



The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXIII, No. 3

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

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

President's Note

It's March Madness bonsai-style. At this point most of your trees are starting to see activity. Flowers are budding and leaves are popping.

Our March meeting will feature Gordon Deeg who will discuss pines. Gordon is extremely experienced in bonsai and it should be very enjoyable and educational.

The month of April will include something for the newbie as well as the experienced bonsai hobbyist. The meeting will feature discussions on a number of topics including selecting trees, matching pots to trees, wiring, watering, etc. You get picture.

April will also include a field trip to Lone Pine Nursery in Sebastopol. It will be an opportunity to purchase trees (and succulents) and get help from other club members on selecting a tree.

Also, if you haven't paid your 2015 dues, please send payment to Pat Cahill at 4933 Cochrane Ave, Oakland, CA 94618.

Michael

March Meeting

Gordon Deeg will present a program on pines at the March meeting. He is particularly skilled in making his programs both applicable and understandable to beginners. Gordon has been involved for many years in bonsai and has recently gone to Japan several times to assist Mr. Matsuya who is one of the premier bonsai artists currently working in Japan. Obviously, with this background Gordon brings a wealth of knowledge to his presentations. Many members know Gordon from the bonsai garden where he was the director for many years. We can expect that his talk will be on the cutting edge of how to make your pine trees shine as bonsai and we look forward to his presentation. This promises to be an outstanding program.

Thanks in advance to Janet and Rick, the Goulds and Bill Castellon for offering to furnish refreshments to the meeting.

April Meeting

The April meeting will be focused on things that are helpful to beginners. The meeting title says it all: Tips,

Traps and Tricks. The meeting will take the form of short presentations on several topics followed by a round table discussion to explore further what was presented, and to provide an opportunity for questions. The meeting is still a bit under construction so the covered topics have not yet been finalized. It promises to be not only a fun evening but an informative one, too. Do plan to come.

February Meeting

Randall Lee presented a program on Hinoki Cypress. There are many cultivars of Hinoki Cypress and Randall showed examples of several of the commonly found varieties. He is particularly fond of Hinoki Cypress variety Well's Special which has smaller and tighter foliage. The Sawara Cypress is very closely related to Hinoki Cypress and the two can be grown under the same conditions. Randall showed how to tell the two apart by looking at the foliage at the tip of a branch. The Sawara has pointed foliage and the Hinoki has rounded branch tips.



Randall provided a handout (a copy is attached to this newsletter) which gives much detail on culture. He emphasized that Hinoki do not handle hot sun well. Those of us who live in the Walnut Creek area should protect their Hinoki from afternoon sun. Also, after

repotting it is best to provide some sun protection until the tree is established, even if you live in the Oakland area.

The soil mix that Randall uses is about 50 to 60 percent akadama with the balance being assorted inorganics such as pumice and lava. Randall passed around a sample of his soil mix for inspection and it appeared that all the ingredients of the mix were about one eighth of an inch in size. This results from careful screening of the components to eliminate both larger and smaller sizes. For fertilizer, Randall uses both inorganic water soluble fertilizers as well as slow release pellets. He particularly likes Apex which is a commercial grade of the readily available Osmocote. He fertilizes during two periods of the year. He starts about April and ends in June, but resumes again in September and continues until November. The trees shut down for the summer and again in the winter, so no fertilizer is needed for these periods. Randall's schedule accommodates this.



When purchasing a Hinoki, be aware that many of the examples for sale are grafted, and this may pose problems developing a smoothly tapered trunk. The problem comes from the fact that the rootstock may grow at a different rate than the tree above it, giving a bumpy look to the trunk. Well's Special variety of Hinoki is usually available on its' own roots and this, in addition to the finer foliage, makes it a fine candidate for bonsai.

Look for trees that have roots that spread evenly around the trunk, a trunk that has taper and a tree that has a lot of small fine branches inside the outer foliage.

These small branches are the basis for the fine bonsai to come. Special care must be given to keep these branches alive and healthy since they are quickly shaded out and die, leaving long, straggly branches. The secret is to cut back the longer branches to allow light to fall on the interior branches with little foliage. The trunk of the tree should flow toward the viewer and there should be lower branches that come toward to greet the viewer.

