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# THE BONSAI GAKUSEI

*Newsletter of the Modesto Bonsai Club  
NOVEMBER 2006*

## PROGRAM

**Date:** Saturday, Nov. 18, 2006

**Location:** Blue Oak Nursery, 784 Albers Road.

### Program Schedule:

- 9:00a Executive Board Meeting (note: board will meet at 10am Jan. & Feb.) All are welcome to attend.  
 10:00a Club Business Meeting / Bonsai Basics  
 11:00a Lunch Break: Club provides food and drinks.  
 12:00p Work on donation or foster trees for 2007 Show  
 1:30p Workshop

**REMINDER:** Each member is responsible for cleaning his/her work area/table before leaving.

### A Message from your President...

Beautiful Fall/Indian Summer weather greeted the club members at our Saturday meeting. Surrounded by the trees, the nursery and nature we had the perfect atmosphere for learning about and developing Bonsai.

Our guest speaker, Ruben Guzman, was delightful and most informative on the subject of Junipers. Bonsai beginners need forgiving species and Junipers are nearly perfect for this.

Mr. Guzman prefers San Jose and Shimpaku and dislikes working with Hollywood, Tam, and Pfitzer Junipers. He has been developing some California and Sierra Junipers that were collected by "Mr. Juniper" Harry Hirao of southern California. Ruben has styled some bonsai from staked Procumbens Nana obtained from Hollandia Nursery in Modesto. The usual Procumbens nursery specimen grows too flat for bonsai.

Mr. Guzman has obtained many trees from Yamaguchi Nursery in Nipomo, near Pismo. They have a large sale the day after Thanksgiving each year. Murnaka Nursery has also provided good junipers. The Shohin convention

vendors at Santa Nella are excellent sources for material with advanced styling.

Ruben recommends latex gloves when working with San Jose junipers as they can be sticky. His junipers have benefited from faster growth and greater trunk diameters when grown in the ground. Attaching the tree to a board with the roots spread out helps the styling and later repotting.

He usually buys the nursery stock in 5 gallon containers and takes them out as soon as possible. It is best to leave them in the nursery containers if purchased in the hot summer months to avoid shocking them with transplantation. Ruben either transplants from nursery containers into the ground or into mica pots. He is a scientist and disbelieves the old belief that clay pots breathe and mica ones don't. He points out that filtering through ceramic requires heavy suction pressure not available to most bonsai artists.

The soil mix of the Japanese bonsai masters is 100% inorganic and takes more frequent watering. Mr. Guzman uses a soil mix of 20% red lava, 20% expanded shale, 20% aquarium sand, 20-30% fir bark, and 10% Supersoil. The soil in the nursery containers is usually 80% sand with 20% peat moss which is not good for bonsai. Ruben uses his soil mix with both junipers and pines.



If the juniper has been dug up with a root-ball, gently comb out some of the soil. Don't wash out all the soil, unless it is February or March (when the rapid spring growth will help decrease the shock). Be careful cutting the branches on the initial styling to avoid excessive scarring and traumatic effects. Should you have scars you can make them positive accents as scars cannot be hidden.

The "ideal" branch development blueprint can be seen by looking at the Avocado or Azalea leaf. The veins on the leaves describe the primary, secondary, and tertiary branch placement on the trunk. Each branch should have movement similar to the trunk line with the foliage arranged like the trunk branches. Branches are wired to give the appearance of age with lower branches bending downward as if bowed by heavy snows. If 45 degree wiring on the branch is insufficient to shape it then wiring the branch down to the pot with a double wire then twisting the wire with a "Spanish Windlass" technique. Very large branches can be bent using the Kimura technique: grind a channel in the underside of the branch, fill the channel with wire pieces, lay a short length of wire on the top of the branch, wrap the branch with raffia, then bend the branch. The Kimura wires can be removed when the branch holds its shape and the channel can be filled with cut paste. Another technique of bending is to make a notch in the underside of the branch, wire, then bend the branch and superglue the cut edges.

Foliage development on the California Junipers is beautiful in both the adult and juvenile growth. Strength can be preserved by removing the flowers. Shimpaku adult foliage is the most pleasing but this will revert to juvenile if stressed. San Jose Juniper is more attractive when juvenile foliage is dominant.

To maintain juvenile foliage on the San Jose junipers pinch back at least 4 times each year with the last pinching no later than the end of October. Fingers or tweezers are best to pinch with as scissors will cause browning of the cut tips. Selectively pinch the top pads to encourage the pads to fill in. The lower pads are stronger and require less stimulation.

Ruben encourages everyone to visit the Bonsai collections at Lake Merritt Garden Center in Oakland and the Weyerhauser exhibit in Washington to observe and learn from magnificently styled Bonsai.

President, Richard.

