



The Tree Shrinker

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East Bay Bonsai Society

March Meeting:

April 13, 2016 @ 7:30 p.m.

President's Note

We are now well into 2016 and have had great meetings. April will bring us Bob, Polly and Tom talking about suiseki, something they know quite a lot about, but probably for most of us we are not as familiar with. Expect we can all learn a lot. Then we have Michael Bell, blogger about Japanese Bonsai Pots, who will instill us with his vast knowledge. We also have our annual field trip to Lone Pine Gardens where we can increase the number of our bonsai trees through their vast inventory (plus succulents).

Michael

April Meeting

The April meeting will feature the suiseki presentation that was originally planned for the March meeting but was switched to April due to a conflict with Peter Tea's schedule. The program on suiseki, the Japanese art of stone appreciation, will feature our very own Bob Gould, Polly Gould and Tom Colby. Suiseki have very much in common with bonsai

since they both are representations of nature, and many bonsai shows feature suiseki either as part of a tokonoma display or displayed alone. The program will cover what suiseki are all about as well as the collection and display of stones. There will be a number of stones featured in the presentation both from Japan and collected in northern California. Thanks in advance to Wendy Quan and Lynn Hollander for offering to provide refreshments for the meeting.



May Meeting

The May meeting will feature a presentation by Michael Ryan on pots. Michael will focus on what constitutes a superior pot, how it is made and who the best producers are. EBBS has had programs in the past on how to match your tree with a pot, but has never had a program devoted to the pot itself. The program will be a wonderful opportunity for us all to learn about pots, and should leave us better prepared to recognize and appreciate the best quality pots for our trees.

Also remember that an hour prior to the meeting you can sign up and bring your bonsai pots for Michael to help critique, identify the potter, and provide an estimated value. There are still open slots and the cost is \$35 divided by the number of participants. Please just bring enough pots so everyone can have their pots looked at within the hour.

March Meeting

Peter Tea presented a program on juniper structure development. His view is that we frequently focus on the silhouette of the tree rather than on the basic structure of the branches. He thinks that this is a big mistake because the beauty of the tree is in the branches, and if they are not well developed, the tree can never reach its full potential. The pruning and wiring of the tree that you do to develop the branches is for the future development of the tree rather than for the immediate present. The work that you do on your tree is not supposed to make the tree look good when you finish, but will pay off in the future.

Before any work can be done on the tree it must be in good health. Peter demonstrated how to assess the health of your juniper by looking at the small branches in the pads. They should be growing upright. If they are limp, delay work until the tree returns to good health. Sunlight and proper fertilization are both very important in maintaining the health of junipers.

Peter does not recommend scheduling a particular time of the year to work on your junipers. Work is keyed to the growth rate of the tree. The tree must have time to recover from what happened the last time you worked on it. Shimpaku junipers grow steadily but not superfast, and depending on how your tree is growing, it is possible

to work on it twice a year. In contrast, superfast growers such as trident maples can be worked on several times each year. California junipers grow naturally much slower and once a year may be too often. If you repotted the tree, you should delay wiring and pruning for a year.

There are three criteria that must be met before you work on your tree. The tree must be bushy, meaning that it is growing vigorously. The tree must have runners growing from the ends of the branches. And the foliage must be hardened off. When these features are met, work can be done on the tree. Note that Peter does not go by the calendar, and this work can occur anytime during the year.

There are some seasonal condescension's that are made. After the tree has been worked on in the middle of the hot summer, the tree should be placed in the shade for a couple of weeks to allow the tree to recover. In winter if the weather is very cold, delay the work until slightly warmer temperatures return. If you repot late in the spring, say March, the tree will grow slowly and more time is needed for the tree to be ready for the next step. Peter was adamant that monitoring when you work on a tree contributes to the health of the tree, and this is far more important than styling considerations.

Once the tree is ready for your attention how do you proceed? The first step is to clean the tree. All the weak branchlets are removed as they are an energy drain on the tree and will not develop into sturdy branches in the future. Peter showed the difference between branches to remove and branches to keep. The good ones are bushy at the tips, whereas the weak ones are not and these are the ones to take off. Next you should remove branches that are not in the design of the tree. Finally, the third step is to decide which branches should be wired and which branches should be allowed to grow.

