

*Serenity
Through Bonsai*



**DAI ICHI
BONSAI KAI**

第一分盆栽會
盆中平穩

THE DAI ICHI GAZETTE

SEPTEMBER 2014 | VOLUME 29, ISSUE 9

LEILA KUSUMI
MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

ROBERT PRESSLER
TAMARISK TAMER

NANPU KAI SHOW 2014

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF DAI ICHI BONSAI KAI

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Co-Founder | Sensei

Jim Tatsukawa
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President's Message

As you all can clearly see, this issue of the *Dai Ichi Gazette* has a new look thanks to Jason Saito. I'm really excited about the new format and we can look for more exciting club branding activities coming from Jason. I am constantly amazed by the members of this club stepping up to help us promote the art of bonsai and to make Dai Ichi a welcoming club to people who are pursuing an initial interest in bonsai and our contribution to their education. Thank you all.



I am sorry I missed Bob Pressler's demonstration last month, I heard it went well and he was informative. I was off helping setup for the Nanpu Kai show in Little Tokyo. This year we were celebrating John Naka's 100th birthday. There was a separate room set up in his honor which contained memorabilia celebrating him and his life. One of the items I connected with was his tool set, which Jason has included a picture of in this issue of the news letter. John's tool set consisted simply of four well used "bud" shears. These are the same shears I like to use around the house and when working on yard trees.

In honor of John's Birthday during the Nanpu Kai reception, Jack Sustic, Curator of the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum in Washington D.C., announced the formation of a USA Bonsai Hall of Fame and that John Naka is the first person to be honored in this way. I feel California will be well represented in the coming years.

This month's demo will be by Robert King and I am looking forward to seeing him and work at our club. Robert is very detailed oriented and enjoys experimenting with cuttings and urban tree collection. Being relatively new to bonsai, he has come a long way in a short time due to his enthusiasm of the art and horticulture of bonsai. Be sure to come on down for the meeting!

John van de Wouw

John van de Wouw
President
Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai



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Member Spotlight

Leila Kusumi

ARTISAN. LEADER. SENSEI.

For 40 years, Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai club co-founder and teacher, Leila Kusumi, has been an integral part of the Southern California bonsai community. Through her wisdom and knowledge, she has guided and inspired many bonsai students to reach their full potential.

Leila is also the recipient of the Golden State Bonsai Federation's Circle of Sensei Award for excellence in the promotion and teaching of the art of bonsai.

Leila was gracious enough to share some of her experiences and stories with us.

Gazette: How long have you been practicing bonsai?

Leila: I've been doing bonsai for 40 years. I've always had an interest in bonsai, so I decided to take a class. I asked my husband Frank, to join me and while he did attend one class, he never really had an interest. He did become interested in suiseki though and attended many Aiseki Kai meetings.

Ben Suzuki was my first teacher. He taught us very slowly and, for the longest time, I only learned wiring Foeminas. Each class, Ben would sell us a Foemina to work on and after awhile, I had 50 of them in my yard!

I once asked him why we weren't learning more subjects and his response was, "Well if I teach you everything, you won't need me anymore."

LEILA KUSUMI (continued)

Gazette: What teachers have inspired you the most?

Leila: Oh, there have been many! Along with Ben, I studied with Harry Hirao, Ben Oki, Frank Goya, Mas Moriguchi, and, of course, John Naka. They all inspired and taught me and I've learned a little bit from all of them. John was quite popular at the time and would teach his class from my house. He was always the sensei. We never did anything without asking first or we got scolded. He was always the boss.

