



Bonsai Wire

Marin Bonsai Club

Monthly Meeting
3rd Tuesday, 7:30PM
Marin Art & Garden Center
30 Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Ross, CA

April 2011

Message from the President...

This month has been exciting in terms of bonsai growth and care. Marin battled rain, wind and sometimes storms. We had to resort to strategic measures to ensure the trees weren't overwhelmed by excess water and tearing winds. Yet it's been a time of magical beauty. Our trees have started to display lots of new Spring growth, with buds leafing out and blossoms opening up. When the skies pause from rain there's nothing better than looking at the new buds, marveling at how the raindrops hold on the tiny tips and contrast so beautifully with the bright greens and reds of the emerging leaves! And wondering about future plans for each tree in our collections...

Fun bonsai activities over the last month also brought excitement to the scene: the Mammoth Sale at the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt yielded great finds; our monthly club demo by sensei Tim Kong described the art of carving and showed some great examples of where this process could dramatically improve a tree's appearance; and the club won yet another friendly and very exciting Iron Man Bonsai contest against the Redwood Empire Bonsai Society (REBS). Undeterred by the inclement weather, about ten MBC members made their way to Santa Rosa to participate and to support the event. Many thanks go to Candace Key and Tim Burke, along with hearty applause for John Doig and Chris Ross who performed some great magic on their trees – see Candace's story for the results. Of course, the regular March workshop provided yet another opportunity to repot, develop and maintain our trees under the direction and help of Tim Kong, Jay MacDonald, John and Chris. Our workshops and demos are always a tremendous experience in terms

of getting great help and suggestions for tree work, tree health issues and ideas on how to maintain your trees. We even get entertainment with jokes included! A great way to unwind from everything else going on in your world.

Looking forward to April, our great friend and bonsai master Ted Matson will return to the Bay Area for our April demonstration on the 19th. He will also lead a day-long workshop on Saturday, April 23, where you can bring your own trees for expert advice and attention. Personally, I never miss an opportunity to work with Ted, and the trees I have been developing with his help are really starting to develop nicely. Please do take advantage of this great opportunity – you will always learn something new, and who knows, you might even win the demo tree he works on! We still have some space for the Saturday workshop so contact Candace Key (415-491-1989) to let her know you're interested, and to secure a place with a check.

Every April we also participate, with Jay's awesome support and our members' trees, in the San Francisco Cherry Blossom Festival – April 23 and 24, see Events for details. We join the Bonsai Society of San Francisco in bringing the art of bonsai to the public with a show of flowering and other bonsai. Even if you are not showing a tree, we always need decent support and visitors at the show. Let Jay know if you can help – 415-847-8909. To celebrate this event, and commemorate the lives of people lost in the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan, I have included in this newsletter some Cherry Blossom season photos I took three years ago in Tokyo and Kyoto.

Moving to general administrative club matters, we are keen to get member dues up to date. Please consider helping us by paying your dues now if you haven't done so already; and, if you receive hard copy newsletters, please let us know your email address if you have one, so that we can reduce our mailing costs. To provide an email address for a newsletter, simply contact info@marinbonsai.org. Thank you very much for doing this.

Lastly, we're looking for people who'd like to contribute articles, small or large, for our newsletter. In particular, we need write-ups for our demonstrations. Please let me know if you're interested in helping.

- Alison Seaman

Cherry Blossom Season in Japan (Photos copyright Alison Seaman)



Korakuen, Okayama



Kyoto



*Kyoto
Cherry
Blossom*



Philosopher's Walk, Kyoto



Ryoan-ji, Kyoto

Taskmaster - April 2011

Northern California Bay Area microclimates are a chilly sodden mess this year as we enter April. Three years ago it was eighty nine degrees and dry as a bone. It's like we've joined the rest of the real world on this Springtime thing for once, March going out like a lion (a cold one) and all that jazz. What a colossal drag.

