BONSAI CLUB OF SANTA BARBARA

SINCE 1971

BONSAI CLUB
OF SANTA BARBARA

P.O. BOX 3703
SANTA BARBARA, CA 93130

SANTABARBARABONSAI.ORG

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MAY 2, 2026

IN THIS NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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OF TWO PILLARS
OF CALIFORNIA BONSAI

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2026

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MARK BRITTON ON BONSAI
BUILDERS PODCAST

Dear members and friend,

The making of a bonsai tree is a very personal process. Sure, we have professionals come to SB to tutor us, and seasoned members to guide us. Being part of this bonsai fellowship is the reason I am deeply engaged with the Bonsai Club of Santa Barbara. When it comes down to it, what happens to my trees is up to me. Yet, I am reminded by others in our community that bonsai should be shared. I get it - it's been a thrill to have some of my trees in bonsai shows where I have an opportunity to meet enthralled guests and talk with them about my tree and the art of bonsai.

Our club's time to show (off) and share is happening this month at our 49th Annual Bonsai Exhibition, May 16th and 17th, when we invite our entire Santa Barbara community to take in the exquisite beauty of our members' trees, learn more about the art and culture of bonsai, and join our club and share in the passion. It's not too late to submit a tree (or two) for the show. We hope to display 31 trees this year, so keep sending in those submissions!

Putting on this show is a grand endeavor, and the one time when the club needs all members to jump in and lend a hand. We have plenty of volunteer opportunities to help set up the show on May 15th, and assist with show activities on May 16th and 17th. We need show greeters and guest ambassadors, and especially need help with sales checkout and membership sign-ups. Because we will have seven vendors this year, we will need a crew to help move all of their wares and tables indoors on Saturday at 4pm, and take them back outdoors on Sunday morning before the show opens at 10am. Please let me know when and how you will help!

Don't forget that you can sell your bonsai related items at the show with 15% of proceeds going to support BCSB, or you can donate those items outright to the club. We are especially excited to have Jonas Dupuich provide a critique of the show on Sunday morning at 9am. This is a great way to learn critical aspects of the art of bonsai display by a highly experienced and objective professional.

Our show has already received terrific community support. We are grateful to Anthony Ranii, club member and superintendent of Montecito Union School, for once again hosting our show. Canoe Footwear is also funding the cost of building additional frames for the show backdrops – thank you Mark Britton! And Sonos is providing mood music for the show again this year, and has made a cash pledge to help defray the costs of the show. Thank you to Vina and Gavin at Sonos!

With the show only two weeks away, we are making a big push to promote the show through press releases, and traditional and social media. We've distributed rack cards around our local communities, but we have hundreds of cards yet to be distributed and we could use some help with that. You can contact me to get rack cards. Most importantly, the best way to "advertise" is word-of-mouth, and we really need each and every club member to help. Please post information about the show on your favorite social media platforms and bring your friends and families to the show. Share the rack cards with your friends, your yoga class, your local grocer, banker, baker, your favorite shops - everyone you know!

Looking forward to seeing you all at the show!
Gwen

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IN REMEMBRANCE OF TWO PILLARS OF CALIFORNIA BONSAI

SUMITOSHI "SUMI" ARIMURA AND AL NELSON

We would like to share the passing of two deeply influential figures in the California bonsai community, Sumitoshi “Sumi” Arimura and Al Nelson.

Sumi passed on April 5th. His impact on bonsai in our region cannot be overstated. Many members of the Bonsai Club of Santa Barbara, whether they realize it or not, likely have a Sumi tree in their collection, either directly or passed down through multiple hands. His legacy quite literally lives on in our gardens.

https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/48063249/sumitoshi-sumi-arimura

We also want to acknowledge the passing of Al Nelson, who passed away at the age of 94. Al was a pillar of the bonsai world for decades and was especially known for his work with Coast Live Oaks. One of his remarkable trees resides at The Huntington bonsai gardens and stands as a lasting example of his vision and craftsmanship.

That oak reflects everything Al valued in his work. It features a rugged, powerful trunk, twisting branches, and a broad, balanced canopy that captures the essence of a full-sized tree in miniature. It is a tree of strength and refinement, composed with a sense of balance and proportion that comes from years of thoughtful development.

