



californiabonsaisociety.com

California Bonsai Society

In Person Meeting with Adam Toth, Wednesday May 17 at 7 PM

Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute, 1964 W. 162nd St.,
Gardena (room 207/208)

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President's Message



Wow, hard to believe its almost May already. Seems like maybe March, with all the strange uncommon weather we had this year. I even had snow on my bonsai in Castaic! Hopefully everyone is keeping up with all the work on our trees this time of year brings.

Our May visiting artist is Adam Toth who spent about three years studying at Taisho-en with Taiga Uruahibata. Adam really enjoys working on collected junipers and on small

and shohin sized trees and has devoted much time to trying to figure out ways to make them better. He will share with us some of his techniques he learned in Japan as well in his study before and after. I'm sure that we'll all learn some useful new techniques from Adam. I hope to see a large turnout at our May meeting.

We'll be meeting at 7 pm at Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute, 1964 West 162nd St. Gardena, CA 90247 I hope to see many of you there.

I want to send out a huge thank you to CBS member Tommy Lee who agreed to donate his time to have a saikei workshop as a fundraiser for our Ben Oki Scholarship Fund. We auctioned off the opportunity to attend a workshop with Tommy and myself and the high bid was \$7050.00 which will help to fund the scholarship program for several years. Many thanks to Tommy and to Jason Saito who was instrumental in helping get the auction up and running on Ebay and in creating the promotional materials for it.

We welcome any input from members for other ideas to help raise funds to keep our visiting artist and scholarship programs running. We are also actively seeking donations of cash or quality bonsai related materials that can be sold or auctioned to raise funds. I'd also ask everyone to think about the possibility of supporting our mission of promoting the art of bonsai for the long term by making a bequest to CBS.

I would also like to hear from our members about the idea of having a convention of some type in 2025 for our 75th anniversary. It's been a long time since CBS has held a convention and it seems like the 75th anniversary would be a really good time to finally have another. I would like to hear from as many of you as possible to get your thoughts. Please email me at californiabonsaisociety10@gmail.com and let me know the answer to the following questions

1. Should we have a convention or some other large similar event to celebrate our anniversary?
2. Are you willing to commit to helping out, either as a committee member or during the event itself?
3. Are you willing to make a monetary donation to help make having a convention a reality?
4. Are you willing to donate trees' pots or other bonsai materials for raffles and /or auctions?
5. Do you have any ideas that could make this event different than your typical bonsai convention?
6. Are you willing to display an exceptional bonsai at this event?

I really hope that we have the willingness and commitment to make some kind of convention type event happen. 75 years is a long time and deserves to be celebrated and with GSBF no longer having annual conventions I think that a large bonsai event will be welcome. Of course something like this will require lots of work but I believe we can make it happen. Lets all pull together and make our 75th anniversary celebration really special.

Hope everyone is doing well and planning on making it to our next meeting on May 17th.

See you there.

Robert Pressler

President

California Bonsai Society



California Bonsai Society is proud to announce The Ben Oki Bonsai Scholarship Fund.

The California Bonsai Society (CBS) has set up a scholarship fund to honor Ben Oki, a man who devoted most of his life to enjoying and sharing bonsai. Ben was happiest when he was sharing his knowledge or working on a tree. To honor Ben's sharing spirit, we will be making two \$1000 grants available to anyone in the bonsai community to be used to attend classes, workshops, studying with a professional, or other bonsai-related educational activity. Winners will be expected to do something to give back to the bonsai community in some way such as a club demonstration or online video showing what they've learned as a result of receiving the scholarship as well as providing photos and a short write-up of their experience. To apply, send an email to CaliforniaBonsaiSociety10@gmail.com. In that email, explain what you intend to do with the money to improve your bonsai skills, and what you will commit to doing to give back to the bonsai community. Be creative! Applicants who receive scholarships agree that, in return for these funds, within 15 days of completing classes (or whichever activity they put this scholarship toward) they will provide photos and a short write-up of their experience using the scholarship that will be published in the California Bonsai Society website newsletter. The application period will be from May 1 through May 30 annually with the scholarships awarded on June 15. Applications will be accepted from anyone in the bonsai community. Awarding of the scholarships will be by decision of a committee of California Bonsai Society Board members after going through all applicants. All committee decisions are final. Everyone in the bonsai community is encouraged to apply for this chance to expand your own bonsai knowledge and to help contribute to the bonsai community. Anyone interested in contributing to the scholarship fund as a way to honor Ben and to help promote bonsai is more than welcome to contact Robert Pressler, President of The California Bonsai Society, at the above email. We are a privately funded 501c3 corporation so any contributions may be tax deductible.

CBS welcomes Adam Toth as our visiting artist for May.



Hello everyone, my name is Adam Toth.

