



# The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXVI, No. 1

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



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## East Bay Bonsai Society

**Meeting:** January 11, 2017 7:30 PM

### President's Message

Happy New Year!

First, a huge "Thank You Michael Hylton!" - our outstanding (outgoing) President for the past two years. Fortunately for all of us (and especially me), Michael stays on the Board as Past President and will continue to provide marketing, web, and social media leadership to EBBS.

Also, special thanks to Suzanne Muller and Janice Dilbeck, whose terms on the Board expired. I'm pleased to report Janice will continue in her pivotal role as Editor and Publisher of *The Tree Shrinker*, and as the Exhibit Director of our Annual Show. Suzanne will continue to provide valuable leadership on special projects and meeting photography.

We have a big year in the works. Based on your Survey responses and our Retreat in November, the Board plans to improve several facets of the Club. But we can't do it without your help. We will need you to participate - a little bit - in any way you can, to make EBBS invaluable to you and your trees and other Bonsai enthusiasts.

For starters, our 2017 'Second Wednesday' meeting in January features Jay McDonald, who will get us out of our winter doldrums with his enthusiasm and expertise!

Roger Brady

### Past President's Message

The end of 2016 is nearly upon us. East Bay Bonsai Society has had very eventful meetings, shows, workshops, field trip and auction, and it could not have been successfully done without your help and volunteer efforts. There are lots of great plans for 2017 and I am glad you are a part of it.

This is my last president's message (for now) and I want to thank the board and club members for making my two years exciting and memorable.

Thanks,

Michael

### January Meeting

The January meeting will feature a presentation by Jay MacDonald. He will bring a number of his spectacular trees for us to admire. Jay is adamant about using high levels of fertilizer and, judging by the results on his trees, it really works. He is a high-energy guy, and his enthusiasm is infectious. We



look forward to an evening of fun as well as an evening in which we will learn the secrets needed to turn trees into fine bonsai. For his demonstration, he will work on one of his own trees that will not be raffled. Accordingly, members are encouraged to bring trees to add to the raffle table. In the past, the raffle table has benefited from member donations, and now is the time to be especially generous.

### February meeting

The February meeting will feature a presentation by our own Bill Castellon on shohin bonsai. These are trees under 8 inches tall. It would appear at first glance that the little trees would require less care than larger ones, but that is definitely not the case. The little trees



present not one, but two challenges. The first is how to grow them to perfection in their very small pots, and the second is how to maintain the styling of the tree. Bill regularly has shown a group of superb shohin trees at our past shows and is clearly a master of this difficult art. We are looking forward to his presentation on how to manage the little trees.

### **Holiday Potluck Dinner**

Our holiday potluck was a great success that was enjoyed by all who attended. The food brought by the attendees was extraordinary. EBBS is fortunate to have many fine cooks, and they outdid themselves for this year's repast. We all owe many thanks to all who brought goodies for the potluck. You made the evening a special treat.



One of the important activities of the annual holiday dinner is to announce the officers and board members for the forthcoming year. Our new President is Roger Brady and our Vice President is Lisa Harper. Pat Cahill will continue as Treasurer. John Nackley will be our Secretary for the forthcoming year. As a special note, John has served as an officer of EBBS for several years and is always willing to help where ever needed, and this time it is serving as secretary. Thanks, John for all you have done over the years for EBBS.

Continuing board members will be Tom Colby, Khary Dvorak-Ewell and Bev Martinez. New board

members will be Roberto Prado and Julie Holcomb. Retiring board members are Suzanne Muller and Janice Dilbeck, both of whom have contributed significantly to the actions of the board over the past year and will be missed. Last, but far from least, Janice Dilbeck will continue in her role as the crusading editor of the newsletter.

