



# The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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## East Bay Bonsai Society

### March Meeting:

March 9, 2016 @ 7:30 p.m.

### President's Note

2016 is shaping (pun intended) to be a great year with great presenters at upcoming club meetings, along with a host of other activities. In March we have our very own Bob and Polly Gould, and Tom Colby who will present on Suiseki. It will be great to learn more about Suiseki and the role they play in bonsai. In April, Peter Tea will present on the art of styling and refining a tree for bonsai. He will share some of his own trees to illustrate the principles of his presentation.

Also, if you haven't yet paid your 2016 dues, please remember to give it to Pat Cahill either via mail or at an upcoming meeting.

Michael

### March Program

The March program will feature a presentation on suiseki, the Japanese art of stone appreciation, by 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 singly. 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 Frank Puccio, Frank Yuhre and Patty Ortiz for offering to provide refreshments for the meeting.



### April Program

In April we will have a presentation by Peter Tea on the care and styling of a bonsai tree. Peter will bring several of his own trees which will serve as examples of points he will make in his discussion. Peter recently completed a multiyear apprenticeship in Japan, and while there, many of us enjoyed a series of blogs he posted on his activities. Before he left for Japan he presented several very well received demonstrations to EBBS. He is a very engaging speaker and his program should not be missed.

### February Program

The February program was a presentation by Kathy Shaner who demonstrated repotting and care of a hornbeam. She had used this same tree for a demonstration a year ago. At that time, the tree presented a severe challenge as bonsai material and Kathy focused on a discussion about what to look for in field grown material. About all she could do then was some preliminary branch movement. She kept the tree for a year during which she converted the tree to a raft style, and also did considerable work on refining the tree. She then brought the tree back to show what changes could be affected in a year, and also how quickly unpromising material could be converted into something special. Over the year, large cuts were well on their way to healing, and major branches which initially had grown together were fairly widely separated. Kathy also changed the upright tree to a raft style by laying the tree in its side.

The demonstration focused on removing the tree from a nursery container that it had grown in for the past year and planting it in a bonsai pot. Kathy carefully combed out the old potting soil to reveal the root structure. Some of the large roots that had been cut when the plant was dug up in the field had never sprouted new fine roots, so these were removed. Laying the tree on its side to convert it to a raft style presented a problem. Some of the large roots under the tree had to be removed to plant the tree level with the soil in the shallower bonsai pot. Over time, many more of the large roots should be removed to encourage the growth of finer secondary roots.



Once the tree had been successfully potted in the bonsai pot, Kathy wired most of the larger branches. She emphasized that hornbeams could wire scar easily and the scars could not be healed once formed. Scars are prevented by not leaving the wire on too long, and when the wire is initially applied, it should not be wrapped around the branch tightly. Wire that is applied loosely serves as a cage for the branch, and this is adequate for changing the direction of the branch.

In the future, the tree could be planted in an even shallower pot, and one with a dull ceramic surface would work well. A shiny surface would detract from the soft nature of the tree. An even better choice would be to plant the tree on a slab which would complement the raft style of the tree.

The changes on the hornbeam, not only during this demonstration but also what happened over the past year, showed what can be accomplished on even unpromising material by an artist with vision and time to bring about that vision.

### Dues

Those EBBS members who are familiar with the works of Shakespeare know that Julius Caesar had a little problem that occurred during 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 for the roster and will no longer receive the newsletter. Don't follow Caesar's example of the bad things that can happen in March by neglecting to pay your dues by the last day of March.

### Copper Wire

We spend a lot of time wiring our trees and arranging the branches just so, but we don't give much thought to the other end of the story. Over time the branch will grow and expand, but the wire does not stretch along with the branch, so the wire will cut into the branch. We need to remove the wire before this happens or else the wire will scar the branch. What happens when it is time to remove the wire? We really have two choices. The best way is to unwrap the wire from the branch in a single piece, reversing the procedure we used to put it on the branch. The other way is to cut the wire into small pieces with a wire cutter. The problem with this way is that we can leave small pieces on the branch, and these missed pieces can cut deeply into the branch over time.

If we have chosen to remove the wire in a single piece, what do we do with it? We can straighten it and reuse it on another tree in the future. Copper becomes harder when it is bent and so we are now dealing with much harder wire which is more difficult to use without breaking branches, so this is not a very good option. We can soften the wire by heating it with a propane torch, but this process is hard to control and is not worth the effort.

