



# YAMATO BONSAI KAI

“FRIENDSHIP THROUGH BONSAI”

Since 1968

Newsletter – March 2011



## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

By Tony Hayworth– President

*Editor's Note: No updates from the board this month, please see upcoming events below*

### Club Workshop

Date and Time: Sat. March 19th 6pm-10pm

Location: Eden Japanese Community Center-  
710 Elgin Street San Lorenzo

For more details please attend the club meeting on Tuesday, March 16.

Eden Japanese Community Center. The location address is 710 Elgin Street San Lorenzo.

### AT THE NEXT CLUB MEETING...

On Tuesday, **March 15th**, Sensei Uchida will cover repotting and transplanting care. Don't miss this club meeting event.

*Note: New Location and time*

PLACE: Eden Japanese Community Center,  
710 Elgin Street, San Lorenzo, CA

Note: Club Meetings start at 7:30 PM.

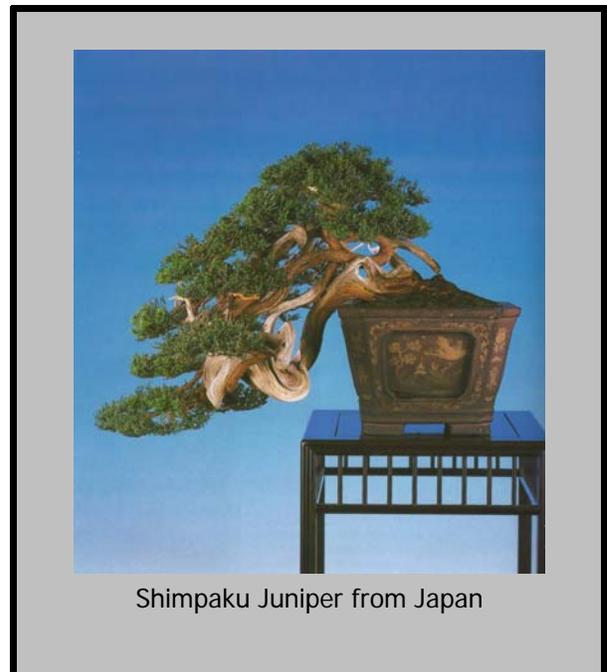
### Annual Membership Drive

Don't forget to send in your membership dues for 2011 to the new Union City post office box or bring your check to the next club meeting.



### Meeting Location Reminder

Our monthly club meetings are now held at the



Shimpaku Juniper from Japan

## COMMITTEES FOR 2011

By Tony Hayworth

We have formed several committees for this year with the following chairpersons:

- Apparel - Karen Paulos / See Karen if you have any input regarding shirts, hats, pins, etc., on what you'd like to see the club organize for 2011 and for our Annual Fall Show.
- Bus Trip - Dave Barron / Dave is organizing a Club bus trip event for April. We need a minimum sign-up of 25 persons. Dave will have details and a write-up in the next newsletter. Cost is expected to be in the 2- to 25 dollar area.
- Holiday Party - Richard Paulos / See Richard if you have any ideas or preference for this annual event in December.
- Web Site re-do - Dave Barron and Noah Hanna are looking into gaining control of and re-doing the Club Website. If you have any skills or want to assist them in this endeavor, please contact Dave or Noah.
- Eden Bazaar - Kathy Baggett / in June our Club will help at the annual fund raiser for the Eden Japanese Community Center. Kathy will organize and lead our resource volunteers on this effort.

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

By Tony Hayworth— President

It is a great time to remind prospective friends or neighbors about the bonsai kai (club) and the many benefits and activities of the membership.

To name a few:

- Annual show
- Monthly club meeting with Johnny's demos and critique of your plants
- Newsletter
- Discount all year at Grove Way Bonsai Nursery
- Annual Holiday party
- Workshops

- Field trips
- And of course, "Friendship Through Bonsai"

Elsewhere in this newsletter is the member renewal form. Dues are the same as last year, \$45 for a single membership and \$55 for a family membership regardless of the number of family members as long as they are living in the same household.



