



# The Tree Shrinker

Volume LX, No.2

A MONTHLY BULLETIN

<http://www.eastbaybonsai.org>



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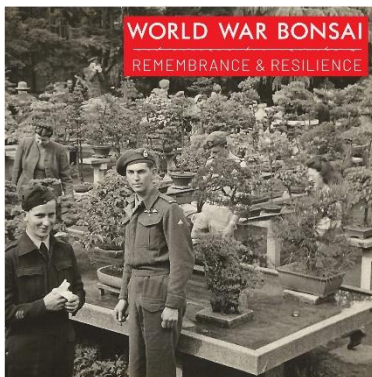


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**East Bay Bonsai Society**  
**Monthly Meeting: February 10, 2020 7:30 PM On-Line**

## February Meeting

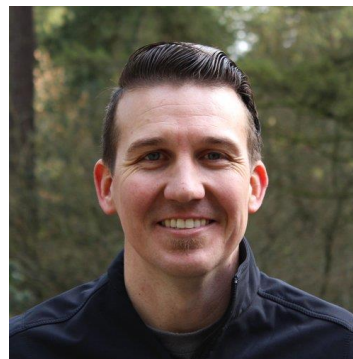
This month we will be getting a lesson in the history of bonsai from Aarin Packard, curator of the Pacific Bonsai Museum in Federal Way, WA. Aarin will discuss the Museum's special exhibition, World War Bonsai: Remembrance & Resilience. The presentation traces the cultural practice of bonsai in location and time—in Japan and in the United States, from the pre-war WWII period, through wartime, amid incarceration, and at peace.



Aarin will share little-known stories of the earliest bonsai practitioners in the East Bay who ingeniously and courageously cared for bonsai, shared their art, and spurred a flourishing, global practice despite overwhelming hardships.



Aarin Packard received his MA in Museum Studies from The George Washington University. In 2006, Aarin was hired as the Assistant Curator of The National Bonsai and Penjing at The U.S. National Arboretum in Washington D.C.



In 2014, Aarin became the Curator of Pacific Bonsai Museum, taking over from David DeGroot who retired after 25 years as curator. At PBM, Aarin oversees the horticultural and artistic care of the bonsai collection while creating new exhibits that honor the tradition of bonsai and advancing the art form in the 21st century.

## January

What a treat it was to have Andrew Robson, from the Great Northwest, entertain us with his visual presentation on winter silhouettes and caring for deciduous trees. Andrew is a co-host of the podcast Bonsai Wire (along with Jonas Dupuich and Michael Hagedorn). He first entered into bonsai while in middle school, when he was at a Japanese Festival. His dad reportedly bought him a tree as long as he joined the local bonsai club. Although he has worked with many different trees, deciduous are his all-time favorites.

The evening opened with Andrew presenting two trees to show a comparison of Natural and Idealized styling. The "Natural" style simulates the way trees grow in nature; branches reaching for the sun, the trunk straight up with no movement. The "Idealized" tree is what we seek for in Bonsai design; contrived movement and pad formation. Forcing the tree to bend certain ways for visual effect.



As we walked through comparing and identifying whether a tree was natural or idealized, Andrew pointed out various aspects of trees; "upper crown is too perfect, it can't be natural", "Nebari on three Maple trees had been air layered leaving all three trees with identical nebari."



Andrew also gave us pointers to managing our deciduous trees:

1. Avoid pruning and wiring in the winter as pruning can cause the trees to bleed and wiring can crack branches. Best to do when sap is running so the tree can heal quicker.
2. Photograph your tree every winter when it is in silhouette. That way a yearly report card can be created that can aid in decision making on care and design.
3. Place the bonsai against a clean backdrop to take photos allowing a visual in 2D.
4. Determine what branches to remove and mark them with colored pipe cleaners for removal in the spring.
5. Growing your bonsai in a box rather than a pot or in the ground can give the tree a chance to spread its roots in the soil and relax. This method is preferable to obtain lateral root growth.

