



# The Collection Connection

Quarterly Newsletter

Volume VIII, Issue 2

May 2010

## Features

- Repotting the Mas Pine
- Mammoth Fundraiser Wrap Up
- Donors for 2010 Quarter
- Construction at the Garden
- Docent of the Month

## Calendar of Events

- May 23 -4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Beginner's Workshop
- May 8 -Tool Sharpening with Lonnie
- June 6 - Oakland Parks and Rec Lakeside Garden's Open House
- June 27 -4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Beginner's Workshop
- July 26 -4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Beginner's Workshop

## Garden Factoids

Kusamura Bonsai Club recently celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and was happy that so many legacy trees have found homes at the BGLM over the years. This year KBC is sponsoring the Refvem Raft, #178, the Mugho Pine(Tosh Saburomaro), #213, and the Tosh Oak, #132 as part of the Sponsorship Program. For the show 5 legacy trees were transported by Gordon Deeg and made a great contribution to the show.



The "Tosh Oak" as the formal tokonoma display at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Show.

<http://www.gsbf-bonsai.org/lake-merritt/>

## Repotting the Mas Imazumi Japanese Black Pine

By Jerry Carpenter



The Mas Pine: #262 (*Pinus thunbergiana*)— Informal Upright style. Donated by Mas Imazumi. Redwood Empire Bonsai Society now sponsors this tree. Known as "Pacific King" and sometimes referred to as the 'Mas Pine', first appeared in the U.S.A. as part of a bonsai exhibit at the 1915 Pan-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. The donor estimated its age as over 400 years. Not e the unique turtle-back that adds to this tree's magnificence.

On Feb 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010 Kathy Shaner and a team of Garden volunteers began the work of repotting the Mas Pine. Kirk Demerest, Aaron Packard, Gordon Deeg, and others chose to work on the tree. The group effort was greatly appreciated as the process would take three days to complete due to the amount of work and care required to give the tree a new growing condition for the next few years.



This tree is has a large canopy of needles and a heavy wide buttress and is very heavy. The size added to the complexity of the process but more importantly the bark of the tree could not be touched due to its fragile nature. This meant that the team could hold the tree only by the newer branches where the bark was stronger or by deadwood areas.

All retaining wires were cut and removed as best could be done. The pot had a slight inside edge and required a team to cut along the inside of the pot as

## GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt

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*Gordon Deeg, the auctioneer and Jay McDonald offers this cedar for sale at the Mammoth Fundraiser held at the end of February in the Garden Center.*

deep as possible to free the tree. Even after spending almost an hour cutting along the edge by team members, Kathy and Gordon interceded to do it again and lay the tree on its side to extract the large heavy pot. Extra care had to taken in the freeing process as not to cut a large heavy root that came very close to the edge of **the pot. The pot size was 22"x17" x5.5" and was extremely heavy. With the aid of** some very heavy tools the tree finally came free of the pot.

The previous documented repotting of the Mas Pine was in 2006 by Yasuo Mitsuya and Kathy Shaner. At that time only a third of the root area was worked hard. At that time they found a great deal of old original dirt and many heavy roots and had concentrated on the center area of the roots. Since that repotting the tree has become more healthy. Then in September 2009 Mitsuya worked with a team of garden volunteers to reduce the needles and thin the canopy so that it would have more strength for the repotting.



Observation of the root ball this time showed a large amount of mottled compressed roots on the bottom. Good root growth this time indicated that the tree had repaired itself well from its early issues found in 2006.

Kathy illustrates that the soil must be removed from the bottom area first and that good clean cuts must be made on the roots. The root base was **then squared off and about 2"** of soil and root was removed from around the sides. The

team was instructed to work close to the roots and to be careful removing the dirt; do not push into the root area and clear out crevices without damaging the roots.

The plan of root work was multifaceted; roots on the left side of the pine would be cut very clean in straight lines following the direction of the root to encourage root development. Since there was evidence that the tree has not been repotted very often over a hundred years, much work will need to be planned for each of the next



few repotting periods. Cutting any major root could be dangerous because it may be the one root that moves around the entire tree. There was a great deal of root wrap and root throttling going on so that root work had to be done very slowly. One of the major roots showed some chisel work done by Mitsuya and this root would be worked some more to help develop fine root growth but a decision would

be made later; if there were fine roots father up the main root that could support the growth then a major root could be removed. That large root was then carefully pried back to inspect behind it we found excellent root development. After careful inspection the root was actually found dead and removed.

Roots continued to be inspected looking for a live cambium layer. If a root is seen to have just bark and hardwood then the root is dead and can be removed. Some live roots were cut and sliced with a very sharp knife to make a clean cut. This slice reduced the heaviness of a particular root and would further stimulate new fine root development. Underground, much dead material and stones were removed to allow new root growth.

