

The Collection-Connection

A newsletter from the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt

Quarterly Newsletter

Volume X, Issue 2 October 2012



Of Special Interest

New Storage Area
Working with Olives
Working with Cork Bark Pines

When the Cats Away

by Gordon Deeg

Note From the Editor

It has been a difficult year for the Collection-Connection and we have not been able to get out all the issues we intended. Therefore, no expiration notices will be sent with this issue and all subscribers will be receiving their copy. I would like to hear from you if you would rather just receive a reminder that the newsletter is posted on our website. Many organizations are trying to decrease mailing and printing costs by sending electronic versions of the newsletter. Please let me know how you feel about that.

Jerry Carpenter, Editor

The new storage shed has been built. It is a very nice addition to the multi-purpose room. Ken Hayes was the contractor and he did a wonderful job as he has on many new additions in the garden: display tablets, display cabinets, green house, Plexiglas addition to the Tokonoma display cubes and much more.

It's barely noticeable and the corner of the new unit juts out over a section of the dry stream. A water

chain will hang down from the gutter allowing the rain water to exit 'into the stream'. *Very Japanese.* Kathy wholeheartedly approves! (Wow – I did something right?)

The next project Ken will tackle is the Shohin display. This will be located under the 2 large maple trees just past the redbud tree. The bonsai bench will be removed and a very different Shohin display will take its place. We've looked

forward to this project for a long time! I am sure you will find it worth waiting for.

Cora Dalager is about to fill the repainted tokonoma display area with bonsai items of interest to the general public. It will be a small educational display.

"A place for everything, our new storage area"

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One of my favorite species to work with is olive trees. They can be so delicate but also muscular trees with fantastic nebari (*where trunk meets the root mass*) and interesting taper. Making an olive bonsai resemble an olive tree in nature, however, can be very challenging. One such example of a tree that is not very natural looking is in our collection. Tree number 175, originally styled by Pete Sugawara, and a former member of my local club, Kusamura Bonsai Club of Palo Alto, CA). It is styled as an informal upright with a great taper from nebari to crown with strong branches extending from the central core.

During the summer, is the best time of year to repot and work olive trees when they are pushing strong growth. This is generally true with most subtropical species. This particular tree was in bad need of repotting and presented some challenges that Kathy Shaner and I had discussed some time ago. Among those challenges were the removal of a heavy straight branching coming off right rear section of the tree, thinning out the larger heavy masses of foliage and attempting to form more of crown at the apex and lightening up the crown so that light can travel through the tree.

The following set of pictures of the tree before repotting.



Working with Olives

by Jerry Carpenter, Assistant Curator for Oaks, Olives, sub-Tropical Trees



appropriate pair of leaves to encourage short internodes with great success. We go about the process of counting leaf pairs.

This is the side view of the tree that illustrates the issues with the lower branch slated for removal. You can also see that the tree has heavy masses of foliage that needed to be opened up and a great deal of running branches of new growth.

With the assistance of David Muir, a new club member, we began the process of thinning the tree. We use a staggered or every other leaf approach along the entire length of the branch to remove leaves. This is done by pinching off those individual leaves. I have had great success doing this technique and have back budding of new branches where the leaves are pinched off.

Another important part of the thinning process is to cut new growth at the appropriate pair of leaves to encourage short internodes with great success. We go

"Olives are summertime repotting projects"

I must say that coaching bonsai owners to do this requires great patience. With all the effort to pinch hundreds of little leaves and then count the pair on each branch some become weary of the process fast. However, for those who see the results, the reward is a great looking tree.

So counting pairs of leaves; we find that the most fertile leaf pairs to create branching are the first and third pair. Cutting a running branch back to the first or third pair will mean that you will develop new branches at those pairs. If you cut the branch at the second or fourth pair you are less likely to see eager

growth where you want it or the back budding will be slower at producing a new set of leaves.

We removed the lower back branch and discovered that this displays the trunk and will allow for some more delicate branch development in the lower part of the tree. In essence, the lower branch was too low and too heavy for the design of the tree.

The olive was then repotted. We removed a great deal of the root mass leaving only the fine roots radiating from the trunk and cut away the heavy roots coming for the center area. We were actually able to reduce the depth of the old trunk as well by cutting way the



heavy hardwood where no roots were growing. This was done by chipping away until we created a concave area directly under the trunk. My assistant was shock at how much could be cut away but I explained that having great roots radiating higher up the that the lower heavy trunk can be cut away allowing the tree to sit lower in the pot and that it was just taking up space. We also have increased the opportunity for fine root develop under the tree. Below you can now see the newly cleaned up frontal view. Notice how much sunlight can now travel through the tree and show the taper of the trunk all the way up to the crown. The leaf removal and thinning of the crown has also integrated it more with the rest of the growth on the tree.

