



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

February Meeting: February 11, 2015 @ 7:30 p.m.

President's Note

Welcome to February!

You know what that means. You should already be repotting your bonsai trees, if necessary, as this is the ideal time. With upcoming tree growth, it's also an opportunity to grow our club. Share your passion of bonsai trees with your family, friends, and co-workers and maybe you can spark an interest in the hobby.

More demo's continue in February with Randall Lee showcasing shohin Hinoki Cypress. The demo tree will be raffled at the end of the meeting.

Also, the monthly Merritt College Workshops are ideal to get expert advice on your trees from Bill Castellon and Randall Lee. The workshops occur at 7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month when 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.

And remember new hobbyists who want to build your collection or long-time bonsai enthusiasts, February is YOUR month. The Mammoth Fundraiser, held on February 21st and 22nd is an ideal time to buy your trees, pots, tools, and accessories. I've been to several and many of my trees are from either the Saturday auction or Sunday sale. Lots of vendors will be there too. Plus, EBBS will have a table promoting our club.

Michael

February Meeting

The February meeting will feature a presentation by our very own Randall Lee on shohin Hinoki Cypress. Randall is a long time member of EBBS and is one of the two highly skilled bonsai artists who lead the bonsai workshops at Merritt College.

Bonsai trees are classified in Japan by a number of size groups. Only one of these size classes has made much impact in the United States bonsai world, and that is the shohin class which is trees less than 8 inches high. A number of people in EBBS are actively growing shohin bonsai and our recent show featured a large number of their shohin trees. These small trees are

generally more difficult to grow and style than their larger relatives. Further, shohin trees are not seen very often in bonsai demonstrations, so the demonstration at the February meeting will be a special treat. As if this is not enough, Hinoki Cypress trees make excellent bonsai of any size, but are not seen very often in bonsai shows. A program on these underappreciated trees is most welcome.

Thanks in advance to the Nackleys, Ernie Katler and Bev Martinez for offering to furnish refreshments for the meeting.

March Meeting

Gordon Deeg will present a program on Pines. Gordon has presented several programs to EBBS in the recent past and all have been well received. His talks are particularly directed to beginners although there is always something for us all to learn. Gordon has made several trips to Japan to



work with Mr. Mitsuya who is an acknowledged expert on pines so we can expect that his talk will be on the cutting edge of how to make your pines shine as bonsai. We look forward to his presentation.

January Meeting

Kathy Shaner, our demonstrator for the January meeting, presented a program with two parts. First she gave a tutorial on how to buy potential bonsai trees and the second part was devoted to styling a small Juniper.

Kathy commented that the first step is purchasing a tree is to have the optimistic attitude that every bonsai nursery has at least one really good tree and your job is to find it. Do not yield to the temptation to buy a lot of small liner trees. They are many years from becoming quality bonsai. Save your money for one good tree rather than buying a group of little ones. By spending the same amount of money for one good tree you will get a

much more satisfying bonsai tree. Take your time when buying a tree to be sure you know what you are getting. Take an experienced person along with you if you are not sure what to look for in a potentially great bonsai and listen to their advice. Do not look for trees that have a predetermined shape. While the tree you are looking at may have a perfect shape, it may continue to grow in a different direction than you anticipated.

Take a chop stick and gently poke around the trunk of the tree to see what the rootage is like. The nebari (the arrangement of the roots around the trunk) will determine where the front of the tree will be located. If the roots are only on one side of the trunk, the ultimate style possibilities of the tree will be seriously affected. If the nebari is poor with sparse rootage all around the tree the overall quality of the tree as a bonsai will be very limited.



Think about the species of tree that you are looking at with regard to disposal of unwanted branches. These branches cannot be jinned (exposed as dead wood) if the tree is a deciduous tree for reasons of style. Since jinning is not an option for unwanted branching, complete removal of the branch can be done, but be aware that cuts on some trees such as hornbeams and elms heal very slowly if at all, which can leave big scars on the trunk. If you are interested in a deciduous tree, best to shop in winter when the tree is not in leaf so that you can clearly see what problems the structure of the branching might present.

Kathy used a field grown hornbeam as an example of her thoughts on buying a tree. She took the tree out of the pot and removed enough of the soil so the

rootage could be exposed. The tree had strong roots on only one side which limited the possible choice of front for the tree. It had numerous crossing branches, some of which grew so tightly against other branches that mutual growth was prevented. Removal of some of these branches became a necessity. The hornbeam would not readily heal large cuts so removal has to be very carefully managed. Each cut must have a clean edge, and it is crucial that the cut be prevented from drying out. The cut must be quickly well covered with cut paste which should extend at least a quarter of an inch beyond the cut to be sure that the cut was well sealed. After care involves placing a piece of cloth over the cut which is moistened every time the tree is watered. This further ensures that the cut does not dry out.