(article continued on page 6 )

# Director's Corner: Gordon Deeg

Spring is here and the Garden has never looked better. This is a tribute to our Curator Kathy Shaner and her band of bonsai tree craft persons, who repotted and styled over 60 of our bonsai trees this winter/spring. They cut, chopped, sawed, chipped, hacked, slashed, sliced, diced, cut down, cut back and gnawed at the roots of trees that had not had this done for many years (or ever). A 'great job' by everyone and a 'thank you' from all who visit the garden.



The Mammoth Fund Raiser was a magnificent success this year. Under Linda Soliven's guidance and management, and in a time of economic stress, we were able to net approximately \$28,000 on the event. A great job was done by all who helped out, resulting in a wonderful, fun time by everybody who attended. This is our main fundraising event of the year, and as such, determines what improvements and repairs can be made at the garden. The Board of Directors will use this money in a judicious manner. Linda has decided that running the Mammoth Fund Raiser needs a new director and Randi Keppeler will be taking over this event. I am sure Randi will follow along the same path as Linda and do an outstanding job. I hope everybody will thank Linda for her efforts of the past several years and welcome Randi to this very important task.

A couple of projects that have been in the works for several years have been completed and another is in the middle of construction. A new drain has been installed near the three tokonomas. Hopefully, this will take care of the mud puddle that seemed to be a permanent part of the walkway in that area. A big thank you goes to Allen Hightower for making this project happen. Also seven new bonsai stands have been installed near the front gate, allowing us to display more trees from our wonderful collection. As this newsletter is being published, the path along the north fence is being redirected and some large boulders installed as part of the design structure. This major project has been in the works for several years and is being done by Bill Castellon. Bill is one of the few Landscape Contractors in the United States that moves large boulders by hand, using a tripod. Also, as part of this project, the paths are going to get a new layer of decomposed granite (called Golden Path Fines) installed.

As part of our exposure to the public and as a service to bonsai groups in the area we can provide bonsai trees for display at shows. Recently the BGLM provided one bonsai tree to the Santa Cruz Bonsai Club for their show, five trees to Kusamura (all are part of the Kusamura heritage), and 5 trees to the San Francisco Cherry Blossom Festival. In each case the trees were well received. The BGLM will provide appropriate bonsai trees to be displayed at club shows in the future if requested. Please contact one of the members of the board of directors to make arrangements and the trees must be carefully moved and handled.

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# Volunteers Make 2010 Mammoth Fundraiser a Success!

by Linda Soliven

It is with deep appreciation that the following Committee Chairs (indicated in the list in bold\*) are recognized for months of devoted time and work in planning, preparing and executing their responsibilities and those committee volunteers who supported many hours during two intense days on February 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. The **two days "hummed" by with camaraderie and cooperation.** What a great Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt supportive family!

Thank you all, Linda Soliven, Mammoth Fundraiser Chair.

Sachiko	Aioyma	Lucky	Fung*	Mike	Mello*
Charlie	Anderson	Rick	Garcia	Dick	Merabel
Jeanette	Arnold	Bob	Gould*	Dennis	Miu
Ken	Azuma	Polly	Gould	Yuki	Nara
Pam	Blanton	Ruben	Guzman	Bet	Neary
Jim	Blanton	Michael	Haley*	Janet	Nelson*
Debra	Bleemer	Alex	Hatch	Aaron	Newton
John	Boyce	Dennis	Hawkins*	Chuck	Nold
Bob	Brown	Jim	Heady	Frances	Noles
Andrea	Burhoe	Joan	Heady	Ann	Norton
Pat	Cahill	Al	Hightower	Hugh	Nyguen
Jerry	Carpenter*	Brandon	Iwaki	Carl	Osterholm
Bill	Castellon	Steve	Iwaki	Richard	Otsugi
Steve	Chang	Randi	Keppeler*	Karen	Paulos
Alex	Clarke	Candace	Key	Richard	Paulos
Tom	Colby	Emma	Kong	Richard	Picchi
Peggy	Coy	Tim	Kong	Mark	Rhine
Gordon	Deeg	Lawrence	LeClaire	Warner	Ritter
Kirk	Demerest	Randall	Lee	John	Rohl
John	Edwards	Grace	Li	Chris	Ross
Donna	Farmer	Lonnie	McCormick	Maria	Ross
Grant	Foerster	Greg	McDonald	Harry	Sato
Jean	Fujimoto	Jay	McDonald	Joanne	Sato
		Don	Meeker		
Brian	Schindler	Bob	Shimon*	Craig	Thompson
Kathy	Shaner*	Penny	Small	Linda	Venton
Della	Shiba	Janet	Smith	Inga	Woefl
Seiji	Shiba*	Marcia	Summers		
Emily	Shibata	Phyllis	Swanson		

*As always we try not to miss anyone; please know that we treasure all our volunteers and beg your pardon if any names are not mentioned in the list above. You have our heartfelt thanks and appreciation.*



## Bonsai Tips from the Garden

One day this Spring as docents were touring the Garden we noticed one of the junipers had begun to change color and show signs of distress. The particular tree had recently been unwired and a few branches were changing color and dying. After careful examination we discovered that the thin bark had been broken on the branch during the unwiring process. This is a reminder that removing wire without cutting along fine branches should be carefully done. We often want to make it faster and cut the wire along the branch; this should be avoided. Holding the branch carefully and uncurling the wire using hands or pliers is a much safer means of wire removal. Just be sure not to damage the thin fragile bark and the process is done. By breaking the bark the branch was killed causing the change in color.

