



the **TREE LINE**

the official monthly
publication of the

BONSAI SOCIETY of PORTLAND

Upcoming Events

April
2024

Monthly Meetings:

- April 23 6:00-9:00pm BSOP Monthly Meeting, John Eads, Left Coast Bonsai
- May 5 9:00-1:00 Mentorship 101 class, Oregon Grape Room, Milwaukie Center
- May 5 1:30-3:30 Mentorship 102 Lab, Oregon Grape Room, Milwaukie Center
- May 28 6-9 pm BSOP Monthly Meeting, Master Ceramic artist, Mr. Kakuzan, Tokoname, Japan
- June 9 9:00-1:00 Mentorship 101 class, Oregon Grape Room, Milwaukie Center
- June 9 1:30-3:30 Mentorship 102 Lab, Oregon Grape Room, Milwaukie Center
- June 25 BSOP Monthly Meeting, Bill Valvanis

Greetings BSOP,

I had a great time presenting to the club last month on spring work for deciduous bonsai. Thanks to everyone who was there for all the great questions. Here at RAKUYO we've been busy pinching and fertilizing the bonsai this spring and they've really pushed the last few days. Just a reminder if you live on the outskirts of Portland and have some elevation, to keep repotted trees and tender new growth away from freezes and frosts.

Spring is a relatively slow time in the garden so I hope everyone enjoys the downtime after a busy repotting season. This month the club has our display and outreach event at the Portland Japanese on April 20th-21st, coinciding with the installation of the bonsai terrace display that the garden and Michael Hagedorn curate.

As the official Bonsai Educator of the Portland Japanese Garden, I'll be giving a few introductory talks in the cultural corner each day and doing some informal tree work demonstrations in the courtyard. This will be a great way for us to share bonsai with the public, and we hope to see you there.

Cheers, *Andrew Robson* BSOP President

BSOP Programs Update April 2024

Greetings BSOP Members,

I want to start by giving a big thank you to all the volunteers that helped with the March program. Especially those that stuck around after the meeting to help with the post-meeting cleanup. We did a great job getting the room put back together, so please keep up that energy throughout the year. We are a large club, and it takes quite an effort to set up and tear down the room every month.

To recap our March program, we were thrilled to host one of our own, Andrew Robson, for very timely instruction on spring work and the associated tasks. The lessons on pests, diseases, and fertilization will surely set us up for success in the coming growing season. His techniques on pinching trees in refinement will also help take our trees to the next level. We are lucky to have such knowledgeable teachers within our organization, so thank you to Andrew for that highly educational program.

Coming up in April, we have another local professional, John Eads, who will be instructing us on techniques for growing bonsai in the development stage. For those who don't know, John is the owner of Left Coast Bonsai, a nursery specializing in professionally grown nursery stock for bonsai. I know I have several trees in the early stages of development, as I know many of you do as well. Be sure not to miss this month's meeting, and I encourage everyone to take away at least one technique you can apply to your collection this year.

I also wanted to touch quickly on our May workshops. BSOP will be hosting Kakuyuki Watanabe, known by his potter's name as Kakuzan, is a fourth-generation bonsai potter who has hand crafted bonsai pots for over 50 years from his studio, Kakuzan Toen, based in Tokoname Japan. We have four separate workshops with Kakuzan and Nao Tokutake, three of which are already sold out. The details are in the member section of our website, so I won't try to recall everything here. Don't miss this opportunity to work with multiple experts in the ceramic field.

I would encourage any member who has requests for programming to contact me. Whether it's a specific artist you are interested in, or a specific topic you have been wondering about. I take that feedback into my planning for future programs.

Thank you for being a part of the BSOP family. I look forward to seeing everyone at our upcoming programs.

Best regards, *Benjamin MacBeth*, vp-programs@portlandbonsai.org



This Chamaecyparis began as an air layer. Roland Schatzer, Italy, presented the entire process in his publication, *Bonsai Shohin Passion*. Roland used damp sphagnum moss and the clear cling film type of plastic wrap. This allowed him to see the roots as they developed.

MENTORSHIP NEWS

We have had two classes since our last newsletter article. In March, the tree we worked on was a big, wonderful boxwood, a broadleaf evergreen. In April, the tree was a terrific Western Hemlock, an elongating species. May will be the month of the broadleaf deciduous and with January's juniper and February's pine, we have completed the five categories of trees.

