



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

Meeting: December 12, 2018 6:30 PM

President's December Message

This is my last message of the infrequent few I've penned for the newsletter before the Mueller Report drops. (-)

First, Thanks to ALL of you, every one of our members, who are so committed to your trees, the art of Bonsai, and to EBBS, who have been: paying your dues, attending our monthly meetings, helping with set up, providing (voluntarily) snacks at those meetings, bringing show-and-tell trees, actively participating in our benefit drawings (raffles) and the Bay Area's best Bonsai auction, your excellent cooking, and for being your friendly, interesting, and giving selves.

Also, thanks to the very many of you who went (and continue to go) the extra mile (or five) for the club: as presenters at our monthly programs, 4th Sunday's at the garden, and workshops; as auction and annual show organizers and team leaders; as hosts and/or hostesses for board meetings or out of towners; as a tireless marketer; as an exacting bean counter; as award winning writers, authors, and newsletter publisher; and as mentors, advisors and/or nudges to me.

And, yet again in many cases, thanks to the officers and directors these past two years, who have all had my back.

And with this message, my 'Reign of Terror' will be fini. As for ROT in WDC, these past two years, you'll have to stay tuned (-)!

All the Best to All of Us,

Roger Brady
EBBS President 2017-2018
See you next next

December Meeting

The December meeting is the annual event in which we celebrate the holiday season with a potluck dinner in place of our usual meeting agenda. Do plan to come and make this part of your festive season. We begin the festivities at 6:30 pm with beverages and appetizers. Note that we start one hour earlier than usual. Doors



open at 6:00 pm and we could use help in setting up for the event.

The club will furnish ham and chicken as well as beverages. The rest is provided by attendees as follows:

Last name A-F	Salad
Last name G-L	Side dish
Last name M-R	Dessert
Last name S-Z	Appetizer

The appetizer-people should plan to arrive early so their contributions are available at the beginning of the evening. Please supply an appropriate serving utensil for the dish you are furnishing. Also, be sure to bring your own plate and eating utensils. A decorative place mat would make a festive setting for the meal. In past years the dinners have been memorable due to the fine offerings of the many fine cooks in the club. Yes, we collectively have talents far beyond just growing trees, and these are on full display at the holiday dinner. People are also encouraged to bring small bonsai decorated for the holiday season as table center pieces. These greatly add to the ambiance of the evening.

The special highlight of the evening will be another slide show presented by Michael Hylton featuring the club activities during the past year, and focusing particularly on our recent show. Those of you who attended the holiday

party last year were amazed and delighted by the splendid program that Michael put together, and we are eagerly looking forward to yet another of Michael's superb programs as the high point of the evening.

One way to celebrate the festivities of the evening is to pay your dues for the forthcoming year. With this obligation behind you, the New Year can be faced with a clear eye. Pat Cahill, our treasurer, will be available to take your checks. Membership is \$30 for singles and \$40 for couples. For those wanting hardcopies of the newsletters mailed to them, add \$5.

January Meeting

The January meeting will feature a presentation by Sam Adina on olives. Olives make wonderful bonsai and have not been the subject of a demonstration at a club meeting in the recent past, so this program is most welcome. Sam has been active in bonsai for a long time and has lead workshops that have been attended by some of our club members. This will be his first appearance at a regular EBBS club meeting as a presenter. We look forward to his program.



November meeting

The November meeting featured a presentation on azaleas by Rick Garcia. The focus was on autumn maintenance. The summer activity was to encourage the plants to grow as much as possible. In autumn the plants uses less water and shut down for the winter like deciduous trees. In fact, many azaleas lose some or most of their leaves over winter. The plants desired shade in the summer to protect them from the hot sun. In winter the plants appreciate as much sun as possible. Winter brings less sun and cooler temperatures. Consequently, the soil the azaleas are potted in stays wet longer. Falling leaves can cover the soil which also prevents the plants from losing excess moisture.



The first autumn task is to remove many of the leaves, leaving five or six leaves at the branch tips. Rick demonstrated this procedure on the demo tree. A fundamental characteristic of azaleas is that inner branches readily die off. Removing leaves which shade the inner branches helps to prevent them from dying off. With more light available, the inner branches are stimulated to grow. These inner branches are critical to the ultimate structure of the tree. At this time, very weak inner branches can be removed.

The next step in the fall and winter maintenance cycle is to wire important branches in January. Softer aluminum wire is preferred because the branches are brittle and the aluminum is less likely to scar them. Unnecessary branches can be removed in February.

Rick emphasized that every branch larger than one eighth of an inch must be sealed after being cut. This is so important that Rick seals all cut branches regardless of size as a matter of practice. Unsealed cuts can develop decay which slowly creeps down the trunk into the roots, and up to the top of the tree, eventually killing the tree. Once started the decay is difficult to stop. As a sealer Rick prefers a Japanese product called Top Jin which is available from him. The material is a viscous liquid the consistency of glue and is easy to apply to the cuts.



