



conejo valley BONSAI society

Volume 17 Number 2 February 2020

A member of the Golden State Bonsai Federation 

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Conejo Valley Bonsai Society Meetings

Westlake Village City Hall
Community Room
31200 Oakcrest Drive
Westlake Village, CA 91361
3rd Thursday of the Month
7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Visit Our Website
www.cvbs-bonsai.org

Follow Us on Facebook
[www.facebook.com/
conejovallebonsaisociety](https://www.facebook.com/conejovallebonsaisociety)

President's Message

February Meeting Delayed

By Marj Branson

Please remember: this month's Conejo Valley Bonsai Society meeting has been postponed one week, to Thursday, February 27, 2020. That's the fourth Thursday of the month instead of the usual third Thursday. But the time and place have not changed—they remain 7:30 PM in the Westlake Village city hall community room.

The change is due to a conflict with another event in the same venue. As a condition of our free use of the room, we must change our schedule in such situations.

Reminder:

This meeting will be a workshop, so bring your trees to work on.

CVBS Mentors

Our Vice President, Mike Blumenberg, sent out an email February 4 to all members sharing his story of how the CVBS mentoring program helped him develop his interest in bonsai. (That same story, plus photographs, appears on page 8 of this newsletter.)

If his story inspires other novice members, we suggest using the Huntington Gardens' Bonsai-A-Thon weekend (see next paragraph) as a steppingstone.

As always at the Bonsai-A-Thon, there will be a large vendors section, which can be overwhelming for a person new to the art form. Our more experienced members are willing to help.

We will have veteran club members at

the Huntington over the weekend and if newer members would like help or guidance, please let us know.

The Bonsai-A-Thon is coming up at the Huntington Gardens in San Marino on Saturday and Sunday, February 22 and 23, 2020. (See the details on page 10.) Entrance to the event and the Gardens is free for bonsai club members. However, you must go to the bonsai registration area (not the front gate) and get a bonsai/Huntington entrance pass. You will need

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Marj Branson

NOTE:
Special date for this
month's
meeting:
Thursday,
February 27

CVBS Membership

Time To Pay 2020 Dues!

It's time to renew your Conejo Valley Bonsai Society membership. It's still a bargain at \$25 for one person, \$30 for two or more. That gets you a rich program of bonsai demonstrations, workshops, and activities as well as this award-winning newsletter.

Simply bring a check made payable to the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society to our next monthly meeting on February 27, 2020. Or you may also mail a check to: CVBS Membership, c/o Marj Branson, 1169 Triunfo Canyon Road, Westlake Village, CA 91361.

—Nancy Smeets

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(Click on Email Address)

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CVBS Programs 2020

If you are interested in the CVBS Mentoring Program, please see Marj Branson for more information & applications to participate.

January 16	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
NOTE: SPECIAL DATE February 27	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
March 19	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by DEMONSTRATION: Jim Barrett / Group Planting
April 16	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
May 21	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by DEMONSTRATION: Roy Nagatoshi / TBA
June 18	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
July 16	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by DEMONSTRATION: Gary Nanson / TBA
August 20	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop and Swap Meet— BRING YOUR TREES AND OTHER ITEMS
September 17	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by PEER CRITIQUES—BRING YOUR EXHIBITION TREES
October 3 – 4	17TH ANNUAL CVBS EXHIBITION Gardens of the World
October 15	7:30PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
November 19	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting with Club Elections followed by DEMONSTRATION: TBA
December 17	7:30 PM HOLIDAY POTLUCK, RAFFLE & AUCTION

It's High Season for Potting

By Jim Barrett

February and March are probably the best two months of the year for potting and repotting bonsai and training trees from nursery cans to bonsai pots.

Deciding which bonsai needs repotting will depend on how long since its last potting and whether the tree has become root bound.

If the pot does not have a major inside lip, you may want to inspect the root ball by lifting the tree out of the pot. Look for a firm root ball with roots visible all around the sides and bottom.

Another indication that the tree needs repotting is the soil lifting above the edge of the pot. This shows that a mat of roots has formed on the bottom and is pushing the tree up. Trident maple bonsai are noted for this phenomenon.

One important reason for repotting is the tree has matured beyond its present container. Either it has grown larger or it deserves a more appropriate pot.

