



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society November 11, 2020 7:30 PM **On-Line**

November Meeting

It's November, and Fall is in full swing! Time to take the shade cloths from our shelters and start working on our bonsais. And what better master to have teach us what to do with our pines than, that's right, our very own Bill Castellon!

I was fortunate to take a Black pine workshop with Bill last year, but since COVID 19 has hit, we haven't had any follow up workshops to tell me what to do now. I am so looking forward to Bill's instruction as I am sure you are too.



Background (courtesy of Janet Nelson):

Bill became interested in bonsai as a child when he attended a flower and garden show and was moved by the bonsai on display. He studied with Dennis Makishima and numerous other noted professionals from California and Japan where he has visited on several occasions and briefly studied landscaping there.

By 1991, Bill had joined the East Bay Bonsai Society and served as its President in 1993-1994. Bill has led numerous workshops on Japanese Black Pines at GSBF conventions, California Shohin Seminars, and bonsai clubs throughout California.



Along with Mas Imazumi, Bill helped construct the rock arrangements in the Bonsai garden at Lake Merritt, where he is currently in charge of pruning the landscape trees. Bill's talents were recognized with two gold medals and one silver medal for landscape design at the 2000 San Francisco Flower and Garden Show.

For the past eight years, Bill has conducted workshops at Merritt College in Oakland, where he also teaches the "Introduction to Bonsai" course as part of the landscape pruning curriculum. Bill belongs to the East Bay Bonsai Society, Bay Area Bonsai Associates, Aesthetic Pruners Association in Oakland and the Merritt College Bonsai Club which he co-leads with Randall Lee.

We are back to our regular schedule on Meetup. The meeting will begin at 7:30 PM with logins starting at 7:00 PM. See you there!

Annual Show

By: Tom Fedor

For our LIX Annual, and First Virtual, EBBS Bonsai Show, we traveled the World of Bonsai with Tony Tickle. A member of the Association of British Bonsai Artists, and past Director of Bonsai Clubs International, Tony has won numerous awards, writes a regular column for "Bonsai Focus" magazine, and has been hooked on the sport since he was gifted a small oak sapling in 1983. Tony has labored as a judge at bonsai exhibitions in the UK, Australia and China, and we were to visit some of them this evening.



We arrived at his home in England in the middle of the night. After introductions and small talk, Tony took us the rest of the way around the world by means of photographic evidence to Belgium where we were introduced to the Noelanders Trophy Show. This is the biggest show outside of Japan. It has over 110 vendors and over 250 trees. There is no photography allowed, but they do provide a book of the trees and allow photography on Sunday afternoon towards the end of the show.



Next up, the Shanghai Bonsai Museum, where they like their trees big. As big as landscape trees, but they are in pots.



Tony with large bonsai in China

His translator, the local school English teacher, explained that the students choose their own English names from literature with which to introduce themselves. Tony commented that, however, he had yet to meet Peter Rabbit. I'm not sure where the subsequent groaning sounds originated. The huge pine tree winning Best of Show (by committee, with predictable results) was actually displayed on a table, its pot having been broken in transport.



Show grounds in China

Next stop, India. Although the show he photographed there was small, eighteen thousand people attended completely free of charge. Tony thinks the general skill level in India is skyrocketing from exhibition to exhibition, year on year. Tony also indicated that most of the bonsais are owned by women rather than men and some are very creative as in the picture of snow on a grove (broken Styrofoam).



On to Brazil and Mauro's nursery, where we saw junipers grown from cuttings over thirty years, with absolutely wild deadwood. Mauro likes his deadwood, says Tony. We visited a pine nursery with trees grown from seed in the 1930's and a completely traditional Japanese pottery, where Tony needed to buy an extra suitcase for his purchases.

Intermission featured our own EBBS Parade of Trees, which in olden times used to be held at Lake Merritt Garden Center but, this year, fortuitously displayed our impressive photography skills (as was mentioned by AG, I'm not just inventing it). You may still have your copy. Great eye candy, sadly only 2-D instead of walkaround beauty as we like to do.

The second half of Tony's presentation featured the twenty-six-year saga of a collected hawthorn rescued from ravenous deer and sheep on the mountain side. Wisely, we had been warned to take notes; twenty-six years is way too long to recount here.



Tony Tickle's prize-winning Hawthorne

And as rosy dawn lightened the dark English countryside, Tony padded off to breakfast while Addison clicked his magic heels to return us to our respective armchairs, having saved us each a fortune in airfare and no end of jet lag.



Canberra, Australia. From a bonsai perspective, it seems, Australia might as well be any number of small similar countries because it is so difficult to move trees between the various population centers on the coasts.

Capetown, South Africa. Tony says Capetown is interesting because, separated by two miles on either side east or west, the climate is totally different. A candidate for EBBS sister club, perhaps, and I hereby nominate myself as your ambassador.

December Meeting

Get ready for another Party! It's been a long year, and we miss seeing everyone, but that doesn't mean we can't celebrate virtually in our special EBBS bonsai style.



Plan to dress up your tree with holiday decorations and get ready for some holiday surprises including the ever-popular Michael Hylton "Year in Review" video.

Election of EBBS Officers for 2021

With year-end upon us, it is time to elect officers for the next year. If you would like to be a board member or nominate a board member you may do so by contacting either Roger Brady Roger@BradysR.US or Stephen Lysaght at smllysaght@sbcglobal.net.

All board positions are open for the election which includes President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and director.

