



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

President's Message

Bonsai Events Go Virtual

By Marj Branson

I am sorry to report that the Westlake Village Community Center is still closed, which means we cannot hold our June Conejo Valley Bonsai Society meeting.

That's bad news, and it gets worse. Virtually the entire 2020 California bonsai exhibition calendar has been canceled (see page 8). This provisionally includes our own fall exhibition, originally scheduled for October 3 – 4 at Gardens of the World in Thousand Oaks. We are certainly living in some very trying times.

Indeed, 2020 has seen the bonsai community turned upside down. There have been no spring shows, and as of press time, there were none planned for the autumn (again, see page 8 for details). And the Golden State Bonsai Federation Convention in October has been postponed until next year.

We at CVBS are up against similar circumstances. Although October is months away, Gardens of the World has canceled all their activities for July and August and are uncertain when they will reopen. So, for the moment, we have provisionally canceled our annual exhibition as a live, in-person event.

Now some good news: The California bonsai community is resilient. GSBF continues to publish its quarterly magazine. "*Golden Statements* ... online live is doing very well; viewed by over 30 countries, almost 400 active subscribers, and over 1,000 views per issue. And, it's free," reports Editor George Haas in an email. "The summer issue of *Golden Statements* [online] is currently undergoing proof reading and will be posted within a couple of weeks."

In addition, local clubs have been innovative in keeping their members active and informed. Our friends at the Descanso Bonsai Society, for example, have replaced their monthly meetings with online demonstrations. And they are making their 50th annual June show "an online presentation on our website (descanso-bonsai.com) and on our Face-

book page," Descanso President Cesáreo Pérez says in their current newsletter.

Back here at CVBS, Editor David Whiteside is continuing with our monthly newsletter; Ken Martin is viewing and critiquing various bonsai websites; Mike Blumenberg is providing a CVBS Book Mobile and also reviewing our library collection in the newsletter; and the niche display is continuing in virtual form with club members photographing their display trees and sending the pictures to our newsletter editor. Club members working on projects have submitted articles for our newsletter. These activities will continue.

Moreover, our fall exhibition will happen in some format. If there is no resurgence of Covid-19 infections in the late summer or early fall, the Gardens may reopen and at the last minute we can have our show, live and in person.

Failing that, we are making plans to have a virtual exhibition. At the least, we hope to have members set up show-tree displays and photograph them at home. These photographs will be published in the newsletter, on our Facebook page, and/or on our website.

We're also exploring more ambitious ideas. If we can identify a tech-savvy member, perhaps we can create a dynamic virtual exhibition or put virtual demonstrations online via YouTube or a similar platform. If you are such a tech-savvy club member and able to help with either a virtual exhibition or video demonstrations, please let me know.

So, I urge everyone to keep an eye on potential exhibition trees and get them into show-ready condition by autumn. We'll need them for an exhibit in some format.

Stay safe. 



Marj Branson

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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	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by DEMONSTRATION: Roy Nagatoshi / TBA
June 18	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 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	PROVISIONALLY CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIROUS 17TH ANNUAL CVBS EXHIBITION Gardens of the World (See page 1.)
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

Tailor Care to Each Species' Horticultural Needs

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.

If you have been pruning your deciduous trees properly, you should be seeing more and finer twigs, which, in turn, make for a more mature-looking tree and a great winter silhouette.

Continue to prune fast-growing elm, zelkova, and maple twigs, leaving one or two nodes on each new branch. Usually the distance between nodes is regulated by the amount of nitrogen the plant is able to use. The more available nitrogen, the longer the internodes—this assumes that the plant is healthy and vigorous.

Because not all bonsai grow at the same rate, you must pay attention to the habits of each one. If you have crab apple, ume, or quince, prune all new growth to one or two nodes around the first week in July. Then do not prune again until next fall. Flower buds form during summer and early fall and pruning during this period reduces the number of flowers you may get next spring.

Along with this procedure, feed high-phosphorus and low-nitrogen fertilizers. Satsuki azaleas should not be fed until after blooming. Once the peak blooming period is over, pluck, or better yet, cut all of the flowers off, making sure to remove any seed pods.

