



# The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXV, No. 11

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



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## East Bay Bonsai Society

**Meeting:** November 9, 2016 7:30 PM

### President's Note

So many people stepped up for our annual club show, too many to mention them all individually. A huge thank you goes to Roger for spearheading the entire event. Also, some big thanks goes to Rick Trumm, Gordon Deeg and Mike Pistello who handled the workshop, critique and demo since JP was unable to come from France. Thanks also to Tim Kong for purchasing and donating the second show demo tree.

November brings our Juniper Jubilee, and an opportunity to observe work on a Juniper. Mike Pistello will be the presenter and I look forward to a great meeting.

Finally, December is the holiday dinner. It's an opportunity to reflect on a great "bonsai" year and mingle with other club members. I look forward to seeing you there.

Michael

### November Meeting



The November meeting is the fifth annual celebration of our 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 as the demonstration proceeds. This meeting should not be missed.

The meeting 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 of the Juniper Jubilee. 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 enjoyed refreshments at the meetings to bring something. It is your turn. A refreshment sign-up list for future meetings will be available at the meeting.

### December Meeting

The December meeting is our annual holiday dinner which will be held on our regular meeting day, December 14. Circle your calendar for this date 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 of the evening by assembling a spectacular program of images from our recent show, as well as others taken throughout the year. We are indeed fortunate that Michael has offered to present a similar program this year.

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 all will make the evening special. See you there!

## Show

The EBBS annual show was a spectacular success. The scheduled headliner, JP Horeau from France, was unable to attend the show at the last minute. He was expected to lead a workshop, do a critique of the trees in the show and then to do a demonstration on a larch tree furnished by the club. Three people stepped forward to fill in for the missing demonstrator, two from EBBS and one from a local club. It was these willing people who stepped in at the last minute that made the show a success.



Rich Trumm, who has been studying bonsai for many years, offered to lead the workshop, and those who participated were delighted with his guidance in improving the trees that they had brought to the workshop.

Gordon Deeg is not a member of EBBS, but has been very active in the bonsai garden and also has been active as a bonsai artist for many years. He delivered the critique of the trees in the show. The critique is traditionally the high point of the show where individuals get comments on how to improve their own trees as well how they are displayed. Gordon focused on the health of the trees and how to improve the culture and care of the trees. This is extremely important because if your tree is not well grown the overall display will be lacking.

Mike Pistello did the demonstration, and his long experience as a bonsai artist really showed. He not only converted two trees into outstanding bonsai, but his comments about what he was doing and why made his demonstration a valuable learning experience for those who attended.



Many other members deserve recognition for their efforts to make the show a success. First and foremost is the show chair, Roger Brady who not only organized the show, but was in the forefront of dealing with the lack of a demonstrator at the last minute. Under his guidance, the show operated smoothly.

Special thanks to all the committee chairs that had the job of organizing volunteer help. The hospitality table offered lunch to EBBS members as well as

honored guests. Much of the bountiful spread was brought by EBBS members, but also included donations from local restaurants. Thanks to Michael Hylton, Suzanne Muller and John Nackley for securing the donations. Michael also deserves a thank you for publicizing the show on the social media. While this effort was out of the public view, it was critical to the success of the show by bringing more visitors to the show.

A special thank you to Bob Gould who once again was the first to arrive at the show setup and was the last man standing at the clean up when the show was over.



A noteworthy aspect of the show was the large display of shohin trees which was organized by Bill Castellon and John Doig. EBBS has been known in the past for the large number of fine shohin trees displayed in their shows, and this year was no exception. The shohin trees require considerably care to grow well and the many trees showed great horticultural skill. Also noteworthy was the display of mame trees. These trees are less than three inches tall and are grown in pots as small as one inch in diameter.



Special notice should be made of three people who presented tokonoma displays for the first time. Tokonoma displays will carry the reputation of EBBS for fine shows into the future.

Lastly, kudos are due to Janice Dilbeck for her efforts in placing all the trees in the display to form a single artistic statement. This is an aspect of the show that is often overlooked.

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

### Tim Kong



Tim has been a supporter of EBBS for many years and this year he out did himself. He contributed heavily to the hospitality table. He also contributed heavily to the silent auction by donating several items for auction. He saw that the larch tree selected for the demonstration

might not be adequate for a full demonstration, so he purchased a juniper from the sales table and donated the tree to the club for use as a second demonstration tree. The club owes Tim a hearty thank you for all that he did for the show, as well as all that he has done for the club in the past.

### Larch

The East Bay Bonsai Society selected a larch for their demonstration tree at their recent show. Larches are not commonly seen in the local shows and a word about them is in order. Larches grow in a northern belt of the world starting in northwestern United States through Canada and northern Europe, into the great forests of Russia and finally terminating in northern Japan. There is a total of about thirteen species with three occurring in the United States. The go-to means of sorting out plant species are botanical keys, and the keys for the American species indicate the differences between the three species are pretty subtle. So, for all practical means, all the native species can be lumped into a single group as potential bonsai trees.



Larches are conifers and have small cones that look a lot like small pine cones. Field observation indicates the wild growing larches begin to bear cones when they are somewhere between 50 and 150 years old, so if you are looking for cones on your

bonsai, don't hold your breath, or at least plan for a very long life.

The trees look a lot like cedars. Both have buds which grow rosettes of needles. The big distinction between larches and cedars is that larches are deciduous and cedars are not. Larches belong to a small group of deciduous conifers. The bald cypress, dawn redwood and pond cypress are other examples. Deciduous conifers form cones and sprout needles, but also change colors in the fall and lose their needles every year like deciduous trees.



Larches make wonderful bonsai and are frequently seen in bonsai shows in the northern United States where collected trees are readily available. Because they grow in northern climates, they are very cold hardy. They are also exposed to summer rains and short, warm and humid summers which gives us a big clue about their cultural needs. They appreciate a somewhat wetter environment than most of the rest of the bonsai that we typically grow. In fact, they are frequently found in the wild in swampy environments.

We usually use a bonsai mix of equal parts akadama, pumice and lava for most of our trees. Probably a mix for these trees that retains more moisture and which contains at least two thirds or considerably more akadama would work best. Because these are northern trees and grow in cooler areas, light shade is required for the warmer parts of the Bay Area, although the trees resent deep shade. Larches could be a challenge to grow well in the hottest parts of the Bay Area.

The trees are vigorous growers and can be regularly pruned back. Be sure to leave at least two buds on each

branch that you cut back. As in the case with most of our trees, vigorous branches will shade the weaker interior branches, causing them to eventually die out, and this should be taken into account when you style your tree. While the tops grow vigorously, the roots grow a little more reluctantly. When repotting larches, care should be taken to disturb the roots as little as possible and avoid heavy root pruning. The trees respond well to application of high nitrogen fertilizer in the spring.

Larches offer spectacular fall color and the possibility for quickly growing into a superb bonsai. What more could you ask for in a bonsai tree? They do have one disadvantage which is not really their fault, and that is that they are not readily available locally. Some nurseries do offer them on line, but the trees are usually small seedling that are many years away from being noteworthy bonsai. None the less, look carefully when you visit local bonsai nurseries because they do occasionally appear, and when they do, they are worthy of your consideration.

### **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**

- 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.*

### **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.

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## **East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2016 - 2017**

**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: [www.gsbf-lakemerritt.org/](http://www.gsbf-lakemerritt.org/)

### **Meeting Program**

**Nov 9** Juniper Jubilee - Mike Pistello

**Nov 27** BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby

**Dec 14** Holiday Party

### **Special Events**

**Oct 8-9** Show

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