



The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXV, No. 5

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



[facebook.com/eastbaybonsai](https://www.facebook.com/eastbaybonsai)



twitter.com/EastBayBonsai

East Bay Bonsai Society

March Meeting:

May 11, 2016 @ 7:30 p.m.

President's Note

There are lots of activities in the coming months and weeks. We have Michael Ryan Bell who will share his wisdom about bonsai pots, chop marks, etc. at our May meeting. I've known Ryan since 2013 and personally purchased several pots from him, so I expect the May meeting to be a great one that you won't want to miss.

We also have our annual trip to Lone Pine Gardens in Sebastopol on May 7th, which will be a great opportunity for both experienced and novice hobbyists to find some great bonsai specimens at a variety of price points. Details are in this newsletter.

Of course July is our annual club auction, and an important source of our club funds. I hope you will consider either donating or consigning items for auction. You can auction trees, accent plants, pots, tools, etc. as long as the dollar amount is over \$10. Thanks in advance for your support.

And finally, a BIG thanks to Bob, Polly and Tom who gave us an educational and fun talk about suiseki at our April meeting.

Michael

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.

Thanks in advance to Don Meeker who was the only one to sign up for refreshments for this meeting. Thanks also in advance to anyone willing to bring refreshments even though they did not sign up.

June meeting

Rick Trumm will present a program on pines for the June meeting. Pines are one of the most important trees in bonsai and we all need to know how to grow them well. Their needs are somewhat specialized, and a program devoted to



pines is always welcome. Those of you who have seen Rick's trees at the annual potluck in August at his house know that he is a highly skilled horticulturalist. We look forward to his presentation.

April meeting

The April meeting was devoted to suiseki. Tom Colby discussed some of the background of suiseki, Bob Gould showed collected suiseki from California rivers and Polly Gould showed how accent plants can be used with the display of stones.

Suiseki has a long history. Stone appreciation started in China and came to Japan probably about 1500 years ago. The Japanese modified the Chinese esthetics to their taste which was heavily influenced by Zen

Buddhism. Early display of stones was in shallow trays filled with water, hence the name suiseki meaning water stone. This method of display is still used today for about a quarter of the stones seen in contemporary suiseki shows, although sand is frequently substituted for water in the trays.



The beauty of suiseki is the color, shape and surface texture of the stone. The shape and surface texture is the result of exposure of the stone to the elements. The most vigorous exposure occurs in running water where the action of the water as well as the action of grit and sand carried by the water slowly sculpts and polishes the stone. Any attempt to “improve” the stone by either modifying the shape by grinding or modifying the surface by oiling, varnishing or waxing detracts from the natural beauty of the stone. While stones shown as collected are valued, many suiseki are sliced from larger stones.

Examples of several different types of suiseki were shown. Most suiseki remind us of natural geologic features with by far the the most common being mountains, some viewed from a distance or some close up. Mountain stones comprise about 75% of the stones seen at a typical bonsai show. Other features shown were waterfalls, streams, ponds and a stone representing an ocean reef. A relatively minor category of stones represents not geologic features but objects seen in nature such as animals, including human figures, boats or huts.

Suiseki are considered art by the Japanese, and as with most forms of Japanese art, are judged by Zen Buddhist criteria. These involve feelings the stone should generate in the viewer, and because of this, are very difficult concepts to understand or quantify. A

simpler test for whether a stone is a suiseki or not and, if so, is it a good one, is to ask a question. Does the stone remind you of something that you have seen in nature, either in person or in a photograph? If it does not, then the stone is not a suiseki. This does not necessarily mean that the stone is not worthy of your admiration. It means simply that the stone does not represent what suiseki are all about. If the stone not represents a scene from nature, it is a suiseki. If your response is “wow, it really does”, then the stone is a good suiseki.

Bob showed a number of his stones that had been collected in California. A striking feature of his presentation was that each river seemed to produce distinctly different stones. Bob emphasized that good suiseki are very hard to find. Although there are many rocks in a typical collecting area, a full day search will produce perhaps a single stone suitable for display as a suiseki. Most suiseki are found in rivers, but Bob showed a stone from the desert that had been sculpted by windblown sand. These stones are very rare because usually in the desert the wind blows from one direction, and so the stone is sculpted only on one side.



