



May 28 Collecting

Led by **Bill McDonald and Steve Iwaki**
7:00PM—9:00 (Garden Center)

Are you not interested in starting bonsai from a seed or cutting? Is there an alternative to buying nursery material? For this month's topic Bill McDonald and Steve Iwaki will talk about collecting trees from the wild.

Bill will be discussing his experience of procuring "yamadori" (trees from the wild) and "yardidori" (trees from the neighborhood). He will explain the permitting process for National Forests, specifically Siskiyou, Shasta and Inyo. Examples of trees gathered and details of the process of excavation and after-care will be included.

Steve will discuss collecting redwoods from our local mountains. He will explain his process, give insights on the tools he uses, as well as showing collected trees in varying stages of development.

"What [the bonsai masters] are trying to do is reveal the essence of the tree—look at the chaos of nature and find its truest, most honest form, and give it a kind of visual harmony," Voss says. "To me, it speaks to a hope for the future. This thing that they have devoted their entire lives to will be passed on and inherited by someone else."

Janna Dotschkal, "Visualizing the Meditative Lives of Bonsai Trees", National Geographic, 2015



Local Events Notice

Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai and Yamato Bonsai Kai Club Show

May 17 - 18

Lakeside Garden Center
666 Bellevue Ave, Oakland
Sat & Sun 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

SBBK—Bantowsky Family Bonsai Sale

May 17 (trees, pots, books, misc.)

Pacifica (address to be shared by email)
SBBK members 9:00 AM, non-members 10:00 AM
Sale ends at 2:00 PM

San Mateo Bonsai Club Annual Spring Show

May 18

SMJACC Gardener's Hall
503 E 5th Ave, San Mateo
Beautiful bonsai trees. Bonsai pots and soil will be for sale.
Sun 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Sei Boku Bonsai Kai Club Show

June 7 - 8

San Mateo Garden Center
605 Parkside Way, San Mateo
Sat & Sun 10:00AM - 4:00 PM

- Show Set Up starts Fri 4:00 PM
- Demonstration Sat 1:00 - 3:00 PM
- Critique Sun 8:30 - 9:30 AM
- Workshop Sun 1:00 - 3:00 PM



Sign-Up Genie Link:
Show Volunteering

SBBK Calendar

- May 28 **Club Meeting: Collecting (best practices)**
San Mateo Garden Center 7-9 pm
- Jun 3 **First Tuesday Workshop**
San Mateo Garden Center 7-9 pm

Also In This Issue:

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SBBK 2025 Show Flier

President's Message

By Mike Rosenthal

Well, we are only 4 weeks away from our annual show and I hope you are as excited as am I about the tree or trees you are contemplating submitting for display. This is my 12th show and only the 3rd for which I am planning to contribute. Like many of you who are new to bonsai the decision to enter a tree is fraught with trepidation and doubt as to whether my/your effort is worthy of inclusion. Fear not, you are in good company so just take a deep breath and make the jump. The goal of the show is to have as many of us participate in displaying our efforts. If your selection is one that needs further development and to include at this point is premature, our leaders – Marsha, Valerie, Steve, Jerry, Gordon and others – will not hesitate to recommend postponement. If that happens, I know that I will take that as positive constructive advice to make me better. Also, I will make dart board pictures of those involved. Marsha Mekisich is once again doing a fantastic job in getting us ready and all of you should be planning to join by signing up for tasks as outlined in the instructions you received.

I want to extend my congratulations to our friends at the Kusamura Bonsai Club in Palo Alto for a wonderful show. The displays and accompanying presentations as well as the sales were just terrific. Bravo to them.

Don't forget the sale in Pacifica that you have all received information as to location and timing on Saturday, May 17. This sale will be especially of value to newer members, but some items will likely also be of value to the more experienced of us. All forms of payment will be accepted.