Joe Byrd offered a short presentation about the interaction between the bonsai garden and EBBS. Our club has an obligation to support the garden. In the past, although individual members of the club have given generously of their time and talent to the garden, the club itself has fallen a bit short. Expect to hear more of the garden activities, both in the newsletter as well as at the meetings, and hear about opportunities to volunteer at the garden. Joe mentioned the garden will be undergoing significant changes in the near future to upgrade and to improve the facility, and in this process, help will be needed.



The high point of the event was a program engineered by Michael Hylton featuring images from the past year's activities. Michael does an outstanding job of weaving the images into a single presentation. He has done this for the past several years and each time the program has been better than the last one. Michael will have a difficult time topping this year's presentation. Thanks, Michael for once again making the evening a special event.

### **Free Lunch**

You may have heard that there is no such thing as a free lunch. EBBS, ever on the forefront, is providing an exception to conventional wisdom. On Sunday, January 29, the East



Bay Bonsai Society is offering a free lunch at the bonsai garden to all members. What is more, the lunch will be catered by our very own master chef, John Nackley. The occasion is EBBS observing an obligation to perform service work each year to the garden. We will meet from 9:00 am to 12pm to prepare trees for the mammoth



bazaar fund raiser later in the month of February. Most of the preparation will be in the form of removing weeds from the trees and whatever else can be easily done to make the trees more salable. It promises to be a fun morning as well as the chance to work with some really nice trees. After our morning of fun in the sun, all workers will enjoy a free lunch. Mark your calendar for this heartwarming event.

### **Mammoth Auction and Sale**

Each year the bonsai garden at Lake Merritt holds a sale and auction to benefit the garden. It is a win-win affair. 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. The fundraiser is the biggest event of the year on the local bonsai scene. 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.

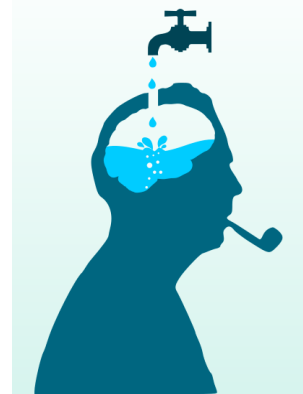
Finally, there will be a number of vendors with a variety of merchandise. Last, but not least, there will be a demonstration.

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 with a preview beginning at 12:00. The sales area opens at 10:00 Sunday and the vender area begins sales on Sunday at 9:00. The demonstration is held at 1:00 Sunday. Further information can be found on the bonsai garden web site, [www.gsbf-lakemerritt.org](http://www.gsbf-lakemerritt.org).

### **How we learn**

When we were in grammar school, our teachers patiently explained to us how to do arithmetic. We practiced our new skill and then we were tested to be sure if we had got it right. If we made mistakes, we practiced some more until we finally did get it right. This is the way we learned all that school had to offer, and it is such an integral part of our educational experience that we don't really think about it.



This method of learning, consisting of instruction, practice, and correcting mistakes, pervades much of our life.

It should come as no surprise that to become an auto mechanic there are, in many parts of the country, work study programs in which the apprentices go to school part time and, at the same time, work on the job as novice mechanics. They then directly practice what they have learned in the classroom on the job, under the watchful eye of experienced mechanics.

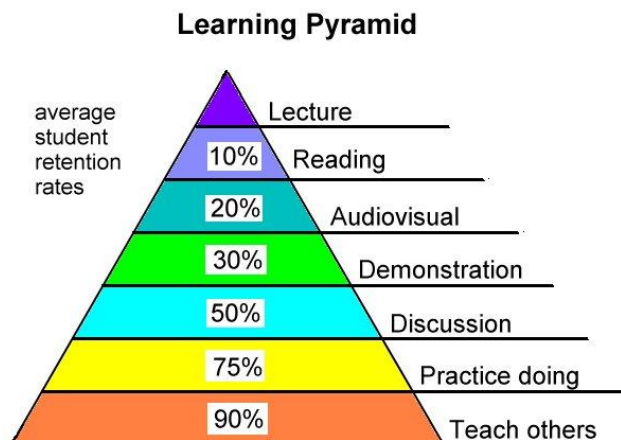
The Japanese have a very different view of how to master a skill. For example, if you want to become a carpenter in Japan in the traditional way, you spent the first six months doing menial jobs such as cooking tea and sweeping up saw dust on the work site. You were given no instruction about carpentry, but were expected to watch the other carpenters on the job.

