



# Bonsai Wire

## Marin Bonsai Club

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

**February 2011**

### President's Letter

Judging from last week's weather, the cold winter days are turning into sunnier, warmer times where trees are poised between dormancy and the first blush of color, with blossom and new leaf buds fattening. This is the time for you and your trees to become even better acquainted with each other!

It's also the time for doing some work at one of our club workshops (first Tuesday of every month). Our talented bonsai artists, Tim Kong, Jay McDonald, Chris Ross and John Doig, can help you address those vexing design challenges, and discuss maintenance and care – such as repotting and feeding regimes. These questions and many, many more are discussed in a very friendly and fun way. We even have a library where you can borrow great books. Informal discussions benefit everyone and help to increase the overall knowledge of the club! If you think you can improve our knowledge too, please don't hesitate to talk to Candace Key, our Programs Director, so she can add you to or use your idea for our program activities list.

As I write this, I think of all the great events that both our club and others around the Bay area are putting on. Our club enjoyed a really great Iron Man Bonsai with Redwood Empire Bonsai Society last Tuesday – many people put in some fabulous effort to make the evening such as success. Candace did a wonderful job of organizing the whole event, ably supported by all the people mentioned in the Iron Man Bonsai article, plus the board, along with Marlene Phillely and Roger Lion who arranged the guest dinner and event refreshments.

Looking forward, please check out the calendar of events in the back of this newsletter for some fun things to do. In particular, mark on your calendars, February 19 (10:30am–2:30pm) for helping to weed the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt, Oakland (see Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt article), and February 26 and 27 for the Mammoth Fundraiser at the same place. There is no other sale like it, and you'll be hard pressed not to come away without some special plant, pot or amazing item! Oh, and we need to continue providing the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt with docents every 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday 10am to 1pm – see Docents article. Please considering volunteering your time – it's for a great cause and you meet nice people, work on the collection's bonsai (under supervision) and learn lots of interesting bonsai techniques.

I need to remind everyone that you need to check the locations in Marin Art and Garden Center (see our Events calendar) for our forthcoming club events. If you come to the center and can't find the meeting at the Livermore Pavilion, it will be in the Marin Society of Artist's building. Turn right at the light into the Marin Art and Garden Center grounds. Continue past the parking lot to the Marin Society of Artists Gallery on the right.

Finally, if you haven't already done this, our 2011 membership dues should be sent or given to Frances Noles, our treasurer. Please send them as soon as possible so that we provide you with uninterrupted newsletter distribution and other communications. We very much appreciate your prompt attention – thanks for continuing to help operate the club and events smoothly.

## **IRON MAN BONSAI January 18 – Another Duel to the Last Twig**

Marin Bonsai Club (MBC) invited another local club, Redwood Empire Bonsai Society (REBS) to join in our yearly Iron Man Bonsai design competition. What a really fun night it was – good humor and lots of joking between teams and the audience.

The REBS participants brought lots of talent (over 180 years of bonsai practice between them) and lots of enthusiasm to the event. The MBC teams were ready for them – we not only matched the level of enthusiasm, but took on the challenge with less than half the amount of practice time (90 years)!



Our Sensei and Master of Ceremonies, Tim Kong, started the event by describing the goals of the event, – a styled, wired tree ready for repotting this season, that would be judged (by the audience) and raffled at the end of the night. Each team then selected their tree (via numbered ticket) – all healthy, pre-bonsai material Shimpaku Junipers from Lone Pine Gardens.

Very quickly Tim got the teams to describe how they were going to approach their design process. REBS teams talked more about cutting and shaping, while MBC teams wanted to wire out first to see which part(s) of the tree could be immediately designed, and which part(s) would be preserved for future design such as in the crown and at the end of the

## **REBS Teams**

John Roehl + Ned Lycett  
Bernardo Fernandez + Frank Bardella  
Ivan Lukrich + James Whitfield



branches. To quote Chris Ross: "I don't believe in cutting anything off until I'm sure I don't need it". In fact, all the participants refrained from dramatic cutting and shaping until they had really analyzed the design potential. Everyone agreed that wiring and positioning of branches is an integral part of realizing the shape of the tree, and that cutting everything before re-positioning wired branches can lead to irreversible design issues later on.

