



THE TREE SHRINKER

Next EBBS Meeting: **May 13, 2026**

2026 EBBS Schedule

Regular Meetings

2nd Wednesday, every month

May 13 - Nick Vila on Air Layering, 7:30pm + pre-meeting member workshop + a wiring workshop with Addison Galambos at 6:30

June 10 - Jerry Carpenter on Tropicals at 7:30pm + pre-meeting workshop at 6:30

July 8 - **EBBS Annual Auction**
Trees and other auction items to arrive at 5:30. Viewing will begin at 6:00.

August 12 - Speaker TBD at 7:30pm + pre-meeting workshop at 6:30

Sept 2 - Sam Tan on Redwoods, 7:30pm + pre-meeting workshop

Oct 7 - Lucy Judd will once again delight us with accent plantings at 7:30 (no pre-meeting workshop)

Nov 11 - 7:30 workshop to get trees ready for the show.

Nov 13-15 - Annual Show-setup is at 6:00 Friday the 13th .

Dec 9 - Annual Holiday Party, set up at 6:00.



May Meeting Nick Vila on Air Layering

Nick Vila has quickly become one of the club's most enthusiastic members – someone whose rapid growth in the hobby has been well-noted by those around him. This month, he's bringing that energy and hands-on know-how to the meeting room to teach us one of the most powerful propagation techniques in bonsai: air layering.

Air layering lets you coax roots onto a branch while it's still attached to the parent tree, effectively growing a new tree from established material. It's invaluable for propagating species you want more of, correcting poor nebari on existing trees, and rescuing beautiful branches you might otherwise lose.

Nick will walk us through selecting good candidates, timing your layers to the season, preparing the wound, applying the moss ball, and knowing when to cut free. He'll cover which species respond best – and share a few hard-won lessons along the way. Don't forget the pre-meeting wiring workshop with Addison at 6:30 pm before the main meeting at 7:30 pm.

Thanks to Ron Sanchez, Nick Vila and Nicole Yabut for bringing refreshments to our April meeting.

April Meeting: Lightning Talks!

Last month's meeting featured 3 "Lightning Talks" by members of the club – Mike Szabo taught us how to propagate Monterey Cypress, Lisa Harper led a primer on accent plants that will be sure to make a positive impact on our next club show, and Addison shared pictures from his most recent trip to Japan for Kokufu (see next page), the most prestigious bonsai show in the world. The presentations were all

very different and extremely informative! Thank you Lightning Talkers!



Mike Szabo shared his process for growing Monterey Cypress from seed – something that he and his son learned from trial and error over the last several years. Here's the step-by-step!

1. **Collect cones** from trees. Make sure they are not green. Those aren't ready yet!

2. **Dry them in sun** - 1 week or so on the windowsill does the trick

3. **Collect seeds** by shaking the cone – they look like pieces of oat

4. **Soak** for 24 hours

5. **Put in sand or small particles** from sifting bonsai soil in ziplock. Put in fridge for 1-2 months cold stratification

6. **Sprinkle over grow tray** of soil (optional: adding 1/8 " of soil over top that c)]

7. **Put it in shade** until you get a sprout. Then grow, grow, grow!



Lisa Harper taught us a lot about accent plants in a highly engaging presentation. Accents come in small packages, but they do a big amount of work: They heighten the impact of your display, they help tell the story of your tree, and express bonsai in space and time.

The most important trait of an accent is that it creates a visceral creative expression. It does this through contrast - between the plant and stand, pot colors, leaf color and shape. Flowers can be great touches, but they should be seasonal.

The vessel or pot should be of comparable quality with the tree it is next to. It's also best practice to match habitats. Observe what grows together in the wild. Redwood forest floors are covered in ferns, so that's a great choice for that type of tree!

April Meeting: Show & Tell

We introduced a new format for club show and tell with members presenting in the front of the stage.

Here are some highlights.

Steven Lyle showed us his Oregon Ash and highly recommended it as a species that's currently rare in bonsai, but grows vigorously and responds extremely well to pruning.



Ron Reid and **Janet Nelson** both showed us gorgeous azaleas in full bloom. The flowers were stunning! Why doesn't my azalea look like that? Maybe a topic for a future article, Ron!

