

Serenity
Through Bonsai



DAI ICHI
BONSAI KAI

第一分盆栽會
盆中平穩

THE DAI ICHI GAZETTE

DECEMBER 2014 | VOLUME 29, ISSUE 12



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF DAI ICHI BONSAI KAI

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On the Cover | San Jose Juniper Forest landscape planting by Nacho Marin. This saikei won "Most artistically innovative entry of all entries from all categories" in the Art of Bonsai Contest 2008.

Inside Cover | Juniper Nana rock planting by Frank Goya.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In this issue we highlight Frank Goya and his devotion to the specific bonsai practice of *saikei* and some of the history surrounding this off-shoot of bonsai. Whereas traditional bonsai features a single tree for one to contemplate a natural setting in nature; *saikei* with its multiple trees, foliage, and hard-scape, transports you to an idyllic environment almost immediately. *Saikei* has with it a whole host of horticultural challenges not encountered with traditional bonsai. *Saikei* is usually grown in pots that are shallower than traditional pots, or on rocks with little room for roots to grow, thus requiring closer observation on their watering schedule. Multiple trees growing in close proximity require a different eye with regards to pruning and shaping. And repotting is almost out of the question, for any reassembly almost inevitably leads to a new layout of all the elements and hence a new *saikei*. Frank took a liking to *saikei* almost out of necessity, for it was his wife Margaret who loved to make juniper cuttings and Frank needed a way to make use of the trees quickly without the need for them to grow into larger specimens. I love Frank's work!



Last month was the California Bonsai Society's (CBS) Annual bonsai sale. I am responsible for putting this on now, after our Dai Ichi's founding member, Leila Kusumi, passed the torch to me several years ago. There were many great bonsai bought at some very reasonable prices. But the reason I wanted to bring this event up in the Dai Ichi Newsletter is because this event really wouldn't have happened without help from both the Dai Ichi and Marina bonsai club members, who come out to help even though they are not CBS members. I greatly appreciate their contributions and hope to see their continued interest in Bonsai. THANK YOU!

Next month's demonstrator will be David Nguy. David is definitely a bonsai master and I have seen him develop some amazing trees. He studied in Japan as an apprentice under Masahiko Kimura, so you know he takes the art form very seriously. Please come down to our meeting and watch David work, it is always a great experience.

As we conclude this year with family and friends, or in a manner hopefully of your choosing, we can all look back at the year and reflect on those things we did well and are proud of, as well as those things where maybe we hope to soon forget, or at least remember less vividly. And that is what is so great about celebrating New Year's for it gives us all a chance to start out on fresh footing. I've thrown away some dead trees this year that didn't quite make it due to either my neglect or forces of nature, but I also have a number of fresh starts with trees I have started from seeds, cuttings, or acquisitions. I hope these new trees will soon be what I think about in the future, not the trees that I've lost. Sure I hope to not repeat any mistakes I may have made that lead to the death of my trees. In the the new year I resolve and plan do things better! Thank you to all the club members who have helped and volunteered this year to make Dai Ichi a club we can all be proud of. Have a safe and happy holiday season – see ya'll next year!!

John van de Wouw
President
Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai

John van de Wouw



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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-Kevin1114.

KEVIN SWEENEY



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

KEVIN SWEENEY
JUNIPER STYLING

NOVEMBER 21, 2014



Q: What's your favorite tree to work on?

A: The one I'm working on now!

JUNIPER STYLING 101

On very short notice, and with a very hectic schedule (as a dad of a 21-day old newborn) Kevin Sweeney was gracious enough to be the featured demonstrator at our November meeting. Kevin is an upcoming student of Mel Ikeda and Leila Kusumi, and he demonstrated his techniques for styling a Juniper donated by Doyle Saito.

When Kevin started out in bonsai, he did what a lot of people do and searched the Internet for information. When asked who his first teacher was he replied "Google-san."

Kevin explains "When I started working with Leila and Mel, my perspective changed a lot. When I started, I was just grabbing anything and everything, and Mel taught me that you should acquire only trees with good roots and trunks. Without this, the tree doesn't really have anything to work with. This tree has a decent trunk... The roots in this tree cannot be opened up at this time as it is too late in the season for a repot, but will eventually need to be combed out and repotted."