As the teams set to work, the material was transformed into nicely styled, mostly informal upright trees, along with a couple of semi-cascades where the material provided several branches of equally strong lateral movement. Some trees lent themselves more to significant jinning, which was applied with suitable attention to appropriate, plausible positioning on the trees, for example in the darker, shaded parts of the tree where dieback due to lack of light normally occurs. Each team worked efficiently, though most people had never worked with each other before, or on one tree together with someone else. As Ivan Lukrich commented, he and James Whitfield were "a true partnership, with James as the wirer, and Ivan as the cutter, and both sharing in the design process". It was interesting to see that all the teams followed a similar method of working – where partners complemented each other's efforts to create their chosen designs. The audience spent much time on their feet asking the teams questions, providing encouragement, and sometimes making choice comments – enlivening and adding interest to the work.

As 9pm drew near, the teams were asked to finish their work, draw up how the trees would look in the future, and discuss suitable pots. Each felt the trees would look best in brown, unglazed, rough-textured pots that complemented the masculine/feminine flow of the tree. Frank Bardella and Bernardo Fernandez suggested that their tree would benefit from being "puffed up" in ground, or set on a styrofoam slab/nuts in a 15gal pot to promote side growth of roots and fatten the trunk.

The evening ended with MBC's team of Jay McDonald and Peter Miller getting the highest number of votes, very closely followed (just three fewer votes) by the REBS of team Frank and Bernardo. With no less than three recounts, the evening provided a nail-biting "hanging chad" climax. Winners of the raffled trees were REBS members Bernardo Fernandez and Ivan Lukrich, and MBC members Candace Key (2 trees!), Tom Mason (new member) and Alison Seaman.

### **MBC Teams**

Peter Miller + Jay McDonald  
Jeanette Arnold + John Doig  
Chris Ross + T.J. Williams



MBC would like to thank everyone who participated, and in particular the REBS teams and supporters who put in a round trip of over 70 miles travelling down from Santa Rosa – incredibly generous of their time and effort. This is not the end of the competition as MBC has been invited up to Santa Rosa for another Iron Man Bonsai tabled as an MBC Throw Down event on March 22. Any bets on who the likely winners might be?

- Alison Seaman

*All Iron Man Bonsai photos courtesy of Candace Key.*



### **Workshop Etiquette**

Our workshop meetings take time to set up and even more time to break down. It really benefits everyone if you can bring some protective covering for your area of the table to ensure we maintain the table surfaces and speed cleanup. And, if you can spare a hand in the cleaning up of the floors, removing garbage etc, it means everyone can finish up earlier!

We also collect any old copper and aluminum wire which we then donate to Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt so that they can recycle and get much needed funds for continuing the maintenance of the collection. Please consider donating rather than throwing away this valuable material.

### **Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt**

*reprint of February 2010*

How lucky for all of us bonsai enthusiasts to live in an area that rivals the beautiful Marin trees, mountains, and streams, and is located only a few miles away in the Lakeshore Garden Center in Oakland, CA. Yes, you've all guessed it - the area I'm speaking about is the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt (the 'Garden') with its many bonsai trees, suisekis (stones), and Japanese style streams and bridges set in a place of peace and quiet.

If you haven't visited the Garden yet, you're in for a wonderful experience. The first thing you'll notice is the wooden Gate at the entrance to the Garden -- gateway to a world of bonsai that is familiar and yet different, with trees that are beautiful, set in an appropriate setting, and that change appearance as the seasons change.

Not only are there many US visitors to this delightful Garden, but many come from Canada and even Europe. Reading their many comments written in the guest book gives you a feeling of pride to be a part of this Garden which is considered to be one of the most beautiful Bonsai gardens in the US.

Kathy Shaner, a Bonsai Master who studied in Japan with Mr. Mitsuya, is the Curator at the Garden. She willingly shares her knowledge of bonsai with any one of us who volunteers time to the upkeep of the Garden and maintenance of the bonsai trees. In addition to Northern California volunteers who work and study under Kathy's tutelage, many of her students come from across the US to acquire proper bonsai techniques. Some are Michigan bonsai club members, Texas club members, in addition to the assistant curator at the Arboretum in Washington, DC. They come at different times of the year and usually stay from a few days to a week. One Michigan club member combines his visit with his son to his study at the Garden.

With such a great bonsai exhibit so close to home and a teacher of so much bonsai knowledge, we should all get to know the Garden and our curator well.

- Frances Noles

## **Docents at Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt** *reprint of February 2010*

As you have heard at every workshop and meeting, our Club is committed to provide docents (at least two) at the Garden on the fourth Saturday of every month from 10am to 1pm – only three hours! Now I know our weekends are precious times to spend with family, run errands, entertain, and relax. But surely you can find some time to help in this regard.

