



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

Live Pro Demos To Return in June

By Marj Branson

Live professional demonstrations are back! For the first time since the Covid pandemic forced the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society to suspend in-person meetings three years ago, the club will present a live, in-person demonstration by a bonsai expert. Mark the date and plan to be there: June 15.

Program Chair Nancy Smeets has confirmed that Peter Macasieb will be our June demonstrator. Peter specializes in shohin bonsai (small sized), which we have all seen in various bonsai shows. (See page 2 for details.)

Tree-in-Pot Wiring

Ken Martin opened our March 16 meeting with a short discussion and



Marj Branson

mini demonstration of how to wire a tree into a bonsai pot. Ken covered many points on how to prepare the tree root system and the pot for planting, starting with how to wire in plastic screens over the drainage holes in the bottom of the pot. This is very important to prevent soil from falling out and bugs from getting in.

Then he demonstrated how to wire around the outside of

the roots to tie the tree into the pot without crossing the wires next to the tree trunk. This is very important to protect the roots close to the tree trunk.

Huntington Guided Tour

Our first major field trip activity for 2023 will be a guided tour on April 22 of the bonsai nursery and work area at

The Huntington Gardens' bonsai nursery and work area in February 2016 (below) during a Bonsai-A-Thon tour. Come to CVBS's private tour to see how it has changed.



Photo by David Whiteside

the Huntington Botanical Gardens. We will discuss the trip and possible carpooling at our April club meeting. There is still time to let Field Trips Chair Damon DuBois know that you want to join the tour.

Important reminder: This is a tour of the bonsai area only. It does not include viewing any other part of the Garden. (For more details, *(Continued on page 7)*

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CVBS Programs 2023

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: Wiring a tree into the pot led by Ken Martin followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
April 20	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting & Presentation: Bugs & Fungi led by Ken Fuentes followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
SATURDAY APRIL 22	10:00 AM – Noon Behind-the-scenes tour of the Huntington's bonsai nursery led by Ted Matson, bonsai curator The Huntington Library, Art Museum & Botanical Gardens San Marino, California
SATURDAY May 6	1:00 – 4:00 PM: Workshop: Bring Your Own Trees Ventura County Nursery, 4595 Balcom Canyon Road, Somis BRING YOUR TREES
May 18	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting & Presentation: Fertilizers led by Ken Martin followed by Workshop— BRING YOUR TREES
June 15	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by DEMONSTRATION —PETER MACASIEB
July 20	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting & Presentation: Cleaning pots and show preparation led by Marj Branson 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 followed by PEER CRITIQUES — BRING YOUR EXHIBITION TREES
October TBA	TENTATIVE 20TH ANNUAL CVBS EXHIBITION VENUE TBA
October 19	7:30 PM: Brief Meeting followed by DEMONSTRATION —TBA
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

It Is a Busy Time of Year for Bonsai Care

By Jim Barrett

Since our [newsletter publication dates are near] 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



Jim Barrett

Watch for powdery mildew on maples, quince, crabapples, and crapemyrtle.

be to encourage ramification, shape, and health.

Fertilize your trees with slow-acting fertilizers or time-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—some CVBS members do this—Editor]. A little work often will save a lot of work later on and the tree will look super. 🌳

Refreshments	
April	Mike Blumenberg
May	Marj Branson
June	Ken Martin
July	Nancy Smeets

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 2023 display volunteers at right) and let us know when you would like to present your display.

—Marj Branson

Niche Displays	
April	David Whiteside
May	Mike Blumenberg
June	Antonio Viscarra
July	Nancy Smeets
August	Volunteer Needed
Sept.	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, 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

April Is for England's Peter Chan on YouTube

By Ken Martin

Online Video Review: For a change of pace, this month I decided to feature two YouTube videos by one bonsai artist, Peter Chan. Both demonstrate how to shape, prune, and style Japanese maples.

