



# The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXIII, No. 1

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



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



[twitter.com/EastBayBonsai](https://twitter.com/EastBayBonsai)

## East Bay Bonsai Society

**January Meeting:** January 14, 2015

### **President's Note**

Happy holidays and I hope 2015 turns out to be a great year for each of you and your families. Also, I hope your trees continue to prosper (and grow, if that's your goal with each)!

I am honored to be your new club president and plan great things for 2015 and beyond. I believe our "collective" goals for the club are to:

- 1) continue to grow our membership,
- 2) learn about bonsai trees from attending meetings and workshops (and more importantly, from each other), and
- 3) bring exciting speakers for our meetings.

Speaking of exciting meetings, our January 14<sup>th</sup> meeting kicks off with a bang with Kathy Shaner as our presenter. Kathy, given the title of "Bonsai Master" by the Nippon Bonsai Association in Japan and also the curator of the GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt, will demonstrate the nuances of bringing out the essence of a tree. The demo tree along with other items will be raffled following the demo. Don't miss this chance to see Kathy in action!

And then in February, our own Randall Lee will present a shohin Hinoki Cypress, and that tree too will be raffled at the end of the meeting. Who could ask for a better start to our 2015 bonsai club season!

One way to learn more about the bonsai hobby is to learn from each other. I ask the long-time hobbyists to walk up to a member who joined in the past year and ask if you can help them in any way. And to new members, say hi to another club member and ask questions to increase your knowledge of bonsai. Another avenue of learning is to attend the monthly bonsai workshops at Merritt College (see article). These hands-on sessions are a great opportunity to roll up your sleeves and work on your trees with experts who can guide you along the way.

Finally, one way to grow our membership is to tell your friends, family members, co-workers, etc. about your bonsai hobby so that they too might find the bonsai bug (not literally) and want to consider joining

the club. Tell them about our website, suggest they "Like" us on Facebook, or follow us on Twitter.

Michael

### **January Meeting**

The January meeting will feature Kathy Shaner as the demonstrator. Kathy spent five years in Japan as an apprentice to one of the most renowned Japanese bonsai masters. At the end of her stay in Japan she was the first non-Japanese bonsai artist to be honored with the title of Bonsai Master by the national bonsai organization. The January meeting will be a wonderful opportunity to see a bonsai artist of the highest caliber in action. By all means put this meeting on your calendar.

Thanks in advance to Marcia Cozens, Dennis Miu and Don Meeker for bringing refreshments to the meeting.

### **February Meeting**

The February meeting will feature a presentation by our very own Randall Lee on shohin Hinoki Cypress which will be a double barreled treat. Shohin bonsai are trees with a maximum height of eight inches. We do not often get to enjoy a demonstration on these small trees. The little trees require special care and Randall will tell us how to successfully grow them. Hinoki cypress trees make excellent bonsai but are not seen very often. A program on these under-appreciated trees is most welcome.



### **Holiday Dinner**

Our holiday dinner was a great success and was enjoyed by all who attended. The food for the potluck was extraordinary as usual. The high point of the

evening was a show produced and directed by our very own Michael Hylton. We all knew that there were many talented people in EBBS but Michael amazed us all with his program of images taken of our events though the year. The reaction of the audience was noteworthy. Clearly Michael captured our attention. Thanks, Michael for a fine program. Thanks to John Nackley who secured the turkey and ham entrees which were the club's contribution to the festivities. Last but not least, thanks to all the members who contributed goodies for the dinner. You made the evening a special treat.



### **A Special Workshop at Merritt College**

Merritt College is pleased to offer a full day workshop on Saturday, February 28, 2015. The workshop is entitled *Introduction to Bonsai*, and while it is part of the curricula of one of the horticulture classes, the workshop is also open to EBBS members. It is not to be confused with the regular fourth Monday evening classes which are totally separate and unrelated and are described in detail elsewhere in this newsletter. The workshop will be held at Merritt College, 12500 College Drive, Oakland, from 9:30 to 4:30 pm with an hour lunch break at 12:30. The instructor is our very own Bill Castellon, assuring that the instruction will be at a high level. 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 a small starter tree at a cost of \$5 to \$7 to practice the techniques presented in the lecture.

