



# THE KAI WIRE



SANSUI-KAI OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## As I See It

*From Milton Huckaby  
Past President*

Another of our great bonsai masters has died. Kaz Yoneda was one of the original bonsai teachers in Southern California. He has taught hundreds of people the techniques of the art. Much will be said and written about his achievements, but his true legacy is the knowledge he has passed on to the bonsai community.

The best way to learn about bonsai is the hands-on method. Books, no matter how good, cannot take the place of having a tree in front of you, which you cut, bend and shape to your imagination under the wise guidance of a great teacher like Kaz.

John Thompson's workshop at Denny Roche's home was completely filled. John is another of the younger teachers and demonstrators who is filling the void left by the passing of the older masters.

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## SPREADING WILD OAKS

*by Mary Tatro*

Twenty-one Sansui-Kai members gathered for the monthly meeting September 3 and applied at least 200 years of collective experience to five trees from the Japanese Garden Permanent Bonsai Collection. The collection's Hollywood Juniper, Black Pine, California Juniper and two Procumbens Nana were primped, cleaned, pruned, wired and shaped.

Then Oak specialist John Thompson gave a workshop and demonstration for members September 17.

For the evening demo John used a Coast Live Oak he collected six years ago from the Santa Cruz Mountains. He described the Coast Live Oak as the dominant tree in the Santa Cruz Mountains. It gets its nourishment from the humidity in the fog bank.

California oaks generally are black oaks, chaparral and scrub oaks, which have aggressive, stinging leaves -- a defense against grazing animals.

Oaks in this region that live a field with 360 degrees exposure to the sun are more broad than tall. He said the oak has no central core, like a pine, but rather branches outward, forming a broad canopy. Branch growth is upward and outward.

Mother Nature's buffeting shows hard times and tells an interesting story about the wild collected tree. John trimmed the dead growth and crossing branches, the first step for deciduous tree bonsai development, revealing, he said, the possibilities for styling. His philosophy: make flaws the feature.

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**Spreading Wild Oaks** (Continued from Page 1)

Oak can be propagated from acorns now until December. The acorn will sprout the first year. Look for shoots June/July. Encourage hair roots for nebari development, cut and wire the shoot to put some movement into the shoot. After one or two years the wood gets too dense and hard to direct. Two years later, side shoots begin developing.

He recommends grow bags, which encourage roots to grow outward into a root system that is short and compact. Plastic nursery pots tend to encourage downward root development, which then circles around the bottom of the plastic pot. For bonsai, the tree must then be corrected from that growing pattern to shallow roots. The grow bags produce a more efficient root system for bonsai development.

John Thompson's demonstration Coast Live Oak will be auctioned.



Oak Man John Thompson

A Coast Live Oak is styled in September 3 demo. The finished work will be auctioned at an upcoming meeting.

*Photo by Mary Tatro*



TLC for Japanese Garden Collection

From Top: California Juniper wired and pruned; Procumbens Nana cleaned; Hollywood Juniper trimmed; Hankums Fawcettus wired.

*Photos by Mary Tatro*



## *Naka Notes* by Jack G Reynolds

This month is sort of spring in reverse. The weather is variable. Heat or cold is a real possibility, but in general, there is mild weather.

If the weather turns hot, be ready to water more but not as much as in the spring because new leaves are not sprouting and the ones that are already grown are beginning to shut down for dormancy. Many deciduous trees will have brown or dying leaves and will be dropping leaves. Conifers will be slowing down as well, and not so much water is needed.

Check wires on all trees and remove any that is cutting into the bark. Tight wire can kill a branch in the winter cold. New wires may be put on, but remember that twigs become more brittle in the cool weather.

Some pruning should be done at this season. This is the season to give junipers a strong cut back and thinning. Pines need to be thinned, and be sure to pluck old dead needles and last year's needles. Deciduous branches and twigs may be cut back as leaves are lost.

Pruning too soon may stimulate new sprouts, so wait until leaves drop or remove them at the end of the month. Remove all fruit or seedpods, as they are an energy drain on the tree. A few may be left for viewing in alternate years if the tree is healthy. Place topical species like Ficus, Bougainvillia and Pomegranate in protected areas for the likely event of cold snaps. Place Elms and maples in the most shady locations to encourage dormancy. They can be defoliated at the end of the month if they still have leaves.

Fertilize for dormancy with low nitrogen fertilizer, something like a 0-5-5 or just plain bone meal. Too much nitrogen will stimulate new sprouts that will freeze off in the winter. Conifers can take a little more nitrogen because they don't really go dormant in Southern California, and will continue to sprout new growth that will not freeze.

This is the last month to transplant. No drastic root pruning should be done at this season but going from pot to pot with a soil change is ok.

### *As I See It*

**From Milton Huckaby** *(continued from page 1)*

While John Thompson's specialty is oaks, he is not limited to oaks as he so adequately showed in the workshop. There were at least six different kinds of trees that he helped to restructure and share valuable information.

I bought one of John's older trees. While pricey, the average cost per year is quite reasonable. To buy a ten-year-old tree, and wait 25 years for it to mature is not in the books for me.

I bought time and now have a beautiful tree that I enjoy as it continues to grow and develop.

To those of you who are serious in the personal advancement of bonsai knowledge, I would strongly advise you to take advantage of the information available from the current masters and teachers.

## Events of Interest

Sansui-Kai Program Director and Vice President Hank Fawcett is planning three important demonstrations over the next three months.

A return visit by Ted Matson is on tap as he continues his staged development of the club's Prostrata juniper. The tree's evolution was started in August 2007 with preliminary shaping, continued in February 2008 with repotting and interior pruning. The latest installment will take place at the November meeting.

Marco Invernizzi, Europe's youngest bonsai master, will begin another California tour in November. A full day workshop and evening demonstration is planned for November or early December.

And the Nature of Bonsai in China is a photo presentation prepared by Jack Reynolds. While visiting China in September for the Olympics, Jack explored the country's bonsai collections. What he found is that although the Chinese originated the art form, it is markedly different than Japanese process.

Jack will be demonstrating the final stages of development of his California Juniper for the club at the October 1 meeting. He has been developing the 80 year-old California Juniper for more than ten years.

Following the demonstration, the tree will be offered for the club's monthly raffle.

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**WEBSITE**

[www.sansui-kai.com](http://www.sansui-kai.com)

### What's Ahead

**Wednesday  
October 1**

**7:30 PM MEETING**

Demonstration Jack Reynolds'  
California Juniper  
Refreshments: *Sonja Kobler,  
Alex Momcilovic, Joe Pando,  
Mary Tatro.*  
Niche: *Michael Jonas*

**Wednesday  
November 5**

**7:30 PM MEETING  
Ted Matson**

**Wednesday  
December 3**

**7:30 PM MEETING  
Demonstration TBA**

**MEMBERSHIP**

*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. Family membership is \$27. Corresponding membership is \$7 limited to any previous club member now living outside a 50-mile radius of the meeting place.*