Since no practical method for reusing the removed copper wire is available, what do we do with it? The Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt collects used copper wire and resells it as scrap copper. The money received is a significant income for the garden.

Reusing aluminum wire suffers all the problems of copper wire. It also hardens when bent, although not to the extent that copper wire does. Aluminum wire can also be sold as scrap metal, but if you want to donate all your used wire to the garden, carefully separate aluminum wire from the copper.

Members can bring their used wire to our club meetings for disposal and Bob or John will transport it to the Garden for recycle.

Donating your used wire to the garden not only benefits the garden, but does not cost you anything. This is something we all should be doing.

### Thanks

We all owe a special thanks to members who bring in trees to the show and tell table. We are fortunate that every meeting features several noteworthy trees there for our enjoyment. Trees on the show and tell table provide a unique learning experience and are an important part of each meeting. It is an opportunity for the newer members to see fine quality bonsai up close. Further, it is the chance to ask the grower about the culture and styling of the tree. Even the most experienced members of our club have a few trees that for one reason or other do not grow well for them and

can benefit from words of wisdom from others who are successful with those particular trees.

Over the years, many of the trees showing up on the show and tell table are not commonly seen as bonsai and represent new possibilities for our collections. Best of all, we can enjoy the results of the owners' hard work by seeing some really cool bonsai.



The show and tell table is part of what makes our meetings special. By the way, if you haven't brought in trees to the show and tell table in the past, we invite you to do so. We all would like to see them and hear what you have been doing with your bonsai.

### Creating a Ginkgo Grove

What do you do when bonsai friends know you enjoy Ginkgo Biloba and they are downsizing their collections for various reasons? Recently during my repotting time I took inventory of my Ginkgo and realized that I had 17 growing in various pots at various stages of development. These plants had come from a special bonsai friend of mine and I enjoy their fall color, so I did not want to part with them.



I recently worked with Peter Tea at a workshop. I asked him, "Do you have any ideas of what to do with these 17 Ginkgoes?" In the back of my mind, I knew Peter would know what to do with my trees. We looked in my backyard for a deep pot and found one that I had recently purchased. We put a layer of  $\frac{1}{2}$  acadama,  $\frac{1}{4}$

hyuga, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  lava in the bottom of the pot, and then Peter made a little trellis out of chopsticks. (Ah, those visits to the Chinese restaurant are finally paying off). In goes the chopstick trellis and then he wired each of the trees on to the trellis to hold them in. It was nice that Bob Gould could help hold the trees straight so I could take the pictures.



Peter and Bob made sure the root crowns of each of the trees were at the same level in the pot. When filling with the soil mix, we only filled the pot up to the crowns. We did not do any styling at this point, but the trees were placed into the pot so that they will grow (hopefully) into a nice grove which will be worked on again in a couple of years, and I can remember my bonsai friends as this group planting develops.



Now that I have combined the smaller pots, I have a little more room on my shelves. Should I go bonsai shopping?

Maria Sargent

### Suiseki Show at the Oakland Museum

As a reminder, there is a unique show at the Oakland Museum and it is an opportunity to see many outstanding suiseki stones presented in an unusual way. If you haven't yet seen the show, it is very much worth your while to do so. 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 until the end of April. 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.

### More Fertilizer

A tree grows by first taking in water through the roots and transporting it to the leaves. Here, carbon dioxide is absorbed from the air by the leaves and is converted by sunlight and the presence of water to the sugars which are the basic building blocks for the tree. All this is facilitated by the action of chlorophyll in the leaves. Since chlorophyll is about 6% nitrogen, it is clear that the tree must have a supply of nitrogen to continue growing. Most of the soil mixes that we use for our bonsai do not have much in the way of nitrogen, so we must supply it in the form of fertilizer. This is why the nitrogen content of the fertilizers that we use to feed the tree is important. Without nitrogen, the tree cannot make chlorophyll and then all growth stops.

Most of the fertilizers that we use also contain phosphorous and potassium. What do they do for the tree and, most important, is their presence critical for the tree? To understand the main role of phosphorous in the tree we must take a close look at how the tree converts carbon dioxide into sugars. This is actually a whole series of complicated chemical reactions. The critical step in this sequence involves a phosphorous compound present in the leaves that is activated by chlorophyll in the presence of sunlight, and the resulting activated compound is what does the heavy lifting for the generation of sugars.

