want them to.

A technique that sometimes helps is to gently flex the branch several times before establishing the final position of the branch. The flexing of the branch causes small cracks in the branch and when the branch is positioned, the cracks slowly heal over time to form

scar tissue which helps to hold the branch in the new position.

Can I anneal copper wire that has been removed from a tree so that I can reuse it? All you need to do to anneal copper wire for reuse is to heat it until it glows a dull red color. A propane torch will do the trick, although you have to be sure that the entire wire is heated to this temperature. Either you must straighten the piece before annealing, which is not easy for the larger sizes of wire, or you anneal the piece, straighten it and then anneal it again. If you manage to do all this successfully, you are still stuck with a relatively short piece of wire. Although all this is possible, is it worth the hassle? It probably is not for most of us.

### **Invitation to the BASA Show**

The Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai would like to personally invite members of East Bay Bonsai Society to their annual Satsuki Azalea Bonsai show on May 18-19. This is the prettiest show of the year, with so many satsuki azaleas blooming in a vast array of colors, shapes and styles. Several BASA members are also EBBS members so you will see familiar faces who will be happy to show you around and answer questions you may have about the amazing trees on display.

The show is held at the Lakeside Garden Center in Oakland, 666 Bellevue, Lake Merritt. Hours are 10-5 on Saturday and 10-4 Sunday. There will be an educational forum at 1 pm on Saturday, and a demonstration on Sunday featuring well known and loved azalea expert Johnny Uchida, styling a tree to be raffled at the conclusion of his presentation. Admission is free and there will be a member sales area and benefit drawings.

We'd love to see you there. This is a show even non-bonsai people will enjoy because of the colors and chance to walk the beautiful gardens at the Garden Center, so be sure to bring spouses and friends. They'll be sure to thank you.

Candace Key

### **Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College**

Bonsai workshops are held at 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 on the culture 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 to Randall at 510-864-0841.

**Special notice: The workshop for May will be on the 20<sup>th</sup>, not the fourth Monday, because the campus**

**will be closed. This will be the last workshop until the fourth Monday in August.**

### **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 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](http://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](mailto:whiteslib@aol.com); or Dave Dierking (831) 338-2771 or [dcdierking@yahoo.com](mailto:dcdierking@yahoo.com).

May 18 & 19: Sacramento: Satsuki Aikokai Association of Sacramento: Annual Show at Shepard Garden Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Hours are Saturday,

10 AM – 5 PM and Sunday, 10 AM – 4 PM with Demonstrations at 2 PM daily. Workshops, vendors, satsuki information booth, and raffles daily. For more information contact Ronn Pigram at (916) 428-8505 or email: [satsukiaikokaisac@sbcglobal.net](mailto:satsukiaikokaisac@sbcglobal.net).

June 1 – 2: San Mateo: Sei Boku Bonsai Kai: 30th Annual Show at the San Mateo Garden Center, 605 Parkside Way, next to Beresford Park. Admission is free. Saturday and Sunday 10 AM to 4 PM. Demonstrations from 1 – 3PM both days. Door prizes, vendor sales, and member plant sales will be featured. There will also be Dr. Bonsai to answer questions regarding bonsai care. For additional information contact Marsha Mekisich at 650-477-4761 or [eclectic.gardener@yahoo.com](mailto:eclectic.gardener@yahoo.com).

June 9: Monterey: Monterey Bonsai Club: 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition at the Monterey Buddhist Temple, 1150 Noche Buena Street, Seaside. Show hours are 11 AM – 4 PM with demonstration at 1:30 PM by Katsumi Kinoshita. Sales area will include bonsai pots and plants. For more information contact: Dianne Woods at [vinca27@comcast.net](mailto:vinca27@comcast.net) or Atsuko Kinoshita (831) 375-4290 or [atsukokinoshi@aol.com](mailto:atsukokinoshi@aol.com)

### **Articles or Services for Sale (or give-away)**

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#### **Wanted to Buy (or for free)**

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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.

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<b>East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2013</b>
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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**

<b>May</b>	<b>8</b>	Bonsai Basics – Tom Colby
<b>May</b>	<b>26</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
<b>Jun</b>	<b>12</b>	Organic Bonsai 101 – Jane Wirth
<b>Jun</b>	<b>23</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
<b>Jul</b>	<b>10</b>	Auction
<b>Jul</b>	<b>28</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Dennis Hawkins
<b>Aug</b>	<b>17</b>	Potluck picnic – hosted by Janet Nelson and Rick Trumm
<b>Aug</b>	<b>25</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – JD Lin
<b>Sep</b>	<b>11</b>	Preparing Trees for Show
<b>Sep</b>	<b>22</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
<b>Oct</b>	<b>9</b>	No club meeting due to proximity to show
<b>Oct</b>	<b>27</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
<b>Nov</b>	<b>13</b>	Juniper Jubilee
<b>Nov</b>	<b>24</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
<b>Dec</b>	<b>11</b>	Holiday Dinner

**Special Event**

<b>Jun</b>	<b>22</b>	Field Trip – details tbd
<b>Oct 12-13</b>		Fall Show – Peter Tea

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