



conejo valley

BONSAI society

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A member of the Golden State Bonsai Federation 

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Conejo Valley Bonsai Society Meetings

**Westlake Village City Hall
Community Room**
31200 Oakcrest Drive
Westlake Village, CA 91361
3rd Thursday of the Month
7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Visit Our Website
www.cvbs-bonsai.org

President's Message

CVBS Program Plan Is Shaping Up

By Marj Branson

The Conejo Valley Bonsai Society's program schedule for 2023 is well on its way. At our January meeting, we spent time outlining club programs and activities for the remainder of the year, but we need every member to help fill out the details.

Our plan is to have two expert demonstrators during 2023. Program Chair Nancy Smeets is reaching out to the bonsai community and putting the schedule of demos together. For her discussions with potential demonstrators, Nancy would appreciate knowing what topics interest you. Please let her know your ideas at the next club meeting.

For most evenings, when we do not have a demonstration, we will carry on with our practice of having 5- to 10-minute discussions on bonsai topics led by experienced members. These discussions will be followed by a workshop. Again, please advise me or Nancy of topics you would like to be included in the discussion program.

Ken Fuentes, our advisor, will be on hand to help members with their bonsai. If you have a club mentor, this would be a good time to work with them.

Rick Boyer has volunteered his nursery for Saturday afternoon workshops. We already have scheduled sessions there on March 4 and May 6. We will meet from 1:00 – 4:00 PM. Please see page 2 for details.

Field Trips & Activities

Chair Damon DuBois has talked to Ted Matson, curator of the bonsai collection at the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens. Ted has agreed to give us a behind-the-scenes tour at the Huntington. We just



Marj Branson

need to discuss it in the next club meeting, pick a date, and get an exact count for the number of people planning to go.

Please remember the Bonsai-A-Thon at the Huntington February 25 – 26, 2023. I have e-mailed the most recent flyer about this important event from the Huntington to all the club members. Note that advanced tickets are required. See the flier I sent and page 7 of

this newsletter for details.

Club Calendars

We have a few of our club's 2023 calendars left. Please see me at the February meeting. The calendar has photos of member trees taken for our October 2022 virtual bonsai show.

If you have not yet paid the club dues for 2023, please bring it along to our February meeting. The \$25.00 for singles/\$30.00 for couples is excellent value for the club activities being offered. See page 3 for details.

Meanwhile, the weather in our area sure has been challenging. On the one hand, we have had good rain through January and the start of February. The trees have been loving all the good water. But we also are experiencing some cold and windy weather. I have been having some frost bite on the leaves of my bougainvillea bonsai, so keep an eye on the cold weather. I should have pulled my trees into the garage. I will see if they break out with new growth this spring. On the other hand we have been having some sunny, warm days so I am finding my trees are drying out. It has been either too much or too little rain so keep an eye on your trees.

See you all the evening of Thursday, the 16th of February. 🌳

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(Click on Email Address)

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CVBS Programs 2023 (TENTATIVE)

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

January 19	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
February 16	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting & Presentation: Trimming junipers led by Marj Branson followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
SATURDAY March 4	1:00 – 4:00 PM: Workshop on Potting Ventura County Nursery, 4595 Balcom Canyon Road, Somis BRING YOUR TREES (CLUB WILL SPONSOR SOIL)
March 16	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting & Presentation: TBA followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
April 20	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting & Presentation: TBA followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
SATURDAY May 6	1:00 – 4:00 PM: Workshop TBA Ventura County Nursery, 4595 Balcom Canyon Road, Somis BRING YOUR TREES
May 18	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting & Presentation: TBA followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
June 15	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting & Presentation: TBA followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
July 20	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting & Presentation: TBA followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
August 17	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by Workshop and Swap Meet — BRING YOUR TREES AND OTHER ITEMS
September 21	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting & Presentation: TBA followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
October 19	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by PEER CRITIQUES—BRING YOUR EXHIBITION TREES
November 4–5	TENTATIVE 20TH ANNUAL CVBS EXHIBITION GARDENS OF THE WORLD
November 16	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting with Club Elections followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
December 21	7:30 PM HOLIDAY POTLUCK, RAFFLE & AUCTION

Best Two Months for Potting and Repotting

By Jim Barrett

February and March are probably the best two months of the year for potting and repotting bonsai and training trees from nursery cans to bonsai pots.

