

The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society
Meeting: February 8, 2017 7:30 PM

February Meeting



The February meeting will feature a presentation on shohin bonsai by our very own Bill Castellon. Shohin are designated as trees that are less than eight inches in height. One might think that the smaller trees would be easier to grow and maintain as bonsai, but the reverse is true. They present two challenges above and beyond the ordinary challenges one faces with larger trees. The small pots can dry out very quickly and the trees require even more careful care than larger bonsai to avoid the disastrous consequences of this happening.

An additional challenge is to maintain the styling of the tree. A three-inch new branch on a large bonsai is not an immediate problem but on a small tree, this branch would be greatly out of proportion with the styling of the rest of the tree.

Bill has consistently shown a fine group of shohin at our annual shows and all are grown to perfection. Bill is one of the instructors at the Merritt College workshops and has given many presentations in the past to EBBS and all have been well received. They are rarely the subject of regular monthly meeting presentations, so this meeting is an event that should be high on your list for attendance.

At the February meeting we will have a signup sheet for people willing to bring refreshments to the

next few monthly meetings. If you haven't contributed recently, the February meeting is an opportunity for you to make a delectable addition to the refreshment table.

March Meeting

The March meeting will feature a presentation by Jonas Dupuich. Jonas is a long-time member of the bonsai community and has just started to make presentations to local bonsai clubs. For his EBBS presentation, he will tell us how to evaluate our trees and how to best show them. Jonas maintains a web site which features articles on all aspects of bonsai. The web site is www.bonsaitonight.com and is a must see for all of us. In addition, Jonas has made several trips to Japan to study bonsai. We look forward to his first presentation to EBBS.

January Meeting

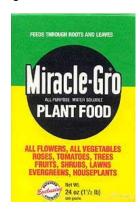
The January meeting was another edition of the Jay MacDonald wow and dazzle show. Jay again proved that he is an extremely enthusiastic speaker and his enthusiasm for bonsai is infectious. His passion for bonsai lies in deciduous trees and he particularly appreciates them when they are in fruit or flower. While many bonsai enthusiasts focus on conifers, particularly junipers, Jay insists that your collection of bonsai trees should be at least one half deciduous trees.



Jay brought in several of his trees to show just how spectacular deciduous trees could be. Since the program was in the winter and the trees had no foliage, the structure of each tree was readily seen to be appreciated. These trees turned the meeting into a mini show. All of them were beautifully grown and were top dressed and displayed on appropriate stands totally ready for a show.

Jay claims to be a very impatient bonsai artist. He says that enjoying the journey does not interest him. It is the final goal that he enjoys. Jay has become an outspoken advocate of extremely heavy fertilization, which he refers to as super feeding, as a way of quickly producing a finished show quality bonsai. Indeed, his fertilization program is super feeding at its best.

He applies a solution of Miracle Grow fertilizer (readily available at garden centers and big box stores), diluted to the strength listed on the package, starting on February 15, twice a month, until the middle of October. Most bonsai sources suggest that the fertilizer should be diluted to no more than one half of the strength listed on the package. Jay also applies Apex, a solid slow release fertilizer, in the spring, and



renews it every two or three months as it becomes depleted. Lastly, on February 1, Jay dusts the soil with a proprietary solid fertilizer obtained from a nursery in Marin. He claims that this gently wakes the tree up from winter dormancy. (Editors' note: a mixture of cotton seed meal and bone meal would probably be a good substitute)

The result of super feeding is rampant growth which means that the trees must be constantly maintained. The year in the life of a super fed bonsai is a busy one and made up of wiring, removing wire and pruning coarse growth. The branches rapidly increase in girth, and since the tightly wrapped wire does not stretch, the wire must be removed before scarring can take place. Scarring can occur in as little as four or five months on a super fed tree. Also, new branches need to be wired so new wire has to be applied. Coarse branches with long internodes will sprout and must be removed to allow the finer branches to grow. A less obvious consequence of super feeding is that branches become more brittle and care must be taken while wiring to avoid breakage of the branches.

A very important characteristic of a deciduous tree is a well-developed twig structure. In the past, Jay has referred to this as the "twiggery of the tree", although the more formal word for this is ramification. A process to help accomplish this quickly is to cut all the leaves off the tree after the leaves have hardened off in the late spring. After this occurs, the junction of the leaf with the branch may sprout a new side branch. Also with the leaves gone, sun can reach the interior of the tree and this can cause latent buds on the branch to sprout. As

the tree leafs out after defoliation, the new leaves will be smaller than those of the first spring time growth

. The best way to defoliate is to cut the leaves with scissors. Never pull the leaf off as this can damage the branch. The petiole of the leaf is the stem joining the leaf to the branch. The leaf is cut at the petiole, leaving on the tree about one third of the petiole. The remaining part of the petiole will dry off and fall.

