



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

December Meeting: December 9, 2015 @ 6:30 p.m.

President's Note

2016 is expected to be jammed packed with great speakers and content. But before we delve into next year, we have our annual holiday party on December 9th. It's a great time to reflect back on the 2015 year in bonsai, mingle with club members, and partake in a great dinner. I hope to see all of you there.

2016 meetings include Kathy Shaner returning to work on the hornbeam, Jay MacDonald working, of course, on deciduous trees, our very own Tom, Polly and Bob talking suiseki, plus Peter Tea, Michael Ryan Bell on pots, Rick Trumm on pines and more.

2015 was a great year and I hope you find the same with our 2016 program.

Happy holidays,

Michael

December Meeting

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

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

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

The appetizer-people should plan to arrive early so food is available at the beginning of the evening. Please supply an appropriate serving utensil for the dish you are furnishing. Also be sure to bring your own plate and eating utensils. A decorative place mat would make a festive setting for the meal. 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 trees. People are also encouraged to bring small bonsai decorated for the holiday 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 presented by Michael Hylton of the club activities, focusing on our recent show. Those of you who attended the holiday party last year were amazed and delighted by the splendid program that Michael put together and we are eagerly looking forward to another superb program to cap off the evening.



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

January Meeting

The January meeting will feature another presentation of the Jay MacDonald show. Jay is a high energy guy who will talk about deciduous trees. He is particularly interested in deciduous trees and usually brings a number of examples for us to admire. He is adamant about fertilizing at high levels and, judging by

his trees, it really works. His enthusiasm is infectious, and we look forward to a meeting which is both entertaining and informative.



November Meeting

We celebrated our annual Juniper Jubilee with a program presented by Mike Pistello. Mike began the festivities with an extended discussion of how to care for a juniper bonsai. In addition to the discussion, Mike provided a handout which is a guide to all you need to know to grow beautiful bonsai from these trees. A copy of his handout is attached to this newsletter. It is well worth your while to study it carefully because it is both comprehensive and well written.

A point that Mike emphasized is that one should never shear a juniper because all the cut areas will turn brown. Worse, this is not a very effective way to shape your tree. Pinching also has been recommended in the past but this, too, leads to brown foliage and possible death of the branch. The proper way is to let the branch grow and then cut the branch above a side branch with sharp scissors. Dipping the scissors in alcohol between each cut will help prevent spreading disease.



In his handout, Mike mentioned pests that can affect junipers and gave treatments for each. This is particularly welcome because the problem of pest control is not addressed as frequently as it should be.

At the conclusion of his talk, Mike demonstrated how to make a bonsai from a whip. He started with a plant that was essentially a straight stick about 18 inches long. He wrapped the lower section of the trunk with raffia to prevent the trunk from breaking when bent. He emphasized that the raffia should be applied in the direction of the bend so it tightens as the bend proceeds. He added a stout wire around the trunk and then amazed the audience by making a number of severe bends which produced a finished tree that was about 8 inches high. While the tree is still very young, the bends in the trunk will provide a basic structure for the tree in the years to come. The take away from his demonstration was that you can make a bonsai with an outstanding future from inexpensive starting material.

Wire workshop



The EBBS wire workshop led by John Doig was held on Saturday, November 21. The workshop featured a discussion about the basics of wiring including the how and why wiring is done and then the hands on experience of applying real wire to a real tree. The workshop provided a fine basis to each of the enrollees for further study and practice. All those who took part in the workshop felt that they had had a valuable learning experience.

This was the second wire workshop lead by John for EBBS, and based on the continued enthusiastic response of the students, EBBS will consider repeating it in the future for those unfortunates who missed out on this presentation. Wiring is probably the most basic skill required for creating bonsai, and we are fortunate to have access to a fine instructor.



Spotlight

This month the spotlight is on Michael Hylton who has been managing our web site. For the past several years, the Golden State Bonsai Federation has sponsored a contest for the best web site of the member clubs. The goal is partly to encourage each club to offer a web site to its members and partly to reward superior web sites which serve as examples of how to generate a fine web site.

At the recent GSBF convention EBBS was voted as having the best web site for 2015. We owe Michael a giant pat on the back for his efforts in maintaining our web site. Actually, we all knew that we had a superior web site but it is nice to have public recognition.

The Golden State Bonsai Federation gave the club a beautiful framed Japanese print as a result of winning the contest for this year and the EBBS board of directors in turn



awarded the print to Michael for his efforts.

In addition to Michael's work on the web site, he also is very active in generating a presence of EBBS on a number of social media. This presence is valuable in advertising our club for prospective members, and also advertising our events to the general public such as the recent show. We are very fortunate to have a willing and internet savvy person like Michael. Thank you so much for all you do, Michael.

Nature

We work hard on our bonsai trees to make them look like just so. And what is the objective of our efforts? We want them to be a reflection of nature,

which raises the question of just what do we mean by nature? It could be as simple as knowing that successful bonsai trees will remind us of trees that we have seen growing in the wild, and this must be what nature is all about. The story is a bit more complicated than that. Bonsai is a Japanese art, and perhaps it is time to consider how the Japanese look at nature, which is quite different from our view of nature.

