

The Bonsai Wire

....in the Time of Covid-19

President's Message Sue Carter, President and CEO



Hello Fellow Club Members,

I hope you and those you love are safe and healthy. In addition to the constraints we are all living under now, we also have this crazy heat. So, I'm adding to my wish that you stay cool, too. As always, the wonderful members of our club are in my thoughts and I miss seeing your beautiful faces. So, I'm exploring the idea of organizing Zoom meetings where members can see and talk to each other about their bonsais. This is still just a seed of an idea, but it might be fun to have some "special interest" Zoom sessions to ask questions and share ideas about specific types of bonsais. If this sounds appealing to you, send an email to susangcarter2004@att.net with your area(s) of interest.

Wire Editors Found!

So excited to announce that **Stephen and Sally Dischinger** have volunteered to take over editing the San Diego Bonsai Club newsletter **beginning with the October edition**. As club members, Stephen and Sally have enjoyed taking classes at Balboa Park and participating in various club events and are currently volunteers at the Zoo Safari Park. They are looking forward to getting back into the Pavilion more when constraints are lifted. Thank you, Stephen and Sally, for stepping up and taking on important service. And thank you to Jaya for editing the Wire this month.

I'm happy to announce that our San Diego Bonsai Facebook page continues to grow with 356 members to date. I particularly like to see the variety of postings. Thank you, Mark Edgar, for keeping us all up to date with the pedestal project at the Safari Park. A few weeks ago, Keith and I went to the Safari Park to renew our San Diego Zoo membership and to see all the work being done. If you get a chance you should go to the Pavilion. Mark's pictures are great, but it's so beautiful in person.

And the changes at the Japanese Friendship Garden are wonderful. You can read about Neil Auwarter's tour and presentation in this wire but be sure to see it yourself on our webpage.

I still have no news on when we might hold another show or when we will be able to meet in person for our monthly meetings. You can visit the county website, sandiegocounty.gov, to see the latest information on Coronavirus Disease and read about Safe Reopening. Even with the information on this site, we know requirements and restriction can change overnight.

Education Bill Graham, VP

August is here and so is the heat! As the heat continues to pick up, watch your trees. Make sure you keep them watered (and pruned as needed). You should be checking them daily, watering as needed. Don't let them dry out!

I hope everyone is continuing to stay safe in these trying times! Sadly, the state of California has had a set back and has rolled back some of our restrictions. Meeting in person is still not allowed at this time.

Due to the continuing uncertain status of the State and our inability to meet in person, all classes are cancelled until further notice. Once we get the green light to start meeting in person, we will start up classes.



Meanwhile, the education trees for the beginning classes are being taken care of by a dedicated team of helpers!



They have finished pruning the olives and are getting ready to trim the boxwoods



When classes resume, the trees will be ready and waiting for you all.

Until then, there is great information to be found on the web at sites like Jonas

Dupuich's website and blog <https://bonsaitonight.com/>,

Ryan Neal's website <https://www.bonsaimirai.com/> or Bjorn Bjorholm's website <https://bjornbjorholm.com/>.

Bonsai Nut is a really good set of boards with lots of information with some very knowledgeable members. <https://www.bonsainut.com/>.

Bonsai 4Me is another page I have looked at with good information. <http://bonsai4me.com/index.html>. All of these and many others are a wealth of information.

As previously stated, all classes and workshops are cancelled until further notice. The Treasurer will be issuing refunds to all that have signed up. If you paid by credit card, it will be returned to your card. If you paid by check or cash, a check will be sent to you. I look forward to when we can meet again and resume our classes!

If you have any ideas that can improve our programs or have skills that you would like to share please contact me at the Monthly Meeting or at wfgraham3rd@gmail.com

Safari Park Bonsai Pavilion
'Lyn Stevenson, Liason
Mark Edgar, Construction

The major construction and renovation projects are winding down at the Pavilion just when the weather is really warming up!



These 6 pedestals are lower than the others as they hold

some of our largest trees.



During the week of 20 August, we set the foundation forms for the last five pedestals in the main display area. The

kneeling construction team is not praying – they are putting their initials on the last pedestal foundations



We have now finished this section.



