



# The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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## East Bay Bonsai Society

### July Meeting:

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

#### A Message from President Linda

Your Board of Directors have been very busy people meeting, planning, scheduling and discussing ideas that make East Bay Bonsai Society a member-oriented bonsai club. I'd like to share with you my perceptions of these very talented, unique and giving individuals. And, I have a special request at the end, so read on please.

I will start with John Nackley, past President who has coordinated the contact and arrangement of the monthly presentations. John's presence on the Board has been vital as a great "working" communicator. He is always willing to pull for the smallest job to the most important jobs. He does so with sensitivity and respect of others. His and wife, Karen's dedication as retired pediatricians have permeated the positive culture of EBBS in the past years. And, he has written a special grant to obtain funds for a specialty workshop on the "Art of Wiring" with a proven workshop presenter, John Doig.

Vice President, Michael Hylton has been carrying out a superb job with getting EBBS into the social media realm and has certainly brought forth the club to a wider audience. He will be chairing the EBBS Fall Show which is a major undertaking. He's just the right person, cool, relaxed and organized! And, he is a revitalizer!

Janice Dilbeck has been judicious in keeping the minutes of the Board meeting giving each of us a monthly guideline by which to carry on the work of the Board. With regrets of all of us, she is stepping out of the position immediately due to the coming forth of many other activities in her life. She will continue as editor of the "Tree Shrinker" so she isn't leaving us completely. I know you all join me in extending a heartfelt "thank you" to the great service she has provided to the club's leadership and EBBS members.

Pat Cahill, Treasurer, continues to perform a close watch on all the financial aspects of the club. This entails a lot of work besides just collecting money and writing out checks. She has State and Federal forms to complete as well. And she continues this thankless job with a smile and the graciousness to offer her home as the Board of Director's meeting place each month.

Tom Colby, Director 1, a stalwart member of the EBBS Board, lends his wisdom, consideration and long experience on matters of the Club. He authors the "Tree Shrinker" and provides those thoughtful articles of information. He has given his permission to use an article just published in the Golden Statements Magazine. Keep an eye out for it!

Director 2, Bob Gould, tends to the "structural bones" of our Club, managing contracts with the City of Oakland for facility usage, maintaining communication between Oakland Parks and Rec personnel and the interests of the Club. Bob is always the hardest working "man in charge" at every function of EBBS as well as the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt, Friends of the Lake Merritt Gardens and other bonsai and suiseki clubs. He is "one-of-a-kind" and irreplaceable. But someone will have to continue what he does for so many in the bonsai world. Hopefully it won't be for a while though. Check this man out, learn from and appreciate him. He's a jewel!

Director 4, Roger Brady, came on Board bringing an excitement and support for status of new members. My "ballpark" count is 24 new members within the last 12 months to date. He is working to provide a list of EBBS members who can be called upon as Bonsai Subject Matter Experts and matching new members with a mentor if they do not yet have one. Roger took this task to "heart" and each of the new members should know that his efforts are your rewards. East Bay Bonsai Society has been a fairly stable club with long time members. Roger recognized the need to turn our attention to view our service to newer members because that's what EBBS is all about, a member-centered Club. I would say that all the newer members should give Roger a "pat on the back" for being at your back!

Director 3 and the Secretary positions are presently open. Keep your fingers crossed for a replacement soon!

And finally, I would like to acknowledge the Off-Board leaders that do work, often unrealized and not appreciated enough. First and foremost are Bill Castellon and Randall Lee who provide guidance and a place for a monthly night workshop at Merritt College each month during the year except during summer

months. Both Bill and Randall, experienced and successful bonsai artists, give of their time and knowledge with generosity and without remuneration. They have done this for years, now.

Beverly Martinez has accepted the task as Librarian and is working to organize the EBBS Club Library. Due to her acceptance of this job, all members have yet another resource for information. Check out the library at each regular meeting, check out a book or two to read and hone your understanding and skills. There is no "due date", just please return it when you are finished with it. Tell others if the information was helpful.