Peter Chan
Herons Bonsai
Newchapel, Surrey, England

For this month's Bonsai Online, I selected two YouTube videos featuring Peter Chan whose extensive bonsai nursery/sales yard is in Newchapel, a hamlet in the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme, in Northern England. I have a bonsai book he wrote and published 38 years ago so he's been around for a while. According to a bio on Bonsai Empire's website, "Peter Chan is a self-taught bonsai artist ... of Chinese ethnicity, born in India. He moved to the UK in 1963 and started experimenting with bonsai in 1967 when ceramics was his main hobby. ... [Trained as an electrical engineer], he gave up his 9-5 job in 1986 to turn his hobby of bonsai into a business venture. Today, his nursery 'Herons Bonsai' is the UK's premier bonsai nursery. Peter is known throughout the world by the many books he has written. His first book—*Bonsai. the Art of Growing and Keeping Miniature Trees*—was published in 1985 and is still in print."

I had reviewed demonstrations by him several years ago, but the acoustics were hampered by airplanes flying over. Thankfully, this is not the case in these videos.

1st Video YouTube: Japanese Maple Shaping Decisions, Part 1 21 minutes

The first video is the 21-minute "Japanese Maple Shaping Decisions, Part 1." In it, Peter looks at seven nursery-potted maples that had been allowed to grow about two meters before they were cut back a year or two ago. These trees had not been styled.

For each tree Peter explained where he would put the front, what style he would pursue, and where the apex would end up. He then did some initial styling on each. I liked that he thoroughly explained every decision he made.

2nd Video YouTube: Maple Series Part II: Pruning and Shaping 57 minutes

The second video, "Maple Series Part II: Pruning and Shaping," is 57 minutes long. Here Peter Chan works on four older Japanese maples that had not been worked on for a while and needed "critical decisions when restyling." Again, he explained every decision.

I got the impression he was styling these trees not for a future show but to make them presentable for sale. He emphasized that when cutting a medium or larger sized branch, leave a 1/2 -inch stub so the dieback will not affect the remaining branch. The stub can be removed next year. He also said even though Japanese maples are his favorite tree, they do have a tendency for a branch to die for no discernable reason. 🌳



Peter Chan with a maple (above). Japanese maples are his favorite.



One maple in the second video prior to being worked on (left). Note the third trunk in the center. This view appears to be the back of the bonsai.

The same maple after this intermediate styling (right). Note that the third trunk has been removed. Also, the strong nebari suggests this is the front view.



All screen captures by Ken Martin

A Ginkgo Forest in Winter Silhouette Display

Editor's Note: Conejo Valley Bonsai Society President Marj Branson provided the niche display at CVBS's March 2023 meeting. She showed this Ginkgo forest on a wood slab with an accent plant. Here's what Marj said about her forest.

Despite the season, I displayed my Ginkgo forest still in silhouette form. (I have found Ginkgo trees sprout in late spring.) I have been cultivating these trees for over three years. During that time, I worked on shortening the length of the trunk in the ground.

The trees came in an 8-inch plastic pot with the root ball at the bottom of the trunk in the pot. I slowly cut back the root area and during the year new roots came out higher up the trunk. This spring I planted them into a bonsai pot.

Ginkgo is one of my favorite tree species. I love the light green color of the leaves, especially when they first open in spring.

—Marj Branson



Marj Branson's Ginkgo forest (left) was still in winter silhouette form when she displayed it at CVBS's March 2023 meeting. Marj is especially fond of Ginkgo's spring foliage, which has not yet appeared in this photo.

CVBS Bonsai Library at Your Service

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

“Deadwood: An American undergoes a grueling apprenticeship to a Japanese master” by Robert Moor, *The New Yorker*, November 21, 2022. (Online the article is headlined “The Beautiful, Brutal World of Bonsai.”)

Our next Book of the Month is an article in a fall 2022 edition of *The New Yorker* magazine. The article, titled “Deadwood,” discusses Portland, Oregon-based American bonsai artist Ryan Neil’s six-year apprenticeship under Japan’s Masahiko Kimura.

