



# The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXVI, No.7

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



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## East Bay Bonsai Society

Auction: July 12, 2017 Set-up @ 6:00 p.m.

Preview @ 7:00 p.m. Auction @ 7:30 p.m.

### July Meeting



Excitement is building for our annual auction in July. The auction will be held at our usual meeting place, the Lakeside Garden Center, and set up for the event will start at 6:00 pm. Sale items should be onsite and checked in by 7:00 pm. Tree tags and seller log sheets are attached to this newsletter and will also be available the evening of the auction. To avoid duplicate tag numbers, please use three initials on the tags to identify your auction items. The auction will start promptly at 7:30, so be sure that by this time you have reviewed what is available for sale, have your bidding paddle, and are ready to participate in the furious bidding in the auction.

Hopefully you have reviewed your collection and have selected those plants that do not quite meet your expectations. You may want to pass these on to a more loving home at the auction, as well as any surplus bonsai related items such as scrolls, pots, stands and tools. As a matter of fact, anything in good taste can be offered in the auction. Note that this excludes husbands, wives, past significant others, kids, and the family dog, but just about everything else is welcome.

The minimum projected selling price for all items is \$10, so save the little seedlings in a Dixie cup for our show in the fall. There, very inexpensive items sell quickly.

There is a limit of 10 items that can be entered in the auction. Items can be bundled. For example, a box of several pots can be sold together as one item. As usual, the club keeps 20% of the selling price and you get the rest, to hopefully use to buy more stuff at the auction. Of course, you can also donate your item to the auction, where the club gets the total selling price. Donations are a great way to support your club.



The auction provides a wonderful opportunity to practice your merchandising skills. If you want to sell a tree, anything that you can do to it that allows the potential customer to more easily visualize the tree as a finished bonsai will lead to a higher selling price. The most obvious step is to remove any weeds growing in the pot. It may surprise you to know that in the past, once in a while trees have shown up complete with weeds. As you might imagine, they did not sell for much.

Trees in bonsai pots sell better than trees in plastic nursery cans. Branches that are not clearly of value to the finished bonsai design can be trimmed off. Wiring of at least a major branch or two also helps. If you are selling a pot, scrub out the residual dirt. Stands can always use a bit of furniture polish to spiff them up.

There are always fine things to be found at the auction to upgrade your collection, and generally at most affordable prices. The auction is not only a lot of fun, but

also is a very important fundraiser for the club. It deserves your support in providing items for sale, buying lots of stuff, and helping out with the many tasks required to make it all run smoothly. Janet Nelson is in charge of the auction. See her if you want to volunteer. She could really use your help.

### **August Potluck**

Circle Saturday, August 19, on your calendar! That's the date of our annual potluck picnic that the club holds instead of the regular Wednesday meeting. Once again, Rick Trumm and Janet Nelson have generously agreed to host the event at their lovely home in the Oakland hills. The event usually starts in the mid afternoon and continues until dusk. This event is one of the 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 their beautiful bonsai is alone worth your visit. EBBS has some truly gifted cooks and the potluck lets you sample some of their best efforts. Best of all, the potluck is a chance for members to socialize on an informal basis. Watch the next newsletter for exact time, travel directions and food assignments and do plan to come. The pot luck is one of the most enjoyable events of the year.

### **June Meeting**

The June meeting was focused on the local bonsai garden, and was held there. The meeting also had to be completed by dusk, so each of the presentations was somewhat abbreviated.

Bob Gould has been active in the garden since almost its inception and gave a brief sketch of how the garden came about. The idea of a garden devoted to bonsai was inspired by a visit to a local Japanese nurseryman who had a large nursery which included bonsai trees.

The original location of the proposed garden was intended to be the Hakone Garden located on the peninsula in Saratoga. This would have been a fine location because the Hakone Garden is a large Japanese style garden. But at the last minute, this site

did not get approval from the city fathers. They felt that there was not sufficient parking available to service the large expected crowds.



The current site selected for the garden was a vacant piece of land in the lakeside park, and was approved for use as a bonsai garden by the Oakland city park officials. Work began in 1996 and the garden opened in 1999. The opening was attended by our current governor, Jerry Brown, who was mayor of Oakland at the time.

EBBS has been vitally involved in the garden since its inception. Much of the work in designing and building the garden was carried out by EBBS members, and many EBBS members are currently active in the operation of the garden. Kathy Shaner was the original curator of the collection and remains to this day, providing continuity to the care of the trees. Some EBBS members assist her with care of the trees in the collection.