There are several things to consider when you decide to proceed:

- Decide which tree or trees you want to pot.
- Choose the pot. And it's a good idea to have a standby in case the first one doesn't work.
- Place the wire or heavy plastic screen over each drain hole. Mesh should be at least 1/8 inch holes. Make sure screens are held in place with wire clips.
- If you are going to tie the tree in [the pot], now is the time to install the tie wires. Use a wire of sufficient size and strength to do the job.
- Make sure the pot is clean inside and out.
- Have your favorite [soil] mix handy. All of the preparations should be

done before the root ball is disturbed. Many bonsai are lost or set back if the roots and soil are removed before everything is ready.

Some hobbyists take just enough soil and roots off to place the tree back in its original pot, leaving room for an inch or so of new soil. Others are more aggressive in cleaning out old soil and pruning the roots more severely. Both approaches are valid. It all depends on the condition of the tree, its root system, and the owner's goals for the tree. This all sounds pretty involved or complicated—it isn't, if you use common

sense and do not get too rough with the tree.

Aesthetic considerations are:

- Tree and pot harmony or appropriateness.
- Is the tree placed in the pot properly?
- Is the tree planted at the proper angle or attitude?
- Is the front of the tree facing the viewer?

After repotting, place the tree in a shaded area to protect it from the wind. In a week to ten days, place it where you would normally. Wait about a month before fertilizing.

Speaking of fertilizers, you should have started fertilizing with organic fertilizers by now. Miracle Gro® and fast-acting fertilizers are best applied at ½ strength. Time-release and slow-acting chemical fertilizers, such as Osmocote® and Woodace®, are safe if you follow printed instructions. Some people add these to their soil mix. 🌱



Jim Barrett

Refreshments

Short but Sweet

February. The Hallmark month. Yes, there's President's Day on the third Monday of each February, but this month will be forever dominated by Valentine's Day on the 14th. The holiday created by Hallmark excites all manner of romantic expectations and an equal amount of dread, depending on which side of a relationship one stands. Hopefully, you or your sweetie made dinner reservation early and have a friend in the flower business.

If we can look beyond Valentine's Day, then it's interesting to note that February is the only month of the year that has fewer than 30 days. In common years, February has 28 days, but every fourth year February includes a Leap Day and is referred to as a Leap Year. We're in luck because 2020 is Leap Year.

In Slovenia, February used to be called "secan," which means "the month of cutting down trees." I suggest bonsai enthusiasts spend the month repotting versus cutting down their trees.

If you can help with refreshments at one of our monthly meetings, please contact me during a club meeting, by email, or just call.

—Mike Blumenberg

2020 Refreshments

	Cold Drinks	Eats / Sweets
Feb.	Rob Westberg	Rick Naber
Mar.	Ken Martin	Rick Boyer
Apr.	Volunteer Needed	Marj Branson
May	Mike Blumenberg	Mary Welz

CVBS Membership

Interested in CVBS?

CVBS is open to anyone interested in the horticultural art of bonsai. If you are not a member, consider joining now. We meet on the third Thursday of every month (except note the special date of February 27, 2020—see pages 1 and 2) at the Westlake Village City Hall (31200 Oakcrest Drive, Westlake Village, CA 91361). Meetings start at 7:30 PM, and include occasional demonstrations by bonsai experts, workshops, critiques, and member swap meets.

It's inexpensive and easy to join. Annual dues are \$25 for one, or \$30 for couples. Simply bring cash or a check (made payable to the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society) to our next monthly meeting. You may also mail a check to: CVBS Membership, c/o Marj Branson, 1169 Triunfo Canyon Road, Westlake Village, CA 91361.

—Nancy Smeets

Pacific Bonsai Museum in Winter Dress

By Mike Blumenberg

I travelled to Seattle over the December 2019 holidays to visit my son and took an afternoon to go back to the Pacific Bonsai Museum. I previously visited the museum in the fall of 2017, so I wanted to see their collection, especially the deciduous trees, in the winter.

Seattle winters are cold and wet; not as cold as the Midwest or East Coast, but they do get freezing temperatures, ice, and snow. It was in the upper 30s, cloudy, and a little foggy when I visited in December.

