

# 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

**May 2010**

### President's News...

Surprises are everywhere! A beautiful spring is finally here, and tree growth is incredibly vigorous due to the lush conditions provided by lots of rain interspersed with finer, sunny days. Every time I step outside my back door into the bonsai area my trees seem to be competing with each other, vying for my attention. If it's not removing spurious growth or wondering about structure, I'm considering what to wire, and of course, when I can/should do any work on the trees.

Like any proud parent I like to admire my bonsai for their individual beauty and look for signs that they are happy by producing healthy, strong growth. For me, I find the tree's health is best served proactively by picking up each pot, checking the leaves for pests and diseases (which I generally remove by hand), looking at branches for signs of too tight wire, removing leaf debris promptly and feeling the soil for water or drainage issues.

Just recently I've added a new part to the surveillance routine due to an unwelcome surprise. While checking a pot I felt slime on the underside and sure enough discovered a fat slug coiled in a drainage hole – the slug was very happy getting a nice shower every day, but the tree wasn't getting sufficient drainage. I had missed tell-tale damage nearby on a couple of leaves during my initial examination. I then went down the rest of the pots on the bench and encountered a similar situation. I know the local bird population is diligent at checking out the soil for unwelcome visitors, but I guess the slugs had eluded them. Again, I dealt with the problem slugs by hand-picking and dispatching them to the great lettuce patch in the sky. A recent visit to a local plant nursery secured some beneficial nematodes which I watered into the soil around

each tree to eliminate thrips, scale, borers and other pests safely before they try to get established and create major problems.

I'm now also monitoring how strong the light is, and whether my plants need more shade and rotation as daylight is longer and brighter. After three years of bonsai I'm starting to better understand the need for team effort between the plant, me and the environment. I just hope with more experience I can translate some of my experimenting into usable solutions to keep my plants happy.

Personally I love to hear other people's solutions for maintaining plant health and got some great tips for my azaleas from the marvelous presentation by Laura and Darren Wong on April 20. If you didn't go, you missed some truly practical advice on how to look after azaleas which, if you follow a few rules of thumb, can be grown relatively easily and very successfully in Marin. And thank you Candace for arranging the event, Michaele for sorting out projection, and Marlene and helpers for the catering. A great team effort!

Another great team effort by Jay MacDonald, Jeanette Arnold and John Doig ensured the club had a beautiful display for the San Francisco Cherry Blossom Festival on April 17 and 18. Many Marin Bonsai Club members kindly provided great trees and accent plants, and volunteered extensive docent support throughout the show period. Thank you to everyone who participated and braved the parking challenges.

Another surprise is in store for the May presentation. We not only have bonsai master Ted Matson to come and visit us, we have a beautiful juniper tree

as a raffle. The material is excellent, and really worth pitching in lots of dollars for a chance to win. Please come and learn some cool tips and join in the fun entertainment.

Finally the last surprise this month is a special invitation that you'll receive by email or USPS shortly. Be sure to RSVP!

- Alison Seaman

### April meeting notes:

Laura and Darren Wong treated us to a fascinating program on Satsuki azaleas at our April meeting. Showing slides of their very recent trip to Nara, Japan, where they study with Sushio Nakayama, the Wongs told stories of their travel to Japan several times a year to study and work on their own trees in Japan. Darren explained the quarantine process whereby their purchased trees are held in tightly controlled quarantine for 2 years before being shipped to the US. Because of the ideal growing conditions in Japan and the centuries' long history of growing Satsuki azaleas, they can obtain larger trees and develop them much faster in Japan than in the US. Through Darren's slides we saw what a long and tedious trek - think coach class for 12.5 hours for the long flight over and train rides before and after to reach their spartan business class hotel - it is to make their twice yearly pilgrimages to study with one of the great bonsai masters and teachers. We couldn't help but be impressed by their dedication and enthusiasm for the beautiful and varied Satsuki's. It was fascinating to see in the slides the extent of the working bonsai nursery of Sushio Nakayama, and quite impressive to see the 'test' trees the students, both Japanese and American, were given to show off their skills. Darren showed the trees he and Laura worked on which started as bushy messes. To see the gorgeous, mature trees that emerged after just 4 hours of work was truly magical, a real testament to the knowledge and skill they have accumulated over 9 years of study.

