



## December 2021 FBS Meeting

We had a great program on pot selection, presented by Steve DaSilva and Harold Mitchell. Jack Green also gave a demonstration on the repotting of a juniper. The art of matching trees and pots has a whole list of cultural and aesthetic elements. Color, glazed vs. unglazed, shape, width of pot to trunk/tree width, depth of the pot, tree health etc., were among the topics covered. As we think about up-coming shows and the display of trees, these are aspects of the art of bonsai that can significantly improve how our trees appear. With repotting season rapidly approaching, how and when we repot trees is a critical skill. Jack Green's demonstration provided valuable information for those developing their skills. See you in January at the Senior Center for our next meeting,



Harold Mitchell





## **Feedback on Bonsai Basics:**

I wrote this article because I would like feedback from members who are currently participating in Bonsai Basics.

I have been assigned responsibility for the Bonsai Basics (BB) program. I know that others before me have struggled with finding the most effective teaching method.

Bonsai Basics is a critical mission of the club and the reason that most new members join. I suspect we have failed, in some ways, to fully achieve our goals.

The goal of BB is to teach the rudimentary fundamentals of how to grow trees in a container and the basic principles of design.

Another issue is that the classes are taught differently by different teachers. Some instructors conduct workshops in which they guide new members as they work on their own trees. I have felt that the fastest way to give new people the fundamental information was to focus on a defined curriculum. To me, that meant a didactic (lecture) format plus demonstration. I was concerned that simply “working on trees” would miss a lot of important information in the short run. I thought novices might not hear about a key point for a long time if it did not come up while they were working on a task. Just “working on trees” is certainly a lot more fun.

I think our members have a spectrum of goals and enthusiasm. Those who are intense will read and watch videos. Others have less interest in the nuances of bonsai. I must remind myself that this is a hobby, not a religion, and the casual members have the same rights as the devout. This is supposed to be fun.

Another problem we have is that people join the club and Bonsai Basics throughout the year, and some have other obligations periodically. The curriculum is planned so that we discuss tasks in the appropriate season each month. Few of our BB participants start in September and attend every meeting. Members who join us in late Spring miss content about such things as Fall pruning and repotting etc. They do not get the whole curriculum until the following year.

My overall goal is to provide new members with a solid foundation in 8-10 months.

I would appreciate hearing from anyone in the club with suggestions for improving Bonsai Basics. Please email me at [tinytreeme@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tinytreeme@sbcglobal.net) or call me.

I have recently revised some of the handouts for BB on the website. I would welcome any comments on those documents.

Mike Saul

# What to do when Akadama is in Short Supply

DECEMBER 17, 2021 by [JONAS DUPUICH](#)



Akadama, particularly when mixed with other media, is a great medium for growing bonsai. Over the course of the last year, akadama has become harder to come by for several reasons:

- \*Global demand has increased.
- \*Mining slowed down due to heavier than normal rainfall.
- \*Shipping congestion has delayed shipments.

As a result, it might be the case that not everyone looking for akadama will be able to find it. What are our options when availability is limited?

When possible, postpone repotting. If I'm on the fence about repotting a tree and I don't have the soil for it, I might wait another year. Although this isn't an option when water fails to drain at a reasonable rate, it is an option when the primary reason for repotting is to change the pot or planting angle.

Avoid using akadama for young trees. I have yet to find that akadama performs better for young trees so I no longer use it even when it is available.

Re-use bonsai soil. If you don't have problems with pests or pathogens in the soil, you can save akadama-based soils, dry them over summer, re-sift them to remove the dust, and then combine them with other ingredients to create mixes that meet your development goals.

Use alternative soil mixes. A variety of mixes can serve as good replacements for akadama depending on the development goals.

Young trees can grow well in a variety of mixes. I use 100% perlite or 100% scoria (lava rock) for most of my pre-bonsai. I have also used mixes that are 60-80% pumice with the remainder an organic-rich mulch or bark.

