



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

November Meeting: November 11, 2015

President's Note

2015 is nearly over and soon our deciduous trees will drop their leaves, and all our trees will go dormant over the winter. But rest assured 2016 is planned to be just as exciting as this year's list of speakers and headliners.

I would like to thank all of our club members who supported our show last month and made it a great event. From food, to set-up, to security, to tear-down the club members stepped forward and helped any way they could.

Our November show highlights Mike Pistello and the Juniper Jubilee. Mike will work on a Juniper which will be raffled at the end of the meeting. Please bring your Junipers as well for "show and tell".

December brings us to the holiday get together and a chance to reflect on 2015. It continues to be a great year.

Michael

November Meeting

The November meeting is our annual Juniper Jubilee and Mike Pistello will officiate by demonstrating how to create a splendid bonsai tree from juniper starting material. Mike has been active as a bonsai artist for many years. His presentation promises to be an opportunity for Mike not only to share with us his considerable skill as a fine bonsai artist, but also his ability to communicate the reasons for what he is doing and why.

This meeting will be our fourth annual Juniper Jubilee which focuses on the humble juniper. Many of us started our journey in bonsai with a small juniper because they are a good introduction to the care and management of bonsai. Junipers are very forgiving of our misguided attempts to learn how to grow bonsai. They are also amenable to being twisted and shaped, for better or worse, as we learn how to style bonsai trees. The humble junipers we start with can become spectacular bonsai in time, and this metamorphosis, as well as their resiliency to abuse, makes them deserving of a special night.



Come join us in the celebration. You can add to the festivities by bringing one of your junipers to the show-and-tell table.

Once again, an appeal is made to those of us who enjoy refreshments at the meetings to bring something. It is your turn. A refreshment sign up list for future meetings will be available at this meeting.

Wire Workshop

EBBS is sponsoring a workshop on wiring on November 21 at the bonsai garden. The workshop is led by John Doig who is not only a talented bonsai artist, but also an excellent teacher. This is a repeat of a workshop he presented to EBBS last year which received enthusiastic reviews from all the participants. There is only one opening left for the workshop, so there is still a chance to participate if you haven't already signed up, but don't delay since this remaining spot will go fast. If you miss out, all is not completely lost. Contact John Nackley at jnackley@gmail.com to be placed on the waiting list in case of a last minute cancellation.

EBBS is pleased to offer this workshop because proper wiring technique is probably the most important skill needed for budding bonsai artists. It is the most important way to change the direction of branches when we want to improve the style of our trees.

The club hopes to offer similar workshops on basic bonsai skills in the future.

December Meeting

The December meeting is our annual holiday dinner which will be held on our regular meeting day, December 9. Circle this date on your calendar as the holiday dinner is the festive climax of the year. It is a potluck dinner with the club furnishing ham and turkey for the main course and beverages. Members bring side dishes and trimmings. Last year Michael Hylton provided the entertainment for the evening by assembling a spectacular program of images from our recent show, as well as other images taken throughout the year. We are indeed fortunate that Michael has offered to present a similar program this year.



Then early Sat morning items for the plant sale start coming in, raffle tickets come out ready for sale, breakfast is set up in the kitchen with coffee, finishing touches are put on and the doors open! I spent the morning at the welcome desk mostly working on items for the plant sale. After lunch, it was on to the workshop. I was scared to attend the workshop as I assumed that I should be much more advanced to benefit from the help and instruction. Nothing could be further from the truth! The workshop was excellent. Ryan Nichols is a true teacher, and, with the expert help of Mike Pistello, four club members including myself got 3 full hours of suggestions, theory and hands-on help with our trees. This is a wonderful way to learn and well worth the \$50 price tag. I did not feel intimidated at all! Then before I knew it, the doors where closing at the end of the first day.



You are aware of the many fine people who comprise the membership of EBBS. If you looked at the splendid bonsai exhibited at the recent show, you also are aware that there are many fine bonsai artists in our midst. What you may not know is that in the club there are many superb cooks, and the holiday dinner is where they showcase their skills. The great food, fellowship, and Michael's program will make the evening special. See you there!

Show

Lisa Harper shared her impressions of our October show:

This was my second show since I have been a member of EBBS and it was thrilling for me! First, there is the social camaraderie that starts Friday night with the massive job of setting up all the tables, taping on the skirts, cutting and folding the blue table top papers, and setting up the chairs and tables for the demo, workshop and the plant sale. Then we have a wonderful pizza dinner all together! For me, it is thrilling to see the empty room transform into a serene, lovely space full of stunning trees. With all the pots shined up and every leaf in place, all the trees, even my beginner ones, looked like masterpieces.



