

# GOLDEN NEWS



NEWS FROM AROUND THE WESTERN US BONSAI COMMUNITY

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## QUARTERLY CLUB SPOTLIGHT

### California Bonsai Society

It was summer 1950, when four middle aged bonsai practioners, Frank Nagata, Morihei Furuya, John Naka and Sam Doi, decided to enter some of their bonsai trees in the annual San Gabriel Valley - Fall Flower and Garden Show held in the Pasadena, Brookside Park. Each of them had been practicing bonsai from before the war and several of them had started trees from seed, while they were held in internment camps. By the time that they showed up at the show installation, they had asked two others to join them Mrs. Ai Okumura and Joe Yamashiro. But to their surprise, they were told that only clubs were allowed to show at the event. Frank responded that they were a club, the "Southern California Bonsai Club". They were allowed to show their trees and actually won a trophy and a blue ribbon.

By 1953 the group had changed their name to the 'Southern California Bonsai Society' and in 1957 became a certified California club known as simply the 'California Bonsai Society' (CBS). Then, in April of 1958, they held their first formal show at the California Museum of Science and Industry in Exposition Park, Los Angeles. By that time, they listed over 100 active members. The show was such a huge public success that the museum slated them as an annual event. It was because of these shows and the attention that they generated that CBS became recognized as showing the best bonsai outside of Japan.

In 1961, John Naka was elected as the President, and the following year, 1962, the club became incorporated. John held the position as club President for the next 35 years. Going forward, many of the CBS founders and presidents have been instrumental in helping to shape the Southern California community. Among them are (in no particular order) Sam Nakano, Kaz Yoneada, Frank Goya, Roy Nagatoshi, Lindsay Shiba, Larry Ragel, and the current President Robert Pressler.

Today, CBS not only holds its regular annual exhibits featuring some of Southern California's best bonsai trees, it also continues to support the local community with its visiting artist program, which introduces bonsai artists from all over the world. Additionally, they are known for their 'Ben Oki Scholarship' which awards 2 practicing bonsai artists, from anywhere in the world that can cash a check drawn on a U.S. bank, a \$1,000 grant towards their continuing education.

At the end of February, 2027, CBS will observe its 70th annual show with a special celebration at the Huntington Library and Botanical Garden in San Moreno, CA. They hope that everyone will help them celebrate their prestigious history by joining the festivities. Specific dates to be announced.

## UP COMING EVENTS

July 1- Marin Bonsai Club - Small Trees with Big Stories

July 8- East Bay Bonsai Society Annual Auction

Aug 22- Redwood Empire Bonsai Society (REBS) Bonsai Show

Aug 22- Naka Memorial Exhibition

Oct 3- Chino Bonsai Club 6th Annual Bonsai Exhibit

SEE MORE AT:  
<https://www.gsbfbonsai.org/events>

# MONEY FOR YOUR CLUB!



Q3 GSBF

## 'GIVE BACK' SCHOLARSHIP

Q3 Special Project Grants

The Q3 Special Project Grants are designed to support innovative projects that grow, enhance, and promote the art of bonsai within our communities. These grants encourage clubs, organizations, and individuals to develop creative initiatives that expand educational opportunities, increase public awareness, and strengthen engagement in bonsai.

Up to five grants of \$500 each will be awarded to selected projects that demonstrate a meaningful impact and align with the mission of advancing the art and appreciation of bonsai. Given your imagination and hard work, the possibilities are unlimited. Clubs are asked to provide a comprehensive description of their special project including a detailed budget outlining projected expenditures.

Applying for the grant is as easy as:

### 1. APPLY

click the link and complete the electronic survey before **August 30** for:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSckhz\\_Yc\\_8ABC8weHfgA\\_1KlcHZlwRtw299DAAtqUAK6GbOyrA/viewform?usp=sharing&ouid=115201761198709164887](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSckhz_Yc_8ABC8weHfgA_1KlcHZlwRtw299DAAtqUAK6GbOyrA/viewform?usp=sharing&ouid=115201761198709164887)

OR fill out the form on pages 9-10 and email to: [dodienewman@gmail.com](mailto:dodienewman@gmail.com).

