



The Bent Twig

Published by the American Bonsai Association of Sacramento

Find us on the web at: abasbonsai.org

Dedicated to learning, enjoying and the promoting of bonsai.

September 2011

September Meeting

Tuesday September 27th at 7 PM

Bay area artist John Thompson styles a collected Mendocino Pygmy Cypress

John Thompson: San Jose, CA

John's experience and bonsai collection encompass a wide range of species and styles. He is a recognized authority on the development of bonsai techniques for Native Oaks. He especially enjoys working on collected specimens of Oak, Juniper and Boxwood. Collecting from the wild as well as the neighborhood and maintaining a growing ground for development of material yield a stream of interesting pre-bonsai for his avocation. JT emphasizes the active "Doing of Bonsai," and incorporates the natural forms that exist around us with the unique characteristics of the individual tree. He believes in touching and enjoying his trees every day.



Be sure to come and watch JT work his magic on a cypress collected by Mendocino Coast Bonsai. The tree will be raffled following the demo.



Refreshments provided by Kathleen O'Donnell and Bob Bugay.

CAN YOU DIG IT?

Collecting Native Bonsai Material

By Paul Holtzen

Those of us serious about the art of bonsai know that our results can only be as good as the raw material we choose to start with. Too many people waste their time working on plants that can never be quality bonsai. While we in Northern California are fortunate to have several excellent bonsai nurseries growing high quality material, in my opinion, nothing can beat finding and digging your own tree in nature.



Interior Live Oak collected April 2010

Why Collect?

Collected trees, *yamadori*, often have many qualities desirable for bonsai that are difficult or impossible to get in nursery grown plants. American Bonsai pioneer Dan Robinson has said

“Every bonsai deserves to have deadwood.” And the natural aged deadwood found on collected trees can’t be duplicated with the best carving skills. Old, rough, bark texture is one of the most desirable features in good bonsai and is one of the things to look for in collected trees. Often, we look for trees to collect that are growing in very tough conditions that affect the growth rate and structure of the tree in ways that make superior bonsai. Winds and snow bend, break, and even kill branches. Poor nutrients, lack of water, and short growing seasons, naturally dwarf the trees. Mother Nature is my favorite bonsai artist.

The biggest reason I collect is that it’s great fun. It’s a great excuse for hiking and enjoying the great outdoors. Nothing for me can top the thrill of finding and collecting a super little tree and turning it into a bonsai.



A promising subject before digging.

What to Look For

California has a wealth of native trees and shrubs that make excellent bonsai. My favorites are our three juniper species, pines, redwoods, and oaks. Less often used, but still excellent for bonsai are Buckeye, California Styrax, our several native honeysuckles, Native wild plums, California Black Walnut, ceonothus, and the list goes on and on.

The first thing I do when I get to a collecting site is hike around looking at all the trees and marking those I think are desirable and collectable. I’m not particularly looking for a small tree. Most often the trees I choose will be many feet tall and my first step is to cut most of it off leaving just the part I want. Look for trees with interesting character, deadwood, bark, trunk

taper and movement, and low branching (branching is not usually a consideration with some trees like oaks and redwoods as they sprout new branches easily).

The best tree in the world is a waste of your time and nature's resources if it doesn't survive the collecting process. Once you have found a tree you like you must determine if it is collectable. For most species, fine feeder roots are a requirement for the tree's survival. Dig gently around the base of the tree looking for roots. If you don't find sufficient feeder roots close to the tree leave the tree and look for another. The Holy Grail is to find a beautiful tree growing in a sediment filled rock depression that can be lifted out roots and all. Some of the most wonderful, naturally dwarfed pines and junipers are found growing in fissures in the granite. Don't be tempted! These trees always have roots that extend for many feet before any feeder roots are found.



Newly collected Western White Pine

Where to Collect

Never, ever, dig a tree without permission from the property owner. All land has an owner whether the owner is a private party or the government. Some National Forests issue permits to collect plants for personal use and charge a nominal price for each tree. I've collected trees in the Inyo and Tahoe National Forests as well as private property and ranches. If you spot a likely spot it never hurts to locate the owner and ask.



Digging in the snow. All the trees survived!