The evening completed with Andrew giving us a peek into his own personal bonsai collection of 200+ trees of which 180 are deciduous. He is currently building his new Rakuyo (Fallen Leaf Bonsai) grounds and should be nearing completion soon. Andrew can be reached at:

[Rakubonsai@gmail.com](mailto:Rakubonsai@gmail.com) and his website is  
At [www.rakuyobonsai.com](http://www.rakuyobonsai.com).

## EBBS Membership Dues are Due!!

Dues are rolling in and 2021 looks to be a very exciting year at East Bay Bonsai. Your board is working hard to get programs that will keep us entertained and educated on the art of bonsai.

Dues costs for 2021 are the same as 2020 and we now have two ways to pay!

Single person/newsletter delivered via e-mail \$30.  
Single person/newsletter delivered via USPS \$40.  
Family/newsletter delivered via e-mail \$40.  
Family/newsletter delivered via USPS \$50.

Checks or money orders should be made out to **EBBS**.

Please send them to:  
**East Bay Bonsai Society**  
**Attn: Pat Cahill**  
**4933 Cochrane Ave.**  
**Oakland, CA. 94618**

If you prefer to pay by credit/debit card there is a link in the Membership portion of the EBBS website, or, you can access it here. [Online pay](#)

## Welcome new EBBS Board Member

We have a new EBBS Board Member! Welcome Alise Lacosse-Offeman. Alise is our newest director on the board and will be heading up the effort to manage the sale of the new Bonsai Seasonal Care Guide online. Welcome Alise! We are looking forward to working with you.

## Bonsai Seasonal Care Guide

Do you remember the San Francisco Bay Area Calendar for Bonsai Care? Well, after much work and a long time coming, it has been upgraded and renamed to the Bonsai Seasonal Care Guide for the San Francisco Bay Area.

This is now a guide by season rather than calendar month. It is a 40-page guide filled with pictures, information on how to care for your bonsais and how to tell the season of your local climate. At the end there is a summary pull out that can be pinned on a wall for easy reference. The challenge in the Bay Area is determining how to effectively care for bonsais within all of the microclimates. This guide starts out with online steps to identify the seasons within the microclimates for each major city. Just follows the instructions in the guide to determine your average rainfall, and temperatures.

The guide will be available for purchase online for \$20 plus postage and handling. It will also be available at the Lake Merritt Bonsai Garden. A separate email will be sent out with pictures of the guide and ordering instructions.

## Grafting

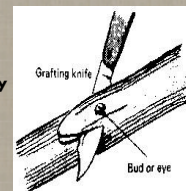
By: Tom Colby  
Photos courtesy of: Janet Nelson

Suppose you want to create a bonsai. You start with two things, a bush and a vision of what the final bonsai should look like. With some luck the bush will have just the right number of branches placed just where you want them. If it has some extra branches they can always be cut off. What happens when the bush has a bald spot where your vision requires a branch? Occasionally you can do a comb over to cover the bald spot by positioning an adjacent branch but more often the comb over looks exactly like an attempt to hide something that is not there. Be of good cheer, though. All is not lost. You can graft a new branch exactly where you want one.

The concept of grafting is deceptively easy. It involves bringing together living tissues of two plants. They fuse together to form a single plant. To understand this process more deeply, we need to look at a bit of plant physiology. Trunks and branches have a very thin layer of active tissue directly under the bark. The interior is wood and is no longer living tissue. This thin layer is known as the cambium. When a cut is made on, say, the trunk of the tree it is the cambium which causes the tree to heal over the cut. If the cambium layers of two different branches are placed together, they can fuse together to a single unit.