## SENSEI UCHIDA'S NOTES

By Johnny Uchida – Club Sensei

*Editor's note: No update this month*

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## Life History of a Bonsai

By Noah Hanna

Introduction:

For this month's newsletter I have a special feature courtesy of the web page of Mr. Walter Pall, a well known bonsai artist from Germany. Mr. Pall was very kind to respond to my email request to use an excerpt from his website <http://walter-pall.de>. It is rare to find a photographic history of the development of a bonsai that is this complete, it covers a time frame from 1984-2010.

What struck me about this article was not the quality of the tree, (although I would say most of us would not mind to own this tree in its current state). What struck me was the underlying message of Mr. Pall's statements about the importance of working with quality bonsai material. This is something that I am coming to grips with myself as I look over my collection. Rather than trying to summarize the intent of this article in

writing, I will present some pictures from the gallery that I feel tell the story well.

*Editor's note: All images are used by permission of Walter Pall. The original gallery can be found at [http://walter-pall.de/maplesjapanese\\_maple\\_nr\\_3.jpg.dir/index.html](http://walter-pall.de/maplesjapanese_maple_nr_3.jpg.dir/index.html)*



First photo: dated June, 1984

This is the Japanese Maple purchased from a nursery for the equivalent of \$10 US dollars. The price is right, but the material is nothing special. Probably a lot of us started out a few of the trees in our collection this way.



Skip ahead to late 1993

Some progress is made over 9 years but there is a long way to go to improve the quality of the material



1994: getting down to business

Certain branches are allowed to grow out to thicken lower branches. This technique is important for deciduous trees, when the lower branches are thinner than the upper branches where strong growth tends to happen in untrained material.



Spring 2002: Mr. Pall is fed up with the poor root spread (nebari)...



...and takes action-air layering at the base of the trunk to generate new roots and a new root spread.



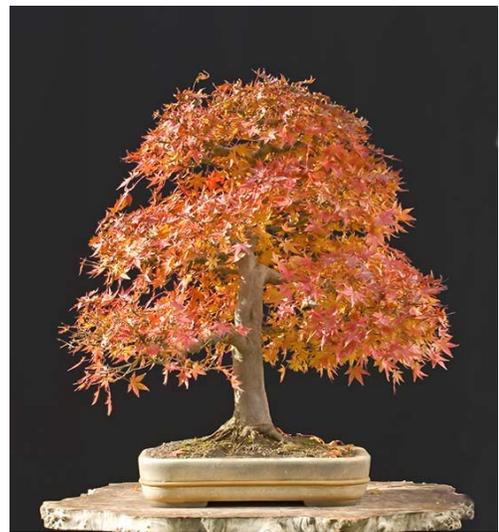
Summer 2006: results!

Not shown here is the process of checking the new roots and carefully separating the tree from its previous roots. Air layering at the base of an existing bonsai tree to generate nebari may seem extreme, but it is sometimes the only way to improve the roots in an established bonsai.



Winter 2002

The tree is placed in a large growing pot with the air layer buried to hopefully generate new roots. Notice also that the branches are allowed to grow freely at this time in order to enhance the root growth.



Fall 2010: Much improved

#### Analysis:

So what are the lessons we can learn from the experience of 25+ years? The results are impressive, but let me take a quote from Walter Pall: "Don't waste 25 years!... go from much better quality at the outset." You can learn a great deal from the techniques shown here, and as a bonsai artist I think it is important to develop the skills necessary to improve your trees to the next

level of quality. That being said, Mr. Pall is absolutely correct when he says on his web page that you can achieve superior results to what is shown here in less time by starting out with better material that has the right qualities from the beginning.

