

Fresno Bonsai Society Newsletter

June 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
SecretaryMarilyn Shelton
Treasurer.....Bob Wright
Past President.....Dave Soho
Newsletter.....John Wright
Carol Wright



President's Message

I start every one of these missives by talking about the season and the weather. This is no different. As I write this it reached 103 degrees and our opportunities for Spring bonsai work are fading fast. We are in survival mode for the next three months in more ways than one.

I have been asked when the Fresno Bonsai Society will get going again. There were fifty some visitors to the Home & Garden Show who wanted to know more about the FBS, and a couple have emailed me more than once. I am delighted with the enthusiasm that has persisted about the club and the art of bonsai. I am concerned that the excitement will fade as the depressed economy and emotional stress have mounted. Just when this hobby might be needed most, we have not been able to meet with our bonsai friends.

There has been a burst of activity with FBS members and friends on social media. I hope that some of our friends on Face Book have gotten the guidance they sought. I hope that they got some gratification out of showing their work and discussing their plans. If any of you have questions about your trees, please email me or respond on Face Book. If I do not have an answer (and I usually do not) I will put you in contact who someone who may.

With guidance from Harold Mitchell, Tim Robinson, and John Wright, we have launched the Gene Nelson Scholarships to offer video streams from Ryan Neil. We have ten of our members starting to learn foundational knowledge about bonsai. After we have gotten some feedback from the first ten recipients, we will offer this again.

There is no question that hands-on learning is more effective for most of us. Videos are the best we can do

with current safety limitations. The principle advantages of Ryan Neil are a) many of us are familiar with his terminology so we can speak the same jargon and b) Ryan is very verbal and well organized. Are other teachers equally effective? Probably. At some point we might want to offer a different source of fundamental information.

At this moment, we do not know several things that would allow us to gather as a large group next Fall. We do not know when we will be able to meet in a group larger than 10. We do not know when or if we will have access to the Clovis Senior Center, the Clovis Police Community Room, or the GSBF-Clark Bonsai Reserve Area. Will we be able to safely work closely together to practice skills?

We hope that we can gather for a general meeting by September, but that is uncertain.

At some point, we will have to gather as a whole and debate our bylaws changes. The changes are needed for us to move forward with forming a trust and a more functional organization. This will likely be a long and tedious meeting that no one wants to attend. It will be needed for some significant financial benefits to the club. As we get closer to that meeting, I will explain all this to our members.

I have some ideas that I would like all our members to consider.

If we are still limited to groups smaller than ten by September, I would like to form more small groups, like the gatherings that Pat Galle and Cris Saldana have done so effectively in the past. These groups will have to be a bit more organized to limit the size of the group and to assure some social distancing. Each group should have one or more experienced members to provide help with those who want guidance. The group could set their own schedule. We will need a leader for each group who can manage the size of the group (in advance) and provide some guidance. The groups could meet at members homes or at the Clark Collection (hopefully). Think about this and email me your opinions

I learned recently that the GSBF Annual Bonsai Convention will be cancelled for October. At this moment, I am uncertain if the 37th Annual Redwood Empire Bonsai Show will be cancelled in August. My point is that these two events have previously had large vendor areas where we could purchase pots, soil, plants, and tools. We may have to plan to travel to purchase these things this fall. We will have to arrange to obtain soil components far in advance. Our members will have to commit to purchasing soil far before February because access to supplies may be more limited this fall and winter. Think about these needs.

The economic catastrophe and the deaths of 100,000 Americans, are as grim as any events in our public lives. These two disasters have allowed many of us to think long and hard about what things truly matter in our lives. Sheltering in place gave us that opportunity. We should take advantage of it.



Learning Bonsai



GENE NELSON BONSAI SCHOLARSHIP 2020 AWARDS

The purpose of this scholarship program is to provide members of the Fresno Bonsai Society with access to three months of training videos from Bonsai Mirai focused on the fundamentals of bonsai.

We are pleased to announce the first ten recipients of the Gene Nelson Bonsai Scholarship. They are: Shawn Miller, Tyler Thomas, Cesar Ordonez, Nick Trujillo, Selina Mendoza, Seng Tran, Jay Louie, Dustin Blaylock, George Lopez and Marilyn Shelton.

This standard membership Includes:

- The Mirai's weekly live stream.
- Unlimited HD streaming of every live stream, lesson, and feature video in the library.
- Watch live or re-watch on your desktop, mobile, or tablet device.
- Expert instruction by Ryan Neil and other renowned professionals.
- Connect with the bonsai community on the Mirai forum.



