



The Tree Shrinker

Volume XXXXVII, No.5

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

Meeting: May 9, 2018 7:30 PM

May Meeting

The May meeting will feature Peter Tea who will use a large trident maple (different than the one pictured) for his demonstration.



Peter is a local bonsai artist who spent several years in Japan fine tuning his skills. While there, he published a blog of his activities which many of us not only enjoyed but found to be a fine learning experience. Since his return, he is now leading workshops and gives demonstrations for a number of clubs locally as well as nationally. He was the headliner for our recent show, and those who attended his demonstration know both that he is a fine speaker and his insights into bonsai are extremely valuable as, for example, his emphasis on the overall health of the tree being the most important single aspect of the tree.

Thanks in advance to Pat Cahill, Julie Holcomb and Randall Lee for offering to provide refreshments for the meeting.

June Meeting

The scheduled presenter for the June meeting unexpectedly withdrew because of a health issue. Mike Pistello, who was originally scheduled for September, will be our presenter instead. Mike will be discussing how to show your trees. He will have a slide show with examples and will talk about the trees attendees bring to give them perspective and advice. It will be a great opportunity to get feedback on how to display your trees. Mike will have at least one pot worthy of our raffle.

Stay Tuned
FOR something
AWESOME

April Meeting

The April meeting featured a program on redwoods given by Bob Shimon. Many of you may have recognized Bob as a vendor of redwoods at many of the local shows. As a matter of fact, he is about the only commercial source of redwoods, and has been for many years, so he is imminently qualified as an expert on the care of these trees.



Bob commented at the outset of his program that redwoods are probably the most aggressive growers of all the species of trees that are used for bonsai. As a result, they require almost constant care to make them look their very best. While redwoods in nature are usually found as tall upright trees, those that are grown as bonsai frequently are short trees with contorted trunks. When bonsai material is selected for collection, the shape of the tree below the soil surface is important because it can have interesting movement. What we see as a trunk on redwood bonsai is frequently part of the root structure before the tree was collected. The bulk of the roots of the collected trees are removed with a chain saw leaving a stump cut flat on the bottom with a few feeder roots above the cut. Bob plants the newly collected trees in a sandy soil mixture, and the trees then develop a new root system in as little as six months.

Once a new root system has formed, the trees are planted in a soil mixture for growth as a bonsai. The trees in nature receive a constant supply of water from fog, and

as bonsai they do best in a soil mixture that retains moisture. Bob prefers a soil mixture with a large percentage of akadama, which can be as much as 100 percent.

Redwoods can survive a light frost but require protection if the temperature falls below 20 degrees. They are also relatively heat tolerant and grow well in Sacramento, for example. But the key to success in hot areas is to shade them from direct sunlight which will prevent burnt foliage. Unlike bonsai, landscape trees can drop some foliage during hot spells.

Redwoods are fed once a month from March to October with a balanced fertilizer. The trees also benefit from foliar feeding with full strength Miracle Grow. During the winter months they are fed a low nitrogen (0-10-10) fertilizer. It may seem odd at the outset to heavily fertilize redwoods which are such aggressive growers, but the object is to encourage back budding which, in turn, is necessary to produce a compact tree.

Redwoods are usually insect-free but can occasionally be subject to fungal attack indicated by yellow foliage with spots. Fungus can be treated with either copper-based fungicides or Daconil fungicide.

Redwoods grow aggressively, and constantly try to grow long branches. Management of the growth is the major challenge in producing a compact bonsai tree. The trees have two growth periods, one in the spring and one in the fall. Attempts to reduce the foliage by either pinching or trimming should only be undertaken during periods of active growth or die back will result. New growth can be pinched back by half its length. Long leaders can be cut back to the first lateral branch, and a new bud will emerge at the junction. Very long leggy branches can be cut back with one of two possible results. New buds will form on the remaining portion of the branch, or the whole branch will die. Cutting the dead branch back to the first live lateral branch will frequently force a new bud to emerge at the junction.

Redwoods frequently grow sucker branches from very low on the trunk, and these should be removed since they take energy from the tree and do not contribute to the composition of the bonsai. The overall strategy in styling the tree is to define each branch on the tree by not hiding the branch in a tangle of foliage. If there are two branches emerging from a single spot, remove one leaving just a single branch. Bob emphasized that development of a fine redwood bonsai is a process that takes time, and there is no need to try to accomplish it all at once.

The best time to wire branches is when they age and turn brown. Jins are best formed by stripping and tearing small section of wood from the old trunk. The exposed wood is not treated with lime sulfur.

Bob demonstrated how to trim redwoods on the demonstration tree as well as on trees that had been brought in for show and tell, which delighted the owners of the trees. After observing Bob working on redwoods, there was a new appreciation and understanding about how to grow and manage these beautiful trees. Thanks Bob for a great program.

