



conejo valley

BONSAI society

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In This Issue

- **President's Message:**
Demo To Feature Black Pines ... 1
- **CVBS Programs:**
The Tentative 2021 Schedule ... 2
- **Barrett's Bonsai Tips:**
May Care Varies Based on Bonsai Species ... 3
- **CVBS Niche Displays** ... 3
- **CVBS Membership** ... 3
- **CVBS Event:**
Design Deciduous Trees for Winter Silhouette ... 4 – 7
- **May Niche:**
'Ghost' Chinese Elm Bonsai with 'Leaves' ... 8
- **Library/Book of the Month:**
The Complete Book of Bonsai by Harry Tomlinson ... 9
- **Coming Events** ... 10
- **CVBS Program:**
Photos from an Outdoor Workshop ... 10

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

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www.cvbs-bonsai.org

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President's Message

Demo To Feature Black Pines

By Marj Branson

Following a very successful online demonstration in April, the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society is planning to cosponsor another virtual event in June. As before, we will join the Bonsai Club of Santa Barbara for this demonstration, which will feature Jonas Dupuich on the development and refinement of black pines.

Be sure to note the special date (June 8) for this program. Remember, the Zoom link will be sent beforehand to CVBS dues-paying members only, so if you haven't paid your 2021 dues yet, now's the time to send in your check (see Membership, page 3). Many thanks to our friends in the BCSB for handling the details of arranging and presenting this event. (For the details see page 2 of the newsletter.)

The April Zoom demonstration with Sergio Cuan was excellent. (See Ken Martin's report on pages 4 – 7.) The first of two points that stood out for me was the ease and frequency he did grafting for both branches and roots. It really makes you think about developing your tree. The other important point I found was the branch ramification he did. The better the ramification, the older the tree looked, which certainly enhanced the beauty of the tree.

For paid-up members who missed the demo, let me know and I will send you the link to the recorded session, which will remain available until the next event on June 8. I recommend watching it.

In other news, May 30 is the deadline to apply for the California Bonsai Club's annual Ben Oki Scholarship. As they did last year, CBS is offering two \$1,000 grants for "anyone in the bonsai community to be used to attend classes, workshops, study with a pro or other bonsai related educational activi-



Marj Branson

ty." To apply, the applicant should send an email to: CaliforniaBonsaiSociety123@earthlink.net. "In that email, explain what you intend to do with the money to improve your bonsai skills, and what you will commit to doing to give back to the bonsai community. Be creative!" CBS said in its announcement.

"Applicants who receive scholarships agree that, in return for these funds, within 15 days of completing classes (or whichever activity they put this scholarship toward) they will provide photos and a short write-up of their experience using the scholarship that will be published on the California Bonsai Society website newsletter," CBS explained in its announcement. It added that "everyone in the bonsai community is encouraged to apply for this chance to expand your own bonsai knowledge and to help contribute to the bonsai community."

If you would like to expand your

(Continued on page 10)

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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	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	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
NOTE DATE June 8	NOTE SPECIAL TIME AND “PLACE”: ZOOM 7:30 PM: Joint Zoom event with Bonsai Club of Santa Barbara DEMONSTRATION: Jonas Dupuich / Japanese Black Pine Development and Refinement
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

May Care Varies Based on Bonsai Species

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.

Satsuki azaleas should be nearly through blooming this month. If your azalea has an established shape, now is a good time to clean out extra and unwanted growth. Trim for form and style.

Make sure all seed pods are removed as soon as possible. Leaving the seed pods to mature tends to weaken the tree and new growth is likely to be weak. Repotting of azaleas can be done now. It might be wise to wait to move your azaleas from nursery containers to bonsai pots until next spring.

Pomegranates and olives may be potted from nursery containers to bonsai pots during June and early July. Protect any newly potted plants from direct sun for a week or so. Black pines should have had their candles pruned by the end of this month and certainly by the middle of July.

Deciduous trees such as elms, Japanese and trident maples, liquidambar, etc. should have slowed down by now. Trim all new twigs to one or two sets of leaves. Pay attention to the way new buds point and trim for direction. Established bonsai should



Jim Barrett

be developing the ramification needed to create the illusion of a mature tree. Remember that most deciduous trees in nature develop soft outlines and rounded apices. Trim accordingly.

Fertilize trees that develop flower buds in early summer, such as crab apple, quince, ume (Japanese apricot), and wisteria with a low nitrogen, rich phosphate fertilizer. Repeat throughout the summer at least two more times.

