



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

May Meeting:

June 11, 2014 @ 7:30 p.m.

June Meeting

The next regular meeting of East Bay Bonsai Society will be held in the Bonsai Garden rather than our usual meeting place. The meeting will feature a behind the scenes tour of the garden by our very own members, Janice Dilbeck and Bob Gould. Both are very qualified leaders. Janice is in charge of maintaining the collected Junipers and Bob has his hand in much of the operation of the garden. Doors open at 7:00 pm and the tour will start at 7:30 pm.



Following the tour, Joe Byrd will speak on the future plans for the garden. This will be enlightening to us all as there is a lot in the works for the garden.

The club will furnish refreshments and beverages for the evening. What can be better than seeing a world class bonsai collection with a glass of wine or pop in hand? The answer to that question is simple. The chance to socialize with your fellow club members is better. It is a lot of fun. See you there!

By the way, the meeting has been referred to as our frolic in the garden. Actually it is our annual celebration of the summer solstice. For millennia the solstice has been celebrated with wild dancing around smoky campfires. For those of us who may be traditionalists and wish to observe the solstice in the age old way, please note that camp fires are not permitted in the garden and the garden will close at

10:00 pm. If you feel the spirit to dance you are welcome to do so, but please arrange your dance choreography in a way that does not endanger either your fellow club members or the bonsai trees.

May Meeting

The May meeting featured a presentation by John Boyce who first discussed defoliation and then lead a critique of trees brought in by members which focused on the next step in the development of the tree.

Defoliation is a process where foliage is removed from the tree. The results are smaller leaves and more ramification ("twiggyness") of the tree. Most trees can be defoliated and this results in improved bonsai. In all cases the tree must be in good health before defoliation can be considered. Defoliation is generally done in late spring when warm weather has arrived. John then discussed how to handle specific species.

Olives are defoliated earlier than most trees. This is done in late February and all but the top two leaves are removed.

Most of the trees we defoliate have leaves that we remove. We don't usually think of pines as being defoliated but in fact they are. They are decandled, which is a form of defoliation, in late May or early June. In the fall the new buds where the candles were removed are thinned to one or two buds, again a form of defoliation. Finally, in the winter old needles are removed

Live Oaks can be defoliated in late spring. John pointed out that Live Oaks are naturally defoliated by fires. The tree can lose most of the leaves in the fire but will slowly regrow new leaves over a period of as much as two or three years.

The most common tree that is defoliated is trident maple. Early in the spring the tree puts out a flush of growth with new leaves and long branches called water sprouts. In preparation for the defoliation, the tree is fertilized starting in April. Defoliation can be accomplished in late May or Early June by trimming the water sprouts and by cutting the petiole (stem) of the leaves about one quarter of an inch from the branch. There is a bud at the base of the leaf which will grow once the leaf has been removed. In most trees there are

small leaves on the inside of the foliage canopy and these can be left. Removal of the large outer leaves allows the sunlight to reach the inner branches of the tree which encourages the growth of latent buds. Trident maples can be defoliated again in late August, but this requires a longer growing season than we usually have in the Bay Area. While this is successful in southern California, it is not recommended for the Bay Area.

Japanese maples do not take kindly to extensive defoliation, but the tree can be partially defoliated where a few of the largest leaves are removed. This results in a more balanced look to the tree.

In the critique portion of the program, John examined several trees. A liquid amber tree was an excellent example of a tree that would benefit from partial defoliation. It had a variety of leaf sizes ranging from quite small to fairly large. John recommended that about one half of the largest leaves be removed and the rest should be left to balance the leaves on the tree.

He made an interesting comment on styling a tree. He said that he had studied flower arranging from a Japanese teacher. The teacher said that a flower arrangement should be like a pretty lady. Only a part of her beauty should be revealed, leaving a sense of mystery and expectation about what was not seen. John applied this concept to bonsai and particularly to a deciduous tree where portions of the trunk should be exposed. Frequently a full canopy of foliage totally hides the trunk which leaves no mystery or expectation.

The presentation was very thought provoking and the format of part discussion and part critique was well received. We hope to have John return for another program in the future.

Field Trip

Circle Saturday, June 21 on your calendar. That is the date for the EBBS field trip to Lone Pine Gardens. Lone Pine is one of the largest bonsai nurseries in the country and is located in Sebastopol, about 75 miles north of the Bay Area. They feature trees all the way from inexpensive starter plants to finished bonsai. Lone Pine is also a prime source of accent plants. EBBS has organized field trips to Lone Pine for the last several years, and all that have participated have said that they have had a good time. Most have returned home with significant additions to their bonsai collection. The Prices have always been gracious hosts.

