

# Bonsai Wire Marin Bonsai Club



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

February 2015

## From the VP of Programs...

Repotting season is well under way. The first repotting workshop at the Marin Society of Artists (MSA) building went well at the end of January, following quickly on the heels of the repotting demonstration earlier in the month. Yours truly was the sidekick to Tim Burke's main demonstration of the repotting of his beech tree. This is the one to which he attached a piece of plywood, nailed to the underside of the trunk and roots, to force the roots to grow only laterally. It was interesting to see how they had developed, and Tim also demonstrated some important key steps in the repotting process.

On my end of the table, I was repotting one of my smallest shimpaku junipers. My intent had been to demonstrate how to deal with a tree that has minimal roots. Instead I was happily surprised to find a rather nice ball of roots and instead showed the benefits of using a good, clean, properly aerated bonsai soil.

Everybody enjoyed the MSA building for the first of our three repotting workshops. Four large tables were moved into an almost semi-circular orientation, giving a cohesive group feel to the gathering. Among other interesting projects that night, Dennis Plaut repotted a majestic oak with a rather large, well tapered trunk, Francesca Metaxas repotted a smallish, pretty Hinoki cypress, and Alan Voigt was up to his usual tricks with another air layering. Alan's elm had a disproportionately large section that he turned into a whole separate tree.



February is a straightforward month for us. February 3<sup>rd</sup> and February 17<sup>th</sup> will be workshop days, fully dedicated to repotting, starting at 7:00 p.m. The club will have a good general soil mix available for a by-tree nominal fee. As always, advice and assistance are available free for members, \$10 for non-members. March 3<sup>rd</sup> will be another workshop, but more open to other activities, since the soil will probably be gone and repotting season will be pretty much over.

## VP Programs Continued...

All of our events in February will take place in the new location, the Marin Society of Artists (MSA) building. To remind everybody, the MSA building is still on the Marin Art & Garden Center grounds, it's simply to the right after the gates rather than to the left. There is a sign pointing that direction that says "Art Gallery."

The board met last month, mostly to discuss the program for 2015. We have two more dates with Peter Tea, in April and July, and will have Jonas Dupuich back for at least one evening. Other possible presenters: Cora Dalga, an accent plant specialist; Mike Pistello, a conifer specialist; and Bob Shimon, redwood specialist and owner of Mendocino Coast Bonsai. If any of these sounds more desirable to you than the others, please let myself or Candace Key know, though at the time of this writing, Bob Shimon is the favorite

There is another event we're cooking up, something to replace the Iron Bonsai event. As some of you know, the trees that are styled during the Iron Bonsai competition frequently die from the stress of that much styling in such a short amount of time. We want to introduce something that is kinder to the trees and maximally educational, stretched out over a longer period of time. What we have in mind is some sort of paired beginner/mentor long-term tree styling contest that will have the ultimate goal of helping the beginners develop a tree worthy of selling at auction. The most improved beginner will win the right to keep their tree. The rest will have to try to win their trees at auction.

We want to try to launch this competition for the March 17<sup>th</sup> meeting date. WHAT WE NEED: interested beginner-level bonsai enthusiasts who want to be paired with a mentor who will help them style a tree throughout the year.

More details as the day of the event approaches. Anybody interested, please contact me at [david@doceichhorn.com](mailto:david@doceichhorn.com).

One last word about repotting: If you haven't repotted your Japanese maples yet, get on it! I see my leaf buds beginning to pop open already.

David Eichhorn



## Repotting-palooza

We are in the thick of repotting season and here are a few suggestions for good bonsai repotting etiquette:

Be sure to label all your tools and supplies. With so much activity going on chances are good they will be misplaced at some point. Identification on them helps you get them back.

Please ask to borrow someone's tools. Even if you think they belong to the club, be sure to ask.

Some members are bringing their own potting soil to workshops. Make sure you know which is the club soil before you start scooping.

If someone prefers not to lend you tools or soil, or anything don't be offended. We all have our idiosyncratic ways and chances are no offense is meant.