Sunday also seemed like a whirlwind! I arrived a little late, and saw part of the show before the demonstration in the afternoon. The demonstration, like the workshop, was excellent. Ryan, assisted by Mike Pistello, transformed a large, informal upright black pine into a very interesting bunjin in just three hours! All the while, Ryan gave us expert advice on everything from tools, raffia use, branch bending, and much more. Like the workshop, the demonstration was an excellent way for me to learn more about bonsai.

During the weekend, I talked to both vendors, Jim Gremel from whom I finally bought my first copper wire, at the urging of Ryan during the workshop, and Jerry Braswell from whom I bought my first stone, and ordered

a mame stand. I barely had time to ponder each tree in the show! It was a really lovely weekend!

Thanks to all:



Our show headliner, Ryan Nichols, led a fine critique of the show on Sunday morning. His demonstration on a black pine was very well received and his workshop was a valuable experience for all who attended. While he is relatively new to the bonsai scene, the high quality job he did for EBBS makes it clear that we will be hearing much more about him in the future.

Many people deserve recognition for their efforts to make the show a success. First and foremost on the list are the two co-chairs of the show, Michael Hylton and Suzanne Muller. Michael's major contribution was to publicize the show which included posting our show on several social networking sites. As a result, much of his effort was out of the public view but none the less critical to the success of the show. Suzanne was responsible for organizing the staffing of the show and being sure that all the various functions had the necessary volunteer help. And what a great job she did to make it all run smoothly. We all owe both Michael and Suzanne a big thank you for all their hard work to make the show a success.

Special thanks are due to all the committee chairs who had the job of organizing and supervising volunteers. It was particularly gratifying to see that many of the committee chairs were filled by relatively new members of the club. Without the emergence of new leaders, the club would wither and die as older members drop out. The willingness of these people to take on responsibility bodes well for the future of the club.

Last, but by no means least, thanks to all who volunteered to help with the show. "It couldn't have happened without you" may be a bit trite, but none the less is certainly true. Willing help is what makes it all go smoothly.

A special thanks to Dennis Hawkins who spearheaded the plant sales. Thanks also go to Tim Kong who is not currently a member of EBBS. He donated food and two pots for the silent auction.

Each year the show is a major financial venture for the club. Major expenses are the cost of the headliner

and food. Income is derived from plant sales, the silent auction, raffle of the demonstration tree and workshop fees. In the past, some shows did not meet expenses. Our treasurer, Pat Cahill, is broadly smiling because this show was financially very successful.

Mention must be made about three commercial companies who made donations to our show. These people went out of their way to support our show and we should go out of our way to support them. Trader Joes and Azimendi's Bakery, both on Lakeshore in Oakland, offered groceries and pastries. Moraga Garden Nursery, 1400 Moraga Road, Moraga donated plants. The nursery has donated items to our show for the past several years and deserves a very special thank you. If you visit the nursery, please take a moment to express our appreciation for their continued support.

If you took pictures at our bonsai show, please share them with Michael so he can incorporate some of them in December's year-in-review program. You can email pictures directly to Michael at mhilton@rocketmail.com.

Lisa Harper

This month the spotlight is on Lisa Harper. Lisa is a relatively new member to EBBS but has already made significant contributions to the club. She is an active member of the board of directors of the club and has spearheaded a search for an improved logo for the club. The current one has a technical problem which limits its use, particularly when enlarged.

Our show always has a need for volunteers to coordinate the various activities of the show and Lisa played a major role. We all owe Lisa a big thank you for her enthusiasm and willingness to take on the tough problems that need solutions. She sets a fine example for the rest of us.

Trust Your Eye

The recent show featured a display of tokonomas in the center of the room. These are the displays by one exhibitor on a single table. Most of the people who prepared a tokonoma display have considerable experience as bonsai growers. The trees featured are generally quite big and are splendid examples of trees that have been grown as bonsai for many years. While these trees are an inspiration for us all, they can be intimidating to new members of the club. Tokonoma displays are something we all can participate in, regardless of our experience level. The club would like to encourage everyone to try their hand at creating a tokonoma display for our show next year. It actually can be a lot of fun as well as a very satisfying experience.

First of all, what are tokonomas anyway? Surprisingly their use predates bonsai itself. In the fourteenth century in Japan the military took over the government from the hereditary rulers. As nouveau riche, they wanted the biggest and swankiest palaces possible to impress everyone. It turns out that the biggest buildings of the time were the Buddhist temples, so the temples served as models for the kind of building that they wanted.