Lone Pine Gardens is located at 6450 Lone Pine Road in Sebastopol. There is an excellent web site, www.lonepinegardens.com, which gives a preview of the treat that you have in store for you. To reach the nursery, travel north on Highway 101 to the Cotati/Sebastopol exit. Turn left toward Sebastopol onto the old Gravenstein Highway and proceed about 9 miles to Lone Pine Road on the left. Turn onto Lone Pine Road and the nursery is located on the right. If lost, the nursery phone number is 707-823-5024. The web site also has detailed driving instructions.

The plan is to meet at the nursery at 11:00 for time to browse all the wonderful plants for sale, followed by

lunch on the nursery grounds where you may enjoy the picnic lunch you have brought. It is a fun trip and there is a lot to see even if you are not interested in adding to your bonsai collection.



We are organizing car pools for those who need a ride. If you are willing to be a driver, contact Linda Solivan at 925-776-2342 or www.bonsaigirl143@att.net. We will e-mail the list of drivers and their phone numbers before the trip, so that those wanting a ride may contact a driver directly to make arrangements. (Call Linda if you do not have e-mail).

July Auction

Excitement is building for our annual auction in July. By now you should have reviewed your collection of plants and selected those which do not quite meet your expectations. You may want to pass these on to a more loving home at the auction. Any bonsai related item can be sold at the auction such as trees, pots, stands and scrolls. As a matter of fact, anything in good taste can be offered in the auction. Note that this criteria excludes husbands, wives, past significant others, kids and the family dog, but just about everything else is welcome.

Note also the minimum projected value for all items is \$10.00. As usual, the club keeps 20% of the selling price and you get the rest to hopefully use to buy more stuff from the auction. In addition to selling your items, you can also donate the entire selling price to EBBS, which is a great way to support the club. There are always fine things to be found to upgrade your collection, and generally, at most affordable prices.



We plan to have a work party to clean-up many trees that have already been donated. This will be at the Bonsai Garden on Saturday, July 5, at 9:00 am. All members are welcome to come and help with this task. Just show up at the Garden Center with rags to clean pots and tools to weed.

The auction is a very important fundraiser for the society and deserves your support in providing items for sale, buying lots of stuff and helping out with the many tasks which are needed to make it all run smoothly. Linda Soliven is in charge of the auction. See her if you want to volunteer to help. She could really use you.

A Little Science, Please

Suppose that you are a scientist and have been asked whether traces of the element vanadium is essential to growing corn. Your first thought is that no, it is not, because vanadium is pretty rarely found and corn grows great just about anywhere. As a scientist you know that you have to back up your opinion with experimental data. You could take a group of about 50 corn seedlings and divide them into three groups. The first group is planted in soil with no vanadium, the second into soil with a little vanadium added, and the third into soil with a little more vanadium added. After a bit of time, you compare how the three groups are growing. If they all look about the same you conclude that vanadium is not essential for growing corn. If the group with a little vanadium is growing better and the third group of seedlings are growing even better you can convincingly conclude that vanadium is, indeed, essential for growing corn.

Two things stand out in this hypothetical experiment. First is that opinion is not enough to make a convincing case regardless of how reasonable it might be, and second is the inclusion of a group of seedlings planted in soil with no vanadium which served as a control. Many things can influence how plants grow such as amount of light, fertilizer and water. The control group showed that the improved growth in the soils with vanadium, if any, was only due to the presence of vanadium and not one of these other factors.

So what, you might reasonably ask, has all this got to do with bonsai? Most people in bonsai are not scientists so there is very little convincing data to be found. Instead, we find a lot of strongly held opinions with no basis in experimental data. A lot of opinions are also based on experiments that lead to invalid conclusions because there were no controls. This makes for a lot of confusion on the part of folks new to bonsai when faced with conflicting opinions about bonsai horticulture.

The area of soil composition is deluged with opinions. Soil mixtures can include organic components (meaning once alive, such as fir bark or compost) and inorganic components (meaning never having lived such as rocks). Current opinion says that you should never include organic components because they can decay over time and this robs fertilizer from your tree. Sounds good, but where is the data? You should include inorganic material which has sharp edges because growing roots will be split by the sharp edges and lead to denser root balls. Sounds good, but has anyone looked at roots and compared the roots of trees grown in sharp soils with roots grown in media with no sharp components to see whether this is true? Where is the controlled experiment where comparison can be made directly between two types of soil?