That leaves June for fun. We will be constructing a saikei. A saikei is a planting that has a rock, a tree, an accessory plant and the representation of water. When you throw on some moss, plant it in an unusual pot/slab/rock, what you are left with is a very satisfying, instantly gratifying bonsai construction and smiles all around.

Every class begins with cleaning the tree, revealing the nebari and removing the flaws. This is the best way to become familiar with the tree. We introduce wiring in the first and second classes, but just primary or structural wiring. At the third class, we have our first potting, primary and secondary wiring and increased pruning. For the fourth and fifth class, we are refining the skills we learned in the first three classes.

In addition to basic skills, the students are learning that each species comes with its own set of characteristics and each variety might have nuances that need to be addressed. We give them resources they can access and encourage them to be proactive in their pursuits. Their biggest resource, of course, is the members of the club and we hope you will support them any way you can.

I want to thank all of you who have contributed to the success of the Mentorship Program. We were able to purchase real bonsai tools to put into the tool packs. I am so appreciative that students don't have to make do with a handyman's tools. I know that my attitude has improved with good trees, good tools and good friends.

Remember, any member can drop in just to hang out, to see what's going on, or to mine some nuggets of knowledge. While the visiting members at the 101 classes are silent observers, there is the 102 open lab following the classes where you can question the mentors or have them sit with you to work on your trees. Be sure to thank them.

We would love having more of you participating in the lab.

Joanne, BSOP Mentorship Chair, joanneraiton@msn.com

BSOP Library News

We have two new additions of books to the library, thanks to donations by members:

Shohin Through the Seasons, by Morten Albek. This new book by European shohin master Albek describes what to do with your treasures throughout the year.

Bonsai and Penjing, Ambassadors of Peace and Beauty, by Ann McClellan. This book describes the history and collections of our National Bonsai and Penjing Museum in Washington, D.C.

Come by the library at the next meeting to check them out. Library hours are 6:00 to 6:45pm on meeting nights for all BSOP members.

Jan (janhettick@comcast.net) and *Michael* (mikexc@msn.com)

March Monthly Meeting

Our president, Andrew Robson discussed bonsai growth management. It is apparent that it has already begun this Spring. New leaves on deciduous and extending shoot tips on pines. Andrew explained ways to stimulate growth and ways to slow it down.



Andrew using the whiteboard to bring out the main points.



BSOP members getting practical information for managing the growth of their trees.

These photos show some examples of the talent and creativity of our members.





BonsaiFEST! returns to Federal Way, May 11 & 12, Mother’s Day Weekend

Saturday, May 11, and Sunday, May 12, Pacific Bonsai Museum welcomes the public to immerse themselves in the beauty and serenity of bonsai culture. Their family-friendly [BonsaiFEST!](#) features hundreds of living works of art, three bonsai exhibitions, bonsai-making demonstrations, guided tours, games, food trucks, shopping, and more, with free admission.

See:

- ◆ The opening weekend debut of Pacific Bonsai Museum’s 2024 special exhibitions:



- ◆ [Small Talk: All the dirt on growing mini-but-mighty trees](#) brings textbooks to life with 41 living bonsai trees. Through anime-inspired illustrations, emojis, and text-like exchanges, the exhibition bridges the gap between textbook STEM education and real-world fun. From “Thirst Alerts” to “Sunlight Status Updates,” *Small Talk* answers common, botanically-oriented questions about bonsai in the format of a chat. Visitors can also try their hand at bonsai wiring and sift through the bonsai’s special soil at interactive stations.

- ◆ ***Skating the Edge: Exhibitions from Pacific Bonsai Museum's First Ten Years***
- ◆ A retrospective journey celebrating ten years of innovative exhibitions that have captured the hearts of audiences worldwide. Featuring works from *Decked Out: From Scroll to Skateboard* (2016), *Natives* (2017), *World War Bonsai: Remembrance & resilience* (2020), and *Avant-garden* (2023).
- ◆ **The Puget Sound Bonsai Association (PSBA) Spring Show** with aisles of diverse bonsai created by local bonsai artists.
- ◆ An incredible **Mame** (“ma-may”) display of the tiniest bonsai around.
- ◆ Azalea, wisteria, and other lovely **flowering bonsai** likely at ‘peak bloom’ including PDX artist Percy Hampton's Japanese Wisteria bonsai (photo attached).