# Featured Docent: Janice Dilbeck

By Kay Hardy

Janice Dilbeck became interested in bonsai while visiting her sister in Mobile, Alabama, about 12 years ago, shortly after her sister had started working with bonsai. When she came home she tried making a few bonsai on her own. In late summer, her sister came to Hayward and they found Johnny Uchida's Grove Way Bonsai Nursery. Johnny told her about his class at San Lorenzo Adult School where she joined and quickly got hooked. Janice repeated his class and joined Yamato Bonsai Club. She has been a member of Shikashima and BASA and served as an officer in all three clubs. She is now a member of EBBS, BABA, Sei Boku Bonsai Kai, REBS and Shohin.



Janice worked 42 hours as a docent at the Bonsai Garden in 2000 (Al Hightower, who was president of Yamato, encouraged members to docent at all levels of experience). Janice remembers, as a beginner, being exposed to the masterpieces in the garden was very inspirational. She found it fun to share information about bonsai and the trees with our many guests.

Janice took six years off for her daytime job before coming back in 2007 to docent at least twice a month. She's been a regular since then and has also spent many non-docent hours working under the direction of Kathy Shaner, mostly on junipers but other trees as well. Janice says: "Being at the garden, I get to work with a lot of talented bonsai artists in the Bay Area and around the country. I've also had the opportunity to work with Mitsuya when he's been at the garden. The learning opportunities are amazing!"

Janice is now an assistant curator at the garden, taking care of the California and Sierra junipers. She receives guidance from Kathy and is supported by many other volunteers including some "foster parents." Bonsai "foster parents" are those volunteers who have taken responsibility for the maintenance of a particular tree in the garden. These volunteers receive detailed guidance and support from Kathy and her assistants. Janice adds: "I love watching the trees go through the changing seasons at the garden. There's nothing like it. My favorite time of year is early spring. I love seeing new life pushing on all the trees I enjoy watching the early bloomers while some of the deciduous trees are still in silhouette.

"Almost every time I docent, someone comes into the garden who lives within walking distance but had no idea the garden existed. These people are always thrilled with the garden and promise to come back! I enjoy when children get enthusiastic about the trees. Some don't stay excited for long, until we tell them about the pollywogs and frogs. Some children enjoy seeing shapes in the deadwood and stones. One little girl thought one of the junipers looked like a giant snail."

A few children have come to work in the garden under Janice's supervision. They help with general garden clean-up and maintaining the collected junipers. They've also been lucky to have lessons (and water fights) with Kathy when she's been at the garden.

## Donors for 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2010

By Andrea Burhoe

We want to thank the following individuals and organizations for their continued support of the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt. We treasure all your contributions which enable us to provide such a beautiful garden to the public. Your generous donations of funds, in-kind gifts, and service are greatly appreciated.

Up to \$100	\$100-250	\$250 and Greater
Cullen, Michael W. Heggie, Beatrice M Kinoshita, Katsumi & Atsuko Anonymous Public Donations Noles, Frances DeGroot, David J. Shimon, Robert Brown, Robert & Susan N. Dilbeck, Janice L.	Anonymous Public Donations Swanson, Phyllis S. Marin Bonsai Club	Kusamura Bonsai Club Feetham, Laurie Refvem, Janet

# Repotting the Mas Imazumi Japanese Black Pine (continued)



After the general cleaning of the bottom and edges the team began working on the nebari of the pine. Kathy Shaner suspected there were great roots of the nebari just below the surface of the soil that had been buried for a very long time. Exploration began by Kathy instructing the team on how to remove the old original soils from the nebari without damaging the roots using dental picks, small metal picks with little scoops on one end and sharp pick on the other, as well as sharpened chop sticks. This was the beginning of many hours of team work by shifts of team members who worked into the night carefully picking away at old punky smelling dirt around the base of the tree. Aaron, Kirk, Jerry and Kathy did the painstaking duty. Our goal was two-fold; uncover these beautiful roots and find new drainage in the area from the top down through the root mass. Periodically there would be a breakthrough wherein we could get our tool all the way through and

there was much rejoicing. At the end of the first day the tree root ball was layered with towels and watered down to keep the roots safe overnight.

