

NEWSLETTER



Baikoen Bonsai Kenkyukai

Ryan Pitts
September 18, 2025
Styling a Juniper

Bamboo Room

LA Arboretum
301 North Baldwin Avenue
Arcadia, CA 91007

Please bring something for the raffle

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September Demonstrator – Ryan Pitts



Ryan studied with Sensei David Nguy at Bonsai Jidai, is the President of Chino Bonsai Club and was co-chair of the recent John Y Naka Memorial Exhibition. You can check out his blog at www.apexbonsaistudio.com, on his progressive design of a juniper cascade. He will be in the GSBF 2025 Rendezvous Raising Stars competition.

Since we did not have a meeting in August, I thought this article by Charlie Mosse about watering, (from the San Diego Bonsai Club August 2025 newsletter, The Bonsai Wire), would give you some helpful information.

It has almost been typical summer weather. We have had some heat but the mid to late July temperatures have been warm but not hot. Thankful for that. A brief, mild heat wave happened in June. Otherwise, it has been nice, but we know serious periods of heat and spikes are most likely on the way, possibly through the end of the year. The snowpack was off for the Colorado River drainage particularly Southern Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico. In addition, there is the spring run-off that occurs earlier now---therefore less snow melt water coming into the system in summer and fall. What does this mean? Most likely you will see higher dissolved salts and minerals in our treated water systems when they are sourcing significant volume from the Colorado River. Therefore, salt build-up in soils can occur more readily. This is particularly true of older soils and growing/nursery soils that hold more moisture, therefore hold more nutrient and...salts. This can be mitigated by taking care to properly leach the salts via proper watering and leaching techniques. Note: Our water comes with salts. To get a rough total of the salts we are dealing with, add in fertilizer salts, whether they are chemical or organic. Salts are not evil unless there is too much which will create an imbalanced gradient between the soil and the root cells. High salt concentrations in the soil can pull water out of the plant roots and also will increase salt uptake into the roots. Salt imbalance in the soil can also create nutrient uptake problems for macronutrients and micronutrients. Balance is the key. Keeping the different soil salts in balance is a challenge at times. Without regular soil tests, it is difficult to know if salt levels are OK. So, we simply keep salts from accumulating. Fortunately, this is relatively easy to do:

- Fertilize more often at lower concentrations and using controlled release fertilizers like Apex and Osmocote. TIP: These types release larger amounts during warm weather, especially Osmocote.
- Water each tree 3 times per watering. This ensures, well almost, that each particle gets watered.
- Dissolving and leaching salts by applying 'extra' water, at proper times. This is a 4th watering. Is this really extra water? For bonsai it is not extra. It is a necessity, especially for older trees and salt sensitive trees.
- How often for the extra water application? It depends on your water source, fertilizers and most importantly, the time of the year. July through October for most of us is when we are watering more often and therefore fertilizing more often. This increases the potential for

