



# The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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## East Bay Bonsai Society

### July Meeting:

July 8, 2015 @ 7:30 p.m.

### President's Note

As we get closer to our next "meeting", it's time to start thinking about the trees, pots, and supplies (minimum value - \$10) you would like to sell at our July auction. This event is one of the big fundraisers for our club and helps us maintain the quality of presentations, meetings, shows, and auxiliary events that you have come to enjoy.

You can use the auction to either make money from selling your trees, or consider donating your entire proceeds to the club. Either way, the club appreciates your participation as either a seller or buyer.

August will bring our annual pot luck, once again hosted by club members Janet and Rick. Details will follow, but it's always a fun afternoon and a chance to see their collection up close and personal.

Michael

### July Auction

Excitement is building for our annual auction in July. The auction will be held at our usual meeting place and set up for the auction will start at 6:00 pm. Sell items can be received no later than 7:00. The auction will start promptly at 7:30, so be sure that by that time you have checked in your auction items. Tree tags and seller log sheets are attached to the newsletter, and will also be available the evening of the auction. To avoid duplicate tag numbers, please use three initials on your tags. You should have also reviewed what is available for sale, have your bidding paddle, and be fully ready to participate in the furious action.

Hopefully you have reviewed your collection of bonsai trees and have selected those which do not quite meet your expectations. You may want to pass these on to a more loving home at the auction, as well as any surplus bonsai related item such as pots, stands and scrolls. As a matter of fact, anything in good taste can be offered in the auction. Note that this excludes husbands, wives, past significant others, kids and the family dog, but just about everything else is welcome.

The auction provides a wonderful opportunity for you to practice your merchandising skills. If you want to

sell a tree, anything that you can do to it that makes the potential customer more easily visualize the tree as a finished bonsai will lead to a higher selling price. The most obvious first step is to remove any weeds growing in the pot. It may surprise you to know that trees once in a while do show up in the auction complete with weeds. They don't sell for very much. Trees in bonsai pots sell better than trees in plastic cans. Trees in bonsai pots benefit from a bit of top dressing. Branches that are not clearly of value to the finished bonsai can be trimmed off. Partial wiring of a branch or two also helps. If you are selling a pot, scrub out the residual dirt. Stands can always use a bit of furniture polish to spiff them up.



Note that the minimum projected selling price for all items is \$10, so save the little seedlings in a Dixie cup for our show in the fall. Here very inexpensive items sell quickly. There is a limit of 10 items that can be entered in the auction. Items can be bundled as, for example, a box of several pots sold as a group counts as one item. As usual, the club keeps 20% of the selling price and you get the rest to hopefully use to buy more stuff at the auction. Of course, you can also donate your item to the auction where the club gets the total selling price. This is a great way to support your club.

There are always fine things to be found at the auction to upgrade your collection, and generally at most affordable prices. The auction is not only a lot of fun but also is a very important fundraiser for the club. It deserves your support in providing items for sale, buying lots of stuff and helping out with the many tasks required to make it all run smoothly. Janet Nelson is in charge of the auction. See her if you want to volunteer to help. She could really use your help.

### **August Potluck Picnic**

Circle Saturday, August the 8<sup>th</sup> on your calendar! That's the date of our annual potluck picnic which the club holds in place of the regular August Wednesday meeting. Once again Rick Trumm and Janet Nelson have generously agreed to host the event at their lovely home in the Oakland hills. The event usually starts in the mid afternoon and continues until dusk. 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 their beautiful bonsai is alone worth your visit. The food is always outstanding. EBBS has some truly gifted cooks and the picnic lets you sample their best efforts. Best of all, the picnic is a chance for members to socialize on an informal basis. Watch the next newsletter for exact times, travel directions and food assignments, and do plan to come.

### **Frolic in the Garden**

The June meeting was our annual frolic in the garden. It featured a tour of the Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt collection hosted by two members of EBBS who are both very active in the garden. Janice Dilbeck is in charge of maintaining and developing the collected Junipers in the collection under the guidance of Kathy Shaner, and Bob Gould has his hand in much of the overall operation of the garden.

Bob pointed out several especially noteworthy trees which included a fine olive tree which had been donated by Frank Bardella who is a member of the

Redwood Empire Bonsai Society. Next came a redwood tree which was the first tree donated to the garden when it opened. The tree had a long and tortured history, including having the top 10 feet or so cut off. In spite of the past history, the tree is a magnificent specimen now.



A wisteria was donated by an old time Japanese nurseryman and Bob said that last year he counted a total of 380 flowers and stopped counting. Considering the number of flowers and the fact that the tree was not all that big, it must have been a grand sight. One of the secrets of the heavy bloom is to leave the long runners on the tree which seems to encourage the development of flower buds. The long runners are removed in the fall.

