



conejo valley

BONSAI society

Volume 18 Number 1 January 2021

A member of the Golden State Bonsai Federation

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Conejo Valley Bonsai Society Meetings

(When Covid-19 restrictions are lifted)

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

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President's Message

Staying Connected in 2021

By Marj Branson

The new year is starting off as the old one finished: an extension of Covid-19 restrictions. Your Conejo Valley Bonsai Society is adapting to this ongoing "new normal" in several ways, with our monthly newsletter taking the lead.

Bonsai Guidelines

During the "old normal" times, many members benefitted from club advisor Ken Fuentes' expert advice during in-person meetings. To fill this gap, we are offering some ways members can interact with Ken.

One is his Bonsai Guidelines column (for an example, see pages 4 – 5 in the December 2020 issue). If you are working with a problem tree, need a critique of an existing bonsai, or have questions relating to your trees, please contact Ken by email at advisor@cvbs-bonsai.org. Attach some photographs and describe the issue you need help with, and Ken will work with you to recommend a solution. The results will be presented in his newsletter column.

Another way to get Ken's help is to arrange a virtual one-on-one consultation with him via Zoom. To arrange such an interactive session, please contact Ken at the email address above.

Virtual Niche Displays

I would like to remind everyone that we need members to volunteer for our virtual niche display, a monthly newsletter activity. See page 3 for the current list and for the months that are open. Please email me at president@cvbs-bonsai.org with the month you can volunteer.

Members' Bonsai Projects

Please remember our members' bonsai projects section in our newsletter. If you are working on a bonsai project, please document what you are doing with some photographs and a few paragraphs describing the project. Send these to our newsletter editor, David Whiteside, at editor@cvbs-bonsai.org.

Mobile Library

Mike Blumenberg is doing an excellent job critiquing books and videos in our library, which he manages for us. You can see this issue's Book of the Month on page 8. If you would like a loan of any of

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Marj Branson

CVBS Membership 2021 Dues Are Due

It's out with the old, in with the new—and that means it's time to pay your Conejo Valley Bonsai Society dues for 2021. Still a bargain at \$25 for individuals, \$30 for couples, your dues support CVBS overhead and expenses. Please write a check (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.

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(Click on Email Address)

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CVBS Tentative Programs 2021

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

January 21	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
February 18	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by DEMONSTRATION: TBA
March 18	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
April 15	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by DEMONSTRATION: TBA
May 20	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
June 17	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by DEMONSTRATION: TBA
July 15	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
August 19	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop and Swap Meet— BRING YOUR TREES AND OTHER ITEMS
September 16	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by PEER CRITIQUES—BRING YOUR EXHIBITION TREES
October 2 – 3	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 18TH ANNUAL CVBS EXHIBITION Gardens of the World
October 21	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
November 18	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting with Club Elections followed by DEMONSTRATION: TBA
December 16	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM HOLIDAY POTLUCK, RAFFLE & AUCTION

Potting Season Opens for Hardy Evergreens

By Jim Barrett

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

Most hardy evergreen bonsai such as Japanese black pines and junipers may be repotted at this time. Wait until next month to pot for the first time (nursery can to bonsai pot).

Now is the time to clean and groom most bonsai. Black pine needles that are discolored because of age or disease may be removed. Leave more needles on weak and low branch terminals, fewer on middle branches, and fewer yet on upper growth. How many you leave depends on the age and health of the tree. All terminal buds should be fat, healthy, and beginning to grow this month.

Slow-release fertilizers such as one of the Osmocote® formulas, bone meal, blood meal, cottonseed meal, or any of the rapeseed pellets may be applied now. It takes a while for the organic fertilizers to break down and become available to the plant. Wait another month or so before you use liquid chemical fertilizers.

Blooming bonsai such as ume, apple, plum, and wisteria can be moved to show pots at this time, providing they are already in bonsai pots.