On a personal note, Al’s work had a strong influence on my bonsai journey. His video and passion for oaks played a big role in my own interest in working with this species. I only wish I had the chance to meet him in person. If you have not seen his work, I recommend taking a moment to watch this video and get a sense of his approach:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LioMMw5Rj8

Also take a moment to check out the image of one of his Coast Live Oaks at The Huntington bonsai gardens. It is a great example of his work and the legacy he leaves behind. Its also one of my personal favorite Coast Live Oaks.

Both Sumi and Al helped shape the foundation of what we practice today. Their influence continues through our collections, our techniques, and our community. The best way we can honor that is by continuing to learn, share, and carry that work forward.

Coast Live Oak by Al Nelson at The Huntington. Photo by Andrew Mitchell.

CALL TO ACTION

ANNUAL BONSAI EXHIBITION VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Our annual bonsai exhibition is coming up on Saturday, May 16th and Sunday, May 17th, with set-up on Friday, May 15th. This is one of our biggest events of the year, and we need your help to make it a success.

We are looking for volunteers across all areas. Whether you can help for an hour or a full shift, every bit makes a difference. We also encourage members to spend time at the show as ambassadors, connecting with guests, answering questions, and sharing what makes bonsai so meaningful to all of us. This is our chance to represent the club and introduce our community to the art we care about.

We will have seven vendors and a demonstration each day, so it is shaping up to be a great event.

Please let us know how and when you are able to volunteer.

Volunteer Opportunities

Friday, May 15th – Set-Up (1:00 PM until finished, approx. 5:00 PM)
Help prepare the space for the exhibition:

- Set up tables and tablecloths
- Assemble tokonoma displays
- Set up backdrop stands
- Steam and hang backdrops
- Set up checkout station
- Place trees (preferred on Friday if possible)
- Set out signage

Saturday & Sunday – May 16th and 17th
Greeters & Ambassadors (3 shifts per day)

- 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
- 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
- 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Welcome guests, provide directions, answer questions, and help create a friendly and engaging experience. A simple guide will be provided, but personal interaction is encouraged.

Customer Checkout (3 shifts per day)

- 9:45 AM – 12:00 PM
- 11:45 AM – 2:00 PM
- 1:45 PM – 4:00 PM

Assist with sales at the club table:

- Process payments
- Help sell memberships
- Sign up new members for beginner workshops

Sunday, May 17th – Tear-Down (4:00 PM)

All hands on deck. The more people we have, the faster it goes. Many hands make light work.

Attached are promotional images you can use to share the event on social media.

Our show setup from last year at Montecito Union School District.

BONSAI IN CALIFORNIA

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sacramento Bonsai Club 80th Annual Show & Sale
  May 2 — Sacramento, CA
- Watsonville Bonsai Club Show & Sale
  May 3 — Watsonville, CA
- Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai & Yamato Bonsai Show
  May 30–31 — Oakland, CA
- Sei Boku Bonsai Kai Annual Show & Sale
  June 13–14 — San Mateo, CA
- Valley Bonsai Society 17th Annual Show
  June 20–21 — Livermore, CA

AUGUST 22-23, 2026

THE NAKA MEMORIAL EXHIBIT

Please join us at this community-driven event to see a selection of beautiful bonsai! Submissions open until June 15th.

What: Southern California's premier juried bonsai exhibit
When: August 22nd & 23rd
Where: George J. Doizaki Gallery
244 San Pedro St #505, Los Angeles, CA

More info: **nakamemorialexhibit.com**
Contact: **nakamemorialexhibit@gmail.com**

Featured Artists:

- Seth Nelson
- Ryan Pitts
- Julian Tsai
- Fred Miyahara
- Caroline Scott

BONSAI CLUB OF SANTA BARBARA

CLUB MEETINGS

LOCATION:
BETHANY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
556 N HOPE AVE,
SANTA BARBARA, CA 93110

TIME:
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

CALENDAR

BCSB PROGRAMS 2026

MEETINGS + WORKSHOPS + EVENTS

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT
GWEN STAUFFER

VICE PRESIDENT
MARK BRITTON

MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR
JOE BALDASSINI AND
CINDY DRAZYNSKI

