



“Beyond the Website Contest”

This year there were only a few submissions to the GSBF Website Contest for 2014. There truly are so many websites out there and we have begun seeing a trend in them again. We know that with all the competition for media and subject matter on the Internet that change must be constant. The effort to remain fresh and attractive to so many different types of people have led many to become social media gurus who invest in as many sites as possible to support one primary information site. Take for the example GSBF-Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt. The site was recently revised on a new platform known as WordPress. The look and feel of the site is very different and tends to be more “blog-like” in nature, mimicking the GSBF main site. The refresh took talents of Dave McCoy, Joe Byrd and me to come up with a plan and navigation that made sense for the current audience. Along with the site refresh, we continued to build audience with our Facebook site that is getting constant information, even if it is a seasonal tree photo. We could not stop there though; we can now be found on Pinterest, Twitter, TripAdvisor, YELP and others. Websites must constantly strive to reinvent themselves to draw new interest and internet work just as people need to do.

We have two winning websites in our 2014 GSBF Website Competition this year. Our winners are San Diego Bonsai Club maintained by webmaster Eric Jacobson in the Advanced Category, and Fresno Bonsai Society by webmaster Michael Reynolds in the Beginner Category. Both sites are vastly different and reflect their membership. The aesthetics of each site are vastly different in so many ways.

Let’s look at www.sandiegobonsaiclub.com.

The site adopts a clean fresh new look that is now becoming the standard design of sites of blogs.



The site engine is complex and requires skill and attention to program. The site is feature rich with many drop-down menus that direct the reader to the many functions of this active club. Their events are clearly presented on the home page and it seems like you would always quickly know what is going on in the club and other area events. The content is very up-to-date with current summaries and photos. Educational events are well described and presented. Club location and maps are to be found everywhere so that no matter where you enter the site you know where to find the club. I want to applaud the site for the very well thought out resources pages. The club has posted some information there that I think we can all learn from, including their By-Laws. Our compliments to San Diego Bonsai Club for their hard work and dedication on their site.

Now let us turn our attention to www.fresnobonsaisociety.com.

The Fresno site is a small intimate site. For a club with 25 members this is a great start. It is a good old HTML site. The core current events are located on their home page. I would suggest some rethinking of the navigation but the site is very thorough containing all the essential elements we look for. The “Our Club” section is laden with current show picture links, membership forms, education, and the By-Laws. They have a goodly number of photos on the site that communicate the club culture and



events. The “Mitch’s Basic Bonsai” link feels like a complete website on its own and probably serves as another popular entry site to the club’s web presence. The club has even provided a PDF of what appears to be their own version of a bonsai basic textbook.

These two sites are applauded for their effort and we will continue to look forward to seeing their sites in the coming years. Congratulations to you both!

Note: This is the last year I will be a primary judge in this competition. I want to encourage winning website club webmasters in helping decide the winners of our competition and continue to encourage member clubs to enter and compete. There are many up and coming websites out there and so many different ways clubs are choosing to be on the Internet. We have come a long way in the past five years. Therefore, I offer Eric Jacobson and Michael Reynolds the opportunity to judge next year’s websites. Please help us get out the message of our competition and please participate in the coming year. This is a great way to bring recognition and pride to your club.

In addition, since the end of the year is approaching, I am putting out a request for Nebari-Net: Bonsai in the Age of the Internet articles you would like to see in the coming year. Please send suggestions to jcsf1090@comcast.net and I will do my best to cover your topics.

-Jerry



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