



# The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



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## East Bay Bonsai Society

**August Potluck Picnic:** August 8, 2014 @ 3:00 pm – sunset  
Nelson-Trumm Residence – see below for location and directions

**(No regular meeting in August)**

### President's Note

Our auction is now behind us and there are way too many EBBS members to thank individually who stepped up and volunteered during the planning, set-up, auction, and clean-up. A big cheer of thanks does go to our very own Janet Nelson who coordinated the entire auction. I hope you were either able to purchase some nice quality material, pots, and accessories, or sell or donate items as you pared down your collection.

Our next event/meeting is our potluck picnic on Saturday, August 8<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm at Janet and Rick's home in Oakland. It will be a great time to talk about bonsai (and other things) with fellow members, and view Janet and Rick's extensive and beautiful collection of trees.

While it is still a few months away, I hope each of you are considering what trees you plan to display at our annual October show. We will again need volunteers to help with different elements of our show. I hope you will step up to the challenge to make it another great show.

Michael

### August Meeting

The August meeting is our annual potluck picnic which will be held this year on Saturday, August 8 at the home of Janet Nelson and Rick Trumm. The picnic will start at 3:00 pm and will continue until sunset. This is one of the social highlights of the year and should not be missed. Janet and Rick have a large collection of spectacular bonsai which they are happy to show off. The chance to see and enjoy their beautiful bonsai is alone worth your visit. Best of all, the picnic is a chance for members to socialize on an informal basis.



The meal is potluck and the food assignments are as follows:

Appetizer-Last name M-R  
Entrée-Last name S-Z  
Side dish or salad-Last name A-G  
Dessert-Last name H-L

Be sure to bring utensils required for serving your contribution. The club will provide wine and soft drinks.

The Oakland hills can occasionally be a bit cool and breezy so dress in layers. Hats and sun screen are also a good idea.

Directions are as follows: If coming from the north or east, take Highway 24, or if coming from the south take Highway 580 to Highway 13 (the Warren Freeway). From either direction proceed to the Redwood Road exit and go east (up the hill) on Redwood road. Take a right at Skyline Blvd which is at the summit. Proceed to Balmoral Drive (at the stoplight) and make a left turn on

to Balmoral and find #5749. The house will be on your left on a corner a short distance up the hill. If lost or you need more information, call 510-482-8428.

### **September Meeting**

The September meeting will feature a program on tropical plants as bonsai presented by Jerry Carpenter. One of the major laments of the bonsai world is that most of the trees that we grow are strictly outside plants. Yes, we can and should occasionally bring them in doors to be enjoyed, but their stay must be brief. Many tropical trees can live happily in doors year around. The presentation will give examples of trees that we can grow inside and which will increase your enjoyment of bonsai. Jerry has given talks on tropical trees to several of the local bonsai societies and all were to much acclaim. Don't miss this opportunity to expand your knowledge of trees that make wonderful bonsai.

### **Auction**

Our auction was a great success. Final accounting is complete and it is clear that our treasury benefited from all the efforts of the many club members who helped to organize and stage the event as well as those who bought and sold plants. Once again Janet Nelson coordinated the event and her efforts made for a smooth operation. Thanks Janet.

Special thanks are due to the people who logged the sales and to the cashiers. Both tasks require people who can function well during occasionally hectic times. These folks truly rose to the occasion.

The success of any auction rests heavily on the auctioneers and our two auctioneers, John Nackley and Mike Pistello, were real pros. It was estimated that there were over one hundred items in the auction and both auctioneers were able to give a good description of each item, quickly auction them off, and, at the same time, keep the action going at a good pace. It is not an easy job, yet they made it look easy. Thanks to you both.



Three commercial companies donated items to the auction. They are: Grand Lake Ace Garden Center, 4001 Grand Avenue, Oakland; Art of the Diaza, Jerry Braswell, [diazamaker@volcano.net](mailto:diazamaker@volcano.net); and Moraga Garden Center, 1400 Moraga Road, Moraga, 925-376-1810. It behooves us to go out of our way to patronize the nurseries when we need supplies, landscaping plants or pre-bonsai trees. When we need stands, Jerry is our man. When you patronize these folks, please let them know how much EBBS appreciated their donation. They are all good folks and are worthy of your support. Thanks to both John Nackley and Michael Hylton for contacting the donors.