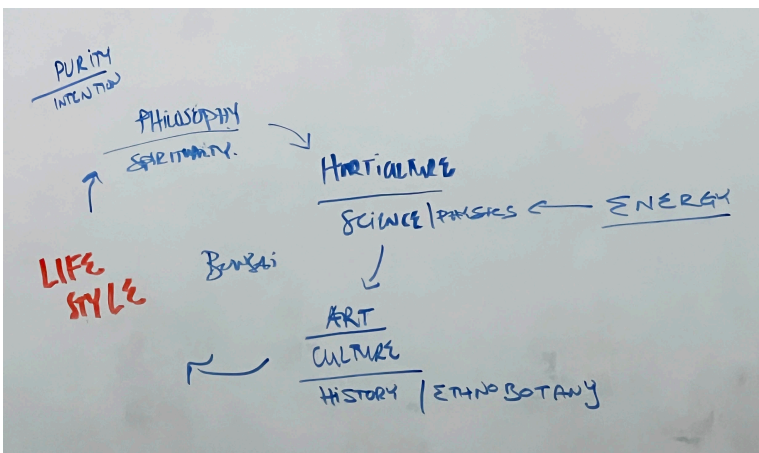
I have been studying bonsai seriously for about 7 years now and spent a little over 3 years studying at Taisho-en with Taiga Uruahibata San, and received an official shohin certificate from the Japanese Shohin Bonsai Association. Before that with Jonas Dupuich at Bonsai Tonight and currently spend a few days a week working at his nursery now. During my time in Japan I spent a lot of time studying and thinking about how we can grow and produce better shohin and small sized trees. I really enjoy working on yamadori junipers and hope to continue learning and enjoying this truly unique art form. I look forward to meeting and working with you all!

See you soon!

Adam Toth

Our February Meeting with Maliea Chiem

It was interesting to see the thinking process of a young bonsai artist. Maliea shared her thoughts on creativity, design and bonsai philosophy.



A very special thanks to Tommy Lee

We auctioned off the opportunity to attend a workshop with Tommy and myself and the high bid was \$7050.00 which will help to fund the scholarship program for several years. Many thanks to Tommy and to Jason Saito who was instrumental in helping get the auction up and running on Ebay and in creating the promotional materials for it.



Marybel Balendonck

October 2, 1925 - February 28, 2023



Recently American bonsai lost one of its founders, supporters and most influential artists, Marybel Balendonck, here shown with the late Harry Hiraio. Here are some excerpts from her Los Angeles Times Obituary.

Marybel Balendonck led a long life of achievement in the field of American bonsai and enjoyed a long career in office administration and contract management for firms including Texas Instruments and Hughes in Texas and California. She married William Balendonck in 1949 and they lived and worked in Dallas before moving to Fullerton California in 1965.

Marybel became intrigued with the Japanese art of bonsai cultivation and hosted classes in her Fullerton garage led first by John Naka, the founder of American Bonsai and more recently by Tak Shimazu. When John Naka invited her to join his select club of bonsai artists based in Southern California, Nambu Kai, she was the first non-Japanese member. In 1982, Marybel helped found the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum at the National Arboretum in Washington D.C.. She was instrumental in raising funds to build the John Naka American Pavilion of Bonsai adjacent to the Japanese Pavilion, which houses bonsai given to the U.S. by Japan celebrate the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976. She stood next to John Naka and his wife Alice when the Naka Pavilion was dedicated in October 1990. She became vice president of The National Bonsai Foundation, which oversees the museum. Her magnificent elm forest is part of the museum

collection and her liquidambar grove and other bonsai she cultivated are housed at the Huntington Library, Art Galleries and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California. She is survived by many nieces and nephews and was preceded in death by her husband Bill in 1977. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to the National Bonsai Foundation.

Marybel was a friend, colleague, mentor, and artist who made a huge contribution to the art of bonsai in America. Those of us who knew and loved her are working to put together an event to remember Marybel, hopefully in the near future.

Rest in peace Marybel, Harry and John and thank you for your efforts in making bonsai an art form open to all.



Ben Oki Scholarship recipient Michael Roberts reports back.

I was awarded this scholarship as an opportunity to further my experience and understanding of the many different approaches to grafting. Early on in my bonsai journey I learned thread and approach grafting on deciduous with very good success. But there are so many other grafting applications to enhance the quality of all of the different varieties of bonsai that I have yet to learn.

This February I made a trip to Portland Oregon to visit and learn from Michael Hagedorn, some of the methods he has learned during his early training here in the U.S. and later during his apprenticeship in Japan. I also spent a day with John Eads of *Left Coast Bonsai* just outside of Portland, to learn some of the techniques he uses and teaches at his nursery.

The very first thing that both Michael and John spoke about was that the health, timing of the grafting process, the size, shape and placement of the scion on the host tree are all critical to the success of the graft.

Generally, successful grafts are performed while the tree is either dormant or just as it begins to “push” in early spring. The following are photos of some of the grafts we performed on Junipers, Pines, and a ground layer made on a Cork Elm.