The following day the work continued to reveal an exciting nebari with many new canyons and hole for the water to travel through the root ball. These new water drainage areas would provide space for new healthy root growth and help to ensure there was no rot occurring in those areas. In other words, the tree will be able to breathe much better. More root work was done on the bottom of the root ball as well and so ends the second day. However; at the end of the second day a frantic search went out to find the correct pot for the tree. The original pot was determined to be too small and heavy not allowing for the roots to grow sufficiently and just too heavy looking for the new found nebari and the tree in general. Finding a pot for an old growth tree that is right for it was not an easy challenge as many people who have this type of pot were called upon with no luck finding one the correct size. A tree of this quality cannot go into just any inexpensive large pot either; color, depth and shape were carefully considered. A pot without an inside lip was a must so that removal of the root ball in a few years will be easier and faster.



Day three brings us a new pot. Kathy Shaner located the perfect pot to house the tree for the next few years. The pot was measured and documented for the record and then perfectly leveled on a stand to begin tree placement. It is important to ensure the pot is perfectly level when placing a tree. Its position will have to remain for a few years so it had better be done carefully and perfectly to present the tree in the best way possible.



Again, the night before the tree soil had been covered in towels and watered heavily to keep the roots wet. At this point it is essential to make the point that the roots of any tree being repotted should not be allowed to dry out. A spray bottle of water with HB101 was always at the ready for spot spraying. If the tree

were to be left unattended for any amount of time it was covered with wet towels.

The pot was then wired and prepared to receive the tree. Once balanced and leveled the tree was carefully moved and seated inside the pot to check the size. As always it is not perfect the first time and more material had to be removed from the side and the bottom. More detailed root work continued. We learned that every time we were ready to say it was **done; well, it wasn't and more study always revealed more that should be done for the health of the tree.**



Work continued and we really began exploiting those



new drainage areas through the root ball. A chop stick inserted from the top would show through the bottom and presented a place to be widened some more. Careful root trimming was done to



allow greater and greater drainage areas through the root ball. This work proceeded through the late afternoon. Fine root work at the nebari continued as well. Hours later as darkness began to fall on the third day Kathy continues to refine the detailed work on the newly exposed roots. Look carefully in the photo to the right at the dark black roots of the nebari that have been carefully excavated from

the soil and you can see the "new tree" that was revealed. Tireless work was required to do this level of detail but on a tree this old, this important, and one that will not be touched for several years to come, the time had to be found.



In the cover of darkness then and the work done to the best we can do, the tree was moved into its new pot again. The root ball had been reduced by nearly half its original mass. Soil preparation contained the standard Akadama mixes and was amended with charcoal, bone meal, and a secret ingredient of "Down To Earth" Root Enhancer that contains mycorrhiza.



Kathy, Gordon, and Kirk placed the tree for the final time. The tree is sitting much higher in the pot now so that it can develop new fine roots. Once the tree was

set into the pot it was moved or slid from front to back and Kathy said you can just hear that the tree is solid in the soil as it did not shift much and did not make any noise. Careful new soil working was done to ensure that there were no air pockets in the roots. This process of pouring a little new soil and chop stick work continued for over an hour. Fine soil was worked into areas near the nebari and in the drainage areas that had been created. A rubber hammer was used to ensure the soil would settle well in the pot.



The final tree reveals a view of the Mas Pine that has not been seen in a very long time. The image in the upper right is the final shot of the tree before it was moved to its stand. Notice the nebari floating on top of the soil. The base of the trunk now appears supported instead of being buried in the ground. The tree also stand a bit more upright in its new position and is elegant shown in the lighter colored, wider, and shorter pot.

Be sure to come by and see the Mas Pine in all its glory. Now in May there are great signs of flourishing growth with new candles and bright green needle growth. If you have seen the tree before; you will see again for the first time.

## Sights from the Mammoth Fundraiser 2010



*The doors open and in rush the shoppers looking for the best material and tools. This event promises a great selection year after year.*



*Demonstration team of Gregg and Jay McDonald work on wiring a black pine.*



*From bonsai, wire and jewelry by offered by Stephanie North there is something for everyone.*



*Sunday demonstrations featured several groups working on trees with Kathy. Here John Edwards listens as Kathy Shaner points out solutions for the bulb at the bottom of the trunk. Possible solutions included carefully carving some of the material away.*



*The volunteer team: Donna Norton, Linda Venton, Debra Bleemer, Jeanette Arnold, Candance Key, Donna Farmar, Lucky Fung, and Andrea Burhoe*



*Lone Pine always a crowd pleaser offers an excellent selection of new material.*



*One can never have enough tools!*

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**Big Changes:** At press time, big changes were occurring at BGLM. The north end of the path is being redesigned and walled with new large boulders by Bill Castellon and his crew.

