



# The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



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## East Bay Bonsai Society

**September Meeting:** September 11, 2013 @ 7:30 p.m.

### President's Note

Peter Tea, the highlight of our 53<sup>rd</sup> club exhibition, is a rising star in the bonsai world who recently interned in Japan. He has already done workshops in San Francisco and at REBS. His appearance at our show is a credit to your Board's foresight to apply to him while he was still in Japan. He will bring a different approach to our view of bonsai art.

We can all enjoy his presence this year in several ways: *Introduce yourself* to him and seek his advice while he strolls through the show or lounges in the hospitality room. He is very approachable for all levels of the art. *Attend his workshop* on Saturday afternoon which runs from 1 to 4pm at the cost of only \$50. These workshops are for the novice to get individual training, the veteran artist to refine his views in a fresh way, and for everyone in between. *Stay for the demonstration* he provides Sunday afternoon where again he will address the whole club on his approach to seeing the bonsai future in a demonstration tree. This session can be the most informative part of the weekend as Peter addresses the art of bonsai from A to Z, as he views the yet unseen potential of this virgin tree.

The positive impact of our club's participation in these three areas gives Peter a clear message that will spread, and facilitates EBBS in obtaining future artists for our club. Our show is a reflection of our club's health in the many ways we participate. Setup, clean up, volunteering for the various jobs of hospitality, reception and security and enjoying the beauty of it all are ways we signal the vitality of our club to visitors and the bonsai world at large. Let us create and enjoy another great show!

John N.

### September Meeting

The September meeting will be devoted to helping us to prepare for our show in October. Joe Byrd will tell us about dressing up your tree for the show. He will show us how to top dress the tree and how to clean the pot. These are the final touches that will make all the difference in the appearance of your tree. This is a fine

chance to formally meet and greet the next honcho of the Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt.

Janice Dilbeck will talk about how the trees in the show are arranged. The board was delighted that she would do this because the overall arrangement of the trees in the show had never been presented as a program. If you have been curious in past shows about all the fussing about placement of which tree goes where, Janice will explain the rationale to us. She has arranged the trees in past shows and has a very good eye on how it all comes together so she is well qualified for this presentation. She will provide an insight of how a well presented show should look. This will provide criteria for judging other shows that you might attend and will allow you to particularly appreciate a well presented show.

Lastly Linda Soliven, our show chair will discuss the mechanics of the show. She is always well organized and her presentation will make for a smooth setup and operation of the show. She will lay out what needs to be done as well as answer questions that you might have. If you have not already signed up to volunteer for an active part in the show, she will provide an opportunity for you to do so.

There was no formal signup for refreshments for the September meeting. If you have enjoyed refreshments in the past, now is the time to show your appreciation by bringing something for the refreshment table.

### August Potluck

The August potluck was held at the home of Rick Trumm and Janet Nelson. The weather was pleasant, the collection of bonsai was breathtaking and the food was terrific. If your view of a potluck dinner comes from the times when every mother prepared her version of rubber chicken for the elementary school benefit, you were in for a big surprise. One of the best kept secrets of EBBS is that not only are the members good bonsai artists but are also superb chefs. The annual potluck was a wonderful chance for the members to socialize with one another. It was particularly nice to welcome some EBBS members who have not attended the regular meetings recently, namely the Callahams, the Gallagers and Joan Scroggs. The ambiance of the



event benefited mightily from the gracious hospitality of Rick and Janet. The club owes them a very big thank you for not only hosting the potluck so successfully this year but for the many times they have done it in the past.



### October Show

There will not be a regular EBBS meeting in October because of our show which will be held on the weekend of October 12 and 13. The Board strongly encourages every member to show at least one tree. Your tree is welcome regardless of whether it is a masterpiece or a pre-masterpiece. Even if your best tree is a humble beginner tree, you'll be amazed at how nice it looks when the pot is cleaned and the tree is top dressed.

Now is the time to be selecting the trees that you would like to show and grooming them. All trees need to be shown on a stand of some sort, and so now is the time to consider what you need for showing the tree.

The headliner for our show is Peter Tea who will do a demonstration, will lead a workshop and will conduct a critique of the trees in the show. Peter has just returned from an apprenticeship in Japan and will bring his impressive knowledge to our show.

