



The Tree Shrinker

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A MONTHLY BULLETIN

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East Bay Bonsai Society

Monthly Meeting: ~~Wednesday, July 14th at 7:30 PM~~ **Cancelled
Shared presentation Ryan Neal - Thursday, July 8th at 7:00 PM**

July Meeting

You read it right! In lieu of having our scheduled meeting on the 14th of July, we are thrilled to be joining forces with the Bonsai Society of San Francisco (BSSF) and presenting Ryan Neal on Thursday July 8th. This will be a zoom meeting.



Ryan was born and raised in Colorado. He fell in love with bonsai at a young age being a huge fan of the Karate Kid and Mr. Miyagi. At 14 he met artist Harold Sasaki and began studying with him in earnest. He obtained a horticulture degree from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo then undertook a six-year apprenticeship in Japan under renowned bonsai artist Masahiko Kimura. After completing his apprenticeship in 2010, Ryan started his garden, [Bonsai Mirai](#), near Portland, Oregon.

Ryan's work is bold and innovative. He is passionate about using native species to create compositions that reflect the wildness of North American landscape. Artistry aside, Ryan is a talented educator — his teachings at Bonsai Mirai has garnered a large following of students worldwide.

June Meeting

By: Tom Fedor

You may recall we met Sergio Cuan nearly two years ago on the occasion of our last October show at the Garden Center, when we were privileged to enjoy an entire weekend with him. This evening he zoomed back to the Bay Area for a welcome return to share his ideas about summer maintenance. Sergio is an artist who, in his day job, works as creative director for a major entertainment company in New York City. He graduated with a BFA in Art and Design from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY. His passion for the visual arts extends to the arts horticultural, as well. Though largely self-taught, he has become well known in the community of bonsai artists, and his work has won awards including Finest Deciduous Award at the 4th US National Bonsai Exhibition in Rochester, NY and Best in Show at the 2016 Winter Silhouette Expo in Kannapolis, NC.

Sergio's first topic tonight was thinning dwarf maples, although the technique is applicable to maples generally, and other deciduous species as well. These trees naturally develop a very dense canopy which, left unaddressed, will cause dieback of lower branches. Sergio showed where when and how to cut and also took several questions, the answers to which highlighted some of the differences in thinning Japanese maples other than dwarfs. The discussion evolved to a consideration of defoliating generally, from the partial to the entire, from cutting off only parts of leaves or entire leaves, and why, when and what to expect from doing it. Regarding pinching, interestingly, Sergio finds it is not guaranteed to produce short internodes. Especially, the length of the first one seems determined in part by the tree's own proclivities. Pinching will prevent the branch from thickening, if that's what's wanted, it but may not necessarily shorten your internodes.



Next up, root grafting. While the time is ripe for thinning and defoliating, time is past for root grafting (and thread grafting), which needs to be done earlier in the spring. Sergio included them this evening because they are some of the best ways for us to improve our deciduous material. And if we'd done them at the right time, we'd be monitoring them now, anyway. He showed us a maple with a gap in its nebari, and where an earlier attempt at a root graft failed. He noted that, although he exposes the mother's cambium with a Dremel, those of us with a less steady hand may have better results with a hand tool. In answer to a question, he also admitted to lightly scraping the seedling to expose its cambium as well (but not too heavily). He then wired the seedling up and out so that it would reach sunshine out from under the mother's canopy. As to whether the seedling needs to be the same species as Mother Tree, well, yes and no. It may be that, upon maturity, a cross-species seedling very different from Mom would display a different bark upsetting to a purist; on the other hand, Sergio would challenge anyone to tell the difference in most cases. Air layering can also be useful for improving one's nebari as an alternative to root grafting.



Sergio next discussed thread grafting as the single best tool we have for putting a deciduous branch right where it's needed. And it's almost foolproof (he says!). In order to place one precisely, remember to drill from the graft's exit point, not the entrance. He then sets the graft with wire in order to start it off in the right direction. When the graft's exit side diameter has thickened to about twice that of the entry side, then it has matured enough to release the rear end from the back side (so to speak).



Sergio closed his prepared remarks with a discussion of wound closing, and the importance of cut paste in promoting the growth of cambium over old wounds. In some cases (and he showed us one), it may even be necessary to remove any dead wood under a scar, filling the cavity with epoxy (or even concrete!) prior to applying cut paste. He then undertook an hour-long assessment of several lucky member's trees (some snuck in more than one, money's worth!) from previously provided photographs offering helpful suggestions, some optional, some strongly suggested to their caretakers for both now and later. And later it certainly was, by the time the trooper finished, almost past my bed-time. Many thanks, Sergio! We're looking forward to the next time we get together.

