



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society
Monthly Meeting August 12, 2020 7:30 PM On-Line!

July Meeting

By: Tom Fedor

In another virtual meeting in these trying times, local bonsai artist, teacher and prolific blogger Jonas Dupuich caught us up on spring work he's been doing while locked down in Alameda. As noted in last month's Tree Shrinker, a serendipitous encounter with Boon Manakitivipart in 1993 led Jonas to more than two decades of study with him as well as two months in 2011 with Mr. Junichiro Tanaka in Nagoya, Japan.



In our July meeting, he began very dramatically with a Japanese wisteria he had cut back heavily last fall, sacrificing spring flowers for new growth. In June, he cut back the prolific new growth, reducing long shoots to two or three buds and cutting each leaflet (of thirteen, apparently) to two leaves each. Five weeks on, the tree has produced new shoots a foot or two long, and *flowers!* Jonas is convinced that early and heavy spring feeding is what enabled all the new growth, although he claims he hasn't a clue how to make a wisteria produce flowers. Hmm.



Wisteria June 2020



Wisteria July 2020

Other spring work followed. Partial defoliation on a hornbeam earlier in spring leads to new growth that requires pinching back to silhouette the rest of the growing season. Cutback on vigorously growing coast live (and other evergreen) oaks leads to new buds at the cuts, which in turn lead to ramification and short internodes in the future.



Spring work was also demonstrated on azaleas (post-bloom cutback) and black pines (decandling). As for junipers, Jonas normally doesn't work on them in spring apart from re-potting, but July is a good time for cleaning up dense growth, making the tree easier to "see" and wire (although heavy bending should wait until winter). Summer is also good for working on your juniper's deadwood, and discussion of the topic received spirited audience participation on this virtual occasion.



The presentation closed with a rambling Q and A free-for-all followed by Jonas's special insights into summer watering. Everyone certainly got their money's worth on the price of admission. But the very best feature of the evening's zoom, in the view of your humble correspondent, was how easy it was to see the show from the cheap seats! Finally, board member Addison Galambos has our special thanks again for peerless techno-ninja services.

August Meeting

Due to the Corona-virus restrictions, unfortunately our normal August picnic is cancelled this year. Instead we have another on-line meeting set up. A prior EBBS member, Mike Pistello will be presenting on a myriad of summer topics.



Mike was introduced to the art of Bonsai 26 years ago by his late grandfather. Soon after, Mike became a member of Fuji Bonsai Club in Berkeley where he met his first two teachers; Jimmy Inadomi and Dennis Makishima. During a club demonstration, Mike met another of his teachers, Boon Manakitivipart. Over the years Mike studied Bonsai with several more teachers such as Mas Imazumi, Ryan Neil and Matt Reel. Mike continues his

Bonsai education on a weekly basis as he is a member of Mirai Live.

Mike enjoys working on yamadori juniper, specifically Sierra juniper. In recent years he has developed an affinity for Oaks of all species. Mike prides himself on his attention to detail and his approach to Bonsai is to make his trees better every time he works on them.

Mike is a member of Bay Area Bonsai Associates and enjoys exhibiting his trees on an annual basis. Mike has written articles for several Bonsai magazines to include Bonsai Focus, Golden Statements and Bonsai Club International. Mike is also a past recipient of the Best of Show and Best Native Species awards at the 2016 Golden State Bonsai Convention in Sacramento.

The topics for the August meeting will include (but not limited to):

- Summer heat (shade cloth/foil/watering of soil and not foliage, evapotranspiration).
- pH of water (6.5 is ideal as it allows for easier consumption of nutrients).
- Fertilizing after de-candling (needle solidification).
- Summer cut back of spring shoots that have hardened off not de-candling (August).
- Shoot selection done in the fall after needles harden off.

Who Knew?

For as long as I can remember, the EBBS board has been struggling with how to aid in seeing a presenter's detail work as they are doing it on stage. We have brainstormed special mirrors, cameras all with very expensive price tags. Along came Corona-virus and we are forced to use video conferencing. As Tom mentioned in his review, we now get a much clearer picture of what is being presented "up front and personal". Nice to see a silver lining during this tough time.

There will be plenty of seats available so be sure to log in and join us 7:30 August 12th. (If you want to come in your PJ's, that's ok. You can block your visual from being seen by the group.)

