



The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXVII, No. 7

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

Meeting:	July 11, 2018	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 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 pm, so be sure that by this time you have checked in your auction items. You should have also surveyed what is available for sale, have your bidding paddle, and be 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 more loving homes 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. Here very inexpensive items sell quickly.

Each person can enter a maximum of 10 items in the auction. Items can be bundled as, for example, a box of several pots sold as a group counts 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 for supporting 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 once in a while trees have shown up complete with weeds in past auctions. 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 the buyer to see the potential of the tree. If you are selling a pot, scrub out the residual dirt. Stands can always use a bit of furniture polish to spiff them up. Old English Scratch Remover (available at Safeway at a nominal price) works well for this.



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. Suzanne Muller and Janet Nelson are in charge of the auction. See them if you want to volunteer to do your part in making the auction a success. They could really use your help.

August Potluck



Circle Saturday, August 11, on your calendar! That's the date of our annual potluck picnic that the club holds in place 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 funnest events of the year.

June Meeting

The June meeting was a presentation by Mike Pistello entitled *The Art of Bonsai Display*. The topic was of special interest to the membership because of our upcoming show in October. Now is the time when we should be thinking about how to prepare our trees for the show as well as assembling the other stuff we will need such as stands and more suitable pots. Mike prepared a power point outline of his talk and the slides were distributed in a separate email so they will be available for us to use as a reference to organize our display at the show.

A properly designed display will make your tree show at the very best. All of the elements should harmonize and this requires careful planning ahead of time. Nothing should be left to the last minute. The display is not about money for expensive components (including the cost of the tree) but is about time spent on selecting and preparing items for the display. An inexpensive tree thoughtfully displayed is far more impressive than an old, massive collected tree carelessly displayed. The display is comprised of two or three elements, the tree and an accent or two. The accent can be a plant, a figurine or a scroll. Accent plants and the tree must be shown on stands. Mike stressed that there should be a variation between color of the leaves of the plants selected, the type of foliage and the shape of the stands.



A problem with acquiring materials for a display is that there is no single source of supply and that stands, pots, scrolls and figurines are slowly collected over time. Be on the lookout for display items when you attend sales such as the mammoth fundraiser sponsored by the garden as well as vendors at shows. Club auctions frequently are a source of objects useful for your display.

Scrolls depict a season or a feeling that should be in harmony with your tree. For example, a scroll showing a snow scene would not work with a deciduous tree in full bloom. Scrolls are never shown alone with a tree. There is also an accent plant present.

Mike showed a number of pictures of bonsai displays and lead a critique of the displays using the guidelines he had presented. This allowed the members to put into

practice principles he had presented in the first part of his presentation and was enjoyed by the audience.



Finally, Mike listed some tips on how to properly prepare a tree for a show. Hanging branches should be removed. Wiring is acceptable but should be neatly done. The tree should be free of insects. The tree should be top dressed with moss which completely covers the surface of the pot or, if moss is unavailable, the pot may be top dressed with monocolored gravel. The pot should be cleaned of dirt and then oiled. Baby oil is frequently used but it leaves an unpleasant oily look to the pot. Mike prefers walnut oil which is applied and then wiped off with a clean rag leaving a soft glow.

The presentation gave the membership mechanics which would lead to a first-class display. We can all use these valuable insights on how to manage the display for our trees in the upcoming show. Thanks Mike for a great and timely presentation.

Show and Tell

Thank you to everyone who had a tree in show and tell.

Michael Hylton showed a mini hydrangea in bloom. It is 5-7 years old.



Bob Gould shared his blooming shohin, Fumi No Tsuki satsuki.



Bill Castellon shared his flowering jasmine.



Alex gave us a look at his beautiful 25 year old five needle pine.



Spotlight

This month the harsh glare of the spotlight falls on our president, Roger Brady. Roger is very active in the board meetings and is constantly looking for ways to make the club a better experience for all. He is particularly interested in how new members can be better welcomed to the club.



His latest project is to lead a group which is contacting other clubs throughout the country to see what works well for them and to see whether ideas from these clubs can be incorporated into EBBS to improve our club. Clearly the “we have always done it this way” does not appeal to Roger. Thanks, Roger, for your efforts to make EBBS a better club.