The best presentation of your tree is to have branches of varying thickness which gives a more natural look to the tree. Management of the branches of your tree requires an understanding that the energy in the branch is at the growing tip. Changing the branch is accomplished by redirecting this energy. A close look at the management of branches shows that there are several possibilities and each should be treated differently depending on what you want to do with the branch.

If you simply want a longer branch as part of your design of the tree, then remove some of the smaller side branches close to the trunk. This allows all of the energy to be focused on the growing end of the branch. If you want a thicker branch, let it grow for a year and then cut it back to the desired length. If you want to have the branch to be the basis for a pad, then the branch must be cut close to the trunk, but leave at least two small side branches. If the branch is a thick one, a major reduction in branch length would be stressful to the tree and best accomplished in several steps in which the branch is reduced incrementally. After each reduction you should carefully monitor how the tree

responds. You may proceed only when the tree has returned to robust good health. Each reduction will focus the energy of the tree into growing the remaining side branches into new heavy branches.

If you want to shorten the branch of a tree which is rapidly growing such as a maple and you cut the branch back to where you want a fork to occur, the new branches will grow vigorously and will have long internodes. To avoid this, cut the branch near the growing tip. This will weaken the growth of the branch and the new growth will be a bit less vigorous. This step needs to be repeated over time. When the branch is finally reduced to the desired length, you will have a shortened branch with side branches with short internodes.



Pads can be developed on your tree by using branch management techniques. If you cut a branch back to two remaining side branches, the side branches will grow into two heavy branches. If you allow these branches to grow and then cut them back to side branches, again each will produce two new branches. In this way a single branch will produce a fork and each of these in turn will fork producing a total of four new branches. Repeating this procedure several times will produce in a short time a pad with many branches. In fact, the pad can become so thick that weaker branches will die. The pad should be thinned so this does not happen. The best way to study the structure of the pad is to look underneath the tree. When you do notice where the thickest branch in the pad is located, it should be positioned into the center of the pad. The structures of the pads greatly influence the look of the tree and should be developed with care. Pads should be uniform in thickness and shape throughout the tree. Thin pads give the tree a stiff look whereas thick pads give the tree a softer look.

The program presented by Peter gave the members a very different and important understanding of how to manage their trees. Especially noteworthy was the focus on the health of the tree and that whatever we do

in the form of wiring and pruning should only be done with the overall health of the tree in mind.

Field Trip

Circle Saturday, May 7, on your calendar. That is the date that EBBS will sponsor a field trip to Lone Pine Gardens. Lone Pine is one of the largest bonsai nurseries in the country and is located in Sebastopol, about 75 miles north of the bay area. They feature trees all the way from inexpensive starter plants to finished bonsai. Lone Pine is also a prime source of accent plants. The trip is a special opportunity for the newest members of the society to see and select plants to start their collection. There will be lots of advice available from more experienced members to help these folks with their selections.



EBBS has organized field trips to Lone Pine for the last several years and all that have participated have said that they have had a good time. Most have returned home with significant additions to their bonsai collection. The Prices, who operate the nursery, have always been gracious hosts.

Lone Pine Gardens is located at 6450 Lone Pine Road in Sebastopol. There is an excellent web site, www.lonepinegardens.com, which gives a preview of the treat that you have in store for you. To reach the nursery, travel north on Highway 101 to the Cotati/Sebastopol exit. Turn left toward Sebastopol onto the old Gravenstein Highway and proceed about 9 miles to Lone Pine Road on the left. Turn onto Lone Pine Road and the nursery is located on the right. If lost, the nursery phone number is 707-823-5024. The web site also has detailed driving instructions.

The plan is to meet at the nursery at 11:00 for time to browse all the wonderful plants for sale, followed by lunch on the nursery grounds where you may enjoy the picnic lunch you have brought. It is a fun trip and there is a lot to see even if you are not interested in adding to your bonsai collection. Save the date!

Suiseki Show at the Oakland museum

If the April program on suiseki sparks your interest in these stones, there is a unique show at the Oakland Museum that you should see if you haven't already done so. It is an opportunity to see many outstanding suiseki stones presented in an unusual way. The show is entitled **Found Art** and attempts to show suiseki in a fine art setting. Stones on display are breath taking and they are presented in an excellent setting augmented with beautiful lighting. Several of the stones are owned by our very own Bob and Polly Gould who also participated in the show set up.

