SEI BOKU BONSAI KAI

The Snippet

Oct 2026

Oct 28 Mtg: Guest Philippe Baron

by Steve Iwaki

San Mateo Garden Center, Wed 7:00 - 9:00 pm

For this month's meeting we welcome Los Angeles based bonsai artist, Philippe Baron. Over the past 20 years he has dedicated his life to the practice and study of bonsai. For the past nine years, he has trained with Italian bonsai artist, Mauro Stemberger, assisting with the care and development of private collections in Southern California. He also travels to Italy to work on Mauro's private collection.

For our meeting, he will share his knowledge on conifer apex and pad development, including a power point presentation and a live tree demonstration. The tree with be raffled off at the conclusion of our meeting.



Refreshment Reminder

Oct Mtg	Nov Mtg
Philip Talbert	Jenny Tsao
Marguerite W	Jimmy Yan
JT Thompson	

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

SBBK Calendar

Oct 13 Pottery Workshop for New Members
San Mateo Garden Center
605 Parkside Way, San Mateo
Tue 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Oct 15-17 BGLM Autumn Lights
650 Bellevue Ave, Lake Merritt, Oakland
Thu-Sat (details to follow)

Oct 20 Kusamono Workshop
San Mateo Garden Center
605 Parkside Way, San Mateo
Tue 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Nov 3 First Tuesday Workshop
San Mateo Garden Center
605 Parkside Way, San Mateo
Tue 6:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Nov 14 SBBK Field-trip: Peter Tea Garden
Meet at the San Mateo Garden Center
Carpool to Auburn. Details to follow.

Also In This Issue:

President's Message
Nov Field Trip to Peter Tea & Muruyama
Sep Mtg: Green Elephant Fundraiser
The Nature of Trees
SBBK Kusamono Focus Group (re-post)
Suiseki—Viewing Stones
BGLM Autumn Lights (re-post)
Fall Tree Work (re-post)

President's Message

By Mike Rosenthal

Hello My Favorite Bonsai Enthusiasts,

I hope all have taken care to provide adequate hydration for your trees as the temperatures have soared over the past several days. It does look like the heat is subsiding, but with the climate so unpredictable who knows what is next. Speaking of watering please remember as late autumn and winter set in and the temperatures cool down, like humans, dehydration with cold can cause considerable damage. Although watering need not be daily, we still need to maintain adequate hydration. El Nino may help, but mother nature does not always listen to forecasting.

Recently I went through a period where my conifers, especially the junipers, began to lose some of their luster unrelated to watering. A small dose of iron sulfate, $FeSO_4$ resulted in a miraculous improvement. I know many of you are aware of the benefits of iron but I just wanted to remind our less experienced members that fading color is not always a premonition of death. Although the mechanisms differ, it is of note that insufficient iron also causes us to lose our luster and plants do have chemicals related to our own hemoglobin, necessary for our red blood cells to carry oxygen. The health of plants also necessitates adequate oxygenation.

Well enough with the science lecture. I am hoping that all of you have put December 6 on your calendars for our annual holiday party. Last year John Mekisich organized one of the best social gatherings we have had. Everyone was thrilled with the party at La Lanterna and John is going for a repeat performance. Your Board will be meeting shortly to

continued on page 7



SBBK Field Trip to Peter Tea & Maruyama Nursery Sat, Nov 14

By Gianne Souza

Sei Boku is planning a field trip to visit Peter Tea's Nursery and Maruyama Bonsai Nursery on Saturday, November 14 for anyone interested in joining!

Peter Tea is an incredibly accomplished bonsai artist whose students consistently sweep awards at the Pacific Bonsai Expo. Peter first trained with Boon Manakitivipart before completing his apprenticeship with Junichiro Tanaka at Aichi-en Bonsai Garden. We are so excited to have the opportunity to view Peter's world-class garden! Peter said there may also be some high quality trees available for purchase!

Maruyama Bonsai Nursery is a retail nursery that carries a wonderful selection of bonsai, pre-bonsai, accent plants, and various bonsai supplies including tools, pots, soil components, and more. This is a great time to stock up materials for the upcoming repotting season!

continued on page 5

Soil For Repotting This Spring

By Steve Iwaki

SBBK members again will have the opportunity to join with Kusamura to purchase soil components at a wholesale price. Anticipated delivery date will be in December or January. Akadama, Hyuga (Japanese Pumice), Black Lava and Premix (combination of all three) will be available.

