



May Mtg: Multi-Species

by Mike Rosenthal

Wednesday, May 27, 2026 at 7:00pm

Our May SBBK member meeting on the 27th will be a Multi-Species Workshop. Members are encouraged to select one or two of their trees to be developed and styled under the supervision and direction of one of our own expert Senseis. Jerry Carpenter, Steve Iwaki, Steve Jang, John "JT" Thompson and Valerie Monroe will each head up a station with 5-6 members assigned based on tree selection. Participants should sign up and indicate the trees they will be bringing at

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A45A9AD2DA7FFC16-63837585-speciesspecific>.

This will be a wonderful opportunity to get guidance, taking your trees to the next level of excellence. Consideration may be given to bringing in the tree(s) that you are planning to include in our annual show. This opportunity is not to be limited to new members but rather all regardless of your level of expertise. Advice from our peers is always welcome in providing new insights into our own efforts. If you are not planning to be an active participant with your trees, still plan on attending and sharing your own ideas.

Also, this will be the final opportunity to get directions and advice for your participation in our 2026 SBBK Annual Show on June 12 -14 from Marsha Mekisich. Looking forward to seeing you all in May.

Refreshment Reminder

May Mtg

Vince Pina

Gio & Jeanett

Jun Mtg

Jose Sandoval

Keith Schmidt

Jul Mtg

Bob & Joyce Shatsky

Christian Sierra

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

SBBK Calendar

May 1-31 Filoli: Bonsai Exhibit

May 17 Bonsai Day (hosted by Kusamura Club)

86 Canada Road, Woodside

Sunday (17) 10:00 - 5:00 pm

Free with General Admission



May 17 San Mateo Bonsai Club Show

San Mateo JACC Gardener's Hall

503 E 5th Ave, San Mateo

(Corner of 5th & Claremont)

Saturday 10:00 - 4:00 pm

Tree show, and member sales.

May 30-31 Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai & Yamato Show

Lakeside Park Garden Center

666 Bellevue Ave, Oakland

Saturday 10:00 - 5:00 pm

Sunday 10:00 - 4:00 pm

Demonstrations, plant sales

Steve Iwaki will have a signup sheet for club name badges at this month's meeting. If you can't make it, contact Steve at steve@iwakibonsai.com.



Also In This Issue:

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First Tuesday Workshop

Japanese Black Pine Case Study

Showtime—Check In and Reminders

President's Message

By Mike Rosenthal

Hello Again,

I recently had the pleasure of attending Valerie Monroe's first Tuesday workshop and it was just wonderful. Seeing 15-20 of our SBBK member both old and new working together in such a productive session was terrific. I brought a juniper for Valerie's input and gained so much from her expertise. Everyone should try to take advantage of this offering by SBBK.

Our April meeting was another successful educational experience with Kaya Mooney from Japan. I want to acknowledge the fantastic contributions that Steve Iwaki has brought to SBBK with his contacts throughout the bonsai community both in the US and abroad. Our exposure to outside experts provides us with very unique and exciting opportunities to benefit from the expertise of these master educators. The opportunities we experience from our guests coupled with the presentations of our own Senseis provide us all with the ability to increase our skill. I can only hope that what I have gained will decrease the prevalence of examples of my abilities so evident in my morgue.

Let me also remind you all about the Multi-Species Workshop at our May 27 SBBK meeting for all members and the Introductory Seminar at the home of Michael Greenstein for those who have joined in the last 5 years on May 24. You have all received mailings describing both offerings and please take advantage of them and sign up soon. If you have any questions never hesitate to get in touch – mhr@stanford.edu.

Mike



Golden State Bonsai Federation Golden Zoom replay

Joshua Roth
Rising Stars



Tom Finsel —
Top Down
Repotting



Recommended YouTube Channel Bonsai Shinshi

This channel shares step by step development of bonsai over time and is most educational. Focuses on shohin trees. English captions. Enjoy.