Marcia Cozens, not only a brand new member but a very gracious lady, has volunteered to coordinate the hosting of the monthly meeting "Break-time Snacks and Hot Coffee/Tea". Everyone enjoys this part of the meeting, but for past years, no one has stepped up to the plate to be in charge of it. The kudos from the Board members and hopefully all of you who enjoy, should lay your gratitude upon Marcia for being willing to take on this task. This doesn't mean she does it all by herself!!! She coordinates it. So help her!

As a representative from our EBBS Club to the *Friends of the Garden at Lake Merritt*, let us acknowledge Janet Smith, a long time EBBS member as well as past Board of Director. She represents our club well and I am so pleased she has accepted this position.

Now there are others in the forms of committees working on various tasks such as Auditing the EBBS Financials, Reviewing and Suggesting Revision of the EBBS Constitution and By-Laws and Researching/Planning to create a Daytime Monthly Workshop on a weekend day once a month for EBBS members. Those involved on these committees are: Janet Nelson-Trumm, John Nackley, Janet Smith, Marcia Cozens, Maria Sargent, and Don Meeker.

So, all members of East Bay Bonsai Society, new and old, it is my hope you will participate in our upcoming social event in August, a picnic in the lovely surroundings of Janet Nelson and Rick Trumm's home. This is a superb opportunity to chat with each Board member and Off-Board members. Get to know them, share your appreciation, comments and perhaps suggestions. Maybe within your exchanges, you, too, will realize what unique, caring and giving individuals they are. In addition, you may see ways you have something to offer and join in being part of the solutions. This is what will continue the viability of East Bay Bonsai Society, a club that is member-centered.

Sincerely, Linda

### **Auction**

The July meeting is our annual auction and participation by everyone, not only by bringing plants for sale but also by bidding generously, is vital to the success of the club. The auction, in addition to the annual dues, is a major source of income to the society

and helps to pay for room rent as well as fees for speakers and the cost of demonstration trees.



Hopefully by now you have reviewed your collection and have selected a tree or two that does not meet your expectations and you are willing to pass it on to a new owner who is more appreciative of its virtues. Eighty percent of the selling price goes to the seller and the rest goes to the club. With the profits from your tree you can feel free to bid lavishly on another tree that incites your lust. The auction, in short, is a splendid way to upgrade your collection. You can also donate your tree to the auction where the entire selling price goes to the club.



Donating is a fine way to support your club and is much appreciated. Trees are the main focus of the auction but any bonsai related items such as pots, scrolls and stands are welcome.

The auction is a great place to practice some of your merchandizing skills. If you are selling a tree, the more you upgrade your tree the more likely it will sell and at a higher price. Upgrades can be pretty simple and can start by pulling weeds out of the pot and then may include a bit of trimming of awkward branches, a minimum of wiring of at least a major branch or two, planting the tree in a bonsai pot and finally applying a little top dressing on the tree. None of these upgrades are required but each helps the prospective buyer to more clearly visualize the finished bonsai that your tree will become in the future and increases the value of the tree.

There is always fine print. You may put a reserve price on your tree which is where the bidding will open. If no one wants the tree at this price, you are responsible for reclaiming it at the end of the auction. Bidding on all other items starts at a minimum of ten dollars, so be sure that your item merits an opening bid of at least ten dollars to guarantee that your item will sell. Less expensive items can be bundled into a single item as, for example, a box of several pots. If you have an item worth less than a ten dollar opening bid, save it for sale at our show in October. The show is a great place to sell inexpensive items where prospective customers not only include bonsai people, but also outsiders who are amazed and delighted with a small starter tree in a pot. The inexpensive items sell quickly.

Seller forms and auction instructions are attached. If you complete the seller form before auction night, this may be very helpful to you and the smooth running of the auction. You will only need to complete and attach the three part tags before the auction begins. Tags as well as forms will also be available when you register. The trees are identified both on the tags and the forms by your initials and by number as, for example, ABC-3. This would be the third item offered by seller ABC. To avoid duplicate tags, please use all three of your initials. Be sure to get a bidding paddle when you register. You'll need one to bid.