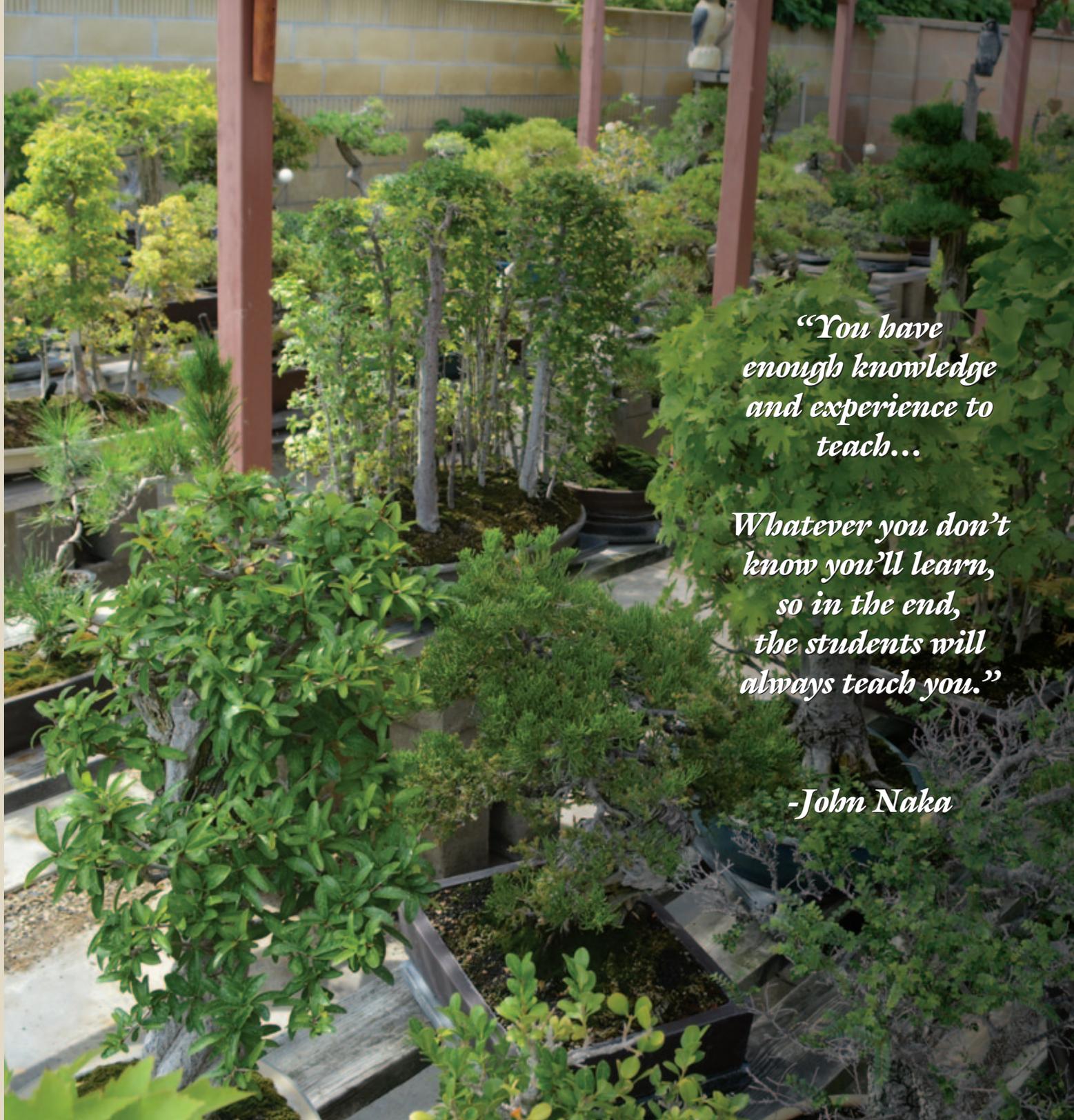
Frank Goya was also a very good teacher. He has such a calm and patient teaching style that really made it easy and fun to learn from.

Gazette: What inspired you to start Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai?

Leila: Well, after doing bonsai for 11 years, I wondered if I should start teaching. I asked John if he thought it was a good idea and he encouraged me to do so. He said, "You have enough knowledge and experience to teach so why not? Whatever you don't know you'll learn so, in the end, the students will always teach you." So along with (the late) Jim Tatsukawa, we started Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai. The club started out strong with about 30 members and it flourished as the years went by.

Gazette: What do you enjoy most about teaching?

Leila: The most rewarding thing is seeing the students progress. They bring in raw material to work on and over the years, you can actually watch the students' progression by seeing the condition of their trees. I see firsthand that they are grasping the fundamentals of what I'm teaching and seeing this is most rewarding to me.