Rick Trumm commented on several of the trees in the garden that he has worked on. He started with a general statement that each tree is different, and if you want a superb bonsai, you have to start with good material. So, look carefully at your starter trees. All of the trees he discussed in detail were magnificent junipers.

He offered a unique insight about the goal of wiring a tree. He said that when the branches once wired, they are moved not only for the looks of the tree, but to allow

sunlight into the interior. As an example, he pointed out a tree that needed to be thinned and branches repositioned because the foliage was so dense that light could not enter the interior. If this is not done, the interior branches will eventually die because of lack of light, and the tree will become leggy.

Rick showed a tree that he has been working on for seven years, and he sees a lot of future work that he would like to do. His obvious point is that fine trees take time to develop, and patience is needed as well as a vision of what the final tree should look like.

Rick graciously offered to answer any further questions about the trees he discussed when he is present at the garden.

At the conclusion of the tour, the members enjoyed a presentation by George Haas on the current and future plans for the garden. George is currently the marketing manager for the garden. He placed heavy emphasis on the importance to the garden of the Garden Revitalization



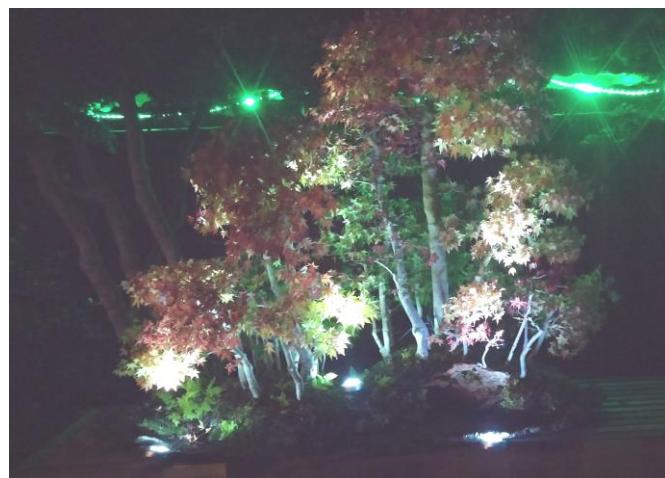
Opportunity (GRO) fund. The money raised will be used to replace, as well as upgrade the current facilities. He provided a long list of planned projects. The goal of the fund is to raise \$100,000 and the goal is now 35% reached. He said that any amount would be appreciated. In addition to approaching individuals for donations, the garden is actively searching for donations outside the bonsai community from charitable organizations.

George touched on several ongoing programs at the garden. The garden could always use volunteer help. The obvious need is for docents. There is in place a docent training program, and he emphasized that being a docent is a lot of fun. A quick poll of the members at the meeting revealed that nearly all had been a docent at one time or another. A less obvious need is for many other skills such as plumbing and electrical work.

George said that many people show up hoping to work on the trees, and for them, an assistant curator program is in place. The purpose is to create a number of people who can assist Kathy Shaner in managing the collection. The program requires an initial fee and a commitment for several years of varying participation in the care of the trees. The garden has an outreach program to the community which features a presentation on bonsai one day each month. EBBS supports this program by supplying instructors.

Planning is beginning for the Festival of Lights event in the park to be held in the fall. The event is important to the garden because the city shares part of the income with the various participants, and thus this becomes a significant source of income for the garden. Preparation for the event needs volunteer help, and EBBS has generously contributed in the past.

The last item that George mentioned was an exciting possibility that is about the upcoming



convention. GSBF holds a convention each year, alternating between southern and northern California. It is usually held in a large hotel which provides space for demonstrations, vendors and dinners as well as business meetings. Over the years, attendance has fallen and space rental costs have risen. GSBF is proposing that the convention scheduled in northern California next year be held at the garden, making use of space at the sailboat house and the garden center. This plan is in the discussion stage and, as you might expect, there are many details to be worked out. If it does come to pass, EBBS members will be called on for help in many ways including setup and security.

Georges' presentation gave a clear view of what the garden is doing, where the garden is going, and what it will take to get there. Thanks, George.