## Instructor

Sam Adina 209-234-3956

## Board of Directors

### **President**

Richard McKinstry 209-577-4174

### **Vice President**

Pam Grassmidt 209-529-1434

### **Treasurer**

Janet Wakefield 209-341-4075

### **Secretary**

Audrey Poulou

### **Members-at-Large**

Bill Hawley  
Mary Miller  
Spencer Tope

### **Past President/ Membership Chair**

Doris Gaberel 209-524-2730

## Other Support

### **Club Wire Supply**

Spencer Tope

### **Greeter**

Lois Jumper

### **Guest Demonstrator Coordinator**

Jerry Jumper 209-667-6701

### **Hostess**

Hana Hodge

### **Librarian**

OPEN

### **Newsletter Editor**

Mary Miller  
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### **Web Master**

Andrew Poulou  
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\*gakusei (gok-say) noun a student or scholar



**Club Members at El Dorado in October**

## CLUB INFORMATION

Welcome to our new club members!

Betty Froelius & Vinton Johnson  
Frank Lowe  
David & Gabriela Townsend  
Marilyn Wood

We still need a volunteer for a club librarian. Anyone willing to take on this important task is asked to please inform Richard.

**Book Sale!** Janet can take your order for Marty Mann's new book **Bonsai Ideas**. Only \$18 – Special club deal only if we can get 5 or more orders.

Price List for items at club meetings.

Name Tags \$8  
Aprons \$15  
T-Shirts \$12  
2 or 3X Shirts \$15  
Tote Bags \$15

**Michael Bennett** is available for all of your photography needs. He suggests that we document our plants for insurance purposes or just for future comparison. He is willing to go to your home and can be contacted by calling 669-1728.

Sams five week class had to be canceled due to low turn out.



## Annual Holiday Dinner Party

Saturday, December 9 at 5pm  
Dynasty Garden, 3500 Coffee Rd. Modesto  
521-8808

Make your reservations by giving Janet \$15 per person at our Nov. meeting. This will cover your meal, tax, and tip. Everyone is asked to participate in the "White Elephant" gift exchange. Bring a wrapped gift (not to exceed \$20). It can be funny or serious. Then everyone will have one chance to "steal" a gift away from someone else. A great time for all!

## UPCOMING SHOWS AND EVENTS

Our club has received pre-notification of GSBF **Collection-North's Annual Mammoth Fundraiser**. This will take place Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> 2007. This will be a good opportunity for club members to get some great buys on plant material, or more advanced members to sell trees they no longer want in their collection.

Each club has been asked to donate at least one tree for the Sat. auction. Preview from Noon to 1. Auction is 1-4.

Those wishing to have their quality trees in the auction will need to get them to the Collection-North Center by Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> for photographing for catalog and website. 30% commission goes to Collection-North. Questions call Bob Gould: 925-935-1914.

Sun. – Demonstrations by Kathy Shaner, consignment sales, vendors and food. 10am – 5pm.  
Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave. Oakland, CA

Our club has also received information on a **Bonsai Tour of Japan**. Feb.6 -15 2007. This is an 11 day tour that includes admission to Kokufu Bonsai-ten, hotel accommodations, travel on Japans famous Bullet Train, and guided tours of many bonsai villages and gardens. The price is an approximate \$2000 per person and does not include air fare. Anyone interested please contact Mary 523-6942 and I will forward more info.

## MEMBER TIP OF THE MONTH

### KUSAMONO

Last month I visited a bonsai show in Santa Rosa. The display of bonsai trees was impressive, but I was equally taken with the wonderful accent plants used as part of the presentation. When I returned home I did some internet surfing on the subject and will share some of what I learned.

When displayed alone these small plantings are called Kusamono. When used as an accent plant for bonsai, the same planting is called shitakusa. The artistic skill of creating Kusamono involves knowing how best to select and arrange plants in the unique setting of a small pot or tray. For example, one type of grass or flower can be planted by itself, or several different kinds of plants can be mixed and coordinated together with natural stones or small rocks. Our interest is mainly with shitakusa. To reach harmony in this type of creation you must:

1. Choose colors that blend well with the main object (bonsai, Suiseki, piece of art...)
2. Include in the planting some element pointing out the season.
3. Push forward the whole theme.
4. Harmonize sizes and shapes with respect to the main object.
5. See to it that some element constitutes a link between the components.



How to design and display these plantings is up to each individual's taste and preference. It is important, however, to select plants that will allow you to enjoy the artistry of the Kusamono throughout the four seasons. This can be accomplished by mixing together plants that provide blossoms in spring, beautiful green grass for summer, warm autumn foliage, and the coolness of winter grass.

Kusamono are often displayed for the public at formal bonsai exhibits and in art museums, or they can be enjoyed in the privacy of your own home. Colorful seasonal arrangements will allow you to enjoy a particular season or sense of place. You can enjoy Kusamono throughout the year by creative planting.

After all the internet surfing, I decided to give Kusamono a try. At the Club's last meeting I purchased a few very small pots, some grasses and colorful violas. I had a great deal of fun creating a few of these small plantings, and they look great along side my bonsai plants. Give it a shot - You'll like it!

*- by Andy Poulos*

Directions to Meeting Site: The **Blue Oak Nursery** is on the east side of Albers Road, 1 mile north of Hwy. 132 (Yosemite Blvd.). Watch for the big blue sign with the blue oak silhouette. Turn into the gravel lane and follow it to the end. Park in designated areas.

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