

Dues are due and are \$30 for single and \$40 for households.
Details on page 3



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



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East Bay Bonsai Society
Meeting: February 14, 2018 7:30 PM

February Meeting

The February meeting will feature our very own Lisa Harper presenting a program devoted to increasing our understanding about how plants grow. Lisa is very knowledgeable about plant growth. She has a PhD in Plant Biology (Genetics and Development), and currently works on genomes and phenotypes of crop plants for the USDA.



This will be an important program because if we have a basic understanding of the biology of plant growth, we can do a better job of growing our bonsai. We all want to grow our bonsai to perfection, and we look forward to Lisa's presentation to show us how to improve our bonsai culture.

Thanks in advance to Julie Holcomb, Michael Jensen-Akula and Bill Castellon for offering to provide refreshments at the meeting.

March Meeting



The March meeting will feature Gordon Deeg presenting a program on tools. A minimum tool kit for maintaining and shaping bonsai includes scissors, pliers, a wire cutter and a diagonal cutter. There are many specialized tools beyond this basic minimum. While hardware store tools can provide some of these functions, tools which are specifically designed for bonsai use make the job at hand much easier. The down side is that these tools come at a significantly

higher cost, so even a basic tool kit can be a significant expenditure. It is imperative that we know how to maintain them and how to keep them sharp and in good working order. Gordon will tell us how to do this.

January Meeting

The January meeting was a presentation by Kathy Shaner. It was comprised of three quite different topics. The first was centered on a hornbeam that Kathy styled three years ago. The tree originally was more or less upright, and was challenging material. Kathy restyled the tree as a raft, which was a radical departure. When asked what her rationale was for this change, she stated simply that the new style better showed the tree. It now had a more natural style and looked like it had been pushed over by a storm but continued to grow. She emphasized that each tree looks different, and our view of what a tree should look like should not fall on cookie cutter stereotypes. We should look at trees in nature and study how they actually grow and use these observations to get the most out of our bonsai trees.



Examining the hornbeam did not lead to drastic work on the tree, but mostly minor details like removing old cut paste and cleaning the wounds by trimming them with a sharp knife. Two heavy branches grew close together and were pried apart by insertion of a cork last year. The cork was removed and the branches remained apart. Kathy commented that major branches can be repositioned if they are slowly moved in stages. Hornbeams send out long branches which keep growing longer rather than ramifying. These branches should be cut off above the first two or three leaves to encourage branching.

Basically, there was not a lot of work required for the tree. The tree is currently planted in a fairly deep, rectangular, unglazed pot. For the future, a shallower glazed pot would be a better choice. Kathy emphasized that work never stops on a tree, and this continued work, even if it is only minor, is required to develop a fine bonsai.

The second portion of the program was a critique of trees from the show and tell table. EBBS had a special focus for the meeting on winter silhouette trees, which are leafless deciduous trees.

Kathy's comments on each tree were thought provoking, and were appreciated by the owners. A recurrent theme was that the canopy of the trees in many cases did not match the trunk size, and should be allowed to grow, or should be reduced, depending on the specific tree.

Thank you, Bob Gould, Ernie Katler, Janet Nelson, John Doig, Michael Hylton, Rick Trumm, Stephan Lysaght, and Tom Fedor for sharing your trees with us.

The third portion of the meeting was a demonstration of a group planting involving a number of trees grown from crabapple cuttings. There were eight trees in rgw group. The Japanese demand that the number of trees in a group planting should always be an odd number, and this is based on Japanese superstitions. Kathy said that we are not in Japan, and thus not bound by the same superstitions. Hence, we can use any number of trees that pleases us.



Her approach to the group planting was very different from what is usually seen for groups. The usual way to construct a group is to have many tie down wires either attached to a screen in the bottom of the pot, or to the bottom of the pot itself through the drain holes. Each tree is then placed in the pot and wired in place.

Kathy first prepared the pot with two tie-down wires and placed a small amount of potting soil in the pot. Next, she placed the trees in a group outside the pot with the tallest tree in the center, and smaller trees toward the outside. She held them upright and in position by loosely wrapping thin wire around the trunks. The wires were placed about a hand width above the roots. The group was then picked up as one large unit and placed in the pot.

Soil was added to the pot, and finally chopsticks were laid on the top of the soil. The ends of the two tie-down wires were then joined over the chop sticks, and the addition of soil was completed. Small adjustments were made to some of some of the smaller trees with chopsticks. The thin wires which held the trees in position were not removed.

