



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

August Potluck Picnic: August 19, 2017 @ 3:00 pm – sunset
Nelson-Trumm Property

(No regular meeting in August)

August Meeting

The August meeting is our annual potluck picnic which will be held this year on Saturday, August 19 across the street from the home of Janet Nelson and Rick Trumm. The picnic will start at 3:00 pm and will continue until sunset.

This is one of the social highlights of the year and should not be missed. Janet and Rick have a large collection of spectacular bonsai which they are happy to show off. The chance to see and enjoy their beautiful bonsai is alone worth your visit. Best of all, the picnic is a chance for members to socialize on an informal basis. The meal is potluck and the food assignments are as follows:

- Appetizer - Last name S-Z
- Entrée - Last name A-G
- Side dish or salad - Last name H-L
- Dessert - Last name M-R

Be sure to bring utensils required for serving your contribution. The club will provide wine and soft drinks.

The Oakland hills can occasionally be a bit cool and breezy so dress in layers. Hats and sun screen are also a good idea.

Directions are as follows: If coming from the north or east, take Highway 24, or if coming from the south, take Highway 580 to Highway 13 (the Warren Freeway). From either direction, proceed to the Redwood Road exit and go east (up the hill) on Redwood Road. Take a right at Skyline Blvd which is at the summit. Proceed to Balmoral Drive (at the



stoplight), make a left turn onto Balmoral, and find #5749. The house will be on your left on a corner a short distance up the hill. The picnic will be across the street from their house. If lost or you need more information, call 510-482-8428.

September Meeting

The September meeting will be a presentation on accent plants by Lucy and Gary Judd who hail from Sacramento. Their presentation will be in two parts, a demonstration followed by a hands-on mini workshop. Lucy will bring some pots for accent plants to sell as well as to use in the workshop. Accent plants are the unsung heroes of a bonsai show, and although our focus is on the trees, accent plants really set off the trees. We are fortunate to have a program on accent plants just in time for our show in October.



Auction



The July auction is a major fundraising event for the society, and this year it was a great success. The final accounting is complete, and it is clear that our treasury benefited from all the efforts of the many club members who helped to organize and stage the event, as well as those who bought and sold plants. Many thanks are due to many people, but most specifically to Janet Nelson for coordinating the event.

Janet has coordinated the event for several years in the past, and each time all has gone smoothly. This year was no exception. It is a big job rounding up volunteers for all the many tasks that need to be accomplished, and Janet makes it look easy. All her hard work resulted in a very smooth operation. Once again, the club thanks you, Janet, for all your hard work in managing the auction.



The success of any auction also rests squarely on the skill of the auctioneer. EBBS was fortunate to have Mike Pistello as our auctioneer. He did a stellar job keeping the action going at a fast pace, and yet giving each item its due. Thanks Mike, you are a real pro.



Thanks are due to the people who logged sales and to the cashiers. Both of these tasks require people who can function well during occasionally hectic times, a skill that not all us have.



EBBS owes a debt of gratitude to those members who furnished items for sale at the auction, and especially to those who donated items to the auction

which meant the entire proceeds of the sale went to the club. Your generosity will be repaid by the club being able to fund outstanding speakers in the future.

If you missed out on selling your plants at the auction or if you have items worth less than ten dollars, take heart. EBBS has a sales table at our show in October, and all plants, especially inexpensive plants, are welcome with the usual twenty percent of the selling price going to the club.

Help!



The bonsai garden needs your help. In this case, it is not your time or your cash, although both are always very welcome. The garden collects copper wire removed from bonsai trees and sells it as scrap copper. The income is not large, but it is steady and adds up to a significant amount over time. They are asking that each of us collect used copper wire and bring it to a regular EBBS meeting where it will be forwarded to the garden by John Nackley. Please do not include aluminum wire (which is not salable). It also reduces the value received for the scrap copper when only a little is mixed in with the copper. Also, do not include twigs and broken branches that still have wire connected to them. Donating used wire to the garden not only supports a good cause, but it also solves the problem of what to do with the darn stuff.

Breaking news

It looks like it is official that Oakland will host the Golden State Bonsai Federation convention in 2018. This convention will be a significant departure from the past. Rather than being held in a single large facility such as a major hotel, it will be focused on the lakeside bonsai garden. Events are visualized to be held nearby, probably at the garden center and the sailboat house.



The history of the GSBF conventions starts a long time ago. Bonsai became a popular activity well after the Second World War. Although there was great interest from the very start, there were not many true bonsai artists who could teach prospective newcomers about bonsai. A convention provided a venue where the few available knowledgeable artists could instruct a large

number of enthusiasts about the care, styling and proper showing of bonsai. Essential aspects of the convention were workshops which provided hands on experience with live trees. Besides imparting know how, the conventions also became a social center where people of similar interests could meet.



