



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

April Meeting:

April 9, 2014 @ 7:30 p.m.

President's Note

Since Mother Nature has not "kicked in" with sufficient rain, we all will need to think about and act on our habits and usage of our precious resource of water. But then, we bonsai enthusiasts really are participating in an activity that consumes a lot less amount of water while providing an artistic, horticultural, pleasurable and sometimes financial benefit.

Yep, we use less water, but the challenging task is in giving just the right amount of water for each tree. More experienced bonsai enthusiasts proclaim this is the most important skill to learn because it can vary by tree, soil, root growth, weather conditions and kind of pot the tree is in. I am realizing I need to pay better attention to my watering strategies. You may also want to consider your watering experiences and knowledge. A great topic to share with each other during our more social events of Frolic In The Garden-June, Summer Picnic-August and Holiday Dinner-December.

A group of three of us took advantage of the invitation to a Napa Valley Club member's sale. The variety and choices didn't disappoint us. A previously owned bonsai purchase may offer a more mature specimen at a reduced price. Perhaps it's been neglected or needs styling correction. But, one can gain a lot of knowledge and experience working on such a specimen. So, keep a look out for future sales and attend the shows and sales of other Bonsai Clubs for good purchasing opportunities.

For the April meeting, do you have an Oak? Interested in growing an Oak as bonsai? Bring your tree and questions for John Thompson's presentation at our next meeting. Please place your Oak Tree on the table to the left of John to give him a chance to look them over without having to move the tree much if at all. Place other items to share on the first curtain-side table. Only you should pick up the item as you share it in front of the audience.

Finally, THANK YOU ALL who donated items to the raffle. Special kudos goes to Carl Osterholm, a long and valued member of EBBS who contributed many of his specialty-Maples. And, appreciation goes to Bob and Polly Gould who picked Carl's contributions up and brought them to the March meeting. These monthly

raffle donations as well as the Auction contributions (July) and Annual Show Sales (October) provide EBBS members with the excellent educational bonsai activities throughout the year.

Linda

A Note from Chuck Gallagher

Dear Bonsai Friends,

I am sending my warmest regards to my bonsai friends. I am recovering now from recent heart valve replacement in February and I expect a slow recovery process for the next two to three months.

I feel blessed to have these multiple chances at life given I had just recovered in 2013 from the auto accident of October 2012.

I appreciate your kind thoughts, and hope to see you in the near future.

Chuck Gallagher

Editor's note: Sadly, Chuck passed away last Friday. There's no other information yet. Chuck was an active participant in many Bonsai and Suiseki activities. He was one of the older members of EBBS, spanning 30 years during which he served as President and member of the Board of Directors. Chuck had also donated to East Bay in many other ways.

April Meeting

Oaks are frequently seen in the rolling hills of California. Not only do they define the local landscape but they also make outstanding bonsai trees. The April meeting will feature a presentation on Oaks by John Thompson. John has been active in the bonsai world for many years and his pet passion is Oaks. He has become expert in growing them to perfection. Styling a tree to best advantage requires that you know how that particular tree grows in nature. Oaks with their huge arching branches have a very different shape than most other trees. John has spent long years observing how Oaks grow in nature and applies this knowledge to styling Oaks as bonsai. We are privileged to see him presenting a demonstration not only because he is an

outstanding bonsai artist but also because demonstrations on Oaks are not frequently seen. John is very generous in sharing his expertise on Oaks as well as bonsai in general so we can look forward to a very informative evening.

Help

In the past years much of the work in setting up the meeting room has fallen on the shoulders of a few people. Bob and Polly Gould and the Nackleys deserve a big thank you for their help. They have elected to retire and allow others to help with the setup. The Board is joining them in asking that this work be shared by others in the club. The more people who volunteer to help with these tasks, the less that each person has to do. In the March meeting a sign-up sheet was sent around asking for volunteers to set up the room, prepare the coffee water and to bring refreshments.

Many thanks in advance are due to Joe Byrd and Nick Gonsalves who volunteered to set up the room for the April meeting and to oversee the putting away of chairs and tables at the end of the meeting. Many thanks in advance also to Lynn Hillander and Mike Pistello for offering to furnish refreshments. Usually three people bring refreshments, so if you would like to add your contribution to the refreshments it would be most welcome. Unfortunately, no one volunteered to assemble the makings for coffee and tea at the meeting so there will be none served. If you would like to be a last minute volunteer, either Polly Gould or the Nackleys can be consulted on what needs to be done although neither will do the work for you.