So frequently we pot all of our trees into a new mix containing, for example, no organic material and discover that they are truly growing better. With no control of plants left in the old mix, are the improved results due to the new mix or are they due to the fact that the weather is warmer, you have increased the amount of fertilizer that you are using, you water more frequently, fewer cloudy days meaning more sunlight, or many other things which have nothing to do with the new mix?

Everyone now agrees that you should never use garden soil as a component of your soil mix. Thirty years ago a popular mix was one third each of garden soil, sand and leaf mold. This mix does not drain well but pictures of trees from this era show that magnificent trees can be grown in this mix if very carefully watered.

Fertilizer is another subject of great debate. There are adherents who claim that the use of only organic fertilizers such as fish emulsion or cotton seed meal are worth considering, and there are other people who claim that inorganic fertilizers such as Miracle Grow are necessary for best results. Again, sadly, there are few if any controlled experiments. All trees require nitrogen and they are not too fussy where they get it, so the differences between fertilizers are probably small or none existent, but this is an area crying for data.

Where does the newcomer turn in face of all this? Opinions that start with "the only way to..." should be immediately taken with a grain of salt, because there are many examples that other ways also work just as well. Opinions that sound good but are not based on valid data should be regarded as interesting folklore. The newcomer is best served by knowing that your tree really wants to grow for you and become the splendid bonsai that you want. It does this by having its basic needs

met. These are a soil that drains well, enough water to keep it moist, sunlight and fertilizer. The rest is all details.

Roster Updates

We have one new member in the club, Lisa Harper. Please introduce yourselves to her at our next club meeting. Her phone number is (510) 220-3339, and e-mail address is lisaharper@me.com.

Also, please add Ryan Vega to your roster. His phone number is (416) 474-0252, and e-mail address is ryan.vega@hotmail.com. Also add Robert Garcia whose phone number is (510) 530-1852, and e-mail address is robereii@comcast.net.

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 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 more details in the August newsletter.

Bonsai Calendar

- Watering – Water regularly. Don't over-water defoliated trees.
- Fertilizing – Continue regular feeding.
- Repotting – Not recommended at this time except for tropical and semi-tropical trees.
- Styling/Pruning – Rotate trees. Watch for wire cutting during this period of fast growth. OK to defoliate healthy trees in first part of month. Candle prune black and other hard pines.
- Cuttings – Root softwood cuttings on deciduous trees and Satsuki.
- 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.

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.

June 7 – 8, Oakland, California Suiseki Society: 19th Annual Show at Lakeside Garden Center on Lake Merritt, 666 Bellevue Ave. Show hours are 10 AM to 4 PM. Free admission. Featuring Suiseki collected and mounted by the members from sites in California. Raffle. Sales area offers Suiseki and viewing stones as well as Asian objects and artwork. For information, contact Henry van der Voort at oldboar3@gmail.com or Bob Gould at rgould1003@aol.com.

June 8, Seaside, Monterey Bonsai Club: 51st Annual Exhibition at the Monterey Buddhist Temple, 1150 Noche Buena Street. Show hours are 11 AM – 4 PM. Demonstration at 1:30 PM by Gareth Shepherd. Silent auction area will include bonsai, pots and plants. For more information: email Rich Guillen at richguillen@sbcglobal.net or Dianne Woods at vinca27@comcast.net.

June 14 – 15, 2014 Livermore, California Valley Bonsai Society: 6th Annual Show at Alden Lane Nursery, 981 Alden Lane. Show hours are 10 AM to 4 PM on both days with demonstrations at noon by Mike Baker on Saturday and Sam Adina on Sunday. The finished trees will be raffled off at the end of the demonstration. Member's sales table, and door prizes. Admission is free. For additional information contact Charles Harder at bonsainut@comcast.net

June 28 – 29, San Andreas, Calaveras Bonsai Club: Club's first indoor show will be held at the Calaveras County Library, 1299 Gold Hunter Road, San Andreas. Free admission; show hours: Saturday 11 AM – 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM. Demos will be presented on both days at 1:30 PM. Members' sale, vendors' tables, beginners' workshop on Saturday at 10 AM for \$25 and an intermediate workshop Sunday at 10 AM for \$30. Call or email contact below before June 15, for \$5 workshop discount. For more information contact: Dan Balsley at (209) 603-1823 or email dbalsley1@gmail.com.

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

Meeting Program

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 – Don Meeker & Linda Soliven
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