I don't want to beginners to think there is only value in bonsai material that is expensive or very old or refined, particularly as you are learning to apply techniques like the ones seen here. In fact sometimes the most challenging and rewarding material can be the bonsai that you rescue from neglect or that unexpected "diamond in the rough". But you should always keep in mind the time investment that will be required and weigh that against the results you expect from the tree.

If your goal is to ultimately to display your tree in a bonsai show or just show off a bonsai that is refined and looks its best, you will need to spend the time to get it to that state. Taking the time to select material carefully will greatly speed up the process and improve your results-whether you are spending \$50 or \$500.

Another important lesson here is that the techniques that make a good "mature" bonsai, do not always make the best results for bonsai in the early stages of their development. Note that when I say mature, the maturity is in the level of refinement of the image, not necessarily the age, (some people say "finished" bonsai here, but as long as a tree is alive the bonsai is never really finished!). Note the use of growing pots to encourage strong root growth, techniques like air-layering, and the fact that the branches are frequently allowed to grow out to thicken them as necessary. If the tree was simply wired, pruned to shape, and repotted in the same shallow bonsai pot every year, improvements to the roots, branch structure, and thickness of trunk will be very slow if not impossible to achieve.

If you take some time to review the tips below that Tony Hayworth provided to us in the Octo-

ber newsletter you will get some excellent guidelines for what you should be looking for when choosing your next bonsai. Evaluating the possibilities in source material and determining the time and techniques that would be required to make a tree into something you are proud of are part of the process of learning to "develop your eye" for bonsai.

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## Selecting Bonsai Material

By Tony Hayworth

For me personally, bonsai is finding something at a nursery or growing area, or collecting something from the wild, and then turning it into a bonsai. This is my thing. I much prefer the creation aspect versus the maintenance responsibility.

When you are searching for a new tree, keep a bonsai style in mind. While a few bonsai artist can turn almost anything into a nice or spectacular bonsai, for most of us, it is more difficult and we cannot always achieve that great finished product. Why? Well, the main reason is we start with something of poor or inferior quality. It then takes many years or even a lifetime to overcome the flaws towards perfecting it. My advice is do not waste your valuable time and valuable resources on trees that have too many flaws or unrealistic expectations along a path of being a nice bonsai. Learn to select trees that have a good potential for being a bonsai. Therefore, keep the following in mind.

**Step One** – Train your eyes and mind to know what are the classical styles of Bonsai, and some of the natural variations. You must look at books, magazines and the Internet. Go to shows also. Look at and study as many bonsai resources as you can to train your eyes. If you cannot visualize the end-state of your chosen material... you will never get there. Always work on developing you bonsai eye!

**Step Two** – choose material that has a good "trunk formation"; that has good "root for-

mation"; that suggests the initial "first three branches" (or at least the #1 branch!). These three items take the most time, skill or resource to achieve. So when it comes to choosing new material... the better these items are, the faster you will achieve success.

**Trunk Formation** – This should be your number one concern. If there are major flaws in the trunk, this will be the most difficult to overcome. In your selection if you do not easily see a recognized bonsai style for the tree, it may be something you want to avoid. The more bonsai experience you have, either through reading, looking at pictures or doing, you may stumble into a style or two more easily. In general, except for formal upright (chokkan) you are looking for motion in the trunk. Let the motion tell you what you should be doing towards the style of the bonsai.

**Major Branches** – establishing the first three branches, from the bottom up, is essential in your initial shaping of a bonsai. It is very difficult to overcome branch thickness defects with these branches. So pay attention when establishing the #1 branch and so on.

**Rootage** – this one might surprise you. Yes, pay attention to the rootage FROM THE BEGINNING. In my early days I did not do this. I was too busy and excited counting the proper number of branches and their directions... that I just didn't get it. I now have some really nice looking bonsai (trunks and branches), but they are not first rate bonsai because of the early mistakes with the root formations, mostly coiled roots or crossed roots at the base. Make sure you do not bury the roots too deep during your transplanting – keep exposing them over time. Look at good pictures and practice good technique when you repot. This is a key item at the initial planning of nursery stock to the pre-bonsai stage!

