



the **TREE LINE**

the official monthly publication of the **BONSAI SOCIETY of PORTLAND**

January 2014

Upcoming Events

- Jan 19 2-5pm **Mentorship Meeting** St. Marks 5415 SE Powell
Jan 28 7-9pm **BSOP Monthly Meeting** St. Marks 5415 SE Powell
Feb 8 10am - 2pm **Oregon Shohin Kai** St. Marks 5415 SE Powell
Oct 18 - 21 Intl Bonsai Art & Culture Biennale, Yokyakarta, Indonesia

A New Year Full of New Opportunity

Once the sun has turned the corner and daylight stretches its influence in my garden, I feel like everything begins to reawaken. I'm looking forward to a great year!

I'm excited about our new location. We've already started hosting our weekend Shohin Kai and Mentorship meetings at St. Mark's Lutheran Church. Our Library has been successfully relocated. Our Annual Meeting on January 28th will give everyone the opportunity to see our new home. [Our website has an updated map.](#) The new address is: St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 5415 SE Powell Blvd., Portland OR 97206. Parking is in the rear of the church. Enter from SE 55th. We'll have lights on and signs to guide the way.

Change is never easy. It requires letting go of things which are familiar. But change also brings new opportunity. We see this in our bonsai over and over again. One familiar branch dies back. Another branch surges with new energy. The result is an opportunity to make it better – to grow with the change.

I'm looking forward to seeing all of you at our Annual Meeting. The agenda is mostly business this month, a requirement to maintain our nonprofit status. But, we'll do our best to make the *new* become the *familiar* as quickly as possible.

Along with our new space comes fun, new opportunities to participate and make a difference. Here's a short list of areas where we will be looking for help: public relations, outreach, member-facing events, public-facing events, newsletter production, website updates and new member outreach/hospitality. We have descriptions for all of these. If you have relevant experience and energy, ask for more information. Besides bonsai, volunteers are what give life to Bonsai Society of Portland.

See you soon.

Chas Martin, President

Here Comes the Rain Again

As I write this, the middle of the country is locked in a historic severe polar vortex weather pattern which will surely kill off many landscape trees and likely take its toll on the region's bonsai. This harsh weather, as well as the cold fall weather pattern we had here, serve to remind us to be nimble in the care of our bonsai: When it gets cold, get them on the ground or under shelter and never water them when the soil is frozen. A few of my bonsai always spend the most of the winter in the garage. I don't know about you, but I feel very fortunate to be living somewhere where we're not subject to such severe weather. Our mild temperate weather and long growing season, in fact, are two of the reasons that Portland has become the mecca of U.S. bonsai. And now it's raining here, moss is growing, quince buds are already swelling, and before long, the Ume and plum blossoms will be pushing outward their riot of pink and white. These little signs herald the coming of spring.

Maybe, if you're like me, your thoughts are now turning to those trees of ours growing in boxes, terra cotta pots, Anderson flats, and nursery cans, that are due to be put in bonsai pots. And maybe you have some pots that really don't go with any of your trees. Maybe too, you don't really feel like dancing in the rain and you wish you had some new bonsai material to practice your pruning and wiring with on those long soggy nights. If so, you're in luck at our January meeting.

Board Updates, Tree Sale, and Pot Swap

Besides our annual program reports, there will be several trees for sale through our Heritage Program. And there will be some space for a pot swap as well. For the pot swap, please bring up to one box of pots (something you can keep with you at your seat), and be ready to do some swapping (or buying/selling). Maybe--just maybe--you'll find just the perfect pot to match that tree you want to put in our May show at the Japanese Garden. As we'll be getting a feel for how to best utilize the new space, there will be no show table for trees this month. But look for that to change in February!

Looking Ahead

Looking beyond January, Ryan Neil and Scott Elser will join us to repot their Douglas-Firs in February, and we'll have Peter Tea visiting us in March. Peter is a rising star on the U.S. bonsai scene, having recently completed an apprenticeship at Aichi-En, a renowned bonsai nursery in Japan. His blog, www.peterteabonsai.wordpress.com, is extremely informative and quite entertaining.