adding salts and accumulating salts. 4 Three passes with a good nozzle for a good watering? Why? Water will find the easiest pathway through the soil. This can mean that it can, and will, bypass hydrophobic areas, effectively tunneling its way to the bottom of the pot. If this occurs, then many particles and some small areas will be by passed. This results in less leaching and the soil drying faster than it should. If you think you have a problem with a tree or two, submersion is the answer. Properly wetted particles will have some salts leached and some salts ready to be leached. HUH? Salts do not leach unless solubilized by the presence of enough water. Then when the so called 'extra' water is applied, many of the salts will be leached and carried away in the flood of water. Note: Not all salts will get solubilized at the same time. Some will move with the water further down in the soil profile but not make it out of the soil. Not a perfect system. But, it works well enough when utilized regularly during times when it is hot and/or with low humidity. That is when leaching is really needed to reduce or prevent salt build up. Three passes with a good shower-type nozzle that has adjustable flow. The 'extra' water will help remove or at least slow down salt build-up we expect in the summer. Heat is always here in the summer as are the increasing salts and minerals in our municipal water sources. Note that not all water agencies have the same water chemistry. Sharing information with others is good but must respectfully be taken with a grain of salt. Techniques to help leach additional salts: ❖ AN ADDITIONAL WATER APPLICATION: When I do a leaching watering cycle, the trees get a 4th watering. ❖ ADDING PH DOWN SUPPLEMENT: Water with 2 passes and then do a 3rd pass with a watering can or other automatic device adding a soil acidifier—a pH down product. This will help to temporarily dissolve additional salts. Then do the 4th watering to flush the soil. ❖ SUBMERSION: A technique, advised as needed, by several bonsai professionals in California. I use it regularly due to my hideous summer water from Helix Water. The trees are submerged in a tray that will more than cover the rootball. The tray is filled with rainwater or rainwater:tapwater at a ratio of 3:1. Tip: I spoke with Julian Tsai about mixing rain and tap water. It turns out we both use 3:1. This way few salts are added when watering. When draining a tree, a lot of salts are leached because of the amount of time the soil particles are exposed to the water and also because the draining of the pot is very rapid like in overhead watering. Dunk the tree until few bubbles are seen rising from the rootball. Then remove the tree and tilt it up and to one corner, to thoroughly drain. This is very important. While sitting in the water, a small amount of salts are leached. While draining, much salt is leached. Tip: If the trees are not as green as they should be and/or it is late summer (August5 September), I will add pH down to the water tray to help lower the pH and leach salts. Lowering the pH can help the tree take up nutrients unless the pH is already low, like below 6.2 or so. Then fertilize in a few days to help improve the leaf color. This helps my trees a lot because many are small trees, so dunking works very efficiently for watering and fertilizing at the same time. Every soil particle gets water and nutrients. ❖ SOIL SURFACE CULTIVATION: If the surface of the soil surface is crusted from salt, organic matter accumulation, fertilizer salts and akadama having broken down, scratch the surface breaking up the surface. This will allow better water penetration and leaching for a month or two until the crusting returns. ❖ SOIL SURFACE REPLACEMENT: This procedure is much more effective in improving water percolation than the above. Remove the old salty, crusty soil surface down about ¼ of the depth of the rootball, that is down to what looks like good soil with individual soil particles. Add new soil mix, firming it into place with some type of soil tamping tool.

Announcements

Refreshments will be provided by Radford Hunt and Cindy Gold.

September 14, 2025, Larry Ragle Foundation Scholarship. Applications are now open to four \$500 scholarships available to all bonsai club members in Southern California. To apply please send an email to larryraglefoundation@yahoo.com, with your name, club membership and phone number. Winners will be announced at the San Diego Bonsai Club meeting on September 14, 2025. You do not need to be present. Announcements will be made by email. Please see flyer.

September 27 & 28, 2025, 10am - 5:00 PM, San Diego Bonsai Club 60th Annual Fall Bonsai

Show and Sale, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, Room 101, 1650 El Prado, San Diego, CA 92101. The free event is open to the public. More than 50 unique bonsai will be on display. Activities will include bonsai demonstrations, sales featuring hundreds of trees, pots and other bonsai items.

October 4, 2025 open 9am -5pm, October 5 2025 open 9am – 3:30pm, Chino Bonsai Club 5th

Annual Bonsai Exhibit, 261 S. Junipero Serra Dr., San Gabriel, CA. Bonsai Styling demos and sales, free admission. Please see flyer.

October 24-26, 2025, GSBF Bonsai Rendezvous, 9:00 AM – 5pm, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, Mission del Oro Hotel, 13070 CA-33, Santa Nella, CA 95322, USA

Biennial GSBF event. Headliners, Suthin Sukosolvisit and Mauro Stemberger will host BYT workshops on Friday. Multiple workshops will be held Friday and Saturday. Vendors all three days. Free educational seminars and BYB hospitality hours. Live and silent auctions. Registration for the convention and workshops will open on June 9, 2025 at 9am. For more information, www.gsbfbonsai.org

November 14-16, 2025, Kofu Bonsai Kai annual exhibit at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana.

Set up is on Thursday November 13 setup and the show is the 14 - 16. Contact Carol Upston to show a tree.

January 17 & 18, 2025, 61st Winter Silhouettes Exhibition, 10am-4:30pm, Baikoen Bonsai

Kenkyukai, LA Arboretum Ayres Hall, 301 North Baldwin Ave, Arcadia, CA 91007.

New ZOOM Link. Baikoen meetings will continue to be recorded live and zoomed by Tom.

Here is a new link. We will be streaming our meetings live to everyone. However, it is not interactive. We encourage people to either watch the recording on YouTube or join us in person.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8328571089?pwd=1Fqg0SeV9vFT5RaF5vf3pyeVUAIYoE.1>

Tom's videos: If you have missed any of the videos that Tom has produced, here is the link to view all of them. https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=baikoen+bonsai+club

Baikoen Demo Schedule – 2025

September 18, 2025	Ryan Pitts
October 16, 2025	Tom Vuong
November 20, 2025	Seth Nelson, CBS Artist
December 2025	No Meeting