Powdery mildew is already showing up on maples, crapemyrtle, and quince. Spray with Benomyl or a good fungicide that is recommended for mildew.

Pine tip moth has been active again. The grub eats the center of new pine candles. If your black pine candles turn brown at the very tip, chances are that pine tip moth grubs are active. Pick off the brown end and inspect the inside. You should find the grub, a pupae, or the pupae

case. Destroy the critter and dispose of the candle tip. Since this grub lives inside the candle, only a systemic poison would be effective. Cygon-2, Borer Control, or a systemic rose insecticide in granular form might work.

Pay special attention to water schedules. Gloomy May days can be deceiving when it comes to watering needs of our plants.

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 (editor@cvbs-bonsai.org).

Please note that we list the month of the newsletter issue for each Virtual Niche Volunteer (right). For example, Rick Naber provided a photo for this, the May 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)

May	Rick Naber
June	David Whiteside
July	Larry Kimmelman
August	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 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 May, the meeting has been canceled. The next meeting will be a Zoom event at 7:30 PM on June 8—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

Design Deciduous Trees for Winter Silhouette

By Ken Martin

The key to excellent deciduous-tree bonsai is to design for a winter silhouette. That's the upshot of the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society's April 15, 2021 demonstration by East Coast-based bonsai expert Sergio Cuan. He said that he designs his deciduous trees "100 percent for a showy winter silhouette."

Presented online, the demonstration was a joint venture with the Bonsai Club of Santa Barbara. Our two clubs shared the cost of the lecture; the BCSB handled the arrangements and hosted the presentation.

Speaking from New Jersey, Sergio showed pictures of ten trees he has worked on, some for as long as 20 years. He specializes in deciduous trees that need winter cold or at least will tolerate it. Here are the ten trees in the order Sergio presented them in his lecture:

1. Arakawa Japanese Maple twin trunk (this page). Sergio likes this cultivar because it has rough bark and little or no leaf scorch in summer, which might make it an attractive candidate for Southern California. (Most of the species that Sergio works with in northern New Jersey are unusual in our area.)

Purchased via an auction on eBay, the tree arrived with the No. 1 trunk's apex broken off. He wired a small side branch up to replace the apex. He also used an approach graft to add a branch on the outside of a new curve created by the new apex.

The nebari had a gap on the right side. With a situation like this, Sergio will approach graft a small tree to the nebari. Normally, after the graft takes, he'll remove the stem leaving the root to enhance the nebari. On this tree, however, he feels the small trunk complements the entire composition, so he kept it.

As an aside, he noted that this grafting process is good for minor nebari problems; for more serious problems, he air layers the trunk higher up to create a whole new nebari. Sergio also noted that thread grafting is generally more reliable than approach grafts, which may be rejected by the tree. Sergio wires the entire tree out to the tips, although some experts don't think it necessary. His technique is to use directional pruning as well as wiring.

2. Japanese Beech forest (this page). Sergio realizes this species would not do well in our climate as it needs winter cold. He purchased this forest in 2004. It initially was on a different slab. He didn't like the initial organization and he felt the soil mound was too high for the size of this forest. He also felt the lower leg of the scalene triangle outline tilted too much lower on the left. In the picture shown here, the bottom of the branches is now near level, the soil mound is lower, and there is a new slab. He feels the unusual plexiglass stand really complements this forest composition. He may slant the No. 1 tree more to the left. In Ja-

(Continued on page 5)



1. Arakawa Japanese Maple twin trunk (top right). Note the grafted third trunk at lower right.

2. Japanese Beech forest on a slab (middle right).

3. Linden Tree (bottom right), before and after.



Photos by David Williams except tree No. 1, which is by David Whiteside

Cuan Demo (Continued from page 4)

pan, beeches are frequently shown in the winter with copper-colored leaves hanging from the branches

3. Linden Tree (previous page). Bought from Ryan Neal, who used it in a demonstration, it has lime-green leaves in spring and red buds in winter. In two years, Sergio wired to remove appearance of the two lowest branches being barred, developed a new apex, and promoted additional branching on the upper right as can be seen from the before and after photos. He will continue to develop this tree, which he likes very much. Sergio noted that the linden, which is common in Europe but not in the U.S., is great material for bonsai.



4. Kashima Japanese Maple (dwarf). Sergio lost nearly half of this tree due to winter freeze (above, left). After rebuilding the apex (above, right)—note the red line indicating future plans to fill out the apex even more.