Deciding which bonsai needs repotting will depend on how long since its last potting and whether the tree has become root bound.

If the pot does not have a major inside lip, you may want to inspect the root ball by lifting the tree out of the pot. Look for a firm root ball with roots visible all around the sides and bottom.

Another indication that the tree needs repotting is the soil lifting above the edge of the pot. This shows that a mat of roots has formed on the bottom and is pushing the tree up. Trident maple bonsai are noted for this phenomenon.

One important reason for repotting is the tree has matured beyond its present container. Either it has grown larger or it deserves a more appropriate pot.

There are several things to consider when you decide to proceed:

- Decide which tree or trees you want to pot.
- Choose the pot. And it's a good idea to have a standby in case the first one doesn't work.
- Make sure the pot is clean inside and out.
- Place the wire or heavy plastic screen over each drain hole. Mesh



Jim Barrett

should be at least 1/8 inch holes. Make sure screens are held in place with wire clips.

- If you are going to tie the tree in [the pot], now is the time to install the tie wires. Use a wire of sufficient size and strength to do the job.
- Have your favorite [soil] mix handy.

All of the preparations should be done before the root ball is disturbed. Many bonsai are lost or set back if the roots and soil are removed before everything is ready.

Some hobbyists take just enough soil and roots off to place the tree back in its original pot, leaving room for an inch or so of new soil. Others are more aggressive in cleaning out old soil and pruning the roots more severely. Both approaches are valid. It all depends on the condition of the tree, its root system, and the owner's goals for the tree. This all sounds pretty involved or complicated—it isn't, if you use common sense and do not get too rough with

(Continued on page 7)

Refreshments

February	Antonio Viscarra
March	Nancy Smeets
April	Mike Blumenberg
May	Marj Branson

CVBS Niche Displays

Niche Display Program

In the Niche Display Program, club members set up a mini exhibition display. Such a display consists of: the tree in a nice bonsai pot; a display stand; and an accent plant.

All these items are important to create the balance for a good display. We aspire to present the best display possible for everyone's pleasure and edification.

However, it is also our desire to give everyone an opportunity to learn by doing. So if any less experienced member feels their trees are not ready for a finished display, it is worthwhile creating a display that is a work-in-progress. It will be up to the club member to determine which category their display falls into, and then the work-in-progress display can become the talking point of work done, work intended, and suggestions from the floor.

We encourage all members to sign up for the niche display! Please have a look at your calendar (see the list of current display volunteers at right—2023 already has some scheduled) and let us know when you would like to present your display.

—Marj Branson

Niche Displays

February	Mike Blumenberg
March	Dick Winston
April	Marj Branson
May	David Whiteside
June	Volunteer Needed
July	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. With Covid-19 restrictions lifted for now, we have resumed 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). Membership includes presentations by bonsai experts, workshops, critiques, member swap meets, field trips, a custom-made name badge, 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, or bring it to our next meeting.

—Nancy Smeets

Two Bonsai Experts in the Commonwealth

By Ken Martin

Online Video Review: This month I decided to bring an international flavor to Bonsai Online. One of the featured bonsai artists is in Montreal, Canada, the other lives in the United Kingdom.

Tony Easterbrook

Bonsai instructor and online demonstrator based in Montreal, Canada

YouTube: From Rootbound Japanese Maple to High Quality

Bonsai

90 minutes

Tony Easterbrook goes through the entire process of selecting the front of this 13-year-old tree, deciding which of the two lower sacrificial branches to save, and choosing which branches to delete and why. He also explains his pot selection.

I think there was a lot of good advice at the start of this demonstration, but I skipped through an awful lot of wiring without losing much. I thought the section at the end on pot selection very worthwhile. It included an explanation of why the selected pot best fit the tree.