May Meeting

The May meeting will feature Tim Kong who is scheduled to make a presentation on penjing. This is a Chinese form of bonsai and there will be more on this subject in the May newsletter. In short, there are many styles of penjing. The most commonly seen style in the United States is a landscape constructed of small trees and rocks. Currently this is what Tim intends to do. Tim is a very high energy guy and his presentations are always worth seeing, not only for entertainment value but also for information content. Circle your calendar for May 14. You absolutely don't want to miss an evening with Tim Kong.

March Meeting

The March meeting was a presentation on pines by Bill Castellon. Bill has been interested in bonsai for over 20 years and a landscape contractor for over 40 years. His main interest both for bonsai and landscape is pines, and so he is well qualified to present a program on pines. He started with comments about several of his own pines which he had brought to show the progress of pines over a number of years. The high point was two magnificent shohin sized pines less than 8 inches high. These were trees that Bill started from seed and were well over 10 years old. They emphasized that great trees can take time to develop but are very much worth the time invested.

He next indicated the pines are grown somewhat differently than most of the trees that are seen as bonsai. A consideration in detail was then given on how to manage pines with the yearlong cycle of what needs to be done with pines and when. In the spring pines show new growth by pushing buds called candles. The name is well chosen because that is what they look like. Repotting is completed before the candles emerge which usually is the end of February but can vary depending on the weather. The tree is then fed heavily with a high nitrogen fertilizer to encourage the new growth. Bill uses Miracid every two weeks. Miracid recently had a bit of a name change and is now sometimes seen as Miracle-grow for Rhododendrons. Any high nitrogen fertilizer will work just fine. A pine that is growing well has needles that are green and sharp to the touch and feel cool. If the tree is not healthy, delay any further work until it recovers.



Candles are cut in early summer for a couple of reasons. If the candles are left on the tree they will produce very strong growth, long branches and long needles, both of which are out of proportion to the rest of the tree. When the candles are cut, the tree responds with new candles which lead to weaker growth, reflected in shorter branches and shorter needles. Cutting candles is stressful to the tree and the heavy fertilization throughout the spring gives the tree the strength to survive the stress of candle cutting and to push the new candles. After the candles have been cut fertilizer is withheld for several weeks to allow the tree to recover.

The best time for cutting candles can vary considerably and depends on the length of the growing season. For Oakland, this amounts to about June fifteenth. Decandling can be delayed in the Walnut Creek area with the somewhat longer growing season to as late as July fourth, but no later. The longer the wait, the shorter the new needles will be as well as the shorter the new growth.

Pines are very top dominant which means that the growth at the top of the tree is much more vigorous than the bottom. This means that if you remove all the candles at one time, the new candles at the top of the tree will be more vigorous than those at the bottom of the tree and will produce longer needles and longer

growths. The tree will not be balanced. There are two basic strategies to cope with this and both attempt to produce even or balanced growth throughout the tree. Once any candle is cut, the tree has the rest of the growing season to grow new candles. The candles at the bottom of the tree are weaker and need more time to develop new candles whereas the top of the tree need less time to develop new candles. The first strategy to balance the tree is to cut the candles in a sequence of three weeks. The bottom candles are cut first, then a week later the middle candles are cut and finally the top candles are cut a week later. A second strategy relies on the fact that the needles behind the candle provide energy to the growing candle. Needles are selectively pulled in the previous fall to reduce the energy supplied to the new candles. A popular sequence is the 5-7-9 approach. In this case the needles at the top of the tree are reduced to 5 pairs, the middle of the tree to 7 pairs and the bottom is reduced to 9 pairs. Both of these strategies lead to a little more refined tree than cutting all the candles at once, but all are much better than not cutting the candles at all. In some cases a candle is not cut on a particular branch to allow the branch to grow as long as it wants. This is done to thicken the branch or trunk and eventually, the long branch is cut off. While this procedure can be used to create sturdy trunks, branches remaining below the rapidly growing tip can wither and eventually die.



