



Descanso Bonsai Society

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2014



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Michael Jonas

The turkey was stuffed and soon thereafter was I. My wish was that all of you had a wonderful day with friends or family and that you went home with lots of leftover treats. I hope that those of you who attended the after Thanksgiving Sale at Yamaguchi Bonsai Nursery put

on by California Bonsai Society found treasures beyond imagining at prices so low you had to pinch yourself to see if you were just dreaming. And so begins the holiday season in Southern California. Black Friday, online Saturday, bonsai Sunday and back to work Monday. Yes, it is a busy time for all.

The club doesn't meet in December and January so you and your trees get some time off from club meetings and you'll just have to get your share of cookies from somewhere else. This is not usually a difficult task this time of year. Spend some time working with your trees and you will see some nice results next year.

December 6 is the date for the Fresno Society 7th Annual Bonsai Yard Sale and though I have never attended I have heard lots of good things from those who did. See details in the November newsletter on the last page. You can see a copy of that or many other of our newsletters stored there in pdf form. Just click it and read, it's that simple.

Don't forget the 25th Annual Aiseki Viewing Stone Exhibit at the Huntington Library from December 26th to the 31st. They are closed on January 1st but you still have one more chance to see the exhibit on the 2nd.

In January we will be having our Annual Luncheon at the Angeles National Golf Club on January 24th at 1:00 p.m. Email Elizabeth or if you still don't know how to do that call her and let her know how many guests to expect and what you would like to eat. Chicken, Fish or Pasta Primavera as we have to tell the cooks what they need to prepare. I hope to see everyone there and most people pay their annual club dues at that time, too. Bring something nice for the raffle, please.

On a sadder note, past DBS member Elliot Farkas, as many of you already know, passed away last week. He had complications which resulted from an operation that he had a while back. We really hadn't been seeing him around since the GSBF Convention in Burbank last year. Elliot will be missed and the club wishes to express their condolences to his mother and his family for their loss. Elliot, I am sure, is in bonsai heaven working on a new potential masterpiece.

Finally, Everett Bassin's wife, Sharyn, one of the sweetest people around, passed away in October will be remembered in a Celebration of Life at Old World German Festival Hall in Huntington Beach on December 6th. Please RSVP Everett at (714) 827-0661 no later than December 3rd if you can attend.

See you next year.



November Niche
Jim Barrett – Korean Hornbeam

NO DECEMBER MEETING
HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Next Club Meeting
Tuesday, February 17, 2015
7:30 p.m.

Van de Camp Hall, Descanso Gardens
1418 Descanso Drive, La Canada Flintridge

DBS NOVEMBER MEETING

On November 18, 2014 DBS had the pleasure of again experiencing Mauro Stemberger, a world class bonsai artist and international teacher, as our demonstrator. Mauro had selected a Procumbens Nana sourced from the House of Bonsai that he believed would be perfect for teaching us how to select and then work on nursery grown materials.

Mauro started off by cleaning out the interior of the tree, eliminating foliage that is growing in the crotch of the branches and stripping interior foliage that would be shaded by growth above it. He noted that junipers back budded in these areas very well and cleaning several interior inches allows easy wiring of the tree.

He encouraged us to look for a good trunk line and then eliminate branches that are not going to be part of the final design, such as branches that have grown on the interior of curves. He also recommended removing weak branches and allowing strong branches to continue with their development. Mauro said he preferred not cutting off any strong branches during the first styling. This keeps the tree form being set back in its development.

Next he brushed the trunk with a brass or steel brush and then chose a front that showed off the tree's trunk movement to its best advantage and drew a design of how he wanted the tree to look at the end of his initial styling.

Then he said to select areas that can be created into shari features. These are areas that already have reduced sap flow due to being under a dead branch or exists between two stronger areas of sap flow that are supporting foliage above. Marking the area to be removed with a black marker and then scoring the edge with a sharp knife, Mauro then lifted the cambium toward the center creating a clean area for the shari. Peel from the top of the tree downward to control the path of the shari. Shari can emphasize the movement of the tree and add interest to an otherwise uninteresting trunk.

Most trees are apically dominant and grow strongly upward. If allowed to grow freely they will cause other branches to be shaded out and to weaken. To balance the tree we wire and then bring the branches down knowing that they will grow upward again filling in the top of the tree.

Mauro arranged the branches so that each one opened to the outside of the tree and spread the secondary branches to open laterally, allowing each area to receive direct sunlight without being blocked from above. To shorten, bend the inside, not the end of the branch. Leave the tips to grow freely.

He recommended using pumice and scoria during the tree's early development, eliminating much of the field soil, to create better rootage and akadama for the completed tree in a bonsai pot.