As usual there will be a sale of trees and related items at the show. Here is the place to sell not only your impressive bonsai but also the inexpensive items that missed our auction. It is a great chance to pass on your unloved trees to a welcoming new home. Now is the time to look over your collection with a hard eye. Oh yes, you get eighty percent of the selling price.

### Show sign-up Sheets

Please be sure to sign-up for 1-2 shifts of work during the show. We need help in the kitchen, greeting folks at the front desk, security, and selling trees and raffle tickets. There will be sign-up sheets at our club meeting and at the show.

The services of every member will be needed in the set-up on Friday Oct. 12, at 6:00 p.m. and take down of the show on Sunday Oct. 11 at 4:30 p.m.

At our September meeting we will also have a sign-up sheet for Tokonoma tables. If you miss the meeting and would like to reserve a Tokonoma, contact Janice Dilbeck.

We also are collecting a list of the trees that you may put in the show so that we can create labels for the trees. Please send Janice Dilbeck a list of your trees with common name, botanical name (if you know it), and the estimated age **by September 30**. Then when you bring your trees to the show, find your labels and put them with your trees.

Janice's phone number is 925-458-3845. Better yet, send your list by e-mail to [janicedilbeck@comcast.net](mailto:janicedilbeck@comcast.net).

### Bonsai Stands

All trees in a show are displayed on a stand. It may surprise you to realize that you do not display the tree in a show, but present a composition, and the stand is an essential part of the composition which consists of the tree, the pot and the stand. Think of the stand as a picture frame. It completes the presentation of the picture, should complement the picture and yet does not compete with the picture for your attention.

Stands come in a wide variety of sizes and shapes and the stand selected for your tree should reflect the features of your tree. A stand with square legs will show a formal tree such as a pine tree to best advantage. A stand with curved legs is a good choice for a maple with a gently curved trunk. A very low stand is needed for a tall tree and a very tall stand might be used to elevate a short twiggy yamadori juniper so the fine details of the tree can be seen and enjoyed. When choosing a stand for your tree, take a moment and observe whether the stand reflects the features of your tree.

Stands can be custom ordered in both the correct size and style for your tree from Jerry Braswell at [www.artofthediaza.com](http://www.artofthediaza.com), but it may already be late to get a custom stand made in time for our show. Jerry will be a vender at our show and may have a stand or two for sale that will meet your needs. Contact him now if you're hoping to get something suitable for your tree in the show.

From time to time stands are available at sales such as the mammoth fund raiser held by the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt in the winter. The criterion for a good stand is a clean and simple design that does not compete with your tree, and should be purchased when available at a reasonable price.

There are several options for displaying your tree which do not involve the purchase of an expensive stand. The first is to borrow a stand from another member of the club. Many members are willing to loan stands. At the actual set up of the show, there are occasionally stands available for trees without stands, but those that are available may not be adequate for your tree either in size or style.

The various oriental furniture stores in the area have stands that are meant to display ceramics and can also serve as a stand for bonsai. Many of these stands are to the Chinese taste and the designs of these stands are frequently too heavy for bonsai.

Bamboo mats are frequently used as an informal summer display in Japan and serve as inexpensive alternatives for display of your tree. They are available in import stores.

Slabs of wood cut from the trunk of a tree are frequently seen as stands. If you purchase a slab for your tree, select one that is as thin as one half of an inch or less. Thicker slabs tend to dominate the tree.

Three boards can be arranged in a staggered formation and this presentation is particularly useful for a very large pot. Each board should be about one third the width of the pot.



Finally, very simple stands can be made from short sections of hardwood. A bit of sanding and finish is all you need. McBeath Hardwood in Berkeley has bins of wood cutoffs which are great sources for potential bonsai stands. Be sure to measure your pot to ensure that the new stand and the pot are a good match.

Before the show, spend a moment to prepare your stands. A bit of Old English Scratch Remover, available from Safeway, will remove the dust, hide minor blemishes, and will leave your stand at its shiny best. Felt dots, available from Ace Hardware, placed on the bottom of the legs of your pot will go a long ways in preventing scratches on your stand.