The cost for the workshop is \$78, payable to Merritt College. Parking costs \$2 per day. Pull up to the gate at the Horticulture Department and the gate will open automatically to allow access to the parking lot. Bring a lunch or plan to go to a nearby store to buy lunch. Register at [www.Merritt.edu](http://www.Merritt.edu) or sign up the day of the workshop. Questions about the workshop may be directed to Bill Castellon at 510-569-8003

### **Our President**

December marks the end of Linda Soliven's term as president. Most of us have seen Linda as the gracious leader of the club meetings. What is not apparent is the fact that behind the scenes, Linda has made several significant contributions to EBBS during the past year.

In the past much of the business of the society has been conducted by a few members who knew what was needed and this knowledge was passed down from member to member by word of mouth, all under the mantra that "this is the way we have always done it". Linda has strongly felt that the business of the society should be transparent and available to all. Toward this end she has prepared two books of information, one for the show and one for the president. In both books detailed accounts were presented of what needs to be done, when and how. These books will make it much easier to incorporate new members into helping with our annual show as well as defining the activities of the incoming president.

Linda also recognized that the club bylaws badly needed revision. The bylaws govern how the society is run and it had become apparent to Linda that in part the bylaws were out of date and in part there needed to be changes in how the society was run to conform to the bylaws. At Linda's urging a committee was appointed to examine the bylaws and their findings have been approved by the board and implemented.

Linda realized that once a new member joined the club there needed to be a program that welcomed the new members and incorporated them into the society. She worked with Roger Brady to develop the mentoring program for the new members where they are paired with older members who offered not only advice on growing bonsai, but also encouraged the new members to participate in the club activities.

Linda has made significant changes in EBBS that should extend far beyond her presidency. We all owe Linda a big Thank You for her efforts. Changing the culture of an old organization is never easy but it is clear that Linda has made a large impact on EBBS.

### **It is a bugs Life**

The world seems to be divided into two camps that border on the fervor usually associated with religious cults when it comes to the use of insecticides. One camp claims that there should be no impact on the environment and materials used should be nontoxic. The other camp's view is that whatever it takes, kill the varmints. Both views have problems.

The no harm school has a philosophical problem. If you find that your precious bonsai is being devoured by Blue-eyed Leafmunchers, you have to realize that they are as much a part of the environment as you are. If you provide them with a lovely salad in the form of your bonsai, it is not their fault. Even if you deal with them by carefully lifting them off your bonsai and tossing them over the fence into the neighbor's bushes, you are impacting the environment. Also, the idea of a material being nontoxic is a myth. For example, consider water. It is generally considered to be nontoxic, but if you

decide to swim to Hawaii instead of flying there on your next vacation, you probably will not make it due to the toxic effect of water in your lungs, aka drowning.

The kill the varmints view has a physical problem to deal with. Most of the heavy duty insecticides fall into three broad classes of chemical compounds, organophosphates, carbamates and pyrethroids. All act by blocking the juncture between nerves and muscles. In recent news there was an item about the alleged use of poison gas in the Middle East. Although the gas is a far more dangerous material than most insecticides, it is an organophosphate which acts by blocking the juncture between nerves and muscles just as insecticides do. The trick in using the heavy duty insecticides is to kill the bugs and not yourself, or the family dog for that matter.



How should we treat the question of insecticide without engaging in pseudo religious mantra? First of all, recognize that bonsai as a group of plants are not usually bothered by insects and that is a great blessing. As a start in managing bugs, keep the area clean where you grow your bonsai. Fallen leaves and trash in general provides a great hiding place for bugs.

The first approach to dealing with bugs is from the Zen school. Here you acknowledge that the bugs have just as much right to live as you do and the correct approach is to do nothing. This works well if your problem is a transient grasshopper or a wandering snail, but falls a bit short in most cases. Once bugs find a lovely dining spot, they quickly send for all their relations, and soon the infestation becomes far more difficult to deal with. As an example, an infestation of scale can grow quickly and may impact the health of your tree to the point where the tree may not survive. However you plan to deal with bugs which find their way onto your plants, the sooner you start the better. Frequent inspection of your trees for bugs pays great dividends.

The simplest way to deal with a few species of bugs such as aphids is to simply wash them off with the hose. This does not work well with many bugs such as scale, and chemical attack is called for.

