

# The Collection-Connection

A newsletter from the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt

Quarterly Newsletter

Volume IX, Issue 1 April 2011

## Of Special Interest

Mammoth Fundraiser Wrap Up  
Education at the Garden  
Changes at the Garden

## Calendar of Events

### Mitsuya at the Garden:

Be sure to check the website for the class schedule and details for the 6 days of events, workshops, and seminars at the Garden.

Dates are:

April 29, 30–May 1

May 6–8

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## Mammoth Fundraiser 2011

by Randi Keppeler

Anyone watching Oakland, California from overhead would have seen the recent completion of an amazing annual cycle.

This year in particular it was a true spectacle of collaboration, human generosity, and the serendipity of nature. I sometimes wonder if space aliens look at us in the same way we look at ant colonies. Do they wonder what we are doing?

In late spring 2010, donated bonsai materials are taken to the BGLM reserve area. There seem to be a tiny number of special care givers who spot check the area frequently and nurture the plants.

Those care givers meet with larger groups of people. This behavior happens more frequently as summer progresses into fall.

Emissaries carry messages to even larger

groups of people farther away. Then, suddenly, in the depths of winter is a rapid convergence of people at the Garden. The large group splits into work teams. One team brings the plants from the BGLM reserve, another group grooms the plants, a final small group catalogs each item and takes pictures. Then the bonsai material is carefully returned to the plant reserve area and everyone goes away.

## *"You get the picture ... This is a lot of work"*

The special care givers continue their periodic nurturing until just as winter is turning into spring. And then on Sunday with the Plant Sales, Vendor Sales, with energy kept high by the Garden Café's famous Chili, Caesar Salad, and Mammoth Cookies.

You get the picture now. This is a lot of work. The miracle is performed by a group of volunteers who have supported the Mammoth Fundraiser for so many years that the

event seems to move like clockwork. It only runs smoothly because the people who give us their time are a wonderful team, all focused on the goal of keeping the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt financially healthy. If you run into one of the people listed below, please stop and say 'Thank You' because they make the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt the treasure that it is.

After all the bonsai material has found new

homes and the salesmen have gathered up their wares, a small tired team loads up the trucks to take supplies back to the Garden storage areas.

Very late on Sunday afternoon, they put away the tables and chairs and they sweep and scrub so that we don't have to pay the City of Oakland for a cleaning crew.

Once everyone goes away, the silence of exhaustion settles for a





*Inside the Mammoth Fundraiser on Saturday afternoon, the auction was packed with visitors.*

## BREAKING NEWS!

**Yasuo Mitsuya Back in the Garden!**  
**April 29, 30–May 1 and May 6–8, 2011**

**May 7<sup>th</sup>**  
 Special evening commemorative event called "With Gratitude"

## Mammoth Fundraiser—Applause!

bit ... the special care givers appear periodically to continue their nurturing... and then it starts again. Please, join us for 2012! The more hands we have, the lighter the load.

|          |           |          |           |
|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Sachio   | Aioyama   | Rick     | Garcia    |
| Donald   | Anderson  | Bob      | Gould     |
| Jeanette | Arnold    | Polly    | Gould     |
| Ken      | Azuma     | June     | Graham    |
| Dave     | Bautista  | Kathleen | Haley     |
| Jim      | Blanton   | Michael  | Haley     |
| Debra    | Bleemer   | Kay      | Hardy     |
| John     | Boyce     | Alex     | Hatch     |
|          |           | Dennis   | Hawkins   |
| Andrea   | Burhoe    | Allen    | Hightower |
| Jerry    | Carpenter | Steven   | Huffman   |
| Bill     | Castelon  | Steve    | Iwaki     |
| Alex     | Clark     | Candice  | Key       |
| Tom      | Colby     | Emma     | Kong      |
| Kevin    | Corrigan  | Tim      | Kong      |
| Zenny    | Cruz      | Jay      | MacDonald |
| Carolyn  | Davis     | Lonnie   | McCormick |
| Gordon   | Deeg      | John     | Mekesich  |
| Kirk     | Demarest  | Marsha   | Mekesich  |
| Janice   | Dilbeck   | Michael  | Mello     |
| Jeremy   | Dilbeck   | Ricardo  | Mirabel   |
| John     | Doig      | Dennis   | Miu       |
| John     | Edwards   | Carl     | Morimoto  |
| Donna    | Farmer    | John     | Nackley   |
|          |           | Jaime    |           |

My apologies for missing some of the volunteers!

