



# Descanso Bonsai Society

## NEWSLETTER

## AUGUST 2014



### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Michael Jonas

Heat is pretty consistent day after day over here, but I believe this is the calm before the storm. I expect we'll be looking back fondly at these days in another month or so. Make sure you don't forget to water your trees or they will quickly begin to look pretty sad.

On July 15th I had the opportunity to perform a demo for the club. I brought three trees. One juniper that was not cleaned and two junipers that were cleaned. I brought the uncleaned tree to use as an example of what not to bring to a demo or a workshop. The members chose the smaller of the two cleaned trees that was already in a ceramic pot. It had an interesting gently curved trunk with some very interesting movement near the

By cleaning I mean that I had first cut off any dead branches of foliage and then stripped about a third of the foliage from the inside of each branch, removing anything growing from the crotch of each branch. I also removed all of the foliage that was either hanging down or growing underneath each branch. If a branch was pointing up I first pulled the branch down in the direction that I would want it to occupy and then cleaned it

The reason that one third of the inside of each branch is stripped is that you must have a clear area to place wire on the branch that doesn't crush existing foliage. I guarantee that you'll enjoy wiring more if you prepare the tree that way first. The reason for cleaning one third of the branch is that generally, you want the foliage on lower branches of the tree to not be covered by the branches above them. This allows most of the foliage to receive sunlight without blocking the branches below. The tree remains healthier and continues to grow stronger this way.

As most of the members enjoyed the break, I wired much of the tree, beginning with the heaviest wire first and then moving to less heavy wires. I started with the main branches followed by the secondary branches next. I didn't wire each branch to the tip, just as far as I thought that I wanted the branch to extend out to in the final design. I left the branches long until the end when I moved each branch down into position and then cut them to length. At the end of the branch I leave a healthy, uncut tip so that the branch recovers quickly and continues to grow.

I left more branches in place than I would have if I were doing this at home. Leaving more branches looks better than a tree with a few branches at the end of a demo. The tree looks scrawny, is not attractive and with few branches left on the tree its life is in danger. Leaving more branches allows the new owner to make some decisions about its design in the future and to gain ownership of the tree faster. The tree looks more like a bonsai now and less like potential bonsai.

The last thing I did was remove the tree from its now too large ceramic pot and to place it into a cut down one gallon growing pot. The tree should continue to develop as if it had never been repotted because the rootage was not disturbed. Next season the tree can be matched with an appropriate pot for a bunjin bonsai. I hope that I see it in our show next year.



**July Niche – Walter Zipusch, Texas Privet**

### **August Demonstrator**

*No demonstrator! Bring one of your trees to work on and for advice from some of our senior members, including Jim Barrett, Kathy Benson, Nathan Simmons, and Cesareo Pérez*

### **August Niche**

Fred Seeley, Al Rivera

### **August Refreshments**

Walter Zipusch, Robert King,  
Hank Gugel, Cesareo Perez

### **Next Club Meeting**

**Tuesday, August 19, 2014**

**7:30p.m.**

Van de Camp Hall, Descanso Gardens

1418 Descanso Drive, La Canada Flintridge

# August Tips

By Jim Barrett

Ahh! Good old summer. Between the heat and the not so good water, most maples (at least mine) look pretty tired.

If the maples are healthy, consider leaf pruning them towards the end of this month. Remove every leaf – large, small, healthy or shriveled. Leaving some or pruning in stages only makes the tree try to survive on what is left. I don't recommend leaf pruning red or lace leaf varieties, but mountain or trident maples may be defoliated. This will help create a tighter inner ramification and allow the tree to develop another set of fine twigs. Also, with the first cold snap, the leaves should turn color. Though such defoliation is done in the spring in Japan, for us here in southern California, leaf pruning then only leads to the new leaves browning out in summer. Always remember that defoliation is stressful for the tree, and should only be done if the tree is totally healthy.

If you candle pruned your black pines in June or July, you should have many new shoots appearing at the base of the cut-off candles. Selectively remove those shoots that are growing vertically off horizontal branches, leaving one or two side shoots and one for the new terminal of each branch. What you want to promote is a fine network of twigs.

On vertical branches in the upper areas and the top of the tree, remove the center candles, leaving one, two, or three side shoots. On more mature trees and more intricate networks of twigs and branches, leave fewer new shoots.

In October or November, you will want to remove some of the new growth you left this summer. More about this next month.

Think about rotating your trees – especially if they are displayed against a wall or fence. Turning them periodically will even out the growth and may prevent dieback.

Some trees are entering a semi-dormant period now and, for this reason, seem to need less water. Don't think that something is wrong unless the tree shows signs of distress. Heat buildup in soil above 80 or 90 degrees tends to slow growth. This is natural. Do not water if the soil is still wet. It takes practice and knowledge of your plants' needs to keep them healthy and happy. Fortunately most plants survive most mistakes.

