



THE TREE SHRINKER

Next EBBS Meeting: **Feb 11, 2026**

2026 EBBS Schedule

Regular Meetings

2nd Wednesday, every month

Feb 11 - Club meeting, Leslie Buck, 7:30pm

March 11 - Randall Lee, Hinoki Cypress, 7:30pm

Mar 22 - Intro to Bonsai at the Garden, Janet Nelson

April 8 - Member Lightning Talks, 7:30pm

- Addison on Kokufu 100th Anniversary
- Michael S on Monterey Cypress from seed
- Lisa Harper on accent plants

Dues are Due!

It's that time again! If you joined after October 1, 2025, you're paid for 2026. Otherwise, you can pay dues in cash, check, or credit card. Drop off cash or check at the next meeting, or use the link on eastbaybonsai.org/membership to pay by credit card. You can also pay at any meeting via Square. Mail your dues to **East Bay Bonsai Society, c/o P. Cahill, 4933 Cochrane Ave, Oakland, CA 94618.**

Annual dues remain the same:

- Single membership: \$30
- Family membership: \$40



February Meeting: Leslie Buck

Leslie Buck is the author of the New York Times-reviewed *Cutting Back: My Apprenticeship in the Gardens of Kyoto* (Timber Press, available on Amazon via Kindle and audiobook), chronicling her journey as a California gardener working alongside traditional Kyoto garden craftsmen from private residences to an emperor's villa. With degrees in fine arts and horticulture, Leslie studied under mentor Dennis Makishima and bonsai master Mas Imazumi at Merritt College.

Her slideshow features rare early photographs of Dennis before his hair turned gray, Mas with his renowned bonsai collection, and the Lake Merritt Bonsai Garden at Golden State—where Leslie worked alongside her niece and sister to set stones and plants. She'll reveal a closely held secret about the bonsai garden that women in the audience will particularly appreciate.

Leslie provides design consultation for gardens of all types, focusing on beauty, health, and fire resistance, and accepts new pruning clients exclusively for California native landscapes. Contact her at lesliebuckauthor.com or follow @lesliebuckauthor on Instagram and Facebook.

"An unusual and entertaining memoir . . . she learns—about durability and resilience. She learns to prune trees exquisitely..." **New York Times Book Review**

"As much a story of bravery and the challenge of adapting to an unfamiliar culture as it is of horticulture. Anyone contemplating a brave career gamble will learn from it." **—San Francisco Chronicle**

Thanks ahead to **Pat Cahill, Ray Lesperance and Bev Martinez** for bringing delicious refreshments to the meeting.



Annual Repotting Party – Another One in the Books

We wrapped up our annual repotting party this month, and it was exactly what these events should be - a chance to get work done, learn from each other, and spend time with friends who understand why we care so much about these trees.

The variety of material that showed up was impressive. Watching people work through their repotting decisions - root work, soil mix choices, pot selection - is always educational. You pick up techniques and approaches just by being in the room and paying attention.

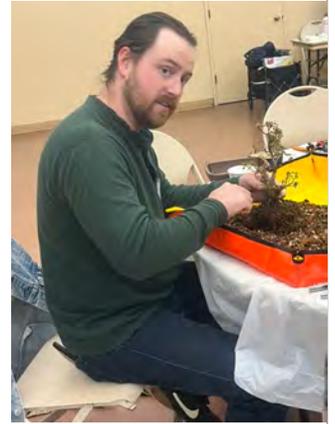
What makes these gatherings valuable isn't just the practical work. It's the casual conversations while you're wiring a root ball or discussing someone's styling plan. The collective problem-solving when someone hits a challenge. The mentorship that happens organically when experienced members work alongside newer practitioners.

This is the kind of day that reminds you why being part of a club matters. Sure, you could repot your trees alone in your backyard. But doing it together, with people who share the passion and can offer insight or just good company while you work - that's what builds a real bonsai community.

Looking forward to next year's already.

– story and photos by Adam Kleinberg





The 2026 BABA Show

If you missed the Bay Area Bonsai Associates show this month, you missed something special. This was like our very own mini Pacific Bonsai Expo – several members who had trees in the Expo brought work to this show. The quality on display was truly next level, the kind of trees that remind you why we all got into this craft in the first place.

Several of our most experienced members are also active in BABA, and their influence was evident throughout the exhibition. These are practitioners working at the highest levels of the art, and it showed in every detail – from the refined ramification and movement to the sophisticated pot selections and display presentations.