The olive is planted lower in the pot now and aligning the nebari with the top edge of the pot. The detail photo on the right shows the area where the branch was cut off and illustrates the density of foliage that remains.

If you are interested in working with olives or other subtropical trees please contact me to have an opportunity to work with me on those trees I care for at in at the BGLM.



Working with Cork Bark Pines

Information from Kathy Shaner



This summer some members of the BGLM team had the opportunity to work with our curator, Kathy Shaner, on a special group of trees. Many bonsai enthusiasts desire but are afraid of working with the fragile cork bark pines. For our learning experience these pines were chosen from the collection for some very special attention. Mind you this work was being done in August, not a typical time many of us would think about doing needle pruning and candle cutting.

Our first example is tree #281. The foliage had become dense. Candles on these trees located at the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt in Oakland, CA are removed generally in mid-July depending on the climate. Sometimes doing the candling later is better to give more strength to the tree.

In surveying this particular tree we did find some weakness so the candles were permitted to grow longer primarily because the lower pine branches required the little buds to develop well before taking off heavier growth. Growth at the crown of the tree is very strong in contrast to the bottom branches.

"Know your local climate and its effects on the pine growth and development to sure a strong tree when pruning"

In that case we would be more aggressive with cutting strong candles earlier and all the way back to the weaker buds.

So, on the lower branches this may require a bud to remain on the limb for another year before it can be cut back.

With cork pines there should be a general design that highlights a great deal of bark. If the foliage becomes too heavy and thick then we lose the beautiful backing features of the tree.

In designing your tree, the branch selection should not leave large holes in the structure. Careful branch selection is done by covering the branches with light paper or thin fabric for previewing before removing it. When you decide to cut a branch off the cork bark pine, leave a stub at the end and do not cut flush to the bark.

With these guidelines we went about carefully pulling needles. Unlike ordinary black pines, the branch cannot bounce or be bent and twisted. This is due to the thin layer of cambium below the beautiful thick cork bark. So, branches had to be held carefully and stabilized while the needles were being plucked. In holding the branches be sure to approach from underneath the needles and the branch. We do not want to damage remaining needles by hitting them or breaking off tips in the process. Reaching under the branch keeps clothes and hands away from the needles. We started our needle pulling from the bottom of the tree this time. Two people working on different sides of the tree made the process go much faster but we had to agree on the number of pairs of needles to leave so that our work would be even.

The image on right is the side of the tree before needle pruning. You can tell it is out of shape and too dense.



We agreed that bottom branches would have about 8 pairs of needles left on group, middle branches would retain 6 pairs and the top would retain 4 or six depending on how strong the branch was. Sometimes, of course we would come across a bottom branch that was weaker than we would like and would leave more needles to ensure the strength of the branch.

It seems that we hear different techniques about needle pulling and timing from every single lecturer on the subject. There is a very good reason for it. Working with your pines require you to observe their growth patterns based on the particular climate you live in. Some techniques will differ greatly if you live in San Francisco compared to Oakland, the peninsula, our the south bay areas of San Jose and Santa Clara. The rule of thumb is that you just need to have growing season time to allow new buds to develop before the cool winter period begins. Late season needle pulling and bud selection may also cause growth to strengthen other candles. So it is good to use caution and not be too aggressive until you know the reactions of growth in your specific micro-climate.

Working with Cork Bark Pines (cont.)

- GSBF-BGLM:**
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The cork pine after initial thinning and pruning. It looks much lighter and allows sun to travel through to the trunk. This is a cautious approach. Thin and step back to observe the work from all sides of the tree, ensure that the work is done evenly.



We had the opportunity to work on several other examples of the cork pines from the collection. Is a new front on now thinned cork pine. The back side actually made a better front and it will look different from the other examples in the collection. The top has also now been wired down to the blank space at the top right has been filled by the lower branches. Wiring the cork pine is tricky and takes some skilled hands to know what parts can be wired, bent and how far. We watched Kathy apply the wire loosely and used pliers to set in carefully as to

Thinning moves along quickly and begins to reveal the internal branch structure of the tree.