4. Kashima Japanese Maple (this page). This dwarf cultivar wakes up early in the spring in his location. When the tree starts pushing buds, the winter hardiness goes away as Sergio found out when he left this tree outside in the winter and lost about half of the original. He completely defoliated two summers out of five to accelerate branching. Both Ryan Neal and Bjorn Bjorholm warn against doing this as there is a danger of weakening the tree. The tree should be extremely healthy to fully defoliate, Sergio warned.



5. Japanese Maple “Kiryu” before and after comparison (above). Note the extensive dead-wood carving and the additional exposed nebari and hollow in the base.

5. Japanese Maple “Kiryu” (this page). There were large scars on both trunks that Sergio carved some more to make it look like what he called an old “decrepit oak.” He then painted the stark light-colored scars with India ink. He raised the tree to show a hollow in the base. He used wood hardener on the deadwood.

(Continued on page 6)



6. Bald Cypress, as purchased (above left) and redesigned as a weeping style tree (above right).

6. Bald Cypress (this page). Sergio bought this small 15-inch tree because of the flared nebari. He initially styled it as an informal upright but got bored with it. “The world doesn’t need another informal upright,” he quipped. So, Sergio made it into a weeping tree by wiring the branches down. Asked how he gets so much growth so fast, he said defoliation helps get more development. He completely defoliated this cypress in two of the four summers he’s had it.

7. Japanese Maple “Kuro hime” (this page). He put this shohin-size bonsai in a refrigerator in early spring to delay spring flush. Big mistake! The low humidity inside the refrigerator sucked the moisture out of the tree and he lost the whole right half. So he used the surviving branch to make this tree into a semi cascade and later planted it on a 12-inch Chinese stone.

(Continued on page 7)



7. Japanese Maple “Kuro hime” after refrigeration mistake (top) and in its first redesign as a semi cascade (above). Finally, Sergio created a tree-on-rock style composition (right) for the tree.



Cuan Demo (Continued from page 6)

8. Eastern White Cedar (this page). Also known as arborvitae, this tree was originally collected in Vermont. Sergio felt that the trunk and the foliage appeared too separate, so he repositioned the green foliage to hide some of the trunk, softening the visual impact of the large amount of deadwood. It is apparent in ten years the live vein diameter increased significantly. The stand with its curved legs was custom-made for this tree. These legs accentuate the curve in the upper tree.

9. Japanese Maple (this page). This tree started as an informal upright bonsai. Sergio redesigned it as a two-trunk tree. He accomplished this by air layering a branch on the lower right side. After he removed the air layer, he grafted it to the extreme lower right to add roots to the nebari and provide the second trunk.

10. Case Study: 60-year-old Japanese maple imported from Japan (this page). Sergio has wanted for the longest time to practice peg grafting, a method of moving a branch from one location on a tree to another place on the same tree. "Sometimes you have a branch that is 10, 15, 20 years old and you may say I love this branch, but I don't need it here. Often, we just cut it off," Sergio said, adding "but there is a way that you can repurpose that branch."

To accomplish this, he first approach grafted a seedling to an unwanted portion of a branch on the second trunk on the right. When this graft was successful, he removed the section of branch he wanted to move. It's now being fed by the seedling's roots. When he cut off the branch, he left 1/2 inch or so before the graft. He made a peg out of the 1/2 inch extension and inserted it snugly into a drilled hole in the No. 1 trunk where he wanted it. When this new graft has taken, he will remove the pot and roots of the seedling. You will note no part of the tree used to transfer the branch will be a part of the final composition.

Sergio said he realizes many of the species he discussed don't do well in our climate. He does think trident maples, which have most of the good attributes of Japanese maples, would be okay here. This was a good informative talk by an articulate and accomplished bonsai expert. 🌲

