



California Bonsai Society

Next Meeting on Wednesday November 20 at 7 PM at Nakaoka Community
1700 W. 162nd St., Gardena 90247

President

Robert Pressler

818-343-4090

bonsaibp@earthlink.net

info@californiabonsai.com

Programs

Steve Valentine

caryme2@yahoo.com

Show Chairmen

Lindsay Shiba

909-806-0937

Joe Galgoul

626-429-0325

Treasurer

Cindi Bayliss

562-596-8464

Membership

Cary Sullivan (Valentine)

760-445-2548

caryme2@yahoo.com

1010 Phillips St.

Vista CA 92083

Newsletter

Carol Upston

carolupston@icloud.com

310-346-4203

Website

Diem Van Groth

Refreshments

Doyle Saito

310-940-9482

doylesaito@yahoo.com

Live Streaming/Technology

Jason Saito

310-909-4598

jason@zenplace.com

Publicity

Mel Carrillo

310-362-7697

NJoyLife17321@gmail.com

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President's Message



I'm loving the crisp cool mornings

we've been having lately. I actually had to wear a long sleeve shirt a couple mornings last week! We were pretty lucky this summer and it wasn't too brutal but I'm happy it's mostly over! Now is the time to start prepping trees for next years show.

It's been an exciting year for CBS, lots of new members, the Visiting Artist Program has been well received by everyone involved- clubs and artists and is only going to get better. The scholarship program gave out five \$200 scholarships and is now funded for quite some time. See a couple of essays from a couple of this years winners elsewhere in this newsletter. Our tech team has gotten us pulled into the 21st century and is very active and has created a significant digital footprint for CBS. Anne Erb put on a fantastic show, we put on a small informal show in conjunction with the Santa Clarita Library and our membership has grown with new members and some older members coming back. John Van De Wouw organized a huge members sale and is planning to do it again this year so see details on the sale further on in the newsletter. All in all I think it was a pretty good year for CBS.

Our Ben Oki Scholarship Program has been very successful and a boon to those looking to increase their bonsai skills. Even more

Events and Opportunities

Golden State Bonsai Federation Convention 42

October 24 - 27

Riverside Convention Center

gsbfconvention.org

CBS welcomes Todd Schlafer

November 19, 7 PM

Nakaoka Community Center

1700 w. 162nd St.

Gardena 90247

CBS Annual Sale Sunday December 1

Yamaguchi Bonsai Nursery

1905 Sawtelle Blvd.

Los Angeles 90025

see article

Baikoen Bonsai Kenkyukai Silhouettes Show

January 18 - 19

Los Angeles County Arboretum

Baldwin Ave, Arcadia

Saturday evening reception

club sales and vendors

demos at 1 PM both days

Bonsai A Thon!

Feb. 22 - 23, set up Feb. 21

The Huntington

Vendors, Demos, Raffles,

Auctions, Exhibit, Tours!

exciting is the fact that it is sure to be funded for at least the foreseeable future thanks to an fantastic fundraising activity we recently completed. We had a tree donated specifically to help fund the scholarship that had been originally collected and styled by Ben Oki. When the tree was given to us last year I decided to ask Ryan Neil, who had a special relationship with Ben, if he would consider restyling the tree prior to us selling or auctioning it. He immediately agreed.

I brought the tree up to him last summer and he got the tree nice and healthy and early this spring donated a Sara Rayner container that looked custom made for the tree and transplanted it, then late spring he restyled the tree. It came out really, really well. Besides the restyling and planting he also made a very nice short film about Ben and the tree, and



then helped us publicize the auction to his large network of clients, students and fans. As if this wasn't enough on top of all that he also committed to donating a tree that we can auction off next year for the scholarship! Last month we held an online auction and the tree was sold for \$16,500.00 to a very generous bonsai enthusiast! After auction fees and expenses we cleared more than \$15,000.00 that is earmarked just for the scholarship. Ryan and his whole team at Mirai made it possible for it to be such a success, we owe them a huge debt of gratitude. Needless to say I was very pleased with the outcome, it is going to allow us to continue giving scholarships without dipping into existing club funds.

Speaking of club funds in the past our major source of income has been conventions and at this point I don't believe we have the ability to put one on yet, so we need to find new sources of income so that we can continue to be a resource to the bonsai community and keep working to bring bonsai standards up. One thing we can do is to actively seek out donations from members, corporations and other sources of

community grants. So if any members would like to make either cash donations, donations of bonsai and related items for the club to sell or to include CBS in your will, we would greatly appreciate it and you'd be helping us to continue our mission of being the premier bonsai club and resource in the US.