He then studied the tree to examine his options and to gauge the direction the tree wants to go; removing branches and shaping to his vision. Mel even stepped in during the break to assist his student.

The finished tree was then raffled off and Paul Minerich was the lucky winner.



Examining the raw material to determine where the tree wants to go.



Taking off unnecessary branches.



Kevin congratulates the lucky winner Paul Minerich.



During the break, Mel Ikeda assisted Kevin, as Scott Pogolian watches.



The club gathers for a group picture at the last meeting of 2014.

Member Spotlight

FRANK GOYA

BONSAI, LIFE & PASSION

Lifetime DIBK member, Frank Goya, has been a bonsai and saikei artist for over 50 years. He is considered to be the number one practitioner of saikei, as well as one of the top 5 bonsai masters in the United States.

Frank was born in Imperial Valley in 1923. Along with his family, he was interned from 1942 through 1946. After a brief stint in the U.S. Army, Frank became a gardener, creating and maintaining some of the most beautiful gardens in LA.

Studying under John Naka, and based on his experience in garden design, he soon found an affinity for saikei. Frank belongs to many bonsai clubs and is a frequent demonstrator for local as well as national events.

Along with Shig Miya and Ben Oki, Frank still finds the time to teach at the Marina Bonsai Club at the Venice Japanese Community Center.

Image courtesy of Thuan Lam



*“Sometimes, you have to
compromise with the tree.*

*Sometimes, the tree has to
compromise with you.”*

— Frank Goya

Image courtesy of Thuan Lam

Gazette: When did you start doing bonsai?

Frank: I started in 1958. Funny story actually, I started learning from John Naka about the same time as Ben Oki. John Naka’s son and my wife’s brother were friends and I really wanted to learn bonsai; so one rainy day, I visited John and he showed me his collection and I was amazed. Also around that time, the gardeners association that I was a member of started a bonsai class, so I attended classes there, and that’s how I got hooked.

Gazette: How did you meet Toshio Kawamoto and what was that like?

Frank: Well Kawamoto had a small class in Tokyo. His father was a famous bonsai man so their family was respected in the bonsai community. On one of his visits to the U.S., my wife, Margaret, and I attended his workshop at a convention here in L.A., and that is when I first got to learn from him directly. Then at the First World Bonsai Federation Convention in Tokyo, I got to spend more time with him and Tom Yamamoto, a teacher at his Nippon Bonsai-Saikei Institute.

Tom was a G.I. from Hawaii; while stationed in Japan, he fell in love with the place and relocated there to be with his Japanese wife, and to study bonsai. Kawamoto had a garden on top of the building where he lived, and I remember he gave us a tour, in the rain, of his beautiful bonsai collection.

In addition to Tom, he also taught another American named Masahiro Furukawa. When someone in the U.S. was interested in *saikei*, Kawamoto would send them to Masahiro who lived in Oregon. Another student of Kawamoto was Lew Buller. Lew wrote a book called *Saikei and Art - Miniature Landscapes*, and I remember assisting Lew to get Kawamoto to write the endorsement letter that appears in that book.

Gazette: Why isn’t *saikei* more popular in Japan?

Frank: One reason is Kawamoto, at the time, did not really market it to a wide

audience. He also did not have offspring to take over his life’s work, so while *saikei* was conceived in Japan, it actually became more popular in the US.

Gazette: What are some tips you have for aspiring *saikei* artists?

Frank: Bonsai can actually be a very expensive hobby – good material, pots, tools – and if you don’t take care of the trees, they die. People think bonsai is something that doesn’t last long and that they cost so much money. With *saikei*, you don’t need to use older, developed trees, so you can create very beautiful scenery with inexpensive rocks, accent plants and younger trees.

Because we live in Southern California, we have many beautiful rocks and stones we can use. Treewise, you can start cuttings or use nursery stock, and it only takes 3-4 years from cutting until they are ready, and you can use them for *saikei* plantings.



