



The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXVI, No. 4

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



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



twitter.com/EastBayBonsai

East Bay Bonsai Society

Meeting: April 12, 2017 7:30 PM

April Program

Have you ever wondered what goes into making a pot? Even better, have you ever wanted to make a pot? The April program will be presented by our very own Bev Martinez and will answer these questions and many more. Bev has been a potter for the last six years and has been making pots for bonsai for the last three years.

Her recent pots have been of very high quality, so she is well qualified to present a program on the art and technique of bonsai pots. We are fortunate to have such a skilled artist in the club.



The program will be in two parts. At the regular meeting, Bev will tell us all the things we need to know about making a bonsai pot. This includes a lot of important details such as type of clay that is used and the effect of firing temperature, as well as what tools are used in the formation of the pot. Last, but not least, she will share a bit about the history of pottery. There will be time for questions and, best of all, there will be a demonstration where you will see her put her theory into action.

The next Saturday after the meeting, April 15, Bev will host a workshop at her house where the participants can put all they learned at the regular meeting to good use by making a pot for their bonsai.

The pot you make will be fired and ready for use. There will be a modest cost of \$10 to cover the cost of materials, and an additional cost of \$5 if you want a glaze applied to your pot. Bev has space for a maximum of 8 participants, so there will be a sign up for the workshop at the regular meeting. Bev graciously said that she would hold a second workshop at a later date if demand exceeds the available space.

The April meeting will be the first of several programs that are in planning stages where the regular meeting will be a theory session followed by a hands-on workshop somewhat later where you can apply what you learned. EBBS has presented this type of double program in the dim past, and the board is excited to reintroduce this style to the club. It is a wonderful learning experience.

Thanks in advance to Wendy Quan, Don Meeker and Frank Puccio for offering to provide refreshments to the meeting.

May program

The program in May will feature a presentation on azaleas by our very own Bob Gould. Bob has been a



member of EBBS for many years. His special loves (after his wife Polly) are shohin bonsai and azaleas. May is a beautiful time for a program on azaleas because,

with a little luck from the weather, they should be in full bloom. Blooming azaleas are clearly the most spectacular plants that bonsai has to offer. Bob's talk is an excellent lead-in to the annual show by the local azalea club. Watch for details about the show in the newsletter.

Bob is specially qualified to speak on the subject because he is a graduate of a year-long course on azaleas offered by Mr. Gondo, a well-known Japanese bonsai artist who is considered to be the last word in azalea management and culture in Japan. Bob has also visited Mr. Gondo's nursery in Japan for a series of workshops there.

March Meeting

The March meeting featured a presentation by Jonas Dupuich on the evaluation of bonsai. He



commented that one of the fun things to do with bonsai is to show them, and how do we know which of our trees should we select for showing? On a different note, how do we know whether a tree that we are considering to purchase is worth the asking price? Both of these



activities require evaluation of the merits of a bonsai tree.



Jonas proposed a method for evaluation which involved assigning a point score for the tree. The score is broken down by scoring five features of the tree. The first and most important feature is the trunk which can receive a maximum of ten points. The higher possible score for the trunk is due to the fact that it generally cannot be modified. The other four features are attributes that can be changed, and they are the branches, the surface roots, the pot selection, and overall aesthetics. Each of these features receives a maximum of five points. The point system is presented in more detail in a hand-out composed by Jonas and is attached to this newsletter.

Jonas started his presentation by showing a number of images of superb bonsai, many of which are locally



owned. Next, he showed three of his trees and led a discussion about how the scoring system applied to each. Jonas then showed three more of his trees and asked each of the members present to score them. Discussion of the scores by the members showed that there was reasonable consensus among the participants. This may have been a bit of a surprise, but certainly showed that the point system for bonsai

evaluation functioned well and had merit. Good features received generally high scores, and not so good features frequently received lower scores. Probably the most important lesson from the point system was not the score, but that it caused you to look critically at the features of the bonsai tree.

Jonas concluded his program by critiquing trees that members had brought for show and tell, and suggested needed work that could be done to improve the trees before our show in October.

The program was very well received, and we hope to have Jonas back for another program in the future. If you missed this meeting, you missed a fine presentation.

Field trip

EBBS is planning a field trip on Saturday, May 13, to celebrate the glorious springtime growing season. The first stop will be to the garden of Jonas Dupuich. Those who attended the recent EBBS program given by Jonas saw six of his trees that he had brought to illustrate his program. His trees included some true masterpieces. All were fine examples of just how good bonsai trees can be. Going to his garden is a wonderful opportunity to see a collection of very notable bonsai and to chat with the artist who created them. Jonas also sells trees, pots and tools.