But the trees just love it. No better growing conditions exist for tender new buds and leaves and roots and their exuberant, off-to-the-races response to the sun's slow, powerful approach. The problems for the bonsai artist (and that's you, my friend, if you're taking the trouble to read this - even if you only have one little tree) are those associated with the type, speed, location, and relative deliciousness of that new growth.

As to the type of growth; remember that rampant growth, large leaves, long internodes, and excessive tip extension result from too much shade, too much water, too much food, and nitrogen. 'Nuff said. Continue 0-10-10 every 2-3 weeks until mid May, except for the junipers and evergreens who get to eat hearty throughout. Azaleas wait until after blooming to eat (so polite!).

As to the speed of growth, here's a primer: Maples will put out sets of leaves real fast. One set will be either horizontal or perpendicular to the ground. The next set of two on that twig will be the opposite. Happens every time. You want horizontal, always. So when the first horizontal set appears, wait until two more sets of leaves appear, then pinch, not cut, the growth off midway between the horizontal set and the next set. The tree should then send new growth out in due course from each side of the horizontal pair, making two twigs from one. Then the process repeats, creating RAMIFICATION, the twiggy look that is so desirable. The junipers get lightly pinched back on the tips to maintain shape and direct and thicken back-growth, Pinching too much or too hard or cutting back hard at any one time may cause reversion to prickly juvenile growth. Flowering trees get pruned back after bloom fade, a whole year's cutting all at once, and fruiting trees don't get pruned until after fruit drop.

As to the location of new growth, cut off all up- and downward-growing starts while they're tiny.

As to the deliciousness of all tender shoots, every bug in creation is licking its lips and sending scouts to check out your defenseless darlings as a possible new home, so use what your conscience and your common sense tells you is necessary and spray them off.

Keep repotting anything that's not leafing out, finish repotting azaleas and pines, and get ready for the real Spring thing.

And now a haiku for bonsai:

*Be still, my bonsai
Stop this wild urge to grow big
Small is beautiful*

- The Taskmaster

Membership Renewal

It is that time again – just like taxes – to renew your membership fees: Single \$45; Family \$65; Student \$25. The membership form was attached to your newsletter notification email or included with mailed copies of the newsletter in January. Checks are payable to Marin Bonsai Club and must include your name, address and telephone number. Dues should be given to Frances Noles, our Treasurer, or mailed to Marin Bonsai Club, P.O. Box 437, Ross, CA 94957.

It would be greatly appreciated if dues could be submitted no later than **April 15** to be included in our directory. You don't want to be charged the non-member fee of \$20 at workshops, do you?

Thank you all.

- Jeanette Arnold

BONSAI SOIL



There's still time to repot!
Stock up on Bonsai soil
\$20.00 per Bucket
Contact Chris Ross or John Doig

Still Time to Sign Up for Ted Matson Workshop

The Ted Matson workshop in April is almost filled. We have just a couple of slots open on Saturday the 23rd, but you need to contact Candace Key immediately to secure one of the few remaining openings. The full day session, 6 hours, is \$70, or you can do a half day, for \$40. The morning session will run from 9:30am-12:30pm and after a break for lunch the afternoon will run from 1:30-5:30pm. We need payment in advance, due by April 10. Make checks out to Marin Bonsai Club and mail to Candace or give her a check at the Workshop on April 5.

We can't emphasize enough how much anyone with an interest in bonsai will benefit from time spent with Ted Matson. Whether you have four trees or forty, are an old pro or a rank beginner, you will not be disappointed. Don't let this opportunity to improve your bonsai knowledge and skills pass you by.

