



# The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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## East Bay Bonsai Society

### June Meeting:

June 10, 2015 @ 7:00 p.m.

### President's Note

June is already here! Your trees continue to grow despite our peculiar weather patterns. And we've had a great bonsai season so far with great presentations on bunjin style trees, tips and tricks regarding trees, pots, stands, and accent plants, Japanese Black Pines, shohin Hinoki Cypress, work on a Hornbeam, and how to buy a potential bonsai tree. Plus we had a field trip to Lone Pine.

Our next big event is our annual July auction. I hope everyone is thinking about possible trees that they want to sell to pare down their collection, and others are thinking about what types of trees they want to add to theirs. The July auction is one of the key fund raising activities so I encourage each of you to help and participate in some way.

While it's not too far off, you should also be thinking about our October show. Begin to look at trees and accent plants in your collection and consider which you would like to display at the show.

Happy bonsai'ng!

Michael

### June Meeting

The June meeting is our annual frolic in the garden and is a celebration of the summer solstice. We will enjoy a tour of the bonsai garden lead by two of our EBBS members, Janice Dilbeck and Bob Gould. Janice Dilbeck is in charge of the collected trees in the collection and works under the direction of Kathy Shaner. These trees are probably the most spectacular trees in the collection. Janice will tell us how she manages them. Bob has been intimately connected to the garden since its inception and he serves many roles.

Park authorities lock the gates to the garden area late in the afternoon, so we cannot directly access the bonsai garden from the street. Instead, we will first meet at 7:00 pm at our usual meeting place, the garden center, and walk to the bonsai garden as a group. At the conclusion of the tour we will return to the garden center for refreshments and a talk about what is

currently going on with the bonsai garden by the bonsai garden director, Joe Byrd, who is also a member of EBBS.

The objective of the program is for EBBS members to gain an appreciation of what the garden has to offer by giving a behind the scenes look. The garden is particularly noteworthy since it is one of the finest bonsai gardens in the United States. This will be your chance to see important people on the garden staff in action. If you are not already a volunteer at the garden, hopefully this program will inspire you to participate. The garden is a fine enterprise and they can certainly use your help.

Thanks in advance to Jim Shurr, Wendy Quan and Joe Lee for offering to bring refreshments to the meeting.

### July Auction

Our annual auction will be held at the regular July meeting. The auction is a great opportunity for you to critically evaluate your bonsai collection. There is no good reason for you to continue to grow a tree that does not please you, particularly since it requires the same amount of care as a tree that you really like. Your displeasure can come from two directions. One is that you bought the tree

with great expectations, but in the cold light of the next day you realized that the tree was not quite as good as you thought it would be, and it seemed to be a very long way for the tree to meet your expectations (hello workshops). Another problem is cultural conditions that you were not aware of, as, for example, trying to grow maples is a very windy area which presents problems with leaf burn. The auction is a great way to pass your trees onto more loving and understanding homes, and you get 80% of the selling price to spend on more trees.



An important aspect of your critical evaluation of your bonsai collection is to discover what your wants are to fill in the gaps in your collection. You never know what will show up at the auction, but if you go with a shopping list of things you would like to add to your collection, you will be better able to take advantage of the offerings. The worst part of the auction is to realize afterwards that there was a tree or an item in the auction that you really would have liked but you didn't bid on it. The shopping list helps to prevent this kind of anguish.

The focus of the auction is traditionally on trees, but there are usually pots offered and usually at attractive prices. Do any of your trees need better pots than they are now growing in? Stands for your trees are usually available at the auction and generally sell for low prices because of the focus on trees. You will need to have stands for your trees if you want to display them at our fall show. Stands can be borrowed, but the stands available to be borrowed are not always the best fit for your tree. Having your own stands makes for a far more satisfying display of your tree.

The most fun part of the auction is the totally unexpected things that show up. Because the prices are usually low you can speculate on an auction item. In the future if it doesn't please you, there is always next years' auction to pass it on to someone else who will appreciate the virtues of the item.

The fine print for the auction is that you get 80% of the selling price. You may donate items to the club and the club gets the entire selling price. The limit is 10 items for sale, but items can be bunched. For example, a box of pots is one item. The minimum bid for all items is \$10 so be sure that all of your auction items have a projected selling price of at least \$10. Warning: Activity at this facility occasionally involves tree nuts. (Ouch—you may have wondered why this newsletter needs an editor.)

### **May Meeting**

The May meeting featured a presentation on bunjin bonsai by Bill Castellon. The origin of bunjin style, also called literati style, is reputed to be by a sophisticated man who turned his back on society and produced trees in a very free style. The styling of bunjin is very different from what is expected from most bonsai. The most important feature of bunjin is a long and skinny trunk. The line of the trunk is the essence of the tree. Bill commented that bending the trunk to give a line that appeared to be natural and not contrived was the most single difficult part of creating bunjin trees.

