

# *conejo valley* BONSAl society

Volume 18 Number 4 April 2021

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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 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the Month 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

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## President's Message CVBS Demos Return via Zoom

#### By Marj Branson

The Conejo Valley Bonsai Society is having a demonstration our first of 2021! This program will be online and will feature Sergio Cuan, a New York City-based bonsai expert.

CVBS is providing this members -only demonstration in collaboration with the Bonsai Club of Santa Barbara, which made the arrangements. We are sharing the cost (so we need everyone to pay their 2021 dues).

This will be a Zoom demonstration on Thursday, April 15 at 7:00 PM. (See schedule, page 2.) Note that this is the normal date for our April club meeting, but the time is a half-hour earlier than usual. The program will last 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours. The Zoom meeting link will be sent out the weekend before the meeting to all current, paid-up members of CVBS.

Founder of M5 Bonsai Works, Mr. Cuan will give a slide presentation on bonsai progression and development of some of his trees utilizing different techniques and design concepts. You can get a preview of this program with his biography on page 10 of this newsletter, and you can visit his website (www.m5bonsaiworks.com) to see some of his incredible trees.

If there is a good turnout of CVBS members for this Zoom program, we can join BCSB for additional demonstrations throughout the year, again on a cost-sharing basis. Please keep this in mind and give us your feedback after watching the Zoom demo. This would be an opportunity for CVBS members to enjoy demonstrators from outside our local area.

#### More CVBS Programs

This cooperative online demonstration is just the latest in a series of online and virtual events now available to our members. In addi-



Marj Branson

tion to the virtual Niche Display Program in this newsletter (see page 8), it is now possible for members to meet online with their club mentors, get one-on-one consultations with CVBS Advisor Ken Fuentes, or gather in virtual mini workshops with other club members.

Some examples of this hive of activities were featured in the March issue of this newsletter; another example appears in this issue (see "Online Consult with Club Advisor Ken Fuentes," pages 4-5). I urge all members to familiarize themselves with everything CVBS is offering during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic by reviewing the relevant articles in the March and April 2021 issues of this newsletter.

Please note that we are continuing to explore various online platforms for these and other potential online programs. Options include FaceTime, Zoom, Discord, and (Continued on page 10)

Contact Us (Click on Email Address) Officers President Marj Branson Phone (805) 373-1330	<b>CVBS Tentative Programs</b> 2021		
president@cvbs-bonsai.org <u>Vice President</u> Mike Blumenberg	If you are interested in the CVBS Mentoring Program, please contact Marj Branson for more information & applications to participate.		
Phone (916) 390-1310 vice.president@cvbs-bonsai.org <b>Treasurer</b> Ken Fuentes Phone (805) 495-7480 treasurer@cvbs-bonsai.org <b>Secretary</b> Ken Martin Phone (805) 445-9221 secretary@cvbs-bonsai.org <b>Committees</b> Advisor Ken Fuentes Phone (805) 495-7480 advisor@cvbs-bonsai.org <b>Membership Chair</b> Nancy Smeets Phone (213) 810-4280 membership.chair@cvbs-bonsai.org <b>Newsletter Editor</b> David E. Whiteside Phone (805) 509-1830 editor@cvbs-bonsai.org <b>Program Chair</b> Nancy Smeets Phone (213) 810-4280 program.chair@cvbs-bonsai.org <b>Publicity Co-Chairs</b> Guy & Deborah Ervin Phone (805) 495-8688 publicity@cvbs-bonsai.org <b>Refreshments Chair</b> Mike Blumenberg Phone (916) 390-1310 refreshments@cvbs-bonsai.org <b>Librarian</b> Mike Blumenberg Phone (916) 390-1310 librarian@cvbs-bonsai.org <b>Field Trips &amp; Activities</b> Damon DuBois Phone (805) 558-2867 activities.chair@cvbs-bonsai.org <b>Webmaster</b> Tom McGuire website@cvbs-bonsai.org	January 21	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop—Bring Your Trees	
	February 18	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by DEMONSTRATION: TBA	
	March 18	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop—Bring Your Trees	
	April 15	NOTE SPECIAL TIME AND "PLACE": ZOOM 7:00 PM: Online via Zoom (members in good standing will be emailed the Zoom link prior to the meeting) DEMONSTRATION: Sergio Cuan / Deciduous Trees	
	May 20	<b>TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS</b> 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— <b>Bring Your Trees</b>	
	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	<b>TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS</b> <b>18TH ANNUAL CVBS EXHIBITION</b> Gardens of the World	
	October 21	<b>TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS</b> 7:30PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— <b>Bring Your Trees</b>	
	November 18	<b>TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS</b> 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting with <b>Club Elections</b> followed by <b>DEMONSTRATION:</b> TBA	
	December 16	TENTATIVE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM Holiday Potluck, Raffle & Auction	

