

# The Kofu Kai Review

The Monthly Newsletter of the Kofu Bonsai Kai Club

## Meeting Time and Place

June 21, 2014 at 7:00 pm

Anaheim Methodist Church, 1000 South State College Blvd, Anaheim



## June Demonstrator

**Marcus Juniel**



*Marcus Juniel will be demonstrating this month on how to develop raw material into Bonsai. Marcus is a dedicated teacher and student of the art of bonsai. He's been involved in Bonsai since the 80s, starting in Boston while in school and joining the Descanso Club in the 90's here in southern California. He began seriously studying the art under Dwight Goins and later with Ted Matson who showed him the details of a developing a finished tree. He spent many hours with Harry Hirao digging and collecting California Junipers as well as assisting him in demonstrations. This led him to begin demonstrating himself starting with the Bonsai-thon in San Marino. He also contributes his understanding of styling and wiring to David Nguy. Given his experience it is an honor to have him share his journey with us, as well as the knowledge of how to develop unseen possibilities in material that is available to all of us.*

Ron Reekers

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# *May Demonstration*

## *Ryan Nichols*

Ryan Nichols has been making an annual appearance at Kofu Kai, teaching about the science of horticulture as it relates to bonsai. This year he spoke about our unusual seasons in Southern California and what we can do to help our trees adapt. We don't have typical, distinct seasons here and temperatures can spike at any time of year. This year we had intense heat in January and February. Ryan says that we only have two seasons, Summer and 'Sprautum'

These SoCal temperature fluctuations can stress plants. We need a good understanding of horticulture, but in the bonsai world, everyone seems to give different answers to the same questions. Why is that? They might all be referring to the same tree! It's because of the difference between principles and practices. The principles of horticulture don't change but practices change to adapt to conditions.

For example a principle is "plants need water to grow". In practice, the amount and timing of watering is determined by many factors.

Ryan then reviewed some basic facts about plants that we all need to know. Plants need water, light, nutrients and co2 to live. By the process of photosynthesis, plants convert light into chemical energy, that is to say, food. This makes plants autotrophic; self feeding, and phototrophic; feeding through light.

Fertilizers are not plant food, they are like our vitamins, they supply minerals plant's need to feed themselves through light. Plants need a lot of light to grow. They use different wavelengths (colors) of light to different degrees. They reflect green light, they don't use it. They use blue, violet, orange and red light. The very best light for plants is morning light which has the highest amount of blue. Afternoon light has more red which causes stress to plants.

Plants record the day length and changes in day length trigger flowering. Light also plays a role in leaf size and color. Leaves acclimate to light. Leaf size and color are also affected by genetics and hormones as well as light. We can't do much about the first two but we can influence the leaves on our trees with light. A plant exposed to less light will put out a larger leaf and in higher levels of light, a smaller leaf because the plant needs less leaf surface to function well.

Light can also be damaging and too much light can harm plants. If you move a plant from shade to full sun suddenly, it may be damaged. Light also damages by increasing temperature. Temperature determines metabolic activity in the plant and the microbial activity in the soil. Although warmer temps increase plant growth to a point, high heat and light can be a disaster.

Ryan uses at least a 30% shade cloth over his plants during the hottest months.

### Soil Types and Textures

In bonsai we use engineered soils. Ryan was very shocked when, as a horticultural

student, he first saw bonsai soils. In bonsai we engineer and alter soils so that we can control conditions. Our soils have ideal proportions for plant growth but also dry out quickly.

Water moves against the force of gravity in narrow spaces due to capillary action. Fine particled soils stay wet longer. Water adheres and coheres more than the force of gravity pulls it down. More particle surface area equals a wetter soil. Larger particles drain faster and need water more often and hold less water. This is the principle behind the difference between shohin soil and regular bonsai soil. When the spaces between particles are larger than the average root diameter, root dieback will occur. Half inch diameter particles are about the maximum size for effective bonsai soil because of the large spaces between the particles. On the small side, there is no small limit for effective soils.

### The Macro Nutrients of Plants

The macro nutrients of plants are Nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, sulphur, magnesium, carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen. These are more concentrated in plant tissues and are more important to plants. The micro nutrients are boron, chlorine, manganese, iron, zinc, copper, molybdenum, and nickel.

Plants can get too much iron but in our alkaline soils it's less available so we need to add it in a form the plants can use. Sulphur also plays a roll in preventing yellowing of leaves and you can give trees a little of it. If the new leaves on your tree are green and the older ones are yellowing, it's usually a lack of nitrogen. If the newer shoots are yellowing it's usually a lack of iron.

