



The Tree Shrinker

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East Bay Bonsai Society Meeting: April 10, 2019 7:30 PM

April Program

This April we are in for a real treat! Randall Lee has consented to present once again. You may recall in 2017 when Randall delighted us with building a slab forest using gopher dirt for the walls, well this year he will be speaking on another topic he is well known for: Hinoki Cypress.



Randall was introduced to and created his first bonsai in 1984. Since that time he has studied with Dennis Makishima, Kathy Shaner and Mas Imazumi. He is continuing to add to his expertise by currently attending classes with Peter Tea.

Randall is a member of two bonsai clubs: our own East Bay Bonsai Society and the Merritt Bonsai Club where he has reigned in the past as president and currently holds monthly workshops with Bill Castellon. Randall is also a Certified Aesthetic Pruner and holds the title of Past President of the Aesthetic Pruners Association. He presently gives demos, workshops and consultations both in pruning and bonsai.



When asked how many bonsai Randall has in his yard, his reply was "Too many to count!"

So look forward to an enjoyable evening as Randall presents on one of his favorite trees.

Thank you in advance to Tom Fedor, Janet & Rick Trumm and Rick Medress for supplying snacks for the evening.

May Program

The May program will feature Kora Dalager; Kora is a well known bonsai tour guide in Japan and expert in Japanese Bonsai display. We are very lucky to have Kora take time from her busy schedule to bring her knowledge and expertise in bonsai display.

March Program

By: Brian Brandley

Our March meeting featured Bill Castellon, EBBS member and landscape contractor. Bill is a life-long bonsai enthusiast and is well known for his work with GSBF's Lake Merritt Bonsai Garden and workshops at GSBF conventions and the California Shohin Seminars. For the past eight years he's provided bonsai guidance and training at Merritt College in Oakland.

Bill's subject in March was princess persimmon (*Diospyros rhombifolia*), and he brought several wonderful specimens. Most of the trees in California come from an original group of 2,000 plants imported by Carl Young in Lodi. The tree is a dioecious (separate male and female plants) deciduous tree, hardy to zone 6, originally from China, and still relatively rare in the US. You need both a male and female tree to get fruit, and fruit is the major feature of this species. Female flowers are slightly larger than males, and they are attached closer to the branch. In contrast, male flowers dangle on a stem and almost appear like tiny bells, usually, but not always, in clusters of two or more hanging from the same axil. The trees don't always flower concurrently, so it can be frustrating to

have male and female flowers open at different times. It is theoretically possible to hand pollinate to overcome the timing issue.

Fruit ripens at variable times as well, and can be tough to time for a show. Flowers and fruit form on new growth each year so prune after fruiting and not again until next year when wanting flowers/fruit. This tree is an aggressive grower, easy to shape, and responds well to pruning. While Bill brought in some seeds for our raffle, propagating by that route is slow and you won't know if you have male or female trees for years. Bill consistently and easily propagates by root cutting, providing a genetically identical plant. Also, if the mother plant is old enough to flower/fruit, the root cutting will begin fruiting immediately. Bill has not tried hardwood cuttings, but Pat snagged some from his demo tree and we'll see how they do. Bill grows these in a pretty standard mix of acadama, lava and pumice or perlite. He feeds heavily all summer long. Bill recommends three rounds of fungicide during the



winter. He uses lime sulfur, but other fungicides should work as well.

Bill likes a tall and graceful style for many princess persimmons, but he brought in an example cut down to shohin size as well. Like many of our presenters, Bill recommends letting primary limbs grow unchecked as long as necessary to reach the diameter that is required, then cut back to secondary branches. Wire them while they're small to generate some movement and the desired angle. Bill's demo tree was a three-trunk group. His goal was to get an attractive relationship among the main trunks. All trunks should be visible from the chosen front. The thickest trunk should be the tallest, the second thickest about a third shorter, and the smallest shorter still. Using the smallest trunk in the back can help provide depth to the group. Bill removed some crossing branches and wired others to move them more to the outside. Each trunk should be positioned so the taller trunks don't shade out the shorter ones. Since these are grown primarily for the fruit they should be shown in the fall. Bill prefers a

glazed pot, ideally in a shade of blue to show off the orange-red fruit.



