



# THE KAI WIRE



SANSUI-KAI OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## As I See It

*From Russell Benson  
President*

I want to tell you all about a wonderful journey. I just returned from Tasmania, off the southeast coast of Australia. The island features an astonishing array of flora and fauna, some found nowhere else in the world.

In the midst of all this grandeur, to my happy surprise, we were able to see three extraordinary bonsai collections.

In the town of Launceston, Lynne Farrell's Tasmania Bonsai Centre serves both as her personal collection and a retail setting.

She has a wonderful array dating back to 1981 and a large bungalow for doing demonstrations and classes. There was a Japanese Larch with cones no larger than one-half inch in size.

Her multiple Myrtle Beeches and Crab Apples, and her group forest setting left me disappointed that importing to the U.S. is almost impossible.

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## Black Pine Made Small

*by Hank Fawcett*

David Nguy, who studied with John Naka, Tak Shimazu, Ernie Kuo, and most recently, with Kimura in Japan, gave us a wonderfully informative demonstration for our April meeting.

Many have shied away from black pine. In the early years, I purchased older black pines only to have them die. In speaking with others, I hear the same refrain, "they are just too hard to grow as bonsai." David provided us with his insight into growing beautiful black pine.

Good draining soil is important. David uses a combination of 60% hard scoria and 40% pumice and scoria. He prefers a combination of red and black scoria. As long as the soil is good draining the roots have an opportunity to dry out a bit between watering.

He fertilizes year round with organic fertilizer. In our climate, the black pine continues to grow during the winter.

Repotting is typically done from February to April. My personal experience is that any black pine you purchase should be repotted during this period to ensure that the soil is fast draining.

David emphasized doing the maintenance in the correct order. In December, reduce the new buds to 2 lateral buds and remove the old needles.

December also is a good opportunity to perform wiring or styling. If the needles are long, they can be shortened to approximately 1 ½" long by using scissors. This will give you a better opportunity to look at the structure of the tree for design purposes.

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## Black Pine Made Small *continued from Page 1*

Repot February thru April every 3 to 4 years.

Candle prune June to July. If you wait until July, there will be a shorter growing period and the needles will be shorter. Pruning in early June may be necessary if growth is vigorous.

Cut the candles at a 90 degree angle to the branch and at the base of the candle.

Be sure to wait until June to prune the candles. This is one of the keys to obtaining a healthy and proportioned black pine. Avoid the temptation to do it any sooner.

I have often wondered why some black pines have short needles and others have longer needles.

I had the opportunity to see David's collection recently. I was especially amazed to see that all of his trees had short needles.

He credited the compact growth to his soil, fertilizing and maintenance schedule. I was gratified to see the results of his work on mature trees.

I have 15 black pines in my collection. I have made the change to a very fast draining soil and organic fertilizer. They are thriving, healthy and vigorous. I will be more attentive to this maintenance schedule to hopefully obtain the shorter needles.

Following the demonstration Tony Castanga won David's styled black pine in the club's raffle.

--Hank Fawcett

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**Reminder:**  
**Deadline for application to exhibit in the Spring Bonsai Show is May 11.**

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*David Nguy demystifies the black pine*



*Selma, Dan, Mary and Guest in rapt attention as David shares his black pine secrets*



*Tony takes the styled tree*

*Photos by Michael Jonas and Mary Tatro*



## *Naka Notes* by Jack G Reynolds

As we move into summer, be vigilant to water accordingly. Check pots daily and water when they are dry on top quarter inch or so of soil. Be careful with mature trees because over-watering will promote large leaves and long internodes. Check pot drain holes for roots that may plug them.

Trees should be rotated every couple of weeks at this season to keep development even. Don't forget that broad-leafed trees may sunburn easily on hot days so think about moving them in to semi shade or to a place where they get morning sun and afternoon shade.

Anything can be pruned or plucked at this season. Cut back deciduous trees to two or three leaves on hardened twigs. Leave the last leaf pointing in the direction you want the next twig to go. Junipers can be pinched back also. Pluck with fingers or tweezers but do not cut. The cut ends will turn brown and look bad.

At the end of this month, pines can be decandled. Take off the shortest candles on the lower branches first, then in about two weeks; take off the candles near the top. The longest candles (over two inches) can be taken last, in about two more weeks. The purpose of this is to make the new candles short and with short needles. By decandling the strongest part of the tree last, the new candles have less time to grow, and become smaller.

Most things can be wired now but watch for wires that may cut into the bark.

Everything can be fertilized this month. Try to fertilize at least once a month during the warm growing season.

Transplanting of conifers can be done, but it is a little late for early sprouters like apples and plums. It is a good time to transplant pomegranate, cotoneaster, olives and pyracantha.

### *As I See It*

**From Russell Benson** (continued from page 1)

The second collection I visited belonged to Noel Kemp, who has been the president of the Bonsai Society of Southern Tasmania since 1986. His collection is an assortment of local and non-indigenous varieties. One Monterey Cypress was only 11.5 inches. He has allowed another sibling to grow a little larger—five feet larger. It reminded me what the capabilities of nature and bonsai really are.

Lastly we stopped at Island Bonsai in a beautiful mountain setting on the outskirts of Hobart. Will Fletcher's Japanese-inspired garden had well cared for and expertly trained mature bonsai plants of Tasmanian origin.

One of my new favorite plants found on the island are Banksias. From a young age they achieve a gnarled and aged look. They flower in a range of size and colors.

Additionally, we came across numerous varieties of Eucalyptus, Pines, Junipers, Tea trees and many others in their natural settings. And while I always hesitate to inflict my vacation photographs on people, I took many pictures of these specimens that I hope to share with you in the coming weeks.

## Events of Interest

### Spring Show May 16 and 17

Spring Show Chair Jack Reynolds says don't forget that the club's Show this year is Saturday May 16 and Sunday May 17. He encourages all club members to exhibit a tree this year. Get some trees ready and participate!

Deadline for applications to exhibit is May 11. Applications can be found on the website or will be available at Wednesday's meeting.

Jack and Co-chair Eric Rogger are asking for volunteers to help set up the club's exhibits at Sepulveda Garden on May 15. Connect with them at the Wednesday, May 6 meeting to get times, places, details and assignments.

### Members' Tree Workshop

Every one is invited to come early on meeting Wednesdays for members' work sessions. Bring your trees and tools and consult with other members. The Session is from 5 pm to 7 pm. Wednesday's Session will be a good time to ready trees for the Spring Show.

### May 6 Demonstration: Citrus

Cesareo Perez will style an Australian Finger Lime for his demonstration May 6. It is a citrus with ½ inch leaves, many thorns, dense branching habit, numerous small white flowers, and edible fruit! We hear about using citrus as bonsai, but don't see much of it. Cesareo says it is a very interesting species.

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### WEBSITE

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

## What's Ahead

**Wednesday  
May 8**

### 7:30 PM MEETING

**Presentation:** Cesareo Perez  
Citrus as Bonsai  
**Refreshments:** Gloria Downey,  
Al and Grace Espinosa, Dan  
Kashinsky, Karen Decker  
**Niche:** Emma Janza

**Wednesday  
June 3**

### 7:30 PM MEETING

**Presentation:** Bob Hilvers  
Microcarving California Juniper

### 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.*