The second stop is in Hayward at the Grove Way Bonsai Nursery operated by Johnny Uchida. The nursery has been open since the 1970's, and is one of the landmarks in the local bonsai world. Johnny has been the sensei (teacher) of Yamato Bonsai Kai since it was founded in the early 1970's, and has given introductory classes in bonsai in local adult education programs for many years. The classes, as well as memberships in Yamato Bonsai Kai, were the starting point in bonsai for many people currently in the local bonsai community. The nursery is always well stocked with trees which range all the way from inexpensive starter material to finished bonsai. There will be all the supplies you need for your bonsai from pots to tools to potting materials. There will be lots to see.

The essential details: the trip will start assembling at the Encinal Nursery in Alameda at 9:30. The nursery is located at 2057 Encinal Ave. Alameda. Since the nursery is open for business and Saturday is a big day for them, please do not park in front of the nursery. The group will walk to Jonas's garden which is located nearby. At the conclusion of this visit, lunch will be at a restaurant, probably Chinese, in the Hayward area. John Nackley is familiar with the area and will make arrangements. After lunch, the group will visit Johnny at Grove Way Nursery, located at 1239 Grove Way, Hayward.

The trip will be an action-packed day filled with fun and bonsai. May 13 is a bit in the future, giving you ample time to clear your calendar and save the day for this special event. See you there!

Bonsai Garden

The bonsai garden needs your help. It has been open for nearly twenty years, and is, frankly, looking a little long in the tooth and worn at the edges. Some things need replacing. Benches have rotted from long contact with water. Drip nozzles in the irrigation system need to be replaced by more efficient nozzles to reduce water consumption. Somethings need to be upgraded such as pathways that can flood from rain. Finally, extended use has demonstrated that some new things are needed to improve the overall operation of the garden. A new pathway is in the plans, and installation of weed cloth will help reduce the need for manual weeding. A complete list of needs is given in detail on the garden web site, <http://gsbf-lakemerritt.org>.



Fulfilling all these various needs and improvements is an ambitious project called the *Garden Revitalization Opportunity* or *GRO* for short. All this takes money, an estimated one hundred thousand dollars to be exact. Crowd funding is hoped to generate the necessary funds and can be accessed by clicking on the giving button on the web site. A recent tabulation on the web site indicates that GRO has met a little more than a quarter of the needed funds, but still has a long way to go. You can help by donating to the fund. Any amount would be appreciated. Let's do our part as club members to make

GRO become a reality. GRO ensures that the garden will continue to be there for our education and enjoyment long in the future.

Terroir

Occasionally one can find collected examples of Mendocino Cypress trees for sale at bonsai shows. These are extraordinary little trees and can make wonderful bonsai. They are usually only about a foot tall, have twisted, thin trunks, and a tight, twiggy branch structure. Although they are small, the rough bark texture suggests that they are much older than you might think. The only way to be sure of this is to count the annual tree rings in the trunk, and no one appears to have done this. They come from a special spot in northern California where few are over three feet tall. There are several planted in a special area of the University of California Botanical Garden. These are much older than thirty years, and yet, they are still barely three feet tall.



The little trees have a surprise in store for us. Back in the late 1700's and early 1800's in England, the top 1% (actually the top 0.1%) of the English folks, made rich by the industrial revolution, built huge houses and surrounded them with extensive gardens which really looked more like parks. They searched the world for cool plants to decorate their gardens, and guess what? Mendocino Cypress trees showed up once in a while. In the English gardens, they grow robustly into stately trees 50 or more feet high.

Why do the cypress trees struggle to grow as much as three feet tall in the United States, and yet grow so well in England? The climate in England is not very different from that of Mendocino, so that is not the answer. Is it the horticultural prowess of English gardeners? They are good, but not that good. The answer is a difference in terroir, a French term, (pronounced "fair-wahr"), for the response of a plant to the specific composition of the soil in which it is grown.

Terroir is a general term applying to all plants. It is frequently used by wine enthusiasts to describe how

the exact composition of the soil of a vineyard can exert a subtle influence in the quality and taste of the grapes. This, in turn, leads to subtle influences on the wine produced from the grapes.

Here, the terroir of the two areas is vastly different, and the results are far from subtle. The soil of the English gardens is deep and rich with organic matter and nutrients, just what you would die for to have in your own garden.



The soil where the little cypress trees grow in Mendocino is best described as gluey cement. It is a mixture of fine sand and clay which is the composition of sticky glue when wet, and hard like cement when it dries out. It tenaciously holds water, so it is usually soggy wet. It is a textbook example of what beginners are told to never even think about for using as a soil for their bonsai. No wonder the little trees struggle.



There is also a problem that is not as obvious but has an even greater effect on the growth of these trees, and that is the fact that some of the sandy part of the soil is the mineral serpentine. This mineral releases small amounts of nickel into the soil. While a growing tree needs a grocery list of trace elements, nickel is not among them. In fact, nickel is very toxic to plant growth.