*“You have
enough knowledge
and experience to
teach...”*

*Whatever you don't
know you'll learn,
so in the end,
the students will
always teach you.”*

-John Naka

LEILA KUSUMI (continued)

Gazette: What is the most important thing about bonsai for a beginner?

Leila: The most important thing is to learn the basics. You cannot do bonsai without first learning the basics. You'll make too many mistakes if you don't. Once you fully learn and comprehend the basics, you won't make mistakes. You may not like styling your tree this way at first, but once you learn the fundamentals, you can then start breaking the rules.

Gazette: How has bonsai changed since you first started?

Leila: Well in the beginning, it was all about making a tree look natural. More like a snapshot taken from nature. We were taught *clip, clip, clip*, which is fine to get that natural shape; but nowadays, it's more about details. Creating flat bottoms and developing detailed canopies and clouds of foliage is more the norm today. Smaller Shohin and Chuhin sized trees are also much more popular these days. I guess as people get older, they want trees that are easier to work on and while they still develop large trees, it's nice to see more diversity in bonsai.

Gazette: What do you enjoy most about bonsai?

Leila: For me it's very rewarding when a tree comes out nice and stays that way over the long haul. Seeing a tree go through many seasons, over many years and still look good brings much joy to me. I also like seeing other peoples' collections. I can see their dedication and skills all on display.

Gazette: Well, thank you Sensei for taking the time to share your life and passion with us... and not just for this article.

Leila: You're most welcome.



Club Demonstration

Robert Pressler



TAMARISK TAMER.

Robert Pressler is a bonsai artist and owner of Kimura Bonsai Nursery in Reseda. He has been practicing bonsai since the 70s and has studied with Frank Okamura, John Naka, Ben Oki and Kenji Miyata.

At our August meeting, Robert had two Tamarisks that needed taming so he brought them in to demonstrate how to style these gnarly beasts.

Tamarisks often grow and can be collected from the wild – usually where there is a constant source of water. The trees he demonstrated on, however, were grown seven years from cuttings and were prime for a makeover.

Robert explained that the worse thing about Tamarisk is that their trunks tend to grow straight and are very brittle, which makes bending branches very difficult. “They are a very hardy tree that requires lots of water. Under normal conditions, daily watering and, during dry hot summer months, twice daily is recommended.”

“They make very nice bonsai as they create deadwood (*shari*) easily and have very delicate foliage and flowers in the spring.” He also stated that a weeping style (*Shidare-Zukuri*) is the preferred style for Tamarisk.



DIBK VIDEO SNAP | CLICK TO PLAY
(ADOBE ACROBAT 9 OR LATER REQUIRED)



This video is available for inline viewing if you are using Adobe Reader 9 or later. Click on the image to play. If the option does not appear, you can view the video here: www.bit.ly/YT-Tamarisk



“They grow out in the desert, so they are used to dry hot weather and heavy winds. They are a really tough tree and are really pretty when they bloom.”



“When in pots, they tend to grow fibrous roots, are easy to transplant and take to severe root prunings. It’s pretty amazing how quickly they recover too. They can drop all of their foliage and a week later they are leafing out again. They are pretty cool trees.”



Tamarisk by Hotsumi Terakawa



*Congratulations to the Demo Tree winners
Doyle Saito and Keith Waters.
Remember to keep them watered well, guys!*



Nanpu Kai Show '14

TRIBUTE TO THE MASTER.

On August 16 and 17, Nanpu Kai had their annual exhibit as part of the Nisei Week festival. Many of our club members and friends exhibited their trees in perfect splendor.

The exhibit was beautifully set in white and a wide variety of trees were on display for all to admire. The crowd was enthusiastic and plentiful and the overall experience was quite ethereal.

This year's show was special, as it was also the centennial celebration of John Naka's birth (August 16, 1914). Many of John's personal belongings, such as awards, original paintings and sketches, books, clothing and trees were on display.

Attendees were also treated to Nisei Week activities, including Calligraphy demos, Japanese Doll exhibits and even a Gyoza eating contest.