Prune all deciduous trees, removing heavy, overgrown branches and twigs—especially in the upper areas of the tree. Upper story branches tend to grow unnoticed during the year and now is a good time to trim or remove them. If you are into making cuttings, these older branches that are removed may take root. I use a rooting medium of 80% perlite (sponge rock) and 20% peat moss. Drench the rooting medium with a good

fungicide such as benomyl.

Deciduous tree branches are fairly flexible now and can be wired. If you are using copper wire, make sure it has been annealed. Think about paper wrapping heavier wires before applying them to Japanese maples and other tender-bark trees.

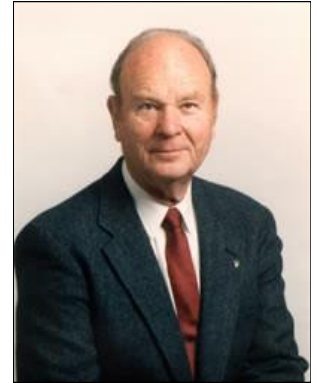
When you are finished cleaning and pruning your trees, spray them with a good petroleum-based dormant oil. You may want to combine it with a lime sulfur dormant spray. One is for bugs; the other is basically a fungicide. Follow directions on the labels and cover your soil and pot with plastic or a towel. Lime sulfur will stain the pot if not washed off.

Don't forget to choose your trees for this year's show [if you plan to enter the Descanso Bonsai Society's annual exhibition in June; for CVBS's show in October, this task may be postponed until the spring].

Detail wiring is a tedious and boring chore, but is a must if you want your trees ready to exhibit in June. You'll be glad you did it.

We are coming into prime potting and repotting time. From now until April, try to get all of your trees that need it repotted. If you need pots, ask around—supply seems to be good for both new and used pots.

If you haven't done so, get your soil mix prepared and stored. I use a trash can with a tight lid.



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.

Please note a change in nomenclature for the listing of Virtual Niche Volunteers (right). We now are listing the month of the newsletter issue for each volunteer. For example, Ken Martin provided a photo for this, the January 2021 issue (see page 7). 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 2021 calendar and let us know when you would like to present your display.

—Marj Branson

2021 Niche Displays (Month of publication)	
Jan.	Ken Martin
Feb.	Mike Blumenberg
March	Volunteer Needed
April	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. Once Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, we will resume meeting on the third Thursday of every month (except for this month of January, which has been canceled—see page 2) in the Westlake Village City Hall Community Room (31200 Oakcrest Drive, Westlake Village, CA 91361). Meetings start at 7:30 PM. Membership includes 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

How To Create a Foemina Juniper Group

By Marj Branson

On November 8, 2020, the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society hosted an “off campus” demonstration by bonsai master Jim Barrett. Instead of our normal venue in the Westlake Village Community Room with the full club watching, for safety this demo was in my garage with only three club members present.

Jim had been scheduled to do this demo at our March 2020 meeting, but that was an early victim of the Covid-19 pandemic: it was canceled. So, this was a makeup session.

The plan was for Jim to do a group planting of foemina junipers (*Juniperus chinensis* ‘Foemina’). Jim had been looking after nine trees that were candidates for the planting for two years. During that time, he had worked on styling, trimming, and wiring the trees. We chose November for this demo because it is a good month to pot foemina junipers.

Jim started the demonstration by showing how he prepares the pot by placing screens over the drain holes. He showed us his way of preparing wires to hold the screens in place (see photo, this page). The whole point of the exercise is to be sure that, once the wires and screens are in place, there will be no “wobble room” between the screen and the pot. If there is movement between the two, in due course roots will grow between them.

Next, for this group planting, Jim selected five trees out of the nine that he had been grooming. Of the trees he picked, two were in one pot and wired together. When placed in the group, this created a very effective look. This wire will come off when the trees have grown together enough that they won’t separate.

With the pot prepped, Jim loosely placed the selected trees in the pot to get the feel for the group he wanted to achieve. He did not use guide wires in the pot.

While preparing the trees, he decided not to take very much off the roots. He opened up the root ball and took off any down growing, hard roots so all the trees sat well in the pot.