I had always been taught not to put the tree in a tub of water after repotting because this doesn't allow the fine particles of soil to escape. Instead, my teachers have said, water the tree from above until the water runs clear out the bottom drain holes. But Tony's technique is to put the newly potted tree in a tub of lukewarm water for 20 minutes to allow the soil to absorb adequate water.

When watching this demonstration, I would recommend fast forwarding through the wiring section.



Tony Easterbrook with the 13-year-old Japanese maple before working on it (left).

The same maple, in its new pot, after Easterbrook styled it (above).

All screen captures by Ken Martin

Tony

Tony's Bonsai

Tony, evidently an amateur bonsai demonstrator in the UK, has his own YouTube channel

You Tube: Root Over Rock—Easy Method

22 minutes

The idea behind Tony's Bonsai channel "is to share my journey with you as I learn and practice all aspects of bonsai technique," according to his YouTube page. He has some 4,000 subscribers.

"In this video," he said at the beginning, "I create a root-over-rock bonsai tree out of a cheap boxwood (*buxus*) plant that I picked up for only 50 pence [about 57 cents—Editor] at a local garden center."

The reason I selected this demonstration is I have several boxwood trees and am interested in creating a root-over-rock bonsai. Tony spent a lot of time combing the roots out with his fingers in a pail of water. The tree was bare-rooted when he finished. He makes his own cement pots, one of which he used. He used medical tape to hold the roots against the rock. There was a comment that he could have put the soil level up much higher on the tree. I agree. 🌳



Tony explains what he is going to do with his 50-pence boxwood (above left) and with the finished root-over-rock bonsai (above right).

This Elm Survived Drought, Downed Tree

Editor's Note: Nancy Smeets provided the niche display at the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society's January 2023 meeting. She showed this small elm in a Japanese pot. Here are some details about Nancy's display.

In November my immense Monterey pine came down, and I lost a lot of trees. I'm so grateful this did not get crushed. I have had this elm since my earliest days in bonsai. It's a very hardy tree, having survived a severe drought when I went away and it didn't get watered! I came home to a withered, brown tree, and somehow it rallied. I am working on ramification, and eventually it may have a new front.

The pot is an unusual shade of red, almost orange. I brought it back from Japan.

I couldn't find a suitable stand because I wanted to create a minimalist scene evocative of winter. It would have been nice if the tree was in silhouette!

