



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

Meeting: March 8, 2017 7:30 PM

March Meeting

Most parents think that their kids are really smart. The day of reckoning comes in the form of school report cards which more or less objectively assesses the truth of the matter. Just as we tend to be optimistic about our kids, we also tend to be optimistic about our bonsai. After all, we spend a lot of time maintaining them and as a result we have to think that they are something special. But how good are they?

The March meeting will feature a program by Jonas Dupuich devoted to objectively evaluating your bonsai. Jonas will present a means of evaluating your bonsai and this method can also be extended to trees you see in a show as well as to trees you are considering to purchase. He will introduce his evaluation scheme and then apply it to trees he will bring to the meeting as examples of how it works. Jonas encourages members to bring trees for evaluation using his technique.

Jonas is a long-time member of the bonsai community and has just started to make presentations to local bonsai clubs. He 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.

Thanks in advance to Bev Martinez, the Nackleys and to Randall Lee for offering to bring refreshments to the meeting.

April Meeting

The April meeting will feature a program by our very own Beverly Martinez on pots for bonsai. Bev is an accomplished potter in addition to being a bonsai artist. A particularly exciting aspect of her presentation is that current plans are to follow the program by a



weekend workshop on April 15 at Beverly's house where members can make pots for their trees. Details are being worked out at this very minute. Stay tuned!

February

The February meeting was a presentation by Bill Castellon on shohin bonsai. These are trees less than 20 centimeters (about eight inches) tall. Trees a little taller than this are also considered as shohin if they have very slender trunks and are potted in very small pots. The scale and proportion of small trees are critical. Leaves must be small as well as fruit for deciduous trees. Pines must have short needles. Taper of the trunk is important. Producing a short tree by cutting the trunk of a big tree gives a chopped off look to the tree. Successful shohin trees should look like the tree grew in a natural way.



Pot size is very important for the display of the tree. A large pot makes a tree look smaller than it actually is, but a small pot makes the same tree look larger, so small pots are desired. Most shohin started life in a larger pot, and each time the tree was transplanted it was placed in a somewhat smaller pot. In this way, the final small sized pot is approached in several steps. However, if the final pot is too small, the tree looks unbalanced. The tree and the pot must work together.



The most critical element in the care of shohin is water. The little pots dry out quickly and this leads to the death of the tree. Shohin must be watered every day during warm days and twice a day on hot days. Bill uses a mist system to assure that his trees do not dry out, although he prefers hand watering when his schedule permits.

Bill feeds his trees every two weeks with fertilizer diluted to the strength recommended on the package. He starts fertilization on the first of March, and continues through the end of October. Any general-purpose fertilizer can be used, but be sure to follow the dilution directions on the package. Deciduous trees that are not fertilized can slowly decline over the years.

The trees are shaped by allowing branches to grow out, and then cutting them back. Maples are kept small by pinching the tips of new growth in the spring. This also leads to short internodes which are particularly important for small trees. Defoliation of maples in the late spring reduces leaf size, increases ramification, and leads to shorter internodes on the branches. That is a lot of benefits for a single operation. He prunes flowering trees after completion of blooming.



Bill uses a commercially available akadama based soil mixture, and occasionally tweaks the mix with a little extra akadama for deciduous trees to form a soil that is slightly more moisture retentive. He commented that in general, mixes with faster drainage speeds up growth of the trees and mixes with more moisture retentive properties slow growth. Transplanting also slows growth.

Bill devoted special attention to pine shohin. Pines not only make fine bonsai, but a pine is needed for the top of a multilayered display. Pines are considered a masculine tree and being at the top of a display says something about the Japanese view of masculinity.

Pines are handled somewhat differently than deciduous trees and other conifers. The goal of pine shohin is to produce a tree in proportion to its size, and this requires short needles. Short needles are obtained by cutting the candles (new growths) each year. The tree responds by forming new growths which have the desired short needles at the place where the candles were cut. The trees are fed high nitrogen fertilizer in the spring to prepare them for decandling which occurs in

late June. Following decandling, the trees are allowed a short rest. Fertilization is resumed in late summer and continued until late fall.