One final recommendation that may go a little beyond bonsai. You and I are all receiving computer generated correspondence in the form of e-mails and messages that often are attempts to fraudulently elicit information and funds. This is the nature of the world in which we live. Access to our e-mail accounts and other contact information is nearly impossible to eliminate. We must be aware and extremely vigilant. Several of us have recently been the target of e-mails purportedly originating from people we know requesting funds in what may appear to be legitimate. One way to discern this is to check the e-mail address of the individual sending out the message. Whenever you have the slightest doubt as to the legitimacy of the request contact the individual directly either in person or by phone – just do not get “sucked in”. These crooks are awfully good, but we are better.

Enjoy our beautiful spring and do not forget to water. I have far too many specimens in my mortuary that died from dehydration and malnutrition.

An Introduction to Mudmen

By Mike Rosenthal

My infatuation with the little Chinese figurines, Mudmen, preceded my interest in Bonsai and in many respects was the impetus for getting involved in what now has nearly become an obsession and certainly next to my family takes up most of my waking hours with my trees. Although I no longer place my Mudmen in the bonsai pot they are still quite visible as my most common accent much to the consternation of my Senseis.

Although it is difficult to put an exact date on the introduction of Mudmen, it is generally agreed that they were first noted as a component of Penjing, miniature landscapes in a tray, during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) in China. These “Chinese landscape bonsai” settings used small clay figurines of people, structures, and animals to enhance the realism of favorite scenic views – forests, mountain ranges, shorelines. The main production area then and now was in

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Refreshment Reminder

May Mtg

Randi Keppeler
Linda Kuhl

Jun Mtg

Norm Land
Russell Leonard

July Mtg

Michael Luna
Ines Malardino

Please find a replacement if you are unable to bring refreshments as scheduled. Refer to the SBBK roster.



April Meeting: Accent Plants

by Valerie Monroe

We had a fun April meeting assembling accent plantings. It was great to have so many members participating. Val and Jen led the meeting with a short session on types of accents and how to put them together. Grouping plants by environmental needs as well as by aesthetic considerations were discussed.

Thanks to everyone who brought items to share, and thanks to Nancy Schramm - our guest vendor - for bringing an outstanding array of unusual specimens.

Lost and hopefully can be found:

Dear members, last month after the accent plant making frenzy, I discovered that one of my favorite green pots didn't make it home with me. Up at the front table there were 'free' pots but also in another area were pots for my own personal use. I'm hoping if someone ended up with a squashed looking green pot about three inches round and can return it to me, I would be so grateful. Thank you.



the Kwangtung Province in southern China in the city of Shekwan (Shiwan). The ceramic figurines were made of clay from nearby rivers and lakes, by hand in collectives and family units with individual artisans making different parts (hands, hair, instruments, etc) and then molding together and fired in kilns. Following that stage, they were often painted with low temperature glazes most often using yellow, blue and green colors while leaving the original clay color for the face and hands to promote realism.



When Canton became a major sight for Chinese exports during the Tang and Sung periods (960-1279) the production of the mudware figurines became commercialized in Shekwan city and were exported around the world. It was about 400 – 500 years ago that bonsai was first exported to Japan from China and their use of Mudmen as part of a bonsai display markedly decreased and eventually ceased altogether. The Japanese favored a more purist approach to bonsai with the tree being the principal focus without the distraction of figurines.

Although the use of Mudmen was absent in Japan as part of bonsai displays, the Chinese continued producing these figurines and after the second world war a resurgence in that production utilizing more mechanized approaches took place. Most of the production was and is still in Shekwan and since 1952 the major center is the Shiwan Artistic Ceramic Factory. The choice of this location dating back several centuries is related to the quality of clay which is quite pliable due to a higher content of sand.

Where the older “antique” figurines have more unique facial features, expressions and individuality, the more recent offerings are smaller and show more complex use of multiple figures often involved in activities including games, fishing and even the styling of bonsai trees with the use of more colors and decorations.