When each candle has been cut, the tree responds with a circle of new candles. These candles are reduced to two which will provide a new leader branch and a new side branch. If all of the new candles are allowed to grow, a large bulge in the branch will form around the new candles and reverse taper will occur where the end of the branch is thicker than it is closer to the trunk.

Pruning of the tree is done in the late fall and focuses in removing straight branches. Bill demonstrated this on a large pine branch. Fall is also the best time for wiring your tree.

There were several notable trees on the show and tell table which included superb pines shown by Rick Trumm and Mike Pistello. These trees demonstrated just how spectacular pine bonsai can be. Bill graciously

offered comments on several others and finally pruned an overgrown pine for one of the members. The show and tell table has become a place where members can bring trees that they have questions about. If you have a tree that you would like advice on by all means, bring it to the show and tell table at the next meeting.

Bill's presentation was a wonderful introduction to pine bonsai for those who have not yet tried these trees, as well as a refresher for those of us who have pine but are not growing them as well as we would like. Bill is one of the instructors at the Merritt College workshops and if you have not yet ventured to these workshops, you got an opportunity to see him in action. Bill is not only a great teacher but he is a good guy as well. Go see him at the workshop!

Our Trip To Napa (And Not For Wine Tasting)

Linda, Roger, and I took a road trip to Napa a few weeks ago to check out the bonsai sale by a hobbyist who is selling the bulk of his collection. We got there right at the start of the sales (10am) and there were already quite a few people in the yard checking out the trees.

The three of us spent considerable time considering our purchases (okay, I admittedly took longer than Linda and Roger). All three of us walked away with some very good trees and a lighter pocketbook.

Before leaving Napa, we decided to explore the new downtown Napa and ended up having lunch there before heading home. To provide our success, here's a picture of our loot in the back of Linda's automobile.

Michael Hylton



*Editor's note: Michael Hylton was recently interviewed on **The Bonsai Garden Podcast**. You can find it online at the following location:*

<http://bonsaificusretusa.com/an-interview-with-michael-hylton-of-the-east-bay-bonsai-society/>

Dues

Since most of you have already paid your annual club dues, most of you can be pretty smug while you

read the last impassioned appeal for dues. Those few who haven't yet paid your dues are about to lose out on membership in a fine source of bonsai information, as well as the companionship of those who share a common interest in bonsai. Not the least catastrophe of not paying your dues is that your subscription to this earthshattering newsletter will end.

Dues are only \$30 for singles and \$40 for couples plus an additional \$5 if you want a hard copy sent by snail mail rather than receiving the newsletter by email. The money goes to good causes, funding the monthly programs and room rent. Our treasurer, Pat Cahill, is a very nice person and even if you are somewhat late in paying your dues, she will still greet you with a cheery smile. She will be more than happy to receive your check at the next meeting. Better yet, how about sending your check to: EBBS Treasurer, 4933 Cochrane, Oakland, CA, 94618-2701?

Plant Physiology 101

We can do a lot better job of growing our trees if we understand what makes them tick and here is where a bit of plant physiology comes in. Let's do three mental experiments which hopefully will shed some light on the subject. In the first experiment we will plant our favorite bonsai tree in lovely soil and water it enough to keep the soil moist at all times. With a bit of fertilizer and sunshine the tree will happily respond by growing vigorously. If we carefully look at what is going on with the tree we see that it has a marvelous plumbing system. There are very fine feeder roots in the pot whose principle job is to slurp up water from the soil as well as nutrients. The water is transported up the tree to the growing ends of the branches bringing the nutrients where they are most needed. Much of the water is then lost by the leaves and this water is replaced from water in the soil by the feeder roots and the cycle continues. As the tree gets bigger it has more leaves and loses more water, and thus needs to grow more feeder roots to keep the water in the tree in balance.

In the second experiment we will pot our favorite tree in lovely soil and don't water it for three weeks. We will observe that the leaves on the tree droop and then, as time goes by, turn brown and fall off. At the end of three weeks our tree is about dead and then no matter how furiously we water the tree it does not stave off death. So what has happened? The lack of water in the soil does not allow the tree to replace water lost by the leaves, and the tree becomes dehydrated. The tree attempts to make up for the loss of incoming water by dropping leaves. The feeder roots are severely stressed and if the tree is watered at this time the tree may slowly recover while it grows new feeder roots. As the drought continues, eventually the feeder roots will die and the tree becomes toast, literally. Once this point has been reached, no amount of water will revive the tree since with no functioning feeder roots, there is no way for the tree to take up water. In the real world, all this can take place in as little as a couple of weeks.