First Day with John Eads:



Juniper and pine grafts. Using last years new growth, 4 - 5 “ whips of juniper are trimmed and wrapped using Parafilm. Grafts are placed and tied securely on the host stock ensuring no movement or moisture can get into the grafted area. It is very important to line up the cambium on the host with the grafted scion. The same techniques are used for pines as junipers using 2 - 4” growth leaders from the past year with only 1 or 2 small candles. If more than 2 candles are present, remove the stronger ones.

The following day Michael Hagedorn taught his technique for ground layering new surface roots on trees that have poor surface roots or on trees where you may want to shorten the main trunk



An example of nursery stock with poor roots and poor lower trunk development. Below, I have removed the lower branches and living tissue. Make sure that cuts are clean and coat cut edges with rooting hormone and let sit for a few minutes while the hormone penetrates.

Cover the area with damp sphagnum moss and tie it loosely with raffia. Note that a layer of weed cloth was added. Below, create a pot made of plastic screen secured with tie wires and fill it with a 50/50 mix of pie bark soil mix and pumice or perlite then soak thoroughly.



Kevin Farris reports on Ben Oki Scholarship Experience

I want to start off by saying that I greatly appreciate the California Bonsai Society for upholding and spreading the spirit that Ben Oki embodied within his practice of the art form and love of bonsai.

Receiving the Ben Oki scholarship afforded me the opportunity of an education that I had only dreamed of. The repotting class that I took at First Branch Bonsai with Todd Schlafer aided in the educational outreach and engagement with the newly formed student organization called the Bonsai Club at The Ohio State University that I started in Fall 2022. It is the first ever bonsai related student organization in the history of The Ohio State University. Outside of the student organization, my local club, the Columbus Bonsai Society, I have been able to help my local club members by providing proper repotting practices/techniques which help elevate and empower club members and their trees.



I traveled to Denver, Colorado from Columbus, Ohio to study with Todd Schlafer at his Bonsai Nursery called First Branch Bonsai. The class I attended went over repotting and covered a multitude of areas. It was in fact the deepest I have ever gone within the physical application and thought behind repotting which covered many different genres of trees. The trees that I was able to work with were varying in age, size, and height. The strength in understanding the proper handling of high-quality trees has been life changing. I was also privileged to see the beginning of what will become one of the top bonsai nurseries in the United States of America in the near future.

I was able to spend a lot of time at First Branch Bonsai and with the time I dug deep into understanding what it means to not only create

beautiful works of art with a living medium but also think about how to provide more outreach and connect more people to the art form whether people want to practice or just appreciate it. The question that is still ruminating in my mind is, “what are other ways that bonsai is not being approached?” or “what other avenues have we not take bonsai down?” These questions I brought up in class and it created a very interesting discussion with my fellow students. In addition to the other students’ feedback, I was provided with personal feedback and guidance directly from Todd. The feedback was not only about my work on the trees that were being worked on while in the class but also my ideas and future personal goals inside and outside of bonsai.

Since taking this class, I have been able to help my local community in Columbus, Ohio. Helping with hands on repotting on an assortment of trees, ages, and sizes including guidance of technique and application the same that I learned in Todd’s class. My next project that I am now working on is starting a monthly study group to help educate and promote the horticultural science and art of bonsai with local club members. This scholarship has also raised awareness of the legacy and impact that Ben Oki had on the bonsai world. I look forward to helping my local community and the students involved with the Bonsai Club at The Ohio State University find the same sense of community, passion, and peaceful satisfaction I have found through bonsai and the community at large.

The Ben Oki Scholarship has allowed me to create a larger network of outreach and learning opportunities with the help of people in and out of bonsai. These networks are being formed to identify key people among the local community, Horticultural and art programs within The Ohio State University and other local colleges, local garden centers and nurseries to create a larger access point for people to find any and everything related to bonsai and offshoots of culture associated with bonsai. These networks are still being set but with the continued work by myself, I see my objectives and future ambitions taking shape more clearly.

Thank you,

Kevin Faris





DAI ICHI
BONSAI KAI

Serenity through Bonsai



36th ANNUAL BONSAI EXHIBIT & SALE



May 6 and 7, 2023
Ken Nakaoka Community Center
1670 W. 162nd St., Gardena

**EXHIBITION • DEMONSTRATIONS • SALES • RAFFLES
AUCTION • BEGINNER'S WORKSHOP • RECEPTION**

Novice to master exhibitors, daily demonstrations and drawings, bonsai plants, tools, and accessories on sale throughout the show. Free admission and parking.

SATURDAY • MAY 6

- 10:00am - 4:00pm **Show & Sales Area Open**
- 10:30am **Beginner's Hands-on Workshop**
(Free to first 15, *first-time* participants only)
- 1:00pm **Dennis Makishima - Bonsai Presentation**
- 6:00pm **Private Dinner Reception**
(*SoCal bonsai club members are welcome*)
- 8:00pm **DIBK Club Auction**

SUNDAY • MAY 7

- 10:00am - 1:00pm **Show & Sales Area Open**

For more info, call Doyle Saito at
(310) 539-9265 or visit bit.ly/DIBK-FB

