



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

(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

Community Center Plans To Reopen

By Marj Branson

Let's start the month off with some good news: the Westlake Village Community Center has confirmed that they will reopen in January 2022. After many months as the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society in virtual space, we can look forward to resuming in-person, real-time meetings.

Caution: While the city has set this date, plans remain subject to change based on pandemic developments, health officer orders, and the City's operations. Keep your fingers crossed!

Back to Virtual Reality

We're still on Covid restrictions in both Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, so in place of our annual bonsai exhibition at the Gardens of the World in Thousand Oaks, we again will hold a virtual show in our newsletter.

For this virtual show, please take pictures of up to three of your bonsai. Companion plants are not required, but do pose your trees in front of as blank a background as possible on a display stand, slab, or matt. Send your digital photographs to newsletter editor David Whiteside (at editor@cvbs-bonsai.org) by Saturday, November 6, 2021. Be sure to identify the species in as much detail as you can (e.g., "prostate juniper" instead of just "juniper").

Not sure how to take really good bonsai photographs? See CVBS Photographer David Williams' article "How To Enhance Your Bonsai Photos" on pages 4 – 5 of this issue.

Keep in mind that, given the late date of our virtual show, you may be able to add a seasonal perspective. If you're lucky, some of your deciduous trees will be sporting fall colors; please seriously consider including some of these. Realistically, however, at this time of year in our climate, foliage on deciduous trees can be in less than

prime condition. Consider removing all the dead or dying leaves and present a winter silhouette. Give it some thought and see how creative you can be.

GSBF Matters

The annual GSBF/Huntington Gardens Bonsai-A-Thon will be in February 2022. The question is whether to plan an in-person activity or a virtual event as we did in 2021? Please let me know whether you would attend and/or volunteer if it is an in-person, physical event.

Election of Officers

Remember, our election of officers for 2022 is coming up. If you would like to volunteer for any of the positions, please let me know. We will set up a nominating committee for the election of the following officers:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

Under pre-pandemic circumstances, we held elections at our November meeting. Instead, we will conduct the election via email next month. All current officers step down and the new officers are installed automatically at the conclusion of the election.

The new officers will then appoint standing committee chairs, which are:

- Advisor
- Membership
- Newsletter Editor
- Program
- Publicity
- Refreshments
- Librarian
- Field Trips and Activities

If you wish to help with any of the above committees, please let me know.

Stay healthy and stay safe!



Marj Branson

Contact Us

(Click on Email Address)

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CVBS 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
NOTE DATE July 8	NOTE SPECIAL DATE AND “PLACE”: ZOOM 7:00 PM: Online via Zoom (members in good standing will be emailed the Zoom link prior to the meeting) DEMONSTRATION: Todd Schlafer / Styling and Detail Work of Collected Juniper
August 19	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop and Swap Meet — BRING YOUR TREES AND OTHER ITEMS
September 16	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by PEER CRITIQUES—BRING YOUR EXHIBITION TREES
October 2–3	CANCELED DUE TO VENUE LIMITATIONS 18TH ANNUAL CVBS EXHIBITION
October 21	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
November 18	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM: Brief Meeting with Club Elections followed by DEMONSTRATION: TBA
December 16	CANCELED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS 7:30 PM HOLIDAY POTLUCK, RAFFLE & AUCTION

October: Great Time for Pine & Juniper Care

By Jim Barrett

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

October is a very good month to clean up Japanese black pines and junipers. If you have a black pine bonsai, finish pruning the unwanted new growth leaving one, two, or three new candles on the tips of each branch or twig that was pruned earlier this summer.

How many candles you leave is determined by your design goals for the tree [and] whether the new growth is on the outer limits of the tree or in the interior. Old needles (discolored) should be removed. New or fresh needles should remain until

October is a very good month to clean up Japanese black pines and junipers.

December or January. Leaving these new healthy needles on through the fall should keep the tree at its best. Cutting long needles shorter will allow sunlight to penetrate into the interior of the tree, and help to build stronger growth on the weak and stunted interior candles and twigs.

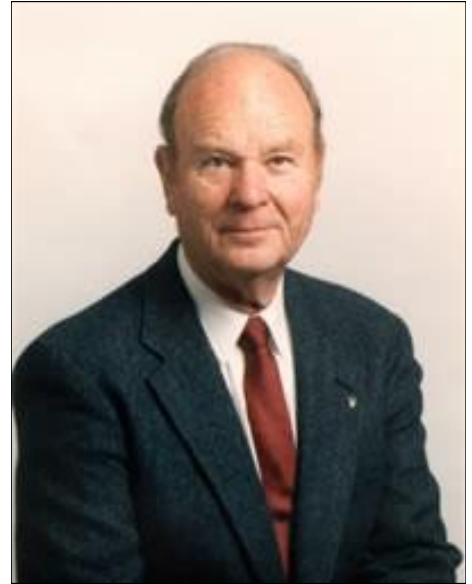
Junipers may be cleaned of all dead or discolored foliage. Prune the "hanger downers" and the "pointer uppers" unless you plan to wire them into a more horizontal position.