The high point of the tour was the Damiyo Oak. The story of this tree begins in the mid 1860's when President Lincoln sent an emissary to China. In 1863 on his way back to the United States, the emissary stopped in Japan where he was given an oak bonsai tree which he brought back to the United States. He purchased a considerable tract of land for his home on the peninsula which includes the city which bears his name, Burlingame. The tree remained with his family for many years and then passed into the hands of a second family, and then to a Japanese bonsai artist. When it finally reached the garden it had been a bit neglected, but has now been restored to good health. Exact records are a little fuzzy but it appears that this tree holds the record for the bonsai tree that has been cultivated for the longest time within the United States. The tree had been grown in Japan for many years before Burlingame acquired it, so the tree has probably been grown as a bonsai for a total of more than 200 years.

Probably the most spectacular trees in the collection are the collected Junipers and Janice was pleased to show them off. Several of the trees were worked on by both her and other members of EBBS including Rick Trumm, Janet Nelson, John Doig and Mike Pistello. One of the trees under her care is a California Juniper which was grafted with shimpaku juniper. The reason for the grafting with the shimpaku is because it has finer foliage than the California Juniper which results in a fuller and softer appearance to the tree.



Bob called our attention to the recently installed display of shohin bonsai. The garden has struggled over the years to find a way to display these gems that is both secure and amenable to the cultural requirements of these little trees. The display is a stunning addition to the garden.

The tour concluded at the entry gate. The gate was built by Hiroshi Sakaguchi who is a Japanese master temple builder. The gate is constructed in the Japanese style with each of the components fitted together without any of the usual fastenings such as nails or screws. This type of construction originated in Japan because of the need to secure structures against earthquakes. During an earthquake, the parts are jammed together even tighter, allowing the structure to survive the quake. Next time you are in the garden, take a moment to carefully examine the gate. There are not a lot of good examples of Japanese construction in the United States.

The evening concluded with Joe Byrd talking about what is ongoing at the garden. He commented that the past year has been a busy one. Two obvious changes have been the installation of the shohin display and the opening of the museum shop which features the sale of tee shirts and greeting cards. A short term plan is to expand the shade screens throughout the garden to reduce water consumption.

The garden is actively seeking formal museum accreditation. This would open the door to major grants as well as provide the ability to solicit major donations to the garden.

To date all of the work in the garden has been performed by volunteers. Kathy Shaner who is responsible for the trees in the collection is not paid a salary. She does receive an honorarium each year for all the work that she does. One of the requirements of accreditation is that there is at least one salaried staff member. This person would be responsible for securing grants and donations to the garden.

The garden has always been interested in education and has recently instituted a program for training new volunteers in all aspects of bonsai culture and styling. The aim is to create a larger number of people qualified to care for the trees.

Joe concluded his talk by stating that there were eight members of EBBS who heavily volunteer at the garden, and he thanked them for their efforts. He said that there is ample room for more members to volunteer. You don't need extensive experience as a bonsai artist to be a docent. Do give thought to becoming a volunteer at the garden. It is a satisfying experience and you get to meet some fine people.

### **The Copper Wire Story**

Proper use of wire is probably the most single important skill required for bonsai. The wire allows you to move a branch from here to there where it makes a more pleasing presentation



on your tree. If you had the best of all possible worlds, the wire would be limp as a noodle when you applied it and would then become sufficiently hard that it would hold the tree branch just where you wanted it. And guess what? Copper wire does this.

As first reported in your newsletter a while ago, the marvelous property of copper was discovered about 8000 years ago by a man who was out hunting a nice fat woolly mammoth to take home to the wife and kids for dinner. As he was walking along, he found a piece of metal which he knew was copper because copper is one of the few metals that can occasionally be found in a pure state rather than as an ore. As you will see, he was a very smart hunter. He also immediately recognized that although the piece was in the form of a lump, he could pound it into a splendid point for his spear where it would make a much better point than the stone one he was using. He set about forming the spear point during his lunch. To his dismay, the more he pounded on the lump the harder it became until it was so hard that no amount of pounding would change the shape of the lump any further. Pounding on the lump was a lot of hard work, so he called the process work hardening. Whatever he called it, he was a long way from having a spear point. Disgusted, he threw the lump into the campfire where he had cooked his lunch.



A friend came by and asked him how things were going. After complaining about his favorite sports team, he told his friend about the lump he had found. He fished the lump out of the fire and when it cooled down, he showed his friend how hard it had become by pounding on it. To his astonishment the lump was soft again! After a bit of thought a light bulb came on. He reasoned that although the copper that he originally found was in the form of a lump, it actually had a highly regular face centered cubic crystal structure and this made the metal soft. Pounding on it disrupted the crystal structure, leading to a much harder form of the metal. (See, he was a very smart hunter). Further, heating the lump in his campfire allowed the lump to reestablish the regular crystal structure. He called this process annealing. His friend was delighted with the new finding of the hunter and together they formed a startup company which featured a whole catalogue of fine spear points.