Bring plastic, a drop cloth or bin for old soil and the mess of repotting. This will make clean up so much faster. The club has some blue tarps, but if possible bring your own protection as well. At the MSA building there is no receptacle for old soil, so plan to take it home with you.

We are in the MSA building for both repotting workshops in February. You can avoid going through the gallery by using the side garden door which takes you directly to our work area.

Because the lighting is not the best in MSA it is suggested wearing a headlight is helpful for detailed work. Art Wasserman found his Petzel very useful at the last meeting.

See you soon!

Candace Key

## Bonsai Gardens at Lake Merritt - Workday and Docent Activities

Saturday, February 14 will be our club's yearly work party at the Bonsai Gardens at Lake Merritt to help get the gardens ready for the Mammoth Fundraiser the following weekend. Guests from all over California and the country come for these events and we love to show off the gardens at their finest. Our chores include weeding, sweeping the grounds and possibly weeding some of the bonsai. Last year we helped label trees, pots and stones for the Mammoth sale which was a terrific opportunity to preview the sale. If you haven't visited the gardens this would make an excellent introduction to one of the 5 best bonsai gardens in the country. We always have fun and everyone comes away awed by just how beautiful the trees are. Please join us from 10:00-1:00ish, to show a little love for the bonsai gardens this Valentine's Day, and learn a few things along the way. Don't forget to bring your lunch! Contact Candace to sign up and let her know if you would like to car-pool over.

One of the most important responsibilities we have as Marin Bonsai Club members is to provide docents for the 4th Saturday of every month at the bonsai gardens. It is easy and pleasant and only 3 hours PER YEAR. Is that really too much to ask of your time to support the gardens which provide so much pleasure, beauty and bonsai education? Of course not! Roger Lion, our soon to be retiring Docent Coordinator, has offered to give newbies a tour and instructions on docent responsibilities during our work day at the gardens. Why not take this opportunity to get to know the gardens and sign up for your shift this year? We need all members to participate. We thank you in advance for taking this responsibility seriously and signing up NOW.

Candace Key



# Marin Bonsai Club

## Membership Application Or Renewal

(PLEASE PRINT)

NAMES(S) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:

Single \_\_\_\_\_ Family \_\_\_\_\_ Student (under 18) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ WORK PHONE (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL\* \_\_\_\_\_ .FAX(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

YEAR YOU JOINED MARIN BONSAI CLUB \_\_\_\_\_

HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT MARIN BONSAI CLUB? \_\_\_\_\_

\*It has become increasingly important for us to have your email address so you can be kept up to date on last minute shows and events. We do not share this with other members or clubs or anyone! Please print clearly.

Membership Fees:     **Single \$45**  
                              **Family \$65**  
                              **Student \$25**

Make checks payable to: Marin Bonsai Club. Please send your check and application to: **Marin Bonsai Club**, PO Box 437, Ross, CA 94957

**There are many benefits to membership in the Marin Bonsai Club, but there are also responsibilities all members need to shoulder as well. Each member of the Club is required to volunteer at monthly and yearly club activities. Please check at least 2 areas where you can contribute to the Club. Thank you.**

Monthly Meeting / Workshop Activities

- Raffle Events
- Assistant to Workshop Coordinator
- Assistant to Program Director
- Publicity
- Board Member
- Photographer

Annual Activities

- Setup Marin County Fair Show
- Auction Committee  
(need lots of people!)
- Organize and coordinate Fall Show
- Holiday Party
- Docent at Lake Merritt

## The Taskmaster, February 2015

February for bonsai artists in the San Francisco bay area microclimates is a very busy time. Repotting from now until the buds open is prime time for all the deciduous trees. After the buds open, it's too late. People who really know what they're doing can get away with a bit more on trees that they're familiar with, but the best advice is to get it all done before the buds open. Young trees should be repotted every one or two years, certainly no more than three years, so that the roots can be directed and refined, and the trees will be rejuvenated so that weaker branches are less likely to die back or dwindle. Any recently acquired tree should be repotted so that you know what the roots are like and that it's all properly done, healthy, and secure. Repot anything that didn't thrive, anything that may have been a little slow to grow or slow to drain, anything that deserves a better pot, a better position or angle, an escape from nursery containers and buckets, or just a second chance. You should even repot the trees you've decided to get rid of, so they'll look better and be worth more. Some people keep a few very cheap bonsai pots around, easily found at sales and auctions, for just this purpose.