July Plant Sale Cancelled

Much to our dismay, we will not be able to have a plant sale in July. Earlier this year we found that while trying to obtain a sales permit the club also needs to be recertified by the State of California and the Federal IRS. The board is diligently working on this issue and we expect to be able to have our normal plant sale in October along with our annual show.

So, hang on to those plants, stands and pots. And be ready to sell in October.

Let us take a moment

By: Tom Colby

As all the inconveniences of the covid pandemic slowly grinds to a halt and the return to normality looms, it is timely to review where we have been as a club over the past year. The role of the board of directors is to provide interesting and informative activities, usually in the form of monthly meetings, as well as to efficiently operate the business side of the club. If they are doing their job all this takes place outside of the view of the membership.

The current board as a group has doggedly attempted to fulfill that role and it is time to shed a little light on their activities. Attendance by club members at the online meetings has been about the same as for the in-person meetings prior to covid which has shown that the board

has, if fact, been doing their job. There have been several members of the board who deserve special recognition, starting with Addison Galambos who has patiently guided us through the intricacies of Google-meet and zoom which were the entries to the world of electronic meetings. Meeting electronically allowed easy access to presentations by bonsai masters in Europe. In-person presentations by European bonsai masters involves transportation and housing costs which make their in-person presence prohibitively expensive.

Usually, these people are available only at GSBF conventions. We were lucky to have not one but three presentations by European masters in the past year. Many thanks to Michael Hylton and Andrea Callegari for arranging these presentations. Another pat on the back should go to Lisa Harper for her always enthusiastic leadership of the board. Not only does the board deserve a pat on the back, but so does all the members who renewed their dues for the coming year which showed their faith that the club had something of value to offer.

Bev Martinez wears two hats. One as a board member and one as the crusading editor of the newsletter. As you may recall, our newsletter was recognized for excellence not long before the covid problem arose. Bev deserves a shout out for maintaining the high quality of the newsletter during these trying times. The newsletter has been a consistent contact between the club and its membership that has been vital when meetings in person are no longer available.

To put in perspective where we have been and the success of our efforts to maintain some sense of normality, we can look no farther than the local orchid society. During the covid restrictions that club did not offer electronic presentations, nor did it produce a newsletter. As a result, there is serious question whether the club will continue. This would be a sad ending for a club founded in the late 1930's and at one time had a membership of considerably more than 200 members.

So where do we go from here? Soon we will be able to once again resume in person meetings which will be a great relief to all. In a sense we will be able to pick up where we were before covid. The advantages of club membership are two-fold, one being gaining technical information on mastering the art of bonsai and the other being social interaction with people with similar interests in bonsai. Electronic meetings have offered two quite different aspects. It allows access to presenters who are not normally available. The downside has been the loss of social interaction. While most future meetings will feature in-person demonstrations as has been done in the past, it is possible that occasionally meetings will be hybrids of an electronic presentation at an in-person club meeting, capturing the best of both worlds. Time will tell.

Bonsai Calendar

- Watering – Water regularly. Don't over-water defoliate trees.
- Fertilizing – Continue regular feeding, but stop fertilizing decandled pines.
- Repotting – Not recommended at this time except for tropical and semi-tropical trees.
- Styling/Pruning – Avoid drastic pruning. Wire uprising branches on quince, ume, oaks, etc. Prune excessive growth on trees.
- Insect and disease control – Maintain defensive treatments for fungus. Watch for and treat insect infestations.

Refer to the EBBS Bonsai Seasonal guide for more information on care

Plant Physiology 101

By: Tom Colby

We can do a better job of growing our trees if we understand what makes them tick and here is where a bit of plant physiology come in. Let's do three mental experiments which hopefully will shed some light on the subject. In the first experiment we plant our favorite bonsai tree in lovely soil and water it enough to keep the soil moist at all times. With a bit of fertilizer and a lot of sunshine the tree will respond by growing vigorously. It might to surprise us to see that the tree has a marvelous plumbing system. There are structures at the ends of the roots, called feeder roots, whose principal job is to slurp up water as well as nutrients from the soil. The water is transported up the tree trunk to the leaves. There some of the water and carbon dioxide from the air are converted to the energy the tree needs to grow by the action of sunlight. Chlorophyll, the chemical that is responsible for the green color in leaves, makes all this happen. Much of the remaining water is then lost by the leaves and the cycle continues. As the tree gets bigger it has more leaves which in turn increases the loss of water by the tree, so it needs to grow more roots to keep the water in the tree in balance.

In the second experiment we pot our favorite tree in lovely soil but don't water it for three weeks. We will observe that the leaves on the tree will droop and then as time goes by, turn brown and fall off. At the end of three weeks our tree is about dead and no matter how furiously we water the tree the water now does not stave off death. What, exactly, happened? The lack of water in the soil does not allow the tree to replace water lost by the leaves and the tree becomes dehydrated. The tree attempts to make up for the loss of water by dropping leaves.