Let's see your tree! The EBBS calendar committee is looking for pictures to use in the new version of the SF Bay Area Seasonal Bonsai Guide. If you would like to see your tree published in the guide, please send a picture of your tree with the common name, botanical name and estimated age to: EBBS_Distribution@yahoo.com.

Organic? Non-organic? What about fertilizer?

By: Tom Colby

We all know that we must fertilize our bonsai and that nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous are essential ingredients in any fertilizer package we offer our plants. It is less obvious that the plants also require tiny amounts of several other elements for optimum growth. Examination of a package of Miracle Grow fertilizer reveals that it is fortified by a cocktail of these elements, some of which are familiar such as copper and iron and some that are not such as manganese and molybdenum.

Suppose that you are a scientist and have been asked whether a trace amount of the element vanadium is essential for growing corn. Your first thought is that it is not because vanadium is rarely found in soil and corn grows great just about everywhere. As a scientist you know that you must back up your opinion with experimental data. How would you do this? You would prepare three soils, one with no vanadium a second with a little vanadium added and a third with a little more vanadium added. You would plant corn seeds in each of the soils and compare how well the corn plants grew. If they all look about the same you conclude that vanadium is not essential for growing corn. If, on the other hand the group with a little vanadium is growing better and if the third group with even a little more vanadium is growing the best then the conclusion is that vanadium is essential for growing corn.

Two things stand out in this hypothetical experiment. First is that opinion is not enough to make a convincing case, no matter how reasonable it might sound. Second is the inclusion of a group of seeds planted in soil with no vanadium which served as a standard against the vanadium enriched soils can be measured. Many things can influence how plants grow such as the amount of light, fertilizer and water. The control group showed that the improved growth of the soils with vanadium, if any, was only due to the presence of the vanadium and not one of these other factors.

You might ask, what in the world has all this to do with bonsai? Most of the people in bonsai are not scientists so there is little convincing data to be found on many of the opinions that we hold dear. Instead we find a lot of strongly held opinions just aren't true. You will not get far on your bonsai journey until you hear comments like "I changed from fertilizer A to fertilizer B and my trees are growing much better" With no direct comparison of some trees fed with the old fertilizer and some fed with the new fertilizer it is not possible to tell whether the improved growth that really happened was due to the new fertilizer or to more favorable weather, the amount of water or more sunshine. This makes for a lot of

confusion on the part of folks new to bonsai and adds a layer of unnecessary mystique to what should be straight forward management of your plants.

The area of soils composition is deluged with opinions. Soil mixtures can include organic components (meaning once alive, such as fir bark or compost) and inorganic components (meaning never lived such as lava or pumice) Current opinion says that you should never include organic components because they can decay over time and this process robs fertilizer that your tree needs. Sounds good, but where is the data? Decayed organic material can affect water drainage which is not good and can influence your watering schedule but that does not affect how well fertilizer is retained by the soil. Another related opinion is that organic material is needed in the soil mix to "retain" the fertilizer. An opinion occasionally heard is that you should include inorganic material which has sharp edges because growing roots will be split by the sharp edges and this leads to denser root balls. Sounds good, but has anyone looked at roots and compared the roots of trees grown in sharp soils with roots grown in media with no sharp edges to see whether this hypothesis is true? Where is the controlled experiment where direct comparison can be made between the two types of soil?

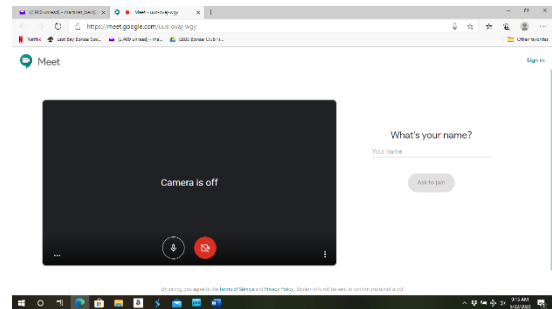
So frequently we pot all our trees into a new soil mix and discover that they are growing better. With no control of plants left in the old mix we cannot tell whether the improved growth of the trees in the new mix due solely to the new mix or are they due to the fact that the weather is warmer, you have increased the amount of fertilizer used, you water more frequently or many other things that have nothing to do with the new mix.