Set up for the auction will start at 6:00 pm and auction items can be received until 7:30 pm. The auction will start promptly at 7:30 pm so be sure that you action items have been registered and you have you bidding paddle at the ready. The auction will close promptly at 9:30 to allow time for transactions to be completed and the building to be cleared. If there are items that remain to be auctioned at this time they can be retained by their owners for sale at the October show.

### **Schedule**

- 6:00-6:30 Room set up
- 6:30-7:15 Sellers bring and tag items
- 7:00-7:30 Preview and bidder paddles secured
- 7:30-9:30 Auction
- 9:30 Auction closes
- 7:45-9:45 Claim and payment for successful bids on auction items
- 9:30 -9:45 Claim unsold items
- 9:30-10:00 Take down tables and chairs

The auction is a lot of fun. If you haven't already volunteered to help contact the auction chair, Linda Soliven. She can really use your help. You can contact her at 925-776-2342. Needless to say, the auction is a fine way to add nice things to your collection. Be sure to bring your checkbook (we do not take credit cards) and be generous in your bidding. We all will benefit.

### **August Meeting**

Instead of our regular meeting, we will meet on Saturday, August 16, at the home of Rick Trumm and Janet Nelson for our annual potluck dinner. The affair will run from 3:30 until sunset. Our potluck is always a rewarding affair where we get to visit with our fellow members in a social setting. We also get to enjoy seeing a fine collection of outstanding bonsai. Lastly and certainly not least, we get to share the products of the many fine cooks who grace our membership. Do save the date. The potluck is one of the funnest events of the year.

### **Frolic in the Garden**

The June meeting was the annual frolic in the garden. It featured a tour of the Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt collection hosted by two members of EBBS who are both very active in the garden. Janice Dilbeck is in charge of maintaining collected junipers and Bob Gould has his hand in much of the overall operation of the collection.



The tour started with an examination of the entry gate which many people pass through without noticing what a remarkable structure that it is. The entry gate was built by Hioshi Sakadoshi who lived in southern California. His family had been tea house builders in Japan for the last 600 years. The gate is remarkable because it is constructed entirely without screws, nails or other metal fasteners. The wood joints are constructed in such a way that they actually become tighter in the event of earthquakes. He built the gate by himself without help. Next time you are in the garden take a moment to carefully examine the gate.

The collection consists of 190 trees, 87 of which are currently on display. Two of the trees on display are of particular interest. First is a black pine which was brought by Japanese growers to the Pacific Exposition in 1915. They did not want to return it to Japan at the conclusion of the exposition and it eventually found its way to Mas Imazumi, a local bonsai artist who donated it to the garden. The exact age of the tree is not known, but it is reputed to have been in cultivation as a bonsai for about 300 years before it came to America which would make it one of the oldest trees cultivated as a bonsai in America.



The other noteworthy tree in the collection is the Daimyo Oak which was given to the American ambassador to Japan in 1865. The tree eventually made its way to the garden. You might be aware of the ambassador's name. He brought the tree back with him and settled a little way south of San Francisco. The place is named for him and is now the city of Burlingame. The tree passed through several owners and eventually made its way to the garden. It is thought to be the bonsai tree cultivated for the longest time on American soil, but unfortunately, documentation to confirm this has been lost. An interesting side note is that Daimyo Oaks in nature have much larger leaves than the bonsai tree in the garden. On Boy's Day boys are given mochi, a gooey treat made from pounded rice, wrapped in leaves from this type of oak. Visitors to the garden from Japan have exclaimed that there is a mochi tree when they see our Daimyo oak.

In response to a question about a hornbeam with a very gnarly root base, the comment was made that the charm of the tree was that you could not see all of the tree when viewed from one spot. This left you to wonder what was on the other side of the nooks and crannies in the roots and gives the tree an air of mystery. The Japanese use this inability to see the whole as an important element in garden design as well as bonsai tree design. If you notice, the curving walkways of the garden do not let you see the complete garden at one glance. You have to walk along the path to eventually see it all.

