



## Feb 25 Guest: Young Choe

by Charlene Fischer

The Sei Boku Bonsai Kai and Kusamura Bonsai Club are pleased to welcome internationally acclaimed kusamono artist, Young Choe, on February 25 at the San Mateo Garden Center at 605 Parkside Way, San Mateo. The program will begin at 7:00 pm. Ms. Choe studied traditional art in her native Korea before moving to the US and earning her BS in horticulture from the University of Maryland. While volunteering at the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum, she brought her artistic talent together with her knowledge of horticulture to create kusamono.

As her interest developed, Young traveled to Japan to further study the art form with the master kusamono artist, Keiko Yamane, a former student of Saburo Kato. She worked for many years in the USDA including the US National Arboretum.



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## 2026 Dues are Now Due

With all these programs and activities this year, comes a cost to the club, which in turn, at this time of year, we are asking for membership dues.

**Dues: \$45 (single member); \$55 (family member).**

If you've been a member for 10 years and are 72 or older, individual membership is \$25 and family is \$35.

## SBBK Calendar

- Feb 22**    **Repotting Party**    **Sun**  
San Mateo Garden Center  
**10:00 AM - 3:00 pm**
- Feb 22-25**    **Kusamomo Workshops**  
See article for details.
- Feb 25**    **SBBK Club Meeting**    **Wed**
- Mar 7-8**    **GSBF Mammoth Auction & Sales**  
Lakeside Park Garden Center  
666 Bellevue Ave, Oakland  
**Saturday 1:00 - 4:00 pm** Auction  
**Sunday 10:00 am - 3:00 pm** Bargain Sales
- Apr 18-19**    **Kusamura Club 66th Annual Show**  
Addison School  
1045 Webster St, Palo Alto  
**Saturday 12:00 - 4:00 pm**  
**Sunday 12:00 - 4:00 pm**  
Headliner Jennifer Price. Raffle & sales each day.



## Refreshment Reminder

- | <b>Feb Mtg</b>   | <b>Mar Mtg</b>  | <b>Apr Mtg</b>       |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Enrique & Jen O. | SBBK Board      | Renate Pearson       |
| Kathi Page       | (Club Birthday) | Barbara & Richard P. |
- Please find a replacement if unable to bring refreshments as scheduled. Refer to the SBBK roster.

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# President's Message

By Mike Rosenthal

Hi Everyone,

What a great February we have in store. The weather is beautiful and working on our trees, especially repotting, is so rewarding. Although recently I removed wire from 2 large junipers at 3 hours each, and it made me want to change to clip and grow.

This month SBBK has a number of great programs thanks to our Program Committee Chairs, Valerie Monroe and Steve Iwaki. As I write this message, Valerie is preparing for a forest/group planting workshop for Sunday the 8th, at the San Mateo Garden Center (SMGC) which will end before kick-off- GO PATRIOTS. Later in the month on Sunday, February 22, we have a double header with a potting workshop at the SMGC from 10 to 3 following by a kusamono workshop with our guest, nationally recognized expert Young Choe. Sign-ups for both of these events are available on-line.

Regarding the potting workshop/party, there will be experienced members available to help anyone with their repotting projects. Those participating should bring all supplies necessary as well as beverages. SBBK will supply sandwiches for lunch. This workshop had been offered yearly at the home of our sensei Gordon Deeg but following his move we have now selected the Garden Center as a convenient alternative. This has always been a fun event providing an opportunity for us to get together and enjoy each other. The repotting event is free and the kusamono workshop

will cost \$75 per participant. Finally, our member meeting on February 25th will feature Young Choe demonstrating her expertise in the creation of kusamono. Of note we will be joined with members from our neighbor club, Kusamura from Palo Alto, which always results in a lively and enjoyable time together.

Be sure to review the schedule in this Snippet which provides the results of our planning for 2026. As you will note and I am sure agree, we have a great collection of programs both with invited guests and our own expert members. Steve and Valerie have done a wonderful job with help from many of you in continuing the success of our activities. Let me also take this opportunity to remind you all that our Annual Show will be on June 13 and 14, 2026. This has been moved ahead 1 week due to a conflict at the SMGC.

Finally, I want to suggest a wonderful bonsai related video that was brought to my attention by a close friend who frequently watches the NHK channel. It can be accessed at <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/shows/2029242/>. This is truly inspiring and worth 28 minutes of your time. It is only available for a short time so do not wait to access.

Keep enjoying this fantastic weather and be thankful you chose this area to settle. My former abodes are buried in snow with temperature below zero F.