As I tend to offer a little seasonal advice in this column, let it be this for the month: Now's the time to begin acquiring pots, soil, screen, and wire. Be sure to get 2.0- or 2.5-gauge aluminum wire to wire your trees into their pots. Our local vendors--Daybreak Gardens and Apex Bonsai, will be happy to help you and are a tremendous resource for our membership.

Stay dry and love your trees,

Al Polito, Vice-President of Programs

January Mentorship Meeting

When: Sunday January 19th 2pm to 5pm

Where: **St. Mark's Lutheran Church 5415 SE Powell Boulevard, Portland, OR 97140**
(see details at the end of this article.)

What: Styling: how to choose quality bonsai material, why wiring is the paintbrush of bonsai art and assisting with styling trees you bring. Bring the trees you want help with.

MOTIVATIONAL, FUN, ENTHUSIASTIC, are all words that our mentorship program is about. Of course, learning is the goal, but we want to do it with zeal. When one really believes in something they become a missionary for that belief. Our mentorship program is on a mission, a mission to educate others about bonsai.

Some mentees move along at a faster or slower rate than others based on many factors; our goal is to reach all those who are interested, no matter the speed they want to move at. We want you to come to the mentorship meetings, the monthly meetings and get involved as much as you want in the many other activities the BSOP offers.

With that said, and after nearly 20 years of being mentored and doing some mentoring of others, I have found that time and again that all levels of bonsai enthusiasts repeatedly tell me they want to learn how to style, style, style. Yes, creating a living artistic sculpture is what we want and what we want to teach. But, doing that involves a lot of basics and practice.

In order for our bonsai to be healthy, beautiful and artistic we need to know about more than styling. We need to learn about soil, watering, pests/diseases, fertilization, pot selection, potting and repotting, wiring, and truly a myriad of other topics in order to be successful. And that is what the BSOP is all about; mentoring or as I like to say, paying it forward.

But, those topics need not be boring. We will endeavor to make all of our mentor meetings enthusiastic by using a lot of our talented experienced members, as well as non-members, teach at each meeting. Our goal as instructors is to have as many of them at each meeting so everyone receives as much one on one time as we can give.

With that said, January's mentorship topic will be concentrating on three things, all based on styling; how to choose quality bonsai material, why wiring is the paintbrush of bonsai art and assisting with the styling of the trees you bring.

We hope to see you there,

See

How to Renew Library Materials

If you have library materials checked out and will not be at the meeting when they are due to be returned, you can renew them. Simply call or e mail Jan Hettick at 503-504-7760 or janhettick@comcast.net BEFORE THE DUE DATE and tell her you want to renew your items. That's all it takes. Just say "renew" and you are good to go!

BSOP Library At Its New Location

One of several advantages to the new meeting hall at St. Mark's Lutheran Church is the accessibility of the library. For the first time, the entire collection of approximately 900 items is out on shelves and available for check out. The library will continue to be open for 30 minutes prior to the start of the general meeting each month, so come a little early and browse. You will see books and magazines you may have forgotten we owned. Our collection of books is substantially larger this year thanks to generous donations from Gene Gold and Ron and Becky Yasenchak in 2013.

The Library Committee is very grateful to those members who volunteered their time to find a meeting location that would get the library collection out of a damp basement, that lets us put it all into secure locking cabinets, and that allows us to access it without using those dangerous stairs to the basement. We appreciate those who made the move – please thank them personally if you see them at meetings: Steve Leaming, Mike Foley, Bill Hettick, Alan Taft, Rocky Lawton, Karl Holmes, Dean Runyon, Peter Jensen, Barry Baertlein, and Patty Myrick.

The books are shelved in color-coded sections. Each book has a colored tag on the lower binding, and the shelves are labeled in color with the name of each section. There will be color key handouts available at the library table to explain how to find a particular book you may want. Our library database matches the new sorting system, so the librarian on duty can look up a title or author for you and tell you where to find it on the shelf.