Gene Nelson

Gene's desire in funding the scholarship program was to increase the overall knowledge of FBS members in a consistent approach to the art and practice of bonsai. He felt that a common base of knowledge would benefit the group as a whole. It isn't that there is only one way of doing things but a common knowledge based on science and real experience will help us and allow us to better make decisions about when we might choose another method and why.

This is intended as an ongoing program. Later this year or next we will again be inviting applications for scholarships. The Bonsai Scholarship Committee will be talking with the first recipients about their experiences with Mirai. ³

Developing your own Bonsai Material

By John Wright

The last few years I have been using my greenhouse to propagate cuttings. As I didn't know how successful I would be, I erred on the side of numerical volume. As it turned out I obtained a much higher rate of success than I had anticipated. I used plastic trays with a mixture of perlite, sand and planting mix. I drilled 1/8" holes in the bottom of the trays for drainage. The rooted cuttings were then moved to small plastic pots to grow. They grew but not overly fast. Since I am in my 70s, I started to think of ways to speed up the growing process. Remembering Steve DaSilva's success with field growing trees, I began to consider options that would fit my yard space. My next thought was the



success I have had with growing trees in pond baskets. I have several 4'x8' grow boxes in my garden and rather than planting as many vegetables this year, I decided to experiment with placing rooted trees in the grow boxes. Some were planted directly in the soil, some were left in their plastic pots and some were put in pond basket containers and then put in the ground.

My best success has been with material in pond baskets planted in grow boxes. The advantages are that I get quicker development of a tree in the ground but I can lift the pot out of the ground easily and prune off roots

that have extended beyond the pot. I can then put the pond basket back in the grow box to continue its development. When it's ready to put into a bonsai pot, I already have a better more compact root system. This mobility also allows me to begin basic wiring and pruning without sitting on the ground to do the work. Trees grown this way easily grow 2 to 3 times as fast as growing in a pot. So far I have worked with junipers, olives, trident maples, oaks, boxwood, pomegranate and cypress. The soil in the baskets is a bonsai mix. The soil in the grow boxes is a perlite and potting soil mix.



Roots easily grow through the baskets. Roots are pruned before replanting which maintains compact roots



Greenhouse with rooted cuttings: While the plants grow well in the greenhouse they don't grow rapidly. Putting the plants directly in the ground causes them to thicken and grow much more quickly but they also develop coarser and more widely spread roots.

By regularly pulling the baskets from the ground and trimming the roots you get faster growth and a more compact root system which is suited for a bonsai pot.

To the right is a Shim-paku Juniper which has been growing in a pond basket for three years.

Below is the same tree in 2017 when placed in the pond basket



Check out the FBS Facebook page. You can also post and interact with our web page/site at www.fresnobonsaisociety.com

Bonsai Activity for June

By now all healthy bonsai should be leafed out and new growth hardened off.

We are entering the hot season. Remember to rotate your bonsai in relationship to the sun so that growth is balanced throughout the summer. We will get little rain. John Naka recommended soaking the foliage, soil, ground and even overhead shade to increase the local humidity. If the soil is draining well, you cannot “overwater”.

June is the correct month to partially defoliate. The purpose of partial defoliation is to reduce leaf size, slow growth (to reduce internode length on new shoots) and allow light into interior branches. Defoliation makes wiring easier. (Defoliation does NOT produce back budding. Some species, such as hornbeams, Japanese maples, and beeches do not tolerate defoliation well.)

Cutting or pruning can be done now, both to maintain shape and encourage back budding in some species. Making large cuts or chops is not advisable now as we are entering the most stressful time of year with our intense summer heat. This is a problematic time to wire new growth if the foliage is soft and green. Wire cuts are a great risk in fast growing thin-barked species like maples.

Some species, such as Trident maples may still be thread grafted this time of year if the green shoots are partially defoliated for use as the graft.

Rapid growing species should be fertilized now. Stop fertilizing Black Pines (multi-flush pines) now.

Insecticide spraying should begin now to prevent scale and spider mite damage. Scale (like Elm Scale) can be removed by hand. Some experts advise spray should be continued every 2 weeks during the cool morning hours, throughout the summer. Ryan Neil advises rotating three different chemical insecticides to prevent development of resistance in Spider mites. There is a diversity of opinion about this.

FBS Treasurer's Report Bob Wright

As of April 30, 2020 the balance in the checking account was \$21,455. A substantial portion of the current funds came from the auction of Gene Nelson's trees at the FBS annual yard sale.