## **Barrett's Bonsai Tips** Constant Care for Your Deciduous Bonsai

By Jim Barrett

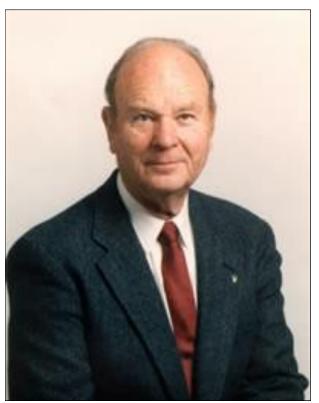
Editor's Note: While the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society's monthly meetings are suspended under the shelter-inplace policy due to the coronavirus pandemic, our trees still need attention. We will continue to publish Barrett's Bonsai Tips for the duration.

**C** ince 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.



**Jim Barrett** 

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, Covid-19 conditions allowing-some CVBS members do this—Editor]. A little work often will save a lot of work later on

Fertilize your trees with slow acting fertilizers or time-

and the tree will look super. Look for stands and accents.

## **CVBS Niche Displays** Virtual Niche Display Program

n 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 (editor@cvbs-bonsai.org).

Please note that we list the month of the newsletter issue for each Virtual Niche Volunteer (right). For example, David Williams provided photos for this, the April 2021 issue (see page 8). 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)		
April	David Williams	
May	Rick Naber	
June	David Whiteside	
July	Larry Kimmelman	

## **CVBS Membership Interested in CVBS?**

Please join me in welcoming our newest member, Antonio Viscarra of Camarillo. 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 at 7:30 PM on the third Thursday of every month in the Westlake Village City Hall Community Room (31200 Oakcrest Drive, Westlake Village, CA 91361). Please Note: this month of April, the program will be a 7:00 PM online demonstration in cooperation with the Santa Barbara Bonsai Club-see pages 1 and 2 for details. 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

#### **Conejo Valley Bonsai Society**

### **CVBS Program** Online Consult with Club Advisor Ken Fuentes **By David Whiteside**

Tearly 13 years ago, while potting a large willow leaf fig (Ficus salicaria formerly classified as narifolia), I removed a 6-foot-long root that had been coiled around in its old nursery can. From that root, I took a half-dozen cuttings, several of which took. Two of those successful cuttings are still alive today.

One of the two surviving cuttings has grown vigorously from the beginning. Today it is a nice, 10-inch-tall bonsai (see the niche display article in the November 2020 CVBS newsletter, page 9).

The other survivor languished for a decade, putting forth just enough foliage to remain alive but not flourish. Then about three years ago, for some mysterious reason it pushed additional foliage. Encouraged by that development, I moved this root cutting into a sunnier space and increased its fertilization. Now, it has several strong branches, each with healthy branchlets and fresh leaves. But it was not clear to me how to develop it into an attractive little bonsai (it's currently just over 5 inches tall).

For help, I turned to CVBS Advisor Ken Fuentes, who has extensive experience with various species of fig as well as other bonsai. But in this era of Covid-19 pandemic, we could not meet in person, so instead we agreed to "meet" on our club's new online server on Discord.

The willow leaf fig (above) as it appeared before I consulted with Ken Fuentes. The vellow line indicates the trunk line that we agreed on-note that the tree needs to be planted at a different angle so the apex is over the base. The <u>red</u> lines are the prunes Ken recommended to reveal the movement in the trunk.