The feeder roots can no longer slurp up water and in addition slowly die. If the tree is watered in time some of the feeder roots can rehydrate, which maybe enough for the tree to slowly recover while it grows new roots. As the drought continues eventually all the roots will die and the tree becomes toast, literally. Once this point is reached no amount of water will revive our tree because there are no functioning roots to take up water. In the real world all this can take place in as little as a couple of weeks.

In our third experiment we pot our favorite tree into lovely bonsai soil and into a pot which does not have drain holes. We water it normally and since the pot has no drain holes the tree ends upstanding in a puddle of water. A bonsai pot with no drain holes is an extreme case for this experiment but a poorly draining soil could also have been used for the mental experiment. We see that the tree slowly drops its leaves and eventually dies. What is happening here? An autopsy reveals a surprising fact. In spite of standing in water, the tree has died of dehydration. How can this be? We live in a world of microbes and not all of them are beneficial by making bread, wine, beer and other good things in life. Standing water is an ideal breeding ground for bacteria and some of these wee beasties can cause root rot. Once the roots have rotted there is no way for the tree to replace water lost by the leaves and then the tree becomes dehydrated just as the tree is the second experiment that we did not water. In the real world this process takes place more slowly than the case where we did not water the tree. Root rot it is difficult to treat and once started saving the tree is problematic.

What does all this tell us? The most import single factor in growing our trees is to maintain conditions which lead to healthy roots. The conditions are a combination of the soil we use and how we water trees in this soil. The lovely bonsai soil mentioned above is one that drains

well but still can retain moisture between watering. There are many soil compositions that have been recommended in the past. One currently popular mix is one third each of lava, pumice and akadama (an expensive form of clay pellets mined in Japan). Other mixes involve lava, fine gravel and pumice as well as about 20% of the mix being an organic ingredient such as either fir or redwood bark. Each of the various soil mixes has strong advocates, but in truth be told they all can work well. The other condition is that the soil must be kept moist so managing how much you water the tree is important. Oh yes, be sure that the pot you use for your tree has a drain hole.

Make your tree a Social Media Star! Our Facebook page is in need of member's trees to display. If interested in showing your tree, send a picture to EBBS_Distribution@Yahoo.com.

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.

Have an idea for an on-line meeting? You can contact any board member or send a note to EBBS_Distribution@Yahoo.com. All suggestions are welcome!

Bonsai for Beginner's is back!

Introduction to Bonsai (Bonsai for Beginners) is back on the 4th Sunday of each month from 1:00 – 3:00, excluding February and December. Sign up at Eastbaybonsai.org. Classes are held at the workshop in the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt.

Events by Others

October 2 and 3, 2021 Santa Nella, California

Golden State Bonsai Federation (GSBF) will host the 2021 GSBF Bonsai Rendezvous. The event theme is "Bonsai Rendezvous." A two-day event for renewal and celebration for the love of bonsai. No registration fees. Open to the public. Free bonsai demonstrations both days. Free professional bonsai critiques, Bring Your Own Bonsai and Do It Yourself Bonsai settings. Vendors from Northern and Southern California in one huge location. There will be silent auctions for quality bonsai and related items. There will be no banquet dinners. Additional information and schedule of activities forthcoming shortly. Stay tuned to GSBF website. For further information or to volunteer in support of the event, contact Rich Guillen at richguillen@att.net or call 831-233-1612.

Newsletter Editor: Beverly Martinez
Contributors: Tom Fedor, Tom Colby
Ryan Neil biography courtesy of the Bonsai Society of San Francisco

East Bay Bonsai Society—Schedule for 2021
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Regular Meetings: Second Wednesday, in person every month (except July, August and October) @ 7:30 pm.
Place: Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland. Visitor's welcome.

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Program</u>
July 8	Ryan Neil – Sierra Juniper
July 14	Cancelled
July 25	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Janet Nelson
Aug 2	EBBS Board Meeting
Aug 21	Annual Picnic
Aug 22	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Michael Jensen-Akula
Aug 30	EBBS Board Meeting
Sept. 8	Randall Lee – Rock plantings
Sept. 26	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – John Nackley/Bob Gould
Oct 4	EBBS Board Meeting
Oct 9	Annual Show (no monthly meeting)
Oct 24	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Tom Colby
Nov 1	EBBS Board Meeting
Nov 10	Monthly meeting – TBD
Nov 28	Introduction to Bonsai at BGLM – Michael Jensen-Akula
Nov 29	EBBS Board Meeting
Dec 8	Holiday dinner