John van de Wouw



Leila Kusumi



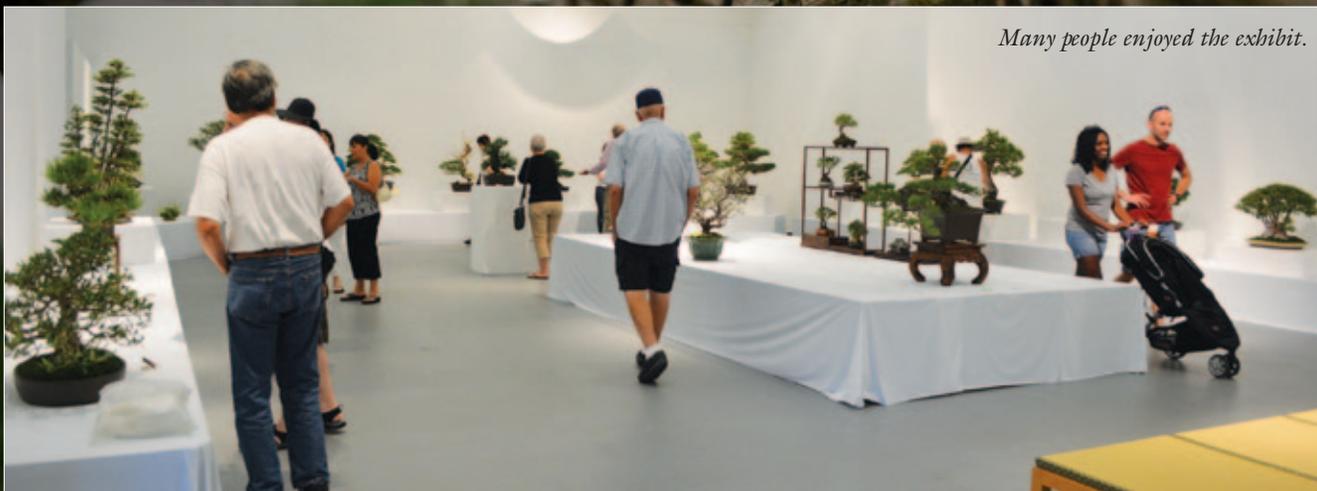
Mel Ikeda



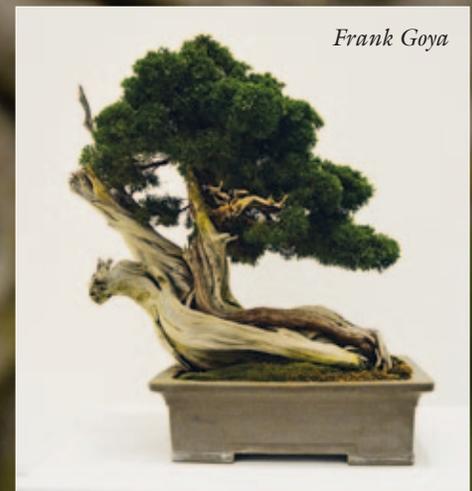
Alan Sugimura



Many people enjoyed the exhibit.



Frank Goya



JOHN YOSHIO NAKA

August 16, 1914 – May 19, 2004



John Naka, the "Father of American Bonsai," was the most influential bonsai master of the 20th century. The centennial of his birth coincides with the annual show of Nanpu Kai, the club he created by inviting his favorite students as members.

John was also nicknamed the "World Ambassador of Bonsai." Believing that this art should be accessible to everyone, he was the first person to travel throughout Europe, South Africa, Australia, Canada, and the United States to conduct workshops and demonstrations. (He refused to teach in Asia, saying "I don't preach to Buddha.")

Though John was born in Colorado, he lived in Japan during his school years and learned about the art of bonsai from his grandfather. John began creating his own bonsai in Los Angeles, California in 1946. He wrote *Bonsai Techniques* and *Bonsai Techniques II*, still considered two of the best books on the art and technique of bonsai. In 1985, Emperor Hirohito granted John the Fifth Class of the Order of the Rising Sun, Japan's highest award for non-Japanese citizens.