Brian Brandley was the lucky winner of the demo tree! He is now in search of a persimmon mate.

On-line Resources

Have you ever wanted to get more information on a particular tree or bonsai technique that was quick and easy? Wish no more! There are lots of great resources on line to augment your bonsai education. YouTube videos offer mini lessons on a variety of topics. Blogs are diaries of a person's bonsai journey. Forums offer the ability to post questions and have discussions with more experienced people on topics of your immediate interest. Most clubs have a website with events, activities, articles, and usually archive their newsletters. And of course there are vendor sites where one can order pots, wire, tools, trees, soil components, etc.

A list of these on-line resources that your board members have found to be entertaining, educational and useful can be found on the club website on the Spotlight page (https://www.eastbaybonsai.org/?page_id=57). If you have others not listed that you'd like to share, please contact Michael Hylton at his email address in the EBBS roster.

Flowering Bonsai

By: Brian Brandley

All non-conifer deciduous trees are technically flowering plants, but for most the flower is inconspicuous. Many of us desire to have that pop of color that a flowering bonsai imparts in the spring. My wife is only interested in the flowers, but what we are looking for is the

combination of good bonsai characteristics and reliable, showy flowers.

There are a few generalities that we need to recognize about flowering bonsai. First, flowers do not reduce. You should choose species with flowers that are relatively in scale to bonsai, or decide that when the tree is in flower you just don't care about the scale. That's the approach the azalea people take! Second, many people prune back their bonsai hard in late winter or early spring. That can remove most or all of the flower buds that have developed, leading to a disappointment in spring. These trees should be hard pruned after flower production, at least in the years when you're trying to maximize the show. Many people use fertilizers with a higher % of phosphorous (lower nitrogen) during flower bud development (2nd half of the year). Others don't make that adjustment and still seem to get enough flowers to make themselves happy.

So which species should you pick? Surprisingly, you tend to see very few types of flowering bonsai, assuming you group azalea varieties together, and *Prunus* species together. This is due to the fact that you're looking for a combination of characteristics, not just good flowers.

The trees used most often are:

Azalea – Flowers often not in scale for bonsai, but nobody cares. Out of flower they make nice looking bonsai. There are many, MANY, cultivars, and the people really into azaleas adjust specifics of care for each. If you're heading down this road consult the experts.



Bougainvillea – love heat and full sun. There are many color varieties, and they're easy to propagate from roots, cuttings and air layers. They are vines, though, and are difficult to style in traditional bonsai designs.



Crab Apple (*Malus*) – Profuse, small flowers and ultimately small fruit make crabs a great choice for flowering bonsai. If you propagate by air layer or cuttings (semi-hardwood) from a tree already flowering they will continue to flower. They are difficult or impossible to propagate by hardwood cuttings. Seedlings can take a long time to mature enough to produce flowers. They make great bonsai but you have to deal with a relative lack of ramification, and a tendency for trunks to make cylinders with little or no taper.



Flowering Quince (*Chaenomeles*) – Several varieties with colors from white to red. They are easy to propagate from cuttings, but it's hard to get a thick trunk. They are often not impressive when out of flower, but the flower display is worth it.



Hawthorn (*Crataegus*) – Excellent bonsai subjects with the flowers as a bonus! There are more than 200 species to choose from with many varieties. Similar look to crabapple flowers and fruit, but hawthorn will develop better taper and ramification. They can be propagated from cuttings or air layered to get a flowering tree quickly. Seedlings take 15 to 20 years to mature enough to flower.



Prunus – There are more than 400 species of *Prunus*, all with nice flowers, many of these with dozens of varieties. Some, for example almonds, peaches, some cherries, don't make good bonsai for other reasons.



Probably the species most often used in bonsai are *mume* (flowering apricot), *tomentosa* (Nanking cherry), *campanulata* (Taiwan cherry), *serrulata* (Japanese cherry), and *subhirtella* (winter flowering cherry). They are susceptible to insect and fungal pests as well as spring freezes.