Ted Matson headlines our April meeting

For our meeting in April we welcome back one of our favorite teachers, Ted Matson. Well-loved and greatly respected by all who know him, Ted brings a long history in bonsai and a wealth of knowledge he is eager to share. The recent past president of the Golden State Bonsai Federation has been active in bonsai since 1979. After learning the basics of bonsai from John Boyce here in San Francisco, Ted moved to Southern California in 1980 and furthered his education with numerous bonsai masters there. Studying with the best teachers in the area such as Ben Susuki, Shig and Roy Nagatoshi, Melba Tucker, Warren Hill and John Naka, Ted was an eager and talented student and it wasn't long before he was mentoring new students of his own. Ted travels throughout California and the US lecturing, leading study groups and giving demonstrations and is much sought after for his talent, depth of knowledge and accessible approach to bonsai. He writes frequently for the Golden Statements publication of the Golden State Bonsai Federation and is a featured demonstrator at conventions and bonsai shows throughout the country.

We are honored and thrilled to have Ted for our program in April.

- Candace Key

Marin Bonsai Gets Down at the REBS 'Throw Down'

Five members of the Marin Bonsai Club gamely accepted the invitation of the REBS bonsai club in Santa Rosa for a rematch of the bonsai style-off competition at the REBS meeting in March. This event was organized much like the Marin club's Iron Bonsai event in January with teams of two drawing for trees to prune, carve, wire and style within the tight confines of the meeting time. Marin teams of Chris Ross with John Doig, and Candace Key with Tim Burke competed against REBS teams of Bernardo Fernandez with Jeff Konicek, and Ned Lycett with Michael Murtaugh. All were competing against the super match up of bonsai professional and teacher Jim Gremel and Marin's own fast-rising star, Alison Seaman.



Chris Ross, Daniel Keller, John Doig

Foliage and branches flew as teams dug into their mystery junipers with great enthusiasm to 'find the tree' and bring it to light, hoping to impress audience members, enticing them to vote with their raffle tickets for their favorites. Master of



MC John Roehl



Ceremonies John Roehl did his best to draw coherent statements from the teams regarding the driving design philosophy behind the work being done to illustrate to the audience the different design approaches. Everyone displayed great skill and imagination in their concepts and it was fascinating to watch as bonsai emerged from bushes.

It was an impressive display of completed - though not finished - bonsai trees that was presented to the audience at the end of the evening, all teams acquitting themselves admirably and truly, any one of the trees could have been a first place winner. In the end, it was the Marin team of Tim Burke and Candace Key who walked away with the imaginary trophy to the delight of the Marin Bonsai fan club who had braved the inclement weather to cheer on their club members.

Tim and Candace, who initially thought their twin trunk/no apex tree didn't have a ghost of a chance of winning, impressed the crowd with some daring carving of jin and shari - thank you sensei Tim Kong for your tips during our meeting this month on this subject - and some very fine wiring and branch placement by Mr. Burke.



Top: Tim and Candace inspect their 'Cousin It' juniper, desperately looking for 'the tree'. They think they've found it.



And the judges agree – WINNER!



John and Chris working on their impressive tribute to Hurricane Katrina design.

The team was humbled to have come out ahead of the other team members, especially Chris and John with their dramatic windswept tree, and shockingly, the very talented Mr. Gremel and Alison who turned a slingshot into a work of art.



The Jim Gremel and our president, Alison Seaman

Win, lose or draw it was a highly entertaining night for participants and audience members. With promises of yet another rematch in the future, we hope to carry on the tradition of these friendly competitions between and among our sister clubs. Thanks to all who came, competed and cheered. Your support is much appreciated.

- Candace Key

Photos by Celestia Amberstone and Jeff Konicek.



March Meeting – Creating Deadwood with Tim Kong

Marin Bonsai Club sensei Tim Kong put on a fascinating program at our March meeting on the subject of creating deadwood features in our bonsai trees. As much attention as we pay to the living parts, it is often the dramatic jin and shari of our trees that set them apart and create the living drama of life against the elements that make a good bonsai truly great.

Tim brought a variety of tools to demonstrate the various ways of developing the deadwood features, explaining when and how to use them and, of course, cautioning that with all tools, powered and not, that safety of the artist and all those in the area is the first concern in any endeavor.