Candle cutting can be fine-tuned. The strongest growth of a pine tree occurs at the top of the tree. A finished bonsai should have all the needles the same length which gives the tree a balanced look. To achieve this, the candles at the bottom of the tree are the weakest, and they are cut first to give them a head start on new growth. Candles at the top of the tree are cut a few days later which delays their growth. The result is a tree with all the needles the same size.



Decandling is applicable to all pine bonsai, but is particularly important for shohin pines. A pine tree wants to grow tall and have long branches. It does this by the tips of the branches growing at a faster rate than the remaining branches. The lower branches and inner small branches gradually die out as the tree continues to grow. This process is stopped by decandling. If not decandled, the tree would quickly become too large and out of proportion for a shohin bonsai.

There were three demonstration trees, a pine, a persimmon and a maple. Bill showed that with only a little work, each of the trees became the framework for a fine bonsai in the future.

Bill brought a number of his splendid shohin to show examples of small trees that were fine bonsai. The trees were presented along with accent plants on stands as they would be displayed in a bonsai show. His enthusiasm for shohin and his presentation left the audience eager to look carefully at shohin displayed in upcoming shows. They are truly little treasures.

Dues

Those members of EBBS who are familiar with the works of Shakespeare know that Julius Caesar had a little problem that occurred during the Ides of March. The end of March also poses a problem for those few members who have not paid their annual dues which are an outrageous bargain at \$30 for single memberships and \$40 for couples. Membership includes an email subscription to the EBBS newsletter, the Tree Shrinker, which is the acknowledged voice of truth and light of the east bay world of bonsai. 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 at the March meeting, or dues can be mailed to: EBBS Treasurer, 4933 Cochrane, Oakland, CA, 94618-2701.

The unfortunates who have not paid their dues by March 31 will be removed from the roster and will no longer receive the newsletter. Don't follow Caesar's example of the bad things that can happen in March by neglecting to pay your dues by the last day of March.

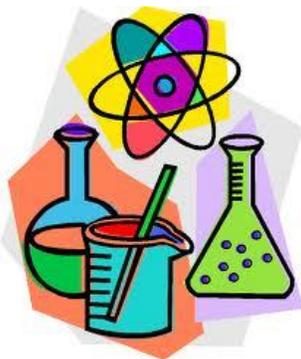
Free lunch

EBBS has an obligation to support the activities of the bonsai garden by volunteering as docents and for general maintenance work as required. On Sunday, January 29, at least fifteen members of EBBS spent the morning helping to prepare trees for the mammoth sale in February. As a special thank you to all participants, EBBS offered a free lunch. See, there is really such a thing as a free lunch. The delectable lunch was engineered by master chef John Nackley and it was so good that John might consider quitting his day job.

Many EBBS members also volunteered to help with the mammoth sale. Thanks to all these wonderful people that are so generous with their time. You will be hearing about more opportunities to participate in supporting the garden in the future. The garden plays a vital role in the bonsai community by not only displaying a large collection of bonsai master pieces, but also is a source of information about growing bonsai, and finally, has an outreach program to the community to stimulate continuing interest in bonsai.

Ni, Cu, Cd

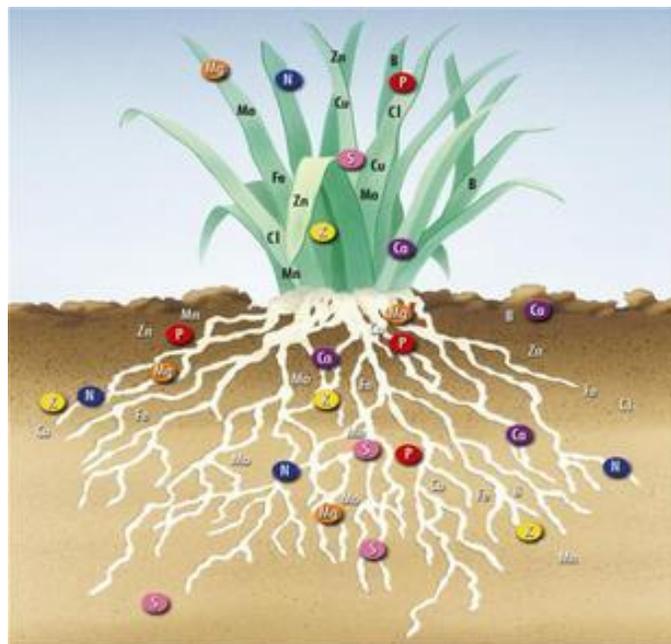
Egads, these are the chemical symbols for nickel, copper and cadmium! This sounds like high school chemistry and for most of us the best part of high school chemistry was seeing it in the rear-view mirror. But wait, there is more. If we want to know about the nutritional needs of our plants, we need to know at least a little about chemical esoterica.