The trees weren't just well-maintained specimens; they were fully realized artistic statements. The kind of work that takes decades of patient cultivation, vision, and deep understanding of the principles.

One of my favorite things about shows like this is getting the stories behind the trees. I managed to get Rick Trumm talking about Janet's juniper (shown here), and the origin story is perfect. They were out collecting and Rick found this tree but decided to pass on it because it had a tap root that ran about 20 feet long. Janet took one look at it and decided she wanted it anyway. So she dug up that entire 20-foot root, wrapped it in sphagnum moss, somehow bent it to fit into a pot, and proceeded to mist and baby that tree back to life and into this



incredible. Very on brand for Janet, as many of you know! The result is the incredible juniper you saw at the show.

If you have the chance to attend future BABA shows, make the time. Seeing work at this level is both humbling and inspiring – exactly what we need to push our own practice forward.

Enjoy the photos on the next two pages. Really incredible work!

– story and photos by Adam Kleinberg

Bonsai Calendar

- Many trees are dormant or semi-dormant, so there's still time for re-potting.
- Take advantage of dormancy to photograph deciduous trees without leaves.
- Rotate trees monthly to promote balanced growth.
- Improve overall design of trees: reduce or eliminate crisscross, inward branches, excessively heavy top branches, vertical twigs, unnecessary crotch branches, and long internodes.
- Many suggest a zero level of nitrogen during winter, especially for hard pines.
- Reduce watering because the sun is low, but not too much! You don't want to overwater either because it can cause root rot.
- Watch for insects and fungus—immediately treat any problems.
- Check old wiring for biting.

Refer to the EBBS Bonsai Seasonal guide for more info on care.

Member Survey Results

In December 2025, the EBBS Board surveyed members about their bonsai experience and club preferences. Thank you to everyone who participated—40% of members responded, demonstrating strong engagement.

Member Experience Levels

Experience breakdown: 39% have 0-3 years, 31% have 3-8 years, and 31% have 8+ years. Skill levels: 38% beginner, 56% intermediate, 7% expert. We're excited to welcome many new members and support your learning journey.

Raffle

Members who included their name will be entered into a drawing at the February meeting for a \$100 gift certificate to Bonsai Tonight. Attendance not required to win.

Key Survey Findings

Monthly Meetings:

All 2025 topics were well received. Beginners favored the Potting Party and Shohin Development, while advanced members preferred species-specific demonstrations. Going forward, beginners want pre-meeting hands-on workshops and core technique presentations; advanced members want deeper dives into specific species and techniques. Top priorities across all levels: pruning, wiring/shaping, initial styling, and seasonal care.

Tree Species

Demonstrations:

Most requested species are Japanese Maples, Junipers, Redwood, Pine, and Oak.

Annual Show:

Opinions split evenly on expert judging versus public voting. Paid advanced workshops with headliners received strong support. Beginner workshops got mixed survey feedback but filled completely in 2025—better viewed as community outreach.

Club Tree Styling Competition:

75% want EBBS to host one; 27% would compete.

Field Trips:

Strong interest in member garden tours and visits to bonsai artists' gardens. Over 22 members expressed interest in Yamadori collection trips.

Workshops: 69% want intermediate/advanced paid workshops.

Member Suggestions

More socializing time, additional pre-meeting workshops, "bring your own tree" sessions, invite Young Cho back for a weekend event, and include more California native species.

- Written by Bryan Morgan





News from The Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt

The catalog for the Auction is now on the website!!! You can download it at:

[Mammoth-Auction-Catalog-2026-Online-Version-1.pdf](#)

Printed catalogs will be available the day of the Auction, March 7 for \$5.



The Bonsai Garden is still looking for volunteers to sign up for help for the 2026 Mammoth

Auction and Sale, March 7- 8.

Please use the link for SignUp Genius:"

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B4DABA729A6FAC34-61255523-mammoth>

Volunteering at the Garden

The Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt is looking for volunteers for the following positions:

Treasurer

Docent Coordinator and Scheduler

Security Manager

Please contact Suzanne Muller at 925.787.1349 for more details.



Several members convened at the Garden this month to do some repotting with Sam Tan. It was an incredible opportunity to volunteer and learn.

How To Decide The Height Of A Bonsai

This guide is repurposed from [Michael Hagedorn's blog, Crataegus Bonsai](#). We're grateful to Michael for sharing his expertise with the bonsai community. Follow him for his fantastic newsletter and weekly blog posts!