The show is scheduled to run only until the end of April so time to see it is running out. A display of the superior quality stones found in this exhibit is a splendid opportunity to develop an appreciation for the beauty of stones and should not be missed.

Japanese Apprenticeship

Kathy Shaner presented a program for the February meeting on the styling of a hornbeam and as part of the advertisement of the program it was stated that she had completed a course of study with a Japanese master. This was not a casual pleasure trip, but amounted to serving a five-year apprenticeship in Japan. At the time she started, the early 1990's, this was noteworthy because she was the first American to do so. Since Kathy's stay in Japan there has been a slow trickle of other Americans going to Japan to study bonsai with Japanese masters which includes most recently Peter Tea. His blog about his activities when he was there indicated that his experience was similar to Kathy's

While most of us will not go to Japan to study the art of bonsai, it is of interest to learn what the life of an apprentice there is really like. We may have visions of being able to frolic among extraordinary bonsai, but Kathy presents a view of apprenticeship that is sobering. Kathy wrote an article for the April-May issue of Golden Statements in 1993 while she was in Japan entitled "**For Apprenticeship Dreamers: An Open Letter to Hopefuls of Japanese Bonsai Study**" which gives details of her experiences. Her comments mirror those of other people who have more recently gone to Japan as apprentices. Below are excerpts from her article.



"If you do not speak Japanese now, go to night school for at least a year. Without being able to converse easily with your sensei much information is lost. It is not fair to your hosts and much more difficult all around.

You are going over as an apprentice to be a businessman. This is not going to be a trip for a hobbyist that has time to spend catering to their wants. Be prepared to work long, hard hours in any weather. You will work most of the winter with fingers that are stiff and numb from the cold with no time or way to warm them. Many times you will be working in wet clothes summer and winter.

Do you take time off from work when you are sick? You work here, everyone does.

Do you now complain at work about something you think is unfair, or dislike putting in extra time? You can't complain here—and it is all their time. No pay, no overtime bonuses.

You must be able to lift many heavy objects, and lift them carefully. Two people lifts in the states are carried by one here, unless it's a very expensive pot. (Some pots cost upwards of \$9,000.) You might work on a tree that cost as much as your house.

Road trips to clients are a real mixed bag. The pressure is great. There is a time limit at clients' homes and you must work fast and accurately. This is not a time to make mistakes. Many times the working conditions are cramped or difficult at best.

At the workshop you find that there are no instructions for the first hour or two. You must be a self-starter and know instinctively what needs to be done, or what they want done.

Much information is gathered by observation and common sense. By observation I do not mean sitting around watching your teacher work. This is not a Convention demonstration or workshop. “

Having read Kathy's comments, it is clear that her vast knowledge about bonsai was hard won. One would wonder why one would knowingly expose themselves to such a daunting experience. Her concluding remarks provide an elegant answer to this question.

“If you think you can take it and lots more and do it for a year (less would not be fair to your hosts and will leave you with big gaps in your bonsai care information) and your life currently exists for bonsai, there is no better place to be! I would do it again knowing now even what was ahead.”

Bonsai instruction at Merritt College

Instruction is in the form of workshops and is a splendid opportunity to learn 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 workshops are open to all experience levels and are usually 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, Bill Castellon and Randal Lee. You can contact Bill at 510-569-8003 or Randall at 510-846-0841.



Bonsai Calendar

- Watering – Start regular watering schedule as temperature rises; Do not over-water repotted plants
- Fertilizing – Do not feed deciduous trees Fertilize evergreens and conifers. Don't feed repotted trees until a month after repotting.
- Repotting – Repot pines, camellias, cryptomeria, juniper, crape myrtle, willow, spruce, fir, cypress and redwood
- Styling/Pruning – Wire evergreens. Pinch junipers. Trim back branches on non-flowering, non-fruiting deciduous trees. Decandle Monterey pines, red pines, and cork-barked black pines.
- Graft – Japanese maples, hornbeam, redbud, beech, ginkgo, and wisteria
- 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.

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.