The image above shows some of our needle cutting details. The lower left image illustrates our pulling the majority of needles from a small branch from the top area of the tree. The middle image shows our aggressive cutting back from the bottom region of the tree and the image on the right shows our typical middle of the tree needle selections. You may ask why we cut these off after pulling needles and that is a good question. Kathy Shaner pointed out that there were buds growing strong behind these. We start with a conservative approach and then after a careful examination of the remaining buds, refine the work by removing selected growth. As she says, "You can always take more off, but you cannot put it back on!"

control the tension of the wire on the branches. We must be very careful trying to move the branches that are heavy with cork. It can be done but it is best to seek assistance with the process.

Below is our final version of the #281, cleaned up and ready to back on display. Be sure to come by the garden and check out the new designs on these amazing cork bark pines.



Director's Corner

by Gordon Deeg

Attention

For all docents and other volunteers, we have made it easier for you to gain entrance to the bonsai garden when at the front gate without a key and no opener. A lockbox has been installed next to the gate on the left side. Inside is a key for the outside gate and a key for the docent house. A full set of keys can be found inside the docent house. To obtain the combination to the lockbox, please call one of the following people: Bob Gould, Gordon Deeg, Andrea Burhoe, Jerry Carpenter.

We are assuming that everyone has a cell phone and that you have the contact numbers for the listed names. Most likely other names will be added to this list.

If you are at the garden and need to close and no one is there with a key, you can now call to get the needed instructions.

For security reasons we are not giving out the combination to the lockbox, which is different from the alarm system. Also the lockbox is bolted through the fence to a metal plate. One should not be able to remove the lockbox without tearing the fence apart which should set off the alarm system.

Mammoth FundRaiser 2013

Preparations have already begun for the next Mammoth Fund Raising Event. We're scheduled for Saturday February 23rd and Sunday February 24th 2013. We are soliciting items for benefit drawings, auction, and sale. Bonsai related items can be submitted on consignment for Saturday Auction (70% owner and 30% Garden split) or Sunday Sales (75% owner and 25% Garden split). Material for silent auction can be creative and may not necessarily be bonsai related. This is our annual push to raise operating funds for the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt. All donations are tax deductible as a 501(c) 3 organization. More information about whom to contact is posted at the end of this article.

Bob Gould is our Auction materials coordinator extraordinaire. He and his crew receive, catalog, and store donated items for the Auction. Right on the heels of Thanksgiving, while folks are watching football and eating leftover turkey, Bob, Carl Morimoto, and a dedicated cadre of people spend hours sprucing up and photographing each item so that the auction catalog can be produced. Jerry Carpenter then spends Christmas vacation preparing the BGLM website so you can get your first glimpse of the material.

WE NEED YOUR HELP! Many of the volunteers that make the Mammoth Fund Raiser a success return to help us year after year. These guys are AWESOME and great fun to be around as well! If you haven't participated in this event, please join us. We can use even a couple hours of your time. This coming year we are in dire need of someone to coordinate feeding the volunteers. Kusamura Bonsai Club did a wonderful job of the Mammoth Café last year. Sei Boku Bonsai Kai gave us 4 excellent years before that, and people still rave about the Caesar salads that we had when the Marin Club ran the Cafe. For 2013, I'm hoping that another Bay Area club or pair of clubs will volunteer to take on the task of feeding our Volunteers.

The format for Mammoth Café is flexible. Normally we serve sandwiches, chips, and a drink. The expenses are subsidized by BGLM. To offset the cost of the sandwiches, we have in the past sold amazing chili, soup, salads, cookies, etc. to the bonsai community at large. While it's "nice to have", food sales to the bonsai community are not a required part of taking on the Mammoth Cafe. Another option is to approach local restaurants and grocery stores that are willing to donate goods in return for a mention of their good will. Let me know if your club would be willing to help out. If you are one of the smaller clubs, perhaps you would consider pairing up with another club.

We need volunteers for the following areas.

Saturday Morning Transport Crew - Moving Items from Storage to the Garden Center Building

CONTACT: Bob Gould, Jay MacDonald

Sunday Morning Coffee & Donuts/Bagels/goodies - for the Item Transport crews. These guys arrive before 8am and have done their part by 9:30am. If you or your club would like to provide the gang with morning treats, please let us know. Last year Marin Bonsai was our benefactor. Thank you!