For the second portion of the program, Laura finished pruning and fine wiring a beautiful azalea for our raffle as Darren shared many tips on keeping Satsuki azaleas in our own collections healthy and happy. Here are a few of the points I picked out and Darren followed up the meeting with his own list of the most crucial considerations in Satsuki care:

### CK Notes:

- Letting your trees flower every year will weaken them over time. Give them a break by taking all the buds off before blooming every 2-3 years.
- When removing flowers at the end of blooming period take them all off when 80% have bloomed - unbloomed buds as well. This will allow all the flowers to come out at the same time next season.
- Debud a weak tree by the first of May to encourage vigor.
- Don't fertilize in the summer or you risk burning roots. Darren suggested tea bags with fertilizer in the spring and fall. For trees you want to show, don't fertilize in April and May.
- Don't repot after bloom at the end of spring. This is old advice and the current wisdom suggests repotting in March. Broad leaf Satsuki azaleas can be repotted up to April 15.
- Yamagoki or mountain moss is advisable as a top dressing for azaleas. This keeps the moisture in and is a good gauge for when it is time to water again. New Zealand sphagnum moss is sometimes used instead of Yamagoki, but it can dry hard and repel water whereas Yamagoki may dry hard, but will always let water into the soil.

### Follow up notes from Darren Wong:

- ***Improper watering of Satsuki azalea bonsai is the number one cause of death.*** Normally, people tend to over water their trees causing root decay. Generally speaking, narrow leaf varieties don't like the soil constantly wet. You must use medium sized Kanuma potting soil. Water and feel when the moss is dry and then water again.
- Large leaf varieties can tolerate wetter soil, but watering as mentioned above is still recommended. A bit smaller soil can be used for these trees.
- Start fertilizing with an organic fertilizer when the temperature in your area stays above 55 degrees on a pretty regular basis and then stop when the temperature gets above 80 degrees. Spring time 6-4-2 is recommended and in the Fall 5-5-5.

Thank you Laura and Darren for taking time to share your love and knowledge of Satsuki azaleas with our club. And congratulations to Pat Pavlison for winning the beautiful raffle tree Laura styled. We hope to see it again at our next meeting in full bloom.

***Refreshment note:***

We were treated to a veritable feast at the April meeting. Duane Johnson provided a wonderful range of snacks and some delicious wine for our enjoyment, and then had to leave because last minute obligations prevented him from staying for the meeting and treats. That is dedication! Dan Keller contributed to the bounty and it really was a particularly tasty and tasteful assortment presented for our nibbling pleasure. Thank you both. This will be a difficult act to follow.

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**Ted Matson headlines our May meeting**

For our meeting in May 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 May.



Ted will be working on a shimpaku juniper during the demonstration, so please plan to come and watch the transformation of this promising shrub into a work of art in Ted's skilled hands and learn from the constant stream of information Ted provides as he works.

***Special Note:***

There are still a few openings in the Sunday, May 16 and Monday, May 17 workshops with Ted. Full and half day options available.

This is a great opportunity to advance your trees with Ted's expert guidance, so please let Candace Key know if you would like to participate. \$70 full day, \$40 ½ day. Workshops limited to 8 people so you will get lots of personal attention.

- Candace Key

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## TASKMASTER – May 2010

*Due to popular demand, the Taskmaster will take questions from club members to be answered in his monthly column. Email [cmrbonsai@yahoo.com](mailto:cmrbonsai@yahoo.com) and the Taskmaster will do his best to respond.*

May in the Bonsai world is a busy time. And it has such a positive feel just to say it, doesn't it? As in things May be better this year; or, this little beauty May make it to the show this year; or, May is the ideal time to...

The ideal time to finish repotting the evergreens that didn't get done yet. Then bright shade only, constantly damp but never soaking and no food for three weeks or so.

The ideal time late in the month to feed 70/30% cottonseed/bone meal, a tablespoon or two sprinkled around the outside edges of the pot and scratched in with a chopstick on all pots.