An important aspect of bunjin style is the feeling and not the look of the tree. The tree should arise from the pot with no swelling at the base. As a general rule the tree has three to five branches located at the top one fourth of the tree, although this rule is not rigidly followed. Foliage is sparse, making the slender trunk stand out. Massive branches should be avoided since they also detract from the line of the trunk. There is an understanding in some circles the trees used for bunjin should be very masculine, meaning pines or junipers,

but Bill showed several beautiful deciduous trees that did not fall into this category.

Pots chosen for these trees are very small and usually round which accentuates the sparse trunk and foliage. Bill showed a tree that had two trunks. The line of the trunks complimented each other and added to the visual effect of the tree. A tree from the show and tell table had a long shari (dead wood) on the trunk and Bill said that it emphasized the line of the trunk to good advantage.



Bill worked on a pine bunjin and stressed that the pine should be decandled by the middle of June or, at the latest, by July fourth. This process will force the very small lower branches to grow and will lead to shorter needles. The tree should be fertilized every two weeks before decandling with a high nitrogen fertilizer because the decandling is stressful to the tree. Bill wired the tree using aluminum wire which he prefers to copper. He adjusted the branches to channel the line of the trunk. Areas where more than two items join should be reduced to only two to avoid swelling at the juncture. The two items include the branches and the trunk. Swelling is particularly to be avoided on bunjin tree because the sparse trunk and foliage would make any swelling stand out.

A question from the audience centered on when is the wire taken off from a tree. Bill quoted Kathy Shaner who said that the wire should be taken off one day before it starts to cut into the bark. He indicated that you should watch your trees carefully since they grow at

different rates and thus require different times to remove the wire.

Bill also worked on two deciduous trees, an Ilex and a persimmon, and mentioned that both could be defoliated. While the flowers and the fruit of the trees cannot be made smaller, defoliation can reduce the size of the leaves. Time for defoliation is late May and June, but certainly before July fourth. Both of these trees demonstrated the free style of the trunk line.

The program was a much needed look at an area of bonsai that is not frequently discussed. The lucky winners of the raffle were John Nackley who won the pine and a new member, Julie Holcomb who won both of the deciduous trees. Welcome to EBBS Julie!

### **EBBS Spotlight**

The spotlight is on Bill Castellon and Randall Lee who lead the workshops at Merritt College and are both long time members of EBBS. The society has long felt the need for continuing workshops where members, and particularly beginners, can learn the fine art of bonsai artistry by working on their own trees. The workshops at Merritt College are not directly sponsored by EBBS, but EBBS members are especially welcome and all members are urged to attend. Best of all, the workshops are free, except for a nominal parking fee.



The bonsai community is privileged to have these workshops available to them. Both Bill and Randall are fine bonsai artists who have been active in bonsai for many years. They have both presented programs recently at our monthly meetings and you had the opportunity to see just how good they are as teachers. EBBS owes them a huge thank you for providing the much needed workshops. When you see them at the monthly meetings do go out of your way to let them know how much their efforts are valued by the society.

The workshops are not held when the college is not in session, so they are discontinued for the summer but will resume on the fourth Monday of August. The

newsletter will give all the necessary details. If you have not yet visited the workshops, do plan to go when they resume.



### **Bonsai Artistry**

A beautiful bonsai tree is the combination of two very different skills. The tree is not only a well grown tree but is also an artistically presented tree. The culture part is fairly easy if one takes the time to recognize the requirements of the tree. The artistic part is much harder because each tree presents different challenges and, furthermore, there is no one single way to make the tree eye popping. Different bonsai artists may have quite different visions of the best presentation of the same tree.

So what is the objective for you as a budding bonsai artist? The goal is for you to be able to approach a tree and make decisions with confidence about the future of the tree that are good decisions and will lead to a fine tree. The big question is, how do you get there?

There are several ways, all of which are helpful. First, watch carefully at the presentations at our regular meetings. If you don't understand why a particular thing was done to the demonstration tree, don't be afraid to ask the demonstrator. Most are quite willing to answer your questions. Next, go to the many club shows in the area. Here you will see lots of trees, each of which the owner is convinced is worth your close look. Also at the shows you will see how trees are displayed, and you can see how the choice of pot and stand can augment the look of the tree. You have to understand that not all trees in a show are superb examples of bonsai art. As you look at the trees in a show, ask yourself what you would have done to improve the tree or the presentation. In most cases the answer is there is nothing to be done, but there are some cases where the tree could have used some help. This critical look will help to develop your eye for good bonsai.



The most important way to improve your artistic skills is through workshops where you get hands on experience. There are two big mistakes to avoid when approaching a workshop. The first one is to assume that the only objective of the workshop is that you



leave with a nicely styled tree when the instructor has guided your every step. That fine tree is actually merely a fringe benefit. What you really should take away from the workshop is knowledge which you can use for other trees in the future. If all you want is a good tree, just give the tree to the instructor along with a stack of dollar bills and tell the instructor that you will pick up the tree tomorrow. You will get a fine tree and an empty wallet, but no learning will have taken place.