The temperature was about 104 degrees when we left at noon so work will be a little slower until it cools down. We also rearranged some of the

bonsai trees and the pictures show the current displays for the last two completed pedestal sections. We try to display some trees that are in training because visitors are very curious about the bonsai process.

This has been a huge undertaking. Thanks to all! Often the volunteers arrive early and try to work in the shade. Charlie and Sylvia surprised the volunteers with a



supply of ice cream treats also — most welcome by all! The Park Staff has also visited the Pavilion and contributed goodies for the

volunteers to enjoy during this current heat wave.

Dedicated volunteers for the past month included: Julia Chow, Sally & Steve Dischinger, Cathy & Mark Edgar, Chuck Fasilis, Sonya Holmquist, John Jackson, Jaya Kaelberer, Jim Kirchmer, Carla Marasco, Sandi Marasco, Charlie & Sylvia Mosse, 'lyn Stevenson, Dennis Wagner, and Ken Zito. We have some members of the SDBC and San Pu Kai that are interested in joining all our volunteer crew, but at this time, the Safari Park is holding back on applications until the Coronavirus situation improves. They are still short of the staff assistants also. We are all looking forward to the time when all our volunteers will be able to participate again. Of course, Pavilion volunteers are always able to use their I.D. passes at the front gate and visit the Safari Park without donning

their red shirts and badges. This is one of the “perks” of being a credentialed Zoo-Safari Park volunteer!

The Safari Staff are keeping all staff and volunteers informed about the protocol of any conversations with guests. Several on-line meetings have taken place so that everyone is comfortable with verbal communication between groups, within family groups, and with the required masks.

Radio communication with security and staff is also a valuable aid for the volunteers. This is more critical in the areas where guests are near animal presentations than is necessary in our Bonsai Pavilion, but we need to be informed. Most guests who come to the Pavilion are complimentary and awed by the garden and are eager to take photos.

*Give a fig about it ...
John Jackson Eric Jacobson
Sylvia Mosse Charlie Mosse*

Ficus...a great plant for bonsai in Southern California



Ficus have been up and coming for many years now. The varieties that do well in our climate also do well with our water and overall drier conditions. They tolerate our local water with high pH, chloramines used for treating the water and high salt content. Ficus are found in humid climates as well as dry climates of the world. Both types do well here in San Diego. It is worth noting that ficus are great for practicing your bonsai skills. It is encouraging that they are very responsive to the actions you take on them. They can be developed "quickly" (relatively) into nice looking bonsai.

All ficus like warm weather. During warm weather is the best time for them to be re-potted, transplanted, grafted, defoliated, leaf pruned, have cuttings taken or air-layered. Providing the tree is healthy, recovery from major work is fast (usually measured in weeks to a couple of months) during the warm months. What the weather trends tell us each year is more important than knowing or memorizing

tasks by the month. Weather patterns in general are changing, not to mention the variations we see each year anyway, so use the months as a guide or memory jog but use the actual weather to make your final decisions of scheduling work.

The warm months are June through October but there are caveats. If you start work in the spring before “prime time”, then the recovery time will take longer, sometimes a lot longer if the weather stays cool. If you start work in the fall, the coming cooler days and nights will slow down the recovery time, sometimes significantly if we get early storms. If you can protect the tree(s) from the cooler conditions, then it is OK to proceed.

I have found through experience and talking with others, that keeping ficus in the sun during the winter helps them through the cold times but, this does not ensure they will always be OK. If you have a greenhouse or something that will protect sensitive trees, use it and you will not have to worry about the cold and wet periods.

Below are the varieties that are most commonly used for bonsai here in SoCal which includes some basic information. You will learn more nuances as you grow.