Tim and other club members brought trees showing different treatments of the deadwood areas, from simple shari features - dead branches bleached white by the elements in the junipers, and simulated lightening strikes and burns in a magnificent redwood tree.

For some practical experience, Tim brought along a huge California juniper that had been collected a number of years ago that he had recently begun styling. Members were invited to develop shari features on this tree throughout the program and Alan Voight and Scott Piatanesi took to this invitation with great relish, illustrating under Tim's direction how branch stubs could be transformed into attractive and convincing shari. Tim also brought with him a beautiful olive tree showing some initial deadwood carving using various tools and tricks. This tree was raffled at the end of the meeting with deadwood enthusiast Scott Piatanesi the lucky winner:

The following are just a few of the helpful tips Tim shared during the meeting:

- All needle trees, boxwoods and olives are excellent candidates for jin and shari creation. Often the soft woods of deciduous and flowering trees are less successfully or convincingly developed with deadwood features.
- The object of creating jin and shari is to suggest the natural forces which work on a tree in nature to produce great character. Be careful not to get carried away and do too much or leave tool marks, which will destroy the illusion you are trying to create.

- Be sure to do a thorough analysis of your tree's dynamics before beginning work. What species is it, how does it grow, where would natural distress occur on your style of tree, where is the life line feeding the upper parts of the tree? You don't want to create shari that will prevent nutrients reaching important branches, possibly killing the tree.

- Don't try to do all the deadwood work at once. Do some, take time to observe the work and then come back with different tools and a better understanding of what the tree requires over time. Convincing features can take years to accomplish.

- If you want to put some movement into your new jin features, wire them when created.

- Some of the tools of the deadwood creation trade: X-ACTO knives, wood carving tools, jin pliers, jin splitters, branch cutters, Dremel tools with various tips - the Weasel being particularly effective. Die grinders, chain saws for early, rough work, propane torch for burning deadwood - be sure to adequately protect live wood and foliage from heat and flame - wire brushes of various stiffness's for different wood conditions, goggles for eye protection.

- Be sure to protect the new deadwood from rotting with an application of lime sulfur or wood hardener. This is particularly important where the shari connects with the soil. In these areas be sure you have good-draining growing medium so rot is discouraged.

- Tim uses a mixture of Thompson's WaterSeal, a couple of drops of India ink mixed with lime sulfur and white glue to treat the deadwood to prevent rot and soften the whitening effect of the lime sulfur. Another alternative is to use dormant spray to discourage pests and rot.

- Edges where deadwood meets live should be treated with a liquid cut paste.

Thank you, Tim, for a great demonstration and learning experience for the club. Hopefully, we will all be producing better deadwood features on our trees in the years to come.

- Candace Key



BAY AREA BONSAI EVENTS

April 2 **San Francisco, CA**
Bonsai Society of San Francisco Bonsai: *Special Sales Event* in the Recreation Room of the San Francisco County Fair Building, Ninth Avenue and Lincoln Way in Golden Gate Park. Bonsai and related items will be on sale by club members. Hours are 9AM-3PM. This sale is an addendum to the club's show of March 23-27 at the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show. Free admission; some parking available behind the building. For more information visit our website: www.bssf.org

April 2-3 **Sacramento, CA**
Bonsai Sekiyu Kai of Sacramento: *34th Annual Bonsai Show* at the Sacramento Betsuin Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Hours are: Saturday, 12-Noon-5:00PM, and Sunday, 10AM-3:30PM.