October is also a good time to remove old wire and rewire for detail.

You should be able to prune quince, apple, and ume for shape now and place them into their show pot, if this is a practice you follow. Fertilize azaleas and most flowering and fruiting bonsai with a low nitrogen, high phosphorous fertilizer. A 0-10-10 should work well.

Repotting and potting (from nursery container to bonsai pot) can be safely done at this time for black pine and most junipers. Repotting flowering and fruiting bonsai from bonsai pot to bonsai pot can be done, provided the root ball is not drastically disturbed and the tree is reasonably healthy.

Pay attention to watering schedules this month and next. Keeping plants too wet may promote root rot, especially if the tree is not actively growing. Watch for fungus, spider mites, and scale. 🐜



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 until at least January 2022 due to 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, Nancy Smeets provided a photo for this, the October 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 and 2022 calendar and let us know when you would like to present your display.

—Marj Branson

2021 - '22 Niche Displays

(Month of publication)

Oct.	Nancy Smeets
Nov.	Antonio Viscarra
Dec.	Ken Fuentes
Jan 2022	Volunteer Needed

CVBS Membership

Interested in CVBS?

The Conejo Valley Bonsai Society 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: during the pandemic, CVBS has cosponsored several demonstrations via Zoom; DVDs of those are available in our library. 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 Enhance Your Bonsai Photos

By David Williams

For over 12 years, I have been shooting pictures for the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society. During these years I have learned many things and hopefully my photography demonstrates my growth. I've also acquired a lot of equipment over the years—equipment most CVBS members do not have. (More on my equipment below.)

This year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we cannot do a live, in-person annual exhibition at our usual venue, Gardens of the World in Thousand Oaks. Instead, we are asking all CVBS members to photograph their own trees and send them to our newsletter editor, David White-side. (Send them in JPG format to editor@cvbs-bonsai.org by Saturday, November 6, 2021.)

There are some basic photography techniques that apply whether you're using the built-in camera on your smartphone, a simple point-and-shoot camera, or a fancy digital single-lens-reflex camera (DSLR). First, some basics, then some more elaborate possibilities.

There are two major issues for all bonsai photographers to consider regardless of what equipment they're using: lighting and camera angle.

Lighting: Natural and Flash

First, lighting. Even though I love shooting with a light kit, often I only have my mobile phone on me. Let's be honest, how often do we drag around the kind of camera equipment I use for our annual exhibition? So when I set up for my shoot, I try to find a location out of direct sunlight. I usually find myself on the shadow side of a building or inside if there is enough room for my setup. This applies regardless of what lighting equipment you have.

For most of the photoshoots I have done for our annual bonsai exhibition, the best days have been overcast for even, shadowless lighting. In the photos I provided for this article, for example, I am shooting on my driveway in front of the big white door.

I have been very successful shooting pictures with my old Samsung Note 8 and even point and shoot cameras. However, I almost always have my flash set to off. We all have seen those pictures with harsh shadows on a wall and this would be no different. When I have shot photos in the past with a forward-facing flash, the shadow muddles the contour of the branching and darkens the entire photo.

Camera Angle, Position

Second, camera angle. Bonsai trees are supposed to be viewed from the front, and completely perpendicular. If the camera is too high or too low, you will get a perspective of looking down or looking up. Keeping this in mind, I usually raise the camera so I see the top of the pot and it appears to be nearly flat (see photo, this page). Also, I find that if I pull back farther from the subject and zoom in a little, the trees appear truer to size. If you have a tripod, use it to keep

(Continued on page 5)



The finished product: how a bonsai photograph should look (above). Note that the camera is level with the top of the pot and the absence of shadows.



David Williams' photography setup on his driveway, with all the equipment (above).

Positioning the bonsai and accent plant on the background paper (below).



Bonsai Photography (continued from page 4)

your camera steady while taking pictures. Otherwise, try to find some stable object to brace your camera.

Before taking the picture, think about if the camera should be horizontal (for landscape) or vertical (for portrait). If you shoot in portrait instead of landscape, you can really cramp your picture. I often shoot in the landscape orientation, and I can always crop the sides off.