### Organic vs Chemical Fertilizer

Chemical fertilizer works well and the nutrients are available immediately. Organic fertilizer is unpredictable in that we don't know how many nutrients are available right away. Organic fertilizers require microbes to break down the materiel so if the soil is under 55 degrees F, there is little microbial activity. On the up side, organic products are unlikely to burn plants. So during cool periods Ryan uses chemical fertilizers and during warm months he uses some chemical and some organic. He warns that too much of an organic product can plug up the air spaces in the soil.

How do chemical fertilizers burn plants? It's the same as drought burn. Water will move from areas of high concentration to areas of low concentration in the soil. When you put too much fertilizer in the pot, just like when a cat pees on your plant, the soil has so much salt in it that water is drawn out of the plant tissues to create equilibrium and the plant is damaged.

### Watering Trees in Bonsai Soil

When using engineered soils, you must water thoroughly. In porous soils, water doesn't spread much laterally, it goes straight down so all parts of the surface of the soil need to be watered. For this reason, drip systems can be a disaster because they are designed for ordinary fine soils where the dripping water will spread out laterally.

During periods of warm weather, high night temperatures may cause plants to continue to transpire and dry out overnight. Reducing the number or size of leaves can help trees maintain their water level and not wilt during intense heat.

In conclusion, extremes cause plant stress, too much or little light, too much or little

water, to hot or too cold, too much or too little nutrients. A good understanding of how plants work can help us take better care of them.

*Ryan Nichols is a phd. candidate in horticultural science at the University of California at Riverside and teaches landscape horticulture and ornamental horticulture classes there. He studies bonsai with Ryan Neil in Portland, Oregon and teaches a class on redwood bonsai at his home in Riverside. Ryan left high school thinking he'd become an architect and worked with an architect for a while but the worsening economy led him eventually to study ornamental horticulture. A few years back he encountered his first bonsai and was hooked and has since adapted his knowledge of horticultural science to help us all have healthier trees.*

Ryan Nichols at Kofu Bonsai Kai by Carol Upston



**RYAN NICHOLS AND DEMO PRIZE WINNER RUBEN AYALA**

*June*

**KOFU BONSAI KAI – BONSAI IDEAS**

**THE ""GROWING-EST" TIME**

**BY MARTY MANN**



The end of May and early June is a good time to remove large leaves from the maturing spring foliage. This routine, just short of actual leaf pruning encourages smaller leaves to remain in scale with the tree. Do not do leaf pruning on an annual basis. Trim selectively, in stages, when new growth has hardened. Later in June is timely to work on leaf size reduction.

Feed the tree well for at least two weeks late in May before cutting Maple, Elm, Liquid Amber and Gingko. Use a low nitrogen formula to restrain spurts of new growth. Don't water as much during this regrowth period. Don't prune flowering trees until after flowering in order to allow new flower buds to form in the warm summer months, before fall and winter. This is the time for propagation by cuttings, planting seeds, and air-layering. Softwood cuttings are best taken from newly hardened wood. Try a group of cuttings with various diameters taken from a single variety of a tree to plant as a forest. Plan ahead and treat this group as a unit when it has rooted and begun to grow.

Harsh summer sun is coming. Guard against sun-burn. Protect deciduous trees as well as bamboo, especially if you use an overhead watering system. Rotate your trees regularly for even light exposure.

Reduce feeding deciduous trees in mid-June and for the last half of the year to discourage large leaves. Fall colors will improve (if nature co-operates with some cool nights) if fertilizers being used are low in Nitrogen (N) and higher in Potash (K) and Phosphorus (P). Flowering and fruiting trees can use some bone meal along with the regular fertilizing schedule.

With the renewal of active growth in May and into June so should pay attention to those ugly predators, insects and fungus. Aphids will multiply actively in warm weather. Fruit flies are attracted to the new young growth as the sugary sap flows. Continue your program of constant attention by the application of good commercial insecticides and fungicides. Check the underside of your leafy trees - a favorite hiding place for insect eggs and larvae growth. When you spray you must cover the upper and lower surfaces as well as the woody branches and trunk areas. While regularly scheduled spraying is the usual recommendation, it should be noted that too strong a chemical mixture could often do more harm than good. Don't overdo while emphasis is always on bugs and spores, attention should also be given to the accumulation of "trash" in your pots and in your growing containers. Keep your surfaces clean to discourage the harboring of unwanted tenants. Keep pulling those aggressive weeds that seem to find a home in well-fed plants in containers. Get them out before they become too much a part of your root ball.