Show and Tell

Thank you to everyone who brought trees for show and tell. Many of those folks who brought in redwoods had the added advantage of having Bob Shimon critique their trees. Here are a few of the trees that were shared.



Bob Gould is holding his Korean Lilac in bloom.



Brian Bradley presented his Pyracantha and willow leaf ficus on an unusual stand he made himself.



Janet Nelson is holding her Crabapple, a one-year old cutting, in full bloom.



Joey brought a redwood ready to start styling.



Michael Hylton brought his shohin redwood that was lush with new growth.



Lisa Harper is studying Kusamono, the Japanese art of arranging wild grasses and flowers in special pots to suggest a season or place. She shared one of her own arrangements with our members.

Spot Light

This month the spotlight is on Suzanne Muller. For quite a while she has been one of the major contributors

of photos for the newsletter. Her images have figured prominently in the wonderful slide shows which Michael Hylton assembles for the holiday celebration at the end of the year. Suzanne has been the sparkplug of the new feature in the newsletter featuring show and tell plants brought in each meeting. Suzanne is a member of the EBBS board of directors and can be counted on for valuable insights. Thanks, Suzanne for your contributions to EBBS.



Introduction to Bonsai Update

Several years ago, the garden recognized that there was a need for a class to introduce bonsai to the interested public. The garden approached EBBS to see whether there was an interest in providing such a class, and EBBS was delighted to accept. Several members volunteered to serve as instructors and each provided their own program. Attendees interested in further information about bonsai would be welcomed into EBBS.

The initial thought was that people would sign up on a form available at the garden, listing their name and email address. Signees would then be sent a nice note written by Michael Hylton reminding them of the meeting. It sounded like a simple and effective plan. Each month up to a dozen folks would sign up and up to six or eight (and frequently much fewer) of these would show up. There was a general feeling that somehow there was something missing because the turnout was disappointingly smaller than expected.

A group of EBBS members including Michael Hylton and Khary Dvorak-Ewell asked a key question. They noted that this was the electronic age. Hand writing with a pencil on paper has joined hieroglyphics written on clay tablets as a quaint relic of a long past age. Why weren't people able to sign up electronically? It took a bit of tinkering to get the electronic sign up process going but it is now working smoothly. It is easy to sign up on the garden web site.



There has recently been a quantum jump in attendance at the classes. Many people still sign up using the old pencil and paper method, but many more sign up electronically. The average number of signups for each of the last three sessions was about fifty and the average attendance was about twenty-five. It is not clear what caused the jump in attendance, but it is clear that ability to sign up electronically plays a big role. The new problem is to find enough chairs for the class. Thanks to Michael and Khary for providing the insight that this is the twenty first century. Thank also to Bev Martinez who is currently managing the class.

Hornbeam



The genus *Carpinus*, better known as hornbeam, consists of about 40 species scattered around the world in the northern hemispheres. The genus contributes more than its fair share of excellent bonsai candidates. The United States features *C. caroliniana* which is native to the eastern part of the country and collected plants can be found in bonsai collections there. Europe has both *C. orientalis*, growing in Italy, and *C. betulus* growing from Europe to as far east as Iran. Asia outdoes itself with two species from Korea, *C. coreana* and one with the somewhat indigestible name of *C. turkzaninowii*. Both are sold in the bonsai world as Korean hornbeams. Japan's offerings are *C. japonica*, *C. laxiflora* and *C. tschonoskii* and are sold collectively as Japanese hornbeams. To further gum up the taxonomic issue, Japanese hornbeams are sold sometimes as Korean hornbeams. The minor differences between these species are the life blood of the botanical world, but as bonsai material they all pretty much look and grow alike. What is of significance is that if your "Korean hornbeam" is a little different from a "Korean hornbeam" that you see in a bonsai show, it probably means that you are looking at two different species of *Carpinus*.

All of the species of Hornbeams grown as bonsai are splendid trees. They happily grow in bonsai pots for many years and can patiently endure a bit of neglect. As a group the trees all have small leaves that have a rather crinkled texture, as well as smooth and fluted gray bark. When the leaves have fallen in winter, the fine branch structure and the gray bark provides wonderful winter silhouettes. As an added benefit, the leaves turn a beautiful color in the fall which is usually a bright yellow, but in some trees, that color can be red or a yellow-bronze. The fall color presents a pleasing contrast to the gray trunk. Hornbeams are relatively slow growing trees and so you can take a more relaxed approach to them as bonsai in contrast to lushly growing trees such as redwoods, for example which require a lot of constant attention. A disadvantage of slow growth is that it takes a lot of time to develop a significantly thick trunk.