The ideal time to pinch back everything to create branch ramification and budding back. On deciduous trees, find where you want the side branching to occur and cut off everything beyond that point, leaving a stem for dieback, to be removed later (unless you want the branch to be thicker-just let it grow long for now). On evergreens and junipers, pinch off just the bright green tips, to remove a hormone that they produce which prevents backbudding.

The ideal time to deal with various pests that are in their prime and proliferating glory right now. Paint Neem oil onto scale bugs with a large watercolor brush like the ones you get with a paint-by-numbers kit. Picking them off may damage the bark (2-3 years minimum for the tree to repair) and leave eggs and larvae behind for another damaging round. Neem oil smothers all. Spray half-strength Malathion or Sevin in the evening or very early morning once per week on non-flowering plants for aphids, ants, inchworms, stickworms and leafrollers.

The ideal time at month's middle or end to defoliate healthy, vigorous deciduous trees partially or fully to create smaller leaves and more intense Fall color. But not beech trees, they won't push out any new growth.

The ideal time to lightly prune back flowering trees that have finished blooming. Next year's blooms will be on this Spring's new growth, so prune to

preserve and protect only the new growth that is in the right places. The old blooming sections can be removed or shortened, and the upgrowing suckers can be removed (or pruned back hard but leave a bit if a spot of green or growth is needed in that location, for now, to balance the look of the tree). Hard pruning with larger cutting back to shorten and control size of tree and length of branch should be done only every three years or so, at repotting, because both of those operations are likely to reduce or prevent most of the next cycle of flowering. Note that on fruiting trees, these operations should be done late in the year when the fruit fades or drops (but well before cold sets in) unless the fruit is unimportant for the current cycle, in which case it's just another flowering tree.

The ideal time to decandle *black pines*. Lots of variations here, but the first issue is whether the branchlet each candle is on needs to be longer. If so, a longer candle stump must remain on the tree at the end of the pinching process, which takes three weeks or so. At May's end shorten the shortest candles, wait ten days, then shorten the medium ones, wait ten days, then shorten the longest ones. In Mediterranean climates like many of the North bay area microclimates, many growers just wait for the second week of June and shorten them all at once.

*White pines*: the last week in May, remove 1/2 to 3/4 from the shortest candles, leave 4 to 6 needle buds on the medium ones, and leave only 3 to 4 buds on the biggest ones.

On all *five-needle pines*, cut off all candles at 1/8 inch (very short) whenever they reach 1/2 to 3/4 inch. All your new growth will be from the new buds that form around these candle stumps.

It's an ideal time to realize that if you deal mostly in waiting for the ideal, your current reality may suffer. You should make yourself a new deal. Is it a deal? Ideal!

- The Taskmaster



### Marin Bonsai Club

**Website...** please send pictures of your trees to [craigthompson@hotmail.com](mailto:craigthompson@hotmail.com) so he can put them on our

website's gallery page.

Check it out -

<http://www.marinbonsai.org/gallery/index.php>

## BAY AREA BONSAI EVENTS

**May 1-2 Sacramento, CA**  
Sacramento Bonsai Club: 63rd Annual Bonsai and Suiseki Show at the Sacramento Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Boulevard. Show hours are Saturday, 12Noon-5PM, and Sunday, 10AM-4PM. 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 15-16 Sacramento, CA**  
Satsuki Aikokai of Sacramento: 40th Annual Show at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Show hours are Saturday, 10AM-5PM and Sunday, 10AM-4PM. Demonstration at 1:30PM both days, followed by benefit drawings. Member and vendor sales. Free admission. For more information contact [Satsukiaikokaisac@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Satsukiaikokaisac@sbcglobal.net) or Ron Pigram, 916-428-8505.