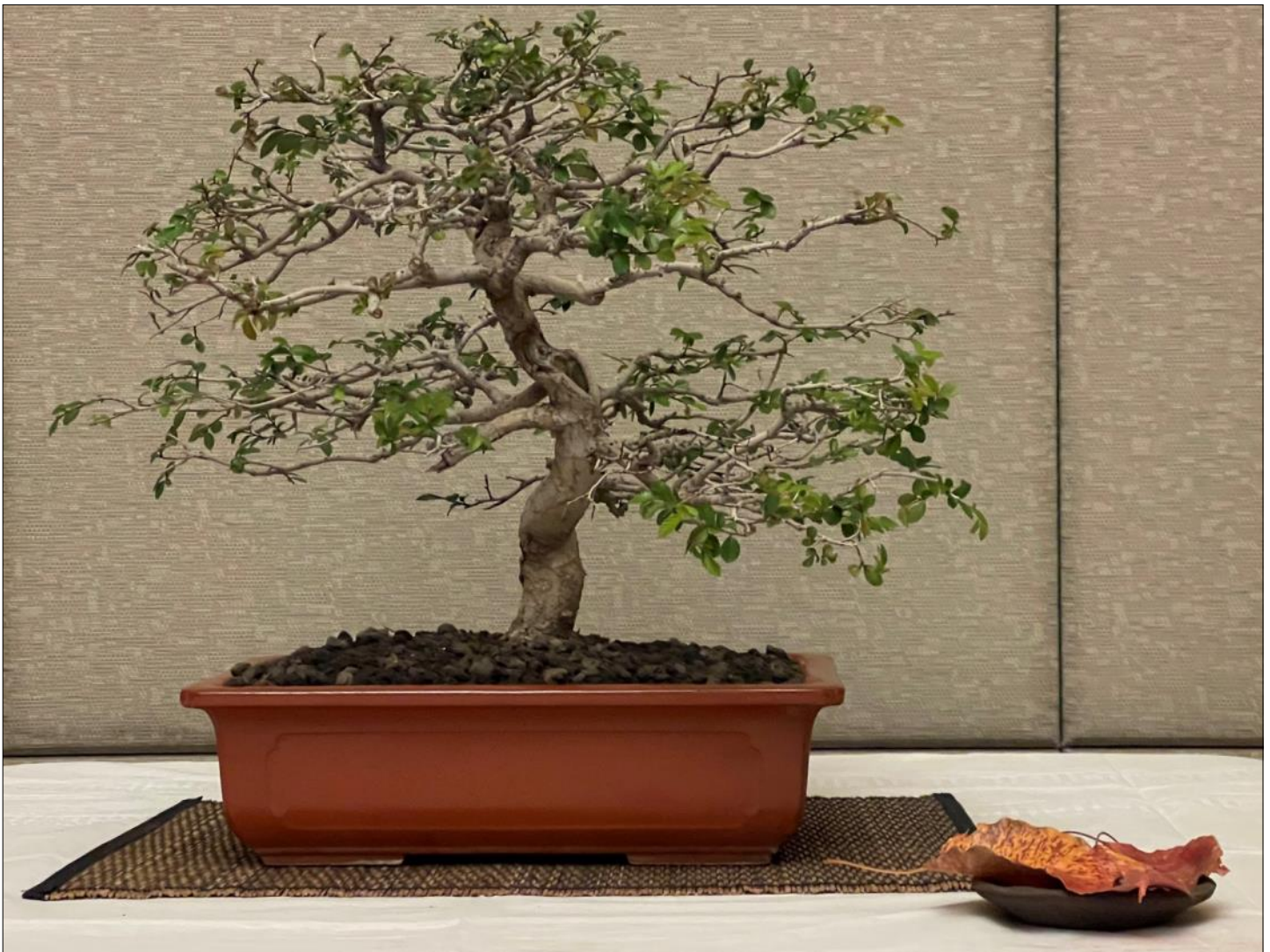
The accent dish is a rare one from Jim Barrett's collection, and I decided on the beautiful leaves to show the changing colors to match the unusual pot's hue.

The tree is buried quite deeply so I can continue to encourage nebari worthy of this pretty little elm.

—Nancy Smeets

Photo by Damon DuBois

Nancy Smeets's "pretty little elm" (below) survived both an accidental drought and the downing of her big Monterey pine. Here it is in its unusually colored Japanese pot with a dead leaf accent to evoke a winter scene.



CVBS Bonsai Library Grows: A New Book

Please remember to return any overdue items borrowed from the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society library. But also remember that if you want a good bonsai book or DVD to review, you can see me during a meeting or give me a call and request a book, pamphlet, periodical, or DVD. For a complete list of our library holdings, please see “Library” under the “Resources” tab on the revamped CVBS website www.cvbs-bonsai.org.

—Mike Blumenberg

Book of the Month

Bonsai Heresy: 56 Myths Exposed by Michael Hagedorn (Crataegus Books, Portland, Oregon, in association with Stone Lantern Publishing, 2020).

We have another new book in the CVBS Library: *Bonsai Heresy* by Michael Hagedorn. This is the second book by Hagedorn who also wrote *Post-Dated: The Schooling of an Irreverent Bonsai Monk* describing his three-year bonsai apprenticeship in Japan.

Hagedorn has been teaching bonsai for over 15 years and is a consultant at the Portland Japanese Garden. In this second book, he explains that most of the techniques used to create and sustain bonsai are based on anecdotes from Japan.

Hagedorn defines anecdotes as the result of many years of trial and error. Eventually practices that work are adopted while practices that don't work are abandoned. He contrasts this anecdotal method from a rigorous scientific method with established controls and defined procedures in order to assess cause and relationship.

The scientific method seeks to understand while anecdotes are more focused on results. This anecdotal approach works when we apply the methodology consistent with the environment or situation in which the anecdote was developed. This method may fail, however, when it is extrapolated and applied to new conditions.