The second big mistake is to sit like a lump and expect the instructor to give you in great detail what needs to be done to your tree. You get the most from a workshop if you have thought about your tree beforehand and what you want to accomplish in the workshop. To get full value from the workshop, do your homework before you get there. What do you like about the tree and what don't you like about it? How do you improve the aspects of the tree that you don't like? What do you see in the future development of the tree? How should the tree be potted, as, for example, would it make a better presentation as a cascade? Have you located the best front for the tree?

The instructor may have a different idea on any of these questions. For example, the instructor may choose a different front for the tree. But if you have thought about the choice of front, you can see why the instructor's choice is better. That is how you learn to be a bonsai artist. If you haven't thought about your tree ahead of time, a learning opportunity is lost. Since the name of the game is knowledge, be sure that you understand the basis for the instructor's choice.

Your time in the workshop is only a brief moment in the life of the tree, so most of the care of the tree is in your hands. It is crucial that you understand how to care for the tree after the workshop. If the instructor has not made the future planning of the tree crystal clear, be sure that this is clarified before you leave the workshop.

Becoming a bonsai artist is a slow process requiring exposure to a lot of information coming from a variety of sources. The good news is that with patience and persistence, we all can learn to deal with our trees with confidence.

### **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.

### **Bonsai Calendar**

- Watering – Water regularly. Don't over-water defoliated trees.
- Fertilizing – Continue regular feeding.
- Repotting – Not recommended at this time except for tropical and semi-tropical trees.
- Styling/Pruning – Rotate trees. Watch for wire cutting during this period of fast growth. OK to defoliate healthy trees in first part of month. Candle prune black and other hard pines.
- Cuttings – Root softwood cuttings on deciduous trees and Satsuki.
- Insect and disease control – Maintain defensive treatments for fungus. Watch for and treat insect infestations.

### **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.

June 6 – 7, San Mateo, Sei Boku Bonsai Kai: 32nd Annual Show at the San Mateo Garden Center, 605 Parkside Way, next to Beresford Park. Admission is free. Hours are 10 AM to 4 PM; with Bonsai Master, David Nguy, conducting a demonstration Saturday and open viewing workshop Sunday from Noon – 3 PM, both days. Raffle and door prizes will be drawn both days at 3pm. Vendor sales, and member plant sales will be featured. Dr. Bonsai will be available to answer questions regarding bonsai care. For additional information contact Marsha Mekisich at (650) 477-4761.

June 13 – 14, Oakland, California Suiseki Society: 20th Annual Show at the Lakeside Garden Center on Lake Merritt, 666 Bellevue Ave. Free admission. Hours: 10 AM to 4 PM. Featuring our best stones collected from California sites over the last two decades under our late beloved sensei, Felix Rivera. The sales area will feature Suiseki books and magazines (many out of print) as well as Suiseki and Viewing Stones from members' collections. For information, contact Henry van der Voort at [oldboar3@gmail.com](mailto:oldboar3@gmail.com) or Bob Gould at [rgould@aol.com](mailto:rgould@aol.com).

June 20 – 21, Livermore, Valley Bonsai Society: 7<sup>th</sup> annual show at Alden Lane Nursery, 981 Alden Lane. Show hours are 10 AM to 4 PM both days with demonstration by an expert bonsai artist at 1 PM. Finished trees will be raffled off at the end of the

demonstration and members sales table. Admission is free. For additional information contact Charles Harder at [bonsainut@comcast.net](mailto:bonsainut@comcast.net)

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.

**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

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**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**

<b>June 10</b>	Frolic in the Garden
<b>June 28</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – J D Lin
<b>July 8</b>	Auction
<b>July 26</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
<b>Aug</b>	Picnic
<b>Aug 23</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
<b>Sept 9</b>	Tropicals – Jerry Carpenter
<b>Sept 27</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Don Meeker
<b>Oct 14</b>	No club meeting due to proximity to show
<b>Oct 25</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
<b>Nov 11</b>	Juniper Jubilee – Mike Pistello
<b>Nov 22</b>	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould
<b>Dec 9</b>	Holiday Dinner

**Special Events**

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

## Golden State Bonsai Federation (GSBF) Announcement

GSBF recently launched a consolidated FaceBook page  
<<https://www.facebook.com/gsbforg?ref=hl>>.



The purpose is to use social media to spread the word about GSBF programs and benefits of membership. Regular postings will cover such things as the upcoming Convention 38 in Riverside, California (October 29 through November 2, 2015), Golden Statements quarterly magazine issues, educational opportunities (grants and scholarships), the annual club website and newsletter contests, and much more. We are 70 bonsai and suiseki clubs in CA, NV and AZ. And, we want to expand our reach to the greater bonsai and suiseki communities. We will make many references to the official GSBF Website <<http://www.gsbf-bonsai.org/>> where you can find information about us and all our programs and benefits. Help us share our events and activities with other bonsai and suiseki enthusiasts - both hobbyists and professionals. Spread the word about our FaceBook page!