Frank: In Japan, they often use the silt from the bottom of rice paddies for

Shallow pots can be hard to get and are expensive, so you can use slate or stone slabs. Large rocks that hold soil can also be used, and it looks a lot more natural.

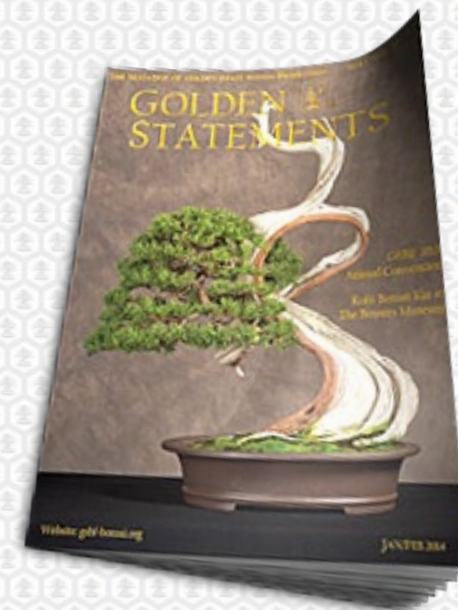
You really have to look at nature and study the scenes to become familiar with the way everything interacts. This is how you make natural looking *saikei*.



Earlier this year, Frank did a demonstration constructing a three tree saikei. To view the demonstration, please visit www.bit.ly/DIBK-FrankDemo



HELP WANTED!



The staff of Golden State Bonsai Federation (GSBF) publication *Golden Statements Magazine* is in need to fill the following positions:

- Treasurer
- Subscriptions Manager
- Part Time Assistants

For more details on duties and special perks, please contact:

George Haas
Past Editor of
Golden Statements Magazine

707-762-9154 or



THE HISTORY OF

Saikei

S*aikei* literally translates as “planted landscape”. It is the art of creating tray landscapes that combine miniature living trees with soil, rocks, water, and related vegetation (like ground cover) in a single tray or similar container. A *saikei* landscape will remind the viewer of a natural location through its overall topography, choice of ground materials, and the species used in its plantings.

A typical *saikei* is contained in a large ceramic tray with low sides, or on natural materials such as rocks or slabs. Rocks and soil are arranged to suggest a natural landscape, often modeled on a specific type of real landscape like a seaside or a mountain path. Small living trees are planted in the soil and are arranged to emphasize perspective, for example, with smaller trees to the rear of the display. The trees themselves are selected and cultivated to look like mature trees that match the simulated landscape they grow in. Non-tree plant specimens may also grow in the *saikei*, such as ground cover or other small accent plants that help evoke the landscape.

Saikei differs from the related Japanese art forms in some key ways. According to Lew Buller, Toshio Kawamoto (the founder of the *saikei* form) “was adamant that his living landscapes were not bonsai”, citing *saikei* rules such as the mandatory use of stones, and the placement of trees and roots above the rim of the tray. Bonsai uses stones as the base for a tree or trees in the root-over-rock style (*Sekijojū*) and growing-in-a-rock (*Ishizuke*) styles, but does not form landscapes from mixed stones and soil. The shape of the ground is very important in *saikei*, where it is of reduced or non-existent importance in bonsai. In general, *saikei*, concentrates on the evocation of a natural living landscape, rather than on the character of individual trees as emphasized in bonsai.

Image courtesy of
Philippe Massard.

Text used under Creative Commons license.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saikei>

A majestic cypress
mountain forest *saikei*
by Masahiko Kimura



"Mr. Kawamoto and Saikei Exhibited at Expo '70."
(Bonsai Magazine, BCI, June 1972, pg. 12).
Image courtesy of the Phoenix Bonsai Society.



Toshio Kawamoto (pictured left) with the chief instructor from the Nippon Bonsai-Saikei Institute, Tom Yamamoto, from a 1976 visit to Australia. Image via The Australian Women's Weekly (1933 - 1982), p. 75. Retrieved December 2, 2014, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page5849978>.



Image via saikei.co.uk.



Image via Bonsai Bark.



Image via Bonsai Bark.