Ficus microcarpa: Excellent plant for shohin or medium or large bonsai depending on the cultivar you are growing. The leaf is easy to reduce through the usual cultural practices of bonsai and proper defoliation techniques. Fast grower and tolerates cold and wet better than the others Ficus listed here. They are very easy to propagate by cutting or air-layer and respond to and recover very fast from defoliation...full or partial. Microcarpas grow nicely in full sun except it is wise to shelter a bit during 95+ degree weather just to be safe to protect the roots and leaves. I grow some of mine in full sun in El Cajon but protect as needed only if it gets over 100 degrees. 30% shade cloth is a good fulltime option.

‘tiger bark’: Same growth habit as its parent microcarpa but has “spotted” bark which is quite attractive. Degree of coloration in the light colored spots can vary by plant. Has slightly smaller leaves and a bit more compact growth than its parent. Good back budding qualities. Grows fast and recovers quickly from heavy work on roots and shoots, and defoliation. They have good cold tolerance and rainy weather tolerance.

Tiger Barks are grown as shohin up to large bonsai. Note: Shohin are up to 8” tall. Chuhin is the next size category from 8”+ to about 16” or so. They can be grown larger if desired.

‘melon seed’: Naturally has a small leaf to that reduces nicely with culture. It has an off-colored leaf that resembles the green and slight yellowishness of a ripe

watermelon. It is a compact grower and very prolific back-budder. This makes it very forgiving if something is mistakenly cut off making re-growing a branch in the right spot very likely. Good for shohin and forest plantings. It can produce a nice trunk base.

Ficus 'green island', 'green mound' and a few others:

Not nearly as fast a grower nor does they back-bud as much as the other varieties. Has typical microcarpa leaf color and has a mounding nature making it more natural for a wide bonsai. Creating density takes more time than the varieties mentioned in this article, e.g. not nearly as dense as quickly as 'melon seed'. They are a little sensitive to cool weather but still tolerate it, just not quite as well as 'tiger bark'. They will lose some leaves but generally not defoliate if too cold. Good for shohin and smaller chuhin sized trees.

Ficus 'burtt-davyi': Is very popular and is one that comes from the drier South African areas. Small leaf with the ability to have small leaves for excellent proportion for shohin and Kifu size trees. Also, very easy to propagate by cutting and air-layer. Responds to and recovers very fast from defoliation...full or partial. Leaf color is a bit lighter than microcarpa. A healthy '*burtt-davyi*' can easily withstand hard root pruning and hard trimming. Good back-budder like microcarpa but not as prolific as '*melon seed*'. They tolerate the cold nicely as long as they are not constantly wet. Best protected from too much rain in the winter and kept in the sun.

Ficus benjamina, weeping fig is not used as much but does make a nice medium to large bonsai. It is more sensitive to hard pruning of branches where a few leaves must remain on a cut branch to ensure, not guarantee, the survival of the branch. The leaves are glossier than microcarpa and '*burtt-davyi*' making them more attractive to many. Leaf size reduction is not quite as easy as the microcarpa and '*burtt-davyi*' but can be made to reduce to a good size for a larger chuhin size or a large bonsai. *Ficus benjamina* and cultivars seem to have good winter tolerance in San Diego. I have grown and seen 'too little' and 'contorta' survive the winter, particularly last year's wet winter, and look OK in the spring. Just watch out for wet feet for too long a period of time.

Ficus benjamina 'too little': Is definitely a dwarf (short) version of its parent. Leaves are much smaller, at least 1/4 the size of the regular *F. benjamina* and curved over backwards. Same nice color and gloss. Also sensitive to



hard cutting back but back buds more than its parent. Trunk seems to have a nice gradual taper on most trees. The small leaves and a very dense growth habit makes them very good for shohin, small chuhin and forests like the forest in the Bonsai Pavilion in the Safari Park.

Ficus benjamina 'contorta': Leaves look very much like 'too little'. The branches grow in a naturally curvy fashion and in random directions. The branches are a bit brittle but due to its curvy, random nature, cut-n-grow works fine without having to wire much, if at all. Good for shohin. Few images are available since it is very new to bonsai cultivation.

There are many other benjamina cultivars like '*kiki*' but are not seen much.