Demonstrations at 2PM, both days by Bonsai Master John Uchida. Amenities include refreshments, light snacks, door prizes, raffles, and a Silent Auction. Plant and bonsai tool sales will also be available. For more information contact Ron Krause at 916-481-4792 or rkrause@surewest.net

April 8-10 **San Jose, CA**
San Jose Betsuin Bonsai Club: *41st Anniversary Exhibition* at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, 640 N. 5th Street. Hours are Saturday, Noon-5PM, and Sunday, 11AM-4PM. A demonstration featuring Harry Hirao, 'Mr. California Juniper' will be at 1PM, both days. The demonstration trees will be raffled at the conclusion of each demonstration. Plants and bonsai material will be available for sale. Free admission. For more information, contact Ken Azuma, 408-730-4506 or kennethazuma@sbcglobal.net

April 9-10 **Sacramento, CA**
American Bonsai Association: *52nd Annual Show and Sale* at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Hours are Saturday, 10AM-5:00PM, and Sunday, 10AM-4:00PM. Demonstration at 1:30PM both days by Bonsai Master Bob Shimon. Beginner workshops available, and intermediate and advanced workshops taught by Bob Shimon. Large member and vendor sales areas; raffles and door prizes. Free admission and ample parking. For more information contact Greg McDonald at Gregandleanne@comcast.net or by phone 530-642-2521

April 24 **Watsonville, CA**
Watsonville Bonsai Club: *Annual Bonsai Exhibit* at the Watsonville Buddhist Temple, 423 Bridge Street. Hours are 11AM-4PM, with a demonstration at 1:30PM by Katsumi Kinoshita. Vendor plant sales and plenty of free parking. For more information contact Don White, 831-724-9283 or whitesib@aol.com

April 30-May1 **Modesto, CA**
Modesto Bonsai Club: *30th Annual Spring Show & Sale* at the Modesto Centre Plaza, 11th & K Streets. Hours are: Saturday 10AM-5PM, and Sunday 11AM-4PM. Bonsai exhibit, demonstrations, auctions, raffles and sales both days. Free Admission. For more information visit us at www.modestobonsai.com or call Peter Camarena at 209-529-1759.

May 7-8 **Sacramento, CA**
Sacramento Bonsai Club: *64th Annual Bonsai and Suiseki Show* at the Sacramento Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Boulevard. Show hours are Saturday, 12-Noon-5PM, and Sunday, 10AM-5PM. Demonstration by Boon Manakitivipart at 2PM both days; raffle will follow. Plants and bonsai related items for sale. Free admission. For further information contact Gary Judd, 916-630-1340.

May 21-22 **Sacramento, CA**
Satsuki Aikokai of Sacramento: *40th Annual Show* at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Boulevard. Show hours are Saturday, 10AM-5PM and Sunday, 10AM-4PM. Demonstration at 1:30PM both days, followed by benefit drawings. Member and vendor sales also available. Free admission. For more information visit Satsukiaikokaisac@sbcglobal.net or contact Ronn Pigram, 916-428-8505

MARIN BONSAI CLUB EVENTS

April 5, 2011: Workshop Livermore Pavilion, 7pm

Bring your tree in and work on it with Tim Kong and Jay McDonald. Fee is \$10 for members, \$20 for non-members.

April 19, 2011: Monthly Meeting Marin Society of Artists, 7:30pm

You don't want to miss this! The one and only Ted Matson will be here to give one of his great demos. This is sure to be one of the best events of the year!

May 3, 2011: Workshop Livermore Pavilion, 7pm

Bring your tree in and work on it with Tim Kong and Jay McDonald. Fee is \$10 for members, \$20 for non-members.

May 17, 2011: Monthly Meeting Marin Society of Artists, 7:30pm

Bob Gould will join us to give a lecture/demo on satzuki azaleas. This is one of our favorite demos so be sure not to miss it.



2010 Marin Bonsai Club Officers:

President	Alison Seaman	415-789-1167
VP Programs	Candace Key	415-491-1989
VP Shows	Jay McDonald	415-847-8909
Secretary	Jeanette Arnold	415-883-2651
Treasurer	Frances Noles	415-461-0437
Historian	Carolyn Robbins	415-460-0339
Librarian	Roger Lion	415-924-5134
Editor/Web	Sharon Bone	415-898-9618
Hospitality	Marlene Philley	415-924-5134
Docent Coord	Roger Lion	415-924-5134

Marin Bonsai Club

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