



conejo valley

BONSAI society

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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/
conejovalleybonsaisociety](http://www.facebook.com/conejovalleybonsaisociety)

President's Message

Keeping CVBS in Touch

By Marj Branson

The Conejo Valley Bonsai Society's April meeting has been canceled due to the CORVID-19 pandemic. During this stressful time, we are taking a number of steps to keep our CVBS community in touch with each other and our art. Our newsletter will continue publication on its normal monthly schedule. Beginning with this issue, the newsletter includes some new segments:

CVBS Member Projects

Club members who are working on bonsai projects are invited to send info to newsletter editor David Whiteside (editor@cvbs-bonsai.org). Our first Member Project column features member Ben Conway (see page 4). So, whatever you are doing with your bonsai, take a few photographs, write a paragraph or two about them, and send it all to David so he can include it in the next newsletter.

Bonsai Online

There is a lot of material on the web and social media talking about bonsai. Some of it is not very good and misleading. Ken Martin is reviewing trusted websites and will critique them and their strong points (see page 5).

Virtual Niche Displays

We will continue with niche displays, but under the circumstances, they will be virtual. Rather than displaying at our meeting, the niche volunteer will set up their display at home, take pictures of it, and send them to David with their comments. Ken Martin's March display is featured in this issue (see page 6).



Marj Branson

Check the niche schedule on page 3 to see when you come up.

Mobile Library

Club librarian Mike Blumenberg will arrange for members to check out books, pamphlets, or DVDs during our meeting hiatus. He has provided a list of our holdings (see page 7). Just let him know what you'd like to check out.

In the past I encouraged everyone to go to spring shows. Sadly, most April shows have been canceled (see page 8). If want to take in a show, check with the sponsor as schedules are very fluid.

Meanwhile, I hope everyone is looking after themselves and their families during this CORVID-19 pandemic. 🌱

CVBS Membership

2020 Dues Are Overdue!

It's past time to renew your Conejo Valley Bonsai Society membership. It's still a bargain at \$25 for one person, \$30 for two or more. Although in-person meetings have been suspended temporarily because of the coronavirus pandemic, when we resume you'll get a rich program of bonsai demonstrations, workshops, and activities as well as this award-winning newsletter and a custom-made name badge.

Simply mail a check made payable to the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society 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	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by DEMONSTRATION: Jim Barrett / Group Planting
April 16	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 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

Bonsai Potting Tips for the Spring Season

By Jim Barrett

Editor's Note: While the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society's monthly meetings are suspended under the shelter-in-place policy due to the coronavirus pandemic, our trees still need attention. We will continue to publish Barrett's Bonsai Tips for the duration.

Since our [newsletter publication dates are] well past the middle of the month, we will attempt to include information that is important for the next month as well.

This time of year can be a very busy one for those of us with deciduous trees.

Deciduous trees need constant attention to keep upper growth in balance with the middle growth and the lower areas. Cut long shoots in the tops of maples, elms, and especially zelkova, to one or two nodes or leaves. Rub off unwanted sprouts before they develop into shoots.

Prune for shape and remove large leaves that block sunlight to the interior of the tree. From now on our task should be to encourage ramification, shape, and health.

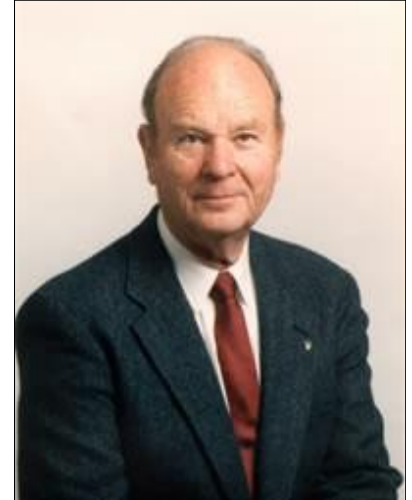
Fertilize your trees with slow acting fertilizers or time-release plant food. It is better to feed a little more often than a lot once in a while.

Resist candle pruning your black pine bonsai until June or later. Black pine, in growing containers that need more development, can be candle pruned in May.

