



The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXII, No. 5

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



[facebook.com/eastbaybonsai](https://www.facebook.com/eastbaybonsai)



twitter.com/EastBayBonsai

East Bay Bonsai Society

May Meeting:

May 14, 2014 @ 7:30 p.m.

President's Note

May's meeting will focus on interaction and discussion. Serendipitous happenings occur that give us an opportunity to do something different from the usual monthly presentations. We are indeed very fortunate that John Boyce, a person with years of experience in bonsai, agreed to be our presenter. When we approached him with our idea for this meeting, he agreed that this is something he would like to do. It's a perfect fit for the likes of John who in my experience gives sage knowledge with concise and direct guidance. He will not deal with the bonsai technical processes necessarily, but with decision-making.

Each member who has a tree that you are wondering, "What's my next step with this tree?" should bring a tree. We need tree representation from members in advanced, intermediate and beginner stages of bonsai to participate. Those members who may not at this time have a tree with the burning question "What is the next step?", be assured that your participation and experience will be equally as valuable—ask questions for clarification and understanding.

The following *general format* will help us keep the discussion within the topic and allow time for each tree to be covered:

- Introduce yourself, share your experience.
- Introduce your tree, how did you come by this tree, what have you done on this tree so far.
- Ask: What is the very next step I take?

A proposed schedule for the evening:

7:30 – 7:40	Announcements, Club business
7:40 – 8:00	John Boyce on "What is Defoliating and Why do we Defoliate"
8:00 – 8:15	Break, arrange furniture if needed, raffle
8:15 – 9:20	What's the Next Step – Round Robin
9:20 – 9:30	Debrief, clean up

Linda

May Meeting

The May meeting was scheduled to be a presentation on penjing composition by Tim Kong. Unfortunately, Tim canceled because of a health issue involving surgery. We all wish Tim a speedy recovery and hopefully we can reschedule Tim for a meeting in the future.

In his place, we will feature a program presented by John Boyce who will discuss two issues including defoliation—what to do and not do, and developing my bonsai—what is the next step? John has many years of experience in bonsai development. He has worked at the Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt since the garden opened in the role of assistant curator under Kathy Shaner. He is probably the most senior member of the San Francisco Bonsai Society. John operated a plant shop in his earlier years.

Defoliation is a topic that has arisen in our previous meetings this year and John will deliver a short talk on the how and why of defoliation and will stress what not to do when defoliating your bonsai. Members are encouraged to bring a tree that they are considering defoliating to enhance the discussion.

The second part of the evening will be devoted to John helping members with what should be the next step in the development of their tree. Each member is encouraged to bring a tree for discussion. The comments will be most valuable if the trees are not all in the beginning stages of development. All of us have a tree that could benefit from John's advice.

Thanks in advance to the Nackleys and Pat Cahill for refreshments and to Ryan Vega and Suzanne Muller for setting up the meeting. Again, no one signed up for hosting coffee so if no one steps forward there will be no coffee or tea served at the meeting.

Note that we will not have our regular "show and tell".

April Meeting

The April meeting was a presentation on oaks by John Thompson. He developed an interest in oaks as bonsai many years ago and was attracted to them because oaks are widely found in much of California, can vary widely in form and are excellent material for

bonsai. John brought three oaks as examples of not only the very different growth patterns found in oaks, but also as examples of different foliage patterns, and how this affects the appearance of the tree. The Coast Live Oak is evergreen but slowly loses a few leaves over time. The Valley Oak is completely deciduous, losing all the leaves in the fall. The Cork Oak is intermediate in leaf loss. It never loses all its leaves but has heavy loss in the spring as the new foliage appears. The Cork Oak is not a native to California but is widely grown as a landscape tree and is frequently seen as bonsai in local shows. Bark texture of different oaks can vary widely. Coast live oaks have smooth bark whereas the Valley Live Oak has very rough bark.



