

# Fresno Bonsai Society Newsletter

July 2020



## Our Mission

The purpose of the Fresno Bonsai Society is to expand the knowledge and skills of Bonsai within its members while offering opportunities for appreciation of this art form to the broader community. We do this through the inspiration of the beauty of the natural world and the rich cultural heritage of Bonsai.

## Officers of the FBS

President.....Mike Saul  
Vice President.....Vacant  
Secretary .....Marilyn Shelton  
Treasurer.....Bob Wright  
Past President.....Dave Soho  
Newsletter.....John Wright  
Carol Wright



## President's Message

I sincerely hope that you all remain well and comfortable.

We have traditionally not met during July and August each summer because of both the limited work we can carry out on our trees and vacation absenteeism.

With the current CDC restrictions on gatherings due to COVID-19, we will look for ways to still function as an organization until we can again meet in person as a group. The effects of the pandemic on our society seems to dwarf the inconveniences that the Fresno Bonsai Society is currently experiencing. There are ways to work with the inconveniences that will still provide great learning and teaching experiences for our club members.

We typically draw between 35 and 50 members to each meeting. Even if we had sufficient outdoor space to put that many of us each 6 feet apart, groups larger than 10 are not appropriate. I remain hopeful that we can figure out a way to conduct a general meeting within the limitations of our state and local guidelines, by September. I think that we will be able to organize multiple small work groups to improve Bonsai Basics in the coming year. I think we can do this effectively. My concern is how we might have larger meetings with outside speakers so that we can offer value to our more experienced members. I think we may also be able to organize small group workshops among our more experienced members in individual homes, but a general membership meeting may be problematic.

There are some compelling reasons why we need to have a general meeting of all our members. We need to (President's Message continued) discuss and vote on several bylaws. We should also decide if we want to reduce our annual dues for the coming

year. As I read the bylaws, we must conduct this business at a general meeting. We will be re-researching some ways to accomplish this.

I am happy to report that we now have become a tax exempt, 501(c3), community benefit organization. Our application for tax exempt status with the state is pending. This, together with a committee (to be established by the new bylaws) to manage our income, would allow us to accept tax deductible donations.

I think that we must acknowledge that beyond our commitments to the study of bonsai, we all enjoy the camaraderie with our bonsai friends. The Fresno Bonsai Society is a pleasant and welcoming group of people. We miss each other's company as much as our bonsai. We will regain that eventually.



## 7TH U.S. NATIONAL BONSAI EXHIBITION SEPTEMBER 12-13, 2020

Just trying to figure out what Ryan Neal will look like when he gets a little older....



## Don't Throw That Tree Away Just Yet - John Wright

As I have gotten more involved in bonsai I have had my share of failures. With some I could identify the reason: lack of water, over fertilizing, insects, disease, etc. but sometimes it's just not obvious. Recently I had a maple which had been growing well for several years began to die on one side of the trunk. I believe it was a root problem, but the dieback stopped just below the top of the tree. To say the least I was discouraged and didn't know if anything could be done to salvage the tree. I almost threw it out several times. The tree seemed to rally and put out new growth. I decided to let one of the lower branches run thinking I would at least air layer off a cutting and keep the variety of maple in my collection. As the branch to be air layered grew I would occasionally check on the tree. As I looked at it one day, not long ago, the idea struck me that carving that dead section might give the tree the ancient look of some that I have seen in New England. I figured I had nothing to lose and got out the carving tools. The tree

will never be a show winner, but it has a unique feel and suggests a damaged, but still standing, old tree. My point is, before you throw that tree away because it didn't come out the way you first envisioned, or had a major dieback, step back and see if there is a different vision. It may also be a way to work on new skills. Remember to enjoy what you are doing.



## Manzanita by Harold Mitchell

I recently read an article in the *Golden Statements E- magazine* about manzanita bonsai. It made me think about some manzanita plants that I had acquired. About two years ago Tim Robinson and I took a little trip to the mountains to pick up some decomposed granite. On our way home we stopped at a nursery in Prather. In our rummaging around we came across some little manzanita plants. I picked out a couple, and Tim picked out some.

When we got to the checkout counter, the cashier told us their story. They were local plants from the area. The nursery gives a little tour to show people who live in the area what trees look like in the native landscape. About thirty seedlings washed down Sand Creek after a downpour and were discovered by the nursery tour guide. These plants were rescued and put in one gallon containers.