Developing an a Keen Eye by Michael Wei

A great part of one's education can come from seeing quality trees in person and up close. Observing both strengths and flaws will help you when purchasing pre-bonsai material that you can develop and style.

In the early days of bonsai in the US, additional learning came from show catalogs, books and magazines. We have the benefit of the internet, which has opened up so much bonsai content.

One practice I apply is to create a Pinterist board(s) for bonsai images that inspire or move me. You can even group them by species or styles. I use a different online inspiration page, where I can save styles that I am most interested in (e.g. pines, junipers, shohin, mame, deciduous, etc) and when I look at potential material, I try to compare it with these examples to envision what that pre-bonsai could become. It is also a great resource to study: for branch placement, pad work, use of shari or jin, etc. You might give it a try.

Apr Mtg Recap: Kaya Mooney

by Michael Wei

At age 14, Kaya was inspired by some bonsai books/magazines that his father brought home. He practiced on his own until he was able to work at a local nursery. Later he attended Boon Intensives, and at age 21, he started a 6 year apprentice at Koku-En (where Bjorn studied at). Continues to live and work in Japan as a bonsai professional.



Some notes from his styling of a San Jose Prostrata:

- When designing junipers, it is easier to shape smaller more flexible branches than to work with bigger rigid branches. Bending larger branches will be too gradual and not as dramatic and acute. than more flexible branches.
- We can grow juniper branch thickness more easily than bending a larger branch.
- Jin, score the end around the bark to prevent bark removal from going too far
- Kaya prefers to wire from the bottom up, angling branches down. So it makes space for upper work.
- You can always regrow an apex, but it is harder to regrow lower branches.
- In terms of learning technique—it is ideal to have an innate sense of doing it properly. One can learn some techniques but having a good sense of things will make a good bonsai artist, but often hard to put into words.
- Shari on this juniper is just a start (select narrow lines of bark removed from the trunk), but must progressively remove more bark—widen it.
- Try to respect the tree—if it does not have twists in the trunk, it is best not to barber-pole the Shari.
- Aftercare: put it in full sun with shade cloth — don't put it under a tree, preferably with afternoon sun, periodic misting, and wait 1-2 weeks before fertilizing.
- This tree was repotted only a few weeks ago—so wait 1-3 years.
- In general, repotting is stressful on trees—so repot less frequently.
- Ask if the roots are too dense. Does it drain? Is it healthy? If needed, use an awl (e.g. sharpened taper screwdriver) or "Dibbler." Do not stab the soil, as it could injure large roots. Push down but wiggle the top to work its way down. Create paths that water can get into the rootball.

First Tuesday Workshop

by Val Monroe

Mini Talk - Pruning; thinning vs. cutting back

Thanks everyone for showing up at the last workshop; what a stellar crowd! So, the main way we keep our bonsai from getting too big is to perform periodic pruning.

Depending on where your cut falls in the tree, you are either cutting back (shortening), or removing extra unnecessary branches (thinning).

When our trees are actively growing, they put on a lot of foliage. Our trees are ready to prune when the foliage is bushy, has active running growth, and at the location you'll be cutting the growth has hardened off.

Cutting back means that we are shortening a branch by getting rid of the growing tip. Usually our cut will fall at a fork in the remaining foliage (like with a juniper), or it could fall at the first set of leaves (like with a maple). In both of these instances, the cutting off of the single tip will result in two lower branches growing instead.

Cutting back results in more ramification, more density, more twiginess. It also weakens the tree by forcing it to divide.

Thinning our trees should only be done if necessary. If our trees are too dense, thinning out unneeded branches will create space and give the tree more energy. If a branch is weak, letting the growing tip reach out and thinning some of the secondary branches will result in a stronger, thicker branch.