## EBBS Show October 11 and 12

The EBBS 2013 show, held at the Lakeside Garden Center on Saturday, 10AM-5PM and Sunday, 11AM-4PM is the time each East Bay Bonsai Society member joins in a collective and collaborative club effort to present the art of bonsai to the public as well as the bonsai community. It is a major project to put on the EBBS Annual show and its success relies on each and every member to contribute by doing and providing what he/she can. We need a donation of a dish for each day's luncheon.

Members have volunteered to head the many aspects of the annual show production. While these members coordinate and oversee their parts to make the show successful as well as enjoyable, there is great need for those members who have not yet been approached to volunteer to help in the kitchen, greeting folks at the front desk, security, selling trees and raffle tickets, acting as Bonsai Doctor, getting contributions for the Benefit Drawing, placing flyers at garden centers and businesses to advertise our show, etc. There will be sign-up sheets at our club meetings and you may be contacted by a committee leader. Your participation is what makes EBBS a thriving and beneficial bonsai club, especially at show time. So if you don't sign up on a list or respond to a call for help from a chair, please contact Linda Soliven, Show Chair at 925-776-2342 or [bonsaigirl43@att.net](mailto:bonsaigirl43@att.net) with your offer to help.

Linda Soliven – Show Chair

## Show Plant Sale

It's our Annual EBBS Show time and a part of the show that can be a real money-maker for the club is the sale of trees and other related bonsai items. The more items we have, whether pre-bonsai or very developed bonsai, the more likely prospective buyers will find something they like. As chair of Plant Sales this year, I am hoping to have lots of items on the tables for Saturday and Sunday. So, look around at your collection, pick out those trees that you just don't have any time for, and send them to a new home. It's important to remember that something you may not want may be a treasure to another.

Items may be donated to the plant sale or sold on consignment. 100% of the sale price of **donated** items goes to the club. 20% of the sale price of items **sold on consignment** goes to the club, and 80% goes to the seller.

Friday night is the best time to bring your items to the Garden Center, although you may still bring them on Saturday and Sunday. Sellers must tag their own trees and provide a completely filled out plant sale sheet. Sale sheets and tags will be available at the next club meeting. Consignment checks will be mailed to your residence.

I also need volunteers to help set up the sales area and cashier during the show. A signup sheet will be coming out soon.

Dennis Hawkins – Plant Sale Chair

### **Show Trees – A Special Note to Beginners**

It's often difficult for beginners to feel comfortable showing trees. I remember that for many years when I started bonsai I felt very uncomfortable putting my humble trees in shows next to some well established bonsai. But once there, although a little nervous, I felt good about having my tree displayed.

Displaying a tree helps you feel more a part of the show celebration. It is a good way to teach others about bonsai, and gives you a chance to learn more about your trees and display. I really take to heart the following words from Tom Colby:

“The show is the place to show what you have learned in the past year. Some of the members have been in bonsai for many years and have acquired beautiful old bonsai whereas others are new to bonsai and their trees are a bit more humble. Apparent competition with fine old trees often leads new members to feel that their trees are not welcome or good enough for the show. These folks miss the point that it is not about the tree but what you have learned in the past year. When examined in detail many of the fine, old trees have had little or no work done on them in the past year, implying that the owners have learned little in the past year. In contrast some of the more humble trees represent major strides by their owners in learning the art of bonsai and these trees are the real stars of the show.

There is room in the show for everyone's tree regardless of skill level, and especially the newcomers who can be the real stars of the show. Do plan to enter at least one tree.”

Janice Dilbeck – Show Display Chair

### **Peter Tea Workshop for members**

As part of the EBBS show next month, there will be a workshop on Saturday afternoon, October 12, 2013. The first **six** EBBS members who sign up and pay the \$50 fee will be able to have Show Headliner Peter Tea guide and assist them in working on their own bonsai tree. Others may attend as “Silent Observers” to hear Peter's instructions and watch the work progress throughout the afternoon. Call Janet Nelson at 510-482-8428 to reserve a slot and bring your payment to the September 11 EBBS meeting. The workshop will take place from approximately 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. in the Ebell Room of the Garden Center Building.