In order to protect their trees from winter weather, the museum took several actions. First, their tropical trees were moved indoors into a small heated display room. Some of the outdoor benches were bare except for a note explaining that these particular benches were too shady to display bonsai through the winter.

The trees that remained on exhibit were protected by four-sided boxes, providing overhead protection against freezing rain and snow and side protection against frosty winds. The front of each box remained open so visitors could still appreciate the tree.

The picture at right of a Formosan Juniper provides a good view of the winter box surrounding the tree.

Accent plants and accompanying artwork were also removed for the winter. The museum is in Federal Way, WA, about 25 miles south of Seattle. 🌲



The winter-weather box used by the Pacific Bonsai Museum to protect its trees during the cold months (above). The tree on display is a Formosan juniper that has been trained as a bonsai since 1962.



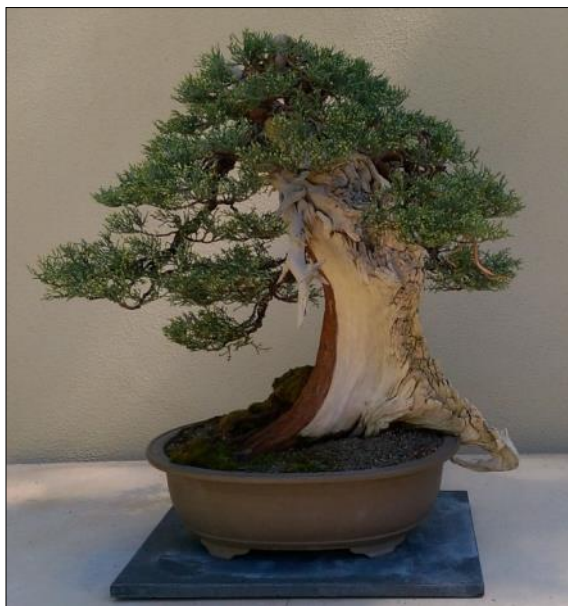
Twin trunk Japanese maple (left) created by Kai Kawahara (bonsai since 1954).

Foemina juniper (below) created by John Naka (bonsai since 1972).



Photos by Mike Blumenberg

(Continued on page 5)



Sierra Juniper created by Ryan Neal (bonsai since 2011). The first picture (left) was taken in December 2019 and the second picture (right) was taken in 2017. Can you see any differences?



Pear (left) created by Dr. Bertram Bruenner (bonsai since 1960).

Western hemlock (below) created by Patrick Anderson (bonsai since 1991).



(Continued on page 6)



Chinese Hackberry (left) created by Ben Oki (bonsai since 1962).

A close up showing the excellent ramification (above).



Bonsai News:

Robbed and Returned: Two Rare Bonsai

On February 9, 2020, two priceless bonsai were stolen from the Pacific Bonsai Museum in Washington state. Two days later, they were returned anonymously, unharmed.

A Japanese black pine (left) was stolen from the museum. It was grown from a seed in a tin can by Japanese American Juzaburo Furuzawa while he was incarcerated in an internment camp during World War II.

The silverberry (right) was created by a female bonsai artist, Kiyoko Hatanaka, in 1946. She and her husband were bonsai enthusiasts in Southern California. Silverberry is a common species for bonsai in Japan but is less common in the U.S. because it is more of a Japanese species. 🌳



Photos courtesy of Pacific Bonsai Museum

President's Message (Continued from page 1)

to identify yourself and the club. Bring your club badge if you have it. There will be signs out for those of you who have not attended the Bonsai-A-Thon before; for members who have attended previously, the setup is the same as previous years.

The Bonsai-A-Thon needs volunteer help. If anyone can work for a few hours on either Saturday or Sunday, please let me know and I will forward your information.

Club Business

Our yearly CVBS bonsai show has been confirmed with the Gardens of the World in Thousand Oaks. As is traditional, it will be the first weekend of October, Saturday and Sunday the 3rd and 4th with setup the Friday before. Start thinking about your trees!

Committee Positions: We have some vacant committee positions. We would appreciate your getting involved with the running of the club. Please see me or any committee chair at our February meeting.

Membership Dues: Your annual dues came due in January, so now's the time to pay. Membership remains very affordable at \$25.00 per person or \$30.00 per couple. Please bring your check made out to the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society to our February meeting or mail it to me (my address is in the box on page 1).