There are areas in California where serpentine mineral is abundant, and each area has a unique flora which can, with difficulty, adapt to the presence of nickel in the soil. One result of the nickel is that most of the flora found in these areas, including the Mendocino Cypress, grow very slowly. Freed from nickel and planted in good soil, the trees can do what they always wanted to do, grow with vigor.

Growing these trees as bonsai involves weaning them away from the atrocious soil where they grow, but this must be done carefully or you may lose the tree. This is best done over a period of several years by replacing only a portion of the soil with good bonsai soil each time. It is almost like they have been waiting for good soil, and now that they have it, they do not know how to act. It usually takes two or three years to completely eliminate the bad soil. Bonsai soils do not contain a source of nickel, so eliminating nickel is not a problem. Once the tree is in good soil, it can start to grow rapidly, and the beautiful twisted trunk that initially attracted the tree to you becomes a fat, straight fence post and the tree becomes a big bush. To prevent this, the tree is fertilized only very lightly, and new growth is severely pruned back.

Mendocino Cypress trees are fascinating trees and make wonderful bonsai. They amply reward you for the special care that they require. By the way, mind the terroir next time you repot your bonsai, and at all costs, avoid gluey cement as soil.

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.

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. There is a gate across the road leading to the parking lot that will automatically open when you pull up close to it. 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.

April 8 – 9, Sacramento, American Bonsai Association, Sacramento: Annual Spring Show at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center in McKinley Park, 3330 McKinley Blvd, Show hours are Saturday, 10 AM - 5 PM, and Sunday, 10 AM - 4 PM with demonstrations by headliner Jonas Dupuich at 1:30 PM both days. Beginner workshop Sunday morning from 10 AM – Noon. Large member and vendor sales area, plenty of free parking, and free admission. Benefit drawing Saturday and Sunday includes bonsai, bonsai related items, and that days demonstration tree. For additional information contact Renee Seely: (916) 929-2106 & email breadcrust@comcast.net or visit our website <http://abasonbonsai.org>.

April 8 - 9, Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz Bonsai Kai: 29th Annual Show at the Museum of Art & History, 705 Front Street. Show hours are 10 AM - 5 PM both days with demonstration at 2 PM. Saturday's demonstrator is Eric Schrader and Sunday's will be Mr. Katsumi Kinoshita. Demonstration tree and trees prepared by club members will be part of the raffle each day after the demonstration. Sales area will include quality vendor and member trees, pots, and other related bonsai items both days. Admission price of \$5.00 includes the Bonsai Show as well as admission to all the Museum exhibits. For more information contact Ed Lambing at edinbonnydoon@comcast.net.

April 22, Sacramento, American Bonsai Association, Sacramento: Bus Trip to 'The Second Annual Fundraising Event for the Clark Bonsai Collection at Shinzen. 12 hour bus trip departing the Sacramento Garden and Arts Center at McKinley Park, 3330 McKinley Blvd, at 7 AM and returning at 7 PM. Must have a commitment from 40 people by March 15 to book the bus. For reservations mail check made out to ABAS to: Patti Fletcher, 3901 Don River Ln., Sacramento, CA 95834. For more information

contact Renee Seely (916) 929-2106 or via email
breadcrust@comcast.net.

more information contact Lucy Sakaishi-Judd at
juddbonsai@att.net or visit
sacramentobonsaiclub.com

April 22 - 23, Fresno, 2nd Annual Kōen-Nai No Bonsai Fundraiser for the Clark Bonsai Collection at Shinzen. Enjoy a wonderful bonsai weekend in the beautiful setting of the Shinzen Garden at Woodward Park, at Friant and Audubon Roads. Hours are Saturday 9:30 AM – 5:30 PM and Sunday 9:30 AM – 4:30 PM. Peter Tea and David Nguy will provide demonstrations for this event. The event will include a huge bonsai auction with a wide selection of trees, complimented by a mammoth vender area. Toko-Kazari Display Competition will provide beautiful artistry together with tours of the Regional Bonsai Exhibit in the garden. Several Shohin workshops will be offered. For more information, contact Bob Hilvers at bonsaigui@comcast.net.

May 6 - 7, Sacramento, Sacramento Bonsai Club: 71st 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

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.

East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 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/

Meeting Program

Apr	12	Bonsai Pots – Bev Martinez
Apr	23	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
May	10	Satsuki Azaleas – Bob Gould
May	28	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Don Meeker & Linda Soliven
Jun	14	Romp in the Garden
Jun	25	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Jul	12	Auction
Jul	23	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould
Aug	27	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
Sep	13	tbd
Sep	24	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
Oct	22	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Don Meeker & Linda Soliven
Nov	8	tbd
Nov	26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Dec	13	Holiday Dinner

Special Events

Apr	15	Workshop Making Pots
May	13	Field Trip to Jonus's Garden and Grove Way Bonsai Nursery
Oct	14-15	Show