Story by Michael Jonas

Photos by Ryan Wells



Top and right, Mauro Stemberger works on a juniper. Center, with the lucky winner of the tree, Carol McOwen

December Tips

by Jim Barrett

December and January are busy times, and because of holiday preparations, we tend to forget about bonsai. After all they are sleeping away the winter, right?

Now is a great time to clean them up, prune, and wire. Japanese and trident maples and Chinese elms (not Catlin elms, which are evergreen) can have all leaves removed, including those that are still green.



Prune all of the twiggy growth having more than two nodes and those twigs whose nodes are too far apart. Leave one or two nodes on each tertiary branch. Do this systematically from the lowest branches to the topmost branches. When this is done, remove heavy thick top branches, paying attention to those with particularly large diameters. This occurs when fast growing branches grow unnoticed and hidden by the foliage canopy. Strive for a multitude of fine secondary and tertiary branches in the top one third or one quarter of the tree.

Don't be worried if the tree has more than one primary branch leading to the apex. As long as one terminal remains slightly higher than the rest, the tree will be natural looking and aesthetically pleasing.

When you are through pruning the obvious problem branches, consider wiring those branches that are not positioned as you would like them to be.

Now is a very good time to pay attention to form and inner branch structure of trees in parks and on the streets. Notice the natural transition from trunk to primary to secondary to tertiary branches - especially in the upper portion of the trees.

This time of the year is a good time to bend and manipulate maple, elm, liquidambar, and zelkova branches. Branches are generally more flexible at this time and because the tree is bare, much easier to wire. One exception will be the Japanese elm (Nire). Their heavier branches tend to be rather brittle.

Again, start your wiring with the lowest branches, proceed to the top, but only wire those branches that need to be repositioned. Strive for a delicate graceful appearance with Japanese maples and a more rugged ramification on trident maples. Chinese elms whose habit is to lose leaves in the winter should be pruned to produce the finest network of twigs possible.

All of these species have a habit of producing heavy, thick branches in the uppermost portions of the tree. If they grow unnoticed during the year, it will be obvious when the leaves are gone which branches need surgery. Make the cuts on a slant, making sure they are concave. Seal all raw scars over 1/4 of an inch in diameter.

Now that the upper portion of the tree is taken care of, clean the trunk and main branches with a stiff toothbrush or a brass wire brush shaped like a large toothbrush. If the bark has a crusty rugged look and it is a desirable feature of the tree, do not brush it.

Pull all moss off of the very base of the trunk and main roots and brush these also. After covering the soil with a cloth or plastic, spray the tree with a good dormant spray such as lime sulphur, volck oil or copper oil.

Set the bonsai in a sunny location where it will be admired for its winter look and enjoy it.

Descanso Bonsai Society

2015 BANQUET

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24, 2015

1:00 p.m. Raffle begins at 3 p.m.

The Angeles National Golf Club

9401 Foothill Blvd.

Sunland, CA 91040

www.angelesnational.com 818.951.8771

\$30.00 per person

Please choose Mahi Mahi Filet, Chicken Florentine, or Pasta Primavera

Call or email Elizabeth Likes with your food preference by Wednesday, January 21, 2015 and pay at the door. Or, mail checks and food choice to:

Elizabeth Likes
9916 Rancho Caballo Dr., Sunland CA 91040
Phone 818.352.3064
Email: LizLikes@aol.com

Bonsai Help Wanted!

The staff of Golden State Bonsai Federation (GSBF) publication *Golden Statements Magazine* needs to fill the following positions:

Treasurer, Subscriptions Manager, Part Time Assistants.

For more details on duties and special perks, contact George Haas, Past Editor of *Golden Statements Magazine*, 707-762-9154 or gwhaas@comcast.net



DBS NEWSLETTER
% Jim Pelling
944 Pine Grove Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90042-1354



Join the
Descanso Bonsai Society
\$25 - Single \$30 - Couples
Payable to:
Descanso Bonsai Society
See Membership Chair Fred
at the next meeting or send
to:
Fred Seeley
27124 Crystal Springs Road
Canyon Country, CA 91387

DBS Board Meeting
Open to all club members
interested in getting involved in
club operations & management.
[Next meeting](#)
[TBD](#)
At Elizabeth Likes's home,
7 p.m.,
9916 Rancho Caballo, Sunland
91040

Dec. 26, 2014 – January 2, 2015 San Marino, Ca.
California Aiseki Kai: 25th Anniversary Exhibition of Viewing Stones
Show at the Botanical Center of the Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens,
1151 Oxford Road. Hours are 10:30 AM – 4:30 PM each day (Closed New
Year's Day). Free parking. For more information see our website:
www.aisekikai.com and/or contact hutch@aisekikai.com

DESCANSO BONSAI SOCIETY OFFICERS

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