I think one of the downfalls of some of us who practice bonsai is that we try to make a bonsai before we learn to grow plants. That's why I have been growing this manzanita in its original container for several years. The other reason is I want to increase its size. That doesn't mean you can't clip here and there to direct the growth and see where it buds out again. But understanding the growth needs of a plant species before investing time to make it into a bonsai makes sense. I understand, we get impatient, but sometimes the practice of bonsai just takes time. The isolation of the last four months has let me enjoy my plants and their growth.



### Planned Opening Shinzen—Clark Bonsai Collection

While Woodward Park is now open to the public we are still waiting for Fresno City's approval to open the Shinzen and the CBCS. It looks like the openings will occur in July, provided the City of Fresno can provide the signing which sets forth the rules for masks and social distancing. The initial opening will be for Shinzen members only.

When the CBCS opens they will be maintaining their regular summer hours 10am to 1pm.

## Bonsai Pot Selection by Bob Wright

Pot selection is a subject probably best discussed in the late fall when potting and repotting is imminent. However, this article will hopefully provide a brief overview of helpful information.

Several factors should be considered in choosing the best size pot for your Bonsai. The traditional viewpoint suggests the width of the pot should equal 2/3 of the height of the tree, and the depth of the pot should equal the diameter of the tree. However, modern techniques, variety of materials, and environmental factors have all led to the adaptation of less stringent “rules”.

A few basics do come to mind such as the plant styles of masculine versus feminine. Trees which have straight trunks or rugged bark are considered to be a masculine style. These trees often lend themselves to basic rectangular containers. These pots are generally unglazed, at least for conifers.

Trees that are categorized as feminine generally have graceful trunks and branches. These types of trees may look best in oval shaped pots with glazed colorful exteriors if deciduous.

Some trees can be well displayed in either oval or rectangular pots. However, conifers are generally displayed best in unglazed pots with occasional exceptions.



Other types of pots can be suited for both types of trees as in a rectangular pot with curved corners. For example, a tree with a thick masculine trunk may have graceful branches and may be suited for this type of pot.

Glazed pots generally are used with deciduous trees. It helps to consider the leaf colors and if the tree blooms. A tree that has blooms can be more spectacular with the right color pot. Some people have used a painter’s color wheel to determine which colors contrast best.

There are extensive variations to these themes. However, the best method is to consider the following factors in choosing a pot: the dimensions of your trees, type of material, and watering needs (especially in the Central Valley). Pots which are the depth of the diameter of the plant’s trunk will require vigilant care.

In the world of Bonsai, particularly in Europe, handmade pots have become the norm in many of the top Bonsai shows. Frequently a pot has been commissioned for a specific tree.



Pot selection has become much more important in the art of Bonsai, and more information and suggestions will be provided in future newsletters. There are also many excellent books available with basic information on pots.

## Bonsai Activity for July

The summer is upon us. While major work slows this time of year there are things we need to be doing.

Watering and sunlight management are at the top of the list. Missed watering or failing to move trees into appropriate lighting can quickly reduce a healthy tree to a dead or severely stressed one. At the same time over-watering reduces root growth and can cause root rot.

While junipers, olives, elms and pines can take a lot of sun, most trees need filtered sun or mid-day shade in the heat of summer. Remember to rotate your trees so they get a balanced exposure to the sun. Pots can be shaded to keep the root area from getting too hot. Small pots are more likely to be impacted by over heating.

With rapid spring/early summer growth, wiring on junipers, cypress, cedars, spruce and redwoods should be checked and removed as necessary. In fact, any wiring should be monitored to control wire scarring. This is less of a concern on trees with heavy bark where branches take longer to set, but never let the wire get more than 50% covered.

De-candling not done in June, especially for smaller, faster growing trees should be done in July. Think about the health of your tree and what you are trying to accomplish before de-candling. De-candling should not be an automatic annual action.

Continue fertilizing your trees this month. But this also should not be an automatic action. Don't fertilize very weak trees. Consider the stage of development the tree is in.

We are sorry that last month brought the sudden passing of club member Selisa Mendoza. She was a sweet, gentle, and kind person. We will miss her enthusiasm and warm smile.

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We also sorrow with Al Keppler in the passing of Rose Harmon. Rose had accompanied Al to club meetings and had been an inseparable part of his life the last two years. Al our condolences go out to you.