Ficus salicaria, narrow leaf fig or willow leaf fig. This is also an immensely popular tree. Leaf reduction is particularly good and easy to do. Shohin fans love this species of ficus and one will see that it is also suitable as a chuhin. The tree responds very nicely to defoliation and hard pruning of roots and branches. It can produce a nice chunky base with time. New growth has a nice bronzy cast to it that can remain on mature leaves but to a lesser degree. Easy to propagate by air-layering and fairly easy to do cuttings. They tolerate the cold nicely as long as they are not constantly wet. During the winter it is best protected from too much rain and kept in the sun. There are more species used for bonsai but many are not as easy to style or get the desired leaf size reduction except perhaps for use as larger bonsai. Those take more time and effort but can be quite rewarding. Try ***Ficus ingens*** or ***Ficus concinna***. ***Ficus rubiginosa***, 'Port Jackson fig' is also grown as a chuhin bonsai and can be found locally at Evergreen Nursery and Walter Andersen's.

Soil: Make sure your soil mix drains well. The club mix of 2-2-1, pumice-scoria-orchid bark works well. It is used successfully at the Pavilion. You can add more bark since ficus do like moisture. 1-1-1 is fine. If you prefer, use akadama instead of bark. Using a soil cover, as mentioned in Neil Auwarter's JFG tour talk, is an excellent way to conserve soil moisture, encourage roots nearer the surface and helps a bit to keep the roots cooler. Ryan Neil has an excellent presentation on soil cover and Jonas DuPuich has a good discussion on his blog. Adding organic supplements from the beginning helps to inoculate the soil with good fungi, bacteria and micro-nutrients. This is a good practice since our basic soil components are nutrient and soil organism poor.

Particle sizes recommended for ficus are listed below but may vary with your watering habits, weather in your area, and even the micro-climate in your yard.

Shohin (up to 8" tall): mix of 1/32" to 1/8" sized particles,

Chuhin (8" - 16" tall): 1/16" to 3/16" sized particles,

Large Bonsai (>16" tall): 1/16" to 1/4", mostly 1/8" to 1/4" particles.

Wiring: Ficus bark is relatively soft and thin and therefore is subject to bruising and tearing. However, the tissue can repair itself easily. How significant the wound is will dictate how long it will take to heal. Aluminum wire is less abrasive than copper so aluminum is preferred. One needs to use a larger diameter wire when using aluminum to get the same holding power as copper. However, the larger diameter wire is better since it will not cut in as deeply. Since Ficus grow rapidly and the wood is soft, wire has to be watched closely for cutting in since it can happen very quickly during fast growth periods. About 2-3 weeks after wire application, the wire needs to be checked weekly because the wire will cut into the soft wood quickly. If the wire cuts in, as long as it is not too deep leaving only a dent, the bark will fill in eventually. If it cuts in more than 1/4 of the diameter of the wire, the scar will take a long time to heal, if at all.

Fertilizer: Ficus are not fussy. Be sure roots are MOIST BEFORE applying fertilizer. Fish emulsion/kelp, Milorganite, Espoma's Holly-tone (if available), BioGold, organics in tea bags are common. Non-organic types like MiracleGro are good but they are salts, so be careful. One has to apply MiracleGro and similar products more often since they are so soluble in water and bonsai get watered a lot. Slow release fertilizer types like GroPower pucks or GroPower pelletized, Apex bb's and Osmocote bb's work well. Fertilize as per needs and developmental stage of the tree and the time of year. Do not fertilize by the calendar or schedule. That is not how plants grow. Even in winter, lightly fertilize your Ficus to keep them healthy but not to support rapid growth. The roots are not active or marginally active and the much of the fertilizer will be not taken up by the roots. Be careful not to fertilize too much during prime growing weather because long internodes and larger leaves will result. Fertilize by plant needs, not a convenient schedule.

*Japanese Friendship Garden
Neil Auwarter, Curator
Ignacio De La Torre, 1st VP*

On the morning of Saturday, August 15th, the club hosted its second Facebook Live event direct from the Japanese Friendship Garden (JFG) at Balboa Park. Our featured speaker was Neil Auwarter, curator of the SDBC collection

at the JFG. Neil has served as the curator for more than two years, and he and his volunteer team have done a tremendous job of maintaining, improving, and growing the collection.