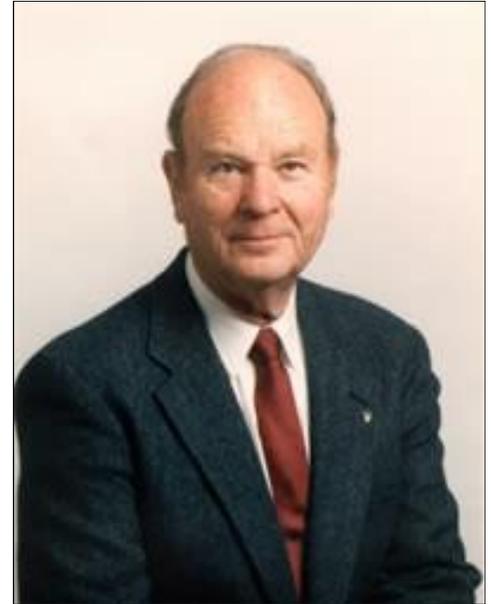
If you have black pine bonsai, try to finish your favorite candle pruning procedure by mid-July or earlier. How you need to prune black pine will depend on the health, the age, and your goals for each tree.

Check with your instructor or bring your untrimmed black pine to your club's next meeting for advice.

Aphids are really out in force now. Watch for them especially on apple, quince, and ume. Spray with an appropriate insecticide. You may want to introduce ladybugs purchased at your local nursery. (Let me know how you keep them in your yard.)

Warm days are ahead of us, so pay attention to your watering program and hold back on the high-nitrogen fertilizers.

You should be able to repot ficus, pomegranate, and atlas cedar anytime now. If you need to repot elm and maple, make sure the new growth has hardened somewhat and try not to remove too many fine roots. You may find trident maples have developed a thick pad of roots on the bottom of the root ball. Add soil as needed and return the tree to its place. Save any major root pruning for next January or February. 🌳



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 we are doing virtual niche displays. 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 will do) to our newsletter editor, David Whiteside.

For example, Nancy Smeets was scheduled to do the niche display at our canceled May meeting, so she provided photos for this, the June 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	
June	Dick Winston
July	Volunteer Needed
August	Mike Blumenberg
Sept.	Volunteer Needed
Oct.	Volunteer Needed

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 June, 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

A Bonsai Lesson Learned the Hard Way

Editor's Note: This month's Member Project is by Ken Martin. Please remember that 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.

A couple of years ago, I planted several bonsai in my garden to fatten their trunks. The first of February this year I dug up a twisted-trunk pomegranate that had developed a nice 5-inch base.

I used a spade about 8 inches from the trunk to dig it out. I was chagrined to find only six or so 3/8-inch diameter short roots with no fine roots at all remaining on the tree. I decided to pot it anyway (see photo, below left).

I contacted Kathy Benson as I knew she grows bonsai in a raised bed. She said she digs up her trees yearly and even rotates them to get a different sun angle. I remembered this from her visit to Conejo Valley Bonsai Society last year, but I thought the main reason was to rotate them.

She suggested I apply a rooting hormone in water, which I did. In the middle of April, I was pleasantly surprised to see buds emerging (see photo, below right). There were lots of shoots and a possible first and second branch.

My current plan is to not trim the growth this year so the maximum photosynthesis will occur to help speed development of the roots. I was lucky and the rooting hormone may have helped.

Lesson Learned: If you plant bonsai in the ground to accelerate trunk growth, strongly consider digging around them yearly to contain small feeder roots near the trunk. Also consider rotating the tree yearly and watering and fertilizing within a foot of the trunk.

—Ken Martin

Photos by Ken Martin



My twisted-trunk pomegranate as it appeared in February 2020, just after I dug it up following a couple of years in the ground (above, left). It had very few feeder roots, but I potted it anyway.



The same twisted-trunk pomegranate on June 1, 2020 (above, right). Note all the fresh growth, which I think was stimulated by rooting hormone I applied earlier in the year.

Trained in Japan: Bonsai Mirai's Ryan Neil

By Ken Martin

YouTube Video Review

Beginner's Series

Ryan Neil

Bonsai Mirai (St. Helens, Oregon)

Available on YouTube

What I would like to review/recommend this month is Ryan Neil's Bonsai Mirai YouTube Beginner's series. It's worth noting that Ryan spent six years in Japan apprenticing under world-renown bonsai master Masahiko Kimura. Ryan's own work is very pricey: He sells his trees at prices ranging from \$2,500 to \$750,000. Most buyers ask him to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

In his Beginner's YouTube series, there are ten sessions ranging from "How to Select a Tree" to "Watering." Some sessions are as short as 5 minutes while others are up to 16 minutes long.

I have reviewed the first several, found them entertaining, and I learned a few new tips. In particular, I watched "Watering" and "Soil" as I thought there might be some differences due to location. I also watched the one titled "Wiring the Trunk" and learned some tips.