CONTACT: Randi Keppeler

Saturday Bonsai Café – Serve lunch to the Volunteers

****!! WE NEED A COORDINATOR AND CREW !!! ****PLEASE CONTACT: Randi Keppeler

Sunday Morning Coffee & Donuts/Bagels/goodies - Last year Sei Boku Bonsai Kai was our benefactor. Thank you ! CONTACT: Randi Keppeler

Sunday Bonsai Café – provide lunch to the Volunteers

!!! WE NEED A COORDINATOR AND CREW !!! **** PLEASE CONTACT: Randi Keppeler

Sunday Afternoon Transport & Clean Up Crew – moving un-sold items back to storage, cleaning up the Lake Merritt Garden Center building so that we don't get charged a cleaning fee.

CONTACT: Bob Gould, Jay MacDonald

To volunteer or for general questions: 925-776-2342, bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com, Attn: Randi Keppeler or CalShohin@yahoo.com

For Auction donations/consignment: www.gsbf-bonsai.org/lake-merritt Click on the links on first page.

Or, contact Bob Gould 925-935-1914 or rgould1003@sbcglobal.com

For Plant donations/consignment: www.gsbf-bonsai.org/lake-merritt Click MMF

Or, contact Mike Mello, cell 510-825-4162; Dennis Hawkins, IDHawk@comcast.net

The Adelgid Saga

What is that white fuzzy stuff on the buds and bottom of the needles of your pines?

It is actually a woolly adelgid, a small wingless insect that infests and kills pines, firs, and spruce. They are an invasive species introduced to the US around 1900.

They feed on the trunks of trees by sucking the sap from phloem tissues and can be particularly problematic for small nursery stock and potted bonsai.

We usually see the woolly masses at the base of soft pine tissue which are actually eggs. They later develop wings and spread.

Use dormant oil sprays for killing the winter adults. Spray the tree with strong water spray, away from other trees to break up to egg masses. Use a diluted mixture of Hydrogen Peroxide and water to spray of the needles and into the fuzzy egg masses.



Observations: Notes from the BGLM

Some observers at the garden have noticed some interesting new developments and asked questions about why we were doing things at certain times of the year.

Defoliation in August?

One such example arose with the sudden change in one of our favorite maple groves. In the heat of August our large maple grove was showing considerable weakness due to heat and sun exposure. The exterior leaves were removed (defoliated) on purpose to allow more light to the interior branches of the trees. One particular tree in the grove looks weak from disease. There were too many heavy leaves covering the smaller trees and weakening them. The defoliation was done so that only a very small leaf stem remained. This would trigger the tree to begin leaf development again soon. The new leaves will have excellent small leaves and will bring new life back into the tree rather than allowing it to hold on to burnt and non-functioning leaves. When defoliating so late in the year be sure to keep the tree in a mostly shaded space until it recovers. This is yet another example of knowing that you have a long enough growing season remaining to attempt late season defoliation. In Oakland in Sept and October you can still get good growth with moderate temperatures before the winter months begin.

Grapes

We hope everyone had a chance to see the grapes ripen at the garden this summer. We had a bumper crop this year. As they ripened and turned to dark red and purple our visitors just could not get enough of them.



"Visitors have some of the best questions, but hard to answer"

Display Stands

Did you know that you can help raise funds to build and dedicate a stand in the memory of a member of our bonsai community?

There is an effort to dedicate and build a stand in the memory of Ruben Guzman. Currently there is \$1325. A stand dedication costs \$2,500 and we are on our way at meeting that goal. There are other stand dedications efforts underway. If you are interested in donating to the Ruben Guzman stand effort please

contact Andrea Burhoe at the BGLM or send a check to our us and not on it that it should be earmarked for a particular display stand effort.

Curators Fund

During the year we remind our volunteers and friends of our curator Kathy Shaner that we have a fundraising effort to reward her for dedication and effort in our Garden. Kathy works tirelessly training our garden volunteers, working on the trees, promoting the garden and giving us direction.

We wanted to take this opportunity to remind the visitors to the garden that we are trying to meet our by the end of the year. Please help us support our excellent curator by giving a gift to BGLM with an earmark of "Curator's Fund" so that we give her a small token of our appreciation for all the work she does for us.

We are working on some fundraising charts that will come out in our next newsletter to better show you where we stand in our efforts.



Meet Randi Keppeler

Six years ago, Randi Keppeler looked at three bonsai trees given to her by a dear friend and realized they would soon be kindling if they didn't get proper care. She knew Gordon Deeg from a Scottish performance group called Red Thistle, so asked him for help. He rescued the trees and steered her into Sei Boku Bonsai Kai where she soon became an active member. She is currently the treasurer of Sei Boku and built its web site (with an assist from Jerry Carpenter and Catherine Iwaki). She's also a member of Electric Termites, Bay Area Shohin and BABA.