There have been a lot of studies of plant nutrition, but they almost exclusively focus on plants of agricultural interest such as wheat and corn, simply because that is where the money is to support research. While these studies are on plants not adapted for bonsai, the results should at least be of interest to the cultivation of our bonsai. However, one must bear in mind that the nutritional needs of each plant species may be a bit unique. For example, pine trees and corn plants may have slightly different nutritional needs.

We all know that we must supply our plants with fertilizer to allow the maximum growth of our plants, and

the fertilizers that we use are rich sources of nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous. These are the heavy hitters of the fertilizer world.



What we may not know is that our plants also require a whole grocery list of other chemical elements. The most important three elements on the list which our plants need are calcium, sulfur and magnesium. Magnesium is a component of chlorophyll, responsible for the green color of healthy leaves and crucial to the manufacture of compounds needed for the plant to grow. Both the soil we use for bonsai as well as tap water contain adequate sources of each of these elements. In fact, these elements are so abundant relative to our plants needs that we don't even think about adding them to our fertilizers.

Next on the list is a large group of elements that are needed in only tiny amounts, hence the collective name, *trace elements*. It is easy to analyze plant tissues for elemental composition but it is yet another matter to understand just what the role of a particular element in the plant metabolism really is. The accepted explanation is that these elements are components of enzymes and hormones that are essential to the life processes of the tree, but are themselves present in only very small amounts. A summary of these elements and what they may do in the plant is given below.

- Iron helps in the manufacture of chlorophyll. Iron deficiency is sometimes seen and results in yellow leaves because of lack of chlorophyll in the leaves.
- Boron helps regulate plant metabolism.
- Chlorine compounds are used in photosynthesis.
- Copper is present in an enzyme which the plants need to metabolize nitrogen.
- Manganese is needed for chlorophyll production
- Zinc is present in a number of enzymes and plant hormones.

Also, potentially on the list are selenium and molybdenum (the symbol is Mo in case anyone asks you at your next cocktail party), although the requirements for these are less certain, and illustrate the problem of trying to figure out what trace elements actually do in the plant. The case of selenium is particularly confusing and is an example of the difficulty of understanding the exact roles of trace elements. It appears to be rarely found in plant tissues, although studies indicate that some plants grow better when very low levels of selenium are added to irrigation water. At only slightly higher levels, it becomes extremely toxic to plants. So, what does the presence of small amounts of selenium do in plant tissues? At this point, no one knows. Molybdenum appears to be found in some plants but not others. Does this mean that it is needed by some plants and not others, or does it mean that it just goes along for the ride and doesn't do anything at all in the plant?



The list is overwhelming. What do we need to do to be sure that our bonsai are growing at their best? Fortunately, the best answer is to do nothing beyond what we are already doing. Miracle Grow, a popular inorganic fertilizer, is enriched with small amounts of boron, copper, iron, manganese, molybdenum and zinc which is just about everything on the list of

needed trace elements. Organic fertilizers such as fish emulsion, bone meal and cotton seed meal are also probably sources of trace elements. Lastly, the soils we use as well as tap water are also sources of trace elements.

There are packages of trace elements available at garden centers and on the Internet that could be added to regular fertilizers, but before you rush out to buy such supplements for your fertilizer, be aware the each of these elements has a narrow window between efficacy and toxicity, and besides, your plants are already probably getting all the trace elements that they need. A little may be great, but just a little more can really set your plant back. Probably the best thing to do is to just relax and enjoy your bonsai trees and wonder at how complex their life processes are.

One might ask how in the world plants growing in the wild find all these elements for their growth, but that is a question for another day.

The Unwanted Christmas Gift.

My son, who is a Science teacher in Chula Vista announced in mid-December that he had received a small tree as a present from one of his students. He told me that he would not be able to care for it, and it looked like one of those bonsai that I have sitting in my yard. Perhaps I might like to have it.