### 2. BE SELECTED

applications are selected based on merit

### 3. REPORT BACK

send us photos and a small write up as to how the money was used

## THE LARRY RAGLE FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP

### Enter to win 1 of 4 \$500 scholarships

To apply send an email to:

**[LarryRagleFoundation@yahoo.com](mailto:LarryRagleFoundation@yahoo.com)**

Include your name, and phone number and your club's name (eg. The San Diego Bonsai Club)

A random drawing for the scholarships will be held at the San Diego Bonsai Club meeting in September. San Diego Members may apply with Fred Miyahara at the Club meetings before the drawing

## Q2 'GIVE BACK' WINNERS!

The Second Quarter Give Back Program Clubs Winners will be awarded \$500 per club to enhance public displays, expand educational opportunities, and promote the art of bonsai within local communities. Congratulations to our club winners are:

American Bonsai Association Sacramento  
 Bonsai Club of Santa Barbara  
 Conejo Bonsai Society  
 Phoenix Bonsai Society



## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

We're midway thru 2026, and at 75+ years of age, the west coast bonsai community looks like it is well on its way to regaining its turn of the century strength and has clearly begun to define its future and manage its long-term growth. Let me explain.

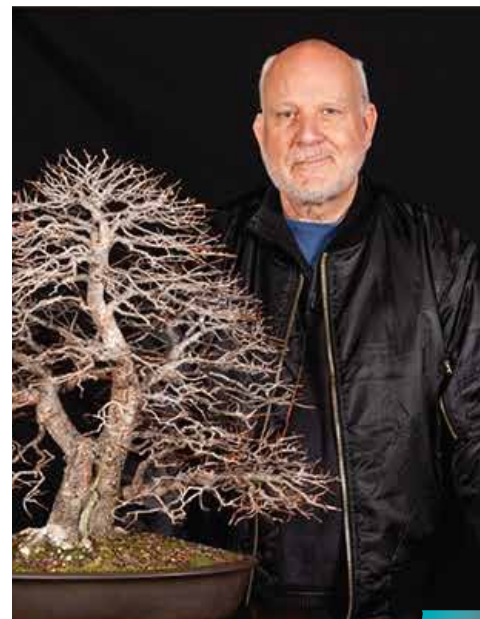
Many of us will remember that at the onset of the 21st century, Golden State Bonsai Federation and California Bonsai Society, were both holding major conventions that were well attended by bonsai professionals and hobbyists from all over the world. California alone had over four dozen large clubs and conventions that drew nearly 1,000 attendees. However, at that time, the west coast community at large (mostly the So. Cal community) relied heavily on our cultural founders... many of whom were responsible for bringing the art of bonsai to the U.S. from Japan and most were now in their 70's and 80's. As their energy slowed with age, so did the ability of the community to react, due to the lack of well-trained practitioners with enough experience to fill all the gaps. By 2015, the GSBF convention attendance had dopped off dramatically to the point that they were operating nearly at a loss, and the California Bonsai Society had quit holding conventions all together. Add to this, that overall club attendance was limited to mostly an aging population and now many of the communities' founders' founders were retired or passing away. There was very little next generation support in place to move the community forward. Then came COVID.

Now, what I am witnessing over the last ten years or so, is a whole host of next generation professionals. Many have either been trained in Japan, or once they returned, are now training new young artists. The result is that the community is quickly beginning to experience the results. There has also been a number of the mid-aged bonsai practitioners and hobbyists from the late 90's and early 2000's that have recognized the communities needs and have stepped up to fill the leadership rolls needed to help educate and keep the community growing into the future. As a result, all of the outward appearances seem to indicate that the west coast community is growing once again and hungry for more advanced knowledge. The challenge now, particularly in So. Cal, is for more seasoned professionals to take the clubs and community to the next level and help to build a reliable next generation of knowledgeable artists.

To all of those that are volunteering to help guide your club's growth and at the same time, actively including new talented, young practitioners for demos and club workshops, we applaud you. To all of the new young professionals that are actively helping to encourage and train the communities new artists, by working with the clubs at affordable rates, we applaud you. And to all of those that volunteer at the community legacy collections, The Huntington, the Clark Bonsai Museum, and the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt... You guys ROCK! It is due to the effort of all of the above mentioned, that all of the rest of us in the community can enjoy what they are helping to create. Thank You. One last item, this spring the community lost several of its most prominent bonsai practitioners, Sandy Planting, Kathleen O'Donald and Al Nelson. There are three heartfelt tributes written for each by their close friends included in this newsletter. All contributed heavily to the community and will be missed immensely.

For the latest news and updates on all of the important Bonsai Events in your area, and to stay current with GSBF news and community opportunities please follow us at the GSBF website <https://www.gsbfbonsai.org>, Facebook and Instagram.