Oaks that we see in nature have very rounded canopies which are a marked contrast to trees like pines which are very upright growers. John provided an intriguing reason for these very different patterns of growth. He attributes this difference to the presence of snow in the areas where the trees grow. During a heavy snow fall, trees can become so laden with snow that they can break. Pines cope with this by having branches that tend to slope downward to shed snow. In the case of native oaks, depending on the species, they either grow in snow free areas or are deciduous so there is no way for a significant amount of snow to accumulate in the tree. Upright growing trees have biological mechanisms that suppress side shoots and are the so called top dominant trees of which pines are an excellent example. Most deciduous trees do not have these mechanisms so side shoots are not suppressed, leading to rounded canopies.

John offered several comments on how to best manage oaks as bonsai. Oaks should be styled with rounded canopies as a reflection of how they grow in nature. The form should be like a fountain with an up and outward direction. He said that styling an oak as well as any other tree is a joint venture between you and the tree and it takes time to achieve the results you want, so patience is a necessity. Training of oaks should begin early as the wood soon becomes very hard and is no longer flexible. The rough barked trees should be handled with care during repotting or wiring so as not to damage the bark.

Aluminum wire is a better choice than copper for wiring oaks because it is somewhat less likely to leave wire scars on the tree. The wire scars on smooth barked trees such as Coast Live Oaks are particularly unsightly and take a long time to heal and, in fact, may never heal. Oaks do not lend themselves to jins in their design because dead wood on oaks can quickly rot. This is because oak wood does not have the resins that the wood of other trees such as junipers have which can act to prevent rotting.

John prefers organic fertilizers for oaks such as blends of blood and cotton seed meals. Many recommendations for potting soil center on a mixture that is one third each of akadama (a Japanese clay based material), pumice and lava. Oaks seem to do best with a mix that holds a bit more moisture, so the akadama is increased to as much as one half to two thirds of the mix, with the balance being equal amounts of pumice and lava. In the spring, oaks push out a flush of new leaves which slowly harden off in a couple of months. Hardening can be seen by the leaves turning from pale green to a dark green. Once this occurs, the tree takes all its energy from the new growth and trimming of branches can be safely done.

Coast Live Oaks frequently form a large ball on the trunk just above the soil level. This can be remedied by encouraging the tree to grow roots from the ball and then partially covering the ball with soil. This process can start when the leaves have hardened in the late spring. A strip of the bark about one inch wide can be removed all the way around the trunk below the ball. Rooting hormone is applied to the trunk where the bark was removed. Finally, the soil level is brought up to partially cover the ball. Once all this has been accomplished, the tree is not trimmed or defoliated. Over time, new roots will form from the ball and then the trunk and roots below the ball can be cut off.



During the presentation John certainly made the case for oaks as attractive bonsai and he provided all you need to know to grow them to perfection.

June Meeting

The June meeting will be our annual frolic in the park which is the annual celebration of the summer

solstice. We will observe this by meeting at the Bonsai Garden rather than our usual meeting place at the Garden Center. First we will enjoy a behind the scenes tour of the garden hosted by Janice Dilbeck and Bob Gould, followed by a presentation by Joe Byrd on future plans for the garden.



Field trip

EBBS is scheduling a field trip to Lone Pine Gardens on Saturday, June 21. 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 very inexpensive starter trees to nearly finished bonsai. They also carry a large assortment of accent plants. Lone Pine has a splendid web site (www.lonepinegardens.com) where you may get a preview of the treat in store for you. The plan is to meet there at 11:00 pm to view the nursery, followed by lunch on the nursery grounds where you may enjoy your picnic lunch. It is a fun trip and there is a lot to see even if you are not interested in adding to your bonsai collection.

Auction

The July meeting is our annual auction which is a very important fund raiser for the society. While it is still a ways into the future, now is the time to start reviewing your collection for trees that may not quite meet your expectations. These trees can be passed on to more loving homes by offering them for sale at the auction. The club keeps twenty per cent of the selling price and you get the rest, hopefully to splurge on some of the fine things available in the auction. Auction items can be any bonsai related stuff like trees, pots, stands, tools and display items such as scrolls. The auction is a great way to upgrade your collection.