The advantage of this method of constructing a group planting is that it is easier to make minor adjustments during the construction, or later as the planting grows.

As usual, Kathy produced a thought provoking program. The meeting was a very full one with three very different topics, and as a result, everyone came away having learned something new. We were fortunate to have such a fine speaker.

Dues



Some of us are now feeling very smug because they have already paid their dues for 2018. 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.

Member of the Month

This month's highlighted member who is often seen, seldom heard, yet always read is indeed special. Tom Colby is a retired chemist from Shell Oil. He was drawn to bonsai only about 16 years ago. Bonsai coincided with his interests in fine arts and nature, and with his special talent, carpentry. Presentation is the essence of exhibiting a bonsai, thus the bonsai is always viewed on a stand when shown. Tom became quite good producing these bonsai stands. Today "Colby" stands are found in exhibits throughout the country.



In bonsai, Tom continues to take lessons from Kathy Shanner, the curator of the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt. Tom has demonstrated yet another special talent as **the** reporter for our newsletter, *The Tree Shrinker*. His ability to blend the history and art of bonsai with every day horticulture requirements keeps our club's newsletter at a very high level. This has led to EBBS winning the Golden State Bonsai Federation's best newsletter award on two occasions.

Tom's wisdom merged with his gentle and kind personality makes him a special Board member who has guided our club for years. He is a true EBBS pillar.

Wire

Our trees don't grow very much in winter, but none the less, winter is a busy time. Trees need repotting and old wire needs to be removed before scarring the branches. (You really need to pay attention to this all year long.) Branches need to be wired before spring comes, and the trees start again to grow. All this activity can generate quite a pile of used wire.

John Nackley lusts for this wire. No, he doesn't straighten it out so he can use it himself. He takes it to the bonsai garden where it will be combined with other used wire and sold as scrap metal. Copper is the big-ticket item, but aluminum is also salable. The sale of the scrap metal provides a small but steady income for the garden. Donating your scrap wire to the garden is a painless way to support the garden. Before you pass the wire on to John, be sure to separate the copper from the aluminum since the presence of only a little aluminum greatly reduces the value of the copper.

Bonsai Class with the Girl Scouts

Tom, Suzanne, Lisa and Beverly gave a bonsai class to members of Girl Scout Troop 32475. Each member created their own tree.



Mammoth Bazaar

Check your calendar to be sure that you have circled February 17 and February 18! Those are the dates of the mammoth sale and auction fund raiser which benefits the bonsai garden. You will 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. As usual 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. There will also be a number of vendors selling a wide 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, February 17 with a preview beginning at 12:00. The sales area opens at 10:00 Sunday, February 18, 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, WWW.gsbflakemerritt.org.

John Nackley

A high point of the January meeting was the presentation of a certificate of appreciation to John Nackley for all he has done for the society. He was also notified that the board has given a brick inscribed in his name to the bonsai garden that will be installed in the walkway at the garden. John has served in many capacities on the board, and as an officer for EBBS. Most significantly, he is always willing to shoulder many of the tasks which allow EBBS to function smoothly. Thanks John for all that you have done for EBBS. The awards were much deserved.

Show and Tell

Each meeting, several trees are featured on the show and tell table. These trees bring two important elements to the meeting. First, they showcase interesting trees that the growers have selected to share. The trees usually represent a wide range of species at different stages in progress toward a finished bonsai. Second, they offer an opportunity for members to connect with the growers for information about the trees, and in some cases, the grower wants information from the members about the tree.



Unfortunately, the show and tell portion of recent meetings has not been given the attention that these trees deserve. The board would like to rectify this by making show and tell a more vibrant feature of the monthly meetings. Toward this end, you probably noticed at the January meeting that people bringing in trees were asked to fill out a simple form listing their name as well as the name of the tree. The forms will allow members to contact directly with the growers. Some of the trees will be pictured in the newsletter, and the forms will help in identifying the owners of the trees.

Recharge - Don Meeker

Recharge is a soil amendment product with four beneficial soil bacteria and six beneficial fungi in a soil nutrient mix. Produced by RealGrowers, Inc. of Ft. Collins, CO, it is designed to aid in naturally protecting plants from noxious soil biologic factors, and aid in nutrient uptake and healthy cell development.