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## Shohin School 2026



# Shohin School 2026

by Gianne Souza McCaskill

Shohin School was a blast! This was my first time going and I learned SO MUCH about shohin display and design. I am excited to apply what I learned towards designing and putting together a shohin display for our club show (although it might take me many years to achieve this goal!).

A key takeaway for me was thinking carefully about the overall display first, and then designing trees and collecting stands and pots to complete that mental picture. I also found the comparison between “regular” sized bonsai and shohin bonsai design very helpful - for example, it is almost impossible to have a full cascade within the space allowed for shohin, but a semi-cascade tree with strong directional movement made up of fewer foliage pads is a very valuable tree to have as a part of the display. I also really enjoyed the afternoon workshop and had a lot of fun discussing multiple perspectives on the same trees with different bonsai professionals at once.

Afternoon workshop! You could purchase trees ahead of time or bring your own shohin to work on. Many bonsai professionals were available for assistance - Daisaku Nomoto, Andrew Robson, Jonas Dupuich, Adam Toth, and Eric Shraeder!



Jonas and Daisaku sharing a moment of laughter during a deep discussion on shohin display



Andrew Robson helped us put together a SBBK Shohin Display!

## More Reflections

by Dustin Ho

My favorite discussion was by Daisaku Nomoto on what is different in making a shohin vs. a larger sized bonsai. You don't just shrink down everything you do.

There's less space to create interest so you need to compress negative space. This is most noticeable in a cascade, where there is a much smaller space between each pad.

To fill up the position in the box, you do a few things differently:

You're looking for a trunk that is thicker relative to branch size in shohin vs. larger sizes. The silhouette looks often more like an equilateral triangle instead of an isosceles.

The branch density is higher. You might accept more suboptimal branch positions to get the density you need.

The first branch is lower (may start ~20% up the trunk instead of ~30%) and reaches further out.

Nebari is still important, but less emphasized due to the need to fit into a pot of the right size.

The tree outside the box (Mae-oki (前置き)) needs a lot of strength and directional flow because it's the only tree balancing that whole side of the display. You achieve this through a very strong main branch and wider spacing of branches.

# January Meeting Recap: Scott Chadd — Forest Planting

by Michael Wei

It was a full house and fun story-telling by Scott Chadd as he constructed a forest planting. With the help of JT and Steve, the arrangement below was raffled off and Yuki was excited to add this to her garden.

Some interesting notes from Scott:

- In a forest planting, he conceptually divides the pot into thirds—and in one third of the pot he composes two thirds of the trees, and in the remaining two thirds of the pot he composes the remaining one third of the trees—asymmetry.
- The tallest, biggest tree should sit on the rise.



- Trees tend to grow similarly, so in a group they should have similar shape and characteristics.
- Repot as far as every 5 years, with signals of poor drainage, and chlorosis (yellowing leaves).
- Can remove small pizza-slices of dense roots and replace with bonsai soil.

Hope you were inspired by this, and for those joining the Forest Workshop. Thanks to Scott Chadd and Bob Shatsky in providing material for sale at the January meeting.

## Guest: Young Choe — Kusamono (continued from p 1)

Kusamono are potted arrangements of wild grasses and flowers in unique pots or trays. Smaller versions can be used for accent plants in a bonsai display. Kokedama is a ball of soil covered with moss on which an ornamental plant grows. For more info on Young Choe and to see examples go visit <https://www.kusamonochoe.com/>.

In addition to a demonstration on February 25, four workshop opportunities are available for 6 participants each. Please bring your tools, plants, pots and trays. The cost of the workshops is \$75 plus costs for plants, pots, and trays if you do not have your own. To give you an idea of what plants to get, this link shows several kusamono created by Young and she lists the plants used in her design <http://www.kusamonochoe.com/journal/2017/9/27/the-native-exhibit>. Additional plant material will be available for purchase that has been selected by Young (expect to pay about \$20-30 on plants). If you have suitable pots or trays to hold your kusamono and kokedama, please bring them too. There will be extra pots and trays available for purchase at the workshops as well ranging in price from \$15 to \$45. You will have time to create a couple kusamono arrangements including a kokedama.

**Workshop #1** is to be held at the San Mateo Garden Center in the evening from 4 - 7 pm on Sunday, Feb 22. This workshop is limited to members of the SBBK. Follow this link to reserve your space for this Sunday evening workshop ( <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A45A9AD2DA7FFC16-61914547-young> ).