I should point out that although I wear the title of overall coordinator, the Fundraiser would fall apart if not for the hard work of Bob Gould and his crew chieftains: Seiji Shiba, Jay MacDonald, Carl Morimoto, Gordon Deeg, Kathleen Haley, Mike Mello, Dennis Hawkins, and Bob Shimon.

Thanks also go out to Kay Hardy who coordinates the Docents for the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt. While the fundraiser was going on in the Garden Center, the docents fielded questions from 126 guests on Saturday and **242 guests** on Sunday!! And last but not least, our own Kathy Shaner and her crew of Experts: John Boyce, Janice Dilbeck, and Linda Soliven. Thank you all.

Oh Yeah! the "Serendipity of Nature" part? Although the weather report called for serious rain, this time we got beautiful, sunny weather! Both Days!

## Education Comes in Many Forms

by Jerry Carpenter

Education around the Garden comes in many forms. When Kathy Shaner is around we must be prepared to learn with every medium we can. This Spring Kathy spent time working with beginners, we intermediate students, and many of the elder statespersons in the art. We walked around in the woods outside the Garden, we studied trees down to the bark level, and we wired and pruned and learned how to make those important bud choices with maples, pines, and fruit trees.

Andrea Burhoe has been working with Kathy to remodel the Monterey Cypress. Key to the remodel is branch selection and creating various Jins. We are learning to not just round a limb and remove bark but to actually provide the naturalist approach to pull the bark a bit further under the branch to add a more natural look. After the bark is removed a fine-grain sandpaper is used to ensure all the cambium is removed and no tool marks are left on the wood.



Kathy inspires new students in the art. She is a patient teacher who spends the time required to teach things like early spring bud selection in this trident maple. She explains about the barking, removal of shedding bark, and selecting buds where energy will be sent on the tree. Too often we cut new growth but should actually be removing buds from congested points on the branches so that the energy can go in the direction we desire, otherwise the tree will just push all the buds on a node and create a thick area we do not find attractive.

*Observation, hands-on work, listen, draw, look and see nature around you. We look at the trees in the forest to teach about how our trees should look.*

We were able to watch John Boyce work magic on wiring a pomegranate that was added to the collection.

John used paper from a thin temporary window shade cut into strips to wrap the copper wire before it was placed on the tree. The paper helps protect the bark from injury during the wiring. Once the tree was completely wired, he worked with Kathy to set the branches. They used a bamboo stick instead of an iron rod to help bend and shape a branch and even added a tie-down wire to help

hold everything in its place. Seen in the photo to the right is the final tree before it went out on display. The white wire is a constant visitor attraction; they want to know why the fruit trees are wrapped in paper. Well, we explain that it is to protect the bark and that it will eventually just fall off the wire over time and weather exposure. It actually helps prevent the copper wire from staining the bark. We use copper wire on our trees because it holds so much better than aluminum wire. So the copper wire is wrapped to keep the bark clean. It is interesting to see it now as leaves and blossoms have developed.



*The pomegranate had not been styled like this before. The bamboo will help brace and set the branch into position much like a rebar would do but with less weight and smaller in size.*



Takahashi tree display

**GSBF-BGLM:**

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Director

**Kathy Shaner**

Curator

**Bob Gould**

Maintenance

**Andrea Burhoe**

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**Randi Keppeler**

Mammoth Fundraiser Event

**Kay Hardy**

Docent

**Linda Soliven**

Education

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**Bill Hashimoto**

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**Seiji Shiba**

Past Director

**Kora Dalager**

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Volunteer Coordinator – Open

Historian - Open

**Abe Far**

GSBF Liaison

**Directors Emeritus**

Walter Brainerd, Warren Clark,

Bill Hashimoto, John Planting,

Ray Thieme

## Honors and Passing

**Frank Y. Takahashi**

passed away at home on Aug. 15, 2010 in Napa. Frank was born on Dec. 28, 1918, in Ocean Park, Calif.

Frank graduated from UCLA in 1940, earning a degree in finance. He was recruited by the Okura Import and Export Company in New York, where he worked as an accountant until drafted into the U.S. Army. Frank served in the Army Signal Corps and worked as a photographer for the Press Corps for two years. He was discharged in 1942 and interned at Manzanar Relocation Camp, where he taught accounting. After the war, Frank moved to Chicago, Ill., and earned a master's degree in accounting from Northwestern University. He met Hannah Okamoto at a church function and

the two were married on June 12, 1948. After becoming a CPA, Frank founded the successful accounting firm, Gale, Takahashi and Channon in 1951. The company grew to become one of the larger accounting firms in Chicago. Before his retirement, Frank merged the firm with Ernst and Young.