Although all this happened 8,000 years ago, the hunter had a clear vision of the future. His marvelous discovery would allow the Egyptians to make hardened copper chisels to carve the stone blocks they used for their big architectural projects. He was saddened to see that copper would be replaced by iron tools which were easier to make and were harder than the copper ones. He looked even further into the future and was delighted to find that there was one area where his discovery would still be used. Iron wire will never replace copper wire for bonsai because iron wire is too stiff and rusts over time, staining the bark of the bonsai trees. He smiled,

knowing that his discovery of the marvelous properties of copper would stand the test of time.

And there you have the true story of the origin of copper wire. There is one unanswered question that history does not shed light on. We do not know whether he bagged a nice fat wooly mammoth as dinner for his wife and kids.

When we buy copper wire for our bonsai we make use of the technology our hunter discovered 8,000 years ago. The wire is relatively soft because it has been annealed by heating it under very carefully controlled conditions of time and temperature. Sometimes the purchased wire is coated with a flaky black residue on the surface. This is copper oxide which was formed in the heating process.

Annealed copper wire becomes work hardened by simply bending it. As we apply wire to our trees, the wire hardens by bending it around the branches. Fortunately you don't have to pound on it before it hardens. The resulting increase in rigidity of the wire makes positioning the branch easier and holds the branch in place until it grows strong enough to hold the position without the help of wire.

When you are wiring your tree, a common mistake is to remove a piece of wire from the coil and straighten it before you apply it to the tree. Straightening the wire hardens it before you wrap it around the branch, and this makes it more difficult to use.

In principle, you can anneal copper wire that has been removed from a tree by heating it with a propane torch to a dull red color. It is a lot of work because you have to first straighten the wire. When the wire cools, it is annealed. Heating with a torch is difficult to control and when you are done you have a relatively short piece of wire. It is a lot of work and most people are happy to buy the wire ready for use.

Aluminum wire is also used for wiring bonsai and it, too, can be annealed and work hardens when used, but each process occurs to a far lesser degree than for copper.

### **Diablo Bonsai Club Workshop**



The Diablo Bonsai Club which previously was under the guidance of Sensei Kay Akabane from the Tassajara Nursery in Danville who is now deceased, now meets informally once a month at Maria Sargent's house in Danville. We meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month from

9 – 12 am. This is a very informal get together where we work on bonsai while enjoying a good cup of coffee.

Our monthly gathering is more of a social event rather than a learning workshop. Members vary in experience, but we are more than willing to help any beginners or beginner/intermediates who would like to come and work on their trees. In the winter we focus more on repotting, and have granite, lava, pumice, etc.

that can be purchased and then mixed for your potting medium.

If you are interested in having company while working on your bonsai and meeting new people, our next get together will be Saturday July 11<sup>th</sup> at my house. Email [sargentmt@gmail.com](mailto:sargentmt@gmail.com) or call 530-304-4299 if you might be interested.

Maria Sargent

### **A little "Tea" in July**

It's not that often that senior club members get excited about a bonsai demonstration the way that many beginners do. For our July 2015 general meeting, BSSF has pulled out all the stops to bring a high-level program that will both delight and inform members and guest.



Japanese-trained bonsai professional Peter Tea will join BSSF for our general meeting on July 9th at 7:30 in the Recreation Room at the SF County Fair Building. Bonsai started for Peter in 2004 when he took part in one of Boon Manakitivipart's Intensive programs. Peter apprenticed at Aichi-en nursery under Junchiro Tanaka in Nagoya for three years. He has been busy since his return to the Bay Area in 2013 and July will mark Peter's second visit to BSSF in the last two years.

The program will allow Peter to demonstrate detailed refinement techniques on an Itoigawa juniper. Most frequently propagated specifically for bonsai, this type of *Juniperus chinensis* is well-regarded for use as bonsai but is difficult to find in nurseries. Ken Wassum from Puget Sound Bonsai Association has cared for the tree for the past eight years. Ken has been doing bonsai for about 21 years, and has also been a student of Boon's for the past 10 years. The material has been trained from the start to become good bonsai, and it will be given to a lucky raffle winner at the end of the night. If you haven't had the pleasure yet of learning from Peter, this is a meeting you do not want to miss.

Guest and members alike are encouraged to attend to watch an already well-established tree be polished into show condition.

### **Ride Needed**

Ruth Clifford is a long time member of our club who is having difficulty with transportation to our club meetings and to the Merritt College workshops. If you live in the Berkeley area and are willing to give Ruth a ride, please call her at (510) 525-9371.



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

The workshops at Merritt College are held only when the college is in session. Because the campus is closed for the summer, there will be no workshops until the fourth Monday of August when they will again resume.

### **Roster Update**

Please add Drew Robarts to your roster. His e-mail address is [robarts@sbcglobal.net](mailto:robarts@sbcglobal.net), and phone number is (510) 654-7780.

### **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.*

### **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.

July 1 – 5, San Rafael, Marin Bonsai Club: Annual Exhibition at the Marin County Fair at the Marin Civic Center in San Rafael. The fair is open from 11 am to 11 pm. The bonsai show closes at 9 pm.

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>.

### **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**

**July 8** Auction  
**July 26** BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley  
**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