Thanks to Ms Gail Rossiter and to all the members of EBBS who donated items to the auction.

Until last year there was no minimum bid on items for auction, and as a result, there were many little seedlings and cuttings offered. This reduced the impact of really nice plants. Further, there was little incentive for members of other clubs to come to our auction. Last year we stipulated that each item must be worth a minimum bid of ten dollars. This year there were people from the Marin club and the San Francisco club as well as the Redwood Empire Bonsai Society in attendance. The auction was also noteworthy in the high quality of items offered. Opening the auction to allow nonmembers of EBBS to sell items also led to several quality items. It appears that our auction has become a destination event which is a new and encouraging sign. Those members of EBBS who had plants that did not meet the ten dollar minimum bid can sell them at our show in October where inexpensive items sell very well.

### **Redwood Empire Bonsai Society Show**

The REBS show is the last weekend of August in Santa Rosa and is really worth the trip. Details of the show are presented in the *Events by Others* section of this newsletter. The show typically has over 200 fine bonsai on exhibition. Kathy Shaner is the club sensei, so you know that all of the trees on display will be of high quality. The REBS show is arguably one of the largest and best shows in the whole country and is only a pleasant drive away.

The show features a large vendor area, and you will see many of the same vendors that were at the Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt fundraiser last February. Here is the place that you can pick up anything that you might need for our show in October.

In past shows there have been vendors of stands and inexpensive slabs that can serve as a stand. There will also be a large number of pots for sale. If you are in the market for either a pot or a stand, be sure to measure your tree before you leave for the show to ensure that your selection will be the right size. Need an accent plant? There will probably be a huge variety available. As a matter of fact, there will probably be even some finished bonsai for sale although, as you may imagine, these trees are not inexpensive. The REBS show is a nice days outing and there will be a lot to see.

### **Azaleas**

A Satsuki azalea in full bloom is clearly the most spectacular sight that bonsai has to offer. People with no prior exposure to bonsai can be wowed and dazzled by an azalea in full bloom. We all should have at least one satsuki azalea in our collection. Unfortunately, there is a divide in the bonsai world at least as big as the Grand Canyon. On one side are the folks who grow azaleas so lushly that they have to whack the daylighters out of them each year to prevent them from becoming a huge bush. On the other side of the chasm are the folks who provide a sterile and harsh environment for azaleas where the cold winds of death blow through the desolate land. Fortunately death comes quickly and does not linger to any azalea wondering into the collection of people living on this side of the divide. Why is it that some folks can easily grow azaleas and others have no success at all in growing them?

There are many reasons why trees fail to grow for us, but for many of us who live on the wrong side of the chasm, the main culprit is the shimpaku juniper. More often than not we started our bonsai adventure with a shimpaku Juniper. These are endearing trees that can tolerate a fair amount of unintended abuse and patiently wait while we learn how to manage necessities of bonsai life like potting soil, water and fertilizer. For this reason, shimpaku junipers are wonderful trees for a beginner to learn how to maintain bonsai.

As our collection grows we add other species of trees and we apply all we have learned about shimpaku to the new trees, assuming that the new tree will respond to the same care that worked for our shimpaku Juniper. In most cases this works splendidly, but there are a few cases where this assumption fails, notably for azaleas. Azaleas have requirements that are distinctly different from shimpaku junipers and if you try to grow them using the cultural conditions that you would use for shimpaku, you are doomed to failure. Recognizing this difference is the line between success and failure.

As usual, it is all about roots, and specifically about keeping the feeder roots alive. As with all bonsai, the feeder roots will die when they dry out. Once this happens, the tree is in big trouble. In nature the roots

of shimpaku junipers grow deeply into the ground and as a result, the roots dive to the bottom of the pot when a juniper is placed in a bonsai pot. They like sun and, during a hot day, the top half of an inch or so of the potting medium can dry out. Most of the feeder roots are down at the bottom of the pot and the dry surface does not bother them. Shimpaku come from a somewhat dry environment and so as long as there is at least a little moisture at the bottom of the pot, they will survive without damage. In short, all of the potting medium should be kept moist, but the most critical area of the pot to be kept moist is the lower third of the pot where most of the feeder roots are located. Heavy overwatering can lead to root rot, although the window between too wet and too dry is actually fairly wide. The same is true for most bonsai.