One great tip when you are shooting pictures with your mobile phone is to make sure your camera lens is clean. Smudges really ruin the pictures. And often cannot be repaired in the computer even with software such as Photoshop. If you have any other point-and-shoot camera or DSLR, make sure you follow the manufacture's recommended directions for cleaning their lenses.

Beyond the Basics

Now for some fancy stuff.

I have acquired most of my equipment piece by piece over the years. My first DSLR camera was given to me by my father-in-law when he upgraded his work camera. When he retired, he gave me his two-point strobe light set with umbrellas. What a difference that made to the final images.

I also picked up a background setup from Amazon to hold a roll of 50% gray photography background paper. (Lacking such a setup, simply pose your bonsai in front of a blank wall.) I find that the gray shows the tree off better than a black background. The background consists of two tripods that extend up to hold a cross beam that you hold the background on. I extend it up tall enough so that the largest tree will have a foot or two above it.

I have two strobe lights on tripods that I aim at the trees on the table covered in paper. The first light I setup is the key light. I set it up in front of the table and to the side pointing down toward the tables in a 45° angle. I then set up a fill light, low and to the opposite side of the tree almost at tree level. The lights give the trees more volume.

The power supply has a strobe sensor on it that communicates with the infrared sensor mounted to my camera. When I press the trigger, both strobes flash at the same time into the reflective umbrellas to give a wider bounce light that gives a more even light.

If are using a flash or strobe setup like what I have, set the shutter speed to 1/60 second. The DSLR will set the f Stop for you if you don't have a light meter.

This next part is a little advanced. Most cameras have a way to adjust the exposure by "bracketing." I start taking test photos and I play with the +/- exposure until I find what I like. Once I like a setting, I usually take three photos: one at that exposure and then one +1 and one -1, especially on partly cloudy days when the exposure changes on a whim.

After all my photos are taken, I drag them all into Photoshop to make adjustments to make the photos pop and to repair any issues with the image. Cropping the photo is very important. If we want to frame it, we should crop the photo in 8x10, 5x7, 4x5, or 4x6 depending on what size you want your photo. When I crop the photo, I let the tree sit with more air on the sides and on the top. It anchors the tree to the "Ground," more. Another cropping technique I use is setting the tree off center, especially if there is an accent plant nearby.

You don't have Photoshop? No problem. Our newsletter editor, David Whiteside, can adjust and crop photos in the Microsoft Publisher software he uses. Just frame your bonsai to fill as much of the screen as possible. This minimizes the amount of cropping David has to do, which helps preserve the quality of your photograph.

Finally, remember: The most important part about taking pictures is having fun and sharing them with friends and family. And, in the case of this virtual exhibition, with our CVBS newsletter. 🌳



The setup to 'bounce' a strobe light off a specially designed umbrella (above).

Framing the bonsai and accent plant in a DSLR camera's view screen (below).



Nason's Camano Island Bonsai Retreat

By David Whiteside

Long-time Conejo Valley Bonsai Society members will recognize Norm Nason (photo at right). While visiting family in northern Washington state late last month, my wife, Romie, and I visited him and his wife, Lisa. They now live on Camano Island, Washington, on a lovely 5-acre property, which they have been gradually landscaping with an interesting variety of trees, shrubs, flowers, and other plantings. Most of the acreage, however, remains untamed woodland. Tucked away in one clearing in the woods, Norm has created a small meditation garden invisible from the rest of their property.

I was particularly interested in what has happened to Norm's bonsai collection since relocating from Southern California (see CVBS newsletter, November 2020, pages 4 – 7). As reported previously, eight of his trees have survived the transition to a very different climate, and Norm is learning new techniques to help his remaining collection adapt.

Norm Nason (top right) with his bonsai collection on Camano Island, Washington.



This hardy old fig (right) was in fruit when we visited at the end of September. Directly below is a closeup of the fruit (far right, below).

First row below (left to right):

Japanese black pine; Japanese boxwood that Norm is restyling after the large top died; unusual cascading fig; and closeup of fruit on the fig bonsai directly above it.

Second row below (left to right):

Rosemary with new apex under development; thyme; Itoigawa shimpaku juniper; and a twisted pomegranate (see page 10 for a photo of this tree in its fall color taken a couple of weeks later).

Photos by David Whiteside



Short or Long, These Videos Are Worthwhile

By Ken Martin

Online Video Reviews

This month I'm reviewing two very different online videos. One, with Jason Chan, is a relatively short demonstration of working on an entire tree. The second, with Joshua Hooson, is longer but deals with just one branch.

Jason Chan
Eastern Leaf Bonsai
Working on a Crepe Myrtle
13 min.