On Thursday, April 1, 2021, Ken and I shared an hour-long audio-video session on the Discord conferencing platform. This needs to be shortened for a more appropriate length given the capability has been developed for the club by Field Trips & Ac- progression from the lowest trunk through its three curves. Rather tivities Chair Damon DuBois. (Damon is also investigating other than make the cuts during the call, I made them the next day (see possible platforms for CVBS member collaboration.)

First, we discussed the main trunk line. After considering our options, Ken and I agreed on one that preserves some nice move- fertilize it regularly. ment and taper. To use this as the main line, Ken pointed out that the little tree's planting angle needed to be tilted (see photo, were some technical issues—we had difficulty getting both our above). Ken had me dig into the soil to reveal whether there is a cameras working, for example. Also, I had some difficulty seeing more attractive base available to work with this proposed trunk details of the tree on screen as Discord displayed it in a small design. Happily, we found some good flare for the nebari (base), inset box. But, of course, I had the actual tree in front of me so so we looked to see what else needed to be done.

that is too heavy for its relatively high location on the trunk (see ficus later based on my notes about what Ken and I had agreed the left side of the photos above and page 5). In addition, Ken

pointed out that the first branch, which comes out of the right side of the tree, needs to be shortened as indicated. Finally, the apex photos, page 5).

Ken recommended that I move the ficus into full sun and

Overall, the online consultation worked very well. There this was mainly a problem because I could not take useable At Ken's suggestion, I agreed to remove entirely one branch screen shots to illustrate this article. Instead, I photographed the (Continued on page 5)

## **Online Consult** *(Continued from page 4)* on.

If you miss getting Ken's input during our club's regular, in-person workshops, this is a great way to tap his expertise. If you haven't yet set up Discord on your computer, tablet, or phone, I recommend you do so and contact Ken (advisor@cvbs-bonsai.org) for a one-on-one consultation. If you have difficulty with Discord, please contact Damon (activities.chair@cvbs-bonsai.org) for help.

Both Ken and Damon have generously volunteered their time and expertise. It's a great opportunity for all active club members. I urge everyone take advantage of this new CVBS capability. And remember, you can use the same technology to consult with your mentor, if you have one—or even just get together for a mini workshop with one or two of your friends from the club.

Photos down the right side of this page show the three major cuts that were decided on during the consultation with club advisor Ken Fuentes. Red circles indicate where each cut was made (right above, middle, and bottom).

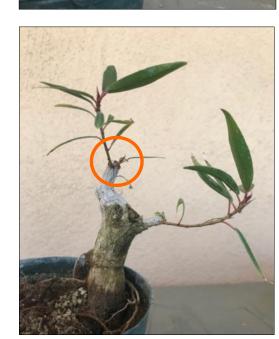
Once all the cuts were made, the ficus' trunk measured only 3 1/2 inches from its base to apex (right). Current foliage added another inch. By one common definition, this makes this a "mame" size bonsai.

The willow leaf ficus planted in its new bonsai pot (below). Note that the planting angle has been modified so the apex is above the base. The pot is by Seattle-area potter Ann Christiansen, who is my sister.











## Member's Project Airlayering an In-the-Ground Maple By Larry Kimmelman

A fter planting a 5 gallon potted maple (*Acer palmatum*) in my yard almost two years ago, I recently determined the tree had a long trunk with a sig-

nificant gap from the lower to higher branches. This created a potential for air layering considering the Nebari was quite prominent. After making two parallel cuts about 1 1/2 inches apart around the trunk, I then removed the ring of bark and cambium layer between the two cuts. A rooting gel was spread around the upper part of the top cut. Next, I prepared a ball of sphagnum peat moss by soaking it in water for a couple of hours, and then placed the ball of moss in a clear plastic bag that was large enough to wrap around cut part of the the trunk. Once that bag of moss was secured in place around the cut part of the trunk, I used electrical tape to seal both ends. Next, I wrapped a sheet of polyethcompletely ylene film around the bag, and then covered the entire bag with aluminum foil to keep it dark and moist. 🏝



Larry Kimmelman's in-ground maple (above left) with air layer in place. The air layering cut is covered with sphagnum peat moss wrapped in plastic and foil (above right).