Pyracantha – aggressive grower, considered an invasive species in some parts of California. They are easy to propagate from cuttings, and they air layer very quickly. They put on a great show of small flowers and fruit in scale for bonsai. They often have flowers and mature fruit at the same time. Drawbacks are that they don't heal over large scars, they have wicked thorns, and are susceptible to fireblight.



Wisteria – an impressive vine with impressive flowers. Flowers hang in large racemes, not in scale for bonsai but again, nobody really cares. Leaves are compound and not ideal for bonsai, but this is all about the flowers. The two most common species are *W. sinensis*



(Chinese wisteria) and *W. floribunda* (Japanese wisteria). Many color varieties are available. Seeds and other parts of the plant are poisonous so watch your pets.

There may be others seen occasionally, but not all that often. Pick some to try and enjoy the show! If you're thinking about azaleas, you might consult with the Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai <http://satsukiazaleabonsai.org/>

You won't want to miss this one!

By: Tom Colby

There's going to be a new show in town. Excitement is already building for the combined shohin and suiseki show to be held next June at the garden center. This will be hopefully the first of many such shows. We know that shohin is a Japanese classification for bonsai trees less than eight inches high. Many consider shohin as the pinnacle of bonsai art because they are harder to grow and maintain than the larger trees. Familiar challenges with shohin are maintaining proper watering and giving them adequate light but not letting them bake in the hot sun. A second group of challenges is to maintain the shape of the trees by management of branches and leaf size.



The shohin trees are truly the queens of bonsai. You have seen some excellent examples of shohin at EBBS annual shows which have featured trees belonging to several members of the club who are expert in the art of shohin. The upcoming show will feature the work of several local shohin artists who are members of other clubs so their work can be seen for the first time for some of us. Local suiseki clubs hold shows but they are generally (and unfortunately) not well attended by bonsai enthusiasts

All this is fine but what in the world are suiseki and why are they a part of this show? Suiseki can be defined as the Japanese art of miniature landscapes. The key word is landscape. Good suiseki will remind you of a scene that you have seen in nature such as a mountain or a waterfall.



The goal of all bonsai trees is to remind you of trees that you have seen in nature and they do this by showing great age, they have survived over the years and, most important, they are beautiful. The bush in a gallon can

that you saw in Home Depot's nursery is not a bonsai because all it reminds you of is that your wife has been bugging you to replace the dead bush out in front and this would be a good candidate. The same kind of approach also holds for suiseki. You have seen many stones for sale at local bonsai events. Many of these stones truly remind you of nature and so qualify as suiseki but many do not. These stones, called viewing stones, can be extremely beautiful and a joy to own but fall short of being suiseki because they have no back-story. What you see is what you get. Just like the bush at Home Depot.

So both suiseki and bonsai are deeply rooted in nature and say exactly the same thing which is remembrance of scenes in nature that you have seen in the past. They just use a different language to say it and paint with a different palette but the end result is the same. Watch for exact details of the show such as date, times etc. in the newsletter and then mark your calendars for a unique and special treat. By the way, sales tables are planned so you will be able to take home souvenirs of what promises to be a great and innovative show.

Show and Tell

What a great turn out for Show and Tell at the March meeting:



Don Meeker – Manzanita



Stephen Lysaght – Beech



Tom Colby – Manzanita



Michael Hylton – Star Magnolia



Tony Saraceno – Crab Apple and Princess Persimmon

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 – Start regular watering schedule as temperature rises; Do not over-water repotted plants
- Fertilizing – Do not feed deciduous trees Fertilize evergreens and conifers. Don't feed repotted trees until a month after repotting.
- Repotting – Repot camellias, cryptomeria, juniper, crape myrtle, willow, spruce, fir, cypress and redwood
- Styling/Pruning – Wire evergreens. Pinch junipers. Trim back branches on non-flowering, non-fruiting deciduous trees. Decandle Monterey pines, red pines, and cork-barked black pines.
- Graft – Japanese maples, hornbeam, redbud, beech, ginkgo, and wisteria
- 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

April 6 – April 7, 2019 Sacramento, California

Bonsai Sekiyu Kai: 42nd Annual show will be held at the Sacramento Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Hours are 10 AM – 4 PM with a demonstration at 2 PM each day by Yuzo Maruyama.