Recently collected trees or trees dug from nearby gardens can go into 100% pumice for one or more years while the initial container roots get established.

For mature bonsai, I'd try a few mixes and see which work best for each species based on my growing conditions. I'd experiment with pumice, scoria, decomposed granite, and possibly organic ingredients like bark or mulch.

I'm curious how pines will do with 50% pumice mixed with 50% scoria. Pine growers in Shikoku, Japan, use 100% "sand" that resembles decomposed granite so I'd try using mixes that incorporate that, too.

The Mammoth Annual Bonsai Auction & Sale Fundraiser for the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt in Oakland, CA. will be held on Saturday, February 19 and Sunday, February 20, 2022 at the Lakeside Park Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave. in Oakland. You are invited to the biggest auction and sale of bonsai, pre-bonsai, pots, books, stands, and related material. A Mammoth fundraiser with all proceeds going to support the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt. Saturday auction preview starts at 12:00 p.m. with auction starting at 1:00 p.m. Sunday sale from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., with a large showing of vendors, plant sales, and much more.

It's a great way to purchase your bonsai needs.

Check out our new auction page for 2022!

**The Mammoth Auction & Sale Fundraiser  
for the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt,  
Oakland, California**

**February 19 & 20, 2022**  
Saturday Noon - 4 p.m.  
Sunday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
at  
Lakeside Park Garden Center  
666 Bellevue Ave., Oakland, California  
Largest bonsai live auction  
Huge bargain sale of bonsai, pots and related items



**VOLUNTEER DAY**  
***At The Clark Bonsai Collection***  
FBS members volunteered at the Clark Bonsai Garden on December 18th. Curatorial staff members Jack Green and Dave Soho were on hand to direct the activity which included work preparing juniper bonsai for sale at the garden. These trees for sale have become an important source of revenue to help fund the garden's operation. There are a wide range of tasks which can be done including: general cleanup, irrigation repair, and of course tree maintenance. The garden provides a public face for the art of bonsai in the community. If you have an interest, please join in on the 3rd Saturday of the month.

## Up Coming FBS Meetings and Events

January 8, 2022 Preparing Bonsai for  
the Home Show Exhibit (Genaro)

February 4-6th Shohin Seminar  
Santa Nella

February 12, 2022 Final preparation  
for Home & Garden Show.

February 20th, Mammoth Fundraiser,  
Lake Merritt Oakland, Ca,

March 12, 2022 No Meeting-  
Replaced with Fresno Home & Gar-  
den Show (Mar 4-6th)

April 9, 2022 Julian Tsai  
Demonstration

May 14, 2022 JT Thompson  
Demonstration

June 11, 2022 Annual Picnic



## Our next volunteer day at the Clark Bonsai Collection is January 15

FBS members have a chance to support  
the GSBF bonsai collection at the Clark  
Garden on the third Saturday of the  
month. If you are interested in joining  
FBS members volunteering then, let us  
know, or just come to the garden at 9  
AM to noon.

### 2022 Shohin Seminar

The 2022 Shohin Seminar will be held  
on February 4 –6 in Santa Nella. There  
is an entry fee which includes meals.  
There is also a single day option. This is  
a very worthwhile event. More details  
are available at:

<https://www.calshohin.org>

### Pacific Bonsai Expo The Bridge Yard, Oakland November 12-13 2022

A juried exhibition featuring 70 out-  
standing bonsai displays and a selection  
of the community's top vendors.

event not to be missed .

### Membership Dues

Membership dues for the Fresno Bonsai Soci-  
ety are \$40 per year for individuals or a fami-  
ly. Students are free. Make checks to the  
Fresno Bonsai Society and given to Bob  
Wright, our treasurer, along with a form filled  
out with your name, phone number and email  
(printed in large clear letters). Even if you  
have been a FBS member please complete a  
membership form. This will help ensure we  
have your current information. Bob will not  
be able to take money without the form. It  
gets hard to keep it all straight if you don't.