Another question was directed toward the use of raffia on trees that were in the process of being styled.

In many cases branches were drastically bent to new positions. A constant problem is that in the process of bending, the branch will break. The raffia is used to support the branch which reduces the likelihood of the branch breaking.

Future plans for the garden include installation of shade cloth areas for trees that are getting a bit too much sun. Among these is a very large pomegranate which will probably grow better in a bit of shade.

At the conclusion of the tour Joe Byrd spent some time discussing future plans for the garden. He started by stating that the garden was your home. By that he meant that the garden was entirely run by volunteers and this makes it unique in all of the United States. The central focus of the garden is the collection itself as well as the facilities. Many of the volunteers have been in bonsai for many years, and as they age, thought has to be made about capturing their collective knowledge and making it available to the next generation of volunteers. Toward this end, Joe visualizes a formal training program on how to handle and understand the requirements of bonsai. The program is currently evolving but might include training at several levels ranging from developing skilled bonsai horticulturists to people who just want to learn how to take care of their bonsai tree a little better. Accompanying this training is the institution of research projects. On another front, he wants to market the garden to attract more visitors, now amounting to about 21,000 per year, and to attract more volunteers. The garden is working to achieve museum certification which would give credibility for grants and for attracting funds from large corporations. Obviously exciting new things are in store for the garden.

These are ambitious new concepts and it takes a lot of hard work to make it happen. The garden is very much worth your support. If you want to be part of the excitement in the offing, volunteer to help. Our tour leaders are both highly skilled bonsai artists but there is much to be done that the rest of us are more than qualified to do. Also donations of money go a long way to maintain the garden.

### **East Bay Bonsai Society is now on Pinterest**

In addition to Facebook and Twitter, East Bay Bonsai Society is now on Pinterest to share our photos from our events as well as pictures of our bonsai trees. If you don't know Pinterest, it is a visual discovery tool that people use to collect ideas for their different projects and interests. People create and share collections (called "boards") of visual bookmarks (called "Pins") that they use to do things like plan trips and projects, organize events or save articles and recipes or bonsai tree pics. You can find us at [www.pinterest.com/eastbaybonsai](http://www.pinterest.com/eastbaybonsai)

### **Field Trip**

The EBBS scheduled a field trip to Lone Pine Gardens on June 21. Those who went took advantage of the fine early summer weather. A picnic lunch and social visit with the owners of the nursery, the Prices, was enjoyed after shopping. If you are one of those who didn't go, you missed a really good time but not to worry

because another field trip may be scheduled in the future.

### **Water, Water Everywhere**

So you have been engaged in the wide world of bonsai for a while and you want to upgrade your collection with a really nice tree. You spot a tree for sale at a show that makes all your dreams come true. Talking with the owner you find that the tree was purchased from a nursery in a gallon can twenty years ago. The price of the tree will probably be in the range of a few hundred dollars to a few thousand dollars. So why is the tree so expensive? There are at least three reasons which figure in pricing a tree.



The most obvious reason is the appearance of the tree which is what attracted your attention to the tree in the first place. All the branches are in the right place and the tree is showing all the signs of great age such as a thick trunk and aged bark. The cost of the tree is in part due to the skill that was needed to bring the tree to the current state of perfection. Bonsai trees are living trees and as a result are constantly changing. After twenty years the tree is not to be considered finished but only a little needs to be done to maintain it as a fine bonsai.

The second factor in pricing a tree is the economic law of supply and demand. There are fewer fine bonsai on the market than there people who want to buy them and this drives up the price.

There is a third and less obvious factor in pricing a bonsai and that is the fact that the owner has asked every day for the last twenty years a simple question. He has asked each day without fail: does this tree need watering? He has asked this question without fail for an amazing period of 7,300 days. If it is pouring rain in the middle of winter the answer to the question

is easy but none the less the question is asked. The pricing of the bonsai also reflects this remarkable and unflinching devotion to the tree over the years.