During training, we might have a hybrid look to our trees; the top is frequently pruned short by periodic cutting back, while the lower branches are thinned and allowed to grow freely (sometimes for several feet). The branches are grown this way until the desired thickness is achieved, then it is cut back to begin ramification like the top of the tree. Michael Wei asked if this had

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Japanese Black Pine Case Study

by Steve Iwaki

Who says you can't remake a decent bonsai in 4 years.

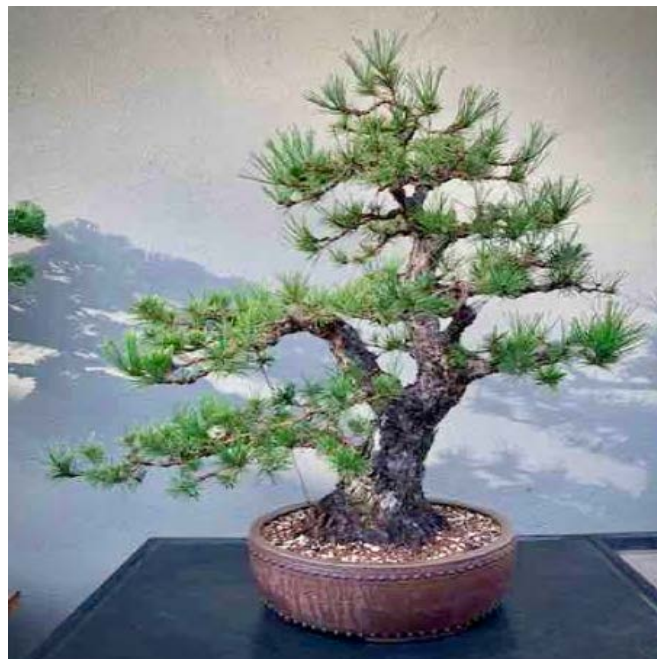
I purchased this Japanese Black Pine in a grower's pot from Jonas at our show in June '22. Although it was in good health growing in a black plastic nursery pot, I could tell it was a bonsai at one time. It had an 8" nebari, good size and aged bark, however it was left untouched for at least 7-10 years. I was anxious to work on it, but thought best to give it time to acclimate to my backyard.

In November, I removed 40% of the branches and wired it.

In February of '23, I potted it in a Sara Rayner pot. It had an abundance of roots and mycorrhiza.

In August of '24, I had it in the John Naka Memorial show (formerly the Nanpukai show), a club my father helped organize in the 1960's.

This year I'm planning to display it in our show in June. Please tell me what you think when you see it.



Your Important Final 2026 Show Time Reminders

By Marsha Mekisich, Show Coordinator

Show time is about five weeks away. Set-up begins Friday, June 12 at 4:00 p.m. The show runs Saturday, June 13 and Sunday, June 14. I'll have the gate open no later than 7:30 AM Saturday/Sunday, and the show is open 10-4 both days.

Sign-Up Reminder: Please sign up no later than Friday, June 5th so we can make tree id cards in advance as well as be sure all is covered for our show.

- Show assignments on SignUpGenius: [https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A45A9AD2DA7FFC16-62502944-seiboku#/.](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A45A9AD2DA7FFC16-62502944-seiboku#/)
- Show tree sign up is on Google Docs: [Sei Boku 2026 Show Tree List - Google Sheets](#)



Trees in Development: For newer members, if you don't feel ready for the main show, contact Steve Iwaki (steve@iwakibonsai.com) or Gianne Souza (giane00@gmail.com) about being included with trees in development stage for special display near the Pagoda.



Accent reminder: Choose seasonal accents that fit your display and feel free to bring additional for use around the show. Please discretely ID them so they can be returned to you.

Key Reminders

Sunday Workshop: Spots remain, first come first served. Val Monroe will lead a bring-your-own-tree workshop from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with a lunch break. Cost is \$50. In advance Sign up included online or contact me directly. Bring your own tools, wire cleanup trays etc. as well.

Sale Items: Members may sell healthy, well-groomed trees, plants, pots, and other bonsai items. **Proceeds are split** 80% to the seller and 20% to SBBK.

