



# The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



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## East Bay Bonsai Society

**January Meeting:** January 13, 2016 @ 7:30 p.m.

### **President's Note**

2015 is behind us and it's now time to look forward to 2016. Before we put 2015 to bed, I want to take this time to thank all of the member volunteers who have contributed one way or another. A thank you goes to those who present at our monthly club meetings, help during our show, auction and holiday party, those who set up and take down the tables and chairs at each meeting, and those that bring things to eat and drink at our monthly meetings.

Thanks especially go to Bob Gould, who has tirelessly helped with just about everything and, without his guidance, EBBS wouldn't be what it is today. Thanks to Beverly Martinez, who is joining the board and Roger Brady, who is stepping up to Vice President in 2016.

I look forward to another year of help from everyone to make 2016 as great as 2015.

Happy holidays and a good New Years!

Michael

### **January Meeting**

The January meeting will feature a presentation on deciduous trees by Jay MacDonald. He is particularly interested in deciduous trees and is expected to bring a number of trees from his collection for us to admire. He is adamant about using high levels of fertilizer and, judging by his trees, it really works. He is a high energy guy and his enthusiasm is infectious. We look forward to an evening of fun as well as an evening in which we learn the secrets needed to turn deciduous trees into fine bonsai.

Thanks in advance to Bill Castellon, Bev Martinez and Polly Gould for offering to provide refreshments.

### **February Meeting**

The February meeting will feature Kathy Shaner demonstrating her expertise on a hornbeam. Kathy spent five years in Japan as an apprentice to a renowned Japanese bonsai master. After her return to the United States she has traveled extensively teaching

the fine art of bonsai. Kathy feels that a single demonstration on a tree misses the element of how the tree changes over time. She would prefer to use a single tree for several demonstrations over a period of time to show how the tree responds to styling decisions. The tree that she will use for our demonstration was the subject of a demonstration last year, and then had a long way to go before it would be a fine bonsai. It will be interesting to see what has transpired over the year for the tree while in the hands of an accomplished master.

### **Holiday Potluck Dinner**

Our holiday potluck was a great success that was enjoyed by all who attended. The food brought by the attendees was extraordinary. EBBS is fortunate to have many fine cooks and they outdid themselves for this year's repast. We all owe many thanks to all who brought goodies for the potluck. You made the evening a special treat.



The high point of the evening was the presentation of two awards to deserving EBBS members. Bob Gould is retiring from the board of directors. He joined the society many years ago. In fact, it is rumored that it was in the Early Bronze Age when he joined. During his long involvement with EBBS he has served several times on

the board of directors, ever generous with his sage advice to the affairs at hand. For a number of years Bob has served as the interface between EBBS and the powers that be in the city, negotiating essentials such as room rental and supply of accessories such as tables for our show. Although Bob is a very patient man, at times his patience was tested. As an expression of gratitude for his many contributions to the society, the Board of Directors approved a donation to the curators fund at the bonsai garden in his honor. Thanks, Bob, for all you have done for EBBS.

The second award was the formal presentation of a beautiful Japanese print to Michael Hylton, our web master. The print had been awarded to EBBS by the Golden State Bonsai Federation for having the best web site of all the member clubs for 2015. The Board of Directors in turn awarded the print to Michael for his work on the web site. Life being what it is, it is nice to see the person actually doing the work getting the rewards from his efforts. Thanks, Michael. Your efforts are much appreciated by the society.

As is traditional at the holiday potluck, the officers for the coming year were introduced. Michael Hylton will continue as President. Roger Brady will serve as Vice President. Pat Cahill will be our treasurer and Lisa Harper will be our secretary. Board Members include Khary Dvorak-Ewell, Suzanne Muller, Janice Dilbeck, Beverly Martinez, Tom Colby and John Nackley. We are particularly fortunate that Janice Dilbeck will continue in her role as the crusading editor of our always entertaining newspaper, *The Tree Shrinker*.

The evening was capped off by a show of images of the club activities over the past year produced and directed by our very own Michael Hylton. He has done this for the past several years and always does an extraordinary job. The best judgment of the quality of his work is the reaction of the audience, and his show, again, captured the rapt attention of the audience. Thanks, Michael. You made the holiday potluck a special event.

### Free Lunch

On January 30 the East Bay Bonsai Society is offering a free lunch to all members at the Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt. What is more, the lunch will be catered by our very own master chef, John Nackley. The occasion is EBBS observing an obligation to perform service work each year to the garden. We will meet from 9:00 am to 12 pm to prepare trees for the mammoth bazaar fund raiser later in the month of February. Most of the preparation will be in the form of removing weeds from the trees and whatever else can be easily done to make the trees more salable. It promises to be a fun morning as well as a chance to work with some really nice trees. You may have heard that there is no such thing as a free lunch, but here is the exception to the rule. After our morning of fun in the sun we will all enjoy a free lunch. Mark your calendar for this heartwarming event.