We are blessed to have the Garden so close; it is truly a remarkable site consisting of looking at beautiful bonsai, being able to 'adopt' a tree to nurture it to its fullest potential, assisting Curator Kathy Shaner with repotting, wiring, styling, and attending various workshops.

It is not difficult being a docent - you already know more than the casual visitor who comes in to the Garden. You provide the guest with a pamphlet and a descriptive listing of the various trees and click the counter. If it is a 'slow' day, walk around and study the trees. And if Kathy or someone in authority is there, you may be asked to assist her/him in whatever needs to be done and that is a plus - what a way to learn and improve.

Just remember that the total number of hours volunteered (and this includes weeding on February 19) by the end of the year will enable you to get raffle tickets for a special prize at our holiday party. Now I know you want to get that.

Please contact Roger Lion to arrange a date.

- Jeanette Arnold

## **TASKMASTER – February 2011**

Ah, the first Spring of a new decade is approaching! Can you dig it? I mean, dig up those trees, of course; The ones that no longer drain quickly, the ones that need to be transferred to a more perfect pot, the ones that should have been put in a bigger pot to beef up for another year, the ones that need a new position, a new tilt, a new front.

Dig it. Take the tree out of the pot, clean the pot with a solution of 1 Tbsp of bleach per quart of water, prune all the fat old roots and leave the growing hair-roots, pick a pot that will be optimal, and begin.

Optimal looks and style is up to you, but the rest, my friend, is a combination of botany and physics. Optimal space for a presentable tree, one that you might actually present this year and therefore hope to be able to keep up with on a weekly basis, means that the roots-to-soil ratio after repotting will be about 50-50, and never less. That means that the contents of the ideal pot will always begin at 50% roots and will be repotted when it reaches 85% roots, over and over. This is the way to control growth rate, leaf size, drainage rate, and maximum encouragement of hair-root development; and if you can force lots of hair roots in optimal growth conditions, you can develop lots of twiggy growth to match the root system. This means that some roots will be left untrimmed or lightly trimmed back to a lateral branching. For the tree to look optimal, you may have to vary the percentages, say 60 or 65 % roots filling the pot so the pot can be smaller, and the result is only that you must mark that tree for repotting a bit sooner than you might otherwise have done - because to be optimal in terms of growth, health, and disease and insect resistance the tree should always be repotted as soon as the roots-to-soil ratio reaches 80-85%.

Leave some of the old soil because it has had a chance to marry to the roots with beneficial fungi which are hard to replace and that promote disease resistance and nutrient uptake.

Now go get'em, podnah, repot'em, rotate'em, 0-10-10 fertilize'em in about three weeks, keep the soil moist but not wet, keep the frost off them, keep the sun on them, keep wiring and shaping them, keep turning them, keep pace, keep the faith, keep getting up early to watch in awe as the land turns slowly towards the day with all its many miracles, as the awesome physics of the cosmos slides us majestically towards the grand renewal of Spring.

- The Taskmaster





## BAY AREA BONSAI EVENTS

### February 26-27

### Oakland, CA

GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt: Mammoth Fundraiser 2011 at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue. Saturday (Feb 26), Auction of fabulous bonsai, 1PM-4PM with preview at 12-Noon. Sunday (Feb 27), Mammoth Fundraiser and Bazaar, 9AM-4PM. Round Robin Demonstrations at 1:30PM by Collection Curator, Kathy Shaner and Team. Vendors, a large consignment sale of bonsai and bonsai related items, and several raffle drawings throughout the day. For general information email: [www.bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com](mailto:www.bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com), website: [www.gsbfbonsai.org/lake-merritt/NewHome.htm](http://www.gsbfbonsai.org/lake-merritt/NewHome.htm) or phone: Randi Keppeler 650-598-0127

### March 12-13

### Oakland, CA

Bay Area Bonsai Associates: 29th Annual Show at the Lakeside Park Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue. Show hours are Saturday: 5-9PM and Sunday: 10AM-4PM. There will be a Saturday demonstration by Ryan Neil at 6:30PM followed by a general raffle and the demonstration tree. A plant sale during exhibit hours both days will include pre-bonsai, bonsai, pots, tools, soils, wire, literature and other bonsai related materials. Ryan Neil apprenticed with Masahiko Kimura and is noted for his bonsai demonstration and teaching excellence. Admission is free, and parking is free after 5PM both days. For more information contact John Roehl at [bigbluemoon@comcast.net](mailto:bigbluemoon@comcast.net) or at 707-827-3206.