A reader asked [Michael] for an explanation of this sentence from a previous post:

"With any tree, thick trunk or thin, follow the taper of the trunk and where the two lines of the sides meet, that's roughly where your tree should end."

I admit that wasn't easy to follow. I often say something like that while teaching, in front of a tree, where it might make more sense. Hopefully the following images will explain this rough guideline.



This elm is by Michael Roberts. It's a great example of the utility of the guideline. If you take the taper of the lower trunk and follow that up, where the two lines meet is about where we should find the top of the bonsai.



Another pretty clear example, a Red Maple by Anne Spencer.

Here's a multiple trunked Japanese Maple. With any of the trunks here, the lines from the lower trunk taper should still meet at the canopy periphery. Note that nebari flare is ignored in this guideline.



The lines of this Satsuki intersect lower than the current crown, so this tree would benefit by being a few inches shorter. Which the last few snips should do.



Let's end with a couple trees where this guideline is nonsensical. The number of reverse tapers on this tree can make you dizzy, and yet it won a Prime Minister's Award for my teacher Mr. Suzuki. The lines from the lower trunk widen—the opposite of assumed bonsai design—and then contract again near the foliage.



Another tree where the guideline is silly, a tree with no taper whatsoever. It was topped off at 14" which was based more on the desire for compaction and available branches to frame the shari. An example of how a guideline can in real world situations be limited to the point of being useless.

Though with other trees, particularly those that fit inside the traditional framework, this guideline can have modest utility.

Club T-Shirts!

Interested in an EBBS shirt? They are now available for purchase at <https://east-bay-bonsai-society.myspreadshop.com/>. Please email Freddie at fjwinter@yahoo.com with questions.

Join the conversation!

facebook.com/groups/ebbs

facebook.com/groups/ebbsmembers

instagram.com/eastbaybonsai/

twitter.com/EastBayBonsai

www.eastbaybonsai.org

Member Ads

Each member can run a free ad in the newsletter once a year. Email Adam at adam@tractionco.com to submit yours.

Newsletter Contributors

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Upcoming Bonsai Events

GSBF Huntington Garden Bonsai-A-Thon & CBS Bonsai Display

Feb 28, 2026, 9:00 AM - Mar 01, 2026, 6:00 AM

San Marino, 1151 Oxford Rd, San Marino, CA

GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt Mammoth Auction & Sale

Mammoth Live Auction - Mar 07, 2026, 12:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Mammoth Vendor + Consignment Sale - Mar 08, 2026, 9AM - 3PM

Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt, 666 Bellevue Ave, Oakland

American Bonsai Association Sacramento Bonsai Show and Sale

Apr 11, 2026, 7:00 PM - Apr 12, 2026, 11:00 PM, Sacramento

Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd, Sacramento, CA

Kusamura Bonsai Club 66th Annual Show

Apr 18, 2026, 12:00 PM - Apr 19, 2026, 4:00 PM, Addison School,

1045 Webster St, Palo Alto, CA. Over 60 outstanding bonsai will be

on display. Chicago headliner, Jennifer Price, will be conducting a demonstration on Saturday 1-3 and a workshop on Sunday from 1-3

- open to the public. Show Critique on Sunday at 10:30 am. Tours will be held throughout both days

Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai and Yamato Bonsai Show

Sat, May 30 | Lakeside Park Garden Center, Come join us for a

combined show featuring the beautiful colors of Satsuki azalea bonsai, Pines, Junipers, and other living bonsai art forms. Round-

robin demonstration on Saturday from 1pm-3pm. Vendor and

member sales. Hours: Sat 10-5; Sun 10-4

Valley Bonsai Society 17th Annual Show

Sat, Jun 20 | Alden Lane Nursery. There will be a demonstration at

1pm on both days. The finished tree will be raffled off at the end of

the demonstration. Bonsai pots, soil, trees, etc. will be available for

purchase. Admission is free.

Redwood Empire Bonsai Society (REBS) Bonsai Show, Sat, Aug

22 | Rohnert Park Community Center, Explore the living art form of

Bonsai with headliner Sam Tan, studied under the renowned Ryan

Neil of Mirai. Formal Displays, BYOT Workshop, Vendor and

Member Sales, Benefit Drawings, Silent Auctions and Trees in

Training. Free Admission and Parking. Hours: Saturday 10-5 and

Sunday 10-4