Let's Buy a Tree



After careful scrutiny of your bonsai bench you decide that with a lot of scrunching together there is just enough room for one more bonsai tree, so you set out to buy one. You have several choices of where to buy including commercial nurseries, dealers such as vendor sales at shows and also member sales at club shows or auctions. Purchasing from nurseries and show vendors can be a source of valuable information about your new tree. Most sellers are very willing to share with you how they grow the tree and any special care they give the tree. Of course, they have an ulterior motive. They want you to be so delighted with the tree that you will return in the future for another purchase.

Trees at member sales have a lot in common with the used car market. There is only one reason why any car is on a used car lot and that is that there was something about the car that the former owner didn't like. You hope that it was the monthly payments and not that



the car was never quite right after the wreck. You hope that the tree for sale by a member is due to a bit of downsizing or direction changing and not that they could not figure out how to make it into a first-class bonsai. This is not always a deal breaker because sometimes you see potential in a tree that the former owner did not, but the message is to look very carefully at these trees.

The first step in buying a tree is to decide whether the tree appeals to you. The appeal may be that you like the look of the tree and the potential of the tree as a bonsai. Another possibility is that the tree would be a new challenge. As an example, perhaps you have never grown a satsuki azalea and would like to try one to see whether you can satisfy satsuki's rather different cultural requirements. Whatever, if the tree doesn't speak to you, time to move on.



The next step is to look at the trunk because there is not usually much you can do with the trunk in terms of moving or changing it. Reverse taper, where the top is wider than the bottom of the trunk cannot be fixed and is a deal breaker. The trunk should show some taper from the bottom to the top. If the tree you are looking at is a seedling with a pencil sized trunk it may be a long while before the tree grows into a respectable bonsai. Think



long and hard about the magnificent 300-foot-tall redwood tree that you saw last summer. It, too, once was a seedling tree with a pencil sized trunk but that was also two thousand years ago.

If the trunk passes muster, look at the root structure. Ideally the roots should radiate symmetrically all around the trunk. You can graft new roots onto the trunk to fix a lack of roots on one side of the trunk but this is a slow process requiring several years.



The last item on your list is the branches. Ideally there should be lots of branches the length of the trunk. Branches which are not quite where you want them can be moved when the tree is wired or simply cut off. On the other hand, missing branches pose a problem. Gaps where there are no branches on the trunk can be filled by moving existing branches to cover the gap which is usually not completely satisfying. It more often than not looks like a comb over used by those of us with thinning hair. The gap can be filled by grafting new branches in the gap. Grafting is not an automatic solution to the problem. It requires special skill and further, it takes a while before the new branches develop into nice stout branches in keeping with the rest of the tree. The branches should get smaller and narrower as your eye proceeds up the trunk. Heavy branches high on the tree are a problem that usually can only be resolved by major surgery.



So, there you have some yardsticks to use for the purchase of your next tree. Look hard at a prospective addition to your bonsai collection. Does the tree speak to you? What is it about the tree that you like and what is it that you don't like? Are the "don't likes" fixable, and if so, are you willing to spend the time and effort to fix them? If the tree passes this test, go for it and enjoy. That is what bonsai is all about.

Merritt College Bonsai Instruction- No July Workshop

Since Merritt College is not in session during the summer months, the bonsai workshops cannot be held at the college's Horticulture Department. While there was a workshop at Janet and Rick's in June, since there is relatively little bonsai work to do in July, there will not be a workshop at their home in July. In August the workshops will start again at Merritt College. Thanks Rick and Janet for hosting the workshop in June.

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.

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. Send your ad to janicedilbeck@comcast.net.

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**

July 11 Auction
July 22 Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Linda Soliven
Aug 26 Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Tom Colby
Sept 12 Artistic Value of Bonsai – John Boyce
Sept 23 Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – tbd
Oct 28 Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – John Nackley
Nov 14 Satsuki – Rick Garcia
Nov 25 Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Janet Nelson
Dec 12 Holiday Dinner

Special Events

Aug 11 Potluck
Oct 13-14 Show