This is the essence of *Bonsai Heresy*: Hagedorn explores 56 anecdotal methods or “myths,” explains how that method evolved, why that method remains valid, and where it falls short.

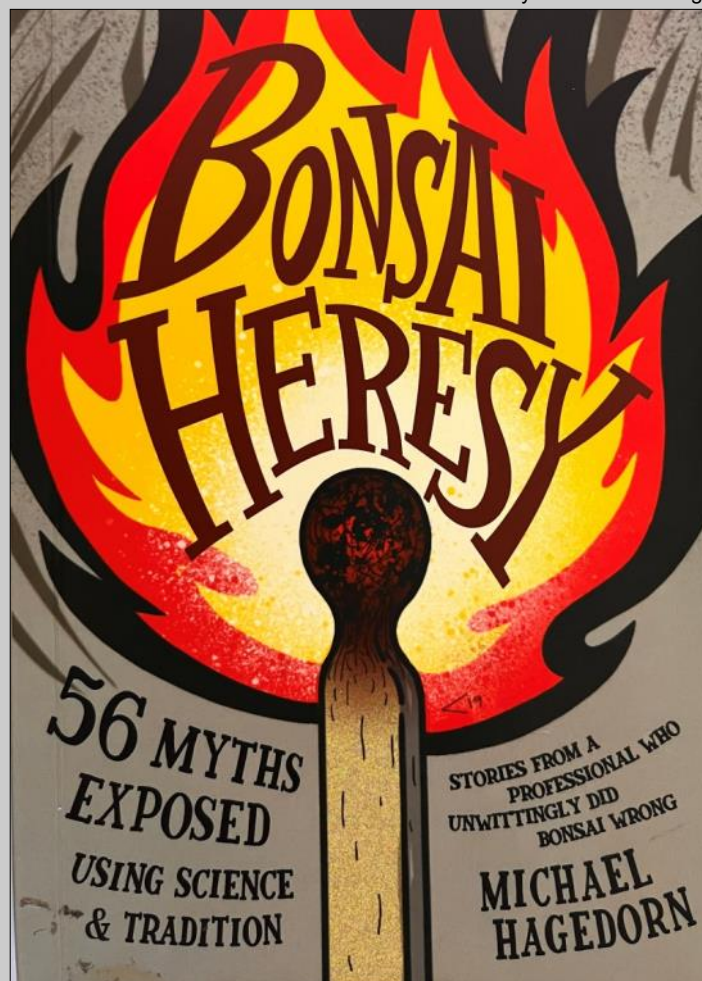
For example, Myth #12 is “The problem with mountain trees in Los Angeles is lack of winter dormancy.” The prevailing wisdom is that “temperate, cold region trees” grown as bonsai in the Los Angeles area will eventually weaken and die because they don't experience winter dormancy brought about by frigid winter temperatures.

Hagedorn argues that this may be part of the problem but not the only cause. He postulates that an additional factor is a day/night temperature differential in Los Angeles that is much less than what the tree experiences in its normal environment. So if you're determined to grow a temperate, cold region tree such as a ponderosa pine in the Conejo Valley, then you may want to expose your tree to extended cold temperatures (as the anecdotal guidance advises) and let the tree experience a larger swing between day and night temperatures. Make room in the refrigerator!

You can delve into this myth and 55 others by checking out this book from the library.

—Mike Blumenberg

Photo by Mike Blumenberg



Michael Hagedorn's latest book, *Bonsai Heresy: 56 Myths Exposed*, was published in 2020.

Coming Events (Click on the Addresses to visit Websites or send Emails)

In-person bonsai events have returned (see below). Most gardens also are open—confirm status and Covid protocols of the garden ahead of time. We also list virtual bonsai events.

2023

February

February 17, 2023 Zoom

Golden State Bonsai Federation Golden Zoom Series. 6:30 PM—8:30 PM. Sergio Cuan will share his advanced deciduous bonsai techniques followed by Q&A. For members of GSBF Clubs Only! GSBF Clubs (which includes the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society) will get the Zoom link to share with their membership for an evening with Sergio Cuan.