First clean, screen, and wire an appropriate new pot. Cut deeply all around inside the edges of the old pot, ideally with a small curved root saw. Other tools may do, but most will be difficult and may cause some root damage. Then turn the pot up on edge and gently tip the pot and tree in opposite directions. Recut the inside edges if this doesn't happen easily, don't use a lot of force or you could tear some roots that you may need. Remove the pot and place the rootball at the edge of the repotting table. Use a chopstick or small short-tooth rake to gently scratch at the surface of the soil, from the trunk outward toward the edge where the pot was, so you can expose the surface roots that will become the primary means of expanding the nebari, that handsome flare at the base of the tree. This important step, which takes patience and a gentle hand, is often rushed and bungled, and then takes two or three years or

more to correct. Once the surface roots are exposed, it should be more apparent how much of the bottom of the root mass can be removed. Tip the tree on its side and use the stick, the rake, or a small root hook to strip and comb across the bottom of the rootball in one direction only, over and over until enough roots are freed from the soil to allow you to scissor across the entire bottom of the rootball to create a nice flat surface. The edges of the rootball can then be trimmed to a convenient length, and the whole process repeated until a fairly thin, very flat pad of roots is created to tie into the new pot. Add a thin base of larger-grain drainage material to the bottom of the pot, and add some bonsai soil in a heap in the middle. Place your flat little rootball on the pile, set the tree slightly off-center in the pot, settle it by rotating it right and left a quarter-turn a couple of times, and wire it in. There are several methods of tying the wire and snugging it down that will work. If you don't know how it's done, it's hard to fake it, so get some advice or use diagrams or get someone to help you. Once it's all secure, run lots of water through the pot to rinse out the dust, which would otherwise migrate toward the bottom and slow down the drainage from the very start.

It turns out that there are some things at almost every phase of bonsai that are very hard to describe verbally, sometimes difficult even with pictures or diagrams, so that the outcome is unpredictable. This is one reason why the clubs are so important. There is sometimes just no substitute for hands-on instruction and personal assistance when it comes to details, and successfully accomplishing the details sometimes takes several repetitions to begin to master. And sooner or later the success of each bonsai creation always comes down to the details.

## Taskmaster Continued...

When the deciduous trees are repotted, move on to the evergreen broadleaves, then the junipers, conifers, and other evergreens. A few tree types, like most tropicals for instance, should be repotted at an entirely different time of year.

Put all repotted trees out in full sun, and remember that new, unsettled soil may dry out much faster than the soil you're used to so be careful about the watering.

Green moss can be removed from trunks and exposed roots by gently brushing with a soft brush, but frequently the bark beneath it will be wet and tender and easily injured and it takes years to grow it back. Kill the moss first with alcohol in a spray bottle set for misting, then brush it off when it's dry with a denture brush or a tiny whisk broom.

Freezes may still suddenly descent on the garden, and potted plants freeze more quickly and more thoroughly than those in cans or in the ground, so keep the soil moist not wet and when you suspect trouble put the pots under the benches, under the eaves, under taller shrubbery, or in the garage for a couple of days.

There's plenty to do. By the end of February you can feel and practically even hear Spring approaching. It's a heart-moving and lovely time of year full of promise and pleasant expectation. Try to make sure that the same can be said for your garden, and your everyday life, and your close relationships. Life is beautiful.

The Taskmaster

## Our Treasurer Says

Remember to send in your dues check ASAP- you don't want to have to pay the \$10 non-member repotting workshop fee! And a reminder that if you would like to use club provided soil the "donation" is \$5 for a small tree and \$10 for a larger tree.

Art Wasserman

## Bonsai Focus

The latest bonsai focus Jan/Feb 2015 has the best outline for pine trees I've ever read and it covers care and direction for the entire year. Get yourselves a copy!