Proper consideration to light conditions of each of your trees is very important during this active growing season. Keeping material in a sheltered or shaded area can produce lanky and weak growth. If the weather becomes excessively warm then the deciduous trees should be protected from too much hot sun. Conversely, conifers and evergreen junipers will benefit from substantial exposure to full sun that will create harder and firmer foliage. Do not react to the theory that the sun is harmful. The only negative effect of this exposure is the increased evaporation and excessive moisture loss. You must compensate for the benefit of good light by adjusting your watering schedules. Most of your trees will thrive in the warmer weather, however special care must be applied to the leafy Maples, Birch, and Liquid Ambers whose surfaces should not be wetted and allowed to broil.

Spring has sprung. Now be attentive to the maturing bonsai as they face the oncoming summer conditions.

HAIKU POEM:

**Soft** hills of clouds drifting by  
Warm days, sunlit skies  
With comfort and nurturing

**By Marty Mann**

This article has been extracted from the recently published book called '**Bonsai Ideas**'© **By Marty Mann**. Material is not to be copied without publisher or author's permission.

June, 2011

***NEW MEMBERS WELCOME !!***  
**Patrick Thelen**

## *Badge prize Winner Chau Phuong*

### GENEROUS GIFT TO KOFU KAI

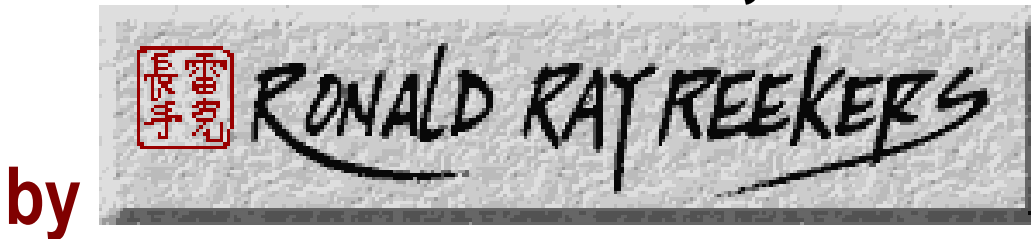


Last month a very nice gentleman named Dale McBride contacted Kofu Kai and wanted to donate some of his trees to our annual fundraising auction. Dale has been doing bonsai for over 40 years. He took his first bonsai lessons from Kan Komai in Pasadena. After two years with Kan, and after going with him to Japan, Dale studied with Harry Hirao for a year. After that he began studying with John Naka and Richard Ota and remained with them for many years. We are very grateful to Dale for his generous gift and are hoping he'll join us at Kofu sometime. The donation includes several very nice olives which, although overgrown, are **finished bonsai** which can easily be pushed back into showable condition.

## *UP COMING EVENTS*

Kofu Bonsai Kai, Bowers Museum Show, September 24 to 28, 2002 N. Main St., Santa Ana, CA. Daily 10am to 4pm, Presentations by Dr Tom Elias on Sept 27, Viewing Stones of North America, Dr Kendall Brown, Sept 26, Japanese Art Deco

**Want to Learn to Draw your Tree**



**Class begins JULY 20th at  
David and June Nguy's Bonsai Nursery  
4207 Walnut Avenue, Chino, Ca 91710**

**Student supplies are provided**

**\$70 for 5 classes (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of every month)**

**If interested contact at:**

**[info@reekersart.com](mailto:info@reekersart.com) or call 714/585-6770**

**(Limited to 10 students, so please sign-up now)**

## **Special Thank You**

### **December Refreshments:**

SORRY NONE

**HELEN HO HAS BEEN UNDER THE  
WEATHER**

**WE WISH HER A SPEEDY  
RECOVERY**

### **Raffle Donations:**

Tak Nakamura

Harry Hirao

Bill & Lois Hutchinson

Manuel & Cheryl Martinez

## **PRE-MEETING WORKSHOP**

**Beginners, looking to get started!**

**Looking to improve your bonsai artistry and technique! Preparing your trees for exhibition! Wondering how to get started in Bonsai and have questions? Have a tree that is "difficult" to style and you may not know what to do. Questions on preparing your tree or displaying it at the Annual Show? No matter what your objectives are, you can bring your trees to work on at the pre-meeting workshop where experienced members will assist and advise. Meet from 4:00pm -6:00pm prior to the monthly meeting.**