### March 19-20

### Palo Alto, CA

Kusamura Bonsai Club: 51st Annual Show at the Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road. Admission is free. Show hours are Saturday: 12-Noon to 5PM, and Sunday: 10AM-5PM. There will be demonstrations, raffles, and club member tree sales both days. Guest Demonstrator to be announced. For more information, contact Jerry Carpenter at 408-557-0166; 408-823-9525 or [jcsf1090@comcast.net](mailto:jcsf1090@comcast.net)

### March 22

### Santa Rosa, CA

MBC has been invited up to Redwood Empire Bonsai Society (REBS) for another Iron Man Bonsai tabled as an MBC Throw Down event! We'll see about that. Veteran's Memorial Building, 1351 Maple Avenue. 7:30pm.

### March 26-27

### Scotts Valley, CA

Santa Cruz Bonsai Kai: 22 Annual Bonsai Exhibit and Show at the Scotts Valley Community Center, 360 Kings Village Road from 10:30AM-4:30PM both days. Demonstration by Mr. Katsumi Kinoshita will be at 2PM each day. Plant sales, door prizes, raffle and much, much more. For more info call 831-469-0688 or e-mail [edinbonnydoon@sbcglobal.net](mailto:edinbonnydoon@sbcglobal.net)

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### The Return of Ted Matson!

Although he won't be here until April, it isn't too early to mark your calendars and save the dates for Ted Matson's return to the Marin Bonsai Club. Ted will be our guest speaker for the April meeting the 19th and we will sponsor a day of workshops with Ted on Saturday the 23rd. Attendance will be limited to 8 participants, so get your reservation in right away if you would like to be included. Cost will be between \$60-\$80 for the full day and half days could be available too.

More details in the March newsletter, but do contact Candace as soon as you know you would like to attend the workshop to reserve your space.

- Candace Key

## Marin Bonsai Club 2011 Meeting/Workshop Venue

February 1 Workshop  
 February 15 Meeting  
 March 1 Workshop  
 March 15 Meeting  
 April 5 Workshop  
 April 19 Meeting  
 May 3 Workshop  
 May 17 Meeting

Livermore Room (Pavilion 1)  
 Marin Society of Artists  
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 Marin Society of Artists  
 Livermore Room (Pavilion 1)  
 Marin Society of Artists



## MARIN ART & GARDEN CENTER

### GROUND AND FACILITY LEGEND

- 1 BASKETRY GARDEN
- 2 BRIDAL PATH
- 3 CHAMBERLAIN GARDEN
- 4 GARDEN DEMONSTRATION AND OUTDOOR CLASSES
- 5 GARDEN ROOM BACK PATIO
- 6 LAUREL GROVE FRONTAGE
- 7 LAUREL GROVE PARKING LOT
- 8 LIVERMORE LAWN AND BEDS
- 9 MAIN PARKING LOT NORTH SIDE
- 10 MAIN PARKING LOT SOUTH SIDE
- 11 MAIN PARKING LOT EAST SIDE
- 12 MAIN PARKING LOT WEST SIDE
- 13 MAINTENANCE YARD
- 14 MOYA LAWN
- 15 MOYA PLANTING BEDS
- 16 NATIVE MEDICINAL PLANTS GARDEN
- 17 NATIVE PLANTS GARDEN
- 18 NATURE TRAIL ABOVE BERRY LANE
- 19 NURSERY AREA
- 20 OAK WOODLAND
- 21 PIXIE PARK PATHWAY
- 22 SUCCULENT GARDEN AND NATIVE PLANTS

Map Source: [www.magc.org](http://www.magc.org)

## MARIN BONSAI CLUB EVENTS

### **February 1, 2011: Repotting Workshop Livermore Pavilion, 7pm**

This will be a repotting workshop with Tim Kong and Jay McDonald. Fee is \$10 for members, \$20 for non-members.

### **February 15, 2011: Repotting Workshop Marin Society of Artists, 7:30pm**

First repotting workshop at our other MAGC location with Tim Kong and Jay McDonald.

### **February 19, 2011: Weeding!** Saturday 10:30am - 2:30pm at The Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt.

### **March 1, 2011: Repotting 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.

### **March 15, 2011: Monthly Meeting Marin Society of Artists, 7:30pm**

Tim Kong will be giving a demo on carving! Come see how this is done by a long standing member of the "Electric Termites".



### **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
News Editor	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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