Our visiting artist this month will be Todd Schafler from Colorado. Todd is a bonsai professional who is an expert in collecting and styling yamadori. His award winning work is amazing and I'm sure he'll have some great collecting tips and will do an amazing job styling a collected CA Juniper. I hope that **many of you will show up** and give Todd a warm So Cal reception on November 20th. We have four more amazing artists from around the world scheduled for next year that we can all look forward to.

I think the club is on the right track and through the efforts of many members we have turned the club around and put us on a path that I believe our founders would heartily approve of. None of this would be possible without the hard work and dedication of our board and members who have stepped up and taken on new roles. I can't thank them enough especially the new members who have jumped right in and taken on responsibilities. They are our future and we should all appreciate and applaud their efforts. We all owe special thanks to the

following members who have helped put us back on track. Lindsay Shiba who over the years has been a rock continues to be a major factor -this time taking on the role of show chair. Anne Erb our past show chair set a high bar but I know Lindsay is up to the task. Carol Upston who is our Secretary and newsletter editor does an amazing job and is always there to step in whenever needed. Jason Saito who leads our tech team, along with new members Jonathon Jee, Soung Shin, and Mel Carrillo are tireless in their efforts to bring us into the 21st century. Our Facebook and Instagram pages are up and running and doing well. Our Youtube channel will soon be up with video interviews with some of our elders and other bonsai notables as well as our visiting artists. Cary and Steve Valentine handle our membership and help with our visiting artists, as well as any other task we ask of them. Cindi Bayliss who takes very good care of and keeps track of our finances. John van De Wouw who for years was our membership chair and who organizes our annual members sale. Doyle Saito, our fixer, who is always ready to do anything and everything asked of him and than some and who makes it his mission to see we always have plenty of good eats at all our events, and new member Diem Van Groth who has created and maintained our website. Without these people we would not be the organization we are today. Many thanks and much appreciation to all of them.

Remember the GSBF convention is in Riverside and coming up at the end of this month- its sure to be a memorable event and I encourage everyone to attend.



Looking forward to seeing many of you at our next meeting on November 20th- a week and a day before Thanksgiving.

Robert Pressler
President California Bonsai Society



photo of Ben Oki from Baikoen Bonsai Kenkyukai

Todd's interest in bonsai

began on a trip to Spain in 2002 when he purchased a bonsai seed kit. When it didn't grow a great bonsai in a matter of a few months, he decided to explore nearby nurseries for older material. This eventually led him to Harold Sasaki, proprietor of Colorado Bonsai, who allowed him to volunteer at his nursery. He did everything from pulling weeds to eventually styling trees.

Todd's obsession with collecting trees formed shortly thereafter, as Jerry Morris, another regular at Colorado Bonsai, invited him on a collecting trip to Utah. He learned very quickly that basic design principles did not necessarily apply to collected material with sparse foliage and unconventional branches. Therefore, in 2012, he decided



to further his studies with Ryan Neil to learn how to style and develop material of this caliber.

His study with Ryan focused on the advanced techniques of setting tree structure, which is the most difficult skill set to achieve in bonsai and refinement. Todd pushed himself to become proficient those techniques. With his skills well rounded, he was inspired to pursue bonsai practice full-time. And when others began to seek out his expertise, he started to instruct professionally.

People often ask Todd, 'is working on bonsai relaxing and Zen-like?' "Refining trees and maintaining foliage most certainly is", Todd responds. "But while setting the initial structure of a collected tree isn't remotely relaxing, when done correctly it's one of the most fulfilling aspects of bonsai design. Watching the tree flourish following such work can be unbelievably rewarding."

To view Todd's portfolio and see a sample of the collected material he has to offer, please visit his site - www.FirstBranchBonsai.com

Achievements

- Participated in Generation Bonsai which is held in Heidelberg Germany
- Was a featured artist on the Bonsai Empire live Q&A on Facebook
- Was featured on the Bonsai Mirai Livestream in April of 2017 <https://live.bonsaimirai.com/archive/video/energy-distribution>
- Past President of the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society
- Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society's Artist of the Year - 2012
- Exhibitor at The Artisans Cup in Portland, Oregon - 2015
- Won Best North American Species award for my Colorado Blue Spruce at the National Bonsai Exhibition in Rochester, New York - 2016
- Recipient of the Malcolm Corel Award, an honor given to a member of the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society from their peers - 2017

References: Ryan Neil of Bonsai Mirai: Ryan@bonsaimirai.com or 503-396-6219
photo courtesy of Todd Schlafer

CBS Welcomed Liliana Marcela Tello Ortiz



It was hard to find good photos of Liliana Ortiz for the newsletter because she is constantly in motion and they're all a little blurry.