The watering session discusses how and when to water, but does not discuss water quality. Ryan says this shouldn't concern the beginner. He's near Portland, OR where the water, I would guess, has less minerals in it than our local water.

I kind of cringe when I see how much overspray results from his watering technique. He undoubtedly has easier and cheaper access to water than we do. He does not mention spraying bonsai to cool them off in the summer as is commonly done here in Southern California.

The soil session is very brief and just discusses the classic mix of equal parts akadama, pumice, and lava rock. He explains what each contributes. No mention of sifting, etc.

Still, overall, I think this series, presented by a very knowledgeable and articulate bonsai master, is certainly worth watching. Even though most of us have heard or read the techniques discussed, Ryan, in most cases, provides the logical reasoning behind them. As an engineer, I always want to know why.

I would go to Ryan Neil's Bonsai Mirai YouTube channel and select the titles that you think would interest you.

Screen capture by Ken Martin



Ryan Neil, owner of Bonsai Mirai (above).

Bonsai Novelty:

At Bag End in Hobbiton: Bilbo's Bonsai

The Lord of the Rings enthusiasts will remember that atop Bilbo Bagins' home, Bag End, there was a stately tree. What most viewers of the films don't realize is that tree is fake.

During a trip to New Zealand in 2015, my wife, Romie, and I scheduled a stop at Hobbiton, the fictional town/movie set featured in both *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* trilogies, which are based on the novels by J.R.R. Tolkien and directed by Peter Jackson. Situated on a family run farm about 5.0 miles west of Hinuera and 6.2 miles southwest of Matamata, in Waikato, on New Zealand's North Island, the movie set has been preserved and is now a tourist destination.

During our tour of Hobbiton, the guide explained that the tree over Bilbo's famous home is artificial. In fact, the story goes that at the last minute director Jackson decided the leaves were

the wrong shade of green and had them all hand painted a more appropriate shade.

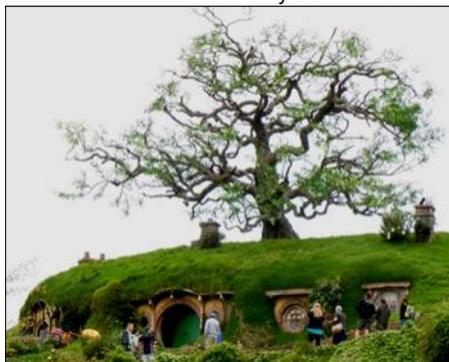
Little did we know that bonsai artist Chris Guise would spend over 80 hours to recreate the scene (see photo, below). His creation is featured on the Bonsai Empire blog, where he describes the step-by-step process.

—David Whiteside

Screen capture from www.bonsaiempire.com/blog/bag-end

Photo by David Whiteside

The original (fake) tree atop Bilbo's home in Hobbiton (near right).



A bonsai trayscale designed by Chris Guise to represent Bilbo's Bag End home (far right).



Kishu Shimpaku in a Japanese Pot

Editor's Note: Nancy Smeets was scheduled to provide the niche display at CVBS's May 2020 meeting, which was canceled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. So Nancy set up a display in her home and photographed it herself. Here's what Nancy said about the tree she picked for this issue's virtual niche display.

This is a Kishu shimpaku juniper (*Juniperus chinensis* 'Shimpaku Kishu') that I got from Al Rivera maybe three or four years ago when I was attending a workshop at Roy Nagatoshi's Fuji Bonsai Nursery in Sylmar, CA. It was much smaller then, in a red clay training pot, and I just fell in love with it. Luckily, it thrived!

Al said he actually got it from Japan, but I cannot verify that. I paid a very high price for it, but was happy to do so.

I repotted it after maybe a year, and I may repot it again next year depending on its health. I did get the pot in Japan!

I gave it a real good trimming and styling a while ago, but hesitate to do it now because the heat just started.

I also brought the little screen back from Japan. I just thought it's interesting, and we don't see much of that when our members do their niches.

I'd say the tree is maybe 40 to 50 years old, but I really don't know; it could be much older.

Oh, and the sweet little accent pot: I believe I got that from Jim Barrett's collection a long time ago, about five years.

—Nancy Smeets

Nancy Smeets' Kishu shimpaku juniper (below). The seller said that the tree was imported from Japan; Nancy personally bought the pot in Japan. She also purchased the little screen behind her accent plant in Japan, at left in the photo. Nancy estimates that the tree is 40 to 50 years old.

Photo by Nancy Smeets



Library

Mobile-Mode Bonsai Library Continues

Just a reminder that while our club meetings are suspended amid the Covid-19 outbreak, I am providing 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). For a complete list of our library holdings—books, pamphlets, DVDs, and periodicals—please see page 7 of the April 2020 issue of this newsletter.