Randall treats his trees gently when moving the tree from a nursery container to a bonsai pot. He recommends doing this over two years. The first year he reduces the root ball by about one half, and the second year he reduces the root ball again by another half. Also, cutting the foliage back is done over a two year period. He demonstrated this on a shohin sized bonsai. Last year major pruning of large branches reduced the tree by about one half, and the final trimming was done at the meeting to make the foliage in proportion to the trunk.

Hinoki heal cuts very slowly. It is imperative that fresh cuts are quickly sealed with cut paste to prevent the cut from drying out which would delay or stop the healing process.

Randall showed several examples of his own Hinoki bonsai including a magnificent tree that he has been cultivating for more than twenty years. His program certainly built a great case for using Hinoki as bonsai. It was much needed and much appreciated.

On another note, those who provided refreshments for the meeting outdid themselves. Special thanks to all involved for a splendid assortment of goodies.

Dues

Those members of EBBS who are familiar with the works of Shakespeare know that Julius Caesar had a little problem with the Ides of March. The end of March also poses a problem for those few members who have not paid their annual dues which are an outrageous bargain at \$30 for single memberships and \$40 for couples. Membership includes an email subscription to the EBBS newsletter, the Tree Shrinker, which is the acknowledged voice of truth and light of the east bay world of bonsai. 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 at the March meeting, or dues can be mailed to: EBBS Treasurer, 4933 Cochrane, Oakland, CA, 94618-2701.

The unfortunates who have not paid their dues by March 31 will be removed from the roster and will no longer receive the newsletter. Don't follow Caesar's example of what happens when the problems that March will bring are neglected by not paying your dues by the last day of March.

East Bay Bonsai Club at the Mammoth Fundraiser

The Mammoth Fundraiser for the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt was a great success. Many members of EBBS contributed in a variety of ways to support the event. Bob Gould was honored for his dedication to the

BGLM, contributing over 1000 hours of his time to the management and maintenance of the garden. EBBS also had a display table which we used to honor John Castle, a long time member of our club and strong supporter of the bonsai community.

Tidbits from the food committee: As advertised in



the last issue, the EBBS Board had accepted a challenge from the Director of the BGLM to provide the cadre of volunteers at the annual Mammoth fundraiser with nourishment. The incentive from BGLM was a donation to EBBS of \$500 to do the task successfully. We accepted and succeeded. Special recognition goes to all the volunteers who stepped up to make it work. The project coordinator, Board member Suzanne Muller, had the forethought to organize everything on a spreadsheet with assigned duties to facilitate the process. Beyond that, she and EBBS President Michael Hylton found time during their busy work week to purchase needed beverages, condiments and paper ware. Then Suzanne squeezed in a shopping spree for pastries, wine, and tidbits in a very busy Friday before the auction.

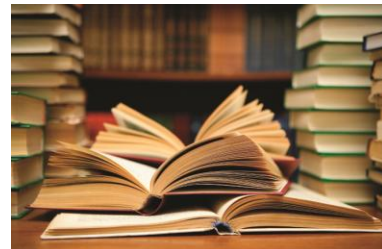
During the weeks before, Michael with John Nackley had scoured the Merritt Lake shopping areas for donations of pastries, coffee, and condiments. This effort really helped reduce cost. Michael also negotiated getting prepared sandwiches at volume discount to be delivered each day of the fundraiser.

More importantly, all this effort came to fruition on the day of the auction through the work of the EBBS volunteers who showed up Saturday and Sunday. Beverly Martinez, Lynn Hollander, Roger Brady, Linda Soliven, Tim and Emma Kong showed up each day for serving and cleaning up. Lynn and Lisa Harper were *the ice man comeths* to cool the beverages. Thank both of their cold fingers. Special thanks to Lynn Hollander and Beverly Martinez. Lynn, unheeded, replaced the broken wine openers and brought fresh fruit to add needed nutrition and color to the spread. Beverly Martinez brought knockout delicious pasta salads each day which were very popular.

In the end, all volunteers had the satisfaction of a job well done, and hopefully EBBS will be invited again next year with the advantage of this year's experience.

Club Stuff

There are several new developments in EBBS afoot that you should be aware of. First and foremost is that EBBS has a library of books which you can check out. Bev Martinez has undertaken to organize the collection by eliminating some volumes which are of less interest, and providing a catalogue of the remaining books. For the first time there is a list of the available material to make your selection easier. The collection consists of reference books on two basic topics, how to do it books which can be a great help to newcomers to bonsai, and picture books on finished bonsai. The latter are guides to styling bonsai and show what your bonsai could ultimately look



like in the future. The library is a valuable resource for all of us regardless of experience level. Take a moment at the next meeting to see what the library has to offer if you haven't already done so. Organization of the library was a big job and Bev deserves a pat on the back and a big thank you from the rest of us for accomplishing a much needed task.