Frank and Hannah moved to Napa in the fall of 1983, where they lived for 27 years and pursued their various passions and hobbies. Frank became a gentleman farmer, overseeing his acres of vineyards. He also enjoyed spending time cultivating his many bonsai trees, golfing, working in his garden, and fishing at every opportunity. Frank was also able to spend precious time with his children and grandchildren at their Napa home and vineyards.

Frank was actively involved in the Napa Valley Symphony as treasurer, and was also a member of the Napa Valley Bonsai Club, the SIRS 136 Chapter, and the Napa Valley Tomodachi Club.

There are several trees in the Garden which will be rotated in his honor.



*They leave behind a legacy of trees and have shared their love of bonsai with so many.*

**James B. Ransohoff, Jr.**

93, passed away peacefully at his home in Atherton on March 19, 2011. A native San Franciscan, he graduated from Stanford where he was a swimmer and head yell leader. He served in the army in the Pacific during WWII and was among the first Americans to enter Japan after its surrender. Upon his return, he worked at and eventually ran the famed Ransohoff's store on Post St., which had been founded by his grandfather. He was one of the founders of the San Francisco Guardsmen.

After selling Ransohoff's, he had a very successful second career as a landscape architect. A master of the art of bonsai, he was a founder of the **Bonsai Clubs International**. He was the elder statesman of the Kusamura Bonsai Club of Palo Alto having been a member for much of the club's 50 years of existence. He was a Director Emeritus of the BGLM.

A private family gathering will be held at Bear Valley on his birthday. Contributions in his memory may be made to Pathways Hospice Foundation in Sunnyvale or

to Stanford University.

Jim has left us some great trees that are have been at the Garden for many years. Thanks to his efforts in designing the BGLM and contributing so much for the art of bonsai.





## Docent of the Month: Meet Jerry Brown

by Kay Hardy



If you come by the Garden on the fourth Wednesday any month you will be greeted by a man who has driven 50 miles from Napa (75 minutes on a good day) to docent. Jerry Brown

has been helping us out for the last seven years on a regular basis. He says: “for one day a month the garden belongs to me; I own it all.”

He became seriously interested in bonsai in 1999 when he learned of the existence of the Napa Club at the Napa Home and Garden Show. Prior to that he’d had a latent interest for 30 years and had killed the usual number of trees. Jerry claims that he just killed more trees during his first year with the Napa Club, but has been enjoying living bonsai since 2000. His year-round favorite is a dwarf Blue Alberta Spruce, but he particularly likes the silhouette of a contorted filbert in the winter. He’s been an active member of the Napa Club, serving as president for several years and also as a Board member.

Jerry loves to hike; most of his vacations are spent in the Sierra, on the lookout for natural bonsai. He hastens to add that he does not dig them up, just appreciates them. He and his wife have a bonsai tree and accent plant on the table each evening at dinner time and include the plants in the dinner conversation. However, one of his house cats loves to “trim” his trees, so they go back outside after the meal.

## Seasonal Pine Cleanup Tips

by Andrea Burhoe

Spring cleanup work has begun on pines. This includes removing all those little pollen sacs: light brown on the black pine and purple clusters on white pine. They drain energy from the growth of the tree, look messy and create lots of sneezing.

Get rid of them! We have been busily going around the Garden removing pollen sacs from all the pines. It takes time and patience, but the fresh look and health of the tree are well worth the effort. Continue also to clean up any remaining old needles.

If you are seeing extremely long candles developing, you can top them to stop the continued elongation. Topping the candle will send the energy into the new needles that are developing quickly now. You want the needles to be small and to develop at the bottom candle so that later in June you can actually do the de-candling techniques.

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## Changes in the Garden

by Jerry Carpenter

There have been so many changes in the Garden this winter and spring time. There will be even more coming shortly as the weather warms.

First we cannot thank our gracious benefactor, Mr. Pye, enough for his support. He lives in the local Oakland area and visits the Garden at least once a week. He fell in love with the space and decided to help support the efforts of the Garden. He

has provided funding for a bench expansion project that we have had on the project list for some time. You will see the addition of 5 large tree stands along the fence line made possible by Mr. Pye. As well it enabled us to place a total of 18 new stands around the Garden so that we can bring more trees out on display.

The stands complete, we undertook the pressing project of fixing our water

system. The Garden water system had been patched and branched for a decade. We had lost track of where some of the feeder lines were. So we contracted with a firm to replace all the existing lines and create new branching to each of the stands. This allowed us to bring water to our new stands, fix leaks, and increase water pressure around the Garden. The project also allows us to connect an in-line fertilization station that will begin to replace all those lovely tea-bags we used for feeding our trees. We



### *Display benches, watering systems, and new paint*

also discovered that the major leaks outside our gates were not ours at all. It appears the city will need to check their larger mains for cracks. More information will soon be provided on the operation of the watering system and we should continue to check the condition of the trees to ensure we are watering enough.