When to Collect

The best time to successfully collect trees is between September and May, depending on the species and location. Junipers and pines can be collected in the fall after the first rains have come and stimulated the trees to start putting out feeder roots. Just a few days after a rain junipers growing in desert conditions will have new red roots. My best results with oaks and other deciduous trees have been in the spring just as new growth starts. Some trees, like redwoods and olives, can be dug all year as long as you can keep them hydrated after collection.

How to Dig

Collecting trees can be as easy as cutting around the tree with a sharp shovel and popping it out as we do with pines at Mammoth Mountain or as strenuous and dirty as spending hours on your knees working juniper roots out of rocks and petrified desert soil. Most often the first step is to cut off the portion of the tree you don't want. It's important with conifers to leave plenty of foliage to act as solar panels to keep the tree alive. Many evergreen broadleaf species survive best if you completely defoliate them before digging. The next step is to start a trench about a foot out from the base of the tree. Trench a circle around the tree and cut any large anchor roots extending past your circle. Once you have found the feeder roots start digging under the tree cutting large roots as you go. Try to keep the root ball intact as you isolate it. After freeing the root ball from the ground you can very gently lift it out and wrap it for transport home. I wrap the root ball in old wet towels and then encase it in clear stretch wrap. The stretch wrap keeps moisture in and holds everything tightly together. Place the wrapped tree in the shade until you're ready to load up and go home. Spray the foliage often with water to keep it hydrated.



Exposed Root Ball Ready to Wrap

Before leaving for your collecting trip you should have prepared your soil and containers for planting your trees as soon as you get home. Use a course bonsai mix with a large percentage of pumice. If it will fit, plant in a slightly oversize bonsai pot. Wooden boxes also work well. I've had poor results planting newly collected trees in black plastic nursery pots except with pines. It is absolutely necessary to firmly wire the trees into the pots so new roots don't get broken off during the critical recovery period. Place the trees in filtered sun in a spot with high humidity and mist them several times a day until new growth starts. This can take as long as two years with some trees. Keep the soil moist but not soaked. If you can provide it, bottom heat will help grow roots.



Newly collected Juniper wrapped in Towels and Shrink Wrap

So get out in the mountains and hunt for trees. Its great fun and exercise. Just remember the rules:

- Always have permission
- Always take a friend
- Leave no trace, refill holes and repair damage.
- Don't dig trees if you aren't sure they can survive.

Maybe I'll run into you in the mountains!



Sierra Juniper collected October 2008 (photo by Clarence Smith)

Power of One **Win a Convention Registration!**

Once again, our club will award a paid registration to the 2011 Golden State Bonsai Federation Annual Convention to a lucky club member. To be eligible just complete, print, and cut out the following form and bring it to the September meeting.

Requirements are that: You are a member in good standing of ABAS; You have volunteered for the club in some way in the past year; You write an article or give a report to the club at a future meeting about the convention.

Name: _____
Phone _____ email _____
Volunteered as: _____

August Meeting

Jim Gremel styles a Shohin Shimpaku



Our August meeting featured Jim Gremel styling a yamadori style shimpaku field grown by Lone Pine Nursery. The tree was quickly reduced in size to the basic structure for the future tree.

The tree was developed by wiring as a young whip and then grown in the ground to produce the interesting trunk. Jim peeled bark to create shari giving the tree the impression of great age.



All but the basis for the future structure was removed. The rest was wired into position.



The tree was won by Lucky Kathy Owyong!



Much to our pleasure, Jim also displayed a Sierra juniper that had originally been grafted with shimpaku by well known Sacramento bonsai artist Mr. Tao.

AMERICAN BONSAI ASSOCIATION, SACRAMENTO
General Meeting August 23, 2011

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM.

General Meeting Business:

Announcements:

Capital City Bonsai Show, October 22nd and 23rd

Need the following:

Volunteers to set up on Friday, October 21st and floor monitors for both days.

Trees to display in the show

Bring food to share at the potluck lunch (both days) if you plan to attend.

There is a Saturday evening social gathering with food and cocktails provided.

GSBF Convention, October 27th – 30th

The recipient of our 2011 Power of One registration will be selected by a raffle held during the general meeting on September 27th. To be eligible, one must have volunteered to help the club during the past year and be willing to write an article about the convention for our newsletter.

Treasurers Report – Carolyn VanHoecke

Auction net club profit: \$449.00 (for details see financial statement below)

Current club assets as of 9/1/2011: \$11,172.