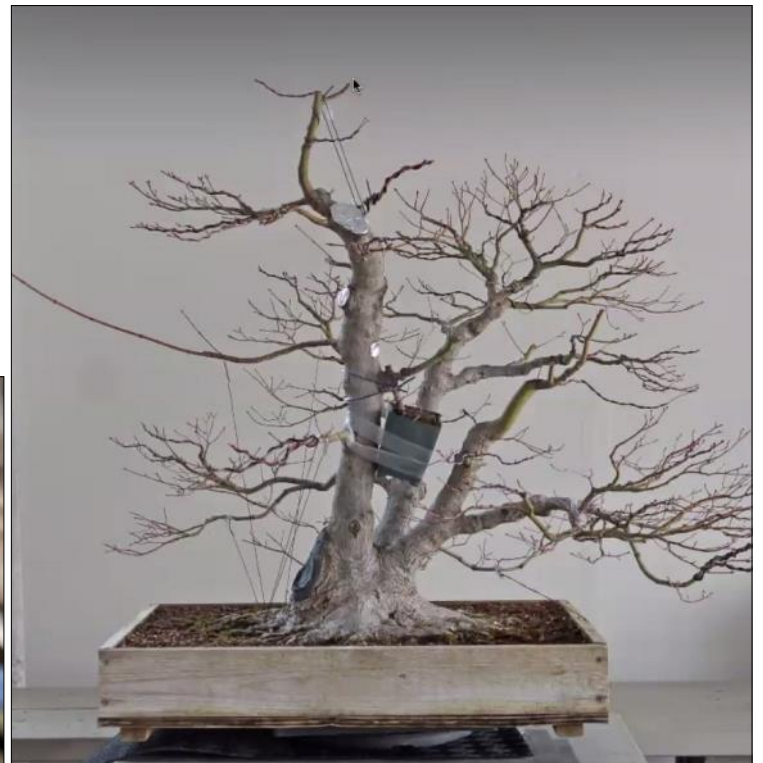


8. Eastern White Cedar (above) in before (left) and after (right) photos.

9. Japanese Maple (below) as single-trunk (left) and two-trunk (right) after air layering a branch and then approach grafting it to the base.



10. Peg grafting a Japanese maple (right and below). First, Sergio approach grafted an unwanted branch to a seedling and separated them (near right, top). Then he drilled a hole to insert the peg (near right, bottom). The finished graft (far right) with the seedling's pot fastened in place.



'Ghost' Chinese Elm Bonsai with 'Leaves'

Editor's Note: Everyone has come up with ways to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. Conejo Valley Bonsai Society member Rick Naber "revived" his dead Chinese elm with artificial leaves for this virtual niche display for this, the May 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, Rick set the display up at home and photographed it. Here are some details about Rick's "ghost" Chinese elm bonsai.

The tree is a Chinese Elm that died a couple of years ago. I was holding on to it because I like the tree structure and the branch ramification. I had been thinking about doing something with it and then one day I was in Hobby Lobby where they had many different tree branches. I found some suitable looking leaf branches, cut and trimmed them to fit this tree, and then took a hot glue gun to glue them onto the tree. I now can have the tree inside my home and enjoy it.

—Rick Naber



Photo by Rick Naber

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

The Complete Book of Bonsai, A Practical Guide to Its Art & Cultivation by Harry Tomlinson (Publisher: Dorling Kindersley Ltd., London, 1990; U.S. Edition by Abberville Press, New York, 1991) 223 pages.

Our May Book of the Month is *The Complete Book of Bonsai, A Practical Guide to Its Art & Cultivation* by Harry Tomlinson. Tomlinson is a world-renowned bonsai curator and author. He established the Greenwood Bonsai Studio near Nottinghamshire in Britain. (Since Harry's retirement in 2008, the business has been owned and run by his two sons, Corin and Paul.)

This book is one of several general books in the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society library, but for this review I decided to dig into a specific section. We recently gained some new CVBS members who may be new to bonsai, so they might appreciate a closer look at Tomlinson's guidance regarding bonsai tools. Experienced members might benefit from the review of the basics, too.

Tomlinson notes that many beginners may be overwhelmed at first with the wide variety of tools that experienced bonsai enthusiasts unpack. He simplifies the bonsai toolbox by suggesting a basic tool set for beginners that includes a trimming shears, a concave branch cutter, and a wire cutter (see the photo below). His discussion of tools includes guidance on how to use the basic tools. For example, he emphasized the importance of sharp shears that will cut clean without any ragged edges because a clean cut promotes healing of the remaining stem.