In our third mental experiment we will pot our long suffering favorite tree into lovely bonsai soil and into a pot with no drain holes. We water it normally and since the water cannot drain out of the pot, the tree ends up standing in a puddle of water. We see that our tree drops its leaves slowly and eventually dies. So what is happening here? An autopsy would reveal a surprising fact. In spite of the tree sitting in a puddle of water, it died from dehydration. How can this be? We live in a world of microbes and not all of them are beneficial by making bread, wine, beer and the other good things of life. Standing water is an ideal breeding ground for bacteria and some of these wee beasties can cause root rot. Once the roots on the tree have rotted, there is no way for the tree to replace water lost through the leaves, and the tree becomes dehydrated exactly in the same way as the tree we did not water in our second experiment. In the real world, this takes place more slowly than the case where we did not water the tree, but once root rot becomes established, it is difficult to treat and saving your tree is problematic at best.

So what does all this tell us? The most important single factor in successfully growing our tree is to maintain conditions which lead to healthy roots. The lovely bonsai soil mentioned above is one that drains well but yet can retain moisture between watering. There are many different soil compositions that have been recommended in the past. One currently popular mix is one third each of lava, pumice and akadama (an expensive form of clay pellets mined in Japan). Other mixes involve lava, fine gravel and pumice as well as about 20% of the mix being an organic ingredient such as fir bark or redwood. Each of the various soil mixes has strong advocates, but truth be told they all can work well and beautiful trees can be grown using any of them. The other condition is that the soil must be kept moist. So how much you water the tree is very important. Oh yes—be sure that your pot has a drain hole.

New Members

We have nine new members in the club. Please introduce yourselves to them at our next club meeting. Their names, phone and e-mail addresses are:

Suzanne Muller (925) 890-0506 smuller@mbcf.com
Moses De Los (925) 348-4271
moses_inc@comcast.net
Michael Pistello (925) 818-6116
DRTYDGO@hotmail.com
Donald Meeker (925) 933-4472
dmeeker@ca.astound.net
Marcia Cozens (925) 934-9770 cozensm@aol.com
Maria Sargent (530) 304-4299 sargentmt@gmail.com
Khary Dvorak-Ewell (415) 794-0042
KharyDE@gmail.com
Stephen Lysaght/ Gary Anderson (925) 254-5751
smlysaght@sbcglobal.net gma88@comcast.net

Michael Pistello shared that he has been doing Bonsai for 22 years. He studied with many different people and considers himself at an advanced level. He

wrote articles for **Golden Statements** as well as **Bonsai Focus**. He teaches Bonsai and does demos as well. He works primarily with conifers, although he can work with deciduous and flowering trees as well. He enjoys high quality bonsai pots and collects them. He is looking forward to being a member of EBBS and sharing his knowledge with the club as well as learning more from its members.

Stephen Lysaght notes that he and Gary Anderson are both rookies, having purchased bonsais for many years, and attempting to create them without any real training. They particularly like maples, azaleas, and oaks, but have an assortment of others (crabapple, contorted cherry, pomegranate, quince, juniper, etc). They live in Orinda on a large hillside lot (.6 acre), with many mature coast live oaks, deodar cedar, manzanita, smoke trees (Cotinus), Euphorbia spurges, Chasmanthe, Toyon, Cotoneaster, Japanese maples, ferns, Rhododendron, and areas in which they have mostly succulents planted.

Bonsai Calendar

- Watering – Start regular watering schedule as temperature rises; Do not over-water repotted plants
- Fertilizing – Do not feed deciduous trees Fertilize evergreens and conifers. Don't feed repotted trees until a month after repotting.
- Repotting – Repot pines, camellias, cryptomeria, juniper, crape myrtle, willow, spruce, fir, cypress and redwood
- Styling/Pruning – Wire evergreens. Pinch junipers. Trim back branches on non-flowering, non-fruiting deciduous trees. Decandle Monterey pines, red pines, and cork-barked black pines.
- Graft – Japanese maples, hornbeam, redbud, beech, ginkgo, and wisteria
- Air Layering – Deciduous trees may be air layered if they have not yet pushed new growth. Otherwise, wait until the new growth hardens in late spring.