KAWAMOTO

The *school of saikei* was founded in Japan by Toshio Kawamoto after World War II. Kawamoto was born in 1917, the eldest child of the bonsai master Tokichi Kawamoto, and was trained in the art of bonsai. In 1960, following his father's death, he ran the family bonsai nursery Meiju-En. He actively promoted the practice of *saikei* after this time, publishing two seminal books on *saikei* (*Bonsai-Saikei* and *Saikei: Living Landscapes in Miniature*) and participating in the creation of the Nippon Bonsai-Saikei Institute and the Nippon Saikei Association.

At the time Kawamoto began developing the rules and form of *saikei*, the practice of bonsai was at a critical low point in Japan. The labor-intensive cultivation of bonsai had been near-impossible under wartime conditions. Many bonsai, in development or completed, had died in the nation's major collections, as well as in the gardens of individuals across the country. Post-war economic conditions made the purchase and cultivation of a real bonsai almost impossible for average Japanese households.

Kawamoto created a simple form of tree display providing many of the aesthetic

and contemplative qualities of bonsai, while also supporting the cultivation of plant stock that could eventually be used as bonsai material. He based this art form mainly on the principles of group plantings from bonsai and rock displays from *bonkei* and *bonseki*. His original objective was to age and thicken up the trunks of young nursery stock. *Saikei* was a way for inexpensive plants and stones to be brought together in a pleasing arrangement, easily accessible to the average person.

Japanese *saikei* does not have deep traditions of its own. But it is related to

a number of older confined-landscape forms popular in Asia, including Japan's *bonkei*, the Chinese art of *penjing*, and the Vietnamese art of *hòn non bộ*. The term *penjing* applies both to individual trees growing in containers, similar to bonsai, and also to detailed miniature landscapes which include trees, other plants, rocks, soil, water, and miniature figurines of people, animals, and other items. Similarly, *hòn non bộ* emphasizes the creation of stylized miniature islands projecting from a body of water and carrying a burden of trees and other plants.

DESIGN

The art of *saikei* overlaps bonsai to some extent, as bonsai includes a tradition of multiple-tree plantings. *Saikei* has a much stronger emphasis on the shape and structure of the landscape than does bonsai, and has much greater freedom in the layout and materials of that landscape. There is no rule to mass the trees together in a contiguous unit in a *saikei*. A *saikei* must contain rocks, which may play the role of mountains, cliff faces, stone outcroppings, stream beds, shorelines, or other aspects of the landscape. They are the skeleton of the landscape, and appear prominently.

Saikei does not focus on the detailed form of each tree, which is a prime objective for bonsai. The trees in *saikei* are not expected to be the mature, thick-trunked specimens that are common in bonsai. For the trees to be in scale with even a large *saikei* display, they cannot be much more than four to six inches in height. Smaller *saikei* displays may require even smaller trees. As a result, the *saikei* trees are often immature and thin-trunked, with small root structures and simple branching.

Saikei allows multiple species of tree to be placed in a single landscape, and allows other plant forms like flowers and grasses, while multiple plantings in bonsai are typically a single species of tree with moss alone allowed as additional vegetation.

Toshio Kawamoto and Herb Gustafson, (who studied at Kawamoto's *Bonsai Saikei Institute*) emphasize that the design and execution of a *saikei* should portray a realistic natural landscape. A *saikei* developed in Kawamoto's style will be complex in topography, rich with vegetation, and strongly evocative of a realistic location in nature.



KIMURA

Masahiko Kimura

One of the few bonsai artists in Japan that practices *saikei*. His artistry and creations are legendary.

Masahiko Kimura Photos courtesy of Philippe Massard.



GOYA

Frank Goya

Lifetime DIBK member and frequent demonstrator for our annual club show, Frank is one of the top *saikei* and bonsai teachers in the United States.



NELSON

Al Nelson

Al is a frequent DIBK demonstrator and friend of the club. Al has years of teaching experience and his style is inventive, informative as well as humorous.



“Saikei has no bounds; it avoids the rigid formality that is often evident in bonsai, lending itself more to experimentation and freedom in composition.”

— Toshio Kawamoto



Photo courtesy of Nacho Marin.