Everyone agrees that you should never use garden soil as a component in your soil mix Thirty years ago a popular mix was one third each of garden soil, sand and leaf mold. The mix requires careful management of water since it may not drain well. Here there is a sort of a control available. Pictures of trees from this era show that magnificent trees can be very successfully grown in this mix.

Fertilizer is another subject of great debate There are adherents who claim that the use of only organic fertilizers such as cotton seed meal or fish emulsion are worth considering and others who claim that inorganic fertilizers are necessary for best results. Again, sadly, there are few if any controlled experiments. All trees require nitrogen and it is likely that they are not too fussy about where they get it. The difference between the two classes of fertilizers is probably small or nonexistent because splendid bonsai trees can be grown using both types of fertilizers, but this an area crying for data.

Where does the newcomer to bonsai turn for help in growing bonsai? The newcomer is best served by knowing that your bonsai tree really wants to grow for you and become the splendid bonsai that you want. It does this by having its basic needs met. These are a soil that drains well, enough water to keep the soil moist, sunlight and fertilizer. A valuable resource to the newcomer is the techniques which local growers use to meet these needs. They should beware of advice that starts with “the only way to...” or “I do this because....” because good data to support the comment may be lacking.

on the microphone and video by clicking on them, type in your name and click the “ask to join” button.



Once you join, you can adjust your screen to look similar to the one below. The images with people have the cameras turned on, images with letters, are on smart cell phones or computers and have their cameras turned off. The image with a phone number is called in on a regular phone so no name was captured, just the partial phone number.



Addison was presenting at this time during the meeting, so the screen reflects this. At the bottom of the screen are buttons for turning the video and audio on and off, and leaving the meeting. To the far right are 3 dots which give additional options. At the top of the screen is additional information and a “chat” box. During the meeting, if you wish to ask a question, you will do it through the “chat box”. Our next meeting will again start early at 7:00 PM so members can become familiar with the screen settings. We will begin the actual meeting at 7:30 with announcements.

We are looking forward to seeing many members in August for our monthly meeting. Please feel free to contact Addison Galambos at 650-495-9342, email: barcalod@gmail.com. Or contact any of the following board members for help in signing into the meeting.

- Michael Jensen-Akula - 510-821-0199
- Andrea Callegari - 206-973-6508
- Beverly Martinez 925-437-2347
- Lisa Harper 510-220-3339

Bonsai Calendar

- Watering – Maintain moist but not damp condition of soil.
- Fertilizing – Reduce nitrogen in late July and August. Do not fertilize de-candled pines.
- Repotting – Not recommended at this time except for tropical and semi-tropical trees.
- Styling/Pruning – Avoid pruning on flowering varieties. Rotate trees at least twice this month as flower buds are set.
- Insect and disease control – Watch for chewing insects.

Refer to the EBBS Bonsai Calendar for more details on seasonal care.

Writers needed!

Have a story to share about bonsai? How about a technique or something special you have learned during your bonsai journey? Or maybe you’d like to head up a column in our newsletter. The Tree Shrinker is in need of writers. If you enjoy writing, have a story to tell, or information to share, please feel free to submit it to: EBBS_Distribution@Yahoo.com.

The only requirement is that it must be related to Bonsai.

Instructions for joining an on-line meeting

In case you were not able to join us last month for our regularly scheduled meeting, here is a little information on the application we are using. The app is titled Google Meet. To join a meeting, click on the join link in the email invitation and you should be presented with the following screen. If joining for the first time you may be asked to install the Meet application. It is free and only takes a few minutes to install. Once you receive this screen, turn

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 EBBS_Distribution@yahoo.com.

Events by Others All bonsai events have been cancelled until further notice

Newsletter Editor: Beverly Martinez

Contributors: Tom Colby

Newsletter Photographers: various members

East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2020
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Regular Meetings: Second Wednesday, every month (except July, August and October) @ 7:30 pm
Place: Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland. Visitors welcome.
Website for Bonsai Garden Lake Merritt: www.gsb-f-lakemerritt.org/

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Program</u>
Aug 12	Mike Pistello – Managing bonsai in summer
Aug 31	EBBS Board Meeting
Sept 9	Gordon Deeg – Camelias/TBD
Sept 28	EBBS Board Meeting