Our visitor from Costa Rica showed her expertise in a wide variety of trees from tropicals to conifers including a rare subspecies of buttonwood. She participated in many club demos, critiques, workshops and work on collections during her visit.

Her enthusiasm for her work in bonsai was contagious!



CBS Annual Sale at Yamaguchi Bonsai Nursery

Sunday December 1, 2019

The annual CBS Members Sale will be held again this year at the Yamaguchi Bonsai Nursery. Bonsai related items are welcome. Tagging will occur on site with the standard fee of \$1.00 per tag. Drop-off times for sale items will be Saturday November 30 from 2 PM to 5 PM and Sunday morning December 1 from 7 AM to 8 AM after which time no additional items may be brought on the premises. Doors open to the public at 9 AM. The club will retain 10% of the sale price, sales tax will be added at checkout. Payment of sales will be by CHECK ONLY and may take up to four weeks for disbursement to be made.

We are looking for four 940 volunteers to help with our most important job of writing up sales receipts. Once the doors open things are fast and furious and we really need the help here to have the event go smoothly. Please contact John van de Wouw to volunteer at shearwouw@gmail.com

Yamaguchi Bonsai Nursery
905 Sawtelle Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90025

gsbfconvention.org

October 24 - 27 2019

Vendors, Exhibit, Demonstrations, Workshops,
click on link for info!



Dear Members of CBS,

I'd like to introduce myself, Lindsay Shiba, as your new Show Chair for the 2020 spring show at the Huntington. Joe Galgoul will be assisting me. Our very sincere thanks to Anne Erb and Marge Blasingame for your years of diligence in providing an excellent level of bonsai display.

Going forward we are going to strive for an even better quality of trees and displays in our show.

As you know, Bob Pressler has been working toward his goal to bring back the CBS club as it once was, as the premiere bonsai organization in the country. This means for all of us displaying in the show next year, **we need to start grooming 2 or 3 trees now** and choose the best one as March approaches.

We are excited to have an open membership for the first time in CBS history! This means we will have more first rate trees available. For those who haven't shown in our March exhibition before, I'll be asking for a (texted) photo of your tree to help in confirming your show tree is detailed properly. A properly detailed bonsai can make a mediocre tree into a very good tree and a very good tree into an excellent tree. We are planning a sort of "check-up" seminar for

members who would like some suggestions on grooming their specific trees and proper display. Contact Bob Pressler if you would like to schedule a bonsai "check-up"

I would also like to see 3-4 demos per day on our show weekend. With so many capable artists in our club we shouldn't have a problem filling those spots. Please contact me (909)8060937 if you are interested.

We'll be sending out a an entry form at the beginning of the year. Thank you in advance for all the help we'll be needing to put on the best show CBS has ever had

We are committed to improving our shows by improving our bonsai.

Lindsay Shiba
Show Chair

A Word About Accents

There is at least in theory an important purpose to displaying a planting, stone, sculpture, fruit, scrolls, etc. with our bonsai trees in a formal exhibit. We tend to look around our garden and choose an accent planting that is looking healthy, clean and pretty and that's good enough. But we're missing an opportunity to add depth and meaning to our display. An accent can, perhaps should, add atmosphere and information to the setting of your tree. It can suggest the season of the year, the environment in which the bonsai might, in our imagination, be growing, a feeling of lush forest or desolate mountain summit, of new growth emerging in spring or the color changes of fall. We are creating an illusion with our tree, casting a spell that suggests to the viewer that they are seeing an ancient tree in nature, a tree in a particular time and place; why not make the most of an accent?

The only real 'rule' for accent pieces is that they should be subservient to the tree and not so flashy or large that they compete with it.

I'm not going to be pestering you if you bring that dwarf mondo grass, or the ledebouria bulbs you always show, not at all, but I'm just gently suggesting that in the Japanese tradition there is a wealth of opportunity for subtle suggestion and seasonal beauty. Oh, and if someone brings in a dormant looking plant for a winter show, give them a break, they're doing it right!