### **Spotlight**



This month the spotlight is on Michael Hylton. First, we need a bit of background. If the local Sumerian bonsai club in the year 2,500 BCE wanted to hold an auction, they would have advertised it to their friends and neighbors by means of distributing clay tablets on which was written a friendly invitation, as well as all the necessary details such as time, place and etc. In the intervening 4500 years, little has changed with the single exception that we now use paper rather than clay as the medium for our message. Until just recently, our auctions and shows were mainly advertised to the interested public by means of paper notices. Now, paper is soooo Bronze Age. Social media have become the best mode for advertising an event in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Here is where Michael is at his best. He has given EBBS a looming presence in the electronic world by posting advertisements for our auctions and shows on a variety of social web sites, and this has paid off for us in the form of increased attendance in past events. Michael has also given EBBS a presence on chat groups, which may lead to new members.

Thanks Michael for giving EBBS a presence in the electronic world and the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Your efforts are much appreciated.

### **A Second Spotlight**

Here we illuminate our president, Roger Brady. As our president, you have seen him masterfully conducting the regular meetings each month. The June meeting was a tour de force for him. At the last minute, the meeting place in the garden center was not available, and Roger gracefully did all that was needed to transfer the meeting to the bonsai garden, and conducted the meeting there. He turned what could have easily been a fiasco into a pleasant evening for all attendees. Thanks, Roger, for your efforts to rescue tranquility from chaos. By the way, is your day job rescuing Pauline from her perils?



Thanks also to Bob and Polly Gould for arranging at least a brief meeting in the bonsai garden.

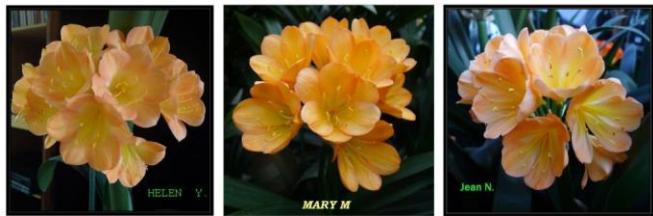
### **A Mingling of the Generations By: Maria Sargent**



I first met Don Meeker at a Diablo Bonsai Show taking place at the Civic Center in Walnut Creek in the 90's. Together my father, Don, and Ruben Guzman were members of the club under the tutelage of Sensei Kunitoshi Akabane, also known as "Kay", from the Tassajara Nursery in Danville. Don has been my go to person since I began working with (2008) and inheriting my dad's bonsai collection in 2011. He is very

knowledgeable about fertilizing, disease control and styling bonsai. Just this last winter I gave him a satsuki azalea that was slowly seeing its demise, and he was able to bring it back to a healthy plant for me. I'm pleased to report that it is doing well.

We drive together to the monthly meetings of EBBS and BASA, and he comes to my garage for our monthly social Diablo Bonsai meetings. I enjoy the casual conversation of discussing travel, family, and his wife's hobby of raising Clivias.



I sent him a couple of questions to get more accurate answers about his family and bonsai.

#### *When did you first become interest in bonsai?*

"I was in Japan in the 1950's and became enthralled with their esthetics. Then I went to college at Berkeley and SF State. I lived just a couple of blocks from the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park, and being a poor student, I spent a lot of time relaxing there. I think all of that set me up, and created my great interest in and fondness for bonsai. So, no single big event.

I met Mary in the winter of 1958, and we spent time in Golden Gate Park where I collected seeds from a Monterrey Cypress. I still have pictures of the tree. I started those seeds in a box in Mary's apartment. Those 1958 Cypress seedlings became my first bonsai. Then I bought a copy of ***The Art of Growing Miniature Trees, Plants and Landscapes*** by Tatsuo Ishimoto, 1956, a San Francisco writer. While not a very good book, I didn't know the difference, and it gave me some direction and information for several years."

*You said you visited Japan in the 50's. What places did you visit?*

"The first time, I spent about 6 months in Japan and visited the 3 major islands: Kiyushu, Honshu and Hokkaido."

#### *What work did you retire from?*

"I spent my final working years as an independent consultant in business computer systems design and implementation, and effective management strategies."

#### *Any other interesting facts?*

"We like to think of ourselves as the 'all American family'. Mary, of Japanese descent, is Asian. Her Mother was born on the Kona Coast of the big island Hawaii, and her Father was reputedly part Hawaiian. My Father was born in the Cherokee Territory in what is now Oklahoma. His Mother was English and Cherokee, his Father Dutch and Creek. My Mother's family were French, German, Irish and Scotch. Mary's nephew adopted a boy who is partially sub-Saharan African, and our oldest son and his wife adopted a boy who was born in Mexico. So that pretty well covers it!"