## Member's Project Spring Is Sprung for Urban Yamadori By David Whiteside

N early 18 years ago, when my wife Romie and I purchased our home in Ventura, this India hawthorn (*Rhaphiolepis indica*) was an insignificant shrub planted in the rear of the house. We quickly decided that it did not fit with our future landscaping plans—but I thought it might make a good bonsai. So, we had our landscape contractor dig it up and put it in a nursery can.

It lingered in that can for more than a decade while I occasionally trimmed it for shape and to encourage back budding on the old wood (not very successful). Wiring helped train it into a more pleasing silhouette. One large branch, however, died back and eventually had to be removed. I finally moved the India hawthorn into a bonsai pot about three years ago.

I bought the pot from West America Trading Co., the company owned by bonsai master David Nguy and his wife June. I sent him a photo along with the tree's measurements (21 inches tall, 5-inch base) just before the Bonsai-A-Thon that year. David recommended this blue glazed rectangular pot. Now, it cheers the Whiteside household each spring with its nice display of pink flowers.

This India hawthorn (*Rhaphiolepis indica*) has been in training for nearly 18 years, in this pot about three (right).



Photos by Larry Kimmelman

## **Bonsai Online Two Takes from Eisei-en's Bjorn Bjorholm**

By Ken Martin

#### Online Video Reviews

My reviews of demonstrations online for April 2021 are both by Bjorn Bjorholm of Eisei-en Bonsai near Nashville, TN. I'm not lazy, really; these are two very good and timely demonstrations.

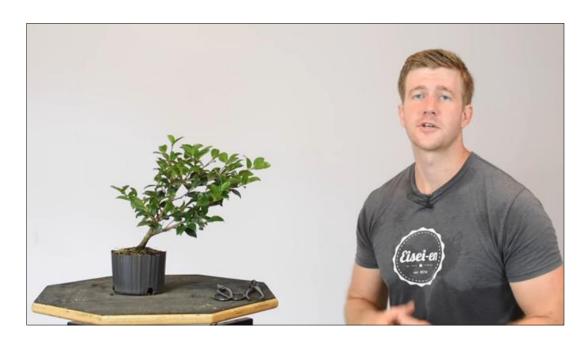
Bjorn Bjorholm Eisei-en Bonsai 26 minutes Type "3 Great Plants for Broadleaf Bonsai | Bonsai-U" into YouTube

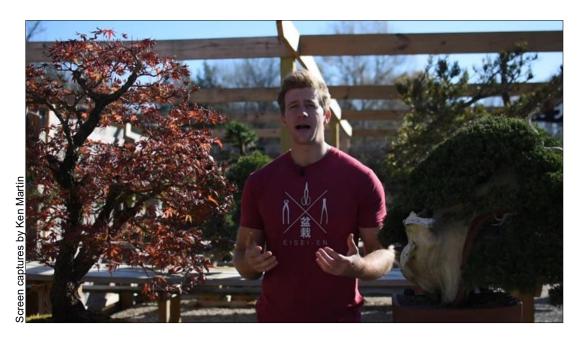
In the first video, Bjorn looks at how to turn smaller nursery-sized pyracantha, camellia, and gardenia into bonsai. The beauty of this demo is these three trees are available in this size at big box hardware stores for a reasonable price. He discusses the features you should look for when selecting a tree (nebari, trunk taper, and leaf size) and the first steps to be taken in working on these non-traditional bonsai trees.

#### Bjorn Bjorholm Eisei-en Bonsai 42 minutes Type "Broadleaf & Deciduous Bonsai Seasonal Tips | Bonsai-U" into YouTube

In the second demo, Bjorn takes the viewer through the four seasons in caring for deciduous and broadleaf evergreen trees: from soil composition to repotting, trimming, partial defoliating, fertilizing, etc. There is a lot of good information about techniques and timing. He discusses how to care for trees in their three phases of becoming a bonsai:

- 1. Young material
- 2. Ready for some ramification
- 3. More mature bonsai I learned a lot.