Tim Burke

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## Upcoming Northern California Bonsai Events

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February 21 – 22, 2015 Oakland, CA  
GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt: The annual Mammoth Fund Raiser will be held at 666 Bellevue Ave. (Garden Center Building). Saturday: Auction preview at noon with Auction starting at 1 PM. Sunday: Vendor Sales start at 9 AM, Plant Sales start at 10 AM, and Demonstrations at 1 PM. Also on Sunday help us celebrate our 15th Anniversary! The Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt will celebrate the many bonsai clubs who have created and supported the Garden by inviting Bonsai Clubs from all over Northern California to showcase their best trees. Bonsai Garden will be open 10 AM to 4 PM on Saturday and Noon to 4 PM on Sunday. For more information or to sell trees, email [bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com](mailto:bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com) and visit [www.gsbflakemerritt.org](http://www.gsbflakemerritt.org).

April 25 – 26, 2015 Sacramento, California  
Bonsai Sekiyu Kai: Annual show will be held at the Sacramento Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Hours are: Saturday Noon – 5 PM and Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM. Demonstration 2 PM both days by Yuzo Maruyama. Amenities include refreshments, light snacks, door prizes, raffles and a Silent Auction. Member and vendor sales of plants and bonsai-related items will also be available. For more information contact Doug Hamby at (916) 273-2328 or [doughamby@gmail.com](mailto:doughamby@gmail.com).

May 3, 2015 Watsonville, California  
Watsonville Bonsai Club: 42nd Annual Bonsai Exhibit held at the Watsonville Buddhist Temple, 423 Bridge St. Over 50 outstanding bonsai, large and small, young and old, will be on display from 10 AM – 4 PM, with a demonstration by award winning Bonsai Master Katsumi Kinoshita at 1:30 PM. A raffle of bonsai items, plants and the demo tree will follow. Tea

& cookies will be served. Plenty of parking for vehicles of all sizes; even for group outings. A vendor will be available to sate your plant appetite for bonsai or otherwise. For more information contact Don White at (831) 724-9283 or [whiteslib@aol.com](mailto:whiteslib@aol.com).

May 16 – 17, 2015 Sacramento, California  
Satsuki Aikokai of Sacramento: Annual Bonsai Show will be held at the Shepard Garden Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Hours are Saturday 10 AM – 5PM, and 10 AM – 4PM, with demonstrations at 1 PM on both days by Yuzo Maruyama. Satsuki information booth, vendors, raffles, etc. For more information contact [satsukiaikokaisac@sbcglobal.net](mailto:satsukiaikokaisac@sbcglobal.net) or Ronn Pigram (916) 428-8505.

### Bonsai Wire Newsletter Submissions:

The deadline for the Bonsai Wire Newsletter is the Saturday following the Club's Monthly General Meeting.

Please email any news, articles, event info, Haiku, photos etc. to:  
[mbcnews@marinbonsai.org](mailto:mbcnews@marinbonsai.org)

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## Marin Bonsai Club Events

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February 3, 2015: Repotting Workshop,  
Marin Society of Artists Building, 7 PM.  
Free for members. \$10 for non-members.

February 17, 2015: Repotting Workshop,  
Marin Society of Artists Building, 7 PM.  
Free for members. \$10 for non-members.

March 3, 2015: Workshop,  
Marin Society of Artists Building, 7 PM.  
Free for members. \$10 for non-members.

March 17, 2015: Monthly Meeting, Begin-  
ning of Paired Competition, Marin Society  
of Artists Building, 7:30 PM.



### 2015 Marin Bonsai Club Officers:

President	Vacant	
VP Programs	David Eichhorn	415-888-3756
VP Shows	Jay McDonald	415-847-8909
Secretary	Candace Key	415-491-1989
	Daniel Keller	415-453-7265
Treasurer	Art Wasserman	415-454-3077
Historian	Carolyn Robbins	415-460-0339
Librarian	Roger Lion	415-924-5134
Webmaster	Sharon Bone	415-898-9618
Newsletter	Scott Piatanesi	415-456-6848
Hospitality	Marlene Philley	415-924-5134
Docent Coord	Vacant	

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