NOW THROUGH – APRIL 24TH, Oakland, Suiseki Society and San Francisco Suiseki Kai: are featured with the work of sculptor Jedediah Caesar at *Unearthed: Found + Made*, a new exhibition at the Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak Street. The Suiseki, all found in California, share a process with Caesar who imitates geological processes in making his sculptures, sometimes encasing found objects from the urban environment in clear or colored resin. For further information go to <http://museumca.org/exhibit/unearthed-found-made>

April 9 – 10, Sacramento, American Bonsai Association, Sacramento: 57th Annual Bonsai Show at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Show hours are Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM, with demonstration each day at 1:30 PM by American bonsai artist, Peter Tea. Beginner's workshop Sunday, 10 AM; daily raffle includes the demonstration tree; large vendor and member sales area. For more information, contact Renee Seely (916) 929-2106, breadcrust@comcast.net or visit our website <http://abasbonsai.org>.

April 16 – 17, Fresno, *Kōen-nai no Bonsai (Bonsai in the Park)* a fundraiser to benefit the GSBF Clark Bonsai Collection at the Shinzen Friendship Garden in Woodward Park. Hours are Saturday 9:30 AM – 5:30 PM and Sunday 9:30 AM – 4:30 PM with demonstrations by Kenji Miyata, Nippon Bonsai Association certified Bonsai Masters (Saturday), and David Nguy (Sunday) with auction of the tree following each demonstration. Huge bonsai auction on both the 16th and 17th of over 60 trees including the Ray Theime's Bonsai Collection along with Bonsai and pre-Bonsai from local and state wide artists. Sale of plants and Bonsai materials each day. Toko-Kazaru Bonsai Display Competition held during event with prize money awarded. For more information visit clarkbonsaicollection.com or contact Bob Hilvers at bonsaigui@comcast.net or (559) 909-1051.

April 24, Watsonville, Watsonville Bonsai Club: 43rd Annual Bonsai Exhibit held at the Watsonville Buddhist Temple, 423 Bridge St., Watsonville, California. Over 50 outstanding bonsai, large and small, young and old, will be on display from 10 AM – 4 PM, with a demonstration by award winning Bonsai Master Katsumi Kinoshita at 1:30 PM. A raffle of bonsai items, plants and the demo tree will follow. Tea & cookies will be served. Plenty of parking for vehicles of all sizes; even for group outings. A vendor will be available to sate your plant appetite for bonsai or otherwise. For more information contact Don White at (831) 724-9283 or whiteslib@aol.com

April 30 – May 1, Palo Alto, Kusamura Bonsai Club: 56th Annual Show, Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road. Show hours are Saturday, Noon – 5 PM, and Sunday 11 AM – 5 PM with demonstrations at 1:30 PM each day. Free admission. Bonsai pots and trees for sale, as well as other bonsai-related items. For more information visit www.kusamurabonsai.org.

May 7, Napa, Napa Valley Bonsai Club 38th Annual Show at Napa Senior Center, 1500 Jefferson St. Show hours are 11 AM to 4 PM, with demonstration by Jonas Dupwuch at 1 PM. Display, Silent auction, Sales, and Vendors areas.

May 7 & 8, Sacramento, Sacramento Bonsai Club: 70th Annual Bonsai & Suiseki Show at the Buddhist Church of Sacramento, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Show hours are Noon – 5 PM on Saturday and 10 AM – 4 PM on Sunday with demonstration at 2 PM each day. Demonstration by the well-known bonsai artist Sam Adina, followed by the demo raffle and more prizes. Free Admission. For more information contact: Gary Judd (916) 622-8048.

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 2016
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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.

Website for Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt: <http://www.gsbf-bonsai.org/lake-merritt/NewHome.html>

Meeting **Program**

Apr 13	Suiseki – Tom Colby, Bob and Polly Gould
Apr 24	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
May 11	Bonsai Pots – Michael Ryan
May 22	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Don Meeker
June 8	Pines – Rick Trumm
June 26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
July 13	EBBS Auction
July 24	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould
Aug 10	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
Sept 14	tbd
Sept 25	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
Oct 23	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Don Meeker
Nov 9	tbd
Nov 27	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Dec 14	Holiday Party

Special Events

Aug 20	Potluck
Oct 8-9	Show