YouTube address: Broadleaf Bonsai; Working on a Crepe Myrtle

I chose this video from May 2020 because I have several crepe myrtles (*Lagerstroemia indica*) and Jason Chan is a demonstrator who explains the reason for every decision. He starts with one of his crepe myrtles in a five-gallon can. He selects one of two competing trunks and proceeds to initial styling. He mentions he will revisit this tree in a year. I looked and couldn't find this tree as a subject of a demonstration this year.

Jason Chan (top right) explaining his plan for this large crepe myrtle.

After (right). Note the apex of the tree at this time is about two feet above the top edge of this picture. Jason is leaving it on to further fatten the lower trunk.

Screen captures by Ken Martin



Joshua Hooson
Bonsai En (Australia)
How to Create a Juniper Bonsai Pad
46 minutes

YouTube address: How to Create a Juniper Bonsai Pad

This video on how to create a juniper foliage pad is unique in that the entire demonstration uses one branch that Joshua Hooson, owner of Bonsai En in Australia, had removed from one of his junipers.

The considerable advantage of using a detached branch for the viewer is Joshua can rotate the branch top up or bottom up and his current operation is in full view whether it be trimming, wiring, or positioning branches. 🌲



Joshua Hooson (above) with one of his juniper bonsai.

Branch Before (below left): bottom view.

Branch After (below right): bottom view plus Joshua's projection of what the future might hold if this were attached to a live tree.



A 'Merry and Healthy' Collected Bougainvillea

Editor's Note: CVBS member Nancy Smeets provided the virtual niche display for this, the October 2021 issue of our newsletter (see listing of virtual niche volunteers, page 3). Because physical meetings are on hold due to the pandemic, Nancy set the display up in her backyard and photographed it. Here are some details about Nancy's bougainvillea.

This is a bougainvillea that I dug out of the ground years ago. It's always so merry and healthy. I keep pinching it back. This shape is pleasing to me—and I like how the one little green leaf is just about to fall. It reminds me of autumn! I got the rock from Jim Barrett's collection. I hand carried that pot back with me from Japan; it is by a lady artist.

—Nancy Smeets

Photo by Nancy Smeets



Nancy Smeets' 'merry' bougainvillea (above) is what some call an urban yamadori. (Yamadori traditionally means collected from the wild.) The stone at left in the photo is from Jim Barrett's collection and Nancy acquired the pot during a trip to Japan.

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

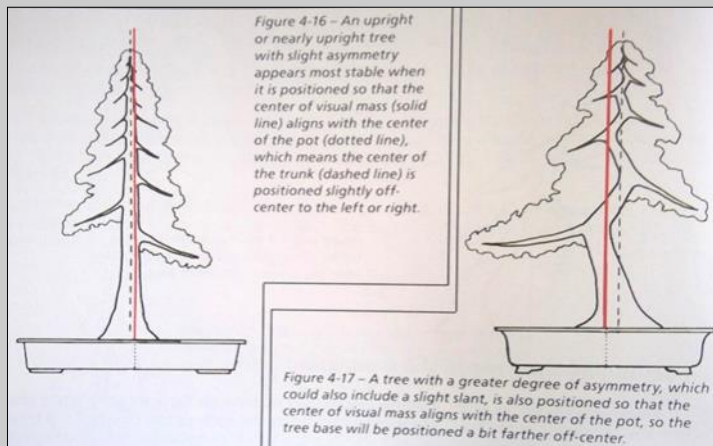
Principles of Bonsai Design by David DeGroot (© David DeGroot, 2015, published by the American Bonsai Society, PO Box 8, Lynnville, TN).

Our Book of the Month for October isn't a CVBS library book; it's from my personal collection. I purchased it several years ago while visiting the Pacific Bonsai Museum near Seattle, WA. It's been languishing on my bookshelf because I've been reviewing library books instead of reading my own books. I decided it was time to read a book from my own library and share it with the club. I may even decide to loan it out (if you ask nice!).

The author of *Principles of Bonsai Design*, David DeGroot, has been studying and practicing bonsai since 1972. He is the former curator of Weyerhaeuser's Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection (now the Pacific Bonsai Museum) and former director of the American Bonsai Society. In 1982, he received Bonsai Clubs International's "Outstanding Writer, Artist and Photographer" award. He continues to travel widely to lecture and has presented programs across the U.S. and in Brazil, Canada, England, South Africa, and Venezuela.