A common name for the European species is Ironwood because the wood from hornbeams is very hard and heavy. The wood has been used (and still is) for bodies of woodworking tools such as planes. As a result, it is not surprising that bending of major branches of hornbeam bonsai trees is a job for the Pacific Coast Crane, Dredge and Pile Driving Company and their heavy equipment. Major branches can, in fact, be bent but the process is slow and difficult. On the other hand, young branches are quite pliable and can be easily bent. The moral of this story is that you need to carefully place young branches because once they are mature bending them is a hassle.

The trees grow by sending out long thin shoots which require several years to enlarge into significant branches. These new branches can be easily wired into place or, if desired, can be cut off just above the last two leaves above the branch they are emerging from. This approach to styling the tree makes the clip-and-grow technique a valuable tool in achieving your design for the tree. Hornbeams make splendid candidates for group plantings because of fine branch structure and the beautiful gray bark. Unfortunately, group plantings of hornbeams are very rarely seen at local bonsai shows.



Hornbeams are understory trees in nature which means that they grow below the forest canopy. As a result, they get along just fine in bright shade although they grow more vigorously in full sun. The leaves can be scorched by very hot sun or windy days. It appears that they would enjoy a little protection from the sun and wind in the hottest days of summer east of the hills in the bay area but they should be fine west of the hills.

Hornbeams are wonderful trees for bonsai on many levels. They are easy to grow and style and they are attractive all year long. They are great trees for beginners. Unfortunately, they are underappreciated by the bonsai community. If you see them offered for sale at a bonsai nursery or at a show, do strongly considering adding one to your collection. You will be handsomely rewarded.



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.

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.

May 19 - 20, Oakland, Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai (BASA): 23rd Annual Satsuki Azalea Bonsai Show, Lakeside Park Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave. Show hours are 10 AM – 5 PM Saturday and 10 AM – 4 PM Sunday with demonstration by Johnny Uchida Saturday 1 – 3 PM (Demonstration tree to be raffled). Beginning bonsai workshop Sunday 1 – 3 PM limited space available, \$20 fee and sign-up required. Participating vendors – North American Satsuki Bonsai Center – Rick Garcia and Shojuen – Darren and Laura Wong. Free admission. Public parking available. For more information contact George Haas at gwhaas@comcast.net or visit BASA website <http://satsukiazaleabonsai.org>.

May 19 – 20, Sacramento, Satsuki Aikokai Association: Annual show held at Shepard Garden Center 3330 McKinley Blvd. Show hours are 10 AM - 5 PM Saturday and 10 AM – 4 PM Sunday with demonstrations at 1:30 PM both days by botanist and bonsai nurseryman Yuzo Maruyama. Create your own azalea bonsai class at 11 AM both days. Raffles, vendors and Satsuki information booth. Free entrance and parking. For more information contact: Ronn Pigram (916) 428 8505 or email - satsukiaikokaisac@sbcglobal.net.

May 19-20 Oakland, California Suiseki Society: Suiseki and aiseki stones exhibition at the Garden Center at Lake Merritt (1600 Bellevue Ave.) in conjunction with the Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai show of flowering azaleas. Show hours are Saturday 10 AM - 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM - 4 PM.

May 19 - 20, Palo Alto, Akebono Bonsai Club and Kashu Suiseki Kai: Annual Show held at the Palo Alto Buddhist Temple, 2751 Louis Road. Show hours are Noon - 5 PM with a demonstration at 2 PM both days. Free Admission. Raffle drawing for door prizes and demonstration tree immediately following each demonstration. Must be present to win. There will be bonsai trees available for sale by the club. For

Bonsai Calendar

- Watering – Water regularly to keep root ball moist, not wet, and never dry.
- Fertilizing – Start regular feeding of deciduous trees after first flush of growth is completed. Continue regular feeding of conifers.
- Repotting – Not recommended at this time.
- Styling/Pruning – Rotate trees. Watch for wire cutting during this period of fast growth. Start defoliation. Shorten branches on fruiting trees. Pinch junipers, spruces and cedars.
- Air Layering – Deciduous trees may be air layered if new growth has hardened.
- 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.

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

additional information, contact Carl Yanari at (408)781-5937.

June 2 - 3, San Mateo, Sei Boku Bonsai Kai: 35th Annual Show at the San Mateo Garden Center. 605 Parkside Way (next to Beresford Park). Show hours are 10 AM - 4 PM both days, with demonstration by Jonas Dupuich from 1 – 3 PM on Saturday (tree will be raffled off at the conclusion of his demo). On Sunday an open view workshop from Noon – 3 PM (one of the workshop trees raffled at conclusion). Large club member plant sale, vendors, door prizes and our always popular raffles. Admission is free. Dr. Bonsai will be available to offer styling and care tips. For more information contact Marsha Mekisich at eclectic.gardener@yahoo.com.

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.gsbflakemerritt.org/

Meeting Program

May	9	Trident Maple – Peter Tea
May	27	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – John Nackley
June	13	How to Best Display Your Trees – Mike Pistello
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	tbd
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