There was some group pontification about the species of **Julie's** tree (I believe the consensus was that it was Chinese Somethingorotherus).



Michael Jensen-Akula shared some young Monterrey and Pygmy Cypress he's been growing so we could see the contrast between the two breeds.

Last, but certainly not least, **yours truly** shared an 8-year old Monterrey I won in the Mammoth Auction and just restyled with Adam Toth. Unfortunately, I was the only one taking photos, so there's not picture to share with you, but I assure you: it was fabulous.



- Adam Kleinberg

Genus Genius Addison interviews Peter Tea on Bonsai Builders

If you haven't tuned into our club president Addison's [Bonsai Builders Podcast](#) yet, you are missing out on some serious bench-side wisdom. Addison sat down with premier bonsai professional Peter Tea for a deep dive into what it takes to build a truly world-class tree.

While listening to the full episode is highly recommended (seriously, go queue it up!), we know you're busy watering, wiring, and whispering sweet nothings to your junipers. Here is a lighthearted cheat sheet of the biggest "aha!" moments from their chat.

1. Adopt the "Bonsai Mechanic" Mindset

Before he was shaping masterpieces in California and studying in Japan, Peter fixed cars at a Ford dealership. He applies that exact same accountability to his bonsai practice. When a tree hits his bench, the buck stops with him. He's not interested in a duct-tape styling job that looks good for a year and then completely falls apart. He builds trees with a solid, long-term foundation so they thrive for decades.

2. Embrace the "Ugly" Phase

Ever wonder why a professional's tree sometimes has a random sacrifice branch sticking six feet into the air? Peter compares building a bonsai to building a house. You wouldn't judge a half-built



house frame for not having wallpaper yet, right? To build the ultimate tree, you have to let it look totally bizarre for a while. Stop trying to make your tree look "show-ready" at every single stage! Cutting back growth just to keep it looking cute in the short term will only sabotage your long-term goals.

3. Age Forgives Bad Technique

Peter breaks down the "age" of a tree into three categories:

- Physical age (how old the tree actually is).
- Manipulated age (wiring and bending to make it look older).
- Cultivated age (how long it's been trained in a pot).

The coolest takeaway? If a tree is genuinely ancient, it can get away with murder. If a black pine has 100-year-old bark, nobody cares if one of the branches is technically a little "leggy." The sheer gravitas of the tree's age forgives the structural imperfections.



Bonsai Calendar

Water

Water regularly to keep root ball moist, not wet, and never dry.

Don't over-water repotted plants – especially azaleas because over-watering can kill them!

Fertilizing

Start regular feeding of deciduous trees after first flush of growth is completed—you can generally start around May 1.

Continue regular feeding of conifers.

Styling/Pruning

Rotate trees every couple of weeks.

Watch for wire biting during this period of fast growth. You may want to remove old wire at this time.

Start defoliation.

Shorten branches on fruiting trees.

Pinch junipers, spruces and cedars.

Air Layering

Deciduous trees may be air layered if new growth has hardened.

Insect and disease control

Apply fungicide and pesticide once a month as a preventative. Immediately treat any fungus or pest problems you discover.

Safer Soap or liquid Sevin can be used to control aphids.

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

4. Leave Your Ego in the Compost Bin

What's the biggest thing holding hobbyists back from improving? Ego. If you've been working on a tree for 10 years and your design just isn't working out, you have to be brutally honest with yourself. Be willing to scrap the plan, ask for help, and accept that you might have been wrong. (Peter jokingly notes that guys tend to struggle with this the most—so gentlemen, take notes!)

5. You Can't Force a Masterpiece

What makes a true masterpiece stand out from just a "good" bonsai? Peter says it's an undeniable, emotional presence. But here is the catch: you usually can't manufacture it. Many masterpieces happen when there is a complete lack of ego in the creation process. If you go in aggressively trying to force a tree to become a masterpiece, you'll probably ruin it. Just do the best work you can, stay patient, and let serendipity do the rest.

The Final Word

Building great bonsai is a marathon, not a sprint. If you want the full dose of Peter's philosophy on Japanese aesthetics, client relationships, and leveling up your backyard collection, give the full interview a listen. Huge shoutout to Addison for an amazing interview!