Neil offered a tour of the collection and, as a part of our Back-To-Fundamental instructional presentations, provided a primer on bonsai horticulture which included information on soil composition, water and its impact on trees, the importance of fertilization, and how to deal with pests. Neil highlighted a number of trees in the collection acknowledging those individuals who donated the trees to the club. The trees look great in their newly-built enclosure.

The presentation was nothing short of a learning bonanza. At times, there was so much detailed and helpful information that I thought I was taking a chemistry course (that I actually enjoyed). Neil spent a great deal of time preparing his material and that came through in the presentation. It is clear that the collection is in great hands. The video is one not to miss and available on the club's Facebook page as well as the club website. We extend a Thank You to Emiko Scudder and the staff at the Japanese Friendship Garden for their partnership. And, of course, a very special thanks to our curator and presenter, "Professor" Neil.

*Mas Takanashi What?
Special Correspondant
Carla Marasco*

For those that are new to the San Diego Bonsai Club, you may never have heard of Mas Takanashi or the Grant that is offered in his name. And for the many other members of our club with varying knowledge about the Mas Takanashi Grant, let me give you an inside look from the student's perspective.

Like many of you, I fell in love with the art of Bonsai but knew very little on how to create one, let alone keep it alive. So, I began my search, found the club, and enrolled in my first beginner Bonsai class. I was so excited to learn all the basics of Bonsai. I continued to take classes, but of course wanted more. I went on outings, found online resources for advancing my newfound love of Bonsai, and bought a ton of books.

Still, I couldn't get enough. During my first year with the club I decided to volunteer at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park Bonsai Pavilion where I continued to learn and practice. (I still learn a lot through volunteering and suggest it to all willing to put in a little work. It is extremely rewarding

and fun!). As time went on, I still wanted to improve my skills and although I felt proficient in my beginning skills, I signed up for one more beginner class. Fortunately for me this was taught by the previous Mas Takanashi Grant recipient and she so eagerly suggested it to me.

Yes, yes, yes, I was so eager to get started! Where do I sign up? I did my research to find out all I could about the Grant program and what it was all about. I discovered that the Grant was created in honor of the original founder of the SDBC to teach those who wanted to continue learning so that they too could then pass on their knowledge and continue the cycle of teaching & learning. What a wonderful concept. I was in (well kind of, I needed to apply and be accepted first).

The two-year process began, and I knew that I was right where I wanted to be. The one-on-one training with different instructors has been amazing and has brought my skill level up considerably. We have covered so much in such a short amount of time, from the basics all the way through design, grafting, wiring and so much more. And although we've had a bit of a lull due to the mandatory shut down, I continue to receive instruction and support in my journey. My love of the art of Bonsai continues to grow and I look forward to the day when I can also pass the torch and ignite the next lover of Bonsai's learning journey!

Treasurer's Report Jaya Kaelberer

SAN DIEGO BONSAI CLUB - TREASURER'S REPORT		
Jaya Kaelberer as of July 31, 2020		
Accounts are reconciled with Union Bank statements		
BANK ACCOUNT BALANCES		
		Change from m/e June
SDBC Checking	\$42,223	Was \$42,673
Bonsai Pavilion Checking	\$13,633	Was \$18,338
TOTAL FUNDS:	\$58,199	Was \$63,354
The following income statements have been split between SDBC and Pavilion. This highlights the \$14k moved from SDBC to Pavilion - an expense in the SDBC and an income in the Pavilion account		
SDBC Income		
	Actuals	Change from m/e June
Total SDBC Income	\$8,764	
SDBC Expenses		
* Total Education	\$3,497	\$300 cost of water
* Total Taxes	\$500	\$120: Raffle registration (years 2015,16,17,18,19,20)
Total SDBC Expense	\$26,360	
Net SDBC Income (Loss)	(\$17,596)	
Pavilion Income		
	Actuals	Changes from m/e June
* Donations to PPP 2020	\$6,250	\$250 Qualcomm grant
Total Pavilion Income	\$20,250	Was \$20,000
Pavilion Expense		
* Total Pavilion Pedestal Project	\$19,351	\$4,955 Pedestals, tops, cement
Total pavilion expense	\$19,640	Was \$14,685
Net Pavilion Income (Loss)	\$610	Was \$5,315
Net SDBC and Pavilion Income (loss)	(\$16,987)	Was (\$11,832)
Net SDBC Income (loss) w/o Pedestal project	(\$3,596)	Was (\$3,146)
Net Pavilion Income (loss) w/o Pedestal Project	(\$289)	
Net SDBC and Pavilion Income (loss) w/o Pedestal Project	(\$3,886)	Was (\$3,436)