PRACTICE

Saikei was designed to be an easier practice to participate in than bonsai. A *saikei* container provides liberal quantities of soil, easing the burden of careful watering and root pruning that mark bonsai cultivation. *Saikei* plantings are quick to assemble, with first-time participants able to create an effective result in a few hours. The trees can be very young and therefore inexpensive, and none of the other materials, except the tray itself, cost much. The trees themselves do not require a great deal of shaping or other manipulation, compared to bonsai's complex and time-consuming development practices. As a result, *saikei* is a good fit for beginners and for those who wish to spend little on the hobby of growing dwarfed trees.

As a particular *saikei* ages, some of its trees may grow out of proportion to the rest of the display. This change is expected and in fact is one of the goals of *saikei*. The owner has two choices, to reduce the size of the large trees, or to remove them from the *saikei* and grow them separately. Reducing their size involves bonsai-related techniques such as pruning. Removing oversized trees from the *saikei* leads naturally to potting them individually and cultivating them as bonsai. After removal of these trees, the *saikei* can be augmented with new trees, restyled to suit the remaining trees, or dismantled and redesigned to a new plan. In all cases, the trees are retained and continue to be cultivated under the *saikei* principle of developing potential new bonsai.



For more examples of *saikei*, please visit the facebook group

Art of Saikei

www.facebook.com/groups/ArtofSaikei/

INSPIRATION

Since *saikei* is influenced by scenes from nature, careful study of mountains and landscapes that portray the scene you would like to recreate, will help to make your *saikei* look natural. Here are some examples to study.

Scale is very important to pulling off realistic saikei compositions. In the examples below, we see the landscape from afar. To convincingly recreate this scene, all elements must be in scale with the mountains (rocks).

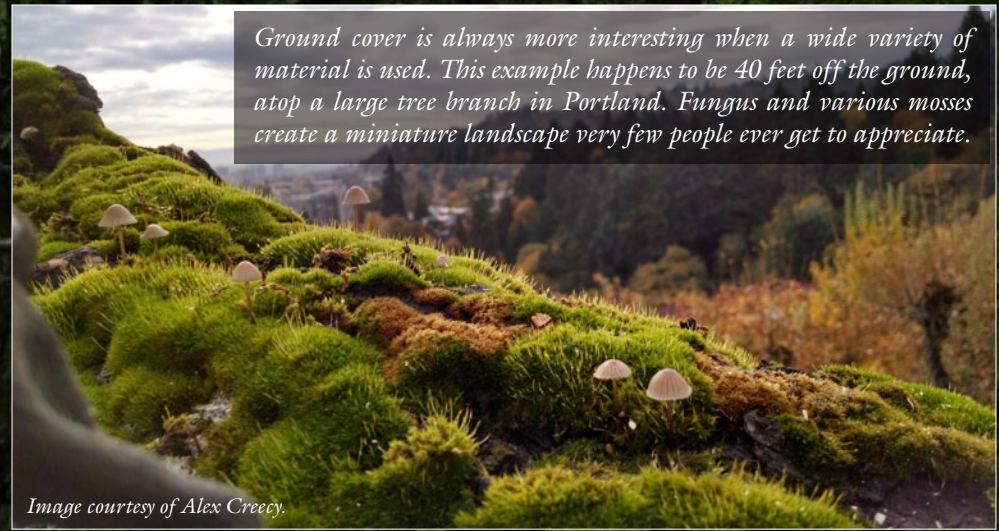
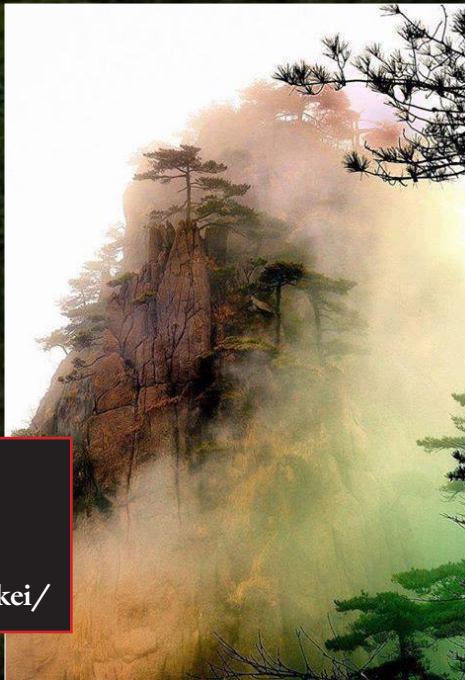


Image courtesy of Alex Creecy.