Watch, learn, and share:

- ◆ **Live bonsai-making demonstrations** -- see how the bonsai are created and talk to bonsai artists who reveal the secrets behind their craft. Demos happen Saturday, May 11 at 10–11:30am; 12noon–1:30pm, and 2–3:30pm; and Sunday, May 12 at 10–11:30am and 12noon–1:30pm.
- ◆ **Docent-led tours of the collection** -- ask questions and share insights; Tours start at 12 pm and 1 pm and last approximately 45 minutes, both days; Meet at the Conservatory. No prior sign-up is required.

Shop, eat, drink, and play:

- ◆ **Shop** for bonsai, pots, and more from Robert Cho's **Asia Pacific Gardening**. Shop for hats, books, stickers, and gifts from **Pacific Bonsai Museum's pop-up shop**, plus (*new this year*) Portulacaria pre-bonsai material grown from cuttings of the Museum's famous tropical bonsai.
- ◆ Enjoy **tantalizing treats** from Whateke Mexican Food Truck and Village Perk Coffee.
- ◆ **Games and Art Station**, with free bonsai coloring sheets and bonsai learning activities, where kids came unleash their creativity.
- ◆ **Book signing** and be-spoke **poetry** writing by local poet Alexandria Manalo, author of *Butterfly Army Unite: A poetic presence poetry book*.



WHEN:

Saturday, May 11 and Sunday, May 12 from 10 am to 4 pm each day.

WHERE:

The Pacific Bonsai Museum is located on the campus of the former Weyerhaeuser headquarters at 2515 S 336th Street, Federal Way, WA 98001. Visitors are advised to search ‘Pacific Bonsai Museum’ on their GPS-enabled devices to navigate to the Museum and should enter Weyerhaeuser Road from the West entry on Weyerhaeuser Way South.

PARKING:

Free parking is available across from the Museum at the Garden Parking Lot; wheelchair-accessible parking and passenger drop-off/pick-up is available at the Museum entrance.

COST:

Admission is free. There is a \$12 suggested donation for those who can support the Museum.

MUSEUM HOURS:

Tuesday through Sunday, from 10 am to 4 pm.

The Museum is *closed*: Every Monday as well as Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day.

MORE INFO:

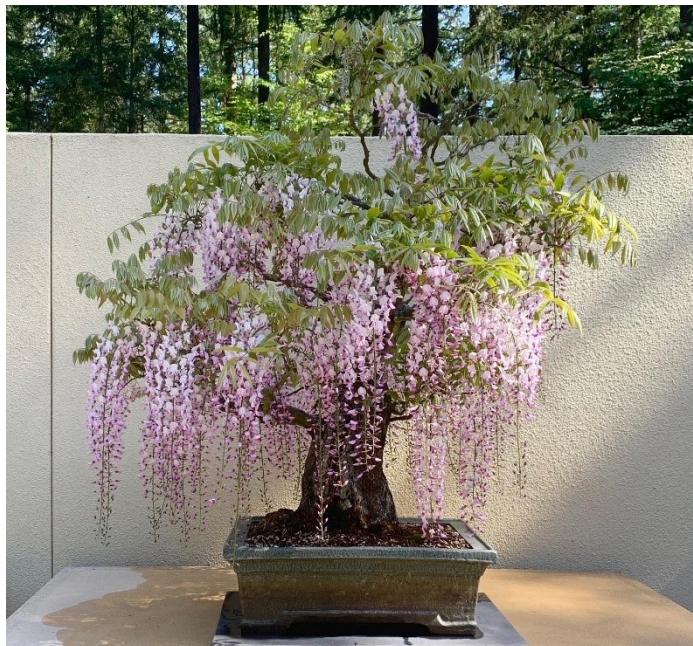
The public can call the Museum at (253) 353-7345 or email info@pacificbonsaimuseum.org. <https://pacificbonsaimuseum.org/events/bonsai-fest-2024/>

Pacific Bonsai Museum's Chinese Elm on Loan and on display at Lan Su Chinese Garden for the month of April for their World of Penjing exhibit

<https://lansugarden.org/world-of-penjing>

Katherine Wimble Fox **Communications Director** Pacific Bonsai Museum

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What Size Grow Boxes do You Need?