Repotting—bonsai pot to bonsai pot—can still be done safely, especially pomegranate, most ficus, elms, wisteria, junipers, and azaleas. Olives can be potted, or if you wish, they can be worked on now.

Watch for powdery mildew on maples, quince, crabapples, and crapemyrtle.

Watch for aphids and spider mites. They will be very active this year. If your trees are infested with black ants, chances are you have aphids or scale. Keep after the trees you want to show in June [at the Descanso Bonsai Society exhibition—some CVBS members do this—Editor]. A little work often will save a lot of work later on and the tree will look super. Look for stands and accents. 🌳



Jim Barrett

CVBS Niche Displays

Virtual Niche Display Program

In normal times, the Niche Program consists of club members setting up mini exhibition displays on a table in our meeting room. But with the Westlake Village City Hall Community Room shuttered for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic, this is not possible.

So in this issue we launch a virtual niche display program. We are asking niche display volunteers to set up their displays at home, photograph them, and send the pictures plus some comments (a paragraph or two) to our newsletter editor, David Whiteside.

For example, Ken Martin, who was scheduled to do the niche display at our canceled March meeting, provided photos of his intended display (see page 6). I am scheduled to do the April niche, so I will provide photos of my intended display for the May issue. Future volunteers, please note that we will be asking you to do the same as long as in-person meetings are not possible.

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	
April	Marj Branson
May	Nancy Smeets
June	Dick Winston
July	Volunteer Needed
August	Mike Blumenberg

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 for this month of April, which has been canceled—see page 1) in the Westlake Village City Hall Community Room (31200 Oakcrest Drive, Westlake Village, CA 91361). Meetings start at 7:30 PM, and include occasional demonstrations by bonsai experts, workshops, critiques, member swap meets, and this award-winning newsletter.

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

—Nancy Smeets

Hanging Out with My Bonsai Trees

Editor's Note: Member Projects is a new department for this newsletter. Its purpose is to help members remain connected during the in-person meeting hiatus. Each month we hope to publish brief notes and photographs from at least one member. Everyone is invited to participate—you don't have to write a *War and Peace* length novel, just a few words to let your friends in the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society know how you and your bonsai are doing during the crisis.

CVBS Member Ben Conway is keeping busy with his bonsai during the coronavirus pandemic. Here's what he reports on his recent activities.

Hope all is well. Just so you know, I will still be around for future meetings. Obviously, it all depends on what the CORVID-19 situation is.

This year started out busy, but now I find myself playing video games and hanging out with my trees every day.

My trees are doing great, and I'm looking forward to lots of fun work to do in the coming months. I have a lot of projects going, but most are pretty tame.

I'm experimenting with different species and looking for locations to go collecting. My window for that is closing. I love our native oaks, and would love to find a California juniper to develop.

Here are a few trees I worked on.

—Ben Conway



Willow leaf ficus (*Ficus salicifolia* or *neriifolia*)—this bonsai will be cut back soon, but I'll leave the bottom branch alone to grow out more.

Photos by Ben Conway



Here is my literati Japanese black pine (*Pinus thunbergii*) a few months back when I styled it up (left). It's coming along nicely. Whoever set the bones on this tree originally, did a great job!

Some back budding on that same Japanese black pine literati tree (below).



Tiger-bark ficus (*Ficus microcarpa* 'Tiger Bark') defoliated (above).

Two Masters: Ryan Neil and Peter Chan

By Ken Martin

YouTube Video Review

How To Make a Bonsai

Ryan Neil

Bonsai Mirai (St. Helens, Oregon)

Go to “How To Make a Bonsai” on YouTube.

From the website: “Part 3 of the Nursery Stock Series. Watch Ryan work with the classic Christmas tree staple, the noble fir, and transform it into a worthy piece of material. We go back to hammer down the foundations of our practice, from defining what a good piece of material looks like to the completion of the first styling. Whether you’re a beginner looking for your first lesson or an advanced practitioner refining their knowledge through our nuanced methods, this stream will cater to all levels.”