The ancestors of satsuki azaleas grow as understory plants in the forests of Japan. The soil is hard and impenetrable, and is covered with a layer of leaf litter. The feeder roots of the azaleas grow on the surface of the soil under the leaf litter. Further, the feeder roots are very fine and die very quickly if allowed to dry out. When an azalea is planted in a bonsai pot, it is not surprising that the roots reach for the surface of the potting medium. If an azalea is placed in the sun on a hot day and the top one half of an inch of the potting medium dries out, good bye feeder roots. As with the junipers, roots are found throughout the root ball and the entire potting medium should be kept moist. In contrast with the junipers the most critical area for the medium to

be kept moist for an azalea is not the bottom one third but rather the top one third of the soil.

So how do you prevent the surface of the soil from drying out? You can keep the potting soil soaking wet, but this is the perfect setting for root rot. The answer is to place a layer of mulch on the pot to keep the top portion of the soil moist. Many azalea bonsai are grown with a layer of special sphagnum moss on top of the soil to protect the top portion of the soil from drying out. Other forms of mulch also work well. Azaleas are subject to root rot if the soil is continuously soggy wet. The choice of soil must be directed toward one that drains well, yet retains some moisture. The window between too dry and too wet for azaleas is a bit narrower than for shimpaku Junipers, and a bit more on the wetter side.

Cuttings from Satsuki azaleas readily root and as a result, little azalea plants are available at most bonsai sales and at very reasonable prices. If you have not had success with these beautiful plants, try one of the little cutting grown plants and be sure to keep the surface of the soil moist. You will be surprised at how well they will grow for you.

### **Marin Bonsai Club Auction**

Now that our auction is over, are you still hungry to get a good deal on bonsai material? You may very likely find what you are looking for at the Marin Bonsai Club Auction. This is a great opportunity to acquire great bonsai material, pots, tools and books, and to meet fellow bonsai enthusiasts.



The auction will be on Tuesday, August 18, at the Marin Art & Garden Center located at 30 Sir Francis Drake Blvd in Ross. Preview of items will start at 7 pm. The auction begins promptly at 7:30.

### **Show Times's A Coming**

The EBBS show is scheduled for October. It seems to be a long way away, but now is the time to start thinking about which of your trees you would like to display. All trees must be shown on some sort of a stand, and this can be a problem since stands are not readily available. When you go shopping for a stand for your tree it is crucial to measure the size of the pot before you go. That may sound like a no brainer, but you would be surprised at the number of people who shop for stands and don't have a clue of how big the pot is. The pot should fit comfortably on the stand. The distance between the edge of the pot and the edge of the stand varies depending on the overall size of the pot, but should be a couple of inches for pots 12 to 15 inches wide, and more for larger pots.

Asian import stores sometimes have stands that can be used for bonsai. Currently the Oriental Vase and Furniture Company at 2756 Alvarado Street in San Leandro has a stock of quite attractive stands in the price range of ten to twenty dollars.

Jerry Braswell had several stands for sale in our recent auction and will probably be a vendor at our show. He has some completed stands in stock and he welcomes custom orders. He usually has a backlog of orders and suggests that if you want a stand for the show, now is the time to place your order. He can be reached by phone at 209-295-1717 or at his web site [www.artofthediaza.com](http://www.artofthediaza.com).

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

The bonsai workshops at Merritt College will resume on Monday, August 24 and will continue on the fourth Monday of each month that the college is in session. They are a splendid opportunity to learn how to develop your trees into first class bonsai. You will work on your own trees under the guidance of an experienced bonsai artist. The workshops are open to all experience levels.

The workshops are held at 7:00 pm in the Landscape Horticulture Building at Merritt College which is located in the Oakland hills off Redwood Road. Leading the workshops are two outstanding bonsai artists who are also members of EBBS, Bill Castellon and Randall Lee. The workshops are free (except for a small parking fee) and are a wonderful learning experience. All you need to take advantage of them is to just show up with your tree. For more information, contact Bill at 510-569-8003 or Randall at 510-846-0841.