Nancy Smeets is organizing new club badges for all members who are financially current with their 2020 membership. The badge will be magnetic and have the club's current logo. We would like to order them in early March, so please pay your dues at your earliest convenience.

See you Thursday, **February 27**—the 4th Thursday of the month. 🌳

Our Niche Display Program

In the Niche Program, club members set up a mini exhibition display. Such a display consists of:

- The tree in a nice bonsai pot
- An accent plant
- A stand

All these items are important to create the balance for a good display. We aspire to present the best display possible for everyone's pleasure and edification, so the niche is often assembled by one of the more experienced members. However, it is also our desire to give less experienced bonsai hobbyists an opportunity to learn by doing. So if any less experienced member feels their trees are not ready for a finished display, it is worthwhile to create a display that is a work-in-progress. It will be up to the club member to determine which category their display falls into, and then the work-in-progress display can become the talking point of work done, work intended, and suggestions from the floor.

We encourage all members to sign up for the niche display! Please have a look at your 2020 calendar and let us know when you would like to present your display.

—Marj Branson

2020 Niche Displays	
Feb.	Rick Naber
March	Ken Martin
April	Marj Branson
May	Volunteer Needed
June	Volunteer Needed

Library

Check Out the CVBS Library

The Conejo Valley Bonsai Society has an extensive library of books, magazines, and DVDs available for members to borrow at no charge. The collection is available for your review at each monthly meeting. Material may be borrowed for a month at a time, so take home a book or DVD from our next meeting and return it at the following meeting. If you have any questions regarding the CVBS Library, please contact me at librarian@cvbs-bonsai.org.

—Mike Blumenberg

Book of the Month

Bonsai in California magazine. Published by the California Bonsai Society, Inc.

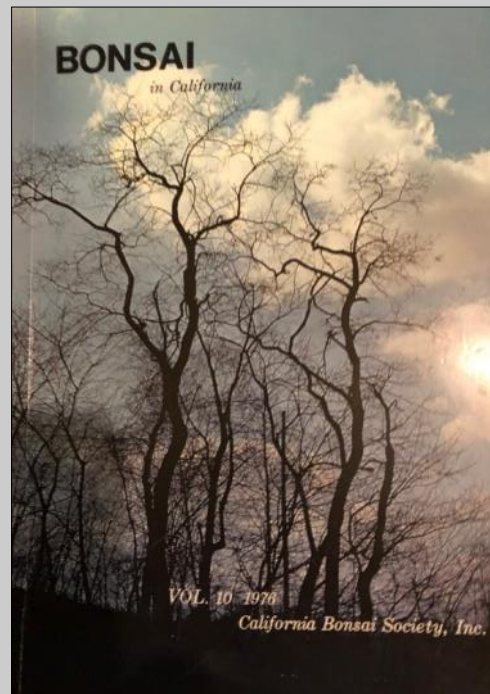
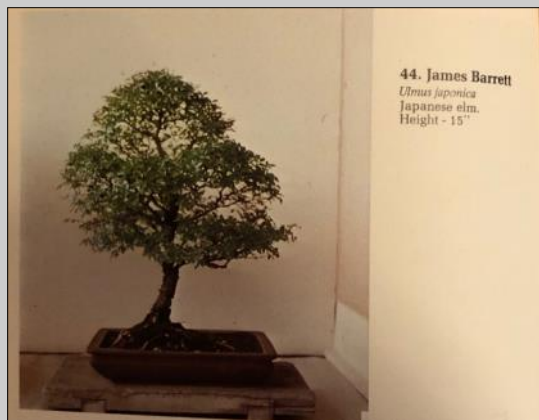
This month's Book of the Month is an introduction to the periodical *Bonsai in California* and a timely foreshadowing of our upcoming demonstration in March.

Bonsai in California is no longer in print, but our CVBS library includes 10 issues from the 1970s and 1980s. I randomly selected Volume 10 from 1976, which was the last of 10 published editions before it made a limited comeback in the 1980s and ultimately went permanently out of print. The periodical was a product of the California Bonsai Society produced in Japan, but its contributors included noted Southern California bonsai artists John Naka, Jim Barrett, and others.