Workshop participants should plan to arrive early and get their materials set up to take full advantage of the time with Peter. He will probably begin the workshop with some general instructions for all participants, and then proceed to work with each individual on a rotating basis, usually beginning with the first person who arrived.

Participants should bring their own tree, a table cover, tools, turn-table and wire. If you forget something, vendors will be on hand with supplies. Before the workshop, be sure your tree is healthy and strong enough to work on, consider the best front of

your tree, and what style it suggests. Peter can help with styling, branch selection, decisions about trimming, wiring technique and future care.

If you are unsure, bring your tree to the September meeting where experienced EBBS members will be happy to consult with you. Non-members who would like to participate in the workshop may join EBBS (a bargain at \$30/year - joining in October or later confers membership through the following year) or sign up for the waiting list for any unfilled slots. Questions may be directed to the Workshop Chairperson Janet Nelson at 510-482-8428 or by email to [rjin@pacbell.net](mailto:rjin@pacbell.net).

Janet Nelson – Workshop Chair

### **Bonsai Basics, Part Two**

Once we have mastered the art of growing our bonsai to perfection, the next problem is what should the tree look like? Simply put, if our tree is a successful bonsai, it should remind the viewer of a tree that they have seen growing in nature. It does this by employing several criteria. Our bonsai tree should show great apparent age, that it has survived a long time in spite of adverse conditions, and that it is more perfect than any real tree growing in nature.

Apparent age in a bonsai tree can be shown in a variety of ways. The most obvious way is a thick trunk relative to the height of the tree. Trees in the wild only get a thick trunk after many decades of growth. As an aside, this points to the fact that a small seedling is a poor choice for a beginner just starting in bonsai because it will be many years before the seedling will develop a trunk thick enough to be a presentable bonsai. Sometimes the tree is planted in the ground to hasten the trunk development, but even this is a slow process.

Another sign of age is the condition of the bark on the trunk. For example, both pines and elms get very thick bark as a sign of age. When working with these trees great care must be taken to preserve the bark which can be easily rubbed off with rough handling.

The great appeal of collected junipers to bonsai enthusiasts is that they are, in fact, very old trees to begin with. Many of these trees are as much as several hundred years old and it really does not take much for them to show their great age to advantage.

Trees in the wild are subjected to many challenges ranging from being sat on by a bear to being struck by lightning. These problems lead to broken branches. Even sections of the trunk may be torn away when a branch is broken. This kind of destruction can be demonstrated with bonsai created from either junipers or pines in which a lot of dead wood is shown. These trees show that they have survived in spite of being badly beat up by the environment.

Another form of survival is shown in bunjin style trees which have a long, thin trunk and only tufts of foliage. Wild trees can look like this when they are growing in soil that is either very poor in quality or very limited as, for example, when the tree is growing in a crack in the rock.

Those old enough to remember actually reading newspapers might recall looking at political cartoons on the editorial pages. Here the artist is making a statement about an event by means of a quick sketch of a politician who is commenting on the event. You can recognize who the politician is even though the sketch does not look exactly like the person. It captures the essential features of the person well enough that you know who it is.

A successful bonsai does exactly the same thing in that it reminds the viewer of a tree that they have seen in the wild even though it does not look exactly like the wild tree. Wild trees are not perfect. Among their many imperfections they can have awkwardly placed and sometimes broken branches, and they are usually not symmetrical. A great deal of effort is made to make the bonsai a perfect tree by selecting the best viewing angle (the front) and carefully arranging the branches (which is where wiring comes in). If the bonsai looked exactly like an actual tree in the wild you would focus on that particular tree rather than have the bonsai serve as a stepping stone to any of a large number of trees that either you or other viewers of your bonsai may have seen in the past.

So how do we get past the philosophy, get into the real world and make our tree into a respectable bonsai? It requires developing an eye for what constitutes a fine bonsai. There are a numbers of ways that you can do this and probably the most important way is to look at trees that you see in your travels. These trees, after all, are where it all starts. Ask yourself what that tree would look like if it were perfect. Pay particular attention to the branching and the shape of the trunk as well as the overall shape of the tree.