Opportunity to create bench space for something new?

- Each item needs a completed sale sheet and tag.
- Forms and tags are available from Mike Mello and me at our May meeting.
- Bring sale items fully tagged, and consignment sheet completed to the sales area by 9:00 AM Saturday. Show opens at 10:00 AM and there is no time for last minute scrambles please.
- Please do not bring sale items before Saturday morning. Friday night is show setup focus only please.

Raffle and Door Prize Donations: Please bring two bonsai-related items worth \$25 or more or donate by check to SBBK through treasurer Randi Keppler. Bring donations Saturday morning before opening. Door prizes are through the day with main raffle at 3:00 p.m. each day.

Volunteer Assignments

Please sign up for one two-hour shift on both Saturday and Sunday. Roles include:

- Welcome Table: Lead is Catherine Tierny: Greet guests, distribute door prize tickets, and help ensure that unpaid items do not leave with visitors.
- Security: Lead is Kevin Corrigan: Welcome guests in the show room, monitor displays, and answer questions. Guests are welcome to look but not touch.
- Sales: Leads are Randi Keppler and Dennis Hawkins: Be present, helpful, and attentive in the club sales area. Assist guests, answer questions, and help discourage issues such as price-tag tampering by simply staying observant.
- Hospitality: Leads are Mike Rosenthal and Joyce Shatsky: Help monitor and restock lunch provisions for members and invited guests from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. both days and assist with Friday night set-up dinner. SBBK will provide prepared food, and there is also sign-ups for snacks, drinks, and ice/chests.

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- Raffle: Lead is John Mekisich: Sell raffle tickets for demo trees and raffle prizes, and help receive, monitor, and display prizes for the Saturday and Sunday raffles and door prize drawings.
- Doctor Bonsai: Experienced members will be available to offer bonsai advice and answer styling or care questions.
- Signage/Banner: Lead is Bill McDonald: Work with Bill McDonald to place signage and banners leading folks to the Garden Center for our Show.
- Sound System: Roy and Gary will cover sound system
- Everyone: Be attentive to where help is needed, to each other as well as show tidiness, visitors' needs and overall security.

Set-Up and Take-Down:

Set-Up Friday June 12th 4pm and Take-Down Sunday June 14th 4pm

All hands needed. Please sign up to help with various stages.

- Muscle Team: Will bring all backdrops Tokonomas, sale risers, tablecloths and table lifts from Rose Room. Will bring chairs and tables out from Redwood storage, first placing tables around show then ALL rest of 6' and 8' tables outside to receive display trees extra, as well as all smaller worktables. Remember there is no access to table storage area once show is set.
- Display staging: Once patio tables are set up, members may bring trees, accents, and stands for staging.
- Friday night set-up: The backdrop team will begin by setting up tables and chairs inside and outside, then bring tablecloths and backdrops down from the Rose Room. After the tables around walls are aligned, and lifts installed, the tablecloth team will box-fold the tan tablecloths around the room.
- Tokonoma tables: Once backdrops are installed, apply black slipcovers to tokonoma tables.
- Sunday take-down: The process will follow set-up in reverse. Please do not move another person's trees or materials without permission, and make sure all items are safely removed before disassembly begins. Label all your items so can find their way back home safely.

Display Materials: Bring your display materials on Friday at 4:00 p.m. and place them on the patio tables once those tables are ready. Your tree, stand, and accent should all be show-ready at that time. Selected senior members will set up the displays once the room is prepared, so please remain available once your tree is selected and help with final adjustments.

Display Set-Up: Val and the display team will guide set-up once the showroom is ready with tablecloths and tokonomas in place. They will work with you to position each display. Please place tree name cards consistently and identify any display that is still missing a name card. If your tree needs an accent, check with the show tree placement monitor and follow their guidance. Members using tokonoma displays may also choose to include scrolls.