Recharge has been successfully used by several growers that we know. I first used it late Fall 2017 with

test plants, and one with signs of rot root. I used it with a weak late fall feeding of azaleas and other bonsai trees. My results are positive, but not especially strong, mostly because of winter dormancy. I expect stronger results with the spring growth.



Among others, the soil fungi include: *Glomus aggregatum*, an arbuscular mycorrhizal fungus used as a soil inoculant in agriculture and horticulture, *Glomus mosseae*, another arbuscular mycorrhizal fungus that induces growth and metal accumulation, and *Glomus intraradices* which increases phosphorus uptake and improves soil aggregation due to hyphae (The fine, branching tubes which make up the body of a multicellular fungus).

Ft. Collins is home to a Colorado research university, formerly A&M. It appears RealGrowers developed this product especially for the cannabis growers, but we may all (otherwise) benefit. It is fairly expensive. The 16 ounce container we have costs about \$50.00. But at ½ teaspoon per gallon of water, it makes 400 gallons, which brings the price to about 8.5 cents per gallon of solution. So maybe a single purchase could be shared to control the cost.

The manufacturer recommends continuous use with each feeding. For my use, I view it as a nutritional supplement to be used two or three times a year at most, or more with a tree that may be weak or infected.

Warning. For your consideration, while the bacteria and fungi of this product are beneficial to your plants, the same is not true for you. Those agents can be infectious for humans. They are common and we unknowingly encounter them in our gardening and potting of plants. Practice standard sanitary procedures to protect yourself. This product is dry and a bit dusty. Be careful when handling that the dust or liquid mix does not get in your eyes, nose or mouth, or cuts or sores you may have on your hands or arms. Just use reasonable precautions when using the product.

Sex

Your Tree Shrinker is committed to bring you all the news about bonsai that is fit to print, as well as some that isn't. It has come to the attention of



the newspaper staff that this topic has not been addressed, and that this grievous omission must be corrected. So, what has sex to do with bonsai?

One occasionally hears about masculine pots and feminine pots. The concept of boy pots and girl pots is not intuitively obvious and begs for an explanation. What is this all about?

The story starts with shows. One frequently hears that a person is going to show one of their trees at the next show. This misses a vital point. One does NOT show a tree. That literally would mean that you take the tree out of the pot and plunk it down on the show bench, roots, dirt and all. Clearly there is more to it than that. The tree is in a pot and on a stand when it is shown. This means that one presents a composition consisting of a tree, a pot and a stand.

While the tree is the focal point of the composition, the other two items are crucial for the artistic success of the composition. All three components must be of the finest quality to make a first-class composition. If one of the components is crummy, the whole composition is crummy. An obvious example would be a composition consisting of a beautiful tree and an elegant stand, but includes a badly chipped pot. The pot reduces the merit of the composition to at best ho-hum, or to "what was the exhibitor thinking", no matter how good the tree and the stand is. All the feverish activity before a show to clean and oil pots and to polish stands is directed to ensure that each component of the composition is at their very best possible condition.

There is also a subtler factor at work. You can have perfect individual components and still have a less than successful composition. For example, the pot may not compliment the tree even though it is an excellent pot. So how do we choose a pot and a stand that allows the very best presentation of our tree?

Japanese masters usually have a large number of pots and stands to choose from. They select those that make the tree "look good", and they are generally successful. It is all pretty easy if you have served a 5 to 10-year apprenticeship, followed by a dozen years or more of experience as a professional bonsai artist. All the while, you have had the opportunity of studying the finest compositions at all the top shows in Japan. Unfortunately, most of us do not have this extensive background. How can we choose pots and stands that complement our trees?



Here is where sex enters the picture. In an effort to make a proper choice a little more objective, one approach is to ascribe masculine and feminine properties to each of the three components of the



composition. Simply put, masculine properties are seen as strong and straight, and feminine are delicate and curved. Matching a tree, pot and stand with similar properties will give the best overall composition. For example, a feminine tree will look best with a feminine pot and stand.

Let's look at these two properties in detail. A masculine tree is one that has a straight trunk, has strong root structure, and powerful, flared base. The tree has the appearance of great age with rough bark and deadwood. A masculine pot is formal, has sharp corners, heavy construction, and has dark color. A masculine stand has heavy construction and straight legs. A feminine tree has the appearance of gentleness and grace. The bark is smooth, indicating youth. A feminine pot has a curved shape and rounded corners. It is lightly constructed and generally light colored. A feminine stand has curved legs and light construction.