Randi began serving as a docent at the BGLM in 2008 and makes time now to come one Sunday each month. She loves meeting new people, answering their questions about bonsai and seeing their inner artist perk up. She remembers keeping the doors open late when a group of people showed up five minutes before closing time—and the over-head sprinkler system came on while they were there.

Randi praised all the docents who volunteer each month and especially those who come weekly. She encouraged others to consider acting as docents and said (and I couldn't put it better) even one extra day covered per club per year makes a huge difference.

Randi also serves as the Registrar for the biennial California Shohin Seminar in Santa Nella. Last year she was particularly impressed to witness Kathy Shaner, Bill Valavanis and Dave DeGroot all donating their time to refine the tree placement, combinations of trees and overall presentation of the trees in the exhibit. We shouldn't take their service for granted.

When asked her favorite trees, Randi said: azaleas, asian pear, redwoods, hornbeams, sawara cypress

Meet Randi Keppeler (cont.)

She successfully bid on a large juniper at the Mammoth Auction last February and needed the aid of other bonsai enthusiasts to transport and store it until a workshop with Ryan Neil. After the workshop, she had assistance loading the tree back into her car, but had no one to help unloading it in the pouring rain at home. She laboriously crab-walked it to her deck but may consider smaller trees from now on.

Randi has been the coordinator for the Mammoth Fund Raiser the past two years. She wants you to know that she hopes there is a club in Northern California that is willing to take on the job of running the Mammoth Café in 2013. Kusamura catered last year and Sei Boku did the job several years before that. She hopes that each of the Bay Area Bonsai Clubs will take on the task on a yearly rotation. Randi adds: "the



Special Events at the Garden

by Gordon Deeg

Two special events have been planned for September and October by the City of Oakland. The first, which occurred on Sunday September 16th, was sponsored by Oakland Parks and Recreation and was part of the Sundays in the Redwood Series, a concert series normally held at the Woodminster Amphitheatre in Joaquin Miller Park. The concert held for the first time at the Gardens at Lake Merritt is starting off the concert series. The rest of the concerts will be at Woodminster.

This concert highlighted Michael Morgan and The Oakland East Bay Symphony Chamber Orchestra. Opening the show was the Oakland Jazz Choir. For this event the Gardens were closed at noon and a \$10 fee charged for entry. Bob Gould, Kathy Shaner, and Gordon Deeg opened the Bonsai Garden and acted as docents as the concert attendees enjoyed walking around the gardens while listening to the music. The weather was perfect.

To get ready for the concert, volunteers worked on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. We cleaned and oiled pots, pulled weeds, cleaned the paths, and generally gave the place a thorough going over. The three Tokonomas were cleaned and repaired, finishing the work started by Jeff Clarkson and John Nackley. Three trees were put into the spaces with accents. They were the hit of the day.

During the concert about 75 guests visited us. Two even filled out forms for volunteering. If this event is staged next year I will encourage everybody to attend. The concert was well worth the \$10 entrance fee.

In October another special event is to take place. On Saturday the 13th from about 6PM to 10PM there is to be a light show where most of the gardens are going to be lit up with different kinds of lighting. Various artist groups are providing the lighting. People will pay to attend and view the various lighting. High scale food trucks will provide meals for a charge. Wine to purchase will also be available.

Details are being worked out by the Friends of the Garden at Lake Merritt. The bonsai garden has been asked to do their own lighting. Jeff Clarkson and Gordon Deeg are spearheading this project. We are still in the planning stages and are willing to entertain ideas and help.

About Our Organization



GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt

Located near the boathouse and Garden Center on Bellevue Ave at Lake Merritt, Oakland, California

Phone

Phone: 510.763.8409

E-mail

bonsailakemerritt@gmail.com

The GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt is the home to some of the finest bonsai in Northern California. BGLM is the only public bonsai garden staffed and maintained by volunteers and is supported entirely by donations.

This permanent collection assures that these precious trees by outstanding masters and collectors will be preserved for everyone's enjoyment. The display is changed regularly, so visit several times a year. Curator Kathy Shaner is

certified by the Professional Bonsai Grower's Association a branch of The Nippon Bonsai Kyokai. She is the only female certified by the association and the only non-Japanese citizen (until three years ago) to receive this certificate. She held that distinction for 15 years.

*Golden State Bonsai Federation
Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt
P.O. Box 16176
Oakland, CA 94610-6176*



We're on the Web!

See us at: www.gsbfbonsai.org/lake-merritt/
and on **Facebook**