If you fertilize this month, do so sparingly. I recommend a very diluted liquid fertilizer low in nitrogen if you must fertilize.

Spraying fungicide to control powdery mildew or needle cast may also kill beneficial fungi present in soils. It's not a bad idea to cover soil surfaces with plastic or a portable shield to keep drips and spray off of the soil.

Wire that was put on earlier this winter or spring should be checked – especially on deciduous trees. Remove all wire and reapply it only on those branches that do not hold their position and shape.

No repotting except emergency repotting until this fall.

## Part II

### Pots and Calcium Deposits

By Bill Wawrychuk

In my first article, two months ago, I showed you how I removed calcium deposits from a suiban tray and a bonsai pot using a solution of Durgol and distilled water at a ratio of one to four.

When I worked on the suiban tray and the pot, I took them out of the solution and scrubbed them with a sponge that has a pan scrubber on it and a tooth brush. Since this pot is more porous than the suiban tray, the tooth brush seemed to work better.

I purchased Durgol on line from Amazon and it is not cheap—a 16.9 oz bottle cost \$14.73— and that's why I still need to experiment with the solution mixture and soaking time. I think a one to three solution will be able to dissolve the calcium in the very tiny pores of the pot more quickly.

It appears Durgol really does work. While it may not take off all the calcium, it will reduce calcium deposits to very acceptable levels. What calcium is left can be covered up with WD40 or any other product you use to clean your pots for shows.

While I used Durgol decalcifier, I am sure there are other decalcifiers on the market that would do just as good a job at a much lower price. The decalcifiers I might try in the future include steam iron and coffee pot cleaners.

I also believe a stronger solution would be better for pots with a very smooth surface. In my experiment I used a four to one solution of distilled water to Durgol. A three to one solution and a longer soaking time may be a little better for smooth pots.

As I have said before, when using any chemicals use gloves and goggles to protect yourself. I hope my suggestion works for you too.

#### And a P.S. from Eric Rogger

I have used Old English Furniture Oil for years for the same purpose. Small bottles are available in all hardware stores.

It is used normally to treat wood and you can dab a little on a rag and rub it on the calcium. It's worked for me!

## MANY THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO DONATED TO OUR JULY RAFFLE!

Marty Hagbury, Jerry Bañuelos, Kathy Benson, Yoko Zipusch, Walter Zipusch, Emma Janza, Hank Gugel, Fred Seeley, Ray & Marge Blasingame, Wendy Tsai, Cesáreo Pérez.

# DBS JULY MEETING

All photos from our July meeting by Ryan Wells



Our own Michael Jonas was the demonstrator in July. Michael, above left, worked on a San Jose juniper in a bunjin style. The demo tree was won by Marty Hagbury, above, with Michael.

Michael gave a general talk about bonsai basics--care of tools, what kind of tools are useful for particular tasks, fertilizing, wiring, and trimming.

He noted that it's good to let junipers grow and then shape them rather than pinching them every day. When scissors trimming a San Jose, don't shear it, cutting across the needles. Rather, go in and cut between the needles.

He quoted Mauro Stemberger on two ways to wire. The first is to wire all the branches on the tree with heavy wire, then go to the next smaller size of wire to wire further out on the branch as it gets smaller. Continue the process until all the branches and so on until all the branches are wired.



The second way to wire a tree is to wire each branch, bottom to top. When using aluminum wire, a good rule of thumb is to use wire that is half the size of the branch.

Another way to check if the wire is strong enough to hold the branch in place is to take about four inches of the wire and push it against the branch. If the branch bends, the wire is the right size. If the wire bends, it is too small.

When wiring, start from the center. And try to wire two branches with one piece of wire whenever possible. When you bend the branch, remember that the branch is riding inside the coils of wire. Support the branch and move the wire.

The branch may go down, but the foliage goes up.

When you shape a tree, you want to open up space to create a tree, rather than a bush. Ideally you want to see whatever movement there is in the trunk.



July niche, Yoko Zipusch brought two sakei. On the left, 10000 Stars and a Cotoneaster. Right, Procumbens Nana juniper.



15<sup>th</sup> Annual Bonsai and Nonbo Exhibition  
August 16 and 17, 2014 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM  
Vietnamese American Buddhist Association in Orange  
County  
12292 Magnolia Street, Garden Grove, CA 92841  
(Magnolia / Lampson)  
Demonstration at 1:00 PM on both days.  
Vendor, plant sales & auction

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

**Nanpu Kai Annual Bonsai Exhibition**  
**August 16th and 17th** as part of **Nisei Week**  
at the Japanese American Cultural Center,  
244 S. San Pedro Street, Los Angeles  
Hours are 10:00am to 5:00pm

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