Our net income for the year is (\$16,987), this includes (\$14,000) that was allocated to the Pavilion Pedestal Project. The only major expense has been for this project.

Who We Are

Address: P.O. Box 86037
San Diego, CA 92138
Email: SDBC01@gmail.com
Website: www.sandiegobonsaiclub.com

Board Members

President :	Sue Carter susangcarter2004@att.net
1st Vice President :	Ignacio De La Torre igdlt@att.net
VP Education :	Bill Graham wfgraham3rd@gmail.com
VP Special Projects :	Abe Far abe_far@yahoo.com
Treasurer :	Jaya Kaelberer jaya.littletree@cox.net
VP Membership :	Udaykant Pandey udaykant@gmail.com
Secretary :	Jack Graham jgraham@drammechter.com
Past President:	Barbara French-Lee barbflee@hotmail.com

Japanese Friendship Garden

Bonsai Curator:	Neil Auwarter neilauwarter@hotmail.com
Liaison:	Barbara French-Lee barbflee@hotmail.com

Bonsai Pavilion, Safari Park

Curator:	John Jackson bonsaijohn@cox.net
Assistant Curator:	Dennis Wagner denisW@cox.net
Liaison:	'lyn Stevenson inthegrove@cox.net

Appointed Positions

Webmaster:	Ron Kaelberer rkaelberer@cox.net
Tool Sales Manager:	Darryl/Christine Elmer droadie@sbcglobal.net
Historian:	Sonya Holmquist sonyaanneh@gmail.com
Benefit Drawing Manager:	Paul Lawrence jplawrence99@gmail.com
Sunshine Chair:	Susan Baker baker@susanMbaker.com
Librarian:	Sonya Holmquist sonyaanneh@gmail.com
Refreshment Coordinator:	Christina Vargas
Publicity:	Keith Carter kcarter315@att.net
Audio Visual:	Wayne Lord wayne832@gmail.com
The Bonsai Wire Editors:	Steve and Sally Dischinger
The Bonsai Wire Postal Distributor:	Shirley Kavanaugh, Jr
Social Media Coordinator:	Christian Reha christianreha@gmail.com

Please Note

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Private Lessons

Several San Diego Bonsai Club members have offered to teach bonsai. Contact the teacher for further details.

Nazim Colak, San Marcos, nazimcolak@yahoo.com
Ryan Haines, Hillcrest - ryanhaines88@yahoo.com
John Jackson, Lakeside - bonsaijohn@cox.net
Gary Jones, Clairemont - twoopenhands@yahoo.com
Fred Miyahara, SDSU area - tmiya@cox.net
VanMoch Nguyen, Mira Mesa - vanmoch@gmail.com
Christian Reha, Lemon Grove - christianreha@gmail.com
Abe Far, Santee - abe_far@yahoo.com

'lyn Stevenson, Poway- inthegrove@cox.net
Glenn Jensen, Encinitas - glenn@bajaphotographer.com)
John Voss, Vista, 442-224-4423

Closing Thought

*Extract from (THE SPIRIT AND PHILOSOPHY OF BONSAI)
An address by Saburo Kato of Japan at the 1980
International Bonsai Convention in Hawaii*

There are three important things to consider:
First, the roots. When looking at an old tree, the roots form the foundation and gives strength. This is impressive and inspiring. Strong roots of large tree protect other smaller trees in a flood or a storm. These firmly rooted trees give us a feeling of stability and security. In the case of a bonsai, this should also be true.