Cuts can rapidly dry out and you can tell this is happening by the tissues quickly turning in color from green or yellow to brown. Once this color change has taken place the game is lost. The cut will heal very slowly, if at all. As a conclusion Kathy had the members in attendance file by the tree to emphasize the challenges that she saw in the tree.

For the second part of her program she worked on a small juniper which inspired some questions from the audience. The tree originally had two large branches which grew in opposite directions. Prior to the meeting, the larger of the two branches was retained and the smaller branch was jinned. The questions centered on why the smaller branch was not incorporated into the composition as a living branch.



The answer that Kathy gave was thought provoking. The remaining branch was in the direction that the tree wanted to grow. Further, why would the tree want to grow in this direction? Here we must consider how the tree might have grown in nature. Something such as snow load, animal damage, lightning or perhaps even fire caused one side of the tree to grow either faster or better than the other. The event that befell the tree killed one branch and caused the remaining branch to grow more or less horizontally rather than upright as the tree probably would have preferred. The dead wood clearly reflected the impact of this effect of the environment.

Kathy placed a heavy emphasis on the way trees grow in nature and this should be reflected in how we style our bonsai. Kathy feels strongly that each tree is unique. Rules frequently found in bonsai books such as the trunk must be some diameter which is dictated by a fraction of the height of the tree are great for making cookies, but fall short for bonsai because they can obliterate the uniqueness of the tree.

Dues

Some of us are now feeling very smug because they have already paid their dues for 2015. The rest of us need to be reminded that the time has come for dues renewal. The dues are \$30 for single memberships and \$40 for couples. To remain on the roster, please make payment no later than March 31.



Membership includes a subscription to our always entertaining newsletter, *The Tree Shrinker*, by email. If you would like to have a hard copy sent to you by snail mail there is an additional charge of \$5 to cover the cost of postage.

Our treasurer, Pat Cahill, will be delighted to receive your check for dues at the next regular meeting. Dues can also be mailed to: EBBS Treasurer, 4933 Cochrane, Oakland, CA, 94618-2701.

Mammoth Fundraiser

Each year the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt holds a giant two day fund raiser which provides the bulk of the funds needed to finance the operation of the garden. The event this year will be held on Saturday, February 21 and Sunday February 22. Details are given in the *Events by Others* section of this newsletter. Saturday afternoon features an auction. Most of the items to be auctioned are bonsai trees, and there are usually other bonsai related items such as pots, stands and suiseki. The projected prices of the trees vary from inexpensive trees needing a lot of love to nearly finished bonsai which are projected to sell for really big bucks. There will be something for everyone regardless of budget. The auction is always an exciting event and is usually a real test of will power that you don't spend more than you wanted to for that tree that has caught your eye. It is an opportunity to see a wide variety of trees and how they are valued.

Sunday features a sale of items on commission and donations. Everything imaginable shows up, and generally at attractive prices. Here is a wonderful place to add to your bonsai collection as well as to secure pots and stands. Sunday also features vendors who generally offer high quality trees and bonsai accessories.

Mark your calendars for the weekend of February 21 and 22. The Mammoth Fundraiser is an event that you should not miss.

Viewing Stones

If you looked at the advertisement for the recent GSBF convention, you probably saw a display of viewing stones that also featured suiseki. This leads to a consideration of what is the difference between a viewing stone and a suiseki. You may have noticed that there were several stones displayed in the recent EBBS show. What were they doing there and why should stones be a part of a bonsai show?

First of all, enthusiasts of both viewing stones and suiseki are very stuffy about terminology. They refer to their treasures as stones, not rocks. Both viewing stones and suiseki are stones that someone has judged to be so much worth your while looking at that they have proudly displayed them on a wooden base called a diaza.

As an introduction to the difference between viewing stones and suiseki, let's take a brief detour into what may be the more familiar world of art and craft. A lot has been written about this difference, but a simple way to distinguish the two is to ask what the maker of an object wants the observer to do. If the maker wants the observer to admire just what he sees, then it is craft. An example of a craft item is an antique Japanese basket made from woven strips of bamboo. The basket is admired because of the skill which it has been made, the choice of material, the color, and the form of the basket. If the maker of the object wants you to see the object as an illustration of either a principle or an answer to a question, then it becomes art.

As an example, consider the painting by Michaelangelo entitled *The Last Judgment*. The painting currently resides on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel in the Vatican. Here the painting is an illustration of a religious event, and the religious event is more important than the image that you see. If Michaelangelo was still around, he would tell you that he wanted you to admire his painting for how well it portrayed the religious event. Art and craft cannot be directly compared because they are made with completely different intent.