A limitation of this approach to display is that while classification of components into the two categories in many cases can be obvious and helpful, some components are either not clearly masculine or feminine, or have properties of both.

Division of components into the broad categories of masculine and feminine can provide us with a helpful yardstick to use when choosing a pot and a stand. Attempting to classify your trees, pots and stands into having either masculine or feminine properties is a great place to start in choosing the pot and stand which best compliments your tree.

Thank You

Our own Carl Osterholm donated a large flat of maple seedlings to EBBS for our Kids Corner next year! Thanks to Bob Gould for getting the trees, Bob and John Nackley for spending three hours separating the trees and untangling the roots, and Michael Jensen-Akula, Suzanne Muller, Michael Hylton and Lisa Harper for potting up the trees. We now have 85 maples for Bonsai classes for Kids!

Bob Gould, with his *BGLM Mammoth Auction Tree Organizer* hat on, asked EBBS in early January if we could come and clean up the auction trees so they would look pretty for the photo shoot. The call went out to



members by email on January 5 to help spruce up the trees on Jan 6! Thanks to Tom Fedore, Rick Trumm, Janet Nelson, John Doig, Bev Martinez, Lisa Harper, and any others who came to help.

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.

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. 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.

Workshop Study Opportunity

Are you beginning your understanding of the development of bonsai? Are you acquiring trees that have a minimum age of 5 years or more? Then give yourself a jump-start by practicing the development of those trees with an experienced bonsai sensei. Contact Linda Soliven at 925-683-3506 for more information and details.

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 17 – 18, Oakland, GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt: The Annual Mammoth Auction and

Sale Fund Raiser will be held at the Lakeside Park Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave., Lake Merritt. Saturday: Auction preview at Noon with Auction starting at 1 PM. Sunday: Vendor Sales start at 9 AM; Plant Sales start at 10 AM; Demonstrations start at 1 PM. Everyone is encouraged to submit their bonsai and bonsai related items for consideration to be included in the Mammoth Auction at the earliest date possible. The Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt will be open that weekend 10 AM to 4 PM on Saturday, and Noon to 4 PM on Sunday. Please visit the Garden and observe the many installments under the Garden Revitalization Opportunity (GRO) project. For more information or to sell bonsai, email bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com and visit <http://gsbf-lakemerritt.org>.

February 24 – 25, San Marino, Bonsai-A-Thon XXII at the Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Road. This is the annual fundraiser for the GSBF Collection at The Huntington. Event admission is free with Bonsai-A-Thon "early bird" registration between 7:30 AM - 9 AM. Event hours are 8 AM – 5 PM both days. Pancake breakfast, demonstrations, lunch, bonsai exhibits, large sales area, raffle and auction. For more information visit www.gsbfhuntington.com

Articles or Services for Sale (or give-away)

Free: ROTATING COMPOSTERS - Would work for doing WORM COMPOSTING! Interested and want to get those kitchen scraps and worms working to make rich soil compost? Email Linda Soliven for more info: lsolivenster@gmail.com

Wanted to Buy (or for free)

Lisa Harper is looking for a shohin size trident maple, pre-bonsai. Anyone even have seedlings? Also looking for your bonsai branches that you cut off, to try to root for mame bonsai. 510-220-3339, or lisaharper@me.com.

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.

Newsletter Editor: Janice Dilbeck
Newsletter Star Reporter: Tom Colby

East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2018
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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.gsbf-lakemerritt.org/

Meeting Program

Feb	14	Plant Biology and Development – Lisa Harper
Mar	14	Tool Sharpening – Gordon Deeg
Mar	25	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Tom Colby
Apr	11	Redwoods – Bob Shimon
Apr	22	Introduction to Bonsai at BLM – Bob Gould
May	9	Trident Maple – Peter Tea
May	27	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – John Nackley
June	13	Carving – Tim Kong
June	24	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Janet Nelson
July	11	Auction
July	22	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Linda Soliven
Aug	26	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Tom Colby
Sept	12	How to Best Display Your Trees – Mike Pistello
Sept	23	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Bob Gould
Oct	28	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – John Nackley
Nov	14	tbd
Nov	25	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Janet Nelson
Dec	12	Holiday Dinner

Special Events

Aug	Potluck
Oct 13-14	Show