At first conventions were hugely popular. In recent times attendance has dwindled for two reasons. Now information about bonsai is widely available because of the many bonsai artists who have studied in Japan and returned to the United States to teach. The internet is overflowing with bonsai information of varying quality. Part of the social aspect of the convention is now fulfilled by the social media on the internet. This is particularly true for the younger bonsai enthusiasts. Another problem that conventions face is that they are becoming very expensive. Major hotels provide space for the various activities associated with the convention as well as a place to stay at reduced rates during the festivities. Hotels require an increasingly large guaranteed amount of income, and GSBF is responsible for any shortfall of this amount. As a result, registration fees for the participants have made attendance at a convention a major investment.

All of this brings us to the 2018 convention. The major objective is to encourage participation by making it more user-friendly, and hence better attended. First, it is hoped that the registration fees for the activities can be sharply reduced. A second objective is to make the convention more attractive to younger people who will be the future of the bonsai movement. The duration of the convention will be reduced from four days to two and one-half days.

There are many details to be worked out and they will be reported in your newsletter as they become available. There will be a severe need for volunteer help from EBBS members to make it all happen. The potential is for a very exciting time for us, and the location is as good as it can get. Stay tuned.

REBS Show

The Redwood Empire Bonsai Society will hold their annual show on Saturday, August 26 and Sunday, August 27 at the Santa Rosa Veterans Building, 1351 Maple Ave., Santa Rosa. Hours are 10-5 and 10-4 respectively. The show is one of the largest in the area, if not the country, with about two hundred trees expected to be shown. Many of the trees that will be shown are the products of workshops by Kathy Shaner, so they are guaranteed to be of high quality.

There will be demonstrations each day by Kathy starting at 1:00 pm. There are other goodies such as a silent auction, raffles of the demonstration trees, and a very large vendor area.

Bob Shimon, the current club president, is delighted to answer questions about the show and can be contacted at shimon@mcn.org. Santa Rosa is a fair distance from the east bay, but the trip is well worth

your while to see one of the biggest and best shows of the area.



Mugho Pines

When we started our journey in bonsai, we wanted a bonsai tree of our own, and we wanted it now. Further, since we were new to the scene, we did not want to spend a lot of money on our first tree since we were not yet confident on the proper care of bonsai trees. As a result, many of us looked first at junipers. These provided a quick start with both easily available and cheap starting material. Just a little judicious pruning and a little wire afforded a product that looked like a bonsai tree. It was a case of instant success. The little tree could grow into a very presentable bonsai over a relatively short period. The reward of a nice bonsai for your efforts began from the day you began to work with the tree.

After your success with the juniper, you may have looked at maple trees. Here the availability of starting material is not quite as abundant as with junipers, but by carefully looking at offerings from vendors at shows and nurseries, good and inexpensive material can be found that can be turned into reasonable bonsai in a relatively short time.

Next stop after the maples are pines. However, with pines there is little chance of quick success. Pine seedlings are readily found and are very affordable, but creation of a bonsai from a pine seedling is a many year process. It is sort of like your kid sister learning to play the violin. The end result is achingly beautiful, but the early learning stages are not too welcoming. The long process to create fine bonsai from pine seedlings could be shortcut by buying trees that are close to being presentable bonsai, but these trees are not inexpensive because the cost reflects the many years that the seller spent in developing the tree.

So, what can the budding bonsai artist do who wants a presentable pine bonsai in a short time that doesn't break the bank? He would like a pine bonsai that uses available and inexpensive starting material, and offers quick results. All of this brings us to mughos pines which can at least partially satisfy these requirements. They are available at local nurseries, and frequently can be bought in one-gallon cans for as little as twenty bucks or less. All you need is a little pruning and a little wire and voila - a bonsai.



Mughos are, for the most part, an unexplored area in the bonsai world because they are not seen as often as they deserve to be. We look to Japan for all things bonsai, and there, the big three are junipers, maples and black pines because all of these are native to Japan. With locally available material, it is not a surprise that black pines have been cultivated as bonsai in Japan for many hundreds of years. The unique features of black pine growth have shaped the Japanese sensibility of what a pine bonsai should look like. Black pines have two characteristics which are important to their use as bonsai. First, they are top dominate which means that the tree wants to grow as tall as possible. Because of this, the growth is at the top of the tree at the expense of lower branches, which over time die out, giving a tall trunk bare of foliage at the bottom of the tree. Secondly, decandling can lead to dense pads of foliage. The current style in Japan is for such dense foliage that the tree is a green blob, and pine bonsai trees frequently look like green lollipops on a very thick stick.