The last step in the winter maintenance cycle is repotting which is accomplished in February to April, depending on the health of the tree. Rick views repotting as the single most important operation in the care of azaleas. Proper repotting manages the amount of water the tree receives by controlling the soil particle size and drainage of the pot. The roots are disturbed as little as possible when repotting. Also, the tree is usually potted in the same sized pot as it was growing in.

In response to a question from the audience about pest control Rick commented that azaleas have fewer problems with pests when growing well. Spider mites and thrips occasionally appear and can be controlled with generally available sprays formulated for roses. Azaleas like to have their leaves watered and this helps reduce the bug population if present.

When styling an azalea, you should let the tree tell you what it wants to be rather than impose your view of what it should look like. This, incidentally, is good advice for all bonsai trees, not just azaleas. Understanding the strengths of the tree will help you to better direct the wiring of the tree and which branches to remove.

Azaleas vary in their robustness and cultural needs. Accordingly, it is important that you add only named varieties to your collection. Identity can be confirmed by flower size and color, and leaf size and shape.

Rick mentioned that he conducts workshops which focus on each component of seasonal care of azaleas. Many members of EBBS have been taking his workshops and highly recommend them for those wanting to master azaleas. For information on the workshops contact Rick on his web site, www.nasbc.com.

Rick made it clear that the care and feeding of azaleas is a bit more involved than that of, say, junipers. However, if you attended the azalea show last year, you know that the spectacular beauty of these tree in full bloom make the special care they need very much worth the effort.

Show and Tell

Tony Saraceno, Bob Gould, and Michael Hylton each shared their satsuki azaleas with us. Thanks guys!



It's ...



After seven and one-half years of producing your newsletter, Janice Dilbeck and Tom Colby are both retiring, each to pursue new opportunities as they say in the business world. For the past years Janice has served as the crusading editor and Tom as the star reporter for the newsletter. Tom noted that with only one reporter it is easy to be the star. The January edition will be produced by new management. Bev Martinez will be the new editor and be assured that your newsletter is in capable hands. While the newsletter is a new adventure for her, Bev has served the society with distinction in a number of roles behind the scenes including board member, secretary, club librarian and as the coordinator for the fourth Sunday introduction to bonsai programs at the garden. She will be assisted by Brian Brandley who in real life wears several hats including being a professional writer, so the quality of the newsletter can only improve. With these folks in charge, expect the newsletter to continue ever onward and upward without missing a beat.

Janice and Tom from the outset felt that the newsletter should be fun to read, otherwise no one would read it, and they attempted to make the newsletter not only informative but fun. Janice and Tom wish to join in giving heartfelt thanks to the club members who actually read the newsletter. Knowing that there is at least a small readership out there makes the effort of producing it worthwhile. To those who felt that the best use of the newsletter was as liners for the bird cage, both Janice and Tom want you to know that they did their very best to give the canary something interesting to read.



Manzanitas

What are manzanitas and why do they matter? Manzanitas are shrubs that grow pretty much all over California. One probably notices them particularly in the foothills of the Sierra where a single species is abundant. They have red berry-like fruits which lead to the common name. Those of you who are linguists recognize the name manzanita as Spanish for little apples which is just what the fruit looks like. Those of our dear readers who are botanically inclined know that the Manzanitas are in the genus *Arctostaphylos* which, of course, is Greek for bear berry because the bears love to eat the little fruits when they are ripe.



Manzanitas are all that you could ask for in a fine bonsai. In addition to lovely fruit they have pink or white flowers in the spring and they have trunks with a lot of movement. The bark is naturally a deep reddish-brown and the foliage makes a beautiful contrast to the trunk because it is a soft gray green. Best of all, because of their abundance, they are easy to find and collect.

Manzanitas are truly rivals of the current divas of the bonsai shows, the collected junipers. As a matter of fact, they are junipers in Technicolor with their lovely trunk and leaf color. There is only one teeny little insignificant problem.

Conventional wisdom flatly states that manzanitas cannot be grown as bonsai. This pessimistic view about manzanitas as bonsai originated a number of years ago. Many were collected from the foothills and in spite of all possible (and some not so possible) variants of soil composition and growing conditions, they all died. Because of the great potential of manzanitas as bonsai it was felt that it was worthwhile to look once again at these wonderful plants. As a result, an article extolling the potential virtues of Manzanitas was published in the newsletter about a year ago.



There is no question that establishing collected Manzanitas is a severe challenge and one that is not likely to have a happy ending. But wait, you shouldn't give up just yet. There is more. There are two questions

here that are totally different. How do you establish collected manzanitas and, secondly, can you grow manzanitas as bonsai? Due to the bad publicity the plants have received, the second question has not been really addressed by the bonsai community due to the dictate that you "can't grow Manzanitas as bonsai" stemming from the poor success with collected plants.



Let's look at what the manzanita family has to offer. Botanists tell us that there about fifty species of manzanitas native to California and they fall very roughly into three groups, low mat forming plants, shrubs and small trees. Several of the varieties grown commercially are hybrids, either occurring naturally or accidentally produced from cultivated landscape plants. There are many cases in the horticultural world of hybrid vigor. When this happens two different species can be difficult to grow, but the hybrid of the two is much easier to grow. Between growth styles of species and the addition of hybrids, there are a lot of manzanitas to choose from.