Michael Roberts,  
 Chair, Golden State Bonsai Federation



# WORLD BONSAI DAY

## AT THE CLARK BONSAI MUSEUM



The Clark Bonsai Museum celebrated World Bonsai Day on May 3 this year. The garden welcomed over 450 visitors between 10am and 4pm who enjoyed a variety of bonsai related activities. In the open air marketplace located in the tree shaded area in front of the bonsai garden, the Clark Bonsai Museum and six local bonsai vendors sold a range of bonsai, plant material, accessories and arts and crafts. The Clark Bonsai Museum also sponsored a Silent Auction of higher value bonsai, a few deaccessioned from the Collection. This year the silent auction included an array of bonsai and Japanese inspired art work created by Fresno State Students who had been working with the museum for the entire semester as part of an upper division Art History Service Learning class. Students also worked in the bonsai garden at the hands-on activity tables guiding visitors of all

ages with origami, bonsai coloring and drawing, a bonsai scavenger hunt, a bonsai matching memory game, and miniature Zen garden raking.

Other opportunities for participants to learn about the art of bonsai included engaging with experienced local bonsai practitioners who provided demonstrations throughout the day. Bob Hilvers, co-founder of the Clark Bonsai Collection and Managing Curator of the Clark Bonsai Museum since its inception nearly 25 years ago at the Clark Center for Japanese Art of Culture, conducted tours of the current Exhibition of Forest and Multi-trunk Bonsai.

In the reserve area in the afternoon, there was a Build Your Own Bonsai Class and a Bonsai Clinic which offered the opportunity for the public to bring their own bonsai for advice and guidance from the curatorial team experts.

A special event of the day was a luncheon to honor Vincent and Kathy Owyong who have been enthusiastic supporters of the Clark Collection from its early days. 27 members of northern bonsai clubs from Sacramento and Modesto made the journey to Fresno to celebrate World Bonsai Day and honor Vince for his 60 plus years of bonsai artistry, which has included sharing his expertise with bonsai clubs, as well as GSBF Convention and Shohin Seminar workshops. Vince was further recognized for his many contributions to bonsai with the establishment of a

permanent pedestal in the exhibit area for displaying the majestic windswept style juniper that he donated to the Clark Bonsai Museum several years ago. It has become one of the museum's signature trees and one of the most popular subjects for visitors drawing their favorite bonsai.

The day was a joyful celebration of bonsai and a wonderful opportunity to share an appreciation of the art of bonsai with old and new friends. In honor of the occasion, the Clark Bonsai Museum launched its Friends Program for volunteers, visitors and supporters of the Clark Bonsai Museum (Visit <https://clarkbonsaimuseum.org/friends-of-the-clark-bonsai-museum/> for more information)



# GOLDEN ZOOM



GSBF'S QUARTERLY  
SPONSORED LECTURE SERIES  
JULY 27TH, 2026 @ 6:30PM



## MIKE ROBERTS - ELM PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES

Mike will join Marcus Juniel on the GSBF Golden Zoom web-cast to discuss his seasonal Elm production techniques and development processes for both retail nursery stock and pre-bonsai material.

Join us on July 27th @ 6:30PM

the zoom link will be provided the week of the event

# SAVE THE DATE!

# BONSAI

## RENDEZVOUS 2027

THE GOLDEN STATE BONSAI FEDERATION IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE

### CAROLINE "CAZ" SCOTT



Caroline is an internationally recognized bonsai artist, teacher, and award-winning exhibitor. She studied under leading bonsai masters including Ryan Neil, Pegter Warren and Marco Invernizzi, and has received the BCI President's Award and Best in Show at Bonsai Expo UK. She now teaches and

### ALESSANDRO BONARDO



Allesandro is an Italian bonsai artist who completed an apprenticeship under Masahiko Kimura in Japan. A graduate of the Nippon Bonsai Association and member of the Nippon Bonsai Kumiai, he works at Mansei-en in Omiya Bonsai Village, combining Italian artistry with traditional Japanese bonsai

# HEADLINERS

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## FOR THE 2027 BONSAI RENDEZVOUS

# OBITUARIES

## Al Nelson (1931-2026)

Wednesday, April 29, 2026, Al Nelson, passed away. He was 94.

Al was a deeply respected artist, teacher and mentor whose influence shaped generations of enthusiasts in Southern California and beyond. He was admired not only for his technical skill and teachings, but also for his generosity, faith, humor and steady dedication to bonsai.

Al became especially known for his bonsai work and knowledge on collected Coast Live Oaks. He spent decades studying and photographing them and was known worldwide for his ability to recreate their naturalistic design as bonsai. He preferred guiding a tree's character rather than forcing it, often avoiding branch wiring and instead relying on pruning, weights, props, and time to create wonderful movement. His best-known oak, collected in the late 1980s, was transformed over many years into a powerful, iconic bonsai reflecting the rugged beauty of California's native landscape. It now resides at the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum in Washington D.C.