### Suiseki Show

Suiseki are stones which illustrate the natural landscape, and they are very compatible with bonsai because bonsai are also an illustration of the natural world. Because both suiseki and bonsai have a common link to nature, stones are very welcome additions to the display of bonsai. There are two local clubs which specialize in the study of suiseki and they usually hold a show once or twice a year to display the stones. Other than seeing stones which occasionally appear at bonsai shows, the shows by these suiseki clubs are usually the only way to see them.



There is a unique show which just opened at the Oakland Museum and is an opportunity to see many stones presented in an unusual way. The show is entitled **Found Art** and attempts to show suiseki in a fine art setting. The stones on display are outstanding 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 until the end of April and is very much worth your while to visit. A display of the superior quality stones found in this exhibit is a splendid opportunity to learn about suiseki appreciation and should not be missed.

### Bonsai Show

There are a number of common questions that arise with people new to bonsai. What should my tree look like? I understand that one should bend branches, but where do I bend them to? If I put the tree in a show what should the display look like? Do I really need a stand for my tree? What kind of pot should I use for my tree? These are easy questions to ask but are hard to answer because each tree is different. Bonsai is an art and because of this there is no single answer for your tree. It is no wonder why newcomers are perplexed when they ask questions and are told that there is no single answer to their question.

There are a couple of ways out of this dilemma. One is to take your tree to a workshop where you learn

firsthand how to develop your tree by actually working on it. The second way is to attend shows where you can see examples of good trees. Spend a little time carefully examining each tree and ask yourself whether or not the artist has maximized the potential of the tree and if so, how did he do it?

On January 23 and 24, Bay Island Bonsai club will hold a show at the Oakland Garden Center. The hours are 10 am to 4 pm each day and admission is free. There will be all the usual stuff like an auction, vendor sale and sale of trees. Most importantly there will be a large number of bonsai trees on display. Members of the club spend a great deal of time developing their tree and the trees on display will all be examples of fine bonsai. The show will provide an opportunity for you to see many examples of what your tree might look like with time and study. Each tree will be displayed with careful attention to details like choice of pot and stand. This show can be a fine learning experience about how to manage all aspects of bonsai. Do plan to attend the show. Seeing a room full of well displayed fine bonsai can propel your interest in bonsai to new levels.

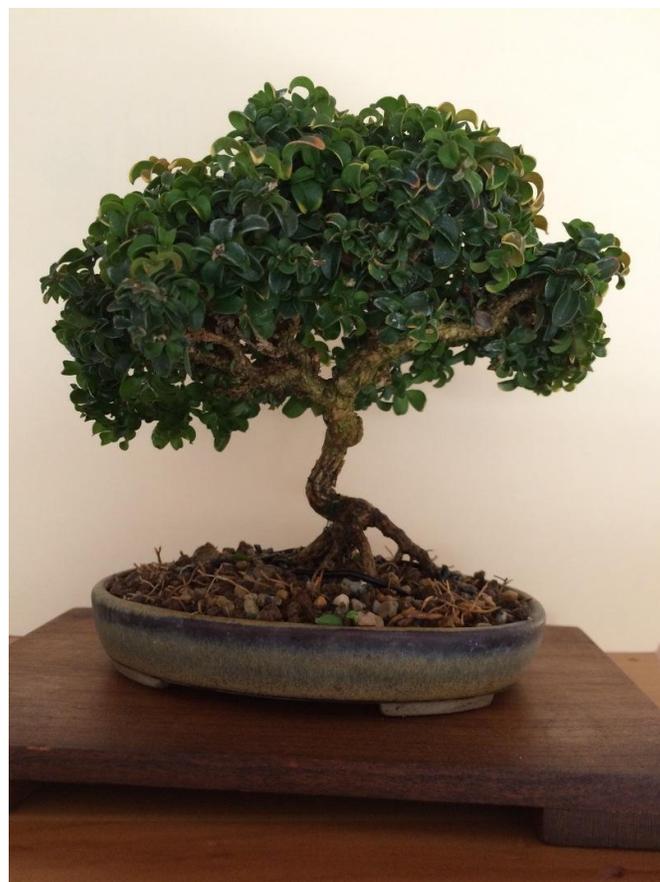
### **Boxwood**

Most of the trees that we grow as bonsai started life as a cutting or seed, were grown in nursery pots for a while, and then trained as bonsai. A few trees are grown as landscape trees, dug up, potted and then trained as bonsai. The big advantage of these trees is that by having been grown in the ground for many years, they can have massive trunks and thus show great age. The most commonly seen example of this kind of tree is the boxwood. Boxwoods are frequently used as hedge plants in landscape designs because they are accommodating plants that grow under a wide range of conditions, grow slowly, and are very long lived. Many of the boxwood trees that we see as bonsai are former hedge plants. These plants are usually inexpensive and can provide impressive bonsai.