John was famous as a bonsai artist, teacher, and writer. He was also a painter, poet, humorist, and entertainer. His legacy continues as we celebrate his hundredth birthday.



In Loving Memory Thelma Koller



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Thelma Koller. Thelma passed away in May of this year, just 44 days short of her 100th birthday.

Thelma and her husband Ron, were one of the founding families of Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai. Their support has spanned 28 years, since the club's inception in 1986.

Thelma enjoyed attending meetings and watching the demonstrators work their magic. After Ron Sr. passed, Thelma would come to meetings with neighbors or have her son Ron Jr. and his wife Glenda, bring her to meetings.

Many of the raffle items this year have been graciously donated to the club by the Koller family.

Our deepest condolences go out to the family and friends of Thelma Koller.

Do You Have a Stone to Exhibit at the GSBF Convention?

The GSBF Convention 37, is accepting submissions for their exhibit of suiseki and viewing stones. Convention 37 will be held at the Sacramento Doubletree Hilton October 30 to November 2, 2014.

If you are interested in exhibiting, submission forms are available for download here: <http://bit.ly/gsbf14-Stone-Entry>

September Demo with Robert King



At our next meeting on September 19th, our guest demonstrator will be Robert King. Robert has been studying with Frank Goya for four years. Prior to that he was doing his own thing and experimenting by growing Live Oak from seed.

Robert is also a student at Marina Bonsai, studying with Sensei Frank Goya, Shig Miya and Ben Oki. Robert has also studied with Emil Depiero and also belongs to several local clubs.

Robert's demo is sure to be informative as well as entertaining so don't miss the next meeting!

*Photo and narrative courtesy of
Thuan Lam, Ko Yu Kai*

Events

Now – September 7, 2014
John Naka - A Special Exhibition at the Huntington Botanical Gardens
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, CA 91108
Admission: Yes - see web site for details
Hours: Wed-Mon 10:30 AM – 4:30 PM
To commemorate the centennial of his birth, the bonsai courtyard at the Huntington is currently exhibiting the largest collection of John's bonsai ever on display, along with work of his students. For more information visit:
www.huntington.org

October 4, 2014
Reseda, California
Bonsai Community Swap Meet
Jesse Owens Park, 7100 White Oak Ave. Reseda, CA 91335
Admission: Free
Hours: 10 AM – 3 PM
Come to the Valley for a day of buying, selling or swapping bonsai trees, tools, pots and paraphernalia. There is no charge to attend or to participate. On street parking is limited. For more information, visit the Facebook group here:
<http://on.fb.me/1rj3kqn>.

October 4 – 5, 2014
**Thousand Oaks, California
Conejo Valley Bonsai Society
11th Annual Bonsai Exhibition**
Gardens of the World's Resource Center, 2001 Thousand Oak Blvd.
Admission: Free
Hours: 9 AM – 4 PM
Demos: 11 AM and 2 PM (both days)
No sales of bonsai related items.
For information, call Marj Branson at 805-373-1330 or visit our website at www.cvbs-bonsai.org

Gratitude

Thank you to all of the members who contributed. The club truly appreciates your generosity and giving spirit.

Benefit Drawing Contributors

Koller Family, Doyle Saito,
Jim Morris, Nelson Sanabria

Refreshment Contributors

Judy & George Unrine,
Jason Saito, Doyle Saito

Refreshment Signup for September

Barry Miller, Gib and Elissa Hoxie



About Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai

Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai ("Number One" Bonsai Club) was established in January, 1986 and takes great pride in its family-oriented character. Our club is dedicated to promoting the art of bonsai. The club meets on the third Friday of each month at the Ken Nakaoka Community Center, 1670 W. 162nd St., Gardena, at 7:00 P.M. Each meeting features a bonsai demonstration, benefit drawing and is open to the public.

Our annual bonsai show is held on the first weekend in May at the Nakaoka Community Center. Other club activities include: bonsai digs, annual auction, potting parties, outings to nurseries and private gardens.



DAI ICHI BONSAI KAI

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Do you have any comments, questions, or submissions?

If so, please contact:

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