Friday Dinner and Refreshments: Dinner will be provided Friday evening at about 6:00 p.m. Feel free to bring something to drink for yourself and to share if you wish; we will have a few coolers available. Please also bring any beverages you would like for Saturday and Sunday. During show hours, you may eat in the Rose Room or downstairs on the Garden Shop Patio. Please clean up after yourself and help us follow the Garden Center's recycling requirements.

Work Assignments: Please keep track of your volunteer shifts. Copies of the sign-up sheets will be available in the Rose Room and Redwood kitchen. If you cannot work your shift, please find another member to cover it and update the sign-up sheet. If you need help finding coverage, contact the lead for your assigned area or reach out to me directly. We need everyone's help, and experienced members will be available to support and coordinate throughout the weekend.

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Help Spread the Word: Bill McDonald, our marketing coordinator, has prepared materials for members to share online through social media channels such as Nextdoor and Facebook. Flyers and postcards are also available to share with friends and the community. Reach out to him at May meeting to help get the word out.

Final Reminders:

- Please wear your Happi coat and/or name badge so guests can identify you as a club member. If you need one, let me know.
- Be sure you have your stand, pot and tree cleaned and prepped for show upon arrival. All show trees must be top dressed and wire and if necessary tie downs discrete and neatly done. Please review [Show Tree Prep Tips: From the March '26 Snippet](#).
- Check your trees for water during the weekend.
- Photographs are up to you. Take and submit to me and I will pass along to include for this year's show photos on our website. I will also take tree photos. We did not hire a professional this year, so there are no moving trees around once in display. In place photos only, so can include your entire display or individual components.

Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

I look forward to seeing everyone's displays and sharing a great weekend together. Always a fun and full weekend. Thanks again in advance for everyone's efforts, big and small to make our show a beautiful success.

Marsha Mekisich (springhill.2@outlook.com)
Your SBBK Show Coordinator

First Tuesday

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to do with energy balancing. All pruning deals with energy balancing is the short answer. On the whole, the top of your tree is the strongest, so cutting back is the best way to weaken a strong area. The lower branches are sometimes weaker than the top, so occasionally leaving them unpruned can add some strength to a weaker area.

We will be revisiting this topic in the future, so just try to notice your trees and the results of the work you do, and gradually these ideas will become second nature.

June First Tuesday - Red and Black Pine Decandling, Preparing your trees for the show (bring moss, top dressing, oil/rag for the pot). Preparing your kusamono for the show.

July First Tuesday - Preparing a yamagoke top dressing for your trees/azaleas.





Bonsai SHOW

Free Admission

COME CELEBRATE SEI BOKU BONSAI KAI'S
42nd ANNIVERSARY

San Mateo Garden Center
JUNE 13-14, 2026

Location: 605 Parkside Way, San Mateo, CA (at Beresford Park)

Times: 10am - 4pm BOTH days

Saturday Headliner: Steve Jang

Demonstration at 1pm - 3pm. Demo tree to be raffled after 3pm

Sunday Headliner: Valerie Monroe

"Watch a Bonsai Workshop" at 1pm - 3pm. Workshop tree to be raffled after 3pm

Both days include: Over 30 bonsai on display

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



SEI BOKU
BONSAI KAI

seibokubonsaikai.org

New SBBK Calendar of Events

2026

May	Mtg: Multi Species Workshop
June	Club Show: demos by Valerie M. & Steve J. Mtg: Bonsai Challenge (Josh & Gio)
July	Mtg: Wiring with JT, hands-on
Aug	Mtg: Guest: Pedro Morales—Tropicals
Sep	Mtg: Green Elephant Sale & Auction
Oct	Mtg: Peter Macasieb - Shohin
Nov	Mtg: Business Meeting, Fall Clean-up Workshop
Dec	Holiday Party

Welcoming New Members



- Ronan Ercan
- Kimi Erfort
- Vincent Paiva



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.

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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