Polly Gould is a specialist in growing accent plants and many of the wonderful accent plants you see in our bonsai shows are her handiwork. She showed plants that could be used for accents for a stone. The plant should reflect the stone, and this is exactly the same kind of choice you would make in selecting an accent plant for a bonsai. The size of the plant should be in proportion to the stone. The choice of plant should harmonize with the stone as, for example, a succulent for a high mountain stone or a grass to accompany a stone shown with water. The color of the plant should complement the color of the stone.



There are a wide variety of plants available as accent plants. Polly commented that there are three specific species of plants used by Japanese that are always in style for both bonsai and suiseki. These are black mondo grass, hakoni grass and miniature bamboo. Among the many accent plants that Polly brought to the meeting, pots of dwarf hostas were particularly stunning.

July Auction



Our annual auction will be held at the regular July meeting. While that seems to be a long way into the future, spring time is a great time for you to critically evaluate your bonsai collection when all your trees are looking their very best. There is no good reason for you to continue to grow a tree that does not please you, particularly since it requires the same amount of care as one that you really like. Your displeasure can come from two directions. One is that you bought the tree with great expectations, but in the cold light of the next day you realized that the tree was not quite as good as you thought it was and it appears to be a very long time before the tree will meet your expectations (hello workshops). Another problem is cultural conditions that you were not aware of when you bought the tree, as, for example, trying to grow maples in a very windy area which presents problems with leaf burn. The July auction is a great way to pass your trees onto more loving and understanding homes, and you get 80% of the selling price to spend on more trees. It is a good time to review your collection of trees and to select trees that are auction candidates.

Politics

The late spring of an election year brings a lot of attention to our national political scene and this year is

certainly no exception. Your newsletter does not want to be left out of the action so a discussion of the EBBS political arrangement is in order.

The governing body of the club is the board of directors which consists of the four officers of the club. The president chairs the regular meetings as well as the meetings of the board. This year we are fortunate to have Michael Hylton as our president who not only serves these functions very well but also is our link to the various social media, and manages our website. The vice president is Roger Brady and his main function is to chair our annual show in October. Our secretary, Lisa Harper, records the minutes of the board meetings. Last, but by no means least, is the treasurer, Pat Cahill who writes checks as needed and accurately records the ebb and flow of our finances. There are a number of people also on the board, filling the role of directors who represent a cross section of the club membership. They are Janice Dilbeck, Khary Dvorak-Ewell, Suzanne Muller, John Nackley, Bev Martinez and Tom Colby.



The board meets once a month on a different night than the regular meeting night and the main function is to oversee smooth running of the club. Their action is very much behind the scenes, and if you are not aware of what the board does, it really means that the board is doing their job well. The biggest single concern of the board is the efficient management of club finances, but they are also involved in selection of speakers for the regular meetings and help in managing our annual show and auction, as well as the day to day addressing of problems as they arise.

The board feels that members come to the meetings to hear about bonsai and do not want to hear about the latest actions of the board so these are not discussed at the meetings. But if you have suggestions, questions or problems with what the club is or is not doing, please contact any of the board members because the board wants to be available and transparent in their actions. The lack of visibility at the meetings does not mean that you do not have a voice in the affairs of the club.

There are two other people who are vital to the function of the club. Janice Dilbeck is the editor of your newsletter which is a window to what is going on in the bonsai world, has timely articles about bonsai culture and reminds you of upcoming meetings. Bev Martinez is our librarian and manages the large collection of books available for loan. See the display of the library material at each meeting.

Shake It But Don't Break It



One of the biggest challenges of bonsai is to produce short trees with fat trunks, features which suggest great age of the tree. This usually takes years of careful culture which includes fertilization and foliage control as well as root pruning to maintain the health of the tree. Any way to shortcut this process is very welcome. An old issue of a bonsai magazine offers a review of an article in Science magazine from the July issue, 1971, with a new approach to quickly producing the kind of trees that we want. Science is a highly respected venue for peer reviewed articles and is the place where many of the current blockbuster findings in the forefront of science are published.

The article in question attempts to address the question of why trees in a crowded forest grow very tall whereas trees in an open field are much shorter. The article speculates that wind may be a factor and reports a study to address this question. In the experiment a large group of liquidamber trees was assembled. The trees were all about four and one half feet high. Half the group was exposed to simulated windy conditions by shaking them vigorously for thirty seconds each day. After 27 days the entire group was allowed to grow without further disturbance. After two months the shaken trees showed greater trunk taper and only 20% of the increase in height shown by the unshaken trees. Further, the shaken trees showed more twig development than the unshaken trees. The apparent conclusion of the study is that trees in a crowded forest are sheltered from the wind but trees in exposed areas are subject to constant shaking by the wind which reduces their growth.