Newcomers to EBBS are faced with a bewildering amount of information about how to grow bonsai and how to style their trees, and in the past have been pretty much on their own to figure it out. Roger Brady and Linda Soliven have tried to address this by making the club more welcoming to newcomers in several ways. Most recently, they have prepared a list of experienced members who are willing and able to be contacted to offer advice or, if needed, consolation. The list is more than a resource directed toward new members. People who have been in bonsai for a long time will occasionally purchase a species of tree that they are unfamiliar with, and need a little help from someone who has had success with that particular tree. The list is attached to this newsletter and is one more step in trying to make EBBS more welcoming to newcomers. Roger and Linda deserve a big thank you for a change that has been badly needed for a long time.

Last but not least is a fun event in the form of a field trip that is in the planning stage for late spring. One of the features of the trip will be the availability of experienced members in the group who may be consulted about what trees to buy and what problems each tree may present in the future. Details on a field trip are still being worked out, but stay tuned for the emerging story.

Tools

One of the many things confronting a new beginner to bonsai is what is needed in the way of tools to work on bonsai. Consultation with more experienced members of the club frequently leads to a statement that you should only consider the very best, and you need a wide assortment of tools. Sounds good, but that usually means a tool box that costs \$1500 or more to fill. Further, you should visit one of the tool vendors at the next show or fundraiser to check out exactly what you need. These folks are very nice and they will show you a lot of tools, all of which they claim that you absolutely must have if you are serious about bonsai. Their tools are of very high quality and should last you a lifetime. They are right on this point. Many tools are for special uses and will truly out last you and your lifetime because you will probably use them only a couple of times. Faced with all of this, it is no wonder why potential bonsai artists give up and look into collecting stamps as a hobby.



So what does the newcomer to bonsai really need to get started that will not cost him a fortune? Five tools will take him far enough into the world of bonsai for him to see whether the hobby of bonsai is really for him. Surprisingly, four of the five are tools not even specifically made for bonsai and are inexpensive.

The first tool on the list is a simple chopstick. They are needed for combing out old potting media when you re-pot your bonsai. The fact that they are made of wood means that relatively few roots are broken during the process. Chopsticks are also useful for determining where roots on your tree are located by poking them into the soil. They also can be used for a variety of other tasks such as flicking off stray dead leaves or unwanted pieces of bark. Chopsticks can be constructed from one of two materials, a soft wood like pine which easily breaks, and the much harder wood of bamboo. Hold out for the bamboo. They are readily available in the local Chinatown and cost a few bucks for a generous handful, or are available in Japanese restaurants where they cost about \$10 for two. By the way, a free meal comes with the chop sticks.

Probably the first thing the budding bonsai artist faces is that the cool tree that he bought would be even cooler if a branch could be moved from here to over there. This could be accomplished by wrapping some wire around the branch, which requires something to cut the wire. Wire cutters available at Ace Hardware will work just fine and will probably cost \$10 or so. They are designed for cutting relatively small diameter wire, and as our budding artist continues in bonsai he will use thicker wire to shape larger branches. Unless he has arms like a gorilla, cutting the thicker wire with diagonal wire cutters becomes a real chore. At this point, wire cutters for bonsai come into play. Their long handles and short blades give a much better mechanical advantage which makes cutting the thicker wire much easier. These can be purchased for as little as \$20 and should serve bonsai needs for a long time.

You cannot do much with wire without a set of pliers. Again, Ace Hardware models will work well. Their limitation is that the jaws are relatively broad which makes it difficult to maneuver the pliers through the shrubbery. Bonsai pliers have jaws that look more or less like ducks' bills, i.e. somewhat broad and thin, which makes for easier maneuvering. Down the road a bit, bonsai pliers will be a distinct improvement over the Ace Hardware models.

The fourth tool on the basic list is a pair of scissors for trimming your tree. Scissors with a sharp point are needed for getting into the foliage, but should be stout enough to allow you to cut very small branches. There are Chinese made scissors on the market which work just fine for bonsai and cost much less than \$10. Bonsai scissors are longer and narrower and can be easier to use, depending on your hand size, and should be on your list for a future upgrade.