The next thing to do is to attend bonsai shows and spend a little time carefully looking at each tree in the show. Ask yourself whether the tree you are looking at reminds you of a wild tree that you either have seen or might see. The fact that the tree is in a bonsai show does not mean necessarily that it is a good bonsai. Some trees in the show will probably be nice to look at but that is all you see. There is nothing to take you beyond what you see in front of you. Others, on the other hand, will bring vivid memories of trees you have seen. These are the good bonsai and should be studied as examples of how it all works.

Workshops are wonderful places to learn the mechanics of how to style our tree including finding the best front of your tree and how to arrange the branches.

Lastly, carefully watch demonstrations at club meetings to see styling of trees by qualified bonsai artists.

The overall approach to styling your tree is that the finished bonsai should show age, survival and perfection. If you are successful with these factors you will have found the beauty of your tree. It takes time and a lot of observation to become proficient at styling a tree but the results are what make bonsai such an exciting activity. Don't give up!

### **New Reference Book**

Many of our members have voiced: I did not understand Japanese words demonstrators and bonsai artists dropped on me.

Our own Bob Callahan has written a book which addresses this problem: Romaji-English Japanese Bonsai Terms and Tree Names.

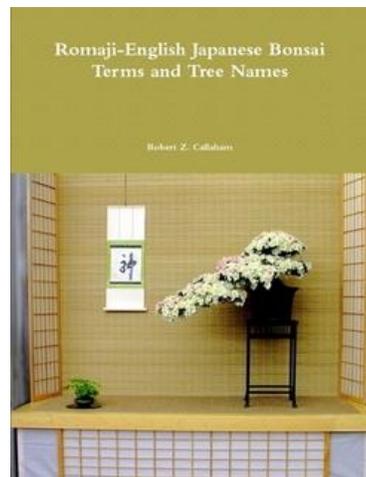
During their work, bonsai artists often encounter Romanized Japanese Kanji terms. English equivalents of these terms are published by many bonsai authorities. Bob copied their word-lists and glossaries into a computer (with credit given to authors).

In his booklet, terms are listed both alphabetically, in a glossary, and under 25 subject headings familiar to bonsai artisans. Correct scientific and common names of trees and lesser plants are also provided.

Dave DeGroot and Dennis Makishima were highly complementary when they received the book.

The book is paperback, 46 pages, and costs \$14.86.

To purchase a copy online, go to [lulu.com](http://lulu.com). In the book search box, enter: "*bonsai terms*" and select: Romaji-English Japanese Bonsai Terms and Tree Names



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

Regular bonsai workshops have resumed. 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 gaining practical experience as well as increasing your knowledge of the fine art of bonsai.

Leading the workshops are two distinguished artists who are also members of EBBS, Bill Castellon 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 in the Oakland hills off Redwood Road. Questions can be directed to either Bill at 510-569-8003 or to 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.

September 15, San Mateo: San Mateo Bonsai Club 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Show at San Mateo Gardener's Association

Hall, 503 E 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Hours: 10 AM – 4 PM. Bonsai material for sale. Free admission. For more information, contact Sam Tachibana at 650-548-9470.

September 28, San Jose: Midori Bonsai Club 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Bonsai Show, at Northside Community Center, 488 6th Street [at E. Empire St]. Hours 10 AM – 5 PM. Bonsai demonstration by Peter Tea of a Black Pine raffled off at end of Demo. Beginners workshop: 10 AM – 1 PM. Bring your own tree for advise with Dr. Bonsai. Bonsai vendors and large plant sale. For more information contact John Thompson at [jtbonsai@earthlink.net](mailto:jtbonsai@earthlink.net)

September 28 & 29, Penryn: Sierra Bonsai Club Annual Show, in conjunction with Placer Buddhist Church's (49th Annual Fall Food Festival), 3192

Boyington Road, (behind Union 76, off I-80 Penryn Exit). Hours are Saturday 11 AM – 6 PM and Sunday 11 AM – 4 PM.

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### **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

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

### **Meeting Program**

<b>Sep</b>	<b>11</b>	Preparing Trees for Show – Joe, Janice, Linda
<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 – Rick Trumm
<b>Nov</b>	<b>24</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
<b>Dec</b>	<b>11</b>	Holiday Dinner

### **Special Event**

**Oct 12-13** Fall Show – Peter Tea

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