SECRETARY
DANIEL OHLINGER

NEWSLETTER
SEBASTIAN FRAYE

WEBSITE
DANIEL MARTINEZ

WORKSHOP / PROGRAMS
MARK BRITTON

HONORARY SHOW CHAIR
ANN ERB

DATE	TIME	DESCRIPTION
THURS - JAN 22	7:00PM – 9:00PM	MEETING: SAM TAN PRESENTATION
SAT - JAN 24	9:00AM – 12:00 PM 1:00PM – 4:00PM	WORKSHOP: SAM TAN – BRING YOUR OWN TREE
THURS - FEB 19	7:00PM – 9:00PM	MEETING: DANNY MARTINEZ ON PROPER REPOTTING TECHNIQUES
SAT - FEB 21	9:00AM – 12:00 PM 1:00PM – 4:00PM	WORKSHOPS: CLUB WORKSHOP - NO FEE
THURS - MAR 19	7:00PM – 9:00PM	MEETING: JASON CHAN PRESENTATION
SAT - MAR 21	9:00AM – 12:00PM 1:00PM – 4:00PM	WORKSHOP: JASON CHAN – BRING YOUR OWN TREE
THURS - APR 16	7:00PM – 9:00PM	MEETING: EXHIBITION PREPARATION
SAT - APR 18	9:00AM – 1:00PM	WORKSHOP: EXHIBITION PREPARATION – NO FEE
FRI - MAY 15	1PM UNTIL FINISHED (5PM?)	SHOW SETUP CLUB EXHIBITION
MAY 16-17	10:00AM – 4:00PM	BCSB 2026 CLUB EXHIBITION
SAT - MAY 30	9:00AM – 12:00 PM 1:00PM – 4:00PM	WORKSHOP: BEGINNERS WORKSHOP
THURS - JUN 18	7:00PM – 9:00PM	MEETING: GUARDIAN TREE
SAT - JUN 20	9:00AM – 1:00PM	WORKSHOP: GUARDIAN TREE
THURS - JUL 16	7:00PM – 9:00PM	MEETING: DAVID CUTCHIN- TROPICALS
SAT - JUL 18	9:00AM – 12:00PM 1:00PM – 4:00PM	WORKSHOP: DAVID CUTCHIN – BRING YOUR OWN TREE

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NEWSLETTER
SEBASTIAN FRAYE

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DANIEL MARTINEZ

WORKSHOP / PROGRAMS
MARK BRITTON

HONORARY SHOW CHAIR
ANN ERB

DATE	TIME	DESCRIPTION
SAT - AUG 8	9:00AM – 12:00 PM 1:00PM – 4:00PM	SUMMER POTLUCK
THURS - SEP	7:00PM – 9:00PM	MONTHLY MEETING: JEREMIAH LEE REDWOODS PRESENTATION
SAT - SEP	9:00AM – 12:00 PM 1:00PM – 4:00PM	WORKSHOP: JEREMIAH LEE – BRING YOUR OWN TREE
THURS - OCT	7:00PM – 9:00PM	MEETING: TBD
SAT - OCT	9:00AM – 12:00PM 1:00PM – 4:00PM	WORKSHOP: TBD
THURS - NOV 12	7:00PM – 9:00PM	MONTHLY MEETING: TODD SCHLAFER PRESENTATION
SAT - NOV 14	9:00AM – 12:00PM 1:00PM – 4:00PM	WORKSHOP: TODD SCHLAFER – BRING YOUR OWN TREE
SAT - DEC 12	11:00AM – 3:00PM	HOLIDAY POTLUCK

CLUB HIGHLIGHT

VP, MARK BRITTON ON BONSAI BUILDERS PODCAST

Our Vice President, Mark Britton, was recently featured on the Bonsai Builders Podcast, hosted by Addison Galambos. In the episode, Mark dives into bonsai design and shares a perspective that does not get talked about enough: starting with a clear concept or idea, then seeking out material that fits that vision, rather than letting the material alone dictate the outcome.

It is a thoughtful approach that encourages more intentional design and long-term thinking, and it is great to see this conversation being brought forward. Mark also gives a shoutout to our upcoming show.

Give it a listen here:
https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/improve-your-design-thinking-w-mark-britton-ep-35/id1833396540?i=1000761542266

A recent repot Mark completed at Mirai, featuring an olive originally from Jonas and planted in a Tom Benda pot.

FOLLOW AND TAG US ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR A CHANCE TO BE FEATURED

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