The last tool on the basic tool list is a pair of diagonal cutters. These are specifically designed for bonsai use and there is no nonbonsai equivalent. The cutters cut larger branches and they really shine when you want to remove a branch close to the trunk. They do not cut flush with the trunk but cut a slight divot out of the trunk. The resulting depression will, in most cases, heal with a scar that is level with the trunk.

So how much is reasonable to pay for tools? There is a wide range of quality and prices for bonsai tools. For example, bonsai wire cutters can range from \$20 to over \$200. The high end tools are designed for professional people who work on trees eight hours a day year around. Time does not permit them to use a tool that does not handle well and does not stay sharp. Tools costing far less suit most of us who work on their tree maybe eight hours a month. The steel in these tools is a little softer than the top of the line tools, meaning that the tools need to be sharpened a little more often. But this is not a burden for most of us.

The most conservative financial approach for the newcomer to bonsai is to start with either very inexpensive bonsai tools or their nonbonsai equivalent. If bonsai is really a passion in their life, the starter tools can be replaced with better quality tools. There are many brands of tools costing in the range of \$40, and any of

these should give a lifetime of satisfactory service. Put the big bucks into trees rather than tools. A frequent trap that people fall into is the feeling that the best quality and hence the most expensive tools will make them a better bonsai artist. This is not true. The tool is only as good as the skill of the person using it.

New Members and Roster Updates

We have three new members in the club, John Doig "The Wire Guy", Joseph Ma, and Frank Edward Yuhre. Please introduce yourselves to them at our next club meeting.

Their email addresses and/or phone numbers are:

John Doig – (415) 892-1676

Joseph Ma – (650) 548-1270, josephmax@aol.com

Frank Edward Yuhre – (925) 754-1084

Bonsai Calendar

- Watering – Reduce watering, but ensure plants receive sufficient water
- Fertilizing – Do not feed deciduous trees. Begin fertilizing black pines. Delay feeding repotted plants for 2-6 weeks.
- Repotting – Repot deciduous trees, pines, satsuki and junipers
- Styling/Pruning – Prune maples if not pruned in Nov or Dec. Pinch leafing deciduous trees unless trying to redirect growth pattern.
- Graft – All species
- Air Layering – Deciduous trees may be air layered if they have not yet pushed new growth. Otherwise, wait until the new growth hardens in late spring.

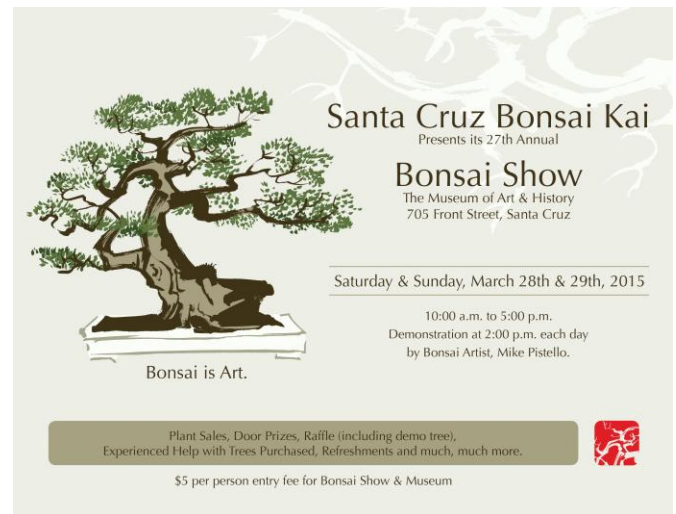
Refer to the EBBS Bonsai Calendar for more details on seasonal care.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

These workshops are a splendid opportunity to learn about how to develop your trees onto 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 so whatever you level of expertise, you are most welcome.

The workshops are held at 7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month when 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, Randall Lee and Bill Castellon.

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.



The poster features a central illustration of a large, gnarled pine tree in a white rectangular pot. To the right of the tree, the text reads: "Santa Cruz Bonsai Kai Presents its 27th Annual Bonsai Show The Museum of Art & History 705 Front Street, Santa Cruz". Below the tree, it says "Saturday & Sunday, March 28th & 29th, 2015". Further down, the hours are listed: "10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Demonstration at 2:00 p.m. each day by Bonsai Artist, Mike Pistello." At the bottom, there is a dark green banner with white text: "Plant Sales, Door Prizes, Raffle (including demo tree), Experienced Help with Trees Purchased, Refreshments and much, much more." Below the banner, it says "\$5 per person entry fee for Bonsai Show & Museum". A small red logo is in the bottom right corner.