**Step Three** – buy from reputable nursery sources. Chances are the taproot has been cut and it has been in decent soil to encourage fine rootage. The larger the nursery pot, and the longer the specimen has been in a container, increase the degree of difficulty in handling the transformation to a bonsai pot and into the pre-

bonsai stage of development. Let's face it, the operation on a 1 gallon stock versus a 20 gallon container, while on the surface looks the same, there are more risks and more surprises. If you are dealing with collected material, do not be in a hurry to get it into a bonsai pot. It should take several years to achieve that progression.

### **Pre or Finished Bonsai**

First and foremost... do not just buy anything based on price alone. A high price doesn't always mean it is a fine specimen. Learn what makes a tree valuable (and it is not nice moss!). It is perfectly okay to obtain a finished bonsai tree, but if you are not equipped with the knowledge to maintain it... within three years it will outgrow its shape and not be worth its original purchase value. That is okay also, as you can still enjoy it, but you will probably need to pay someone to maintain it for you.

If you purchase fine trees, you have an obligation to learn about its specific maintenance to maintain its beauty. Do not let it grow uncontrolled or it will be ruined. When this happens, I always feel sad... however, there is some light in the tunnel if you keep it alive. It can be transformed into another style or it can be reworked into a new masterpiece of the same style, given the right circumstance, time and talent.

**Bonsai Tip:** What makes a tree valuable?? As beauty is in the eye of the beholder... there are those who would debate this question until the end of time. Let me share with you my feelings on the subject as follows.

- A tree that is easily identified as a classical bonsai style or grouping or arrangement (on a rock, bunjin, moyogi, etc);
- Is properly positioned in an acceptable bonsai pot;
- Has defined rootage and a proper tachi-agari;
- Is of advanced age in its presentation – either naturally or by artist technique;
- Has attention to detail with shape and lines (symmetry/balance)

- Has a properly defined and developed apex;
- Has a properly defined and thickened #1 branch;
- Has developed secondary and tertiary branch structure;
- Has developed an interesting trunk that is mostly free of defect or that has advanced techniques applied to minimize the negative effect towards an interesting trunk;
- Has properly placed branches for the style and shape being presented;
- Has clean and natural Jin and deadwood;
- Has no unacceptable wire marking;
- Is disease free
- Is not overrun with "Moss"!

## Bonsai Basic

By Noah Hanna

First and foremost on our minds this month will be repotting. If your deciduous trees are sprouting leaves, the conventional wisdom is you are probably better to wait until next year. Wiring deciduous bonsai is not the best idea at this time of year either because the emerging sprouts and young leaves are delicate and can be knocked off in the wiring process.

Prepare for repotting with the appropriate soil mixtures, the appropriate drainage is important. Keep your soil components dry as it's still raining from time-to-time.

From now until May is also a good time to do cuttings and other propagations. It is perhaps a little early to start air-layerings but ask an experienced member for advice.

Junipers and pines are fair game now for repotting. In all cases you will still want to protect the trees afterwards from drying out or overwater-

ing. Do not fertilize or do so very lightly until the tree has recovered. Remember that aftercare is a huge part of the health of the tree in any operation.

I personally use a straight b1 solution on pines after repotting rather than Superthrive since Superthrive labels indicate that it contains fungicides, and this could impede growth of mycorrhiza. But it's important to note that many bonsai artists have used the product successfully for years on pines so maybe this is not an issue? Whatever product you may want to try, make sure you read and understand the labels. Be wary of claims or testimonials for any of these types of products, especially when you can not verify what the actual ingredients are. Worse than just wasting money, you may actually end up harming your trees.