This video, How to Make a Bonsai, is a 95-minute free demonstration by one of the most accomplished young bonsai masters in the United States. Ryan apprenticed in Japan for six years and now explores what he views as an American form of bonsai at his garden, Bonsai Mirai.

In this video, Ryan takes the viewer through what to look for in the selection process, how to select the front of the tree, how to decide on the style, and completes the first styling of this \$20 Christmas leftover. Along the way, he also provides a great wiring tutorial.

I found the presentation very instructive as well as entertaining. The audio and visual components were very professionally done. Certainly, a worthwhile hour and a half.



Ryan Neil with a \$20 fir (above).

YouTube Video Review

Creating Bonsai from Wild Material

Peter Chan

Heron Nursery (United Kingdom)

Go to “Creating Bonsai from Wild Material” on YouTube.

I purchased a basic bonsai book authored by Peter Chan about 35 years ago. Besides writing several books, he owns a large bonsai nursery in the U.K., conducts classes, and makes demonstration videos. Since I had his book, I decided to review some of his demonstrations. This video is 63 minutes long. The subject is an approximately 2-foot tall mugo pine collected in France 30 or 35 years ago by a lady who put it in a pot but did no styling and recently gave it to Peter to style. He said he worked on this tree in nine sessions of about an hour each.

Peter Chan with a mugo pine collected several decades ago (below).



Originally, he thought a semi-cascade would be the best style but changed his mind and, in the end, made an informal upright bonsai of it. Topics covered in depth are selecting the front, deciding on a style, wiring, and re-potting.

In order to more easily bend two large branches, he used a branch-splitter on them. He emphasizes not deleting branches until absolutely sure of the style. At one point he was pretty sure he was going to delete a small lower branch but much later decided to keep it as it provided some distinctive quality to the composition.

At one time there was a lot of background noise and I could barely hear what he was saying. He said it was raining torrents on his greenhouse roof. He had to interrupt this demo for several weeks to repair flood damage to his greenhouse. Not a terribly exciting demonstration, but I felt it worthwhile. I learned some new stuff. 🌲

Transformation from Forest to Saikei

Editor's Note: Ken Martin was scheduled to provide the niche display at CVBS's March 2020 meeting, which was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Here's what he planned to show.

Ever since Mike Blumenberg and I took a saikei class from Frank Goya at the 2017 Golden State Bonsai Federation Convention, I have been intrigued by saikei. Lindsay Shiba's saikei demonstration at the February 2020 Bonsai-A-Thon (photo bottom left) was a great motivator.

Rick Naber's excellent boxwood forests have also been an influence. The importance of Rick's landscaping strongly suggests saikei in my mind. My primary enjoyment in looking at a bonsai tree or forest is imagining I can walk into the landscape and it surrounds me. A saikei does this for me.

In bonsai, the soil appearance has little value. It's all about the tree and pot: a simple topography and a single species of plant material. In saikei the landscape of rocks and soil are of much more importance and are arranged to suggest a natural landscape. "Saikei concentrates on the evocation of a natural living landscape, rather than on the character of individual trees as emphasized in bonsai," according to an article on saikei history, practice, and aesthetics on Wikipedia.

Several years ago, I put together a forest planting from boxwoods in one-quart containers obtained from the local home improvement store (photo bottom right). When thinking about what I would bring for a niche display at the CVBS March 2020 meeting, I decided to convert this nine-boxwood forest to a saikei. I made hills and swales, added two more rocks, raised the #1 tree a couple of inches higher, and added a stream bed (or walking path) and three small different-species plants (photo right).

—Ken Martin

Photos by Ken Martin



Boxwood saikei (above), March 17, 2020.

Boxwood bonsai forest with one rock (below right).

Lindsay Shiba's 2020 Bonsai-A-Thon saikei demonstration (below left).



Bring on the CVBS Bonsai Book Mobile

I started to write my monthly book review when I realized that nobody will be able to check out any book while our club meetings are suspended amid the COVID-19 outbreak. In lieu of a book review, I offer this summary of the CVBS Library and propose to start the CVBS Book Mobile! If you want a good bonsai book or DVD to review while staying home, then give me a call and request a book, pamphlet, periodical, or DVD. We'll arrange for it to be sanitized and delivered (or picked up).

