

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: March 14, 2018 7:30 PM

## March program

The March meeting will feature Gordon Deeg presenting a program on tools. Gordon is a longtime teacher of bonsai and has one of the most impressive bonsai collections in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is a longtime volunteer at the Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt and a member of several local clubs.

A minimum tool kit for maintaining and shaping bonsai includes scissors, pliers, a wire cutter and a diagonal cutter. There are many specialized tools for use on bonsai beyond this basic minimum. While hardware store tools can provide some of these functions, tools which are specifically designed for bonsai do the job much better, and are much easier to use. 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 our tools and how to keep them sharp and in good working order. Gordon will tell us how to do this.

Thanks in advance to John and Karen Nackley, Wendy Quan and Don Meeker for offering to provide refreshments for the meeting.

## April Program

The April program will feature Bob Shimon and the use of redwoods as bonsai. Bob has been active in bonsai for many years and has also been a mover and shaker for the Redwood Bonsai Society. You may have seen him at shows where he frequently appears selling primarily redwoods. He is the expert on how to grow and style redwoods as bonsai and, as he will reveal, these trees require somewhat different treatment from the usual bonsai material. In the distant past, Bob presented a program on redwoods to EBBS that was very well received. We look forward to his return visit.



## February Program

The February program was a presentation by Lisa Harper on how plants grow. It was all of Botany 101 distilled down into a one-hour talk. Lisa started by reminding us about just how different plants are from animals. Animals, including us, grow through distinct epochs of life. We age as infants through middle age to old age in distinct stages. Plants, on the other hand, have old parts and new parts present at the same time; for example, a tree can have old leaves and thick branches

at the base, and delicate tiny developing leaves at the growing tips.

Plant growth comes from meristems which are domes of undifferentiated cells present at the tip of each branch, in the branches at the points where the leaves join the branch (at the node), and at the root tips. These cells don't know whether they should be a leaf, a branch or a root, but as soon as the clarion call to start growing comes, they quickly figure it all out. Each of these globs of cells become a new branch, new leaves at the tip of the branch, or more roots as the plant grows, depending on where in the plant they are located. Each meristem knows exactly what it is supposed to do.



Meristems are present at the point where a leaf attaches to a branch. These meristems are responsible for the growth of a new branch from this point. When we pull needles from a pine branch, it is likely that a new branch will grow from where the needle was pulled. What we call a bud is actually a meristem being called into action.



The meristem at the tip of a branch is responsible for the growth of leaves, and organizes how the leaves are presented as well as the form that they should take. Lisa showed a number of images which

demonstrated just how much leaf forms can vary (imagine a pine needle vs a maple leaf vs a leaf of the nepenthes pitcher plant). Looking down at the tip of a branch we saw that leaves emerge from the meristem

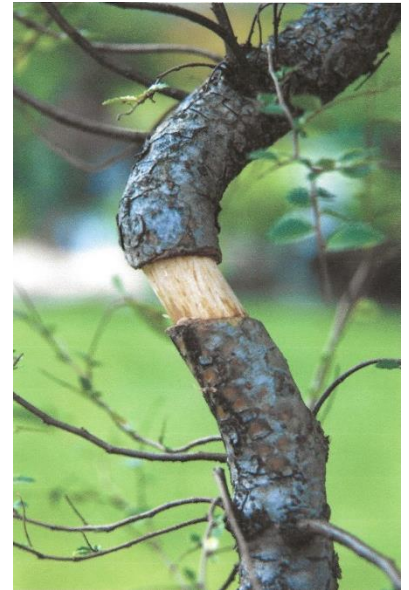


in different patterns. They can grow in opposite pairs, spiral forms and many other presentations. If you have not looked at branches this way, you are in for a surprise because all of the trees we grow as bonsai have distinct patterns of leaves around a branch.

All roots have a cap at the end which is a protection for the meristem at the root tip. Just above the root cap are small and thin hairs which are responsible for slurping up water and nutrients to the plant.

Auxins are a group of chemicals produced by the plant to control growth and development. Their complete role is still under study, but some things are well known. Trees want to grow taller at the expense of side branches because an auxin produced at the apex of the growing tree inhibits growth of side branches. Removing the tip of the growing tree eliminates the source of this auxin which allows the side branches to grow.

Auxins also flow down through the phloem to the roots of the trees to stimulate root growth. In the process of air layering, the tree is girdled to remove a section of bark which includes the phloem. Thus, the flow of auxins to the root stops, and auxins accumulate on the upper side of where the bark was removed during preparation of the air layer.



This accumulation of auxins stimulates the initiation of root growth at this point. And all of this is what makes the tree grow roots at the air layer. Various rooting compounds available to stimulate the rooting of cuttings are effective because they serve as auxins.