Over the years, Al shared his expertise through demonstrations and club programs, teaching the essentials of collecting, repotting, watering, defoliating and styling bonsai. He emphasized preserving moisture when collecting trees, allowing branch structure to develop through selective pruning, and respecting the distinctive growth habits of oaks. Many of his students will remember him as a gifted instructor who made complex ideas practical, memorable, fun and enjoyable. He always introduced himself to students a "Your Pal Al".

view one of Al's demos at the San Diego Bonsai Club - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LioMMw5Rj8>  
Trees created by or trees that Al helped to style, are on permanent display at the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt, The Huntington, the San Diego Zoo Safari Park, and the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, Washington DC, reflecting both the quality of his artistry and the esteem in which he was held. "Your Pal Al" will be remembered for combining mastery with generosity-ensuring his trees, knowledge, and spirit will continue to inspire



## Kathleen O'Donnell

Our dear friend and bonsai community advocate, passed away on April 14, 2026, after battling cancer with grace and courage for 8½ years. Kathleen was one of the bonsai communities most influential ambassadors, leaving a lasting impact on both the art and the community that surrounded it.

Her journey began in 1989 when, at the urging of Timm Johnson, her first bonsai mentor, she attended a meeting of the American Bonsai Association Sacramento (ABAS). From that moment forward, she immersed herself wholeheartedly in the hobby and community she came to love. Over the years, she served ABAS in many capacities, including as vice president and program chair.

Kathleen also volunteered and contributed heavily to the Golden State Bonsai Federation (GSBF). She served as editor of Golden Statements magazine from 2008 to 2010, elevating the magazine to a full-color, "newsstand"- style publication. Later, she helped to pioneer what was then referred to as an "e-zine" or online format.

In more recent years, Kathleen also helped to revitalize GSBF. She designed the new GSBF website, and helped to restart the GSBF convention by volunteering on the 2023 Bonsai Rendezvous planning committee, urging the committee to bring back Joshua Roth 'Rising Stars' competition, as well as the first ever 'All Collection' exhibit from all three GSBF Collections. Both of these ideas raised the bar for the event and reflected Kathleen's creativity, dedication, and forward-thinking spirit.

Kathleen's legacy will live on in the organizations she strengthened, the people she inspired, and the countless lives she touched through her generosity, vision, and love of bonsai.

## Sandy Planting

Sandy Planting died on January 4, 2026 at the age of 87. Together, Sandy and John Planting operated a massive private collection of thousands of bonsai trees in Menlo Park, CA, where they hosted workshops and trained numerous enthusiasts.

Sandy and John Planting's life-long love of bonsai began in the Fall of 1961 after attending their first bonsai show and soon joined Kusamura Bonsai Club. In 1977 Sandy took over the club's beginner classes and she taught them until 2011. For many years Kusamura's monthly meetings featured Sandy teaching basic bonsai skills during the first hour.

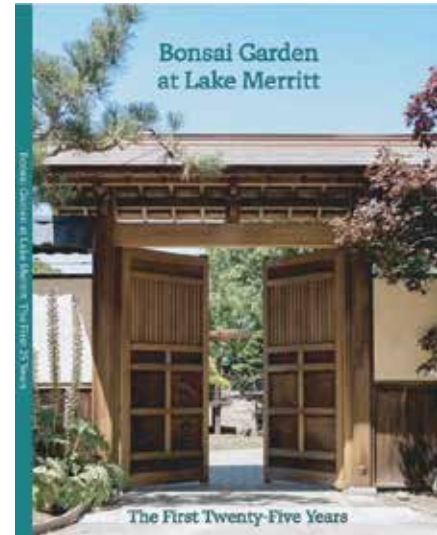
Together Sandy and John served as Kusamura Bonsai Club president for 14 years and for 40 years straight, one or both were either a club officer or board member. They were powerful influences on the direction of Kusamura and bonsai in the US.

Sandy served as Chair of Exhibits and Vendor Committee for the very first GSBF convention held in Berkeley, 1978. In 2014 Sandy was named a member of the GSBF Circle of Sensei, joining people such as John Naka, Ben Oki, Tosh Saburomaru, Ted Matson and David Nguy.



## Twenty-Five Years of Growth — Past, Present, and Future

A Quarter Century of Living Art at the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt



For twenty-five years, the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt (BGLM), Oakland, California, has stood as a testament to patience, artistry, and community. Like the trees it houses, the garden has grown slowly and intentionally shaped by many hands, guided by shared vision, andV rooted in a deep respect for the ancient art of bonsai.

BGLM is a volunteer-driven nonprofit organization supported entirely through donations and grants.