Watering your bonsai is a lot like feeding the family dog. It is not hard to do but must be addressed every day. If you decide to skip feeding the dog for a week the dog is pretty mad at you and if you skip feeding him for a couple of weeks, you will find that the dog has packed up and left. It is the same way with bonsai. Skipping water for a week will make the tree look pretty sick and if the drought is extended to a couple of weeks your tree may well be in need of a decent burial because it is no longer living.

You might ask, why the fuss about consistent watering? After all, trees in nature aren't watered every day. The answer to this lies in how roots function. If the soil the bonsai is planted in does not drain well, the roots can rot. If the soil drains well it can quickly dry out leading to the death of the roots. Not a good thing. We select soils for bonsai which allow good root growth and are compromises between these two extremes. Our trees look best in shallow pots and the shallow pots aggravate how fast the potting media can dry out. In fact, in warm weather the soils can completely dry out to the very bottom of the pot in a few days, and this leads to dry (and dead) roots. In the natural habitats where most of the trees that we select for bonsai grow there are summer rains. The soil near the surface may dry out between rains but there is enough moisture in the soil beneath the surface to prevent loss of roots. The soil does not completely dry out as is would in a shallow bonsai pot.

An interesting example is the native California oaks which grow in places with little or no summer rain at all, yet if we neglect to water our oak bonsai for more than a few days they will die. Why the difference? These trees get by with lack of summer rain in part by going semi dormant in the summer. Probably part of the dormancy includes the roots slowly hardening off to prepare for dryer soil. Also, although the soil appears to be dry, the level of moisture left in the soil is enough to sustain the dormant roots. The roots also grow very deeply to capture the residual moisture in the soil. If the winter rainfall is poor, the tree will suffer because of low residual moisture content of the deep soil and the tree may not survive an extended period of drought lasting several years. One can speculate that in nature the soil slowly dries out leaving the roots time to prepare for a period of low moisture. Oak bonsai however can dry out quickly in the fast draining soil and shallow pots leaving no time for the roots to harden off, so they die.

How often should you water your bonsai? That depends on the soil you use and how quickly it dries out as well as the weather where you live. Obviously on hot days the soil will dry more quickly. Is your tree in full sun or part shade? This, too, influences the dry out rate. Taking all these factors into account, you probably should water about every three days or less in cold weather, every two days in mild weather and every day in hot weather. These are only rough guidelines and, of course, actual water needs for your trees may vary depending on your specific circumstances. The crucial thing is to ask every day without fail the question: does this plant need water?

### **Bonsai Calendar**

- Watering – Water regularly. Don't over-water defoliated trees.
- Fertilizing – Continue regular feeding, but stop fertilizing decandled pines.
- Repotting – Not recommended at this time except for tropical and semi-tropical trees.
- Styling/Pruning – Avoid drastic pruning. Wire uprising branches on quince, ume, oaks, etc. Prune excessive growth on trees.
- Insect and disease control – Maintain defensive treatments for fungus. Watch for and treat insect infestations.

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

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

The workshops at Merritt College are discontinued for the summer and will resume in August. These workshops are a splendid opportunity to learn how to develop your trees into first class bonsai as well as how to make them grow at their very best. If you have not

attended them you are missing out on one of bonsai's best deals. The workshops are held once a month at Merritt College in Oakland when the college is in session. Watch for more details in the August newsletter.

### **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.

### **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.

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### **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.gsbf-bonsai.org/lake-merritt/NewHome.html>

### **Meeting Program**

<b>July</b>	<b>9</b>	Auction
<b>July</b>	<b>27</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
<b>Aug</b>		Picnic
<b>Aug</b>	<b>24</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould
<b>Sept</b>	<b>10</b>	Show Prep
<b>Sept</b>	<b>28</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Don Meeker & Linda Soliven
<b>Oct</b>		No club meeting due to proximity to show
<b>Oct</b>	<b>26</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – J D Lin
<b>Nov</b>	<b>12</b>	Juniper Jubilee
<b>Nov</b>	<b>23</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
<b>Dec</b>	<b>10</b>	Holiday Dinner