Inge Woelfel

Inge has been an active member of the EBBS Board for many years, first serving as the secretary and then as a director. She recently resigned because of health issues. Inge was a vital member of the board and could always be counted on to contribute to the subject at hand. The board will certainly miss her and if her health issues are resolved, we would welcome her back. In the meantime we, as well as the rest of EBBS, wish Inge the very best and we all join in a big thank you, Inge for all you have done for EBBS.

Penjing

As you travel through the wide world of bonsai, sooner or later you will come across the term penjing. So just what is penjing? In a word, penjing is the Chinese equivalent of bonsai, although there are subtle differences between penjing and bonsai. They are both very old traditions which have a basis in Buddhism. Buddhism came to China from India about 2000 years ago and brought with it a great appreciation of nature. Many of the early Chinese emperors built vast gardens where they could enjoy nature. The first evidence of potted plants appears on a wall painting in a tomb dated to about 700 CE. Monks from China brought Buddhism to Japan about 1300 years ago. Again, large gardens which had a religious significance were created in the estates of the imperial household. The first evidence of potted plants in Japan appeared in scroll paintings dated about 1300 CE. An interesting speculation is that in both China and Japan potted plants came into fashion by people who wanted to enjoy nature but couldn't afford the enormous cost of an elaborate garden.

Both penjing and bonsai came from the same interest in nature, but it is not surprising that over the centuries they have become somewhat different in focus, particularly since contact between China and Japan remained limited. Bonsai tries to present a very stylized view of nature. We spend a great deal of time trimming and adjusting the branches of our trees to what we conceive to be the best presentation of that tree. The result is a tree that is more perfect than any tree growing in nature. This quest for perfection is best expressed in a single tree in a pot. There are, to be sure, bonsai created from groves of several trees as well as trees growing on a rock, although both of these are in a small minority. The overwhelming numbers of trees you will see in a bonsai show are single trees.

Penjing, on the other hand, tries to present nature as it really is. Only about one half of the trees in a penjing show are single trees in a pot. These trees look more like a tree you might see in nature and are far less rigidly styled than the Japanese bonsai. Scenes of several trees growing amid rocks are very popular as are trees growing on a splinter of rock. These presentations reflect the classical brush paintings of the old masters and accounts for as much as one half of the trees in a penjing show. A particularly popular penjing presentation is a composition of trees and rocks on a marble tray. In fact, these compositions which are occasionally seen here are understood locally to be the

definition of what penjing is all about. As we have seen, penjing covers a much broader area and marble tray compositions are only one of several possible penjing presentations.

Interest in bonsai in the United States grew from Japanese gardeners as well as from people returning from Japan where they had seen bonsai. This interest led to the many bonsai clubs and shows that are available today. America, on the other hand, has not had this kind of exposure to penjing, and so there is far less interest in penjing here in spite of the large Chinese population in the bay area. To see a big penjing show you need to visit China. The lack of visibility of penjing in the United States is unfortunate because it represents a contrasting view to bonsai and could give a perspective to the many ways nature can be displayed.

Bonsai Calendar

- Watering – Water regularly to keep root ball moist, not wet, and never dry.
- Fertilizing – Start regular feeding of deciduous trees after first flush of growth is completed. Continue regular feeding of conifers.
- Repotting – Not recommended at this time.
- Styling/Pruning – Rotate trees. Watch for wire cutting during this period of fast growth. Start defoliation. Shorten branches on fruiting trees. Pinch junipers, spruces and cedars.
- Air Layering – Deciduous trees may be air layered if new growth has hardened.
- 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.