In the west, if we are members of a religious faith, we are usually committed to a single faith. Even broad categories are broken down into fine divisions. For example we may not be just Protestants, but are specifically Baptists. On the other hand, many Japanese see no problem in simultaneously observing at the same time two very different religions, Shinto and Buddhism. Broadly speaking, Shinto deals with the world we live in and Buddhism deals with the world after death. According to Shinto belief we are subject to forces that are out of our control, but that govern events of our everyday life such as luck in business or having healthy children. Not all Japanese adhere to Shinto religion, but the concept that all things are subject to forces we do not understand certainly pervades all of Japanese art. All of the things we regard as nature such as trees, rocks and hills are also governed by these forces which gives the natural world a spiritual quality the we in the west do not have. Japanese attempt to portray this quality in their gardens and the display of bonsai and suiseki.

Each bonsai tree is viewed by the Japanese as a reflection of the product of these forces. The best trees show great age and the fact that they have survived the sometimes devastating effects of age. Think deadwood here. According to the Japanese view, a fine bonsai represents more than just a cool tree. It is the result of more than our efforts to produce a special tree by our pruning and wiring. It should be enjoyed for not only what we specifically accomplished, but for the way it grew which was not in our control.



Another example of these forces on the world as a whole is the changing seasons. Those of us who are native Californians do not see much of a change between each season, but those of us who have lived in the eastern United States know that there is a large change with each season, ranging from hot humid periods in summer to snow and cold in the winter. Japan also sees similar changes with the seasons and the changes are interpreted to be due to unseen forces. As a result, seasonality takes on an almost spiritual quality. If we exhibit a bonsai tree in full spring bloom along with an accent plant of dried grass, typical of the fall season, we have a composition that is very jarring to Japanese eyes. The two different seasons in a single composition present a very discordant view of the spirituality that should be present.

What is the takeaway from all this? If you want to be an excellent bonsai artist do you have to adopt the Shinto religion? The answer is certainly not. Japanese view each of their trees as something more than just a tree and as a result treat them with respect. When they display their trees they are doing more than simply arranging accessories. This attitude of respect is certainly something that we can adopt. We can treat our trees with respect by growing them and styling them as well as we possibly can, and when we display our trees, we should be thoughtful about the choice of materials that we use.

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.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

Instruction is in the form of workshops and is a splendid opportunity to learn how to develop your trees into first class bonsai. In these workshops you work on your own trees under the guidance of an experienced bonsai artist. The workshops are open to all experience levels and are usually held at 7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month when the college is in session. **This month the workshop will be on December 14 since the college will be closed on the 4th Monday.**

The meetings are in the Landscape Horticulture Building at Merritt College which is located in the Oakland hills off Redwood Road. The workshops are free, except for a small parking fee. Leading the workshops are two members of EBBS, Bill Castellon and Randall Lee. You can contact Bill at 510- 569-8003 or Randall at 510-846-0841.

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.

January 23 – 24, Oakland, Bay Island Bonsai: Annual Bonsai Exhibit at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave. Hours 10 AM – 4 PM, Saturday and Sunday. Auction at 1 PM on Saturday, with preview at Noon. Workshop on Sunday open to the bonsai community. Guided tours of the exhibit Saturday and Sunday. Vendor sales, club sales, educational bonsai material for sale and a special pot sale this year. Entry to the exhibit is free, donations accepted. Learn more and register for the workshop by calling (510) 919-5042 or visit <http://bayislandbonsai.com/bib-annual-exhibit/>.

February 5 – 7, Santa Nella, California Shohin Seminar @ Hotel Mission de Oro Feb 5: Registration 10 AM – 5 PM with demonstrations from Noon – 6 PM, Exhibit and Vendor areas set-up 11 AM – 5 PM; everyone is invited to share their treasured Shohin Bonsai in the Exhibit. Feb 6: Exhibit opens for Registration, Viewing, Vendor Sales, Workshops, Raffle & Benefit Drawing 8 AM – 5 PM. Feb 7: Exhibit Open 9 AM – Noon with demonstrations, and business meeting. Registration Forms available on the website. Attendees who only want access to vendor and exhibit may purchase a day pass. For more information see our website: <http://www.calshohin.org/>, email: calshohin@yahoo.com, or phone: Randi Keppeler (650) 598-0127.

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 2015 and 2016

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

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

Visitors welcome.

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

Meeting **Program**

Dec 9 Holiday Dinner
Jan 13 Deciduous Trees – Jay Mac Donald
Jan 24 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – JD Lin
Feb 10 Hornbeam raft, revisited – Kathy Shaner
Mar 9 Suiseki – Tom Colby, Bob and Polly Gould
Mar 27 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
Apr 13 Deciduous Trees Care and Culture –TPD
Apr 24 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
May 11 Bonsai Pots – Michael Ryan
May 22 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Don Meeker
June 8 Pines – Rick Trumm
June 26 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby

Special Events