The difference between viewing stones and suiseki is exactly the same as the difference between art and craft. Viewing stones are best understood as crafts. What you see is what you get with no philosophy lurking in the background. Some viewing stones are exquisitely beautiful so they really don't need any story connected with them. The Chinese have a long history of stone appreciation and have long treasured many beautiful viewing stones. On the other hand, Suiseki, a Japanese form of stone appreciation, are meant to be an illustration of nature and thus can be considered as art because they are meant to reflect more than just what

you see in front of you. Suiseki are judged to fall in a number of categories of geological shapes found in nature such as waterfalls, distant mountains and shore stones. The best suiseki display colors found in nature such as muted green, brown or gray-black. Imagine flying over the Sierras on your way east. If the stone in front of you reminds you of the mountains that you saw in the distance from the plane, then it is a successful



suiseki. If you see a stone that does not remind you of a natural feature then it is a viewing stone.

Returning to the question we started with, stones are an important part of a bonsai show because they are a reflection of nature and the natural world. After all, what is the goal of our bonsai trees but to reflect nature? It is the common thread of nature that brings bonsai and suiseki together.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

These workshops are a splendid opportunity to learn about 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.

The workshops are held at 7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month that the college is in session. The meetings are held 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.

For more information, contact Bill at 510-569-8003 or Randall at 510-846-0841. 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.

New Members and Roster Updates

We have two new members in the club, Jim Shurr and Wendy Quan. Please introduce yourselves to them at our next club meeting. Their phone and e-mail addresses are:

Jim Shurr: 925-348-2484, shurrthang@aol.com
Wendy Quan: 510-482-5272,
wendyquan@mac.com

Call for Volunteers

John Kennedy once famously stated that you should not ask what your country should do for you but ask what you should do for your country. Here is a wonderful opportunity to put this idea into practice by doing something for your society. The Mammoth Fund raiser is the biggest fundraiser for the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt and will be held on Saturday, February 21 and Sunday, February 22. EBBS will manage the food for all the volunteers helping out at the weekend event and here is where we need your help. Your duties would be to help set out, monitor the food distribution and clean up. Please volunteer for one or more of the following shifts:



Saturday, February 21

Breakfast 8:30 to 11:00

Lunch 11:30 to 1:30

Sunday, February 22

Breakfast 8:30 to 11:30

Lunch 11:30 to 1:30

Please contact Suzanne Muller at 925-890-0506 or smuller@mcbf.com and let her know what shift and time for which you would like to volunteer. It promises to be a lot of fun, not too much work and, boy, will you get to meet a lot of people.

Bonsai Calendar

- Watering – Reduce watering, but ensure plants receive sufficient water
- Fertilizing – Feed with 0-10-10.
- Repotting – Repot deciduous trees and junipers
- Styling/Pruning – Do heavier pruning. Cut large limbs on pines.
- Graft – All species

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

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.

February 21 – 22, Oakland, GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt: The annual Mammoth Fund Raiser will be held at 666 Bellevue Ave. (Garden Center Building). Saturday: Auction preview at noon with Auction starting at 1 PM. Sunday: Vendor Sales start at 9 AM, Plant Sales start at 10 AM, and Demonstrations at 1 PM. Also on Sunday help us

celebrate our 15th Anniversary! The Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt will celebrate the many bonsai clubs who have created and supported the Garden by inviting Bonsai Clubs from all over Northern California to showcase their best trees. Bonsai Garden will be open 10 AM to 4 PM on Saturday and Noon to 4 PM on Sunday. For more information or to sell trees, email bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com and visit www.gsbf-lakemerritt.org.

February 28, "Introduction to Bonsai" course at Merritt College Horticulture Department, 12500 College Drive, Oakland, from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm (with a 1 hour lunch break at 12:30). Instructor: Bill Castellon. This one-day course will consist of a lecture presentation followed by a hands-on workshop. If you have bonsai tools, bring them. Otherwise, tools will be available to use during the workshop. Bring your own bonsai tree or the instructor will provide small starter trees for

students to practice the techniques presented, at a cost of \$5 to \$7. The cost for the course is \$78 to Merritt College. Parking costs \$2 (pull up to the gate at the Horticulture department and it will open automatically). Bring a lunch or plan to go to a nearby store. Register at www.merritt.edu or sign-up on the day of the class. Questions may be directed to Bill Castellon at 510-569-8003.

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

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

Feb 11	Shohin Hinoki Cypress – Randall Lee
Mar 11	Pines – Gordon Deeg
Mar 22	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Linda Soliven
April 8	TBD
April 26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
May 13	TBD
May 24	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould
June 10	Frolic in the Garden
June 28	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – J D Lin
July 8	Auction
July 26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
Aug	Picnic
Aug 23	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
Sept 9	Tropicals – Jerry Carpenter
Sept 27	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Linda Soliven
Oct 14	No club meeting due to proximity to show
Oct 25	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Nov 11	Juniper Jubilee
Nov 22	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould
Dec 9	Holiday Dinner

Special Events

Oct 10-11 Fall Show