## April Niche Bonsai Meets Lego in Cherry Tree Displays

Editor's Note: Everyone has come up with ways to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. Conejo Valley Bonsai Society member David Williams found a way to blend two of his hobbies: bonsai and Lego<sup>®</sup>. Dave provided this pair of unusual, virtual niche displays for this, the April 2021 issue of CVBS's newsletter (see listing of virtual niche volunteers, page 3). Because physical meetings are on indefinite hold due to the pandemic, Dave set the displays up at home and photographed them. Here are some details about his unorthodox "bonsai" display.

This niche display is not your ordinary, everyday display. It's a little unorthodox.

I am a man of many hobbies, and at the end of last year, two of my hobbies crossed paths.

Lego has been a major part of my life since my early childhood. If it weren't for Lego, I honestly believe I would not have been the problem solver, out-of-the-box thinker, artist, and ingenuitive individual that I am today. When Lego announced there was going to be a limited run of these bonsai cherry trees, I had to grab a couple, and now they seem to be unavailable.

On this page there are three photos of the actual display. One depicts the tree during summer with lush green leaves, while another shows beautiful cherry blossoms in the spring.

The closeup of the cherry blossoms are not only flowers but they also used pink frogs to add some extra dimension to the blossoming tree. It is a nice surprise.

One other unique feature of this set is a few parts are actually made from plants! The green leaves, the white leaves, and some of the smaller brown details are made out of sugarcane. This is in reaction to Lego looking for a more sustainable future for the children.

How cool is that? I now have a tree on my desk that is beautiful and will hopefully never die from over or under watering. This tree was designed by Lego Bonsai Master Nicolaas Vás.

—David Williams

## Enlarged detail of the cherry blossoms (right), which include tiny pink frogs for added dimension.

The Lego cherry tree in its green summer foliage (below left). The leaves and some brown details are made from sugarcane.

And what would a springtime cherry tree display be without full blossoms (below right).



Photos by David Williams





## **Library Mobile-Mode Bonsai Library Continues**

J ust 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* 

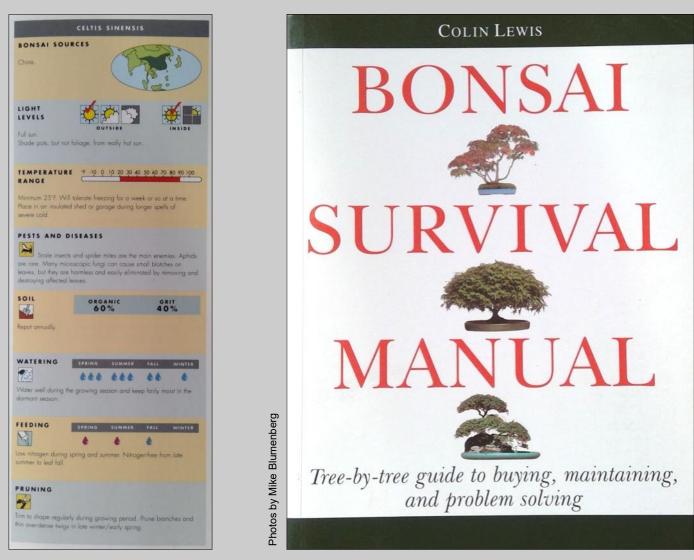
#### **Book of the Month**

Bonsai Survival Manual: Tree-by-tree guide to buying, maintaining, and problem solving by Colin Lewis (Publisher: Quarto Publishing, London, 1996; U.S. Edition by Storey Publishing, North Adams, Mass., 2002) 157 pages.

Our April Book of the Month is *Bonsai Survival Manual* by Colin Lewis. The highlight of this book are the species profiles, which provide guidance on over 50 trees that are frequently used for bonsai. The profiles cover key information for each species including its origin, preferred light levels, temperature range, common pests and diseases, soil conditions, watering, feeding, and pruning. See the photo below left for the book's summary of guidance for Chinese hackberry (*Celtis sinensis*). Hackberry is a species that does well in our local area, and I have two in my own collection.