Jay uses a mixture of seventy percent akadama, a Japanese product available from vendors at most bonsai shows, and thirty percent lava as the preferred soil mixture for his deciduous trees. For conifers, he uses a mixture of equal amounts of akadama and lava. He uses either aluminum or copper wire on his deciduous trees. As a standard practice, raffia is sometimes wrapped on branches that are to be sharply bent to help prevent them from breaking, but Jay said that he rarely uses it.

The demonstration tree, an American beech, presented several interesting possibilities. There was a tall branch which could be used to make a tall tree, or it could be removed to make a shorter tree. Both of these choices would lead to interesting bonsai. He allowed the audience to vote which they preferred and the vote was overwhelmingly in favor of the shorter tree. There were even more choices to be made because the resulting shorter tree now had two possible fronts. The final choice was left to the winner of the tree when it was raffled.

Once again Jay presented a fine program. His talk was packed with information, his style of delivery was engaging and the trees that he brought made it a truly special evening.

Mammoth Auction and Sale

Check your calendar! Be sure that you have marked down the mammoth sale and auction which is a fund raiser for the bonsai garden and will be on the weekend of February 18 and 19. It is a win-win event. The garden receives money to fund the operation of the garden and you have the opportunity to acquire some fine trees as well as bonsai accessories such as pots, stands and tools, and usually at very attractive prices. There will be something for everybody. The auction usually features a few superb bonsai at very high prices, but also features many affordable trees a little further away from being finished bonsai. There will be a sale which will feature a wide variety of trees, pots and stands, and usually at very favorable prices. Finally, there will be a number of vendors selling a wide variety of merchandise. There are even more vendors this year than in the past. Last, but not least, there will be a demonstration. With so much to see over the weekend and with so much to buy, you absolutely must put this event on your calendar.

The auction starts on 1:00 Saturday, February 18, with a preview beginning at 12:00. The sales area opens at 10:00 Sunday, February 19, and the vender area begins sales on Sunday at 9:00. The demonstration is scheduled for 1:00 Sunday. Further information can be found on the bonsai garden web site, <u>WWW.gsbf-lakemerritt.org</u>.

Super Star

Ryan Neil spent five years in Japan as an apprentice to an outstanding bonsai master. On his return, he has become one of the super stars of the United States bonsai world. A couple of years ago, he worked on a magnificent collected juniper. He will return on Saturday, March 4, to do a demonstration on the same juniper to further develop the style of the tree. The demonstration will be held from 1:00 to 4:00 pm in the sailboat house at Lake Merritt. Space is limited so if you want to attend, best to reserve your space at bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com. The demonstration is a benefit to the garden and costs just thirty-five dollars. Here is a wonderful chance to see a super star in action as well as contribute to the garden.

Ode to Events by Others



Each month your crusading editor. **Janice** Dilbeck, works her fingers to bone bν tirelessly maintaining and updating the column in the newsletter entitled Events by Others. This is clearly the most (and perhaps only) significant item to appear in the newsletter.

Why? Here is the detailed when and where information on bonsai shows in the area. Shows are an important part of your bonsai experience. You get to see a large number of trees at one time and they can provide a big impact on your development as a bonsai artist. All you have to do is ask yourself what you like about each tree and what do you think could be improved. It is through these questions that you can begin to see what makes a first-class bonsai. Also, and equally important, shows are a chance to meet other nice people who share your interest in bonsai.

A case in point is the annual show by Bay Island Bonsai at the end of January. The show was quietly advertised in the Events by Others and is arguably one of the finest bonsai shows in the entire country. If you attended the show you saw a large number of excellent bonsai. If you missed it, do not worry. There will be more excellent shows to see and they will be mentioned in the Events by Others in the newsletter. Do check it out each month.

Dues

Some of us are now feeling very smug because they have already paid their dues for 2017. The rest of us need to be reminded that the time has come for dues renewal. The yearly dues are \$30 for single memberships and \$40 for couples. Membership includes a subscription to our always entertaining and informative newsletter, The *Tree Shrinker*, by email. 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 for dues at the next

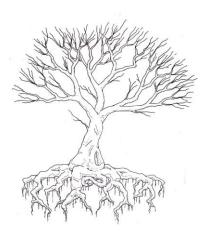
regular meeting. Dues can also be mailed to: EBBS Treasurer, 4933 Cochrane, Oakland, CA, 94618-2701.