[Marty Weiser, Inland Empire Bonsai Society](#)

This depends upon several factors, but the most important are:

- What are you trying to accomplish with the grow box, and
- What is the size of the tree?

If you are just using the grow box as an alternative to the much more expensive bonsai pot then the box should be about the same size as the optimal pot. I do this quite frequently and normally use rectangular boxes that are about 1.5 times as long as they are wide. They are generally fairly shallow, but not too shallow, on the order of 2.5 – 4" deep even if the optimal pot will be shallower since they drain faster than a pot. The grow box does not need to be completely filled if the root ball is thin and the tree will go into a shallower pot. The optimal pot size is an entirely new discussion, but for our newer members a very crude rule of thumb is that the length should be about 2/3 the overall width of the tree.

If the goal is to convert the root ball of a nursery stock tree in a tall, narrow pot into a wider, shallower bonsai pot then I like a grow box that is about 1.5 to 2 times as wide as the nursery pot (remember the 1.5 length/width ratio) and about 1/3 to 1/2 the depth of the nursery pot. The box and the nursery pot will contain a similar amount of soil. You can also make it smaller, but I feel the less experienced should downsize the root ball volume by no more than about 1/3 when making that transition.

If the goal is to rejuvenate a bonsai that has started to stagnate and suffer in the bonsai pot, even with appropriate repottings, then the box should be a little deeper and 1.5 to 2 times the surface area of the bonsai pot (i.e. 1.2 to 1.4 times the width and length). The goal is to get new root development outside of the current root mass to strengthen the tree but not have so much soil that the soil stays cold and wet.

Another goal of the grow box is to create a forest planting from smaller trees. In this case the box should simulate the size of the final pot. The advantages of the grow box vs. a pot are cost and the ability to run wires up through the bottom of the box at just about any location to anchor the trees since the bottom can be made from wire mesh or you can drill holes in a wood bottom.

The most common use of grow boxes is to develop larger trees from smaller ones. Yes, standard nursery containers can be used, but they generally don't lead to the wide, spreading nebari that are valued in many bonsai styles. In this case, the goal is to promote strong growth. The bottom of the box has more openings than a pot which allows good water and air exchange. When combined with strong fertilization and a grow media rich in organic material this promotes strong growth. The key is to increase the volume of the box by 50 to 100% with each repotting so the roots can colonize the new growth media before the next fall/winter. If the box depth is kept the same then the other dimensions of the box should be increased by a factor of 1.2 to 1.4.

Grow boxes are used to pot up freshly collected Yamamori. In this case they are often custom made to just contain the roots of the new tree. A square or rectangular box with a wood slat bottom is most common with the addition of interior partitions to just contain the roots. The reason for the minimum volume box is to minimize cold, wet spots that can cause root growth issues since these trees often have poor root systems. In addition, these trees are frequently potted in 100% pumice which dries out fairly quickly. As a result, the bottoms are often made from wood slats with screen over the gaps since this still provides good drainage and air exchange while not drying out as quickly as a full mesh bottom.

I have made grow boxes as small as 6" square outside (4.8" square inside) and 2.5" deep but am now using 4" square by 4" deep and 6" diameter by 4" nursery pots instead since the grow media to space used ratio is higher. I use 8" square outside grow boxes as the next step up from the 6" pots as well as 8x12" and larger up to about 36" square. The larger ones are generally for trees that are dug from the ground, while trees that are entirely pot grown often use a 12x18" as the max size. A quick note is that I tend to think in terms of the outside dimension for smaller boxes since I have frames that are 16x24" inside dimension to hold multiple pots or grow boxes.

The grow boxes in the picture are the following sizes from the top: 10.5" x 7.5" x 4", 16.25" x 11" x 2.5", 20" x 15" x 2.5" (about as big as build in cedar fence boards), 16.5" square x 5.5" (more traditional construction), 24" x 16.5" x 5.5" (built from 2x6 lumber to imitate a bonsai pot), and both 8" and 6" square x 2.5" deep.





Shohin maple



Larch



Ponderosa pine

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The Bonsai Society of Portland meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

The Milwaukie Center

5440 SE Kellogg Creek Drive, Milwaukie OR 97222

Enter parking lot from Rusk Road

Visitors are always welcome!

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Contact information is on the BSOP website www.portlandbonsai.org under Services/Members Only/Membership Directory