My trees are growing well, but I learned a few interesting points from this section. First, the author recommends letting new spring growth continue until there are eight to ten leaves, then trim back to two. I had been trimming back to two leaves after only four or six leaves sprouted, so maybe I'll be a bit less zealous. The author also notes that hackberry likes a lot of water during the growing seasons and should be kept moist throughout the dormant season. That's always a challenge in Southern California! A final point is the recommendation to repot annually using a soil mixture that is 60% organic and 40% grit. I didn't repot one of my hackberry trees this year, so I'll make sure to repot it next year before spring growth emerges. If you have questions about any of your trees, then check out this book.

*—Mike Blumenberg* 



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.

#### April

#### April—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 (www.jaccc.org). (If that link doesn't work for you, please try cutting and pasting https://www.jaccc.org/bonsai-athome 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.

#### President's Message (Continued from page 1)

ties Chair Damon DuBois is leading the effort to identify for their newsletter contributions. the most suitable platform(s) for our members to use and GSBF – Annual Fall Convention Update will keep us informed.

please email Ken Fuentes (advisor@cvbs-bonsai.org). If nual convention this year due to uncertainty surrounding you would like to have an online mini workshop, please the pandemic. But GSBF will hold a two-day Rendezvous email Damon DuBois (activities.chair@cvbs-bonsai.org) on October 2 and 3, 2021 in Santa Nella, CA. Preliminary for help making arrangements.

are open to all members to report bonsai projects, online ment sales. We will bring you more information about the meetings, and other bonsai activities you would like to share with the group. Please send pictures and details to

Newsletter Editor David Whiteside (editor@cvbs-Google Meet, among others. CVBS Field Trips & Activi- bonsai.org). I would like to thank all our club members

The bad news this month is that the Golden State Bon-If you have a problem or a question about your trees, sai Federation has announced that it will not hold its anplans are for holding demos, bring-your-own-trees work-Speaking of this newsletter, remember that its pages shops, tomodachi, vendors, silent auctions, and consign-Rendezvous as we get it.

#### Stay safe.

## **CVBS Event** Sergio Cuan To Present Bonsai Techniques

he presenter for the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society / Bonsai Club of Santa Barbara joint online demonstration on April 15 will be Sergio Cuan, a visual artist who holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Art and Design from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY (see pages 1 and 2). Sergio works professionally as a creative director for a major entertainment company in New York City.

A versatile artist who works on a diverse range of projects across the globe, he also has a passion for painting and horticulture. Early on he realized that bonsai was the ideal synthesis of both. As a result he became

fascinated with bonsai as an art form. Mr. Cuan is a largely self-taught bonsai artist. He has taken workshops with prom-

inent bonsai masters Bill Valavanis, Mauro Stemberger, and Bjorn Bjorholm. He continues to take workshops periodically to further his own bonsai skills.

Although Sergio works on a variety of conifers such as Engelmann spruce, Subalpine fir, and Eastern white cedar, he has developed a particular interest and passion for a wide range of deciduous species, which include maple, elm, and beech among many others. In 2014 he built a bonsai garden in Northern New Jersey in a beautiful setting surrounded by rolling hills, lakes, and deciduous forests. The garden, which is inspired by Japanese design aesthetics, features a bonsai collection of diverse species. Recently, Sergio started to conduct virtual consultations, workshops, and lectures for groups as well as individuals from his own studio and garden.

Sergio believes that bonsai as a true art form holds commonalities with painting, drawing, and sculpture. Although the artist is bound by the physical limitations of the plant material itself, bonsai can be effective vehicles for self expression. But unlike other art forms, bonsai is alive and constantly evolving. The bonsai practice is an intimate and continued dialogue between artist and nature. This relationship gives bonsai its own unique dimension. Sergio also believes that one must allow for the tree to help guide us as we strive to evoke a clear and crystalized expression of nature in its most essential and simplest form.

*—Biography provided by BCSB and Sergio Cuan, edited by David Whiteside* 

Arakawa maple (below) by Sergio Cuan, spring 2020.