What do the colors mean? In addition to general how-to books about bonsai, we have separate sections for shohin, penjing, suiseki, artists, photo galleries, fiction, the “hardware” of bonsai (tools, pots, stands, shelves), related areas of interest (Japanese gardens, koi ponds, flower arranging), and a group of books that are each devoted to one single subject (such as a single species or style).

Magazines are shelved by title and year. We will have an up-to-date printed Periodical Index available in the room in case you are looking for a particular article. DVDs and VHS tapes are shelved separately, but each one is color-coded. Once you are familiar with the categories you can tell at a glance which DVD or tape falls in your area of interest.

Occasionally a book can fit into more than one category, but it has to be shelved in one; so we are in the process of expanding our database to create keyword tags for each book. If you don't find a book you want in the section you think it should be in, the librarians will soon be able tell you quickly where to find it.

We hope you will enjoy the “new” library.

Karen VunKannon

Barbara Devitt

Jan Hettick

Scott's BRANCH TIPS

BONSAI TECHNIQUE & PHILOSOPHY

Repotting Tips

We just finished up a great session with the Shohin club talking about pots. Since repotting is upon us, or just around the corner, I thought it would be a great time to throw out some great tips to add to our success and enjoyment this repotting season. These won't be a formal checklist or set of instructions – just a collection of tidbits.

Positioning the tree in the pot – this was big question that we went over several times in the Shohin group. Looking at the tree from front to back, the tree should always be placed in the middle of the pot. Always. The roots may prevent you from doing this, but it is always the goal. From left to right, the tree should be placed very near the middle. It may vary slightly to one side, depending on the movement of the tree and the proportions. Never try to balance a poor visual design by moving the tree too much to one side. Rather work on balancing the tree in the design of the trunk and foliage. In a round pot, the tree should go smack dab in the middle. The reasons for these placements are simple. We want to get nice, even growth of roots around the whole tree, so we want an equal length around the root system. When potting deciduous trees in ovals and rectangles, I often cut the root pad back to a circular shape, giving a little more room for new roots.

Aftercare is one of the most important aspects of repotting, and is easy to overlook. Since I have no greenhouse to protect trees, I tend to start my repotting a little later to avoid frosts. I would start earlier if I could, just when the buds begin to start moving. Root development is happening way before the buds move, but don't get too anxious with species like junipers and beeches, which are some of the last trees to start growing. Junipers like to have warmer conditions to activate their roots. All of these precautions are so that we can maximize the work that we do at this time.

With many trees, especially conifers, we may not need to repot for five or six years, so we want to get it right when we have the chance. Speaking of which, if you have an established tree, get it into good soil, then let it settle down for a few years. This will allow all the internodes and foliage to shorten, and allow you to work on balancing out the strength throughout the tree. Aggressive repotting will tend to initiate aggressive growth and may ruin your hard work.

This is also the time when we can really set the visual direction of the tree with a change in pot, planting angle, and position in the pot. And don't forget, this is the time to get it just right for an upcoming exhibit. For the pot itself, we can adjust the size – and thus the growing conditions, as well as the style, shape and color of the pot. This is the bulk of what we talked about in the Shohin meeting. You can adjust the pot from Formal to Informal to Casual, from masculine to feminine, and from strong to soft by changing elements of the pot. Those roughly equate from angular to curved shapes, and from dark colors to lighter colors. So from a straight edged rectangular unglazed pot to a shiny cream colored oval, and everything in between.

If we want a softer rectangle, we can choose one with rounded, or indented corners, or maybe some banding detail. To make it stronger, add an out-curved lip. There are many ways to work this, and of course we almost never have just the right pot. Rarely do I see a tree in too small of a pot. Many times, the pot is way to big, even for just growing on. Keep this in mind.

As for the great techniques, the best way to learn repotting is of course to do it. If you can learn from one of our available professionals in the area, all the better. It requires some practice and knowhow. Each tree is a slightly different situation, so the more circumstances you can practice at, the better you will be able to cope with the current crisis. This is no more apparent than working with collected material, which hardly ever grows in the prescribed bonsai manner. Their roots are as tangled and irregular as the trunk and branches are on top and require some creativity to get them anchored properly.

