



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

December Meeting: December 10, 2014

President's Note

2015 is at the door! I find myself relaxing. EBBS will be in such "good hands" with Michael Hylton chairing the Board of Directors, veterans Bob Gould, Tom Colby, Pat Cahill and Janice Dilbeck providing the wisdom of EBBS experience, and Roger Brady continuing to lead the new member outreach. Suzanne Muller, Lisa Harper and Khary Dvorak-Ewell, newly elected Directors, add promising skills and expertise to the Board. I, as is my comfort level will work from behind the scenes!

Please join with me in being thankful for the service of each Board of Director. This year, they planned interesting and educational programs, provided special workshops, organized productive fundraising and maintained the stewardship of the organization and much, much more. Each of the Board members actively devoted much personal time, energy and expense.

Reflecting on 2014, you as members have shown much energy and participation by your attendance at program meetings and social activities, and volunteering at the show and auction events. Thank you all for making the Board of Directors' work worthwhile.

We are still in need of a person(s) who will be in charge of putting out and putting away the table area for refreshments at each program meeting. It's not a difficult job, but so necessary. Also the position of Vice-President is still not filled on the Board. Recall my mantra: "Many hands make light work".

Happy Holidays and a Bountiful Bonsai New Year Experience!

Linda

December Meeting

The December meeting is the annual meeting in which we celebrate the holiday season with a potluck dinner in place of our usual meeting agenda. Do plan to come and be part of the festive occasion. We begin the festivities at 6:30 pm with appetizers and beverages. Note that we start one hour earlier than usual. Doors open at 6:00 pm, and we could use help in setting up. The appetizer-people should plan to



arrive early so food is ready at the beginning of the evening.

The club will furnish ham and turkey as well as beverages. The rest is provided by attendees as follows:

Last name A-F	Dessert
Last name G-L	Appetizer
Last name M-R	Salad
Last name S-Z	Side dish

Be sure to bring your own plate and eating utensils. A decorative place mat would make a festive setting for the meal. Also bring appropriate serving utensils if required for the dish you are bringing. In past years the dinners have been memorable due to the fine offerings of the many fine cooks in the club. Yes, we collectively have talents besides just growing great bonsai.

People are also encouraged to bring small bonsai trees decorated for the season as table center pieces, which greatly add to the ambiance of the evening.

The special highlight of the evening will be a slide show of the club activities of the past year, focusing on our recent show. The presentation will be coordinated by our very own Michael Hylton who did such a fine job last year. He is back by popular demand and he is asking for your help in making the presentation a

success. If you have digital images you would like to have included in the show, send them to Michael at mhylton@rocketmaail.com.

The holiday dinner is one of the high points of the year for EBBS. It is a chance to socialize with your fellow club members at a very pleasant occasion. Do plan to be there!

January Meeting

The January meeting will be a special treat for EBBS. We will have Kathy Shaner as the demonstrator. Kathy spent five years in Japan as an apprentice to one of the most renowned bonsai masters. At the end of her stay in Japan, she was the first non-Japanese bonsai artist to be honored with the title of Bonsai Master by the national bonsai organization, the Nippon Bonsai Kyodo Kumai. If you haven't seen Kathy at work, you must put this meeting on your calendar. It is not only a chance to see a recognized artist at work, but Kathy always makes her demonstrations both informative and entertaining. She will be working on a massive hornbeam which will be raffled at the end of the meeting. See you there!



November Meeting

The November meeting was devoted to a celebration of the Juniper Jubilee with a demonstration by Mike Pistello. Mike followed in the footsteps of his grandfather who was a member of the Fuji Bonsai club in the 1960's. Mike started bonsai when he was in the eighth grade, 20 years ago, and has since become a fine bonsai artist.



The demonstration tree was a shimpaku juniper which at first glance was not too promising. It had a flat, straight trunk and symmetrical branching. Mike said that the role of the artist was to make an uninteresting tree interesting. He did two simple things which made the tree come alive. First,

he tilted the tree by raising one side of the pot, and second, he removed many of the branches on one side giving the tree a very nice flowing line. The remaining branches were wired to further compliment the flow of the tree. At the conclusion of the demonstration Mike had certainly accomplished his goal of making the tree interesting.

As he was working, Mike made several notable comments. One of the most important techniques for

styling junipers is to understand how to properly prune them. A frequently seen approach is to shear all the ends of the branches evenly. This gives a great look to your tree, but has a problem in that the sheared ends all turn brown. The proper way is to let the branch grow and the cut only the stem of the branch, leaving the rest of the foliage intact. Allowing the branch to grow out and then trimming the branch back in this way encourages back budding in the interior of the branch.

The tree was wired with copper wire and the size selected was about one third the size of the branch. Aluminum wire could also have been used, but because it is softer than copper wire, the size should be more like one half the size of the branch.

Mike passed on a valuable tip in handling copper wire. When you cut a piece of wire from the roll, do not straighten it before you apply it to your tree because as you bend the wire straight it stiffens, and the stiffer it is, the harder it is to apply. The wire should be applied gently around the branch rather than very tightly. Think of wiring your finger. You would not want it to be terribly tight, and that is what you want for your branch.

