

The Collection-Connection

A newsletter from the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt

Quarterly Newsletter

Volume X, Issue 1 February 2012

Of Special Interest

Root Grafting

California Juniper

Restyling



Calendar of Events



March 24, 2012
Ryan Neil and the repotting of the convention tree!
Morning talk about legacy trees will be from 10-12PM and repotting from 1-4PM. Keep watch for more information.

New Roots for a Venerable Trident Maple

by Donna Farmer and photos by Jeff Clarkson

On January 29, 2012, curator Kathy Shaner grafted eighteen trident maple seedlings onto the roots of BGLM trident maple #207. Trident Maple, #207, is an *Acer buergerianum* donated by Dr. Waldman of Kansas City.

It has been in on display at the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt since 2002. Master Mitsuya removed a large second trunk from the tree in 2003, used medical plaster to heal the wound and covered it with

mountain moss.

A placard has been placed beside the tree that reads:

Tree #207 Thread grafts for new roots.

This tree is a mature trident maple with a very successful and extensive root base.

How were the thread grafts done?

Each vertical "stick" that you see coming up from the pot is a trident maple tree. Each young tree

was threaded through a hole drilled into the old root base. As the seedlings grow, their roots will become part of the root base of the mature tree. After a year or more, the tops of the seedling trees will be cut off, and a new group of seedling grafts will be put into place. This process will be repeated as many times as necessary to create a successful new, smaller root base for this wonderful tree.

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"Each vertical "stick" that you see coming up from the pot is a trident maple tree."

Why are new roots needed on a tree that already has good roots?

The answer is that the root base is actually too extensive and too deep for the size of this tree. The thread grafts were done so that parts of the existing root mass between the soil line and the wall of the pot can be removed.

For the success of this project, it is important not

to disturb the seedlings this year.

DO NOT CUT ANYTHING ON THIS TREE THIS YEAR.

Kathy Shaner will do the cutting at the appropriate time.

In preparation for the grafting project, Kathy purchased appropriate trident maple seedlings in four-inch pots. She

looked for seedlings with healthy roots and long straight trunks with multiple buds.

On grafting day, the soil was shaken from each seedling, the roots were reduced, and all side twigs were removed. The seedlings were placed in a pail of water until needed.

In the image, you will see that the seedlings are being prepared by soaking and root pruning.

New Roots for a Venerable Trident Maple (cont.)



"Root grafts are made from seedlings"



The picture above shows the tree ready for grafting. It has been removed from its pot, and the root mass has been trimmed. Wet towels have been placed below the tree to keep the root base in contact with water. The edge roots were covered with wet towels to keep them

moist, or they were sprayed with water if they were exposed for grafting. The bottom of the root ball is cleaned up in preparation of the additional root grafts.

A one-quarter inch drill bit was used to make the holes for threading the seedlings. This size was chosen so that the root end of the seedlings would fit snugly into the hole.

A chopstick was placed in each hole after it was drilled to mark the exact position of the hole. Having chopstick markers reduces the chance of drilling errors for new holes in the same area.



The picture above shows the chopstick inserted into a drilled how on the left side. On the right side of the image Kathy is drilling another hole for a graft.

After holes had been drilled for about half of the root base, Kathy began threading the seedlings. First, each hole was cleaned with a knife to assure good contact at the root end. The bark was removed

New Roots for a Venerable Trident Maple (cont.)

from the last couple of inches of the trunk at the root end of each seedling.



With a very sharp grafting knife remove the bark from the seedling where it will contact living material of the host tree.

The seedlings were carefully threaded into the holes so that the buds were not disturbed and the root end fit tightly into its hole. *The image on the right shows the seedling being pulled through the drilled holes.*



Some of the seedlings that had a curved trunk near the root end were appropriately placed to look like natural curved roots from the tree. Each of the seedling trees was tied with twine into an upright position. Some of them had to be slanted outward for maximum possible exposure to the sun. Some of the new roots were also tied to existing roots with twine to hold

them in the correct position.

After the seedlings are pulled into place, the grafting completed, and ready for final potting. The tree is wired into the pot and soil was added to a level that covered all of the grafts. Fine soil was placed in several areas along the trunk line to insure that all roots were in contact with soil. The final step was placing moist mountain moss along the trunk line.

*Be sure to see the complete photo journal on our website for more details:
<http://www.gsbf-bonsai.org/lake-merritt/NewHome.htm>*



A Restyled California Juniper

by Jerry Carpenter



Tree #148, nicknamed the Tsunami, is a California juniper (*Juniperus californica*) in an informal slant style. The tree was donated by Harry Hirao and collected from the high desert region of southern California. It has a narrow reddish lifeline to its foliage that runs long the left edge of a massive naturally carved deadwood section of trunk.

In preparation for the massive restyling effort the tree had been allowed to grow vigorously.

On January 2, 2012, the effort to redesign the canopy began. curator Kathy Shaner, wanted to develop a more realistic foliage mass for the tree. The new growth tended to move straight upward as if it were a young tree defying the great age of the trunk. The styling would entail splitting major branches and bringing them down to create an

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aged look. Kathy began the process by removing some deadwood in an area that would allow the upper branch to move down. It was an area of limited interest and had many old spurs that had been cut off but left very jagged. With hammer and chisel she began removing the material. We found that some of the area was decayed and soft. This process would remove the decaying woody material and be healthier for the tree.