—Mike Blumenberg

Book of the Month

Botany for Bonsai: The Science Behind the Art, by Enrique Castano de la Serna. © 2007 Published by Haskill Creek Publishing, Spokane, WA. Reprinted by American Bonsai Society, which has a few copies available for \$20.95. 124 pages.

Photo by Mike Blumenberg

My elm tree started dropping leaves. I was concerned and a little perplexed. I wanted to understand why this was happening and how I can stop it. I looked through the library for a good book that could help me understand and resolve this problem, and I found *Botany for Bonsai* by Enrique Castano de la Serna. A paperback, it contains 175 illustrative drawings and 30 photographs.

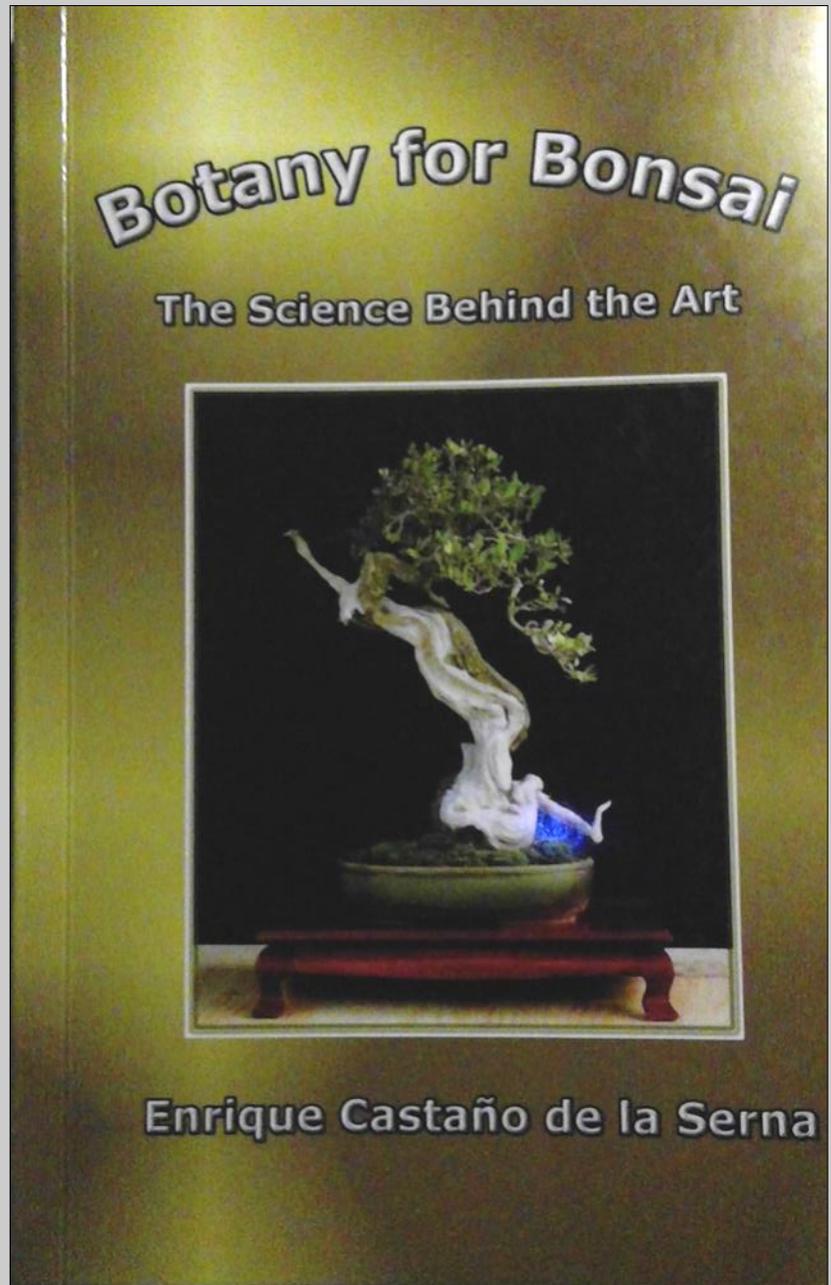
The author explains that “bonsai is a form of art that works in four dimensions.” A tree exists in three dimensions, but the fourth dimension of time allows us to “predict what happens in a week, month, year, etc.” This understanding then will allow us to do “better planning of the design that our trees can achieve as they change over time.”