Water, water everywhere

By: Tom Colby

You have been engaged in the wide world of bonsai for a while and you want to upgrade your collection with a really nice tree. You spot a tree for sale at a show which makes your dreams come true. Talking with the owner of the tree you find that the tree was originally purchased from a nursery in a gallon can twenty years ago. The price for the tree will probably be in the range of a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. So why is the tree so expensive? There are at least three reasons which figure in pricing a tree.

The most obvious reason is the appearance of the tree which is what attracted your attention to the tree in the first place. All the branches are in the right place and the tree is showing all the signs of great age such as a thick trunk and aged bark. The cost of the tree is in part due to the skill that was needed to bring the tree to the current stage of perfection. Bonsai trees are living trees and as a result are constantly changing. After twenty year of careful attention the tree is not considered finished but only a little is needed to maintain it as a fine bonsai. The second factor in pricing a tree is the simple law of supply and demand. There are fewer fine bonsai trees on the market than there are people that want to buy them and this drives up the price.

There is a third and less obvious factor in pricing a bonsai and that is the fact that the owner has asked a simple question each day without fail: does this tree need watering? Over the twenty years he has owned the tree, he has asked this question without fail for an amazing 7,300 days. If it is pouring rain in the middle of winter the answer to the question is easy but non the less the question is asked. The pricing of the bonsai also reflects this remarkable and unflinching devotion to the tree over the years.

Watering your bonsai is a lot like feeding the family dog. It is not hard to do but must be addressed every day. If you skip feeding the dog for a week, the dog will be pretty mad at you and if you skip feeding him for a couple of weeks you will find that the dog has packed up and left. It is the same way with bonsai. Skipping water for a week will make your tree look pretty sick and if the drought extended to a couple of weeks your tree will be

in need of a decent burial because it will no longer be in the land of the living. You might ask why all the fuss about constant watering? After all, trees in nature are not watered every day. The answer to this question is lies in how roots function.

When the roots become completely dry, they die. If the soil that the tree is planted in does not drain well, the roots can rot. To prevent this from happening, soils can be chosen for our trees that drain well. These soils can also dry out very quickly leading to death of the roots. Not a good thing. Thus, water becomes a major issue to maintain healthy roots We select soils that allow for good root growth and are compromises between these two extremes. Our trees look best when potted in shallow pots and the shallow pots aggravate how fast the potting medium can dry out. In fact, in warm weather the soil in a bonsai pot can completely dry out to the bottom on the pot as quickly as a couple of days and this leads to dry (and dead) roots. There are summer rains in the natural habitats where most of the trees that we select for bonsai grow. The soil near the surface may dry out between rains but there is enough moisture beneath the surface to prevent the loss of roots. The soil does not dry out completely as it would in a shallow pot.

What happens in places where there is little or no summer rain? Native California oaks are found in such places. If we neglect to water our oak bonsai for more than a few days, they will die. Why the difference? In the wild the oaks get by with the lack of summer rain in part by going semi dormant in the summer. Probably part of the dormancy cycle includes the roots slowly hardening off to prepare for the dryer soil. Also, although the soil appears to be dry at the surface, the level of moisture left deep in the soil is enough to sustain the dormant roots. The roots of the tree grow deeply to find the residual moisture. If the winter rainfall is poor, the tree will suffer because of low residual moisture content of the deep soil and the tree may not survive an extended period of drought lasting several years. One can speculate that in nature the soil near the surface slowly dries out as summer approaches, leaving the roots time to prepare for a period of low moisture. Oak bonsai however can dry out quickly in the fast draining soil leaving no time for the roots to harden off, so they die.

How often should you water your bonsai? That depends on the soil you use and how quickly it dries out as well as the weather where you live. Obviously on hot days the soil will dry out more quickly. Is your tree in full sun or part shade? This, too, influences the dry out rate. Taking all these factors into account you should probably water about every three days or less in cold weather, every two days in mild weather and every day in hot weather. There are only rough guidelines and, of course, actual water needs for your trees may vary depending on your specific circumstances. The crucial thing is to ask every day without fail the question does this tree need water?

Congratulations Tree Shrinker team!

The voting is over and The Golden Stare Bonsai Federation has announced the winners of its annual newsletter competition for the western states. 12 clubs submitted entries. The winners were:

- 1st place – Clark Bonsai Collection
- 2nd place - San Diego Bonsai Club
- 3rd place – East Bay Bonsai Society

Good job Tree Shrinker!



Editor, Beverly Martinez accepting the award (Jim Gremel pot) from George Haas

Events by Others

The Marin Bonsai Club is hosting an outdoors bonsai fundraising sale at the Tera Linda Community Center, 670 Del Ganado Road, San Rafael on Saturday, November 7, 2020 from 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM. There will be pre-bonsai, bonsai, pots and more. Checks and cash only. Masks required and 6' social distancing required. See club website for further details - <http://marinbonsai.org/>

Looking to sell bonsai or give away?

Each membership household, free of charge, may place a five-line ad related to bonsai in two newsletters each Monday of the month to appear in the next publication. Send your ad to EBBS_Distribution@yahoo.com.

Newsletter Editor: Beverly Martinez
Contributors: Tom Fedor & Tom Colby
Newsletter Photographers: various members

East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2020

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.gsbflakemerritt.org/

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Program</u>
Nov 2	EBBS Board Meeting
Nov 11	Bill Castellon – Pines
Dec 7	EBBS Board Meeting
Dec 9	Holiday Party