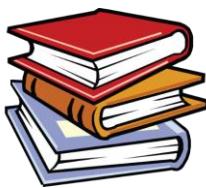
Many people do not realize the time and donations that Don has given to the bonsai community here in the

Bay Area. He is always willing to set up/ take down and be a presence at the EBBS and BASA shows. Don always brings donations to club meetings and shows, whether it be his starts from clippings, or him downsizing some of his bonsai. He never expects his percentage, but gives the full amount back to the club. He also teaches *Introduction to Bonsai* at the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt.

Thank you, Don, for being a friend and mentor to me, donating bonsai to EBBS and BASA, and being a volunteer not only for the clubs that you belong to, but also to the Gardens at Lake Merritt.

### **A Plea**

Bev Martinez would like to upgrade the collection of books in the EBBS library. She welcomes donation of your unused books, and is particularly interested in specialized books rather than general books on bonsai. Her efforts have made our library a go to source for bonsai information, and she would like to make it even better.



## **HISTORY**

Ever wondered how long bonsai has been on the scene as an art form, and where did it start? The answers to these questions are a long time and we don't know, respectively. Let's look a little closer at these questions. Bonsai did not become an important activity in America until after the second world war. EBBS was founded in about 1960 and was one of the first clubs in California, and probably among the first bonsai clubs in the entire United States. One can see the effects of the relatively recent start for bonsai in the United States in the fact that there are very few trees that have been cultivated here as bonsai for more than fifty years. Two notable exceptions are trees that were both brought from Japan. The Burlingame oak in the bonsai garden which came from Japan in the 1860's, and a pine tree that was bought from Japan for the Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1915.

There is a much greater time depth for bonsai in Japan. Some trees there have been cultivated as bonsai for way more than 200 years. These trees are carefully documented by written records, listing who owned them and who were responsible for the cultivation of the trees. The written record on bonsai trees dwindles after about three or four hundred years.

To deepen the time depth for the cultivation of bonsai, we next turn to a relatively unsuspected source, fine art and specifically painting. Paintings are usually more or less accurately dated. Much useful information for a variety of interests can be frequently found in the background of paintings that are outside of the immediate subject of the painting. For example, Persian carpet enthusiasts who want to date when a particular design came into usage, pour over western paintings

that have carpets in the background for the designs in the carpet. Dates derived from paintings tell us only when a particular feature was in use, but do not tell us about how much earlier the feature was in use. In the same way, trees in pots, by definition bonsai, appear in Japanese scrolls as early as the 1500's. Beyond this, the record peters out because of the dwindling number of surviving scrolls in Japan. The best we can tell from art sources is the age of bonsai as an art form in Japan is at least several hundred years old.

So how did it all get started? There are at least two possibilities. Chinese paintings indicate that potted plants were frequently seen in the backgrounds of Chinese royal portraits as early as 600 CE. Buddhism was brought by Chinese monks to Japan in the year 753 CE, and they may have also brought the appreciation of potted plants with them.



A second possibility is that bonsai had a truly Japanese origin. We know from contemporary paintings that a hundred years or so after Buddhism arrived in Japan, monks had built a large garden in the palace grounds of the emperor. The garden was a reflection of Buddhism's great respect for nature, and as a result, had a spiritual quality.

Japanese gardens today have preserved this same spirituality. Construction of these gardens required an enormous expenditure of money, man power, and space, and these resources were limited to the top of the ruling class.

It is possible that people less endowed with financial resources figured out that reducing the garden to a single tree in a pot could retain the spiritual quality of the entire garden. If this supposition is correct, bonsai as art was born as an outgrowth of large gardens. Also, this supposition explains why bonsai trees, even today, are treated with such respect in Japan.

Where ever the origin of bonsai lies, over the years it has evolved into the distinctly Japanese art form that we enjoy today

Creating a bonsai today is a cool activity, not only because it is both rewarding and satisfying, but also because it is continuing a very long tradition that has qualities beyond simply growing a tree in a pot. Treat your trees with respect!

### **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.*

### **Roster Update**

We are glad to have Inge Wolfel return to the club. Please add her to your roster. Her phone number is (510) 533-7455, and her e-mail address is iwoelfel@att.net.

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

#### **Meeting      Program**

Jun 14	Romp in the Garden – Bob Gould and Rick Trumm
Jul 12	Auction
Sep 13	Accent Plants – The Judds
Nov 8	Slab Planting – Randal Lee
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

Please also welcome two new members to the club, Rick and Candace Medress. Their phone number is 510-990-6966.

### **Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College**

The workshops at Merritt College are held only when the college is in session. Because the campus is closed for the summer, there will be no workshops until the fourth Monday of August when they will again resume.

### **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.