One characteristic of boxwoods is that they have very hard wood which means that it is very hard to move old branches. Many times the landscape boxwoods have large branches that are difficult to incorporate into a good bonsai design and the only alternative for these branches is to reduce them to carved deadwood. When purchasing an old boxwood tree, look carefully at the trunk and main branches. Be sure that you understand that styling the tree can become an exercise in reducing the size of unwanted large branches by carving. Young branches can be readily wired, but in a couple of years the branch will be too hard to bend without breaking it, so you must think carefully where you want the branch to be situated in the future because moving it again later may be a problem.

Vigorously growing boxwoods tend to have straight new branches which are 3 or 4 inches long, and all along the branch the leaves grow in pairs. This gives the tree a rather straggly look. There are three ways to cope with this. The first and easiest way is to do nothing. Each of these branches will eventually sprout

side branches in time, but the process is slow and the side branches may be not quite where you want them. The second way is to cut the branch above the first two leaf pairs. The remaining branch will sprout side branches close to the trunk. These, in turn, can be reduced to two leaf pairs, and the foliage will become much tighter. You can speed up the ramification process even faster by the third approach which is a combination of pruning and defoliation in the spring when your tree is actively growing. First, cut off the branch near the growing tip end. Then leave the last couple of leaf pairs at the very end of the cut branch, but remove all the remaining leaves down toward the trunk. This will force growth of side branches. As with most defoliation processes your tree will look like a plucked chicken, but be of good heart. The defoliation will force the formation of several side branches and you can pick the ones that you want to keep. Your efforts will be rewarded by a much fuller looking tree.



A couple of comments about the care of boxwoods are in order. Boxwoods have very dense root balls and they grow best when they are repotted every couple of years to prevent the root ball from being totally impacted. In the wild, boxwoods are understory plants meaning that they grow in the shade of large trees. They remember this and do best in some shade. They can show their disgust in being placed in the hot sun by their leaves turning yellow.

Older boxwoods are usually available, are inexpensive and are easy to grow. They can be made into cool bonsai. If you do not yet have a boxwood tree or two in your collection, they are worth investigating.

### **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 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**

- Sun – Move all trees into full sun.
- Watering – Adjust watering for winter.
- Fertilizing – Use low or zero nitrogen fertilizers.
- Repotting – Generally, not the time for repotting.
- Styling/Pruning – Trimming should be minimal. OK to wire, but be careful of brittle foliage.
- Insect and disease control – Remove dead plant material. Apply dormant spray. Watch for and treat insect infestations.

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

### **Events by Others**

GSCBF'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.

January 1 – April 24, 2016 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>

January 23 – 24, Oakland, Bay Island Bonsai: Annual Bonsai Exhibit at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave. Hours 10 AM – 4 PM, Saturday and Sunday. Auction at 1 PM on Saturday, with preview at Noon. Workshop on Sunday open to the bonsai community. Guided tours of the exhibit Saturday and Sunday. Vendor sales, club sales, educational bonsai material for sale and a special pot sale this year. Entry to the exhibit is free, donations accepted. Learn more and register for the workshop by calling (510) 919-5042 or visit <http://bayislandbonsai.com/bib-annual-exhibit/>.

February 5 – 7, Santa Nella, California Shohin Seminar @ Hotel Mission de Oro Feb 5: Registration 10 AM – 5 PM with demonstrations from Noon – 6 PM, Exhibit and Vendor areas set-up 11 AM – 5 PM; everyone is invited to share their treasured Shohin Bonsai in the Exhibit. Feb 6: Exhibit opens for Registration, Viewing, Vendor Sales, Workshops, Raffle & Benefit Drawing 8 AM – 5 PM. Feb 7: Exhibit Open 9 AM – Noon with demonstrations, and business meeting. Registration Forms available on the website. Attendees who only want access to vendor and exhibit may purchase a day pass. For more information see our website: <http://www.calshohin.org/>, email: [calshohin@yahoo.com](mailto:calshohin@yahoo.com), or phone: Randi Keppeler (650) 598-0127.

### **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.

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<b>East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2016</b>
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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**

**Jan 13** Deciduous Trees – Jay Mac Donald  
**Jan 24** BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – JD Lin  
**Feb 10** Hornbeam raft, revisited – Kathy Shaner  
**Mar 9** Suiseki – Tom Colby, Bob and Polly Gould  
**Mar 27** BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley  
**Apr 13** Deciduous Trees Care and Culture – Peter Tea  
**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

**Special Events**

**Jan 30** EBBS Work at the Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt

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