Library holdings:

- **General books on bonsai techniques**
 - ◇ *Bonsai Techniques I* by John Naka (widely viewed as the best bonsai guidebook available)
 - ◇ *The Masters Book of Bonsai* by the Directors of the Japan Bonsai Association
 - ◇ *Practical Bonsai* by Paul Lesniewicz and Hideo Kato
 - ◇ *The Art of Bonsai* by Peter Adams
 - ◇ *The Living Art of Bonsai* by Amy Liang
 - ◇ *Bonsai Ideas* by Marty Mann
 - ◇ *The Complete Book of Bonsai* by Harry Tomlinson
 - ◇ *The Complete Practical Encyclopedia of Bonsai* by Ken Norman
 - ◇ *The Bonsai Handbook* by David Prescott
 - ◇ *Keep your Bonsai Alive & Well* by Herb Gustafson
 - ◇ *Bonsai Survival Manual* by Colin Lewis
- **Species specific books**
 - ◇ *Pines: Growing & Styling Pine Bonsai* from *Bonsai Today*
 - ◇ *Junipers: Growing & Styling Juniper Bonsai* from *Bonsai Today*
 - ◇ *Bonsai Techniques for Satsuki (Azaleas)* by Naka, Ota & Rokkaku
- **Landscape style books**
 - ◇ *Saikei and Art, Miniature Landscapes* by Lew Butler
 - ◇ *Creating Bonsai Landscapes* by Su Chin Ee
- **Books emphasizing the art aspects of bonsai**
 - ◇ *Four Seasons of Bonsai* by Kyuzo Murata
 - ◇ *Bonsai and Penjing* by Ann McClellan
 - ◇ *The Bonsai Art of Kimura* by Kimura
- **Interesting, in-depth reading**
 - ◇ *Post-Dated, The Schooling of an Irreverent Bonsai Monk* by Michael Hagedorn
 - ◇ *Botany for Bonsai, the Science Behind the Art* by Enrique Castano de la Serna
- **Pamphlets**
 - ◇ *Shaping Pines* by Peter Adams
 - ◇ *Basic Wiring* by George Buehler
 - ◇ *Indoor Bonsai* by Jerry Meislik
- **DVDs**
 - ◇ *Bonsai Gallery of Walter Pall* (8,000 images)
 - ◇ *The Growing Art of Bonsai*
 - ◇ *Finding the Bonsai Within: Ponderosa Pine Wiring Techniques*
 - ◇ *Repotting: Japanese Black Pine*
 - ◇ *Wiring & Styling: Japanese Black Pine*
 - ◇ *Decandling: Japanese Black Pine*
 - ◇ *Japanese Maples*
 - ◇ *Repotting Deciduous Trees*
- **Periodicals**
 - ◇ 20 editions of *Bonsai Today*, from 1994 through 2001

—Mike Blumenberg

Please note that two DVDs are missing and we have no record of who last checked them out. If you have one of these in your possession, please contact me and we'll arrange to return it to inventory.

⇒ DVD: *Scale Junipers* by Bonsai Boon

⇒ DVD: *Bonsai Pottery*

2020

April BE SURE TO CONFIRM STATUS OF ALL EVENTS AHEAD OF TIME

Now – June 15, 2020 San Marino, California HUNTINGTON CLOSED THROUGH APRIL 19

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.

April 4 – 5, 2020 Sacramento, California CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

Bonsai Sekiyu Kai: 43rd Annual Show will be held at the Sacramento Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Hours are 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM with a demonstration at 2:00 PM each day by Yuzo Maruyama. Free Admission. Amenities include refreshments, light snacks, door prizes, raffles, and silent auction, as well as a member and vendor sale of plants and bonsai related items. Drop-in mini bonsai lessons will be held from 10:00 AM-12:00 PM for \$15. For more information, contact the Bonsai Sekiyu Kai at bonsaisekiyukai@gmail.com.