Watch for your evergreen bonsai to be emerging from dormancy, in most cases you should be OK to start fertilizing evergreens like junipers, but be cautious about the level of nitrogen you use. Be aware with inorganic slow release fertilizer (Osmocote, etc) that some granules may be still present below the soil line that are not used up, and as soon as the weather warms up they will release their remaining fertilizer. If you apply too much fertilizer now you may be giving your tree a "double whammy" of nitrogen that the roots are not able to cope with.

From past observation Sensei will usually apply a light application of fish emulsion as his evergreens start to wake up, something along the lines of a full strength application of 5-1-1. When to start fertilizing deciduous can be tricky, as a rule of thumb I wait until the leaves are fully opened up and start out lightly with fish emulsion or a slow release organic. Sensei has rape-seed cakes and the slow release organic teabags which are both good early in the season as well, also inorganic fertilizers are fine as long as you are careful about the application, how strong the application, and the NPK (nitrogen(N), phosphorus(P), and potassium(K)) levels.

Remember that you want compact, controlled growth, particularly on deciduous trees that can get very leggy. Finally, if you have trees that are taking longer than usual to come out of dormancy don't panic. Move them to a sunnier spot and let them take their time and then fertilize when they are ready. I have not seen any evidence to indicate that applications of high nitrogen fertilizer will "wake up" either deciduous or conifer bonsais.



## GSBF CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(For a more complete list, please refer to Golden Statements calendar of events or visit the web site at [www.gsbf-bonsai.org](http://www.gsbf-bonsai.org)).

Some nearby scheduled events are:

### March 19 20

#### Palo Alto, California

Kusamura Bonsai Club: 51st Annual Show at the Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road. Admission is free. Show hours are Saturday: 12-Noon to 5PM, and Sunday: 10AM-5PM. There will be demonstrations, raffles, and club member tree sales both days. Guest Demonstrator to be announced. For more information, contact Jerry Carpenter at 408-557-0166; 408-823-9525 or [jcsf1090@comcast.net](mailto:jcsf1090@comcast.net)

### March 23, 24, 25, 26, 27

#### San Mateo, California

Bonsai Society of San Francisco: Annual Bonsai Exhibit located in the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show at the San Mateo County Event Center, 1346 Saratoga Drive. General admission to the show is \$20.00. The hours are: Wednesday-Saturday 10AM-7PM and Sunday 10AM-6PM. For more information visit our website [www.bssf.org](http://www.bssf.org). For general information on the Flower and Garden Show visit: [www.sfgardenshow.com](http://www.sfgardenshow.com)

### April 2

#### San Francisco, California

Bonsai Society of San Francisco Bonsai: *Special Sales Event* in the Recreation Room of the San Francisco County Fair Building, Ninth Avenue and Lincoln Way

in Golden Gate Park. Bonsai and related items will be on sale by club members. Hours are 9AM-3PM. This sale is an addendum to the club's show of March 23-27 at the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show. Free admission; some parking available behind the building. For more information visit our website:

[www.bssf.org](http://www.bssf.org)

### April 2-3

#### Sacramento, California

Bonsai Sekiyu Kai of Sacramento: *34th Annual Bonsai Show* at the Sacramento Betsuin Buddhist Church, 2401 Riverside Blvd. Hours are: Saturday, 12-Noon-5:00PM, and Sunday, 10AM-3:30PM. Demonstrations at 2PM, both days by Bonsai Master John Uchida. Amenities include refreshments, light snacks, door prizes, raffles, and a Silent Auction. Plant and bonsai tool sales will also be available. For more information contact Ron Krause at 916-481-4792 or [rkrause@surewest.net](mailto:rkrause@surewest.net)

### April 8-10

#### San Jose, California

San Jose Betsuin Bonsai Club: *41st Anniversary Exhibition* at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, 640 N. 5th Street. Hours are Saturday, Noon-5PM, and Sunday, 11AM-4:PM. A demonstration featuring Harry Hirao, 'Mr. California Juniper' will be at 1PM, both days. The demonstration trees will be raffled at the conclusion of each demonstration. Plants and bonsai material will be available for sale. Free admission. For more information, contact Ken Azuma, 408-730-4506 or [kennethazuma@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kennethazuma@sbcglobal.net)