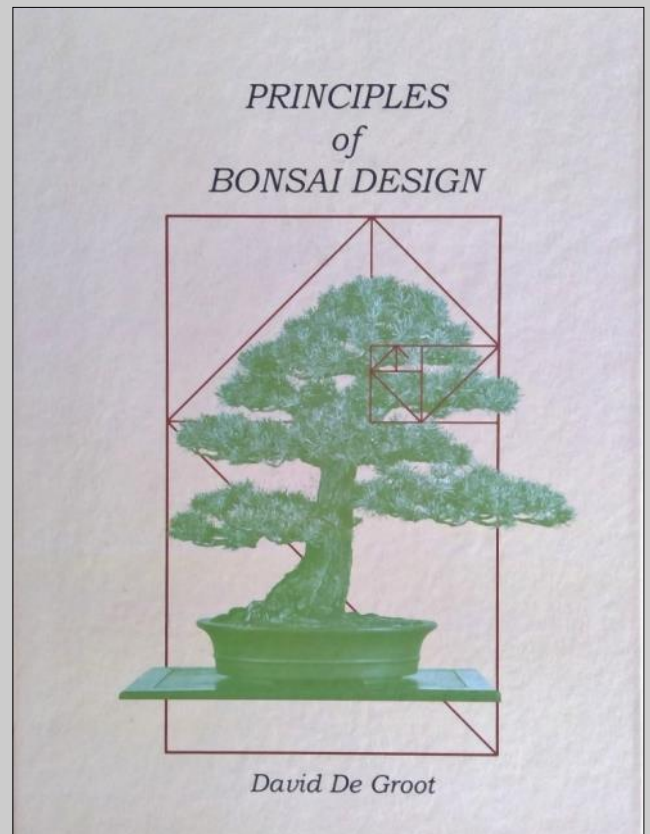
In *Principles of Bonsai Design*, DeGroot discusses "principles that underlie bonsai as an art form." The initial chapters include "Visual Elements," "Proportion," and "Balance." In the chapter discussing Balance, he explains that "in bonsai the entire composition of the tree in its container must be visually balanced." He discusses symmetrical and asymmetrical designs and shows how to find a tree's centers of vertical and horizontal mass. He uses these centers to select an appropriate container and appealing position for the tree within the container. The figures below are good examples. Both are asymmetrical trees. The dotted black line shows the main line of the trunk, and the red line shows the vertical center of mass. In both figures, he explains that the tree appears most stable (balanced) with the vertical center of mass going through the center of the pot while the main trunk line is slightly off center. This chapter and the rest of the book is filled with similar guidance. I'm sure I'll be referring to it a lot this winter when it's time to start repotting trees.

—Mike Blumenberg



Graphics (above) illustrating good aesthetic placement of asymmetrical trees with the vertical center of mass (red lines) over the center of the pot while the main line of the trunk (dotted black lines) is off center.

October's Book of the Month, *Principles of Bonsai Design* (right).



Photos by Mike Blumenberg

AT PRESS TIME, SOME IN-PERSON BONSAI EVENTS IN CALIFORNIA WERE SCHEDULED DURING 2021 – 2022 (see below). MANY GARDENS ARE OPEN—NONETHELESS, YOU ARE ADVISED TO CONFIRM STATUS OF THE GARDEN AHEAD OF TIME. WE CONTINUE TO LIST VIRTUAL BONSAI EVENTS AS WELL.

2022

February

February 19 – 20, 2022 Oakland, California

Annual Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt Mammoth Auction & Sale will be held on Saturday, February 19 and Sunday, February 20, 2022 at 666 Bellevue Ave., Lakeside Park Garden Center in Oakland. You are invited to the biggest auction and sale of bonsai, pre-bonsai, pots, books, stands, and related material. A Mammoth fundraiser with all proceeds going to support the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt. Saturday auction preview starts at 12:00 PM with auction starting at 1:00 PM. Sunday sale from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Large showing of vendors, plant sales, and much more. Purchase your bonsai needs. For further information, contact George Haas at gwhaas@comcast.net or stay tuned to BGLM Website.

Fall Color

When my wife, Romie, and I visited northern Washington State late in September, the deciduous trees in the mixed forests were just beginning to show their fall colors. And all of Norm Nason’s deciduous bonsai were still solid green (see page 6). What a difference a few weeks can make!

As you can see in the photo of his twisted pomegranate below, fall has come to Norm’s “bonsai retreat.” Now, if any of your deciduous bonsai are showing fall color, please consider including them in your contribution to this year’s Conejo Valley Bonsai Society’s virtual annual exhibition (see pages 1 and 4 – 5). Remember: Saturday, November 6 is the deadline for submitting your photos. Send them to me at editor@cvbs-bonsai.org. Thank you!

—David Whiteside

Norm Nason’s twisted pomegranate (below) in splendid fall color.

Photo by Norm Nason