He then placed lace rock around one side, which gave the feeling of the trees growing on a plateau. On the other side of the lace rock, he placed decomposed granite gravel, which gave a feeling of a riverbed or low area.



Jim finished the foemina group planting with a lush covering of moss. 🌲

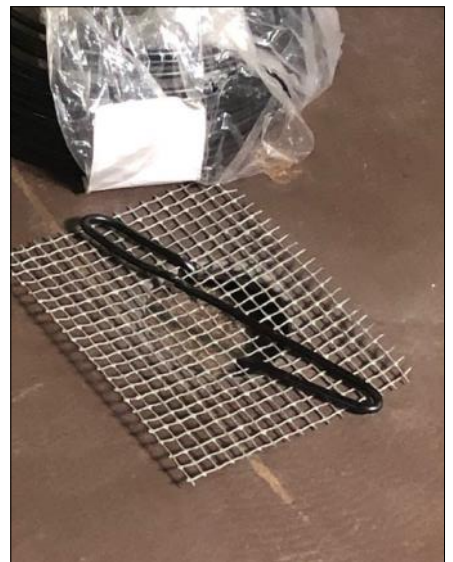
The foemina junipers in their nursery pots, ready for planting (top right).

Drain-hole screen secured in place (middle right).

One of the lace rocks that will be used in the composition (bottom right).

Jim Barrett places the trees loosely in the pot to begin arranging the foemina juniper group planting (left).

Photos by Nancy Smeets, Mike Blumenberg, and Marj Branson



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Jim opens one tree's root ball (top left).



The finished planting from one side (top right).



Placing lace rock in the composition (left).

Jim with the foemina juniper group planting, from the front (bottom right).

Fine tuning the wiring after the group has been assembled (bottom left). Note the 'left-over' trees in the background.



Bjorholm and Valavanis Hold Forth

By Ken Martin

Online Video Reviews

I have been aiming my reviews of free online demos to the “how to” for smaller, less expensive trees. It seems to me there is a sharp division between this category and the demos with super refined, super expensive, big trees, and there isn’t much in between.

This month I’ve chosen two leading bonsai artists’ demonstrations to review. One is on Bonsai Empire’s website and the other on YouTube. Both, I feel, are well worth watching.

**Bjorn Bjorholm, owner of Eisei-en, Tennessee
Bonsai Empire
10 minutes 39 seconds
“Bonsai Display”**

As near as I can figure out, Bonsai Empire is a multi-national bonsai organization. Bjorn is the owner of Eisei-en in Tennessee, but here his video is on Bonsai Empire. I have reviewed his demos several times and found them chocked full of good information. Here, Bjorn talks about how to display trees of sizes from shohin (8 inches tall or less) to huge. This is in my mind a great introduction to stands and what kind of trees look best on which stands. He discusses two-point, three-point, and seven-point displays—the latter a concept of which I previously had not heard. I plan to hunt for a more detailed demonstration on this subject.



Screen captures by Ken Martin

**William Valavanis, proprietor of the International
Bonsai Arboretum in Rochester, New York
YouTube
29 minutes
“Developing Maple Bonsai”**

Bill Valavanis has been interested in bonsai since he was 11 years old, 58 years ago. In October 2017, he became the third inductee into the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum's Bonsai Hall of Fame. Although he lives in upstate New York, he routinely comes to the Golden State Bonsai Federation’s annual shows as well as the every-other-year Shohin show in Santa Nella, California. I have taken several of his classes there.

Here he talks about both Japanese maples and trident maples. He shows the viewer a lot of very old elegant trees of different subspecies. Since he admirably had a mask on, it was hard for me to understand all the tree names. Some have been in a pot over 100 years and others he’s been developing for over 40 years. A lot of pretty trees, but not too useful to us. He did, toward the middle of this video, provide some instruction on how to develop maple bonsai from scratch, which was interesting. 🌳



Two-Tree Siberian Elm Composition

Editor's Note: Ken Martin provided this virtual niche display for this, the January 2021 issue of the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society's newsletter (see listing, page 3). Because physical meetings are on indefinite hold due to the coronavirus pandemic, he set the display up at home and photographed it himself. Here are some details about this unusual bonsai, which he collected as seedlings from his yard in Lancaster, California, nearly a quarter century ago.

This Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*) was used in California's high desert (Palmdale, Lancaster) as a street tree for many years. It is one of the few trees that reliably survive in that climate. (By the way, this species is not particularly good bonsai material because the crotches are notoriously weak and tend to split.)

I pulled these seedlings from next to a faucet in my yard in Lancaster about 1998. Five years ago, I started getting serious about styling these trees. Four years ago, at CVBS member Shig Hayashi's suggestion, I made a two-tree composition.

I am pleased with the development of the many small twigs (ramification) in this tree. I attribute this to regular fertilization in the growing season, and when a shoot grows to five leaves, I have been cutting it back to two. This can happen once a week or more. The completely leafless tree allows the viewer to see this ramification. This and the almost dead mondo grass accent should suggest the dead of winter to the viewer. If you look very closely, there are a couple of live blades of grass in the accent plant, giving hope that a better 2021 spring will come eventually.

—Ken Martin

This Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*) two-tree planting (below) originated as seedlings that Ken Martin collected from his yard some 23 years ago. He combined them into this composition about four years ago. Note the nearly dead mondo grass companion: it's consistent with the winter silhouette of the trees yet heralds spring with a few new blades.



Photo by Ken Martin

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.

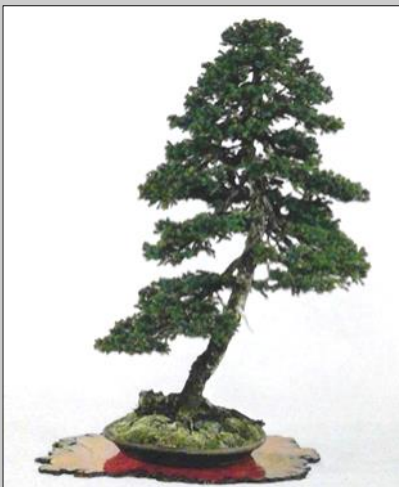
—Mike Blumenberg

Book of the Month

13th Ichijuten Bonsai Exhibition, the exhibition book for the 1988 annual Ichijuten bonsai show.

Our Book of the Month is the exhibition book from the 13th Ichijuten Bonsai Exhibition that was held in 1988. This annual show in Japan draws international acclaim, and the resultant exhibition book highlights the outstanding bonsai from each year's show. This 13th edition has 140 pictures of beautiful bonsai, including the three shown here. This is a good book to peruse and study. There is minimal text besides the photo captions, and all the text is written in Kanji, so most of us will have to just enjoy the pictures. The scientific name for the species of each tree is shown in Latin (we added the English common names below).

—Mike Blumenberg



Photos by Mike Blumenberg

Cover of the 13th Ichijuten Exhibition Book (above).

Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum* var. *Matsumurae*) (top left).

Sargent's juniper (*Juniperus chinensis* var. *Sargentii*) (middle left).

Sakhalin spruce (*Picea glehnii*) (bottom left).

2021

AT PRESS TIME, THERE WERE NO KNOWN IN-PERSON BONSAI SHOWS, EXHIBITIONS, OR EVENTS IN CALIFORNIA SCHEDULED DURING 2021. SOME GARDENS MAY BE OPEN—IF YOU WISH TO VISIT ONE, YOU ARE ADVISED TO CONFIRM STATUS OF THE GARDEN AHEAD OF TIME. THERE ARE SOME VIRTUAL BONSAI EVENTS SCHEDULED OR IN THE WORKS; WE WILL LIST THOSE AS INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE.