Stay tuned for details.

SBBK Scholarship Reminder

By Michael Fernandez

Sei Boku members. Please remember that the deadline to apply for the Sei Boku Bonsai Kai Scholarship for this year is October 31, 2026. There is a link to the application here on the Snippet and Resources on our Website. So please apply before that deadline.

Sep Mtg Recap: Green Elephant

By Michael Wei

We hope you enjoyed a fun night of auction bidding, good humor, and left with a tree or two. Thank you to all who offered donations to be on the live auction, and for John for being a jovial auctioneer. There were some great items up in the silent auction as well. This is always a memorable event for the club, and proceeds contribute to the programs (and scholarship) opportunities that we offer to club members.















The Nature of Trees

By Michael Wei

I had the pleasure of camping with friends recently, somewhere near Tahoe. After settling in and dinner, under the night sky, we explored for trees until 11:30 by headlamp and pick in hand. Crossing over bear tracks and not able to see further than a few bear-lengths. We tested our fate, and dipped a few collected trees into the edge of the lake. Deep sleep and dreams of bears and junipers.



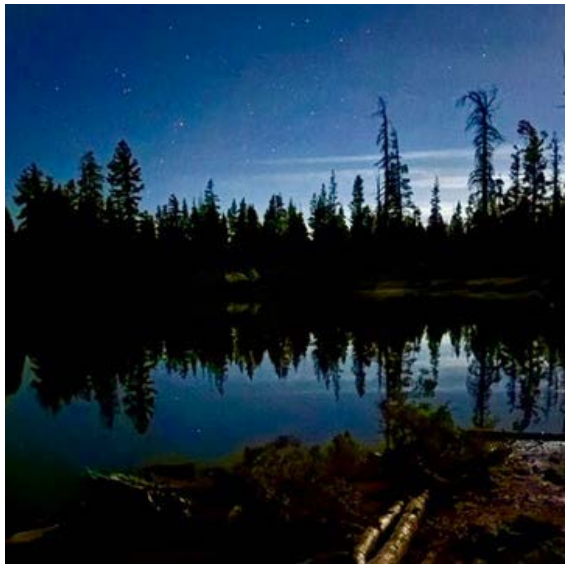
This forest was a collection of diverse trees, living side by side, intertwining branches and sharing or competing for sunlight. It was a harmony of Lodgepole Pines, Red Firs, White Bark Pines, Hemlock, and an occasional Sierra Juniper.

Lodgepoles naturally are tall and narrow, with short branches and compact foliage—and lower branches draping longer and downward like a skirt.

The protected White Bark Pine has a finer, more delicate 3-needle cluster, and a smoother silvery bark—with a trunk having natural movement.

Red firs have organized layers of horizontal flat pads, densely ramified. The short, brightly green needles catch your eye, Older Red Firs have thickly plated bark on slender trunks.

The topography of the valley was composed of granite and volcanic boulders and stones, with the occasional crest of granite sheets like sleeping giants.



Trees growing near the flatter valley terrain were densely gathered and appeared healthy and straight, a life with few challenges. Trees growing more sparsely on rocky terrain, exposed to high altitude winds were more sinuous and curved. Generally either two foot tall or thirty feet tall, their movement is a result of constant nudging by weather, and each year's growth compounds prior years of movement. No two alike, like some interpretive dance by the trees. Trees growing on granite faces, in small pockets or crevices of soil resulted in more squat trees, crouched close to the stone. Others appeared strong and massive with folds of trunk and roots wrapping over the granite. Most having survived decades or centuries on a tap root running between crevices. These trees have the most character and stories of persistence.

Sadly, many trees had been penetrated and weakened by a Bark Beetle, enabling pathogens to invade and slowly kill the tree. So many Lodgepole exhibited a fungus that swelled under their bark and erupted in a yellow ooze. Needle foliage also showing signs of stress or infection.