**Workshops #2-4** are to be held at the home of Steve and Catherine Iwaki during the day with two workshops on Tuesday, Feb 24 and one workshop on Wednesday, Feb 25. These workshops are open to both clubs. Follow this link to reserve your space for the workshops on Tuesday and Wednesday ( <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A45A9AD2DA7FFC16-61914587-young#/> ).

Please contact Steve Iwaki ([steve@iwakibonsai.com](mailto:steve@iwakibonsai.com)) or Charlene Fischer ([charlenerae@mac.com](mailto:charlenerae@mac.com)) if you have questions.



“Choe fuses her artistic talent with horticulture, resulting in a process she calls ‘articulture.’ Choe says that Kusamono is the perfect tie between her Asian culture, knowledge of plants’ physiology and the talent she has developed toward creating beautiful works.”

National Bonsai Foundation, Sep 9, 2019

# Adventures with Air Layering

Gianne Souza McCaskill

One of my bonsai goals last year was to play around with different types of air layering. I was heavily inspired by both my Sei Boku Bonsai Buddy Idris Anderson (yay!) and by the April 2025 GSBF Scott Elser presentation on Air Layering. Below are a some of my projects:



This wildly twisted Japanese Maple came from Dylan Ferreira at Cedar Rose Nursery. I bought this tree with the intention of creating 2 or 3 shohin maples with air layering. I created the first air layer on the top major bend (see arrow) using heavy duty plastic, long fibered sphagnum moss, wire, and rooting hormone.

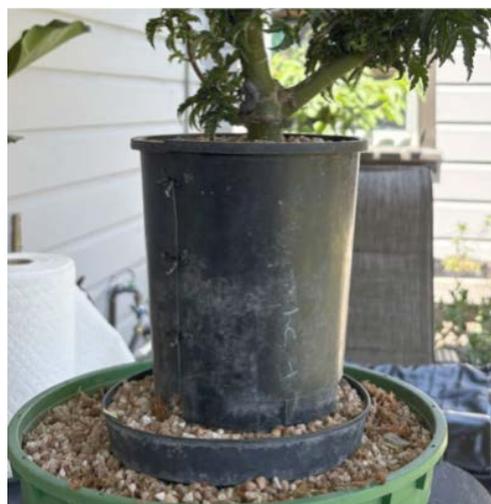


Although I did not get even root development all the way around due to a callus that bridged over part of the wound, and I probably should have let it produce more roots, I separated it last Fall into a tall pot with 100% pumice and placed it into a plastic greenhouse all

winter. The roots continued to grow over winter and are now poking out the sides of the new pot! I also had a hard time securing this air layer in the pot and it got knocked over TWICE by my landlord's gardeners after I potted it up, so I am really amazed that this air layer even survived.



This Shishigashira maple I got from our Sei Boku show (thanks Gio!) has a nice base, but the branches are too far from the nebari for me. I had to carefully place this air layer (green arrow) because of an old scar on the trunk from a large branch removal (red arrow). I think part of the reason my previous air layer had uneven root development was from one side of the air layer getting dried out and overheated by the sun, and I decided to switch to pots.



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## Adventures with Air Layering

I had to add an extra collar at the bottom to support the weight of the large pot. I placed long fibered sphagnum moss immediately around the wound, and then sandwiched the moss with bonsai soil above and below it in the pot



Wow roots! This air layer was placed in mid-May and I uncovered it mid-January. I was very pleased with the even root development all the way around the wound!

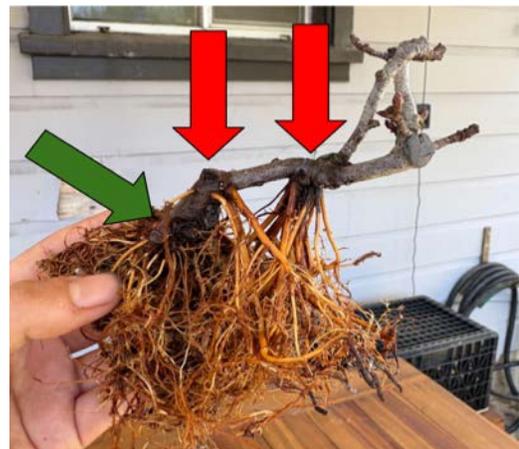


I anchored the newly separated air layer with wires that wrapped all around the pot. I made sure that it couldn't move at all so the new nebari could gain strength and support the tree. Looking back, I wish I had screwed on a piece of wood underneath the new roots to keep them straight (I just kind of spread them

out while I was potting it up). We will see what they look like when I uncover them in a year. I am also excited to create a broom-style tree from the base of this tree!