*Inspiration for composition can also be found in many different disciplines. One example is naturalistic aquascaping. The concepts are the same as in *saikei*, but with a lot more water.*





ANNUAL CBS SALE

Once again, Yamaguchi Bonsai Nursery in West LA was the scene of the California Bonsai Society's Annual Bonsai Sale. Many people journeyed into the frosty cold morning, for a chance at some great material at even greater prices. The crowd showed up early to get the best bargains, and they were not disappointed.

While a light drizzle did dampen (pun intended) the event a bit, no one seemed to mind too much. Here are some scenes from the event.



BONSAI BY NACHO MARIN

Nacho Marin is an award winning photographer and bonsai artist from Venezuela. His work has been displayed throughout South America and the U.S. For Nacho, bonsai is a virtual space where nature allows us to play at creating it. For more examples of Nacho's amazing photography and bonsai, please visit his website.

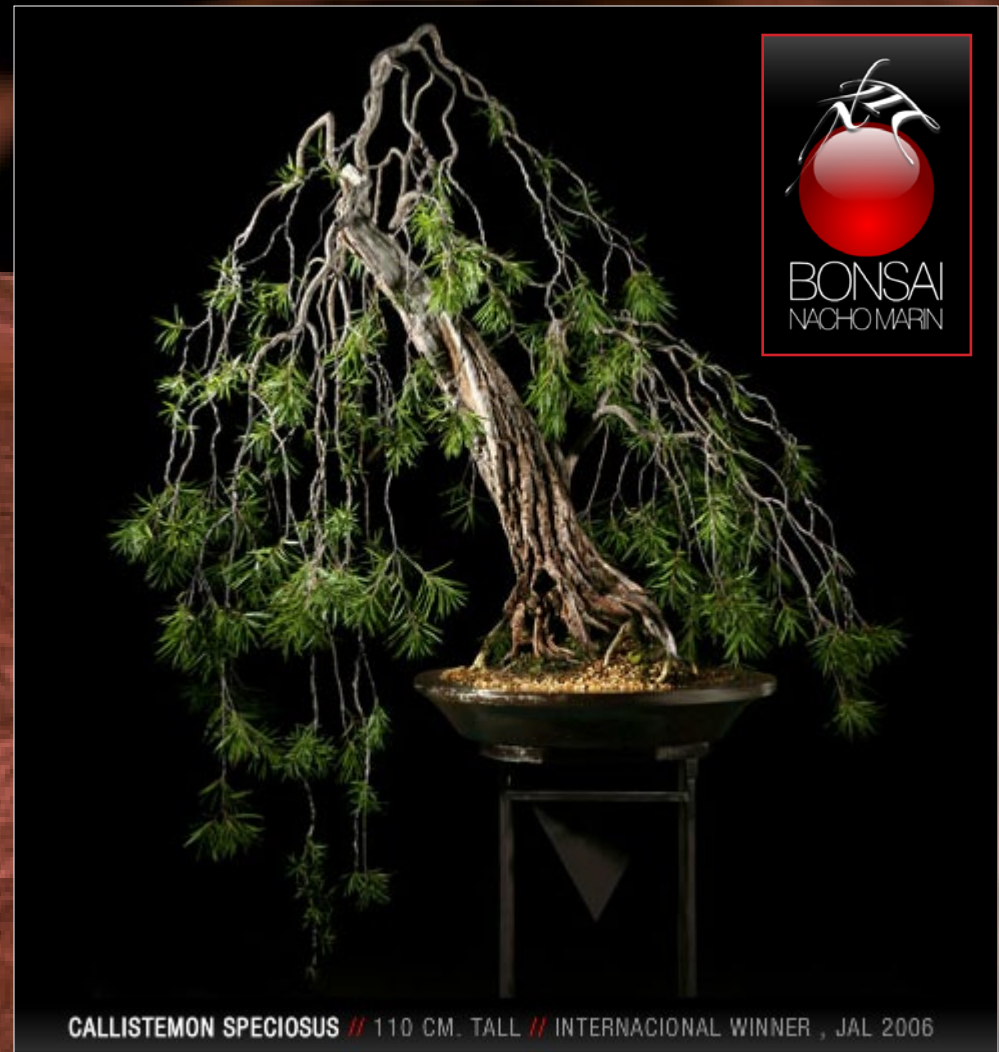


<http://www.nachomarin.com>

Images courtesy of Nacho Marin



JUNIPERO SAN JOSE, 1° PLACE, PENJING, BONSAI OLIMPIC PHOTO CONTEST 2009 // 70 CM. TALL



CALLISTEMON SPECIOSUS // 110 CM. TALL // INTERNACIONAL WINNER , JAL 2006



PITHECELLOBIUM TORTUM



JUNIPERO SAN JOSE // 55 CM. TALL



CONIOCARPUS ERECTUS (MANGLE ROTONCILLO), 2° PRIZES BY THE MASTERFUL PRESENTS // 65 CM. TALL



NO DECEMBER MEETING

JANUARY DEMONSTRATOR DAVID NGUY



David Nguy will be the featured demonstrator at our next meeting on Friday, January 16, 2015.

David is well known for his work with California Junipers and Black Pines. Formally trained in Japan by renowned bonsai master, Masahiko Kimura, David employs the styles made popular in Japan, along with his own developed techniques in his teaching. He emphasizes group collaboration and hands on application through his courses at his school, Bonsai Jidai located in Chino.

EVENTS

Dec. 26, 2014 – January 2, 2015
San Marino
California Aiseki Kai:
25th Anniversary Exhibition
of Viewing Stones
Huntington Botanical Gardens
1151 Oxford Road
