

The other major benefits of belonging to a club are access to experienced local bonsai people and access to bonsai material. Gifts, swapping and lower prices for tree material are generally available to people inside our club. Donations to our Mini-yard Sale and the upcoming air layer workshop are examples.

Finally, we can offer supplies and soil to our members at budget prices.

There are a lot of people in the Central Valley who enjoy practicing bonsai and have no interest in belonging to a club. I understand that. I do think they miss out on some benefits, but I realize that they get what they want out of their hobby without dealing with an organization.

That leads me to a final point about our club. I am unsure of how large the FBS should be and therefore how much effort we should put into promotion and recruiting. We all acknowledge that the majority of new members don't have the zeal for this hobby that many of us have. New members often drift away. I don't feel guilty about that if we have done our best to show them what it's all about.

Bonsai is a hobby, not a religion. Not everyone has a passion for it. It has to be fun. It is harder to make it quite as fun as in the past, without the social aspects. Club leaders have to focus on the benefits of club membership in the meantime. I have been thinking about these issues because my term as president is ending soon and we will need to find some additional committed leaders for the next term.

Mike Saul



John Thompson's Tree Tips

February 2021 Written by John Thompson

Dry as a bone then we get the atmospheric river. Hope they can fill the reservoirs and get us out of the 'La Niña' drought trajectory. Water quality for our trees is better when there is an abundant source and the water company doesn't have to pump from more compromised sources.

Remember to check your trees if there is a gap in the rain! When the akadama on the surface turns light brown at the surface, it's time to water. If there is too much rain, put a block under one side to ensure you don't drown your trees.

Transplanting

Continue to transplant your trees. Do it now!

Healthy deciduous that have a good base in which healthy radial roots occupy the inner core do not need to be bare-rooted. Just remove the exterior edges and long gangly roots and the circling mass on the bottom.

Weak deciduous trees can be partially bare rooted, removing the field soil on $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{3}$ of the root ball leaving the rest of the root ball intact. You can get the rest cleaned out when you transplant in a year or two. Conifers should not be totally bare rooted but at least one section of old field soil should be cleaned out if any still remains — just like in the weak deciduous trees above.

Grafting

Grafting time is here for pines junipers and other species. Now and fall are perfect times to graft. Keep some shoots toward the side of the tree to use as scions. But don't use the very tip of a vigorously growing shoot as this can be too strong a scion for the graft to take. Plan out where you will be putting these grafts.

If you will be grafting deciduous trees, cut some scions and put them in damp paper towels and in the crisper of your refrigerator. When the tree buds start moving, bring them out and use them

John Thompson Tree Tips (cont.)

for your grafts. Remember that you will have better success if the under-stock's sap is moving before the scion's does.

Practice Makes Perfect

Remember the project we talked about several years ago when we were to work on trees at different stages of refinement? Start on a couple trees now, develop last year's starters and refine a couple of last year's developed trees, as well as the six you refined a couple of years ago. When you get multiples of nicely refined trees, keep the best and trade the extras for better and better trees.

The key is to keep only the best of these for your own collection and really concentrate on them.

Lose the rest. Don't start working on another one until you have completed as much work as you can on one for this year.

Develop your techniques. Learn from what you did last year. Practice whenever you can and you will succeed. Practice on workshop nights. Practice at home. Practice in your sleep.

Dormant Spray

Remember to use dormant spray again around Valentine's day. It is best to do it on a day that the temperature will not get above 55° or you could burn the foliage. Try copper spray or lime-sulfur, except on Ume, spruce, azaleas and tropical trees, to protect deciduous and fruiting and flowering species. This will head off big problems later on.

Pruning

When you cut back on branches this month, leave just a tiny stub for die back. If you cut an entire branch, do not cut into the branch collar which is that swollen area where the branch attaches to the trunk. Remember that the tree is getting active and will soon generate new growth to heal over the cuts.

Now that the pine needles have matured and hardened, if you haven't already removed them, it is time to take off the all the old needles and some of the newer needles on the plump and healthy shoots. This opens up the interior of the

tree to the sun and airflow that is necessary to generate back budding. Remember to leave more needles on lower branches and interior buds; and if weak, don't touch at all. Watch out for those that have already started new tiny buds. It would be a shame to accidentally pluck out those tiny buds you try so hard to generate.

Yamadori (Collected Trees)

Plan to collect some trees this year. Whether it is a neighbor's pyracantha hedge or an oak dig or a trip to the mountains or desert for junipers, don't pass up this great way to find super material. It also gives you a chance to observe the branching and twigging patterns of your favorite trees as they grow in nature. Collect interesting mosses and lichen in flats for use at show time. The best accent plants for a bonsai are those that are growing up alongside it in the wild.

FBS February Zoom Meeting Recap

John Thompson provided an outstanding presentation on boxwood bonsai via a Zoom meeting with the club. Information from his slide presentation is included on the next page.