Good luck with this year's repotting.

Scott

NEW LOCATION UPDATE

Our January 28th meeting as well as our Shohin Kai and Mentorship meetings will be held at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 5415 SE Powell Boulevard. About two miles from I-205 and 3 miles east of Ross Island Bridge.

Parking is on the north side (back side) of the church. Turn north on SE 55th at the An Dong Oriental Market. There is ample parking in the large parking lot, but be considerate of others and park efficiently. A second entry on SE 54th Avenue is often blocked by a chain.

Meeting Room - Turn right as you enter the church and go up the stairs at the end of the hallway. Acoustics in the room are excellent, so if you want to visit during meetings, take it out into the hallway.

Elevator – There is a small elevator near the church entry. Press the call button; wait for the elevator to arrive and the door to open BY ITSELF. Do not try to move the door, either to hurry it open or closed. There is a maximum load of 3 persons and 750 pounds. Once inside, WAIT FOR THE DOOR TO CLOSE, then you can press the button for the second floor. The inside door will close and the elevator will move. Once on the second floor the door will again OPEN BY ITSELF. If you try to speed the door up by pushing or pulling on the door, it may jam, then you'll be stuck! So don't do it!

Carts – There are two carts for moving materials. Both should be by the front door.

Restrooms – There is one unisex restroom on the main floor at the foot of the west stairwell, and a larger restroom in the basement, near the elevator. That one can be reached using the elevator or the stairs at the end of the main-floor ramp.

Meeting Check-in – The Registration Desk and Hospitality Table will be in the hallway on the second floor. Show and Tell tables will be in the hallway, along with raffle tables.

Library – Be sure to check out the new library storage cabinets. For the first time in years, all 889 items, books, videos and magazines, will be accessible. Take advantage of the “new” library software and check out some items. Note: All items currently checked out are due back at the next meeting, but can be renewed easily if you can't get there.

Oregon Shohin Kai

Another fantastic meeting on January 4th! Our first meeting in the new location at St. Mark's Lutheran Church. Scott Elser presented an excellent lecture about how to improve our trees by choosing the best pot. Members brought a few trees and several options for pots, and Scott helped choose the best one. Several vendors brought pots for sale; thank you to Apex Bonsai, Natasha Borodovsky and Jan Rentenaar!

The next meeting of the Oregon Shohin Kai will be the SECOND Saturday of the month, February 8, 2014, 10 am to 2 pm. Barry Baertlein will be discussing bonsai soils, explaining the properties of different components. He will talk about things you need to consider when you are preparing soil for the coming potting season, and spend a little time on fertilizer and fertilizer uptake. He is going to show us why some popular soils work well and why some others that are less popular could be the best for your particular situation. Everyone is encouraged to bring your standard soil mix to be tested for porosity (pore space). Also, feel free to bring your trees and your questions.

The meeting will be held at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, SE 55th and Powell Blvd, Portland. The meeting room is upstairs, and can be accessed by stairs or elevator. The light is perfect - huge north windows. Note: The chairs are metal, so bring a chair pad if you don't like hard seats. Also, there are no restaurants nearby, so bring your lunch.

Questions? Contact Jan Hettick at 503-504-7760 or email at janhettick@comcast.net

Jan



Shimpaku styled by Matt Reel

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Recycle Wire

Please bring your used copper wire to the monthly meetings. Roger Case will have a five gallon bucket available to collect used copper wire to turn in for cash for the club. Take advantage of the fact that he has volunteered to do this for the club to generate income for BSOP.



Peter Tea working on a Trident maple



Peter Tea's Japanese antique (100 years) drum pot

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Welcome to the Village



BONSAI SOCIETY of PORTLAND

P. O. Box 21271
Keizer, OR 97307

The Bonsai Society of Portland meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month except in summer, when other group outings are arranged.

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
5415 SE Powell Boulevard, Portland OR 97140

Enter parking lot from SE 55th Avenue

Visitors are always welcome!

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