### When To Graft?

- Conifers: February – April
- Deciduous: February – May
- Live Oaks: March
- Tropicals: June



The mechanics of the process to form a graft are simple. Typically, a narrow slit is made on the trunk or branch to form a large splinter and a twig is placed in the slit and the twig starts to grow as if it was part of the original tree. And there you have it. A branch just where you needed one. The actual mechanics of grafting, while simple in concept, are a bit demanding in practice. First all cuts must be made with a very sharp knife. Dull knives crush the cambium layers rather than make a clean cut. Crushed fibers grow slowly if at all. The ends of the twigs are cut with two cuts to form a wedge-



shaped point. The more surface that the twig and the slit on the trunk come in contact the more likely you will have a successful graft. Care must be taken that the cambium layer of the twig exactly matches the cambium layer of the trunk. Once the twig is installed the cut surfaces must be protected from drying out. The cut areas are protected by tightly wrapping the union with a variety of ties, including raffia, rubber bands or Pliofilm all of which work well. The twig will dry out because it can lose water through the leaves but has no means of replacing the water until the graft takes place. This can be prevented by placing the twig in a plastic bag which takes some juggling to be effective or wrapping the twig with Pliofilm. This technique is lovingly known locally as an asparagus graft because the wrapped twigs look just like asparagus spears.

You can tell when you have made a successful graft when the twig starts to grow, and this usually takes a few months. This process sounds simple, but the sad fact is that despite your careful efforts the success rate for a successful graft is frequently low due to improper technique or to the fact that the tissues just do not want to cooperate. With practice, the success rate becomes better but even the most experienced people have less than 100% success rate.



There are several variants of the grafting procedure. Branches can be cut squarely at the end; the cut end is split, and the twig is placed in the cut. Many maples available in the nursery trade are grafted this way. Approach grafts are made by cutting a thin strip from both the trunk and a seedling and the two cut surfaces are tightly bound together. The seedling is left in its pot and thus has less tendency to dry out than a cut twig since the pot can be regularly watered. Once the two are growing together either the root end below the graft can be removed or the upper end can be removed if the objective is to enhance the root structure of the tree. Another variant is the thread graft in which the tree can grow a long whip-like branch. A hole is drilled completely through the trunk and the long branch is bent and threaded through the hole. The surface of the whip is lightly abraded to expose the cambium layer so fusion can take place. The hole is then sealed with cut paste. If the graft is successful, the base end of the whip is then trimmed. The thread graft solves a problem that can be encountered with maples. If you select a twig from a different maple, it may have different properties such as leaf size or color than the host tree and this can detract

from the tree. Thread graft means that the new branch will be exactly like the rest of the tree.



Can you graft a twig onto a dead branch? The answer is yes, well, sort of. This takes us to a procedure known by two romantically inspired titles from folklore. Locally it is known as a phoenix graft because the Phoenix arose from the dead. In Japan it is called a tanuki, the Japanese word for badger. In Japanese folklore the badger is a trickster who makes people see things that are not there. The process involves taking a piece of deadwood and cutting a groove in it. A seedling, usually a juniper, is placed in the groove and is tightly bound either by raffia or wood screws. As the seedling grows it appears to be part of the tree and gives the illusion of a large bonsai.

Grafting is a skill that all accomplished bonsai artists should have. A great way to start is to practice by grafting on an inexpensive juniper. When you can make a successful graft, you are then able to attack that bald spot in your prized bonsai.

**Member 'for sale' items**

Each membership household, free of charge, may place a five-line ad related to bonsai in two newsletters each year. Please submit your ad by the preceding Monday of the month to appear in the next publication. Send your ad to [EBBS\\_Distribution@yahoo.com](mailto:EBBS_Distribution@yahoo.com).

**Bonsai Calendar**

- Watering – Reduce watering, but ensure plants receive sufficient water
- Fertilizing – Feed with 0-10-10.
- Repotting – Repot deciduous trees and junipers
- Styling/Pruning – Do heavier pruning. Cut large limbs on pines.
- Graft – All species

*Refer to the Bonsai Seasonal Care Guide for more detailed information*

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Newsletter Editor: Beverly Martinez

Contributors: Tom Colby, Andrea Callegari, Janet Nelson, Lisa Harper

Newsletter Photographers:

<b>East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2021</b>
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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.gsbflakemerritt.org/](http://www.gsbflakemerritt.org/)

**Meeting**

**Program**

Feb 1	EBBS Board Meeting
Feb 10	Aarin Packard-WWII Bonsai and West Coast Beginnings
Mar 1	EBBS Board Meeting
Mar 10	TBD