In the temples, the head priest had a small alcove where he stored religious items such as texts. The new rulers incorporated these alcoves into their buildings and used them to display fine ceramics as art. As time went by someone decided that it would be cool to put some flowers in the ceramic vases, and the art of flower arranging was born. It was only much later that bonsai were incorporated in the tokonomas.

To this day, high class residences in Japan incorporate tokonomas which are alcoves set aside from the rest of the house to display art objects. The use of a separate table in a current bonsai show for an individual tokonoma display sets the display apart from all else that is going on in the show. Further, the display is the sole creation of the exhibiter.



We are all aware that when we display a bonsai tree in a show we are really presenting a single composition consisting of a tree, pot and stand. The choice of the pot and the stand is dictated by the style of the tree which limits the acceptable choices.

The tokonoma display takes us one step farther in that it is a composition consisting not only of a tree, pot and stand but also usually two more items and the total display is viewed as a single composition. Besides the tree, scrolls, accent plants, stones and occasionally metal sculptures of animals such as crickets and turtles can be used to complete the composition. Two popular choices in our recent show were the tree, a stone and an accent plant, and the tree, a scroll and an accent plant. It is important to note that while the principal focal point of the display is the tree, the total composition is where the value of the display lies. Simply having a spectacular tree in the tokonoma does not guarantee that the total display merits you attention. As a matter of fact, some of the most effective displays consist of a relatively modest tree and a thoughtful choice of companion accessories.

So how do you go about choosing items for a tokonoma? The items should be selected so that nothing totally dominates the composition in size or color. Examples of things to avoid are a very large stone which would compete with the size of the tree. Another example to avoid might be a scroll with a lot of

very bright colors which would draw your eye away from the rest of the composition. In a word, the selected items in the display should have balance meaning that no single item stands out to catch your eye. If you are considering a tokonoma display for our show next year simply striving for a balanced presentation where the items work together in size and color will take you a long way to an effective display.

The next step in you evolution as a tokonoma artist is to incorporate the time of year and place in your display. All the items should reflect the same season. For example, an accent plant of dried grass signifying fall or winter does not go with a bonsai tree in full bloom signifying spring, nor would a scroll of ducks flying over a marsh with storm clouds in the background. The accent plant should reflect where the bonsai tree grows. As an example, collected junipers grow in dry high desert environments, and a fern which usually grows in a moist environment, would not be an appropriate accent plant.

There are several books in our library which show tokonoma displays and can serve as a good place to start for examples of good displays. Another very valuable resource is other bonsai shows in the area where you can see examples of tokonoma displays. Spend a moment looking at each display and ask yourself if it is balanced in that you see the whole display and your eye is not drawn to a single item because of, for example, an overly bright color. Next, ask yourself if the display represents a uniform time and place. Do the items show a single season? Finally, do the items appear to all reflect a single environment?

If you have looked critically at tokonoma displays you will be in the position of creating a fine display at our next show. The important thing is to trust your eye. It is not that hard to make a fine display and it is a lot of fun. The rest of us look forward to seeing your display next year.

Bonsai Calendar

- Sun – Move deciduous trees into full sun. Rotate all trees at least once a month.
- Watering – Adjust watering for winter.
- Fertilizing – Use low or zero nitrogen fertilizers.
- Repotting – Best done when plants begin their dormant period and continuing warmth encourages root development, often this month.
- Styling/Pruning – Shape both evergreens and deciduous trees.
- Insect and disease control – Remove dead plant material. Watch for and treat insect infestations.
- Propagating/Collecting – Continue root cuttings.

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

Roster Updates

We have two new members in the club. Please add the following people to your roster:

Patricia Ortiz and Roberto Prado at (650) 455-8918 and (415) 745-2570. Their e-mail address is patricia.ortiz23@gmail.com.

Please introduce yourselves to them to at our next club meeting.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College

Instruction is in the form of workshops and are a splendid opportunity to learn 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 and are held at 7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month when the college is in session. The meetings are in the Landscape Horticulture Building at Merritt College which is located in the Oakland hills off Redwood Road. The workshops are free, except for a

small parking fee. Leading the workshops are two members of EBBS, Randall Lee and Bill Castellon. Interested parties should contact Randall at 510-846-0841 or Bill at 510-569-0841 for more information and to confirm meeting dates which may be changed during the holiday season.

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.

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

Nov 11 Juniper Jubilee – Mike Pistello

Nov 22 BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould

Dec 9 Holiday Dinner

Special Events

Nov 21 Wire Workshop – John Doig