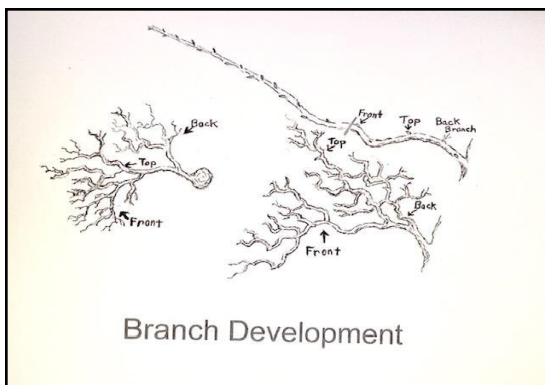


Growing Boxwood

- Soil - medium draining - Aka+/Pum/Lava
- Dappled shade - Partial sun - Full in winter
- Protect Nabari - Top dressing - S & G moss*
- Keep well watered
- Feed moderately - Mar - Oct
- Few pests/diseases
- Temperate climate - Watch for freeze
- TP every 2 - 4Yrs - Fall OK-Check roots
- Thin 1-2 x's Yr* in May/June - Sept/Oct
- Buds back easily
- Propagate -Cuttings May thru September Layering
- Branch Pattern - Up and Out
- Adaptable natural form - Any style OK

Developing Boxwood Bonsai

- Aluminum wire—shoots pliable about 2 years
- Year 1: Initial shoot harden—Wire— Set— Remove wire—Run till late winter to thicken
- Year 2: Jan/Feb cut back to desired Length—harden— keep 3 shoots (Back, top, front) -Wire— Cut to 2 leaves –Repeat to Oct 1



- Year 3+: Jan/Feb cut back to 2 leaves—harden—pinch/cut to 2 leaves—repeat to Oct 1—Wire when needed for design
- Thin inside foliage 1 –2x's yr. Clean off bottom foliage and open crotches

- Create small, ramified and complex branches
- I use my thumbnail ~ 3/4" and pinky ~ 3/8" - hand span ~8" to create scale
- Shohin start with pinky—Larger tree start with thumbnail to measure desired internodes.



Picture of three shoots to form branch structure.



Expanded view showing branch pruning pattern.



Branch thinning before and after.

Three of FBS's Emeritus Members

From time to time, the members of the Fresno Bonsai Society have come to recognize a very few of our members who have contributed long and devoted service to the club.

Howard Latamer was one of that small group of original members from more than forty years ago who led collecting trips, taught new people and led the club as president in the early years. His knowledge of botany and plant science kept the members focused on the horticultural science. His collected trees are now the core of many collections in our club, in the Clark Collection and across California.

Howard Mitchell was a student of Howard Latimer and others of that early core group more than 25 years ago. Mitch has been a passionate student of the art, even during his years in Hawaii. Most notably, he was a club president for several years before he became the devoted teacher to a whole generation of bonsai students. His greatest contribution to the club may have been that he helped teach teachers, like Cris Saldana and Tim Robinson. Mitch invested time in planning his classes and organizing the content so that his students had a more comprehensive understanding of the science and the art.

Finally, we elected **Dania Nelson** as an Emeritus Member, even though she never pruned or wired a bonsai. What she has contributed to the FBS was tireless behind-the-scenes work to organize and manage successful events that kept our club growing. She and Gene devoted themselves as much to the members of the FBS as to Gene's great collection. Dania was a master organizer. Now she has consented to serve on the FBS-Gene Nelson Educational Fund. The purpose of that committee is to guide the management of donated funds for the most effective ways to fulfill Gene's goals of teaching bonsai.

Each in their own way, our Emeritus Members contributed to the advancement of this club.

Howard Latamer

I moved to Fresno in 1958 to begin my career at CSUF teaching Botany, specifically Genetics

and Plant Ecology. The topic of conversation in those days among the "newcomers" was "your path to Fresno". Mine began in the Pacific Northwest. My family had a farm in Des Moines, a small town on Puget Sound between Seattle and Tacoma. My Bachelor's and Master's degrees were from Washington State College in Pullman. My PhD degree is from Claremont Graduate School where I studied at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.



When I found my interest in bonsai, the Fresno Bonsai Society, as we know it today, was in the early stages of organization.

About that same time, John Roehl and Dick Bates joined the club. A few years later, Ray Thieme moved to Fresno and became an active member.

Our first meetings were held in a room provided by Fresno Guarantee Savings Bank at Blackstone and Ashlan. Later we met at the Ornamental Horticulture Greenhouse at CSUF, sharing space with the Fresno Women's Garden Club. Soon membership increased such that a larger meeting place was needed. And we moved to a spot at Fresno City College.

In those early days it was quite often easy to search the "back rooms" of the local nurseries in hopes of finding just that right plant on which to work. As local interest in bonsai grew, it became harder and harder to find material that way. Then members organized collecting trips, especially to the desert for junipers, and to our Sierra Nevada foothills for oaks. My collection grew to number over 200 trees!