**May 22-23 Sacramento, CA**  
American Bonsai Association: 51st Annual Show and Sale. Hours Sat 10am-4pm, Sun 10am-3pm at the Shepard Garden & Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Boulevard. Hands-on workshops for all levels from novice to advanced enthusiasts; large member and vendor sales areas; raffles and door prizes. Demonstration daily at 1:30PM by Ryan Neil, who recently returned from an apprenticeship in Japan with Bonsai Master Masahiko Kimura. Free admission. For further information contact Greg McDonald, 530-642-2521, or [gregandlee@comcast.net](mailto:gregandlee@comcast.net)

**May 22-23 Oakland, CA**  
Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai: 16th Annual Satsuki Bonsai Show at the Lakeside Park Garden Center at Lake Merritt, 666 Bellevue Avenue. Hours are Saturday, 10AM-5PM and Sunday, 10AM-4PM. Fabulous blossoms and bonsai display. Demonstration both days at 1:30PM using mature bonsai material. Rick Garcia will be featured on Saturday and Bonsai Master Johnny Uchida on Sunday. Large selection of bonsai trees and other bonsai-related materials available for purchase. For further information, please contact Ron Reid, 925-831-2500.

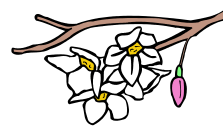
**May 22-23 San Francisco, CA**  
Bonsai Society Of San Francisco 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Saturday, May 22 from 7:30pm to 10pm: free demonstration/raffle on an old Japanese white pine by Kathy Shaner, with additional raffle of

quality bonsai trees and related material. BSSF members' sales area. Sunday, May 23 from 10am to 5pm: free bonsai exhibit with 20 tokonoma displays, bonsai displays, demonstrations, hourly raffles, a bonsai clinic, and sales area.

Location: County Fair Building in Golden Gate Park located at Lincoln Way and Ninth Avenue in San Francisco near the Strybring Arboretum. Park at Concourse Parking Facility (open until 10pm) or along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

Visit the BSSF website for information and updates ([www.bssf.org](http://www.bssf.org)).

**May 23 Grass Valley, CA**  
Nevada County Bonsai Club 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Bonsai Show. 11am to 4pm Grass Valley Veteran's Memorial Building, 255 South Auburn Street. Free admission. Bonsai trees on display; demonstrations; trees, pots, and accessories on sale; raffles. For more info, call 530-273-2628.



### Cherry Blossom Festival 2010

It was a beautiful weekend in Japantown and a glorious bonsai exhibit at the Hotel Kabuki—that was the repeated statement from many who attended. Four clubs participated: Bonsai Society of San Francisco, Yamato, Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt, and Marin Bonsai Club. Each club had a limited number of tables but thanks to Jay McDonald, Marin displayed beautiful trees from various members.

Over 1,600 people came through the exhibit and all were very impressed. There were numerous happenings in the vicinity including sword and paper dolls exhibits, tea ceremony, sake sampling, food, etc., and a grand parade on Sunday.

And appreciation goes to those who volunteered to docent: Jay McDonald, John Doig, Candace Key, Chris Ross, Frances Noles, Roger Lion, Marlene Philley, and Jeanette Arnold.

- Jeanette Arnold

## MARIN BONSAI CLUB EVENTS

### May 4, 2010: Workshop

Starting at 7pm, our monthly bring-your-own-tree workshop with Tim Kong and Jay McDonald. Fee is \$10 for members, \$20 for non-members.

### May 18, 2010: Ted Matson Returns!

Don't miss this one...the triumphant return of Ted Matson.

### June 8, 2010: Workshop

Starting at 7pm, our monthly bring-your-own-tree workshop with Tim Kong and Jay McDonald. Fee is \$10 for members, \$20 for non-members.

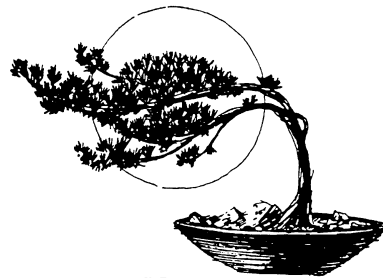
### June 15, 2010: Demonstration

Wiring workshop with John Doig.

### July 1, 2010: Bonsai Show at the Fair

Our annual summer show will be held at the Marin County Fair, July 1 - July 5 at the Marin Civic Center auditorium. Hours are 11am to 10pm daily.

For a full list of currently scheduled MBC events, see <http://www.marinbonsai.org/events/index.php>.



Marin Bonsai Club

### 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    | Karen Stagg     | 415-897-6824 |
| 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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[www.marinbonsai.org](http://www.marinbonsai.org)

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