### **Command Performance by John Doig: EBBS Wiring Workshop on Saturday, Nov. 14**

On Saturday, Nov. 14, EBBS will hold a *hands on* workshop for improving wiring skills. It will take place in the workshop area of the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt from 9 to 12 AM. Well known wiring trainer, John Doig, will demonstrate that as the hand turns so bent is the wire, and many other wiring caveats to boot. The class was max'd out last year and again is limited to 8 enrollees to ensure personal attention. Enrollment fee is only \$25!



The trainee is asked to provide a tree he wishes to wire, or else John will have affordable training trees for sale. Aluminum wire will be provided by the club, but those wanting training in copper wire are asked to provide their own wire.

Tips and tricks for wiring will be discussed and demonstrated in detail. Basics on how to space spirals, how to avoid crossing wires, and what gauge wire to use, and much more are on the agenda. Each enrollee should take home a more sophisticated ability to wire as well as the wired tree.

Email [jnackley@gmail.com](mailto:jnackley@gmail.com) or call him at 510-693-2420 to enroll. A signup sheet will also be presented at the August Potluck Party if spaces are still available

Your EBBS Board

### **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.*

### **East Bay Bonsai Society Reaches A Milestone (Socially)**

On July 6<sup>th</sup> the East Bay Bonsai Society's Facebook page reached 500 "Likes" (actually 502, +5 this week). Each club member is encouraged to "Like" our page which can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/EastBayBonsaiSociety>. The EBBS page offers pictures, links to blog postings, and events, and pulls content from other bonsai-related clubs and groups. The 502 people who like our page come from all around the world, including other hobbyists from Singapore, Mexico, Thailand, U.S., etc.

In addition, EBBS also has a Twitter account that you can find at <https://twitter.com/EastBayBonsai>. There we have (as of now) 536 "followers".

### **The History of Bonsai in the Bay Area**

Mike Hylton, among other bonsai artists in the East Bay, was interviewed for an article, *Tiny Trees, Deep*

*Roots: The History of Bonsai in the Bay area* on the 7x7 website. You may access the article at the link, <http://www.7x7.com/culture/tiny-trees-deep-roots-history-bonsai-bay-area>.

### **Roster Update**

Please add David Martin to your roster. His e-mail address is [daveonlincoln441@gmail.com](mailto:daveonlincoln441@gmail.com), and phone number is (510) 387-4540.

### **Events by Others**

GSBF's Bonsai and Suiseki Garden: open Tues. - 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.

August 1 – 2, San Francisco, San Francisco Suiseki Kai: 34th Annual Suiseki Exhibit at the Union Bank Community Room, Japan Center, 1675 Post Street. Hours are 10 AM – 5 PM both days. Show coincides with the 42<sup>nd</sup> annual Nihonmachi Street Fair, so come early and enjoy your day in San Francisco's historic Japan Town! Suiseki and stone sales. For more information about our club, contact [sfsuisekikai@gmail.com](mailto:sfsuisekikai@gmail.com) or visit <http://sfsuisekikai.wordpress.com>.

August 18, Ross, Marin Bonsai Club: Bonsai Auction at the Marin Art & Garden Center located at 30 Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Preview of items will start at 7 pm. The auction begins promptly at 7:30.

August 22 – 23, Santa Rosa, Redwood Empire Bonsai Society (REBS): 32th Annual show at the Santa Rosa Veterans building, 1351 Maple Ave. 10 AM – 5 PM Saturday and 10 AM – 4 PM Sunday with demonstrations both days at 1 PM by club sensei Kathy Shaner. Large exhibit of members' trees, vendors' sales room, members' sales room, raffle and silent auction. Free admission, parking and treats. Contact Bob Shimon @ 707-884-4126 or [shimon@mcn.org](mailto:shimon@mcn.org)

### **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.

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<b>East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2015</b>
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**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**

**Aug 23** BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson

**Sept 9** Tropicals – Jerry Carpenter

**Sept 27** BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Don Meeker

**Oct 14** No club meeting due to proximity to show

**Oct 25** BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby

**Nov 11** Juniper Jubilee – Mike Pistello

**Nov 22** BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould

**Dec 9** Holiday Dinner

**Special Events**

**Aug 8** Picnic

**Oct 10-11** Fall Show – Ryan Nichols

**Nov 21** Wire Workshop – John Doig

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