Admission: See website
Hours: 10:30 AM – 4:30 PM
For information, email
hutch@aisekikai.com or visit:
www.aisekikai.com

January 17 -18, 2015
Arcadia
Baikoen Bonsai Kenkyukai
Winter Silhouettes Show 2015
Los Angeles Arboretum
301 North Baldwin Ave

The Winter Silhouettes bonsai show at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum exhibits the best work of California's own bonsai masters.

For more information, please contact Lindsay Shiba (ljshiba@earthlink.net) or Ken Teh (hanyuls@yahoo.com).

February 28 – March 1, 2015

San Marino
Bonsai-A-Thon XIX
The Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens,
1151 Oxford Road
Admission to the event is free with Bonsai-A-Thon "early bird" registration between 8 AM – 9:30 AM.
Hours: 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM
Pancake breakfast, tour hosted by Jim Folsom (Director of the Garden), demonstrations, lunch, bonsai exhibits, large sales area, raffle, and auction.
Sunday only: "Bring-Your-Own-Tree" Bonsai Consulting Clinic.
For more information, contact Marge Blasingame, (626) 579-0420 or email margeblasingame@att.net.

GRATITUDE

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

Benefit Drawing Contributors

Doyle Saito, Nelson Sanabria,
Leila Kusumi

Refreshment Contributors

Doyle Saito, Michael Izumoto,
Kei Ikari, Leila Kusumi

Refreshment Signup for January

George & Judy Unrine, Jason Saito, Doyle Saito

Please remember to sign the contribution sheet so that we may acknowledge your generosity.

Special thanks to

Nacho Marin, Kevin Sweeney, Frank Goya, Thuan Lam,
Phillipe Massard, Alex Creecy, Phoenix Bonsai Society, Saikei.co.uk,
Yamaguchi Nursery and the California Bonsai Society.

For their contributions to this issue of the DIBK Gazette.

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.

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DAI ICHI BONSAI KAI

*Please feel free to forward this publication to friends, family
or anyone with an appreciation for bonsai.*

Do you have any comments, questions, or submissions? If so, please contact:
Jason Saito ph 310.909.4598 | email jason@zenpalace.com