One day you were handed a saw and were asked to cut a board. You were carefully watched, and if you didn't perform the task correctly, the saw was taken away from you, but there was no comment about what you did wrong. You got to watch some more, and with luck, were able to figure out what you did wrong so the next time you were asked to cut the board, it would go better. The Japanese term for this style of learning is that you were expected to "steal your craft" from the people around you, and make it your own style. This is a very grueling way to learn a craft, but if you survived, you would ultimately have a high level of skill.

So, what has all this to do with bonsai? Without thinking about what we are doing, we are participating in something very close to the Japanese method of skill development. We regularly attend bonsai meetings and the typical program is a demonstration. We watch a bonsai artist create a bonsai tree from a bush, and if the demonstrator is a good one, we learn why each of the steps were taken and, further, some cultural advice about how to grow the tree. This format is very Japanese in that we are expected to absorb what we have learned and apply it to our own trees.

The problem with watching demonstrations is that when we apply what we have seen to our own trees, there is no practice, no correction of mistakes, nor the concept that moving a branch a little more to the right would have a beneficial and dramatic effect on the tree.

As an example, wiring takes practice before you can be comfortable that you are doing it correctly and with confidence. No amount of watching a demonstrator is a substitute for this practice.



So where does this take us? Demonstrations at club meetings are valuable learning experiences, but are limited in that there is no opportunity to practice what you have learned, and there is no mechanism for correcting mistakes. You can become a bonsai artist by only watching demonstrations, but progress is slow at best. You have to figure out not only how to manage skills such as wiring and repotting, but what mistakes you have made and how to correct them.

The way to speed up the path to becoming a confident bonsai artist is to participate in workshops where you work on your own trees under the guidance of a knowledgeable bonsai artist. Here you have the benefit of both practice as well as suggestions such as where and how to move a branch to enhance the look of your tree.

There are frequent opportunities to participate in workshops. The most available is the monthly workshops at Merritt College which are free and are open to all. EBBS has offered workshops on wiring in the past two years, and these were focused on the single skill of wiring. The recent show featured a workshop which was well received. There will be more workshops sponsored by the club in the future.

The opportunity to participate in a workshop should be high on your list of bonsai activities. It will play a vital role in your development as a bonsai artist.

### **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 all trees into full sun.
- Watering – Adjust watering for winter.
- Fertilizing – Use low or zero nitrogen fertilizers.
- Repotting – Generally, not the time for repotting.
- Styling/Pruning – Trimming should be minimal. OK to wire, but be careful of brittle foliage.
- Insect and disease control – Remove dead plant material. Apply dormant spray. 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.

January 28 - 29, Oakland, Bay Island Bonsai: Annual Bonsai Exhibit at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave. Show hours are 10 AM – 4 PM, both days. Saturday: Auction preview starts at Noon with auction at 1 PM. Sunday: Workshop open to the bonsai community. Guided tours of the exhibit Saturday and Sunday. Vendor sales, club sales, educational bonsai material for sale and a special pot sale this year. Entry to the exhibit is free, donations accepted. Learn more and register for the workshop by calling (510) 919-5042 or visit <http://bayislandbonsai.com/bib-annual-exhibit/>.

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-come-first-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](mailto:bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com) and visit [www.gsbflakemerritt.org](http://www.gsbflakemerritt.org).

**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.

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**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.gsbflakemerritt.org/](http://www.gsbflakemerritt.org/)

**Meeting Program**

**Jan 11** Plant Care – Jay McDonald

**Jan 29** BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – Bob Gould

**Feb 8** Shohin – Bill Castellon

**Special Events**

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