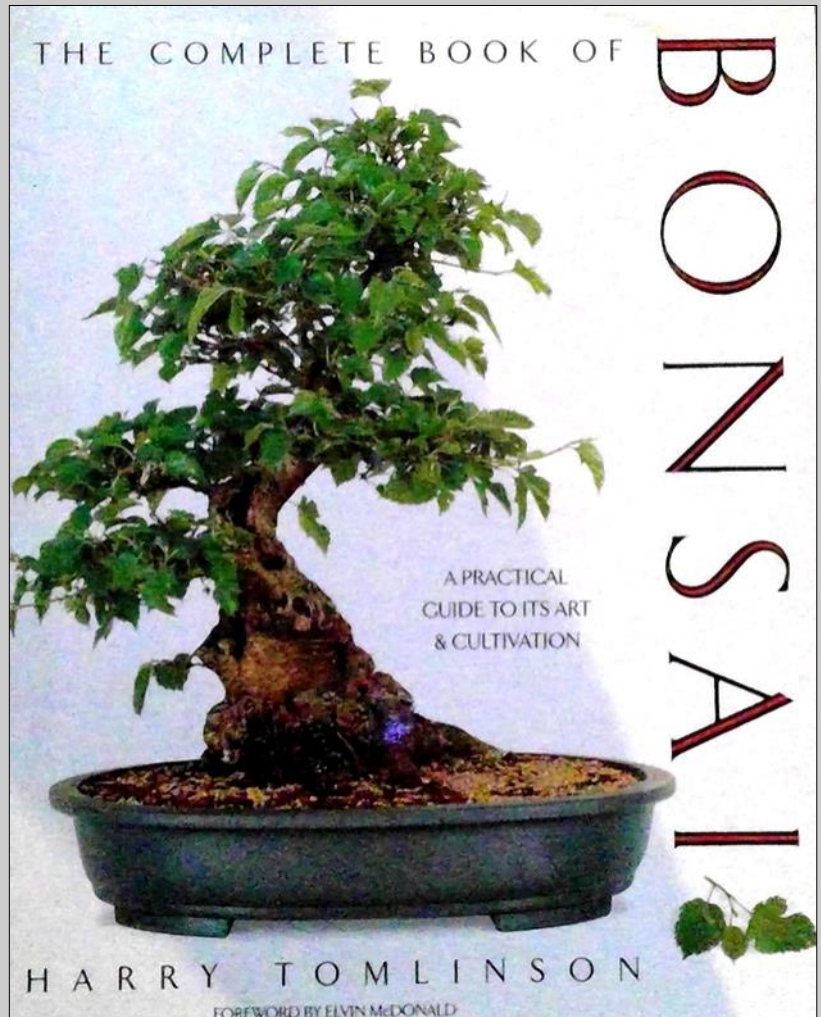
You can check out his advice regarding tools and many other elements of bonsai by borrowing this book from the CVBS Library.

—Mike Blumenberg



Harry Tomlinson's suggestion for a beginner's basic toolkit (above).

In a handsome, large format hardcover (right) *The Complete Book of Bonsai* is chock full of information for beginners and advanced hobbyists alike.



Photos by Mike Blumenberg

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

May—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-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.

President's Message (Continued from page 1)

bonsai education, this is an excellent opportunity. We are truly fortunate here in California to have many excellent bonsai teachers. I encourage all CVBS members to consider applying—but hurry, the deadline is fast approaching. Give it a try!

On Saturday, April 24, we had a mini workshop at fellow member Rick Boyer's family nursery in Somis. Thank you, Rick, for the use of the nursery. The workshop was outside, and with the overcast sky we had perfect working weather—not too hot (see photos below). Our club advisor, Ken Fuentes was on hand and available to help members with their trees. Our two newest members, Antonio Viscarra and Rob Webb, came and worked on their trees. It gave us an opportunity to meet them both. Welcome both Antonio and Rob to the club.

For many years, CVBS friend and bonsai master Jim Barrett has provided our monthly bonsai advice column

with his Bonsai Tips (see page 3). He recently was injured in a fall and is in the hospital. We all wish him well and a speedy recovery.

I have been keeping in touch with the Westlake Village Community Center. They will let us know as soon as the center is available. Hopefully, it will be mid-summer or sooner. They are in Los Angeles County, so their Covid opening depends on the LA regulations. We will keep you posted.

Spring/Summer is in full force. One day it is very hot, and the little roots cook in their pots and the next day it is cool and overcast. Over watering and underwatering is a real challenge for me. I hope you can get a good grip on it. The trees are sprouting out all over and I no sooner finish pruning one tree than I have to start over again. I am happy to see everything green and healthy. I hope you are enjoying working on your trees as well.

Stay safe. 🌳

Nancy Smeets and her finished boxwood (near right).

Antonio Viscarra working on his elm tree (middle right).

Rick Boyer cutting down his boxwoods (far right).

Ken Fuentes working with new member Rob Webb (below left).

The group at Rick Boyer's family's nursery in Somis (right).