Oakland Plant Exchange

The Plant Exchange is fun, free and encourages reuse, recycling, organic living, resource sharing, and information exchange, and was held this past March at the First Presbyterian Church in Oakland. The EBBS board felt that it might be a good venue for attracting new members so it participated by hosting a bonsai table. The table was staffed by Michael Hylton, Bob Gould, and Barbara Olival. In spite of somewhat less than favorable weather conditions there were more than four hundred attendees at the event, so there was good exposure for the club. The current plans are to hold the event again this fall. Thanks Michael, Bob, and Barbara for your efforts on behalf of EBBS.

Invitation to the BASA Show

Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai would like to personally invite the members of East Bay Bonsai Society to their annual Satsuki Azalea Bonsai exhibition on Saturday

May 17 from 10am-5pm and Sunday May 18 10am-4pm. Trees will be in full bloom for arguably the most colorful show in the Bay Area. An Educational Forum will be presented at 1 pm on Saturday with tips for more advanced satsuki-o-phils as well as those just learning about these wonderful bonsais. Experts will be on hand all day to answer questions and give guided tours of the exhibit. Noted bonsai teacher and artist, Johnny Uchida, will do a demonstration on satsuki styling on Sunday, starting at 1 pm. There's free admission, benefit drawings, and a sales area featuring beginner material as well as imported specimens from Japan. The show will be at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue, Oakland, CA. Parking is available with a \$5 fee on the weekends. We hope to see you there for this celebration of bonsai color!



Satsuki azalea, Nikko by Gordon Deeg

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 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 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 to do 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.

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 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.gsbf-bonsai.org/sjbonsai/.

May 3, Jackson, Amador Bonsai Society: 13th Annual Bonsai Show to be held in conjunction with the Sierra Madre Garden Club and the Mother Lode Rose Society Flower Show and Exhibition, "Beauty of the Mother Lode" at the Amador County Senior Center, 229 New York Ranch Rd. Free admission. Hours 10 AM – 4 PM. My First Bonsai class held at 11 AM and 2 PM; cost is \$20. For more information, contact Juliene Hiatt at julienehiatt@hotmail.com or visit www.amadorbonsaisociety.com.

May 4, Watsonville, Watsonville Bonsai Club: 41st Annual Bonsai Exhibit at the Watsonville Buddhist Temple, 423 Bridge St. Over 50 outstanding bonsai, large and small, young and old, will be on display from 10 AM to 4 PM. An afternoon demonstration by Don White will be held at 1:30 PM. A raffle of bonsai items, plants and the demo tree will follow. Tea & cookies will be served. Plenty of parking for vehicles of all sizes. Even for group outings. A vendor will be available to sate your

plant appetite for bonsai or otherwise. For more information please call Don White, 831-724-9283 or E-mail: whiteslib@aol.com.

May 17 – 18, Sacramento, Satsuki Aikokai Association of Sacramento: Annual show of flowering satsuki azalea bonsai at Shepard Garden Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Hours are Saturday 10 AM – 5PM, and 10 AM – 4PM, with demonstrations at 1 PM on both days. Satsuki information booth, vendors, raffles, etc. For more information contact; Ronn Pigram (916) 428-8505 or satsukiaikokaisac@sbcglobal.net.

May 23 - 25, Lotus Bonsai Nursery & Gradens 8th Annual Spring Sale, 9 AM to 4 PM. 1435 Lower Lake Drive, Placerville. (530) 622-9681. www.lotusbonsai.com.

May 31 – June 1, San Mateo, Sei Boku Bonsai Kai: 31st Annual Show at the San Mateo Garden Center, 605 Parkside Way, next to Beresford Park. Admission is free. Show hours are 10 AM to 4 PM. Peter Tea will be conducting a demonstration Saturday and open viewing workshop Sunday from Noon – 3pm both days. Raffle, door prizes, vendor sales, and member plant sales will be featured. There will also be Dr. Bonsai to answer questions regarding bonsai care. For additional information contact Marsha Mekisich at 650-477-4761.

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.

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

Meeting Program

May 14 Defoliation and Next Steps – John Boyce
May 25 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – J D Lin
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