The responses that we see in our trees for these two fertilizer components are different. Nitrogen encourages rapid and lush growth, and we particularly use high nitrogen fertilizers in the spring to support spring growth. Phosphorous has a more subtle influence. We don't see much in the way of effects on the tree except for root growth and, in the case of flowering deciduous trees, improved spring flowering. Another difference between nitrogen and phosphorous is how the tree conserves these compounds when the tree loses leaves. At least part of the nitrogen present as chlorophyll is lost when the tree loses its leaves or needles. In the case of phosphorous, the tree prepares for the loss of leaves by transporting at least part of the phosphorous compounds into the tree trunk before the leaves fall.

What about the third component of our fertilizers, potassium? Transport of chemicals within the tree requires that the water be present as a weak salt solution, and here is where potassium comes in. In theory, table salt would work just as well as potassium in the tree but for one little detail. It completely jams many of the critical reactions for the generation of sugars, and hence becomes very toxic to the plant. Beware of water coming from water softeners. It contains high levels of sodium, an ingredient of table salt, and is very toxic to your plants.

In addition to forming weak salt solutions in the tree, potassium also has another important function. Much of the water taken up by the roots travels up the tree trunk to the leaves, and is then lost through the same pores in the leaf that the tree uses to absorb carbon dioxide from the air. At night, the pores close so water will not be lost, and, since it is dark and light is required for the manufacture of sugars, there is no need to absorb carbon dioxide. Potassium regulates all this. Without potassium, the pores in the leaves remain open at night and the tree loses water faster than it can replace it by absorption through the roots.

Do we have to know about all this to grow magnificent bonsai? Nope. Not really. However, the closer we look at what is going on in our trees, the more we can appreciate just how complicated a tree really is and just how important all of the three elements, nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, are for our tree to grow. They work together, and if any single one is lacking, all growth comes to a screeching halt. Fortunately, all available fertilizers that we usually use have all of them in abundance. All we have to do is to remember to use the fertilizer and use it regularly. It can't work any magic on the tree while it is still in the package.

### **Bonsai Calendar**

- Watering – Continue reduced 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**

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.

### **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.

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>

March 12 – 13, Oakland, Bay Area Bonsai Associates (BABA): 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Bonsai Exhibition at the Lakeside Garden Center at Lake Merritt, 666 Bellevue Avenue. Show hours are Saturday 5:00 – 9:00 PM with light dinner, and Sunday 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Demonstration by Mr. David De Groot, award winning bonsai artist and author, who has been involved in bonsai since 1972. Mr. De Groot served for 25 years as curator of the Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection/Pacific Bonsai Museum in Federal Way, Washington. Demonstration starts at 6:30 PM, Saturday, followed by a raffle of the demonstration tree. Continuous plant sale including bonsai pots, tools, soil, wire, and more, both days. Admission is free. Public parking available. For

more information, please contact Bob Gould at 925-935-1914.

March 16 – 20, 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 are Wednesday – Saturday 10 AM – 7 PM and Sunday 10 AM – 6 PM. There will be trees for sale and demonstrations. For more information about the club, visit [www.bssf.org](http://www.bssf.org), and for the Flower and Garden Show, including ticket information, visit <http://sfgardenshow.com>.

Apr. 2 – 3, Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz Bonsai Kai: 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Show at the Museum of Art & History, 705 Front Street, 10 AM – 5 PM both days with demonstrations at 2 PM. Saturday's demonstrator is Mike Pistello and Sunday's will be Katsumi Kinoshita. Raffle drawing for demonstration tree and trees especially prepared by club members are part of the raffle each day. Sales area will include quality vendor and member trees, pots, and other related bonsai items both days. Fresh items will be in the vendor area on Sunday. Admission price of \$5.00 to the Museum includes entry to bonsai show/demo and complementary coffee, tea and cookies. For more information contact Ed Lambing at [edinbonnydoon@comcast.net](mailto:edinbonnydoon@comcast.net).

April 2 – 3,, Sacramento, Bonsai Sekiyu Kai: Annual show will be held at the Sacramento Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Hours are: Saturday 11 AM – 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM with demonstration at 1 PM both days by Yuzo Maruyama. Amenities include refreshments, light snacks, door prizes, raffles and a silent auction. Member and vendor sales of plants and bonsai-related items will also be available. For more information contact Bonsai Sekiyu Kai at [bonsaisekiyukai@gmail.com](mailto:bonsaisekiyukai@gmail.com)

### **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**

**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  
**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 10** Potluck  
**Oct 8-9** Show

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