Fall Garden Center Sale, October 1st and 2nd

Volunteers needed:

Setup Friday evening, September 30th.

Takedown Sunday afternoon, October 2nd

People to man the sales tables 11:00 AM to 4:PM Saturday and Sunday.

We need stuff to sell! Drop off items Friday evening or Saturday morning.

Contact chairperson Kitty Gerwig or Paul Holtzen.

New Back Drops

Greg McDonald presented a prototype at the board meeting on August 9th. They will be wood frames with muslin covering and Tatami mat display surfaces. Total cost estimate is \$2200.00. Greg and Ken Santucci are in charge of construction. Volunteers interested in helping with the project should contact Greg.

Storage is an issue. The club will rent a storage unit until a permanent home is found.

Auction Summary:

Turnout was lower than expected but sales were about the same. A decision will be made as to whether or not to do this again.

Show and Tell:

Crepe Myrtle – Bob Bugay

Grape with fruit – Timm Johnson

Olive – Timm Johnson

Shimpaku Litterati style – Clarence Smith

Shimpaku – Clarence Smith

Dwarf Lebanon Cedar – Dolores Rauh

Shimpaku Kishu Litterati style – Dolores Rauh

White Pine from seed, imported from Japan, very old tree that had a mummified root ball; restoration work by John Cota has this tree in very good condition.

Cobra Plant accent plant – John Cota

Indian Summer Crab Apple – John Cota

Boxwood rescued from a compost pile is now a beautiful semi-cascade bonsai – John Cota

Program – Jim Gremel of Deer Meadow Bonsai Nursery styling a shimpaku juniper.

Respectfully submitted, September 1, 2011.
Renee Seely, Secretary

Financial Statements

Jul 1 - Aug 23, '11

Income

3000 — Membership Dues 100.00
3800 — Gross Member Consignment Sales
3850 — Auction 2,904.60
Total 3800 — Gross Member Consignment ... 2,904.60
Total Income 3,004.60
Cost of Goods Sold
3900 — Seller Sales Percentage
3950 — Auction 2,110.00
Total 3900 — Seller Sales Percentage 2,110.00
Total COGS 2,110.00
Gross Profit 894.60

Expense

4110 — Shepard Garden Center
4111 — Facilities Rent 1,745.00
4112 — Facilities Overtime Charges 25.00
Total 4110 — Shepard Garden Center 1,770.00
4700 — Events & Programs
4770 — Shows & Sales Expense
4775 — Auction Expense 83.79
4771 — Spring Show Expense 49.34
Total 4770 — Shows & Sales Expense 133.13
4710 — Presentations
4712 — Honorarium 375.00
4710 — Presentations - Other 150.00
Total 4710 — Presentations 525.00
4740 — Meals & Entertainment
4747 — Entertainment 180.00
4745 — Spring Show Lunch 34.21

Jul 1 - Aug 23, '11

4742 — Luau 357.00
Total 4740 — Meals & Entertainment 571.21
Total 4700 — Events & Programs 1,229.34
Total Expense 2,999.34
Net Income -2,104.74

UPCOMING BONSAI EVENTS

Tuesday, September 27th

ABAS Monthly Meeting

John Thompson will style a collected Pygmy Cypress. Tree will be raffled following the demonstration Tuesday night.

**Saturday, October 1st
& Sunday, October 2nd**

**Shepard Garden and Arts Center
Fall Festival and Sale**

Plan to donate to this annual event, and better yet...come and help out!
Please contact Kitty Gerwig

**Saturday, October 22nd
& Sunday, October 23rd**

**Capitol City Bonsai Show at the
Shepard Garden & Arts Center**

Tuesday, October 25th

Club member, Doc Ward, will do a hollow trunk carving demonstration.

ABAS Monthly Meeting

October 27th – 30th

**GSBF Annual Convention
Riverside, CA.**

Tuesday, November 22nd

Always a club favorite, Bob Shimon, will give a lecture on redwood refinement.

ABAS Monthly Meeting

Sometime In December

Annual Christmas Party with Satsuki Aikokai

Presidents Message

By: Paul Holtzen



Our club finds itself without a treasurer, probably our most important officer. If you like numbers, please contact me and volunteer.

We also need a person (or a committee) to chair the Christmas Party this year. Please contact me to volunteer your amazing hosting talents! The party will be held with members of Satsuki Aikokai.