Someone sent me an electronic copy of the article several month’s ago but I never seem to get around to reading links on my computer. I made time to read it when another friend gave me their paper copy of the magazine.

The story is interesting and insightful into the world of bonsai in Japan and Ryan Neil’s own story. Sometimes

called “The Magician,” Kimura favors sometimes harsh and intricate deadwood designs in his bonsai. His influence is obvious in some of Neil’s work. I’ve never met Ryan Neil but know his reputation as a creative American bonsai artist who mastered the bonsai traditions but consciously pushes past those traditions to create unique bonsai.

As I read the story, I admired Neil’s tenacity during the apprenticeship but was uncomfortable with his stories of hazing and the associated denials from Kimura. The article ends with Neil’s admission that he is still wrestling with the results of the whole process.

You can read this article yourself since the magazine is now part of our CVBS Library collection.

—Mike Blumenberg

THE NEW YORKER



Ryan Neil with one of his own bonsai. Note the abundant deadwood.

Photograph by Suzanne Saroff for The New Yorker

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

May

May 6, 2023 Gardena, California

[Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai's 36th Annual Bonsai Exhibit & Sale at 1670 West 162nd St, Gardena, CA 90247. Join us for our 36th Annual Bonsai Exhibit & Sale. Novice to master exhibitors, daily demonstrations and drawings, bonsai plants, tools and accessories on sale throughout the show. Free admission and parking.

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. [Please see Book of the Month, page 6.—Editor] Ryan workshops both mornings from 9:00 AM – Noon. Enrollment is limited. Ryan's 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.

President's Message (Continued from page 1)
please see the Field Trips article below.)

And There's More ...

For our April meeting, Ken Fuentes will lead a discussion on bugs and fungi. Ken asks members to bring photos of distressed trees. He will help figure out what the invasion is and how to

treat it.

Also, please remember that we will have another weekend outdoor workshop on Saturday May 6th at the Ventura County Nursery on Balcom Canyon Road in Somis. CVBS member Rick Boyer is our host. (See page 2 for details.)

See you Thursday, April 20th. 🌳

CVBS Field Trip

Behind the Scenes Tour of the Huntington Bonsai Collection

By Damon DuBois

As reported last month, the Conejo Valley Bonsai Society's Field Trips committee has arranged for a private, behind-the-scenes guided tour of the massive bonsai collection at the Huntington Library, Art Museum & Botanical Gardens. The tour will include the workshop areas where trees are maintained or prepared for exhibit. Our guide will be bonsai curator Ted Matson.

The tour will be on Saturday, April 22—which coincidentally happens to be Earth Day. We are to arrive by 10:00 AM and the tour will last two hours, ending at 12:00 noon.

Ted will meet us at the Allen Street entrance and escort us back to the bonsai nursery, where there's parking. He has asked us to gather in the bus lot right by the entrance. When everyone is there, I will call Ted and he'll come to get us.

We will spend some time in the courts, but most of the time will be in the nursery where our group will see all the trees that are not on display. That will include many of the larger trees that are rarely shown because of their size. During the tour, Ted will highlight and talk about some select bonsai, and our group will be free to ask questions and explore other areas.

The bonsai nursery and work area is also next to the 320-year-old Shoya House, so our group will get to see that as well.

The tour will **not** include general access to the Huntington. (Individuals who want to make separate reservations as Huntington Gardens members or visitors may do so on their own. Note that the Huntington requires advanced reservations for weekend visits.)

When: April 22, 2023, 10:00 AM – 12:00 Noon

Where: Huntington Library, Art Museum & Botanical Gardens

Meet in the bus lot at the Allen Street entrance.

Note: We will discuss details at the April 20 CVBS meeting, when there will be an opportunity to sign up. 🌳

The 320-year-old Shoya House (below) next to the Huntington's bonsai nursery.