Refer to the EBBS Bonsai Calendar for more details on seasonal care.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

These workshops are a splendid opportunity to learn how to develop your trees into first class bonsai and how to make them grow at their very best. In these workshops you work on your own trees under the guidance of an experienced bonsai artist. The classes are open to all and to all experience levels. Best of all, they are free. There is, however, a small fee for parking. The workshops are held at 7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month when the college is in

session. The meetings are held in the Landscape Building at Merritt College, which is located in the Oakland hills off Redwood Road. Leading the workshops are two fine bonsai artists who are also members of EBBS, Bill Castelon and Randall Lee. Interested parties can contact Bill at 510-560-8003 or Randall at 510-864-0841. The workshops are a wonderful experience and all you need is to go and bring your tree.

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 5 – 6 Sacramento, Bonsai Sekiyu Kai: 37th Annual Bonsai Show at the Sacramento Betsuin Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Show hours are Saturday Noon – 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM. Demonstrations at 2 PM on both days. 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 go to bonsaisekiyukai.wordpress.com.

April 12 – 13, Fresno, Fresno Bonsai Society: Spring Blossom Festival and Annual Bonsai Exhibit, Shinzen Friendship Garden at Woodward Park, 7775 Friant Road. Gates open 10 AM to 4 PM. Bonsai will be displayed in a beautiful outdoor setting amidst the spring blossoms, koi ponds and wild peacocks. Local artists, including bonsai potters will display. Very large plant sale. Japanese cultural events including koto drummers, tea ceremony and continuous bonsai demonstrations. Contact Ralph Schroeder at ralSch@sbcglobal.net.

April 12 – 13, Sacramento, American Bonsai Association of Sacramento (ABAS): Annual Spring Show will be held at the Shepherd Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM; demonstration both days by Kathy Shaner at 1PM. For further information email Paul Holtzen at pbholtzen@sbcglobal.net.

April 26 – 27, Modesto, Modesto Bonsai: 33th Annual Spring Show at Park Inn by Radisson – 1720 Sisk Road. Hours: Saturday 11 AM – 5 PM; and Sunday 11 AM – 4 PM with demonstrations both days at 2 PM by Sam Adina. Raffles, Auctions, Exhibit, and Sales of plants, pots, tools. Free Admission. For more information visit ModestoBonsai.com.

April 26 – 27, Palo Alto, Kusamura Bonsai Club: 54th Annual Show. Location is Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto, CA 94301. Show hours are Saturday, Noon-5PM and Sunday,

11AM-5PM. Demonstration each day at 1:00PM, with special guest demonstrator Saturday. Club member sales available. For more information contact Mark O'Brien at 650.327.0450, mobrientrees@hotmail.com. Please see www.kusamurabonsai.org for more details.

North Fifth Street. Noon – 5 PM Saturday and 11 AM – 4 PM Sunday with demonstrations on both days at 1 PM by “Mr. California Juniper” Harry Hirao. Styled and pre-styled trees will be offered for sale on both days. For more information, contact Ken Azuma at kennethazuma@sbcglobal.net or visit www.gsbfbonsai.org/sjbonsai/.

May 3 – 4, Sacramento, Sacramento Bonsai Club: 68th Annual Bonsai Show at the Sacramento Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Noon – 5 PM Saturday and 11 AM – 4 PM Sunday with demonstrations on both days at 2 PM by Sam Adina. Benefit drawings, Plant & tree sales. For more information, contact Lucy Sakaishi-Judd at juddbonsai@att.net or visit <http://sacramentobonsaiclub.com>.

May 3 – 4, San Jose, San Jose Betsuin Bonsai Club: 44th Annual Bonsai Exhibition and Demonstration at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, 640

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 four 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 2014

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

Apr 9	Oaks – John Thompson
Apr 27	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – J D Lin
May 14	Penjing – Tim Kong
May 25	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
June 11	Frolic in the Garden
June 22	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
July 9	Auction
July 27	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Aug	Picnic
Aug 24	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould
Sept 10	Show Prep
Sept 28	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – tbd
Oct	No club meeting due to proximity to show
Oct 26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – J D Lin
Nov 12	Juniper Jubilee
Nov 23	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
Dec 10	Holiday Dinner