Lisa touched on the role of genes and DNA and how it influences plant growth. Genes are responsible for the formation of proteins which ultimately define what the plant looks like. Occasionally genes make a mistake in the meristem and the result is a new color or shape of flower, as in the case of satsuki azaleas, or in variegated leaves.

Lisa commented that plants with variegated leaf can make stunning bonsai but, in her opinion, they should be avoided. The pale section of a variegated leaf has little or no chlorophyll and thus cannot produce energy for the



plant. Bonsai trees need all the energy that they can get and this comes only from green leaves.



The program was highly informative. Lisa's infectious enthusiasm for the subject made the evening particularly enjoyable.

### **March Show and Tell**

Two of our members brought trees to share during show-and-tell. Stephen Lysaght brought a beautiful flowering quince with red blooms, and Alex Clarke brought a double-trunk trident maple in winter silhouette, showing off ramification that you only get after years of development.



### **Dues**

Those EBBS members 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 very 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.

### **Outreach**

EBBS is always willing to spread the word about bonsai to the general public. This had led to two types of programs that you might not be aware of. We are occasionally contacted by outside groups who would like a program on bonsai. These requests usually fall on willing ears. We are also very much involved in the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt, and teach a free *Introduction to Bonsai* class there ten times a year.

**have you  
heard about it?**

Last year the Pleasant Hill Garden Club asked for a bonsai program, and Tom Colby and Bob Gould delivered. The program consisted of a talk about bonsai followed by a show and tell portion featuring a collection of Bobs' fine shohin bonsai trees.

This January a Girl Scout troop wanted a program on trees. The program was organized by Lisa Harper, Bev Martinez, Susanne Muller and Tom Colby. The program involved a talk about bonsai, and then each of the girls got to plant their own tree into one of Bev's fine pots which, incidentally, were stunning.

EBBS is obligated to support the bonsai garden. It fulfills this in part by managing an introductory program on bonsai directed toward people with whom bonsai is a new experience. The program is in the form of short talks on bonsai held at the garden on the fourth Sunday of each month, except for December and February. Here, the intent is to provide general information on bonsai to the public as well as to publicize the garden. Most of the students are people who visited the garden for the first time and would like to learn more about what they have seen. Also, some people have been given a bonsai and would like to know how to take care of it. All attendees are encouraged to visit an EBBS meeting, and hopefully to join EBBS if sufficiently interested. People sign up for these talks on the internet. Walk ins are also welcome. The instructors are Tom Colby, John Nackley, Janet Nelson and Linda Soliven. Don Meeker and Bob Gould have served as instructors in the past. Bev Martinez coordinates each meeting.

If you would like to become a presenter for the introductory programs at the garden, or for programs for other organizations, contact Bev Martinez. Materials for the presentations are available, and the current presenters welcome EBBS members to sit in and to observe how it all works. It is not only a lot of fun, but also a rewarding experience.

## Pyracantha



Pyracantha bonsai are not seen that often and they deserve more recognition as worthy candidates for bonsai trees. First, let's consider a bit about Pyracantha. There are seven members of the Pyracantha genus, and their range extends from southeastern Europe to Asia.

The most common locally seen species is *P. coccinea* which hails from southeastern Europe.

Each spring these plants produce an abundance of small white flowers, followed by a heavy crop of red berries in the fall. The display of berries is what makes Pyracantha especially attractive as a candidate for bonsai.



Pyracantha has been in cultivation for a very long time, and as a result, there are many named selections available. Also *P. coccinea* has been hybridized with the other species and, again, many named varieties are available. The available varieties of Pyracantha differ in size of leaf, plant growth, and berry color. There are lots of varieties to choose from.

Another species in cultivation is *P. angustifolia*, native to western China. It differs from *P. coccinea* by having yellow berries and slightly fuzzy leaves. This form seems not to be readily available from local nurseries, perhaps because it is a bit sensitive to cold. It is hardy only to freezing, and not to below freezing temperatures. The yellow berries make it worth seeking out from nursery stocks.

The most obvious thing that you see (or feel) with Pyracantha is that they have formidable thorns. You can make life with Pyracantha more pleasant by cutting the tips of the thorns to remove the sharp points. Do not totally remove the thorns because at the base of each thorn is a flowering bud.





Pyracanthas are lush growers and as a result, can be aggressively pruned in the summer and fall by cutting branches back to one or two nodes. Some growers remove all flower buds every other year to allow the tree to direct energy only on the growth of the trunk and branches. Pyracanthas can be wired, but require care and a gentle hand. Young branches can be moved but are brittle, so care is required to prevent breakage. Older branches quickly become quite stiff and can be moved only with difficulty. Because of the lush growth of Pyracanthas it is no surprise that they can be defoliated without fear in June to increase ramification. The trees respond well to high nitrogen fertilizer applied in the spring and summer. Cuttings taken in late spring or early summer root readily.