Our days were filled with rock hopping, steep hikes, assessing and appreciating trees. The reflected sun off the granite made us sunburn. A weekend of touching nature wore off most of my fingerprints. In a month the weather will shift quickly. As we were packing up, a hunting party was preparing for the hunting season to open next week. They shared that they had hunted these hills for many years, and we tried to humor them with our collecting exploits. Quite a memorable trip; I came away with a respect for the resilience of nature, in a delicate balance with pests, pathogens and fire that can cause forests to collapse.

I recommend that you go out and hike, camp, and enjoy nature—and observe the rich textures, colors and shape of trees—as inspiration for your bonsai.

SBBK Kusamono Focus Group

By Randi Keppler

There is a growing interest in Kusamono in the Bay Area. For those who are fuzzy on what that is, Kusamono are potted arrangements of wild grasses, flowers, ferns, and/or mosses that evoke a season or a natural habitat. Smaller scale versions of these arrangements are called Shitakusa and are used as companion plantings for our bonsai displays.

Sei Boku Bonsai Kai is forming a Kusamono focus group that will meet on the third Tuesday of each month (except Dec). This is separate from and in addition to our First Tuesday work-shop which is dedicated to working on our bonsai trees.

Kusamono Third Tuesday will meet in the San Mateo Garden Center Rose Room. The first meeting is Tuesday, October 20th from 7pm to 9pm. We'll start with a presentation on what Kusamono is from various artists' perspective. We hope to make this a regular forum for teaching the techniques needed to create and maintain Kusamono and to share knowledge and tips for various habitats and plant species.

As a starting goal, we plan to provide a couple of mini shows for the Sei Boku Monthly Meeting, perhaps one in the spring and another in the fall. We also have an opportunity to help the Kusamura Bonsai Club with the amazing Kusamono display that they create each year for their annual show. They have 16 feet of table space reserved next year with a theme of "California Grasslands".

We encourage everyone to suggest meeting agendas and activities. For example, we could arrange shopping trips, or exchange Kusamono knowledge with friends on the east coast and with the San Diego Bonsai club perhaps via Zoom or something similar. This will hopefully evolve the botanical sophistication of the companion plantings for our annual Bonsai Show as well.

The SBBK Kusamono focus group is open to all members of Sei Boku Bonsai Kai. We welcome members from other bonsai clubs, but we request that they become SBBK members so that our activities are covered under Sei Boku's 501c3 annual reporting as well as covered under our insurance.

SBBK Field Trip to Peter Tea & Maruyama Nursery

By Gianne Souza McCaskill

continued from page 2

Peter's nursery is located in Auburn, which is about 30 minutes outside of Sacramento. We will first visit Maruyama Nursery in Sacramento in the morning, stop for lunch, then continue to Peter's in the early afternoon. For lunch, we will stop at a Japanese grocery store 5 minutes from Maruyama Nursery which has delicious bento box lunches to go. You are also welcome to bring your own bag lunch of course!

All interested members should sign up using this Sign Up Genius or let Gianne Souza McCaskill know at the next meeting. We plan to leave from the San Mateo Garden Center at 8:00 am on Saturday, November 14 and arrive back in San Mateo in the late afternoon. Carpool worked out well on our last adventure - please let Gianne know if you have a high occupancy vehicle and are willing to host passengers!

Hope to see you there!

If you have any questions, please email Gianne at gianne00@gmail.com.



Suiseki—Viewing Stones

By Jerry Braswell and Michael Wei

Jerry has been passionate about Suiseki, and you likely have seen him at our June bonsai shows for many years. He will be presenting at one of our 2027 club meetings — and will be bringing a slideshow of all the different types of Suiseki and viewing stones.. This article is to pique your interest before his visit.

Suiseki is the Japanese name for viewing stones, or Gonshi, which originated in China and then spread to Japan. Suiseki means "Water Stone" as most stones in this art are water tumbled by an ocean, river or lake. There are many different categories of stones: Mountain stones, puddle stones, picture stones, color stones, texture stones, etc.

A daiza is a carved wooden stand to support a stone, , crystal, etc. Jerry started making daizas in 2005, and has since made over 3000 daizas now. He can make a daiza for anything.

Jerry is a retired master cabinet maker of 25 years, and he also makes tables for Bonsai and Suiseki. Reach out to him if you have a special need for his craftsmanship.