January

January—Ongoing, 2021 Los Angeles, California / Online

Japanese American Cultural & Community Center: Bonsai at Home. A Virtual Exhibit on its website that features photographs that JACCC members and bonsai club friends took of their own trees in their home environment. The online exhibit includes two trees from Conejo Valley Bonsai Society members Bob Pressler and David Whiteside. You can find the JACCC Virtual Exhibit at Bonsai at Home — Japanese American Cultural & Community Center (jacc.org). (If that link doesn't work for you, please try cutting and pasting <https://www.jacc.org/bonsai-at-home> into your web browser. You may need to press the "Control" key while hovering the cursor over the link.) A great way to get your 2021 bonsai year underway.

February

February 1 — 6, 2021 Arcadia, California / Online

Baikoen Bonsai Kenkyukai: 57th Winter Silhouettes Show and online Auction. In lieu of an actual show, there will be a virtual YouTube video, premiering on February 6, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. Deciduous trees from club members and invited guest exhibitors will be on display. A short narrative of the trees, interesting facts, and its owner will be presented by Tom Lau and Joe Galgoul. The Nagata-Komai Award for excellence of instruction and encouragement in the art of bonsai will be announced. In addition, an online auction of bonsai plants and related items will be held between February 1 - 6, 2021. For more information please visit <https://www.facebook.com/baikoenbonsai>. Visit our website at <https://www.baikoenbonsai.com> or contact Joe Galgoul at joegalgoul@yahoo.com.

President's Message

(Continued from page 1)

these items, please contact Mike at librarian@cvbs-bonsai.org.

Online Bonsai Demo Critiques

Ken Martin has been viewing numerous bonsai websites, online demonstrations, and Internet classes. He has been summarizing and evaluating these each month, which is helpful finding useful content on specific bonsai subjects you want to study. If you have any suggestions for Ken, please contact him at secretary@cvbs-bonsai.org.

Barrett's Bonsai Tips

Just because we aren't gathering in monthly meetings doesn't mean we can ignore our bonsai. Tips on how to look after our trees are provided every month by Southern California bonsai guru Jim Barrett. Jim's guidelines for how and when to do bonsai chores provide a very good timetable. You will find Barrett's Bonsai Tips on page 3 of every newsletter.

Virtual Events

Normally at this time of year, I'd be touting the various bonsai club spring exhibitions. Already it's clear that in 2021, most will be canceled, postponed, or changed to virtual shows. So, our newsletter's list of upcoming events will include virtual bonsai activities (as well as in-person activities when they resume).

In this issue, for example, we list Baikoen Bonsai Kenkyukai's annual Winter Silhouettes Show, which will be virtual this year (see above for details).

Various bonsai groups are creative in keeping their communities connected. If you are aware of any in-person or virtual bonsai activities, please let me or newsletter editor David Whiteside know so the information can be passed on to our membership.

Bonsai-A-Thon

The format for the annual Golden State Bonsai Federation's Bonsai-A-Thon at the Huntington Gardens in San Marino is changing. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Huntington Gardens has restricted activity, which will affect the Bonsai-A-Thon, usually held in February. Rather than the normal program for 2021, there will be a virtual tour through the bonsai areas of the garden highlighting various bonsai activities. There will be more details in our next newsletter.

Membership Dues 2021

Finally, although we currently are not meeting, certain overhead expenses cannot be avoided. One is our insurance policy, which we must maintain to be able to resume in-person meetings when that becomes possible, hopefully later this year. Also this year, we incurred the expense of a virtual demonstration by bonsai professional Jim Barrett (see story, pages 4 – 5).

To cover these expenses and have the resources in hand to resume in-person demonstrations, we still rely on your membership dues, which are due this month. Membership dues remain only \$25.00 per person or \$30.00 per couple. Please make your check payable to the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society and send it to me. See my mailing address on page 1 and in Membership Chair Nancy Smeets' membership update on page 3.

Our newsletter keeps us connected and I have summarized a few of the features it offers. Thank you, members, for your contributions and support. Please keep us posted about your bonsai projects or activities you see in the community that you would like to share with the club.

Stay safe and keep in touch. 🌳