Once the material was removed, a large pair of branch splitters was used to separate the lifeline from the hardwood. Gravity and pulling the branch down created a natural break of the branch.

See the continuation of the story on page 6.



Hammer and chisel in hand, Kathy Shaner begins to carve out excess material that will allow the branch above to lower into position.

Director's Corner

by Gordon Deeg

The past year has seen many changes at the BGLM. Most were good but unfortunately some brought great sadness. We experienced the passing of two old friends of the Garden; Jim Ransohoff, this last Spring, and Ruben Guzman this past fall. Both of gentlemen contributed much to the Garden, by working or managing projects, or as docents, and having great fellowship. Jim Ransohoff was a landscape design architect who made the original design and layout of the Garden. Ruben Guzman worked on the original Garden construction and for the last several years coordinated the collection and sale of the scrap copper. They will be missed by all.

On the good side, the Garden has never looked better. Kathy Shaner, our curator, has been able to improve the style and health of

the bonsai. Our volunteer workforce, numbering around 50, has put in a great number of hours working on the bonsai, maintaining the grounds, and as docents. Completed projects include: a modified watering system improved water usage, the addition of approximately 20 new display stands, an upper reserve storage building, and the new educational boards. A couple of projects are nearing completion: the Tokonoma display area now has the option of having front Plexiglas coverings and is scheduled for repainting in March, and the greenhouse awaits inside construction details.

In addition to the great amount of volunteer hours given the Garden, monetary donations has allow us to transfer \$50,000 to the Educational Fund, set up to insure continual operation of the Garden. We did not transfer any money to the Fund last year, but were able to this year.

Major projects for the coming year include the Storeroom adjacent to the multipurpose room which should provide storage for weather sensitive items and allow us to construct a library and a Shohin display area. The delay in the Shohin Display has been caused by locating the best place in the Garden for it. This finally has been decided and construction should start this spring.

We have two upcoming events; the Mammoth Fund Raiser this weekend, and the Great Repotting Party with Ryan Neil on March 24th. The Mammoth Fund Raiser (MFR) is our primary fund raising event of the year held the last weekend of February each year. It's a great party with an auction on Saturday and plant sale, vendors and demonstrations on Sunday. Saturday starting approximately 30 minutes after the auction ends is an informal wine and cheese party at the multipurpose room in the Garden. This is an opportunity to meet the Garden's BOD, hear a little about the Garden and to ask questions about how it is being run. Remember, The Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt is your Garden and we want your input. See you there. The Great Repotting Party involves the repotting of the Western Juniper designed by Ryan at the 2010 GSBF convention in Santa Clara. This tree was purchased and donated to the Garden so it could be on permanent display. The tree underwent a major redesign that now will require extensive repotting. Ryan has maintained the tree at his bonsai garden for the last year and a half. Ryan will demonstrate the proper technique for repotting a Western Juniper.

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A Restyled California Juniper (cont.)



The cord wrapped branch. The cord will keep the branch in position while the lifeline continues to strengthen to create a stable branch.



The break was allowed to move to a desirable position and then, with the use of wet cord the break was wrapped and bound to the upper branch for support. The strong cord was used instead of raffia to provide support that would not allow the branch to continue to lower over time.

"We calmly held our breath and the Garden was silent"



This image shows the first split branch on the lower right and the new split in the center.

In the image on the left, you will see another branch being lowered. This branch is just above the branch that had just been secured. The first branch can be seen in the lower right of the image. Most of the material being removed from the second branch was center hardwood and allowed the upper to drop. But that was only

the beginning. The new designed called for the lowering of many of the top branches! Hammer and chisel again in hand the lifeline was carefully split and separated from the hardwood center core. The entire old apex of three was now pointing downward.

Our next process was to illuminate excess foliage

to better show the trunk. Bamboo stakes were used to act as spacers for some. Since the tree was so healthy there was no fear of removing, cut back or fashioning a jin.

The recently carved branches were then wrapped with cloth to keep the area moist and encourage healing. The cloth was secured to the



A Restyled California Juniper (cont.)

area with wire and will be watered to hold moisture.

A partial jin was created but some foliage was left with a lifeline in tact to allow the branch to continue to pull water.

Now we must think about the future. The canopy will be permitted to grow and back bud. The new apex of the tree will be reduced over time to compact growth. Some branches will be killed to create jins. Foliage will be further reduced as the tree responds and grows. The branches are more exposed to sunlight so budding is expected to occur inside on areas that previously had none.

The image on the right is the current state of the California Juniper. Be sure to visit it in its new display position as it was restored to the garden as a teaching example. Be sure to check out our website for a more detailed photo essay of the work on this venerable tree.



Notice Something New Along the Walkway?

As you are walking into the Garden you may see an interesting tree by the fence. Early in the morning Kathy and Jeff moved this fascinating Hornbeam to a place in the ground. When Master Mitsuya was in town last, he said that this tree was weak and would benefit from being put back in the ground for a few years. So the tree has joined the landscape to become strong and healthy.

GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt

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and Garden Center on
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About Our Organization

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.

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