

AL NELSON SPEAKS SAIKEI



Bonsai artist Al Nelson discussing the finer points of creating Saikei (tray landscapes)

Photos by Dan Kashinsky

by **Dan Kashinsky**
Editor in Chief

Al Nelson arrives like an old friend coming to a party. He is full of jokes and gossip. With him comes his trusty assistant Howie whom he claims is homeless but good for the job. Al seems relaxed but he lectures from a rigorous set of notes covering all you would want to know.

He is putting together a saikei of “too little” a species of ficus. The trees are small and non-developed as they should be in a saikei. The ficus “too little” are al-

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ready wired to save time in the demo. The leaves of this species will be appropriate size. He will also use Kingsville boxwood, shimpaku and oak in other projects.

Al and Howie have spent several hours before coming up from OC planning the position of the trees by the rule of 1/3. That is 1/3 trees 1/3 open space usually in the middle and 1/3 trees. Smallest trees are in the back for depth. No tree should line up predictably. Spaces between trees should appear random and none overlapping. The overall triangle shape of all trees in the frontal view is appropriate.

He prefers a slab to a pot because he feels it is more natural. Repotting can be deferred as long as 10 yrs. A

spatula can be used to lift the saikei up and then add soil underneath. His slabs are a secret but generally available in stone yards.

His soil is composed of akadama, scoria and perlite (50-30-20).

Sources of tufa Rock used as a soil surface are difficult to find because they are off limit now for



Matson doing a fine job assisting Al in his demonstration.



collecting. He advised we try Mr. Yee's table at the Bonsai-a-thon (he had plenty).

Muck is mixed modeling clay, akadama dust and chopped New Zealand only sphagnum moss. The tray is lined with a muck border. The Tufa rocks are held in place with the muck. His soil mix is applied to the tufa rock and tray and the trees are placed. Aquarium stone was used to simulate a lake. Moss follows as the finishing touch. Moss is grown on newspaper on the bottom and akadama dust in the middle with the moss on top finished with worm castings- bon appétit. Moss application was successful with the help of young MATSON. Check out the pic.

Immediately spray with water and 101. Finish with Cloud Cover. Pests are treated with rose systemic Al admits. Wire may be taken off in 2 mths. Lucky Eric took home the trees.

Saikei styled by Peter Macasieb. Santa Anita Bonsai Club.



Marge Blasingame's Blue Cedar Atlas. Santa Anita Bonsai Club.

Bonsai-A-Thon

Photos and text by Dan Kashinsky
Editor in Chief

To facilitate the management and support of the Huntington Library Bonsai collection, the Southern California Region of GSBF presents the yearly Bonsai-A-Thon. Ted Matson is the current curator. His position is in part supported by these funds. Bonsai sales are leased and a large auction provides some of the funds for the ongoing support and expansion of the bonsai pavilion.

Sansui-Kai members Ted Matson, Elliott Martin, Mitch Matsey, Russell Benson, and Nathan Simmons rented sales tables and sold their bonsai.

Santa Ana Bonsai Club displayed their favorite bonsai as Sansui-kai did last year. There again was a fine shohin exhibit. Bonsai notables Harry Hirao, Mel Ikeda, Bob Hilvers and many others shared knowledge during their demos. Their trees were also auctioned.

*Naka Notes - Lessons from a Master is Jack Reynolds's collection of guidelines primarily from Sansui-Kai founder and master John Naka's texts, **Bonsai Techniques I and II** monthly care of your bonsai.*

Naka Notes

Lessons from a Master

by Jack Reynolds
Contributing Editor



In this odd year most trees have broken dormancy. This presents some problems. We may later get more frosty nights. Bring trees coming out of dormancy into sunny locations to stimulate the new growth but be ready to move them back into protection if the weather should turn cold. Watering needs to be handled carefully as well. Over watering will promote large leaves or leaves with browning at the tips.

Many flowering trees will be in bloom. When they have bloomed out eighty percent of their flowers, remove the remaining buds and all of the bloom. This will prevent stressing the tree. Leave a few blooms on fruiting trees so that a few fruits will develop for the fall. The same should be done with berries.

It is not too early to use high nitrogen fertilizers and magnesium, sulfur and iron can be added for good leaf color. Conifers can also be fertilized with organic fertilizers such as cottonseed and bone meal. Liquid fertilizers can be used such as one half or one-quarter strength Miracle Grow.

From March until June is the time to transplant. There are two reasons to transplant; the first is that the tree needs to be moved to another pot for aesthetic reasons; the second is for reasons of health of the tree. When trans-

planting into a new pot there will probably not be much of a size change and roots will not be disturbed too much. Some root pruning will undoubtedly be necessary. Remove large unsightly roots but leave enough white fine feeders to sustain the tree.

Remember to remove some foliage if you remove a significant number of roots in order to maintain a balance between water uptake and water loss. Trees that are vigorous such as willows may have to be potted every year but in general the decision to change soil should be made when the tree shows signs of slowing down in growth or signs of being root bound.

Insects can be bad at this time of year particularly aphids and scale. Check early and often. Spray with Ultra Fine and Malathion or other insecticide as directed. It is better to use slightly dilute mixes due to the fact that trees in pots tend to be more sensitive to insecticides than those in the ground. A second spraying with lime sulfur can be done now if you did not do it in Feb. Do not spray lime sulfur on new growth or flowers unless you are willing to suffer some damage to same. This is the perfect time to start deciduous cuttings, especially large ones.

Grafting of deciduous trees can also be done but it is too late for junipers.



Harry Hirao
Demo Tree



FRANK GOYA

Frank Goya Saikei





Sansui-Kai is dedicated to the learning, use and teaching of the horticulture techniques and artistic principles needed to grow, design and care for bonsai. Regular membership is \$22 & \$27 for Families.

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Ted Matson to Speak in March

Photos by Dave Williams



Ted Matson will be the headliner in March. He will continue developing a black pine for future auction.



As I See It

by **Eric Percifield**
SSK President

Officer Installation

The Sansui-kai officer installation brunch is scheduled for March 17th. I confirmed the date of Sunday, March 17th at 11:30 at The Zen Buffet in Woodland Hills. The cost will be \$19.50/person, which includes a buffet meal, drink, tax, and gratuity. We will have a section of a separate room available to us for display trees and raffle items. We will have a great raffle table set up and I encourage people to bring in raffle donations for free tickets. This your chance to say thanks to the group of officers who have worked to bring the art of Al Nelson, Ted Matson, Jim Barrett and Cheryl Manning, Roy Nagatoshi and Lindsay Shiba and many more into our bonsai club.

Mark Your Calendars!

Bonsai Artist Studio:
OUTSIDE THE BOX
EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Headliners:
David De Groot
Weyerhaeuser Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection, Federal Way, WA
Suthin Sukosolvisit
Royal Bonsai Garden, Stoughton, MA
Peter Warren
Sarayama Bonsai, United Kingdom and Japan

The 2013 GSBF Convention
Oct 31 – Nov 3, 2013

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MARCH Refreshments

Josh Miller
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2013 Dues Now Overdue:

Annual dues for 2013 were payable in January. Single membership are only \$22.00 and family are \$27.00. Please bring your check or cash to the March meeting or send a check payable to San-Sui-Kai to:
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18419 BLACKHAWK ST. PORTER RANCH, CA.91326