This issue includes dozens of photos of the finest bonsai in California, including a beautiful elm by Jim Barrett. It also includes several well written articles such as Jim Barrett's essay entitled "You be the Judge," in which Jim explains how to prepare your bonsai for show.

This discovery of Jim's bonsai and essay from 1976 was serendipitous because Jim will give us a demonstration on creating a bonsai forest at our March club meeting. You can check out this issue of *Bonsai in California* and other volumes at our next club meeting, and be sure to mark your calendar for Jim's demonstration in March.

—Mike Blumenberg



Photos by Mike Blumenberg

Overcoming Beginner's Jitters with CVBS

By Mike Blumenberg

I was given a nice little “starter” bonsai as a gift many years ago, and I promptly killed it. Several years later I moved to Ventura and decided to try bonsai again. I wanted to learn about bonsai and grow my own trees, but asked myself “where do I start?”

If this sounds like you, then keep reading. I’ll share my story on how the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society (CVBS) helped me get started with bonsai and how CVBS continues to help me learn and care for my growing collection of bonsai.

My first and best step was a visit to a Conejo Valley Bonsai Society (CVBS) meeting. Even though I knew very little about bonsai and didn’t own any trees, I was greeted warmly and welcomed into the group. I decided to join soon after but was still uncertain on how to start learning this new art form and hobby.

My next step was getting assigned a coach. Ann Lofquist, an experienced and very talented CVBS member, volunteered to be my coach and mentor. Ann advised that I buy two types of trees: (1) a mature bonsai that I could continue to care for and refine and (2) some nursery stock that I could grow, train and eventually pot as bonsai.

I found and purchased my first bonsai at the annual Bonsai-A-Thon fundraiser at the Huntington Gardens. It’s a small juniper that is still growing in my yard today.

Next, Ann and I went to a local bonsai nursery where we selected two hardy trees in nursery containers. One is a hackberry and the other a Chinese elm.

Over the next several months, Ann coached me on how to trim and train these trees. I took advantage of the CVBS workshops and library. I read about bonsai techniques and bonsai care. When the trees were ready and the season was right, I potted my first bonsai under Ann’s watchful eye.

I will always remember the thrill several months later when that tree showed a few spring buds. It’s alive!

Since then, I’ve potted several more trees and continue to improve my bonsai skills, including wiring, trimming, fighting pests, and watering. I won’t claim to be a bonsai artist, but in a few short years I’ve amassed a nice collection of bonsai and pre-bonsai trees. I’ve learned a lot and most of my trees are thriving. I still agonize a little too much about cutting a branch, but I love spending time trimming and caring for my trees.

If the initial part of my story (i.e., “where do I start?”) sounds like your own, then I encourage you to reach out to the CVBS leadership and ask for guidance. CVBS has several experienced club members who will happily mentor you in the art of bonsai.

The upcoming Bonsai-A-Thon (BAT) on February 22 and 23 will be a great opportunity to get started. At the BAT, you’ll be able to find bonsai ready for adoption, as well as nursery stock. You can also find all the necessary tools, pots, soil, fertilizer, and wire. There will also be demonstrations by several bonsai artists.

It can be a little overwhelming for a newcomer, but one of the experienced CVBS members can help you shop wisely. If you’re interested, then ask Marj Branson (CVBS President), myself (CVBS Vice President), or any of the other club officers for some help.

Hope to see you at the BAT. 🌳

The hackberry shortly after I purchased it from a bonsai nursery in August 2017 (top right). Now in a bonsai pot, here’s how it looked in early February 2020 (bottom right).

I won’t claim to be a bonsai artist, but in a few short years I’ve amassed a nice collection of bonsai and pre-bonsai trees. I’ve learned a lot and most of my trees are thriving.



Procumbens ‘Nana’ Work in Progress

Editor’s Note: David Whiteside provided the January 2020 niche display, a procumbens juniper of unclear provenance. Here’s what David said about his display.

This is a little mysterious tree that has been sitting, largely neglected, in a remote corner of my bonsai yard. I guess I’d been waiting for inspiration before doing any serious work, other than an occasional pruning. Unlike many of my bonsai, I have not kept records on this one so while I suspect I got it in a Conejo Valley Bonsai Society raffle some years ago, I have no idea whence it came before that.