Beginner Wiring Workshop Series

We're excited to invite you to a **Free Pre-Meeting Workshop** on **Wednesday, May 13th at 6:30pm**, held before our regular meeting (7:30-9:30pm).

This will be a hands-on mini course hosted by the club, running **1-4 sessions depending on interest.**

We'll cover the following and more!

- Why you should wire and what it tries to achieve
- Proper wiring techniques
- How to create movement and bends
- Copper vs aluminum
- Wire thickness selection
- How to avoid wire bite
- Anchoring techniques

Wire and supplies will be provided (bring wire cutters and pliers if you have them!).

Our goal is for you to be able to wire your first tree by the end of the classes.

The EBBS Annual Auction is Coming!

Mark your calendars for our biggest event of the year on **Wednesday, July 8th 2026!** Whether you are looking to thin out your benches or find a new masterpiece, it's going to be an exciting night at the Lakeside Garden Center.

We have updated a few of our auction guidelines for this year to ensure a smooth and high-quality event:

- **Seller Eligibility:** Only current EBBS members are eligible to sell trees and items this year.
- **Item Limit:** There is a strict limit of **10 items per seller.**
- **Minimum Value:** All items (or bundled "lots") must have a minimum value of **\$30.**

Evening Schedule:

- 5:30 Setup begins, trees may arrive at this time
- 6:00 Item preview
- 7:00 Bidding starts promptly

Volunteers Needed: Signup positions have been added to our volunteer sheet. Please check the [latest link](#) to grab a spot and help make the auction a success. We look forward to seeing you all there!

From the Bonsai Garden

The BGLM is looking for more volunteers, see attached link for the volunteer information form on the website.

When you sign up, the form will come to Suzanne Muller.

Join Us as a Bonsai Garden Volunteer

We are looking for the following volunteer positions:

- Docent coordinator and scheduler
- Bookkeeper
- Docents
- Security manager for the collection
- Director Assistant

Please contact Suzanne Muller (queueinteriors@comcast.net) for information regarding the description for each position.



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

Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai 40th Annual Bonsai Exhibit and Show

May 09 - May 10, 2026, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM, Ken Nakaoka Community Center, 1670 W 162nd St, Gardena, CA. Beginner's hands-on workshop on Sat, May 9 at 10:30 AM followed by a demonstration at 1:00 PM. Novice to master exhibitors, daily demonstrations and drawings, bonsai plants, tools and accessories on sale. Free admission and parking. **Hours: Sat 10-4, Sun 10-1.**

The Bonsai Club of Santa Barbara Annual Exhibition

May 16 - May 17, 2026, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM, Montecito Union Elementary School Distri, 385 San Ysidro Rd, Santa Barbara, CA. A curated selection of bonsai trees and styles, live demonstrations and trees, pots, and tools available for purchase. Free and open to the public.

San Mateo Bonsai Club Show

May 17, 2026, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM, San Mateo JACC Gardener's Hall, 503 E 5th Ave, San Mateo, CA. Please attend our annual bonsai show. In addition to beautiful bonsai trees to view, our member sales area will offer items for purchase. Bring your bonsai trees to our clinic to obtain guidance and suggestions .

Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai and Yamato Bonsai Show

May 30 - May 31 10AM - 4:00PM, Lakeside Park Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave, Oakland, CA. Combined show (Satsuki azaleas + more) with a round-robin demo Saturday 1-3pm and vendor/member sales.

Sei Boku Bonsai Kai Annual Show and Sale

Jun 13 - 14, 2026, 7:00 PM - 11:00 PM, San Mateo Garden Center, 605 Parkside Way, San Mateo, CA. Demo Saturday 1-3 (Steve Jang) and workshop Sunday 1-3 (Valerie Monroe), plus raffles, clinic, and sales.

Valley Bonsai Society 17th Annual Show

Jun 20 - Jun 21, 2026, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM, Alden Lane Nursery, 981 Alden Ln, Livermore, CA. Demo at 1pm both days with the finished tree raffled after; bonsai supplies for sale.

Redwood Empire Bonsai Society (REBS) Bonsai Show

Aug 22 - Aug 23, 2026, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM, Rohnert Park Community Center, 5401 Snyder Ln, Rohnert Park, CA. Headliner Sam Tan with formal displays, workshops, sales, and auctions.