Water

A frequently asked question by people new to bonsai is how much care does a bonsai tree We know that reauire? the daily care of bonsai takes about the same amount of time that feeding the family dog does. Each day some kibbles are scooped into his bowl and the water dish is checked to see if he needs water, and that's about it. How hard



is that? In the case of bonsai each day the tree must be checked to see if it needs water. If it does, it is watered. Again, how hard is that? The tricky part is consistency. If you don't feed the family dog for several days he will become very mad at you. If you let your bonsai go dry for several days, the tree may die. Of course, each year the bonsai tree requires a little more than just the daily care, and may be repotted and trimmed and wired as needed, but these activities are only performed once or, at best, occasionally during the year. The rest of the year is pretty easy.



Why is it that bonsai trees need to be frequently checked for water, whereas landscape trees can be left on their own all summer without water once thev have become established? The simple answer lies in the feeder roots. These are structures at the very end of the roots and are responsible for slurping up water and

nutrients that the tree needs. When the soil is moist, water flows from the soil into the tree. The flow of water is a gate which swings both ways. When the soil is dry water flows from the tree to the soil. Once water is lost from the feeder roots they can become dehydrated. If water is promptly administered, the roots can rehydrate and no major harm is done. However, the dry roots can quickly pass the point of no return, and then no amount of water will forestall death of the roots. If this happens, the tree has no means of securing the goodies that it needs to survive and the tree becomes essentially a cutting which needs time to grow new roots. While waiting for new roots to grow, the tree is constantly losing moisture through the leaves. It becomes a race between losing moisture and replacing lost moisture

through new roots. In short, the tree is in big time trouble and the prognosis is not good.

On a hot day, the top few inches of typical garden soil can dry out. The landscape trees know this and bury their roots deeply into the soil. Even though the top few inches of soil are crispy dry, there is enough moisture in the deep soil to maintain the feeder roots of the tree. However, in the case of the bonsai tree, if the top few inches of soil become crispy dry, that is all the way to the bottom of the pot and beyond, and that, of course, includes all the feeder roots. The feeder roots will dry out and die and generally the tree will give up and die before it can grow new feeder roots. This scene is aggravated by the fact that very loose soil mixtures are used for bonsai, which avoids root rot but dries out quickly. The moral of the story? Check your trees daily for water needs and, by the way, don't forget to feed the family dog.

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 Reduce watering, but ensure plants receive sufficient water
- Fertilizing Feed with 0-10-10.
- Repotting Repot deciduous trees and junipers
- Styling/Pruning Do heavier pruning. Cut large limbs on pines.
- Graft All species

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.

February 18 - 19, Oakland, GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt: The annual Mammoth Auction and Sale Fund Raiser will be held at 666 Bellevue Ave. (Garden Center Building). Saturday: Auction preview at noon with Auction starting at 1 PM. Sunday: Vendor Sales start at 9 AM, Plant Sales start at 10 AM, and demonstrations at 1 PM. The date for this year's event is a week earlier than in the past to let attendees and vendors participate in both the Mammoth and the Bonsai-a-Thon. You are encouraged to submit your bonsai for consideration to be included in the Mammoth Auction as soon as possible. Items will be considered on a first-comefirst-considered basis. The Bonsai Garden will be open 10 AM to 4 PM on Saturday and Noon to 4 PM on Sunday, so you can check out the many changes that have been made this year. For more information or to sell trees, email bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com and visit www.gsbf-lakemerritt.org.

March 4, Oakland, GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt: Ryan Neil will conduct a re-styling of the BGLM's Rocky Mountain Juniper to be held at the Lake Merritt Sailboat Boathouse from 1 to 4 PM. Ryan's demonstration will be a fund-raising event in support of the Bonsai Garden Revitalization Opportunity (GRO) project. BGLM is raising \$100,000 to replace worn out display and seating benches, upgrade water systems and install new pathways and windows.

Tickets are \$35 each (tax deductible) and will be available on a first-come-first-serve basis. Tickets may be reserved by emailing bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com with the name of purchaser, number of tickets requested, phone number, mailing address, and email address. Once you are confirmed that there is space for you, you will be asked to mail a check or credit card number, expiration date and Zip code to GSBF BGLM, PO Box 16176, Oakland, CA 94610. Once purchased, the tickets are non-refundable

Articles or Services for Sale (or give-away)

Mike Pistello is selling two types of cut paste at \$15 each. Contact him at 925-818-6116.





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		<u>Program</u>
Jan	29	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould
Feb	8	Shohin – Bill Castellon
Mar	8	Tree Display - Jonas
Mar	26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
Apr	12	tbd
Apr	23	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Janet Nelson
May	10	Satsuki Azaleas – Bob Gould
May	28	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Don Meeker
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
Nov	8	tbd
Nov	26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Tom Colby
Dec	13	Holiday Dinner

Special Events