Since nursery grown manzanitas are already established in pots, it was speculated in the newsletter article a year ago that it is possible that they could well continue to easily grow as bonsai. Nursery grown manzanitas readily grow as landscape plants in the Bay Area, so local conditions of sun and rainfall are fine. Further, these plants are pretty tolerant of soil composition as long as it is well drained. All in all, Bay Area climate and bonsai soil should present no problems for the culture of manzanitas as bonsai.

Inspired by the speculation that manzanitas might, in fact, be easy to grow from nursery stock, an experiment was begun a year ago to see whether the speculation in the newsletter article was true. A selection of eleven different manzanita species were purchased in gallon cans. They were bare-rooted and potted in bonsai pots. Soil used was equal mixture of pumice, lava and akadama. The pots were then placed in full sun and the plants were occasionally fertilized with full strength Miracle Grow. As of a year later, the plants are all happily growing which clearly indicates that you can, in fact, grow manzanitas as bonsai.

Some preliminary observations can be seen with these plants. The mat formers are probably limited to be grown as cascades. Branches are low and level with the ground. Perhaps the branches can be wired up to present a more tree-like structure, but this appears to be a struggle at best.

The shrub, and particularly the tree forms send out long branches that can be easily wired while young, but

quickly become so hard that they are intractable, so repositioning them later is not easily possible. Hence, delaying wiring the long branches is not a good idea. Also, the young branches rapidly grow thicker and wire scars can form sooner than you might expect, so the wire should not be left on the tree for long.

The horticultural literature tells us that the manzanitas can be shaped by pinching the new growth, and that bare branches do not readily bud back. Long branches that are cut back near the end of the branch send out new branches close to the cut end, giving a "tassel" look to the branch, suggesting that you need to cut back to where you want branching to take place.

Manzanitas which fall into the small tree group generally have larger leaves, and as a result will probably be best as relatively large bonsai so the leaves are in proper scale.



One of the charms of manzanitas is that many, if not most, have peeling bark. The bark shreds can be easily knocked off when handling the trees. There is a lot more to be learned about the care and feeding of these plants, not the least of which is whether they will continue to flourish year after year.

Manzanitas are available from most nurseries, but the stock is frequently only the mat formers. Berkeley Horticultural Nursery has had a nice selection of manzanitas in the past. Other species are also available from native plant sales. The Botanical Garden at University of California at Berkeley has a number of species for sale from time to time.

As a general statement, starting material of most plant species growing in gallon cans is two or three years at a minimum away from being a presentable bonsai. The upside is that manzanita nursery stock has the potential of ultimately being outstanding bonsai. For someone with patience and a willingness to explore an uncharted area, there is no better place to look for new and exciting bonsai material than at manzanita nursery stock now that the preliminary observation shows that they can, in fact, happily grow in bonsai pots.

Looking for Volunteers

Come join us Dec 15 at 9am to noon! Each year, EBBS club members help beautify the Mammoth Auction Trees by removing weeds, adding top dressing, cleaning pots, and whatever else is needed. This helps to get the trees ready for their photo shoot for the auction booklet (Jan 5, 2019). All EBBS members are encouraged to help at the BGLM at 9-12 on December 15, 2018. We will postpone if it is raining. Questions? Contact John Nackley at 510-693-2420 or jnackley@gmail.com.

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. Prune maples before cold weather to minimize bleeding.
- 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.

Bonsai Instruction at Merritt College – No December Workshop

Instruction is in the form of workshops and presents a splendid opportunity to learn how to develop your trees into first class bonsai. You work on your own tree under the guidance of experienced bonsai artists. The workshops are open to all experience levels and are free. Workshops start at 7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month when the college is in session and are held in the Landscape Horticulture Building at Merritt College which is located in the Oakland hills off Redwood Road. 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 Randall Lee. You can contact Bill at 510-569-8003 or Randall at 510-846-0841 for further information.

Merritt College is closed at the end of December so there is no workshop that month. The workshops will resume in January.

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.

December 1, Alameda, Pyracantha collecting with Brian Brandley. Contact Brian for more details at 415-858-9187 or brianbrandley@gmail.com.

December 1, Clovis, Fresno Bonsai Society and GSBF Clark Bonsai Collection: 10th Annual Bonsai Yard Sale at the Clovis Botanical Garden, 945 North Clovis Avenue, from 8 AM until 2 PM. Free parking and bargains galore on bonsai, pre-bonsai, pots, books, stands, accent plants and all things bonsai. Everyone one is welcome to buy, sell or trade. Come early for the best selection. Contact Dave Soho for more information at 530 722-7132 or Mike Saul at tinytreeme@sbcglobal.net.

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. Send your ad to janicedilbeck@comcast.net.

Newsletter Editor: Janice Dilbeck

Newsletter Star Reporter: Tom Colby

East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 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

Dec	12	Holiday Dinner
Jan	9	Olives – Sam Adina
Jan	27	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Tom Colby
Feb	13	David Degroot

Special Events