### April 9-10

#### Sacramento, California

American Bonsai Association: *52nd Annual Show and Sale* at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Hours are Saturday, 10AM-5:00PM, and Sunday, 10AM-4:00PM. Demonstration at 2PM both days by Bonsai Master Bob Shimon. Beginner workshops available, and intermediate and advanced workshops taught by Bob Shimon. Large member and vendor sales areas; raffles and door prizes. Free admission and ample parking. For more information contact Greg McDonald at [Greg-gandlee@comcast.net](mailto:Greg-gandlee@comcast.net) or by phone 530-642-2521.



date our contact and mailing list information. Thank you.

## YAMATO CLASSIFIEDS

Notice: *if you want to advertise something in this space, please compose your text and contact the Newsletter Editor.*

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## THIS MONTH ...

A very Happy Birthday to:

### February

- 25th – Dagmar Bedard
- 27th – Don Fernquest
- 30th – Brad Sheldon

Happy Anniversary and many more

- 1st – Doris & Art Johnson
- 14th – Dennis & MaryEllen Hawkins

| YAMATO BONSAI KAI - 2011 BOARD |                |              |
|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| President                      | Tony Hayworth  | 510-289-5731 |
| Vice-President                 | Karen Paulos   | 510-410-5782 |
| Secretary                      | (open)         |              |
| Treasure                       | Dave Barron    | 510-657-6895 |
| Director 2010/11               | Carl Osterholm | 925-274-1574 |
| Director 2010/11               | Brad Sheldon   | 510-888-1139 |
| Director 2011/12               | Dennis Hacker  | 510-559-1755 |
| Director 2011/12               | Dennis Hawkins | 510-657-8229 |
| Advisor                        | Jack Ellis     | 925-455-5429 |

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## CONTACT US

If you need to mail anything to the club in general, please send to:

**YAMATO BONSAI KAI**  
**P. O. Box 770**  
**Union City, CA 94587-0770**

If there is anything you would like to contribute or comment on regarding the newsletter, contact the editor, Noah Hanna, at [noah@invalidargument.com](mailto:noah@invalidargument.com)

*If you have moved, or changed your email address, please notify Yamato Bonsai Kai, so that we may up-*

# 2011 Yamato Bonsai Kai

## --- MEMBERSHIP REQUEST FORM ---

|                              |                                                                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Request Type:</b>         | <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> New   |
| <b>Membership Type:</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Family |
| <b>First Name(s):</b>        |                                                                 |
| <b>Last Name:</b>            |                                                                 |
| <b>* Address:</b>            |                                                                 |
| <b>* Phone:</b>              |                                                                 |
| <b>* Email Contact:</b>      |                                                                 |
| <b>** Birthday mm/dd:</b>    |                                                                 |
| <b>** Anniversary mm/dd:</b> | (enter spouse name if single membership)                        |

### Instructions

Enter appropriate information in the provided form. Return this request form in person to the next club meeting or return by mail to:

**YAMATO BONSAI KAI**  
P. O. Box 770  
Union City, CA 94587-0770

To continue your membership and to receive the newsletter uninterrupted, please respond with your membership request form by 28 February.

Make checks payable to "Yamato Bonsai Kai".

### Notes

**Single** = \$45

**Family** = \$55 (same household)

**Email** = requested for Newsletter distribution

\* = **Address, Phone & Email Contact** are only required on New Requests or if you have changed your details in the last year

\*\* = **Birthday & Anniversary** = Optional.

Used only for newsletter congratulatory announcement

## **YAMATO BONSAI KAI**

P. O. Box 770

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**Return Service Requested**

**Attention Postmaster:**

**Dated Material – Please Expedite**