A major issue with Pyracanthas as bonsai is that they resent disturbance and should be repotted every other year, or better, every three or even four years. Trees show their sentiments about being repotted by usually having a sparse crop of berries in the year that they are repotted. The plants expend a huge amount of energy producing berries, and some growers remove the flowers on recently repotted plants to allow the tree to recover. The minimal crop of berries that the plant produces after repotting indicates that the tree can adjust to the trauma of repotting on its own.

As a side note, the literature on Pyracanthas allege that the berries are bitter when eaten out of hand, but when cooked can produce delicious jams and jetties. An additional culinary delight comes late in the season when the berries can become slightly fermented as they age. Birds, particularly robins, adore Pyracantha berries and, at this time, can show all the symptoms of being three sheets to the wind after eating them.

So, there you have it. Pyracanthas as bonsai are well worth your interest. Between flowers and berries they produce a spectacular display through the year and, with a little care, are not that hard to grow.

### **Workshop Opportunity**

Are you beginning your understanding of the development of bonsai, 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 925-776-2342 or [bonsaigirl43@att.net](mailto:bonsaigirl43@att.net). We have 3 committed individuals to begin workshops in April. We are hoping for 2-3 more participants.

### **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 510-864-0841.

### **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.*

### **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 24 – 25, Oakland, Bay Area Bonsai**

**Associates:** 37th Annual Bonsai Exhibition at the Lakeside Park Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue. Show hours are 5 – 9 PM Saturday and 12 noon – 4 PM Sunday. Light dinner at 5:30 PM Saturday followed by a bonsai demonstration by club members from 6:30 to 9 PM. Benefit drawing of demo tree(s). Winning ticket must be present to win. Sales of plants, bonsai, and other bonsai related items both days. Admission is free. Parking fee to the Lakeside Park entrance is required during the park hours. For more information, please contact Janice Dilbeck [janicedilbeck@comcast.net](mailto:janicedilbeck@comcast.net).

**March 24 - 25, Tucson, Arizona, Tucson Bonsai**

**Society:** 46th annual exhibition in the pavilion at the Tucson Botanical Gardens, 2150 N. Alvernon Way. Show hours are 9 AM to 4 PM daily. Show in the pavilion will feature 24 trees, while the intermediate and beginning students' trees will be staged outside pavilion. Continuous demos by club mentors, bonsai for sale and raffle. Bonsai Basics 3-session classes start in April. Garden admission for adults of \$13 include all features of the gardens, such as the butterfly greenhouse and Zen garden. Visit website at: [www.tucsonbonsaisociety.org](http://www.tucsonbonsaisociety.org).

**March 31 – April 1, Sacramento, Bonsai Sekiyu Kai:**

41st Annual show at the Sacramento Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Show hours are 10 AM – 4 PM daily with a demonstration at 2 PM. Amenities include refreshments, light snacks, door prizes, raffles and a silent auction. Member and vendor sales of plants and bonsai-related items, as well as a food vendor. For more information contact Bonsai Sekiyu Kai at [bonsaisekiyukai@gmail.com](mailto:bonsaisekiyukai@gmail.com).

**April 4 - 8, Daly City, Bonsai Society of San**

**Francisco** Bonsai Exhibit at the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show, Cow Palace, 2600

Geneva Avenue. Show hours are 10 AM - 7 PM Wednesday thru Saturday, and 10 AM - 6 PM on Sunday. There will be demonstrations daily and sales of bonsai trees, pots, and other bonsai-related items by the club. For more information contact Bernard Marque at [imarque@yahoo.com](mailto:imarque@yahoo.com), or see show website <http://www.sfgardenshow.com/the-show>.

**April 6 - 7, Fresno, GSBF Clark Bonsai Collection at**

**Shinzen:** Kōen-Nai No Bonsai, Bonsai in the Park, 7775 North Friant Road. We have planned a new event style this year. Join us for an afternoon BBQ on Friday and a full day of bonsai on Saturday.

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Articles or Services for Sale (or give-away)

**Free: Rotating Composters** - Want to get those worms working to make rich soil compost of your kitchen scraps? These composters would work for doing worm composting! Have questions, want more info? Contact Linda Soliven at [bonsaigirl43@att.net](mailto:bonsaigirl43@att.net) or 925-776-2342.

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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](mailto:lisaharper@me.com).

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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](mailto:janicedilbeck@comcast.net).

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Newsletter Editor: Janice Dilbeck

Newsletter Star Reporter: Tom Colby

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

**Meeting Program**

|      |    |  |
|------|----|--|
| 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

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