April 11 – 12, 2020 Sacramento, California CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

American Bonsai Association, Sacramento: Annual Spring Show at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center in McKinley Park, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Show hours are Saturday, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM, and Sunday, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM, with a demonstration by Dave De Groot at 1:30 PM, both days. Beginner workshop: Sunday morning from 10:00 AM – Noon. Large member sales and vendor areas, free admission and parking. Benefit drawings, both Saturday and Sunday, will include each day's demonstration tree and many bonsai and bonsai related items. For additional information visit our website: <http://www.abasbonsai.org> or contact Renee Seely, 916-929-2106 or email breadcrumb@comcast.net.

April 18, 2020 Modesto, California CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

Modesto Bonsai Club: 38th Annual Spring Show at the Stanislaus County Harvest Hall, 3800 Cornucopia Way. Show hours are Saturday, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM, with a demonstration at 1:00 PM by Sam Adina. Exhibits, sales, plants, pots, tools and more, multiple raffles. Free admission and parking. Benefit drawing Saturday, will include demonstration tree and many bonsai and bonsai related items. For additional information visit our Club Facebook Page Modesto Bonsai Club, or contact our Club President Peter Camarena, 209-529-1759 or email pete.camarena@sbcglobal.net.

April 18 – 19, 2020 Santa Cruz, California CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

Santa Cruz Bonsai Kai: 31st Annual Bonsai Show at the Museum of Art & History, 705 Front Street. Show hours are from 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM with demonstrations at 11:00 AM and 2:00 PM. Saturday's demonstrators are Enrique Castano at 11:00 AM and Gordon Deeg at 2:00 PM and Sunday's demonstrators are Enrique Castano at 11:00 AM and Scott Chadd at 2:00 PM. Demonstration trees and trees prepared by club members will be part of the raffle after each day's demonstration. Sales area will include quality vendor and member trees, pots, and other related bonsai items. Come and enjoy the Museum of Art & History, over 100 bonsai trees on display, and demonstrations on how to create bonsai from nursery stock. In addition, enjoy the Watsonville Taiko Drummers, a hang drum demonstration, and other Japanese cultural events in the recently revitalized Abbott Square next to the Museum. For this weekend only, admission price is \$5.00 for both the Museum and the Bonsai Show (Half off the normal Museum entrance fee). For more information, contact Sarah Tiller at sarah.tiller@gmail.com or Robert Potts at cbobgo@gmail.com.

April 25 – 26, 2020 Palo Alto, California CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

Kusamura Bonsai Club: 60th Annual Show, Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. Show hours are Saturday, Noon – 4 PM, Sunday 11 AM – 4 PM. Free admission. Bonsai trees, pots, and other bonsai-related items will be for sale. Bring your tree to our Bonsai Clinic for advice on care and development. Tours of the show will be held starting at 1:30 PM each day. For more information contact Charlene Fischer at charlenerae@mac.com or visit www.kusamurabonsai.org.

April 25 – 26, 2020 San Diego, California CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

San Diego Bonsai Club: The 55th annual Spring Bonsai Show and Sale of the San Diego Bonsai Club will be held at in Balboa Park's Prado Building, San Diego. The two-day event is open to the public from 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM each day. More than 50 amazing bonsai of various sizes and species will be on display. The wide range of activities will include bonsai demonstrations by expert members on both days, and a table sale featuring hundreds of trees, plants, pots and other bonsai merchandise offered by San Diego Bonsai Club members. For more information, go to <http://www.sandiegobonsaiclub.com>

May

Saturday, May 9, 2020

World Bonsai Day celebrates the legacy of bonsai master Saburo Kato (1915-2008), a key figure in the modern history of bonsai. Mr. Kato was the third-generation owner of "Mansei-en," located in Omiya (just north of Tokyo) and one of the most famous bonsai nurseries in the world. Today Omiya Bonsai Village is known as the "Bonsai Mecca" of the world. In honor of Saburo Kato and in keeping with his beliefs, the World Bonsai Friendship Federation has designated the second Saturday of May as "World Bonsai Day." On this special day, CVBS hopes all it's members share in the friendship and love of bonsai with others around the world.