At press time, we will be painting the exterior of the Garden buildings. It has

been many years since the walls were painted and we were beginning to look quite stale. This will be taken care of with the application of a new trim color and a new wall color chosen by Kathy Shaner. Our attempt will be to create a more pleasing appearance for the Garden and attract more visitors.

Mr. Pye has also provided underwriting for the paint work (paint is provided by Frazee Paint and Wall Covering), a small green

house that will be constructed in the corner outside the docent office, and an education center located where the old Shohin bench was. The education center will help us bring information to children as well as provide an area for outside training as Linda Soliven has been doing in recent summers.

We will begin to see progress on the new Shohin display bench as plans have begun to solidify as well as a new formal tokonoma display area. Several other projects concerning a redesign of the reserve area storage center and exterior emergency water storage will be underway soon.

### *Check out our new look!*

We often wonder how all this work is done. We survive on the generous contributions of others, generous benefactors, and the Mammoth Fundraiser to generate funds to keep the garden going. Having been open to the public for over 10 years things must be updated. We appreciate all the efforts of our volunteers and contributors for their diligence and monetary contributions to keep our doors open year after year.



## The Basics of Wiring

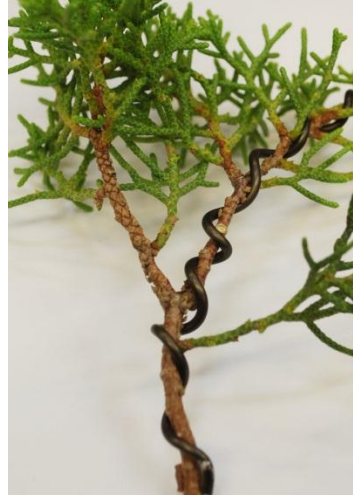
by Jerry Carpenter from notes with Kathy Shaner

One of the hardest parts of doing bonsai is learning to wire. Even those who have been wiring trees for many years still say that sometimes they just get lost in the limbs. Recently we were privy to a beginning lesson of wiring given by Kathy Shaner. It was so fascinating that we took pictures of the wire path and took notes.

First we start with a regular juniper branch as seen below. It forks like so many branches we have to deal with. Now let's start wiring.



We begin with wiring down our central branch with a single piece of wire.



It is important to remember that we should wire **BEHIND** the branch we encounter. Notice in the photo to the left that the wire comes very close to the lowest branch. In wiring a longer branch, always come up close to the branch. This will allow us to move around the branches later on.

*Wire every branch. Seriously, wire every branch!*

### What not to do!

The photo below shows a typical problem. Do not cross wires. This problem can be fixed, but many of us stare at it a while to figure it out.



This wiring shown here on the left will not support the branch and will most likely apply too much pressure and cut into the branch. It also sets up a problem continuing on up the branch.



The correct way to do this is to simply go behind the branch and to support the two branches carefully by keeping the wire close to the crotch and evenly spaced up the branch. On the branch with existing wire, follow the wire path close to the first wire.

## Continue Wiring

Notice now the final wiring on the far right. We follow up along the wire path of the first wire and then out a secondary branch; we come in front of the crotch of the branch and go around the next branch keeping our spacing even as we go. In this way we have wired

this small branch without crossing over and adequately supporting the branch for bending and setting. The wire looks clean and consistent all along the branches. Do not stop practicing your wiring. Wire often, wire everything, wire every branch.





**GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt**

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## Watch our New PSA Video

*by Jerry Carpenter*

A new video streaming from our website on the ABOUT page was directed and edited by Raymundo Archila as a class film project. He is a member of the Kusamura Bonsai Club in Palo Alto and his class is located near the Garden in Oakland. His appreciation of Bonsai inspired him to

make this file. It is viewable from our website and from YouTube.com. It tells the story of a place of peace nestled in a crowded downtown Oakland. Interviewed on the video are Gordon Deeg and Jerry Carpenter. We were asked to talk about why the Garden exists and what the

art of bonsai is about.

Charisette Li was an assistant, Jason Jakaitis produced the film in association with The Bay Area Video Coalition, NextGen Factory program. Program information can be found at [www.bavc.org](http://www.bavc.org). We are honored to work with this wonderful group.

## About Our Organization

The GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt is the home to some of the finest bonsai in Northern California. The Garden 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 collection is changed regularly, so visit several times a year.

Curator Kathy Shaner is the only female Japanese-certified bonsai master in the United States.

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



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**We're on the Web!**

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