An explanation for the different growth rates observed when the trees are shaken is that the shaking generates tiny ruptures in the trunk tissue which generate scar tissue in the trunk, causing swelling of the trunk as well as the increased twig formation and slowed growth due to impaired nutrient transfer. This

explains why trees in very exposed situations that are subject to extremely windy conditions do, in fact, grow more slowly.

The observation reported in the study that shaking changes the growth of trees is reasonable and valid. Interpretation of the results as an explanation of the greater height of trees in a crowded forest due to wind factors seems more than a bit shaky (ouch!). A more obvious explanation for the different growth



rate of the trees in the wild was apparently not considered and that is that each tree needs exposure to light to grow. In the crowded forest the trees grow upwards to reach the limited available light. In more exposed areas the trees have all the light they need and can remain relatively shorter. This is an obvious variable that seems to have been missed.

The observation reported that shaking changes growth of trees is of more than passing interest. If anyone in EBBS is interested in shaking the daylight out of their trees for 30 seconds a day for a month as a way to increase trunk taper and twig development, your newsletter would be proud to be the first to publish your findings. If you undertake such a study, and have the results in hand, please contact your crusading editor, Janice Dilbeck, who will happily headline your results in the next available issue of the Tree Shrinker.

Field Trip

As a reminder, don't forget the big event on Saturday, May 7. That is the date that EBBS will sponsor a field trip to Lone Pine Gardens which is one of the largest bonsai nurseries in the country. They feature trees all the way from inexpensive starter plants to finished bonsai. The trip is a special opportunity for the newest members of the society. There will be lots of advice available from more experienced members to help these folks with their selections. The Prices, who operate the nursery, have always been gracious hosts in past trips.



Lone Pine Gardens are located at 6450 Lone Pine Road in Sebastopol, about 75 miles north of the bay area. There is an excellent web site for the nursery, www.lonepinegardens.com, which includes driving directions. If lost, the nursery phone number is 707-823-5024.

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!

Bonsai Calendar

- Watering – Water regularly to keep root ball moist, not wet, and never dry.
- Fertilizing – Start regular feeding of deciduous trees after first flush of growth is completed. Continue regular feeding of conifers.
- Repotting – Not recommended at this time.
- Styling/Pruning – Rotate trees. Watch for wire cutting during this period of fast growth. Start defoliation. Shorten branches on fruiting trees. Pinch junipers, spruces and cedars.
- Air Layering – Deciduous trees may be air layered if new growth has hardened.
- Insect and disease control – Maintain defensive treatments for fungus. Watch for and treat insect infestations.

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.

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 Sam Adina, followed by the demo raffle and more prizes. Free Admission. For more information contact: Gary Judd (916) 622-8048.

May 21 & 22, Oakland, Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai (BASA): 21st Annual Satsuki Azalea Bonsai Show at the Lakeside Garden Center, Lake Merritt, 666 Bellevue Avenue. Show hours are 10 AM – 5 PM Saturday and 11 AM – 4 PM Sunday with demonstration by Bonsai Master Artist Johnny Uchilda Saturday between 1 and 3 PM. Demonstration tree will be raffled. Sales area with beginner material and imported plants from Japan. Benefit drawing. Free admission. Public parking available. For more information, contact George Haas at gwhaas@comcast.net.

June 4 & 5, San Mateo, Sei Boku Bonsai Kai: 33rd Annual Show at the San Mateo Garden Center. 605 Parkside Way (next to Beresford Park). Show hours are 10 AM to 4 PM both days, with demonstration by Dennis Makishima from Noon – 3 PM on Saturday (tree will be raffled off at the conclusion of demo). Sunday Dennis will lead an open view workshop from Noon – 3 PM. Large club member plant sale, vendors, door prizes and our always popular raffles. Admission is free. Dr. Bonsai will be available to offer styling and care tips. For more information contact Marsha Mekisich ateclectic.gardener@yahoo.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.

East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2016

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

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	Oaks, John Thompson
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

May 7	Field Trip
Aug 20	Potluck
Oct 8-9	Show