The anniversary book captures years in the making. It is a story of transformation: of trees, of people, and of a public space that has become one of the most cherished bonsai collections in the United States.

The major project in 2024 was undertaken by a modest group of garden volunteers to celebrate 25 years of BGLM. Research and execution took more than 13 months, six separate photograph shoots, and certainly dedication for creating and publishing the book.

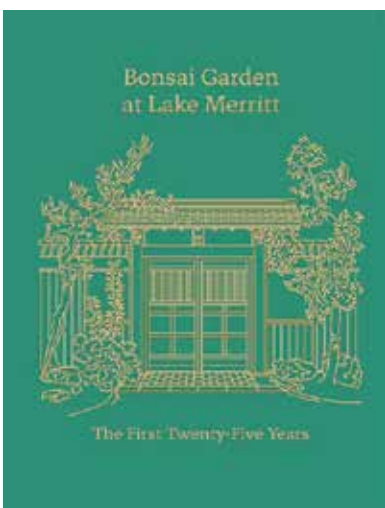
The 123-page book focuses on the history of the garden, the number of donors, supporters and volunteers, and the museum quality bonsai and suiseki viewing stones. Going back to the concept in 1974 and covering the years of construction and growth, more than 1,700 contributing individual names were published in the book.

The 25th Anniversary Book - produced in both softcover and hardcover editions - was completed right on schedule and made its debut during the BGLM's anniversary celebration in November 2024.

The future of the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt - its trees, its stones, its educational mission, and its role as a living art museum - will rest in the hands of all-volunteer bonsai practitioners and enthusiasts who support it today. Their dedication is the garden's greatest asset.

For information about purchasing the 25th Anniversary Book, visit the Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt or contact Geoge Haas at:

**GWHAA@COMCAST.COM**





## GSBF Give Back Program – 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2026 \$500 Special Project Awards

The GSBF Give Back Program is pleased to once again offer our popular **\$500 Special Project Awards!**

Last year, four clubs received \$500 to fund outstanding projects that enhanced their clubs and benefited their members. This year, **up to five clubs** will each receive a \$500 award to help bring another great idea to life.

Eligible projects might include:

- Special trips or educational events for members
- New member workshops
- Community outreach or public education programs
- Any other creative project that strengthens your club and enhances the member experience.

**How to Apply** – one application per club

Each club must submit:

- A description of the proposed project – be specific and detailed
- A detailed project budget
- An explanation of how the project will benefit the clubs and/or its members

### Award Requirements

Winning clubs agree to submit, within one month of completing their project:

- A written summary of the project and photos with captions to be published in the Golden News GSBF newsletter.
- Copies of all project receipts

### How to Submit

We encourage clubs to use our **Google Form**, but either submission method is accepted.

1. Complete the Google Form:  
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSckhz\\_Yc\\_8ABC8weHfqA\\_1KIcHZlwRtw299\\_DAtqUAK6GbOyrA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSckhz_Yc_8ABC8weHfqA_1KIcHZlwRtw299_DAtqUAK6GbOyrA/viewform)
2. Complete the Word application (page 2) and email it to [dodienevman@gmail.com](mailto:dodienevman@gmail.com)

### Timeline

- Application deadline: Sunday, August 30 – no late submission will be accepted
- Grant recipient announced: Sunday, September 20

We look forward to seeing the creative ideas and helping bring them to life.

From the

*“Giving Back” Committee*

## GSBF 2026 3rd Quarter Give Back Project Application

This quarter's program is intended to sponsor up to 5 clubs with a \$500 award per club towards a '**special club project**'. One submission per club, submission deadline is: August 30.

Scoring will be: Benefit your club and its members (60%); Enhance public education and/or exposure to the art of bonsai (20%); Promote new member recruitment / education (20%). It is critical that clubs provide specific details in their project description and budget projection.

Club Name:

Name, email and phone contact information of person(s) completing this form:

Secondary club contact name, phone and email:

1. Describe with specific detail the project you are proposing.
2. Provide detailed accounting of projected budget for this project.
3. What is your timeline for completion of this project?
4. Describe how this project will benefit your club and its members.
5. How will your special project enhance public educations and/or exposure to the art of bonsai
6. How will your special project promote new member recruitment / education?
7. If selected, you agree to provide photos with captions and a written summary of your project for the GSBF newsletter as well as a copy of all receipts within one month of completion of your project.  
Circle response:    YES            NO
8. Please provide the addressee and mailing address for your club to receive the award check.
9. Email completed WORD application or Google Form to Dodie Newman at [dodieneuman@gmail.com](mailto:dodieneuman@gmail.com) no later than midnight on August 30, 2026. Late submissions will not be considered.