April 12 – 14, 2019 Tucson, Arizona

Tucson Bonsai Society: 46th Annual Exhibition at the Tucson Botanical Gardens, 2150 N. Alvernon Way. Hours are 9 AM - 4:30 PM daily with demonstrations

at 11 AM and 2 PM. Garden admission \$13 adults and \$7 children/students.

April 13 - 14, 2019 Sacramento, California

American Bonsai Association, Sacramento: Annual Spring Show at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center in McKinley Park, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Show hours are 10 AM – 4 PM with a demonstration by Dennis Makishima at 1:30PM both days. Beginner workshop: Sunday morning from 10 AM – Noon

April 13 - 14, 2019 San Jose , California

San Jose Betsuin Bonsai Club: 48th Annual Spring Exhibit at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, 640 North Fifth Street . Hours are Noon – 5 PM Saturday and Noon – 4 PM Sunday.

April 27 – 28, 2019 Palo Alto, California

Kusamura Bonsai Club: 59th Annual Show, Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road. Show hours are Saturday Noon – 5 PM and Sunday 11 AM - 5 PM with a demonstration at 1:30 PM each day.

April 28, 2019 Watsonville, California

Watsonville Bonsai Club: 46th Annual Bonsai Exhibit will be held at the Watsonville Buddhist Temple, 423 Bridge St. Show hours are 11 AM - 4 PM, with a demonstration by award winning Bonsai Master Katsumi Kinoshita at 1:30 PM.

May 4 - 5, 2019 Sacramento, California

Sacramento Bonsai Club: Annual Spring Show at the Buddhist Church of Sacramento, 2401 Riverside Rd. Show hours are 10 AM – 4 PM, with a Sam Adina demonstration at 1:30 PM, both days.

May 18-19, 2019 Santa Barbara, California

Bonsai Club of Santa Barbara: Annual Bonsai Exhibition and plant sale in Fellowship Hall at Trinity Lutheran Church, 909 N. La Cumbre (Corner of Foothill Rd.). Show hours are 11 AM - 4 PM Saturday and Noon - 4 PM

May 18 – 19, 2019 Sacramento, California

Satsuki Aikokai Association of Sacramento: 41st Annual showing of beautiful blooming Satsuki azalea bonsai at Shepard Art and Garden Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Show hours are Saturday 10 AM - 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM - 4 PM with demonstrations at 1:30 PM both days

May 18 - 19, 2019 Palo Alto, California

Akebono Bonsai Club and Kashu Suiskei Kai: Annual Show held at the Palo Alto Buddhist Temple, 2751 Louis Road. Show hours are Noon - 5 PM with a demonstration on each day at 2 PM.

May 18 – 19, 2019 Oakland, California

Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai: 24th Annual Satsuki Bonsai Spring Show "Flowers Abound" at the Lakeside Park Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave., Lake Merritt. Show hours are Saturday 10 AM - 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM - 4 PM.

May 19, 2019 Van Nuys, California

Sansui Kai: Annual Bonsai Show at the beautiful Japanese Garden, 6100 Woodley Ave. Show hours are 10 AM - 4 PM with a demonstration at 1 PM.

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 third Monday of the month to appear in the next publication. Send your ad to Martinez_Bev@Yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor: Beverly Martinez
Newsletter Reporters: Brian Brandley, 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.gsbflakemerritt.org/

Meeting Program

Apr	10	Randall Lee – Hinoki Cypress
Apr	22	Workshop at Merritt College
Apr	28	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – John Nackley/Bob Gould
May	8	Kora Dalager – Bonsai display
May	26	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Janet Nelson
Jun	12	Polly Gould – Suiseki and John Doig - Shohin
Jun	23	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Brian Brandley
Jul	10	Annual Auction
Jul	28	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Tom Colby
Aug	10	Annual picnic – hosted by Michael Jensen-Akula
Aug	25	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Michael Jensen-Akula
Aug	26	Workshop at Merritt College

Special events

Jun 29/30 Suiseki and Shohin Show Lakeside Garden Center