I jumped to the chapter titled “Leaves – What are they telling us?” and learned about photosynthesis, photochrome (a plant pigment that detects the length and intensity of light), and chlorophyll (the pigment that gives leaves their green color). I read about the multitude of nutrients—including nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium—that our trees require and how leaves react when there are nutrient deficiencies.

Finally, I was reminded that too much water and too little light are the most common causes of pale color in leaves. After my review, I decided that I'm probably overwatering my elm, so I've reduced my watering frequency to every other day.

If you want to learn more about how our trees grow, check out this book from our library. The mobile bonsai book club remains open for business.

—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

June

BE SURE TO CONFIRM STATUS OF ALL EVENTS AHEAD OF TIME

Now – June 15, 2020 San Marino, California HUNTINGTON CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

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.

CANCELED June 13 – 14, 2020 Oakland, California

Suiseki Societies of Northern California, California Shohin Society and Bay Area Shohin Society enthusiastically present The Second Annual Bay Area Suiseki and Shohin Show at the Lakeside Park Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave., Lake Merritt. Hours are Saturday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Sunday from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. This show will feature Suiseki viewing stones and Shohin bonsai from clubs around the San Francisco Bay Area. There will be demonstrations and large vendor and club sale areas. For more information, contact Lisa Harper at lisaharper@me.com.

CANCELED June 20 – 21, 2020 Livermore, California

Valley Bonsai Society: 12th Annual Show at Alden Lane Nursery, 981 Alden Lane. Show hours are 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM with a demonstration at 1:00 PM on both days. The finished tree will be raffled off at the end of the demonstrations. Bonsai pots, soil, etc. available for purchase. Admission is free.

August

CANCELED August 8, 2020 Mateo, California

Bonsai Society of San Francisco, East Bay Bonsai Society, Kusamura Bonsai, Midori Bonsai, San Jose Betsuin Bonsai, and Sei Boku Bonsai Kai: sponsoring a Bonsai Flea Market/Swap Meet at the San Mateo Garden Center, 605 Parkside Way, San Mateo. Saturday only, from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Admission is free to the public. To reserve a table for \$10 contact Bill McDonald at bill@walter-mcdonald.com or (650) 678-5517.

CANCELED August 22 - 23, 2020 Santa Rosa, California

Redwood Empire Bonsai Society: 37th Annual Bonsai Show at the Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building, 1351 Maple Ave. Hours are Saturday 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Sunday 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Featuring Kathy Shaner bonsai demonstration, both days from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. Demo trees to be raffled. See largest bonsai exhibit, San Francisco Suiseki Kai stone exhibit, large vendor area, large member sales, and exciting silent auctions. Free admission and parking. Free refreshments. Contact Bob Shimon for additional information shimon@mcn.org or visit our website www.rebsbonsai.org.

September

CANCELED September 19, 2020 Modesto, California

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.

CANCELED September 19 - 20, 2020 San Andreas, California

Mother Lode Bonsai Club: Sixth Annual Bonsai Show at the San Andreas Public Library, 1299 Gold Hunter Road (off Mt. Ranch Road.), San Andreas. Show hours on both days are 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Demonstrations at 11:00 AM and 1:30 PM with prize drawings immediately following. Vendor and member bonsai-related items will be available for sale. Open to the public with free admission and free parking. For more info, contact Richard McKinstry (209) 288-2330 or email richardwandr@aol.com. Visit club website at www.motherlodebonsai.org.

October

CANCELED October 3 – 4, 2020 Thousand Oaks, California

Conejo Valley Bonsai Society: 17th Annual Bonsai Exhibition at the Resource Center at the Gardens of the World, 2001 Thousand Oak Blvd. Hours are 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM both days. Demonstrations in the Bandstand at 1:00 PM Saturday and Sunday. Free Admission. No sales of bonsai related items. For information, call Marj Branson at 805-373-1330 or visit our web site at www.cvbs-bonsai.org.

CANCELED October 30 - November 1, 2020 Nella, California

Golden State Bonsai Federation (GSBF): 2020 Convention 43 " MISSION: BONSAI " to be held at the Hotel Mission De Oro, 13070 S. Highway 33. Hotel rooms \$121 + tax (two night minimum). Featuring headliner Yasuo Mitsuya of Japan. A full slate of workshops, seminars and critiques. There will be two banquet dinners, Friday and Saturday evenings with live auction and raffle. Vendors from northern and southern California in one huge location. Online Registration Date: July 1, 2020. Reduced convention price of \$199.00 (watch for early bird and club bundle registration discounts). For further information, contact Bob Hilvers at bonsaigui@comcast.net.