This bunjin crabapple (originally from Brent at Evergreen Garden Works) has an awkward branch that does not align with the current design, and since I love the flowers of this particular variety, I decided to turn that branch into a little mame. I used a small square pot this time, again sandwiching the long fibered sphagnum moss with bonsai soil, and taped the pot so I had a little hole at the top to water it. It was very easy to keep moist during the growing season. The air layer was placed in May and separated in January.



I definitely did NOT expect this many roots to form! Notice that roots formed not only at the cut site where I had placed rooting hormone (green arrow), but also at

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## Adventures with Air Layering

the two nodes above it (red arrows)! I decided that it looked weird enough to keep it all and potted it up. Will this become an exposed root raft mame in the future?!



This little shohin redwood collected by Bob Shimon looks cute, but it has an awful nebari, with a big bulge that ends in a sword-like projection 5 inches down into the soil (where all the roots are!) that would make fitting it into a shallow shohin pot basically impossible. I decided to ground layer it to create a brand new nebari right at the widest part of the base. The bright pink is the rooting hormone, and I just kept it in its original nursery pot and replaced the soil around the nebari with long fibered sphagnum moss topped with



bonsai soil. This was performed in late May.

Seven months later, a big difference! It's a little difficult to see in this picture, but the redwood produced a beautiful new nebari with evenly spaced out roots all the way around the widest part of the trunk (green arrow). The old bottom of the sword-like projection (red), which is where all the old roots originated from, could now be sawed off and thrown away! I tied down the new nebari very securely and padded the wires with more long fibered sphagnum moss to prevent any damage.

My key takeaways with air layering this past year:

- Pots are better than plastic bags. Much easier to water them and keep them moist.
- Make the wound deeper than you think it has to be! Use a sharp clean blade.
- Covering the wound with long fibered sphagnum moss and sandwiching it with bonsai soil works extremely well for robust root development.
- Secure the new air layer carefully! No wiggles. And keep it far away from gardeners, squirrels, or anything else that can disturb the new trees.
- Be patient! Roots keep developing during our mild Fall and Winter - waiting definitely gives stronger roots.

### Getting Down to the Roots About Roots

*Air layering and ground layering in bonsai induce root growth by removing a ring of bark (phloem) on a branch, which stops the downward flow of carbohydrates and hormones (auxins) produced in the leaves. These compounds accumulate at the top of the cut, triggering callus formation and adventitious root development.*

*Interrupting Phloem: By stripping a ring of bark down to the cambium (the green layer beneath the bark), the transport of sugars and nutrients from the leaves down to the roots is interrupted.*

*Accumulation of Growth Hormones: Auxin, a primary plant growth hormone, travels down from the apical buds and leaves but gets trapped above the girdle/cut.*

*Callus Formation: The accumulation of carbohydrates and auxin, combined with high moisture and oxygen from the surrounding, packed, and dampened sphagnum moss, stimulates undifferentiated meristem cells to form a callus.*

*Adventitious Rooting: These callus cells differentiate into roots. Because the upper part is still attached to the parent, it receives water through the inner wood (xylem) while developing its own root system.*

# New SBBK Calendar of Events

2026

Feb	Mtg Guest: Young Choe - Kusamono Extra Workshop to follow Forest Planting Workshop
Mar	Mtg: Club Birthday, Adam Toth - Shohin
Apr	Mtg: Show info. & Guest: Kaya Mooney
May	Mtg: Multi Species Workshop
June	Club Show: demos by Valerie M. & Steve J. Mtg: Bonsai Challenge (Josh & Gio)
July	Mtg: Wiring with JT
Aug	Mtg: Pedro Morales—Tropicals
Sep	Mtg: Green Elephant Sale & Auction
Oct	Peter Macasieb - Shohin
Nov	Mtg: Business Meeting, Fall Clean-up Workshop
Dec	Holiday Party



Yuki was the fortunate raffle winner of this planting

## Welcoming New Members



- Krishna Rocha-Singh

If new members would like to be paired with a SBBK Bonsai Buddy, please reach out to Bill, [bill@walter-mcdonald.com](mailto:bill@walter-mcdonald.com)

### Editors Special Note:

Consider sharing your projects or best seasonal trees with the club by submitting some photos and captions for the Snippet. Please send your entries to [mwei2cre8@msn.com](mailto:mwei2cre8@msn.com).

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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