Any form of chemical control is usually not completely effective with the first application because bugs hide under leaves, in the bark, or in the soil, and so a few are usually not reached on the first application. Whatever you use for control, carefully inspect your trees to be sure that retreatment is not required for complete control.

Some forms of scale can be dealt with by brushing them with a cotton swab soaked in rubbing alcohol. This works well on the bugs that you can see, but there may be some hiding where you can't see them so you have to keep at it to get them all. Next up the scale of chemicals is safer soap as well as agricultural oil, a form of specially treated mineral oil. Both are relatively nontoxic and can be safely handled with minimal precautions. These relatively gentle treatments are not effective with a few insects such as spider mites, and stronger insecticides are required for control.

Bayer chemical company now markets a so called three in one insecticide which is a mixture of three products, an insecticide a miticide and, for good measure, a fungicide. This product is very effective for a wide range of ills which might befall your bonsai, but also affects the "good" bugs that eat the "bad" bugs, which you would like to avoid if possible. If you choose to use this product, best to spray only the specific tree affected.

The use of powerful insecticides brings up the question of safe handling of the more potent insecticides. These products can be absorbed through the skin, and so you should avoid contact with them by using gloves. The local drug stores sell inexpensive exam gloves made from nitrile rubber which work well. These gloves, incidentally, are useful when you do wood finishing because they are resistant to attack by paint, varnish and stains. Materials that are absorbed through the skin are also rapidly absorbed in the lungs, so inhalation of droplets of insecticide spray should be avoided. Here, paper masks, again available at local drug stores, are a great protection. Although the insecticides available on the market can be toxic if not used with some care, rest assured that they will not jump out and bite you, and with a little thought they can be safely handled.

California is blessed with a master gardener program which fosters a responsible approach to insect control. They may be accessed through their web site for help in identifying insects and specific methods of control. The web site also includes much information about the general care of plants such as fertilizer requirements. Although the information is directed to plants in general and not specifically to bonsai, there is still much of value to bonsai growers. The web site is [www.camastergardeners@ucdavis.edu](mailto:www.camastergardeners@ucdavis.edu)

## **A Call for Volunteers**

The Mammoth Fundraiser 2015 is quickly approaching. The dates are Saturday, February 21 for the auction and Sunday, February 22 for the vendor and plant sale. This is the biggest fundraiser for the GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt.

The EBBS has volunteered to manage the food for all the volunteers helping out for the weekend event. This is a notice to anyone who would like to volunteer for the following shifts.

### *February 21: Saturday*

Breakfast 8:30 to 11:00  
Lunch 11:30 to 1:30

### *February 22: Sunday*

Breakfast 8:30 to 11:00  
Lunch 11:30 to 1:30

Your duties would be to help set up, monitor the food and clean up. Also, if you are willing to provide food, please let me know. Please contact Suzanne Muller at 925-890-0506 or [smuller@mbcf.com](mailto:smuller@mbcf.com). Let me know what shift and time you are able to volunteer. Thank you.

## **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. OK to wire, but be careful of brittle foliage.
- 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**

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 tree under the guidance of an experienced bonsai artist. The classes are open to all experience levels.

The workshops are held at 7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month when the college is in session. The next workshop will be on January 26. 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 nominal parking fee) and are a wonderful learning experience. All you need to take advantage of them is to just show up with your tree.

## **Events by Others**

GSBF's Bonsai and Suiseki Garden: open Wed., Thurs., 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 24-25 Oakland, Bay Island Bonsai Annual Bonsai Exhibit at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave. Hours: 10AM-4PM, Saturday and Sunday. Auction on Saturday, preview at noon and auction at 1pm. Bonsai demonstration by Boon Manakitivipart on Sunday at 1 PM. Guided tours of the exhibit both Saturday and Sunday. Vendor sales, Club sales, Educational bonsai material for sale, A special pots sales this year. Entry to Exhibit is free, donations accepted. For more information call 510-919-5042 or go to <http://bayislandbonsai.com/bib-annual-exhibit/>

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](mailto:bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com) and visit [www.gsbf-lakemerritt.org](http://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](http://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**

- Jan 14** Hornbeams – Kathy Shaner  
**Jan 25** BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson  
**Feb 11** Shohin Hinoki Cypress – Randall Lee  
**Mar 11** Pines – Gordon Deeg  
**Mar 22** BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby

**Special Events**

---