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.

Mar 14 – 15, Oakland, Bay Area Bonsai Associates: 34th Annual Bonsai Exhibition at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue. Show hours are Saturday 5 – 9 PM and Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM. Demonstrations by Matt Reel at 6:30 PM Saturday, followed by a raffle of the demonstration tree. Continuous plant sale including bonsai related items (pots, tools, soils, wires, books, etc.) both days. Matt Reel has studied bonsai in Japan for 8 years under Shinji Suzuki. Admission is free. Parking fee to the Lakeside Garden Center is required during the park hours. For more information, please contact Bob Gould at (925) 935-1914.

Mar 18 – 22 San Mateo, Bonsai Society of San Francisco: Annual Bonsai Exhibit at the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show, San Mateo County Event Center, 1346 Saratoga Drive. Show hours Wednesday – Saturday 10 AM – 7 PM, and Sunday 10 AM – 6 PM. There will be demonstrations and trees for sale. For more information about the club, visit www.bssf.org. For group and early-bird ticket information to the Flower and Garden Show, visit <http://sfgardenshow.com>.

Mar 28 – 29, Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz Bonsai Kai: 27th Annual Show at the Museum of Art & History, 705 Front Street, 10 AM – 5 PM with demonstration at 2 PM (demonstrator TBA at a later date) both days. Raffle drawing for demonstration tree and trees especially prepared by club members are part of the raffle each day. Sales area include vendor and member trees, pots, and other related bonsai items. Admission price to museum includes entry to bonsai show/demo and complementary coffee, tea and

cookies. For more information contact Marc Shaw at marcshaw@sbcglobal.net.

Mar 28 – 29, San Jose, San Jose Betsuin Bonsai Club: 45th Annual Bonsai Exhibition at San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, 640 North Fifth Street. Hours are Noon – 5 PM Saturday and 11 AM – 4 PM Sunday with demonstrations at 1 PM on both days by club members headed by Dr. Seiji Shiba. A benefit drawing will be held at each demo conclusion. Styled and pre-styled trees will be offered for sale. For more information, visit www.gsbf-bonsai.org/sjbonsai/ or email Ken Azuma at kennethazuma@sbcglobal.net.

April 11, 12 – Sacramento, American Bonsai Association, Sacramento's 56th Annual Spring Show will be held at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center in McKinley Park, 3330 McKinley Blvd, Sacramento, CA. Open Saturday: 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM, and Sunday: 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Headliner Dan Robinson, known as '*The Picasso of Bonsai*', will demonstrate his skill for adding a dose of antiquity to a tree's soul. Demonstrations will be held on both Saturday and Sunday beginning at 1:30 PM. The club is offering a member-led, hands-on beginner workshop Sunday morning. Those interested may sign up Saturday, or Sunday before 10:00. The show will feature a large member and vendor sales area with a daily silent auction of quality bonsai and accessories. Benefit drawings will be held each day after the demonstration to include the demonstration tree and other trees and

bonsai-related items. For more information visit <http://www.abasbonsai.org/>

April 18, 2015 Napa, Napa Valley Bonsai Club: Annual Show at the Napa Senior Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Hours are 11 AM – 4 PM with demonstrations at 2 PM with Jonas Dupuich. Vendors, Silent Auction and raffle of demo tree. Huge outdoor sales area with trees, pots, and bonsai related items. For more information please visit www.nvbonsai.org.

April 18 – 19, Modesto, California Modesto Bonsai Club: 34th Annual Spring Show and Exhibit, Park Inn by Radisson, 1720 Sisk Rd. Show hours are Saturday 11 AM – 5 PM and Sunday 11 AM – 4 PM with demonstration by Sam Adina at 2 PM both days. Free admission. Exhibit, Raffle, Beginners Workshops and more!! Sales of plants, pots and other bonsai items both days (with auction immediately following demo). For more information contact Peter Camarena at (209) 529-1759.

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
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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

Mar 11 Pines – Gordon Deeg
Mar 22 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Don Meeker
April 8 Tips, Traps and Tricks
April 26 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
May 13 Bunjin – Bill Castellon
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 – 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

April Field Trip
Oct 10-11 Fall Show – Ryan Nichols