Visit: artofthedaiza.wordpress.com
https://www.facebook.com/jerryssuisekistore/

The Pacific Bonsai Expo 2027 will include a Suiseki Exhibition. You can learn more about this appreciation of nature, adjacent to bonsai.

Please enjoy this PBS show as an introduction to Suiseki.

Hunting The Stone: Suiseki in the West (PBS, 6/1/26)

https://www.pbs.org/video/hunting-the-stone-suiseki-in-the-west-itfjhs/









Autumn Lights Festival Needs Volunteers By Randi Keppler

The annual Autumn Lights Festival is a fundraiser benefiting all the Gardens at Lake Merritt. The Autumn Lights Festival itself will run from Thursday Oct 15th through Saturday Oct 17th with cleanup happening on Sunday Oct 18th.

We need help to get the Bonsai Garden ready for the festival. We also need docents for each night of the festival where we answer questions from the 1000 to 3000 people who enjoy our bonsai. Each tree with its own spotlight, and we need people on the very last day, to help take everything down and packing up for storage.

Any small bit that you can give us will be Greatly Appreciated! Please sign up using the following link or QR Code.

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0848A9AC2BA2FBC43-65628079-2026

While we cannot gift families with admission tickets, we can get Thursday, Friday, or Saturday night admission for those who volunteer on those days. With enough docents, we rotate guard duties so that each person can spend time exploring the rest of the Autumn Lights Festival. We hope that you will join us in having fun and giving back to the community around us.

Please contact Randi Keppeler:

(calshohin@yahoo.com or 650-773-5119) if you have any questions or if you have trouble with the online sign-up interface.

Fall Tree Work [re-post Oct 2021]

By Jerry Carpenter

Fall is here and as temperatures cool and leaves change color there are some important care tips for your bonsai.

1. Windy conditions, like we have seen recently, will wick moisture away from the top layers of soil but may not actually remove moisture below. I have found some of my clients keep watering every day because the trees "look dry" but actually are quite wet. Be sure to use a chopstick or finger to move the top level and check moisture levels below the top soil.

2. Leaves and debris are falling from surrounding trees and landing on the bonsai. Many times those leave bring with them pests and or fungus. Be sure to clean off your trees and remove falling debris. Your trees may be shedding their own leaves and dropping on the soil. Be sure to clean those up regularly.

3. Some of us have very little moss growth on trees this summer but, suddenly as temperatures drop and sun-light penetration has decreased, moss is starting to make a comeback. Monitor moss and ground growth carefully to ensure it stays away from the trunk and bark of your trees.

4. Plan your repotting season. Some fruit trees may need to be repotted in Oct/Nov. I have to force dormancy on some trees to accomplish this task but others will need to plan accordingly. Hope you found soil supplies.

President's Message

continued from Page 2

discuss SBBK's contribution to the costs as was the case last year and more information regarding that will be forthcoming. I hope you will plan to attend and enjoy one of the best aspects of membership in SBBK and that is our collegiality and enjoyment in each other's company.

I am looking forward to so many SBBK activities in the next 2 months – Barbara Phillips' pottery class on October 13, the annual Autumn Lights Festival at the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt from October 15 to 17, the inception of Randi Keppelers' monthly Kusamono Focus Group on October 20, Steve Iwaki's program with guest Phillip Baron at our meeting on October 28, Valerie Monroe's first Tuesday workshop on November 3 (now at 6:30 PM) and Gianne Souza McCaskill's field trip to Sacramento on November 14.

We are a busy bunch,

Mike

PACIFIC BONSAI EXPO 2027

The 2027 Pacific Bonsai Expo

The 2027 Pacific Bonsai Expo will be held on February 6-7, 2027, at the Alameda County Fairgrounds in Pleasanton, California.

New SBBK Calendar of Events

2026

Nov Mtg: Business Meeting, Fall Clean-up Workshop
Dec Holiday Party

Welcoming New Members



- Chris Lee, Anne Nguyen
- James Lee Family
- Eloisa & Paul Briones Family

Shorter days and cooler nights tell deciduous bonsai to retire their green chlorophyll. Hidden yellows emerge; reds may develop. Leaves return nutrients, then bow gracefully before winter's intermission.



Photo from the 2022 Pacific Bonsai Expo

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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