I wasn’t even sure of the species, although I suspected a procumbens juniper. Prior to the January meeting, club advisor Ken Fuentes confirmed that it is a procumbens ‘nana’ (*Juniperus procumbens* ‘Nana’).

Although there is nice movement and some taper in the trunk (see insert photo at the right), due to the years of neglect, the silhouette is not well formed and there were many long, leggy branches with little inside foliage near the trunk, so this is a work-in-progress bonsai: it will take years for the foliage to fill out and an apex to be developed. The long-range plan is to develop the branches and foliage near the upper right center of the tree, then jin most of the longer, exterior branches for a rugged, hard-scrabble, natural look. Note that I’ve already created a lot of deadwood; there’s much more to come.

The inspiration that I’d long awaited to start serious work on this tree actually came from the pot, which I had “commissioned” from my sister Ann Christiansen, a Seattle-area amateur potter. The design parameters I gave her were based on a different tree, but when the pot arrived I found that while she had followed my instructions perfectly, I had miscalculated the proper size. Disappointed, I looked around my benches for a replacement tree and recognized the potential for this juniper.

—David Whiteside



2020

February

February 15 – 16, 2020 Oakland, California

Annual Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt Mammoth Auction & Sale will be held on Saturday, February 15 and Sunday, February 16, 2020 at 666 Bellevue Ave., Lakeside Park Garden Center in Oakland. You are invited to the biggest auction and sale of bonsai, pre-bonsai, pots, books, stands, art, and jewelry. It is a giant fundraiser with all proceeds going to support the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt. Saturday auction preview starts at Noon with auction starting at 1:00 p.m. Sunday sale 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM, vendors, plant sale, and much more. Purchase your bonsai needs. For further information, contact George Haas, at gwhaas@comcast.net or visit web site <https://www.bonsailakemerritt.com>.

February 22 – 23, 2020 San Marino, California

Golden State Bonsai Federation Collection at the Huntington: Bonsai-A-Thon XXIV (see details in public service ad below).

March

March 14 – June 15, 2020 San Marino, California

Lifelines/Timelines: Exploring The Huntington's Collections Through Bonsai Visitors will discover an expansive new way to look at miniature trees in "Lifelines/Timelines: Exploring The Huntington's Collections Through Bonsai," on view March 14 through June 15 at The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens. The exhibition, one of the keystone events of The Huntington's yearlong Centennial Celebration, asks the question: How do five venerable bonsai trees relate in age and historical significance to masterpieces of literature and art? The Huntington is located at 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, CA.

March 28 – 29, 2020 San Jose, California

San Jose Betsuin Bonsai Club: 49th Annual Spring Exhibit at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, 640 North Fifth Street. Hours are 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM Saturday and Noon – 4:00 PM Sunday. Demonstration at 1:00 PM, both days with guest demonstrator David Nguy on Saturday and a club member demonstration on Sunday. Club sales of plants and pots. Vendor sales include West America (June and David Nguy) and Bonsai Fusion. For further information, call Bob Shatsky (408) 353-3239 or Susan Yea (408) 464-7340.



BONSAI-A-THON XXIV

Saturday & Sunday, February 22nd & 23rd, 2020

GSBF Early Bird Passes – Bonsai Club Members 7:30 AM–5:00 PM

General Public 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM

**Annual fundraising event on behalf of the
Golden State Bonsai Federation Collection at the Huntington.
Botanical Center Building
The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens
1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, CA 91108**

- **Extensive Bazaar Area** – Select vendors selling top-quality tools, pots and trees (raw material to display-ready); masterpiece trees on display
- **Bonsai Exhibit** – By Kofu Bonsai Kai Society
- **Bonsai Workshop for Children and Adults**– Pre-Registration required at huntington.org/calendar. Registration opens Dec.15, 2019.
- **Demonstrations** – Initial training and advanced styling of bonsai by experts
- **Daily Raffle & Auction** – Demonstration trees and donated trees, pots, tools, etc.
- **Guided Tours** – Led by Jim Folsom, Director of the Huntington Botanical Gardens, 10:00 AM Saturday; and Ted Matson, Bonsai Garden Curator, 10:00 AM Sunday
- **Pancake Breakfast** for BAT participants–7:30 AM both days.