Mike was asked when the wire should be removed. His reply was that there was no definite time. Removal depends completely on how fast the tree is growing, and the wire should be removed before it starts to cut into the branch. A good target is about a year and a half, but continue to check your tree because each situation is different.

Choosing a front for a tree usually involves choosing the best presentation of the base of the tree, the best display of movement, and finally arrangement of the branches. An overriding basis for choosing the front for a juniper involves choosing a front that best displays the deadwood.

Mike offered a comment that at first glance seems counterintuitive. He said that air at the roots was important for the growth of your tree. If you want to make your tree grow fast, use a soil that drains rapidly, and hence, is quite porous. To slow the rate of growth as, for example, in an old tree that is approaching final styling as a bonsai, use a soil that holds a little more moisture and, as a result, is a little less porous.

Mike concluded by saying that the chosen front should be indicated by two short pieces of wire in the pot placed vertically. The pot had been tipped during the demonstration, and when using the pieces of wire as a guide, the pot could be tipped at the same angle by the lucky winner.

The meeting was much enjoyed by the attendees. Not only did Mike offer lots of vital information on the proper management of junipers as bonsai, but it was fascinating to watch how he achieved his stated objective of making an uninteresting tree interesting.

More Political Stuff

At the November meeting the formal proposal to amend the club constitution was placed before the membership. The amendment would allow for more than four directors to serve on the Board, and the rationale for this change was to encourage participation of newer

members of the club on the Board. This would ultimately lead to a larger pool of candidates willing to be officers of the club. The amendment simply involved changing the wording in the constitution from “four directors” to “at least four directors”, and was approved by the membership.

Nomination of new members of the Board for the year 2015 was opened. At the close of nominations a vote was conducted and the following slate of Board members was elected which included additional directors in view of the new amendment to the constitution: President, Michael Hylton; Vice President, open; Treasurer, Pat Cahill; Secretary, John Nackley; and Directors, Suzanne Muller, Roger Brady, Janice Dilbeck, Lisa Harper and Khary Dvorak-Ellis. The term of each Director is two years and Tom Colby and Bob Gould will also serve on the board because they are in midterm. Linda Soliven will be on the board as Past President which is not an elective position. The club welcomes each of these elected members to the Board for the coming year.

Celebrity

The recently concluded convention of the Golden State Bonsai Federation in Sacramento had a competitive exhibit of bonsai and the best trees were singled out for recognition. Rick Trumm entered a tree that he thought was pretty nice. Boy, was he ever right. The tree won awards as the best conifer, the best tree in the show, the Peoples' Choice award and the John Naka award. Congratulations Rick. The tree was also shown at the recent EBBS show which goes to prove what we have been saying all along, namely that we have some very nice trees in our shows.



John Nackley

The Kaiser Cement Company has been active in the East Bay for a long time, and their trucks had the company logo on their side which said something like “find a need and fill it”. East Bay Bonsai Society has their own version of Kaiser Cement in the form of John Nackley. He has quietly filled many jobs for the society, many of which are behind the scenes, and also many of which are not wanted by others. The list of his recent accomplishments is lengthy. He frequently runs the raffle at the regular meetings when no one else will do it. He served as the hospitality chair for our recent

show. He has served as a voice of reason on the Board as past president, and served on both the audit committee and the bylaws review committee.

His most recent endeavor was to organize a successful workshop for beginners, a project that the Board has wanted to accomplish for many years. John not only organized the workshop, but he also got funding from the Golden State Bonsai Federation so the workshop didn't cost the society a dime.

John deserves a great big thank you for all he does for the society. He has set a high standard for what you can do for the society and it is time for the rest of us to follow in his footsteps and volunteer for things that need to be done. At the next meeting, take a moment to seek him out and say thanks for his efforts in behalf of the club

Wire workshop



The EBBS wire workshop was held on Saturday, November 12 and was led by John Doig. The workshop featured a discussion about the basics of wiring including the how, when and why wiring is done. Sample fir trees were then supplied to the participants to practice what they had learned. Each enrollee took their tree home for further study and practice. All those who took part in the workshop felt that they had a valuable learning experience. Based on the success of this workshop, EBBS may hold similar workshops in the future. If so, don't miss out. Sign up without delay since it will rapidly fill.

Mendocino Cypress

Lately Mendocino Cypress trees have been showing up at the various bonsai show sales. These are splendid little trees with thin trunks with a lot of movement and great bark. The branching is usually very twiggy which gives a vision of great age. Best of all they are very reasonably priced for collected material.

The care and feeding of these little trees is a bit different from most trees we see as bonsai. Most of the trees found in northern California in the wild are at most two to three feet high. In contrast, Mendocino Cypress trees are occasionally grown in England as landscape trees where they grow to 50 or more feet high, indicating

that the tree would like to grow into a large tree if it had a chance. So what keeps them small in California? The secret is the soil. We spend a great deal of effort on our bonsai soil, trying to perfect a mixture that drains well and yet can retain some residual moisture. Now think of the worst possible soil. This might be a mix of very fine sand and heavy clay that has a composition somewhere between glue and cement. As you would expect, the soil does not drain well and stays sopping wet. To make matters worse, the soil in the area is a serpentine soil which means that it contains traces of elements like nickel which are toxic to plant life. Yep, you got it. With soil like this it is no wonder that the trees stay small.