With increased production, until recently, the cost of Mudmen has been quite reasonable with figurines imported from China and available in San Francisco in the range of \$7 to \$25. Older pieces are difficult to find and near impossible to verify their age but may be of far greater value.

Since the COVID pandemic, it has become more difficult to find markets where Mudmen can be purchased. Much of that is due to decreasing production in China as the youth seek more lucrative opportunities. From my experience in visiting bonsai nurseries in Japan I have found similarities among the offspring of growers and bonsai masters leaving the future of many Japanese gardens and nurseries in doubt.

In ending this short story to acquaint you with the background of these little figurines allow me to leave you with some insight from an unknown observer who states a view that expresses my thoughts far better than me.

Mudmen figurines are more than just bonsai accessories or decorative objects. They are miniature works of art that embody centuries of Chinese tradition and craftsmanship. Their vibrant colors, expressive characters, and symbolic meanings continue to fascinate and delight people around the world. Whether you're a seasoned collector of antique Mudmen, a bonsai enthusiast looking to add a touch of whimsy to your display, or simply someone intrigued by the history of Chinese folk art, Mudmen figurines offer a window into a rich and enduring tradition. By understanding their origins, craftsmanship, and Chinese cultural artifacts, we can appreciate these charming figures not only for their aesthetic beauty but also for the stories they tell and the connections they forge between the past and the present.



Additional information: Myron Redding: Antique Chinese Mudmen – The Collectors Guide, 2020.

<http://www.edensong.com/history.html>

The Omiya Bonsai Art Museum: The Story of Bonsai - the history of bonsai from ancient times to the present, 2014.

New SBBK Calendar of Events

2025

June	Club Show (Sat & Sun) Guest: Jennifer Price
June	Mike Lane Growing/Cutting Techniques
July	Bonsai Challenge
August	Making Pots — Barbara & Caroline
September	Green Elephant Sale and Auction
October	White Pine — Hiroyoshi Yamaji
November	Tree Improvement & Critique (bring in a tree)
December	Holiday Party, no meeting

2026

January	Scott Chadd Group/Forest Planting
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Welcoming New Members



- Geri Lee
- Cathy Coit—welcome back
- Nathaniel Smith

If new members would like to be paired with a **SBBK Bonsai Buddy**, please reach out to Bill, bill@walter-mcdonald.com

Suggested Watching:

San Diego Bonsai Club hosted Jonas Dupuich for a workshop on **Exposed Root Pine Development**.

Always a pleasure to learn from Jonas, and excited to give this a try.



Photos by Jonas Dupuich

Visit us on the web at <https://seibokubonsai.org/>
or at <https://facebook.com/seiboku.bonsaikai>
or at <https://instagram.com/seibokubonsai>



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Sei Boku Bonsai Kai Inc.
Proud member of
Golden State
Bonsai Federation



BONSAI SHOW

JUNE 7-8, 2025

10am - 4pm, both days

SATURDAY

Demonstration by Jennifer Price

Time: 1:00pm – 3:00pm
“Demo Trees” for Raffle!

SUNDAY

**Open public viewing workshop
led by Jennifer Price**

Time: 1:00pm – 3:00pm
“Workshop Tree” for Raffle!

We welcome Chicago-based bonsai artist, Jennifer Price. She aims to make bonsai accessible to all, as she travels extensively around the world leading workshops and demonstrations and representing the US at international conventions.

As one of the younger generation of bonsai artists, Jennifer describes bonsai as “a way for me to express the grace and power of nature...”.

As a former professional ballet dancer, Jennifer has the eye for the natural flow and movement in trees. She specializes in carving and loves nothing more than working with challenging material.



Door Prizes — Raffle Prizes
Tree Clinic — Vendor Sales — Plant Sales

— FREE ADMISSION —

LOCATION

San Mateo Garden Center
605 Parkside Way
San Mateo, CA 94403
(at Beresford Park)



SEI BOKU
B O N S A I K A I

seibokubonsaikai.org