February 18 – 19, 2023 Oakland, California

Golden State Bonsai Federation Annual Mammoth Auction & Sale 2023 at Oakland, Lakeside Park Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610. Saturday 12:00 Noon – 4:00 PM. Sunday 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM. All proceeds support the GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt, Oakland, California.



February 25 – 26, 2023 San Marino, California

Golden State Bonsai Federation Bonsai-A-Thon at the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, California 91108. In the Brody Botanical Center. 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM both days. Southern California bonsai masters share their passion for the art form in this annual event that includes exhibits, demonstrations, prize drawings, a “bonsai bazaar,” and a live auction each day. Demonstrations both days from 10:30 AM – 2:00 PM. Silent auction 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM both days. Guided tours: Saturday 11:00 AM Chinese garden; Sunday 11:00 AM Ben Oki Bonsai Nursery and Japanese Heritage House. Raffle & Auction: 2:30 PM both days, including demonstrator trees. Vendors open all day. Proceeds from the event support the Golden State Bonsai Collection at The Huntington. NOTE: Advance tickets are required, Saturday tickets sold out. Visit the Huntington website at <https://huntington.org/event/bonsai-thon> for tickets.



April

April 8 – 9, 2023 Sacramento, California

American Bonsai Association, Sacramento (ABAS) 63rd Annual Spring Bonsai & Suiseki Show and Sale at 3330 McKinley Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95816. The show will feature headliner Todd Schlafer of First Branch Bonsai. Demonstrations will take place both Saturday and Sunday at 1:30 PM. In addition to our quality exhibition, there will be a large vendor area and consignment sales area! A daily benefit raffle will include each day's demonstration trees and many more bonsai and bonsai related items. A beginners workshop will be offered Saturday morning. For more information, check out www.abasbonsai.org or call Dodie Newman at 916-799-9575.



August

August 26 – 27, 2023 Rohnert Park, California

Redwood Empire Bonsai Society 37th Annual Bonsai Show at Rohnert Park Community Center, 5401 Snyder Lane, Rohnert Park, California. Saturday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Sunday from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Featuring the internationally renowned bonsai artist Ryan Neil as guest demonstrator. Ryan is the creator and owner of Bonsai Mirai and Mirai Live. Ryan workshops both mornings from 9:00 AM – Noon. Enrollment is limited. Ryan critique of the show trees from 5:30 – 6:30 PM on Saturday. Contact Bob Shimon (shimon@mcn.org) regarding cost and for enrollment. Demonstrations and raffles at 1:00 PM both days. Visit the REBS website for more information: www.rebsbonsai.org.



October

October 20 – 22, 2023, Santa Nella, California

Golden State Bonsai Federation Rendezvous at Santa Nella, 13070 CA-33, Santa Nella, CA 95322. October 20, 10:00 AM PDT – October 22, 4:00 PM PDT. • Bonsai Sales • Auction • Workshops • Lectures • Community. Very little information is available at this time. We will publish more as it's made available. Please visit www.gsbfbonsai.org.



October 21 – 22, 2023, Sacramento, California

Capital City Bonsai Show, October 21, 10:00 AM – October 22, 3:00 PM. 3330 McKinley Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95816. This group show features tree and suiseki displays from participating area clubs. This is all the information available at this time. Watch this space for details as they are released. Please visit www.abasbonsai.org.

Barrett's Bonsai Tips (Continued from page 3)
the tree.

Aesthetic considerations are:

- Tree and pot harmony or appropriateness.
- Is the tree placed in the pot properly?
- Is the tree planted at the proper angle or attitude?
- Is the front of the tree facing the viewer?

After repotting, place the tree in a shaded area to protect it from the

wind. In a week to ten days, place it where you would normally. Wait about a month before fertilizing.

Speaking of fertilizers, you should have started fertilizing with organic fertilizers by now. Miracle Gro® and fast-acting fertilizers are best applied at ½ strength. Time-release and slow-acting chemical fertilizers, such as Osmocote® and Woodace®, are safe if you follow printed instructions. Some people add these to their soil mix. 🌱