Well, I was flying to San Diego for Christmas so I told him I would take a look at it. I arrived just in time to make sure it had water and some light. It turned out to be a very dark green *Chamaecyparis Lawsoniana*

elwoodii (Lawson False Cypress). I brought it back home in my carry on and decided to plant it in a terra cotta pot for it to grow for a while.

After Christmas I was at Home Depot and saw they had little Christmas trees on sale. I couldn't resist the Gold crest Wilma cypressus macrocarpa (Wilma Monterrey Cypress), which has a lemon smell to it. The more I thought about these two Cypress, I looked in my collection and found that I had started a blue Cypress awhile back from a cutting. Three is better than 2 in a group planting.

Move forward to repotting season. I thought, let's try putting these three Cypress together in a pot and see how they grow. I was taking a creative break from the mundane of repotting my bonsai.



I would have preferred a simpler oval pot, but this was the only one deep enough. I decided to put into practice the building of a grid that Peter Tea had taught me when I did a Ginkgo planting last year. I lined the bottom of the pot with some pumice, and then put a mix of 40% Akadama, 30% Pumice and 30% lava. I decided on this mix as I want the trees to grow more this year since they are still developing, and they like to be on the moister side. I did some branch trimming and root trimming as I was putting the trees in the pot.



Hopefully the men will enjoy playing their game of "GO" as the trees produce more shade for them. Just a word of caution about the Cypress. I have found that the Cypress tree does not like full sun in the summer, but can take the morning sun, and then rest under shade cloth in the afternoon.

Maria Sargent

New workshop

A new workshop led by Sam Adina, the sensei of the Modesto club, has been established for serious beginners. The workshop is currently full but is looking for alternates to fill in for regular participants who are unable to attend specific meetings. The workshops are held on the first Saturday of each month at the house of Linda Soliven, located in Antioch. The cost is \$50 per session. For further information see the attached flyer or contact Linda at bonsaigirl143@att.net or 925-776-2342. This is a great opportunity to further your bonsai skill set and should be particularly enticing to people living in the Walnut Creek- Concord area.

Bonsai Calendar

- Watering – Continue reduced watering, but ensure plants receive sufficient water
- Fertilizing – Do not feed deciduous trees. Begin fertilizing black pines. Delay feeding repotted plants for 2-6 weeks.
- Repotting – Repot deciduous trees, pines, satsuki and junipers
- Styling/Pruning – Prune maples if not pruned in Nov or Dec. Pinch leafing deciduous trees unless trying to redirect growth pattern.
- Graft – All species
- 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

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.

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.

March 11 – 12, Oakland, Bay Area Bonsai Associates: 36th Annual Bonsai Exhibit at Lake Merritt Garden Center , 666 Bellevue Avenue , Oakland. Hours are Saturday 5 PM – 9 PM with light dinner at 5:30 PM and demonstration by Bill Castellon, Gordon Deeg, and Jim Gremel at 6:30 PM. Hours for Sunday are 10 AM – 4 PM.

April 1 - 2, San Jose, San Jose Betsuin Bonsai Club: 45th Annual Bonsai Exhibition and Demonstration at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, 640 North Fifth Street. Show hours are: Saturday Noon - 5 PM, and Sunday 11 AM - 4 PM with styling demonstrations at 1 PM on both days. Styled and pre-styled trees, as well as bonsai pots will be offered for sale on both days. For more information, contact Ken Azuma at kennethazuma@sbcglobal.net or visit our website at http://www.sanjosebonsai.org/sjbbc/SJBonsai/SnbM-enue/Links_holder/link.html

April 1 - 2, Sacramento, Bonsai Sekiyu Kai: 40th Annual Bonsai show and demonstration at Buddhist Church of Sacramento, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Hours are 10 AM – 4 PM with demonstration at 2 PM by Yuzo Maruyama, followed by a benefit raffle both days. There is a bonsai vendor area and a food vendor. Admission and parking are free. For information, email BonsaiSekiyuKai@gmail.com.

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.

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

East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2017
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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/

Meeting Program

Mar	8	Tree Display - Jonas
Mar	26	BGLM Introduction to Bonsai – John Nackley
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

Oct 14-15 Show