(continued next page)

(Howard Latamer continued)

Each spring members held a show to exhibit their own plants as well as to increase local awareness of and interest in bonsai. We also participated in the Fresno County Fair held yearly in October. The club hosted many visiting instructors: John Naka, Harry Hirao, Ted Matson, Walter Pall, to mention a few. Each June, the meeting was a “work party and potluck” which we hosted several years.

In November 1998, my wife and I were fortunate to travel to Japan with a small group led by Cora Dalager and Bill Hashimoto. We visited Tokyo, Nagoya, Miyajima Island, Hiroshima, Nara and Kyoto, taking in many cultural sites as well as those specifically connected to bonsai: gardens and nurseries, and the very large show held yearly in Kyoto. We took a side trip via train to the small, very beautiful town of Takeyama, in the mountains above Nagoya.

In June 1999 we went to China, the itinerary planned around historic sites but including a few bonsai places too!

In 2005 John Roehl, Mike Saul and I joined Walter Paul in Ghent, Belgium, to take in the European Bonsai Association show. Afterwards, John and I traveled through France to Walter's home in Munich stopping to see bonsai collections and other sites along the way.

Bonsai has been a very rewarding hobby for me. I have toured bonsai collections and gardens both in the US and abroad, and visit the Shinzen Japanese Garden and the Clark Bonsai collection in Woodward Park as often as I can.

Howard Mitchell

I was introduced to bonsai when I was twenty by a neighbor. I bought a Sunset book on bonsai and that was my teacher. Being a young man helping raise a family left little time for bonsai. But the seed was planted.

Years passed, I was now living in Fresno, and I read in the Fresno Bee about a bonsai show at a school, visited the show, and was impressed. The next year I went to Woodward Park and watched a demonstration by John Roehl and I think it was also with Joe Kobe. I signed up for a newsletter.

The next month was a class with Jim Gremel, at Steve DaSilva's House. Steve was club president in those days. I joined the club and became president three years later. That lasted five years. After I was president I just took a year or two off just attending meetings. Steve DaSilva asked me to maybe teach the basics. He was a persistent person and I finally said yes. My first student was Andrea Crowe. There were about three students that came sometimes. Each year there were a few more that showed up. Steve and I did the first home show at the Fairgrounds but didn't get many takers at first. But our classes eventually had eight to ten people once a month. The teaching was the proudest moment for me. There are many walking among you who were the Basic students.



The next meeting of the Fresno Bonsai Society will be held on Saturday, March 13th at 1:00 pm. This will be a Zoom meeting,

Andrew Robson will discuss **Defoliation and Early Summer Deciduous Work**. Andrew is an emerging deciduous artist. He is the President of the Bonsai Society of Portland and has studied under Michael Hagedorn. He and his family are currently building a deciduous-focused bonsai garden, school and nursery.

(Howard Mitchell continued)

I must leave you with some advice. The trees that you are growing today are just in your care; they are not yours. Your signature trees will eventually wind up in someone else's hands. You never quit learning bonsai. Don't make your trees do something they are not physically capable of doing. There are many ways of doing things. There are no right or wrongs. If a concept is right for you, then do it. Never stop learning. Your trees will show it. Learn to read your trees. They will tell you what is needed if you are observant. Ninety-nine percent of deaths in bonsai trees are operator error. You never buy a perfect tree, so learn the skills it takes to make the trees better. If you don't know, ask, or you will never know and your trees will suffer. This confinement will soon be over, I can't wait to be back with you.
MITCH!



Boxwood by John Thompson

Membership dues for the Fresno Bonsai Society are \$40 per year for individuals or a family. Students are free. Checks should be made out to the Fresno Bonsai Society and given to Bob Wright, our treasurer. If you are new to the FBS, please complete a membership form with your name, phone number and email (printed in large clear letters) when you pay your dues.

Dania Nelson



Gene loved to teach and if someone was interested in learning about bonsai he was right in there teaching them all about the soil, growth, wiring and whatever else there was to know. This was one of the reasons he wanted to start a scholarship program for beginners. Of all the hobbies Gene has had, this was the most relaxing and enjoyable one for him.

We both enjoyed working in the yard and he ventured to the bonsai trees and I stayed with the larger ones. Whenever Gene went to the garden to water and feed our cat, Meka, and if I had time, I would go with him to pull weeds and help clean up. Of course I played with Meka who is now part of my life and chases the other cats away from my yard. We worked together getting the trees organized for the different auctions FBS had through the years and then worked the auctions with many helpers.

(It would be more accurate to say that Gene and Dania Nelson were the cornerstones of every bonsai fund-raiser for the Fresno Bonsai Society during the few years before Gene's untimely death. Dania was the source of the meticulous planning and organization for these events. She was also the silent caregiver for his outstanding collection. Gene and Dania provided extraordinary kindness and support for Ray and Evelyn Thieme during their long illnesses. Gene worked tirelessly to maintain the remainder of Ray's collection so that those iconic trees remain.

Following Gene's passing, Dania has maintained her commitment to the FBS through the Fresno Bonsai Society-Gene Nelson Educational Fund Committee.) Mike Saul