Second, the trunk and the way it's formed. In the case of a solitary tree, its especially important as to how the trunk emerges from the roots and the rising taper that it develops. After many years the aged characteristics and bark appear and you can sense the added character and personality of each tree.

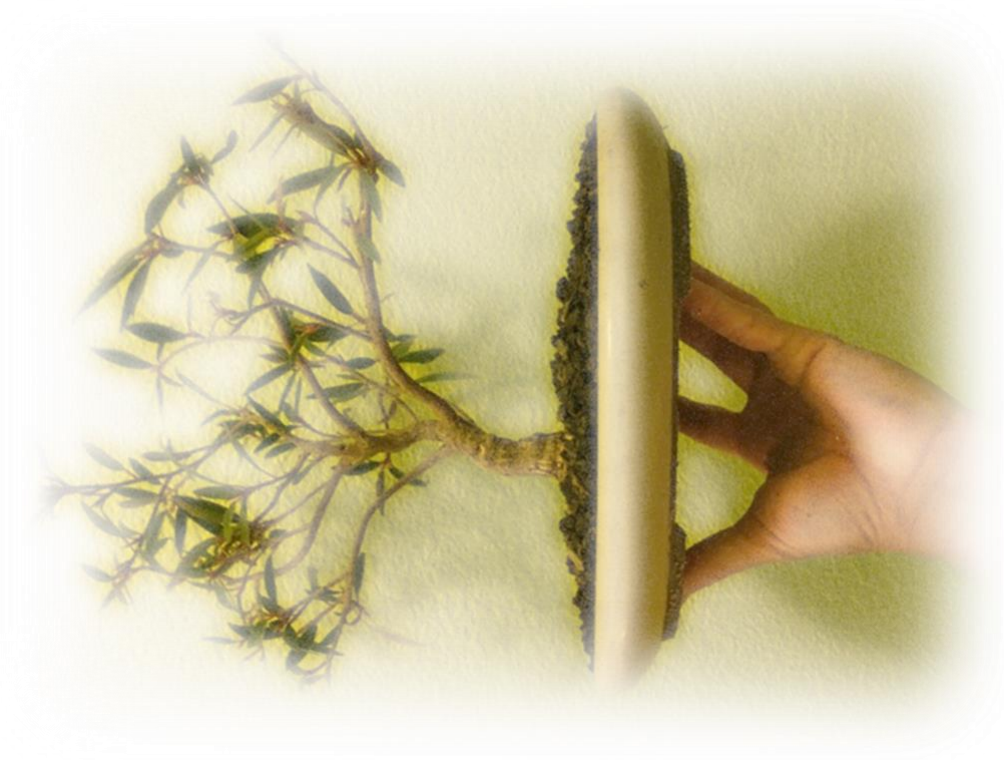
Third, the branches. These face the sky and are balanced and must have sunlight to flourish. Because branches and leaves are growing strongly, beautiful flowers can bloom. Even though growing vigorously and flowers are blooming, you must not be complacent and must be very diligent in the care of your plants. This care is important.

To raise bonsai ,it is very important to learn the strong and weak points of each plant. Raising bonsai is like raising children. Be a teacher and a guide but with patience and loving care. Treat your plants as you do your family.

Bonsai is a living thing in the roots and even in the leaves. Every day that you are attending your bonsai, although the plant cannot speak to you, you'll sense that the plant is trying to tell you something. You'll one day know a plant is asking for water or fertilizer. When you come to that stage, you'll have developed a close bond. Bonsai responds to your love and becomes like honest friends with no human falsehood or betrayals.

Bonsai are loyal if you water and fertilize regularly with loving care. Life is more meaningful when we attend these little plants. We learn the essence and dignity of life! Even the life of a bonsai is older than us. So, bonsai must be passed on to the next generation to preserve the life in the tray. This is important.

*August-September 2020
The Bonsai Wire in the Time of Covid-19*



San Diego Bonsai Club
P.O. Box 86037
San Diego 92138

Return Service Requested