Successfully growing collected Mendocino cypress involves two distinct steps. The first is removing the soil that the tree was collected in and replacing it with good quality bonsai soil. Surprising as it may seem, if you do this all in one afternoon, the tree is likely to die because it needs time to adjust to nontoxic soil that drains well. The way to replace the soil is to repot each year for a period of two or three years, each time removing only one half or one third of the soil the tree was collected in. Step wise reduction of the original soil ensures that the tree will survive.



The next step involves maintaining the character of the tree. Now that it is potted in good bonsai soil it is ready to grow like gang busters. If it is fertilized regularly it will respond by rapid growth of the trunk which losses all the lovely movement that attracted you to the tree. Further, all the beautiful twigs quickly

become stout branches. To prevent this from happening, pot the trees in relatively small pots and fertilize very sparingly, if at all. Also, keep the foliage severely pruned.

The little trees make splendid bonsai and are very easy to grow if you understand their game plan.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

These workshops are a splendid opportunity to learn about how to develop your trees into first class bonsai. In these workshops you work on your own tree under the guidance of an experienced bonsai artist. These classes are open to all experience levels.

The workshops are held at 7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month when the college is in session. In December, the college is closed on the fourth Monday, so the workshop will be moved to the second Monday, December 8.

The meetings are held in the Landscape Horticulture Building at Merritt College which is located in the Oakland hills off Redwood Road. Leading the workshops are two members of EBBS, Bill Castellon and Randall Lee.

For more information, contact Bill at 510-569-8003 or Randall at 510-846-0841. The workshops are free (except for a nominal parking fee) and are a wonderful experience. All you need to take advantage of them is to just show up with your tree in hand.

Bonsai Calendar

- Sun – Move all trees into full sun.
- Watering – Adjust watering for winter.
- Fertilizing – Use low or zero nitrogen fertilizers.
- Repotting – Generally, not the time for repotting.
- Styling/Pruning – Trimming should be minimal. Prune maples before cold weather to minimize bleeding.
- Insect and disease control – Remove dead plant material. Apply dormant spray. Watch for and treat insect infestations.

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

Events by Others

GSBF's Bonsai and Suiseki Garden: open Wed., Thurs., Fri. 11:00 am–3:00 pm, Sat. 10:00 am–4:00 pm, Sun. 12:00 noon–4:00 pm Enter at gate across from Boat House.

Dec 6, Fresno, Fresno Bonsai Society: Seventh Annual Bonsai Yard Sale at 736 West Browning. Set up begins at 8 AM. Everyone is welcome to buy, sell or trade. Sales include pre-bonsai, finished trees, pots, supplies, stands, books, suiseki and accent plants.

Lunch will be available. Great bargains and great fun! If you need a table or more information, contact Ralph Schroeder at ralSch@sbcglobal.net or Peter Schaffert at peteschaffert@gmail.com.

Dec 8, Oakland, Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College, in the Landscape Horticulture Building. Starts at 7:00 PM. The workshop is free except for a nominal parking fee. It is open to all experience levels. Participants work on their own trees under the guidance of experienced bonsai artists. For more information, contact Bill Castellon at 510-569-8003, or Randall Lee at 510-846-0841.

Dec 26, 2014 – Jan 2, 2015 San Marino, Aiseki Kai: 25th Anniversary Exhibition of Viewing Stones Show at the Botanical Center of the Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Road. Hours are 10:30 AM – 4:30 PM each day (Closed New Year's Day). Free parking. For more information see our website: www.aisekikai.com and/or contact hutch@aisekikai.com

January 24-25 Oakland, Bay Island Bonsai Annual Bonsai Exhibit at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave. Hours: 10AM-4PM, Saturday and Sunday. Auction on Saturday, preview at noon and auction at 1pm. Bonsai demonstration by Boon Manakitivipart on Sunday at 1 PM. Guided tours of the exhibit both Saturday and Sunday. Vendor sales, Club sales, Educational bonsai material for sale, special pots sales this year. Entry to Exhibit is free, donations accepted. For more information (510) 919-5042 or go to <http://bayislandbonsai.com/bib-annual-exhibit/>

Articles or Services for Sale (or give-away)

Wanted to Buy (or for free)

Each membership household, free of charge, may place a five-line ad related to bonsai in two newsletters each year. Send a copy of ads to your editor by the fourth Monday of the month to appear in the next publication. To place an add call (925) 458-3845.

East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2014 - 2015

Regular Meetings: Second Wednesday, every month (except August and October) @ 7:30 pm

Place: Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland.

Visitors welcome—for more information: call: (925) 431-0452

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

Meeting Program

Dec 10 Holiday Dinner
Jan 14 Hornbeams – Kathy Shaner
Jan 25 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
Feb 11 Shohin Hinoki Cypress – Randall Lee
Mar 11 Pines – Gordon Deeg
Mar 22 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby

Special Events