Thank you, Carol Upston

Ben Oki Scholarship Winners

Gabriel Gonzales

I'd like to start out by expressing my gratitude for being given the opportunity to participate in a workshop with Bjorn Bjornholm. The workshop was coordinated by the Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai Club and held on July 19, 2019 at the Nakaoka Community Centre in Gardena, CA. The workshop was limited to 8 attendees, began in the morning and lasted through late afternoon.

I brought in a Juniper that I've had in my collection from my bonsai beginnings. I acquired the tree when I attended a bonsai convention in Garden Grove back in 2011 or 2012. I had just started with bonsai only months before and this was my first major show. I knew nothing back then about how to select a proper bonsai, but I did know that this tree on the raffle table was calling me. It was sort of an upright tree with slight movement mostly in the upper parts. There was very little foliage and looked half dead. The tree was in a round unglazed pot that had a nice design on the rim that reminded me of a native style water design which caught my attention as well. The tree/pot combo was one of many nice items on the raffle table that evening that had a "special" can next to it. This meant it was separate from the general raffle and for those that wanted to win the tree, required them to put tickets into that "special" can. Bonsai people love to gamble and so I watched the can throughout the night and noticed not many attendees were putting tickets into it. I decided to buy \$20 dollars' worth of raffle tickets and put every single one of them in the "special" can next to the tree. It was time for the raffle and as you've figured, I won the tree! There was just one dilemma, I was driving a Cadillac CTS at the time and the tree was over 3.5 feet tall in the pot. Luckily, I have the greatest wife ever! She drove from Covina to Garden Grove at 10pm in her Scion XB and we were able to set it in the back at an angle as to not damage the branches and sparse foliage.



Once the tree was home, I did some research and asked around about the tree and pot. I found it was an old California Juniper. It's said that California Junipers are so slow growing in the wild that they only grow approximately 0.04 to 0.2 inches in diameter per year. The base of this tree is approximately 4 inches across in diameter. Y'all can do the math! The ceramic pot turns out to be an old one from Tokoname in Japan that are not made anymore! I

definitely got my moneys worth on this one!

Gabriel Gonzales 😊



Leslie Rinchen-Wongmo

There aren't many hobbies you could engage in for three years and still feel like a total beginner. Learning the art of bonsai is like no other learning experience I've ever had. Knowledge grows more slowly than the trunks of my little trees thicken. I watch intently as my teacher snips some branches and points out others. I nod with tentative confidence. But when he walks away, the visible distinctions that had seemed so obvious when he was there seem to walk away with him. I try to replicate his process but my confidence vanishes too. Leaves and branches blur. I feel uncomfortably ignorant.

Progress is so slow that sometimes I wonder if I should give up. But then I show up for the next class. There's something about the time with the trees and the company of my classmates that feeds me. I love the slow pace, the close looking, the collaboration with a wordless partner. Maybe I even love something about the confusion and the promise of discovery contained in it.

Recently, I had to miss a few months of classes. When I finally returned, I felt the trees welcome me. It felt like coming home. Thanks, Bob. Thanks, trees. Thanks, California Bonsai Society for supporting me in this uncommon path of discovery.

Good wishes,
Leslie



Otis Gordon

Last week I used the funds from the Ben Oki Scholarship towards an unforgettable class at Seikou-en in the Omiya Bonsai Village just north of Tokyo. Taking an hour-long train ride from my hostel in Tokyo, I arrived at the entrance of Seikou-En, a nursery that is regarded as one of the top bonsai nurseries in Japan and therefore one of the top in the world. Luckily the class included a translator, so my instructor and I were able to communicate with ease. In the class I learned about how to choose an appropriate pot to fit the tree I was using, how to wire the mesh gates on the top of the holes in the pot, how to water properly, which soil to use and how to comb the roots and plant a tree in the pot. I was able to obtain a great amount of knowledge about planting and taking care of a bonsai appropriately. After planting the tree we put moss around the trunk and even added some white rocks to create a sort of landscape (this reminded me of the



Chinese style of bonsai). Because I was making a documentary highlighting my journey through Japan studying bonsai, I was able to use the translator provided in the class to interview the bonsai master about his experiences learning about bonsai and why he thinks bonsai is important to Japanese people. It was most memorable to hear him talk about how he has become more thoughtful about the people and plants around him because, doing bonsai, taking care of a living thing, requires so much thought and care to sustain a healthy plant. Ultimately, the experience was extremely memorable and useful to my bonsai journey and I can't wait to apply the knowledge I gained to bonsai I create in the future!