Mughos are not held in high esteem partly because they grow in central Europe. Since they are not locally available in Japan, they have not been cultivated for the long period required to develop a background in how to best manage them and how to take advantage of their natural growth patterns.

Mughos grow in the wild more like shrubs than a tree. They rarely grow more than ten feet tall, and are usually at least ten feet wide. Clearly, they are not top dominate. Trees available as nursery stock are usually multibranched little trees, and will grow into a densely branched globe shaped landscape trees. This growth

style is further encouraged by pruning the trees by the grower. The dense growth leads to the new branches in the interior of the tree quickly dying out. This leaves most of the foliage at the end of bare branches.

The problems in creating bonsai from nursery grown mughos are twofold. First is to reduce the number of branches to a more manageable number, and to select a main branch for the single trunk of the bonsai tree. Branches on purchased nursery trees should not be reduced by more than one third in a year. Opening the tree will allow light to start back budding, which helps to resolve the problem of long bare branches. Also, lower branches should be reduced to give the tree a more upright appearance. Choose nursery trees that are a little more open and still have needles well down on the branches.

Nursery stock is frequently grown in mucky soils that are not amenable for growing them as bonsai, and repotting them into a proper bonsai soil is important. Mughos have the reputation of being difficult to repot, frequently not recovering after repotting. While black pines, as most bonsai, are repotted in the late winter or very early spring, the trick to successfully repotting mughos is to repot them in summer after the flush of spring growth. The trees should not be totally bare rooted when they are repotted. The trees are allowed to recover after repotting by leaving them in the shade for a couple of weeks, and during this time, foliage should be misted. After major work on the tree, it should be allowed to grow for a full year before the next major work is attempted.



The care of mughos offers other distinct differences from the care of black pines. Black pines are decandled late in the spring by cutting the candle completely back to their base. The new growth on mughos is not cut back to the base, but at least one pair of needles is left. As with black pines, the number of new buds emerging where the candles were cut should be reduced to only two.

Back budding in black pines is encouraged by pulling old needles. This also directs the energy of the tree to the newer growth. Mughos are the exact opposite. Back budding takes place where there are old needles still on the branch. You remove the old needles only where you do not want back budding to take place. Needles that face downward can be removed because you do not want a downward facing new branch.

Mughos enjoy fertilizer every two weeks from early spring to the late fall.

Mugho pines do not offer the instantaneous success as bonsai that can be found with junipers. However, inexpensive nursery stock does provide the possibility of creating a nice little pine bonsai tree in a relatively short time. Next time you are in Home Depot, look over the mughos. There may be a future gem waiting there for you.

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.

Bonsai Calendar

- Watering – Water regularly. Don't over-water defoliated trees.
- Fertilizing – Continue regular feeding, but stop fertilizing decandled pines.
- Repotting – Not recommended at this time except for tropical and semi-tropical trees.
- Styling/Pruning – Avoid drastic pruning. Wire uprising branches on quince, ume, oaks, etc. Prune excessive growth on trees.
- 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.

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

August 12, San Rafael, Marin Bonsai Club: Annual Bonsai Auction at Terra Linda Community Center, 670 Del Ganado Road in San Rafael. Preview at 7:00 PM. Auction starts at 7:30 PM. Terrific deals on bonsai, pre-bonsai, pots, stands, tools, books, and other bonsai related items. Payment by check or cash (no credit cards). Come early and have dinner at one of the many great restaurants across the street.

August 26 – 27, Santa Rosa, Redwood Empire Bonsai Society (REBS): 34rd Annual show at the Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building, 1351 Maple Avenue. Show hours are 10 AM to 5 PM on Saturday and 10 AM to 4 PM on Sunday, with demonstrations by Bonsai Master artist, Kathy Shaner, from 1 to 3 PM both days. Demo trees will be raffled. See the large bonsai exhibit, and shop from the many vendors and member sales. Exciting silent auctions, or "buy it now". Free refreshments by the Bonsai café. Free admission and parking. For more information visit our website at www.rebsbonsai.org, or contact Bob Shimon at (707) 884-4126 or shimon@mcn.org.

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 - 2018

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

Aug	27	Introduction to Bonsai – Don Meeker
Sep	13	Accent Plants – The Judds
Sep	24	Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
Oct	22	Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
Nov	8	Slab Planting – Randal Lee
Nov	26	Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Dec	13	Holiday Dinner
Jan	10	Styling Raft Hornbeam - Part 3 – Kathy Shaner

Special Events

Aug	19	Potluck
Oct	14-15	Show with Peter Tea as our Headliner
