



# THE GOLDEN STATE BONSAI FEDERATION COLLECTION AT THE HUNTINGTON NEWSLETTER

April, 2025

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



After the horrendous Eaton and Palisades wildfires in January, we weren't sure that we'd have the Bonsai-A-Thon in February. We continued making plans and were happy that everyone was able to participate. On the last weekend in February, we were blessed with perfect weather, huge crowds, and a grand celebration of bonsai.

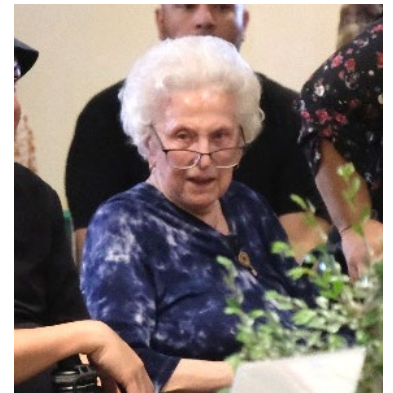
This 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bonsai-A-Thon was special because it was dedicated to Ted Matson, who had just retired as Curator of the Bonsai Collection at The Huntington. Visitors were greeted with a huge coastal Foemina Juniper forest placed near the entrance to the event. Left, early morning activities before the show began had Aaron Hughes and Daniel Deephouse watering the plants and making last minute changes.

Inside Banta Hall, a video of Ted and his

crew creating the coastal planting played throughout the day. The exhibit on the lower-level featured trees that Ted had created or collected were now owned by his students and friends. On the upper level were bonsai designed by Ted's students. Ted dedicated the last fifteen years to improving the collection and training the next generation of bonsai artists at The Huntington. We are grateful for his contributions and friendship. Thanks to Mitch Matsey for his hard work at organizing this beautiful tribute to Ted.

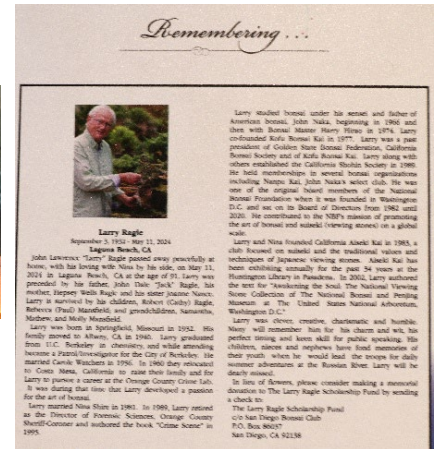


One of the main functions of the Bonsai-A-Thon is to raise money to support the bonsai collection at The Huntington. At left is Daniel holding a check for \$20,000 that was raised at the Bonsai-A-Thon for The Huntington. It was also announced that Emma Janza (right) has donated funds to support and renovate the Shohin display in the upper courtyard.



In the past year, we lost two important friends of the bonsai community and featured memorials in Banta Hall for each of them.

Larry Ragle developed his passion for the art of bonsai in 1960. A few years later, he began studying with John Naka, the father of American bonsai. He co-founded Kofu Kai with Harry Hiraio and collected suiseki on the Eel River. Larry and his wife Nina co-founded Aiseki Kai which has its annual show at The Huntington after Christmas. In addition to writing books and helping organize the California Shohin Society, he was a board member of the National Bonsai Foundation and a past president of the Golden State Bonsai Federation. In 1995, Larry (as a representative of GSBF) and Jim Folsom (Director of the Gardens at The Huntington) created an endowment to support the bonsai curator and the fundraiser which became the Bonsai-A-Thon. Larry was a kind person with a great sense of humor, who passed away on May 11, 2024, at age 91.



Jim Barrett started his bonsai career in 1954 self-taught with books and advice from Japanese bonsai friends. He started teaching beginner bonsai classes at the Komai Bonsai Nursery. When he had difficulty finding good pots for his bonsai, he started making them himself in 1975. In 2001, Jim took first prize for a bonsai pot in the modern style in the first North American Pot Competition in Washington, D.C. Jim was the first President of the Golden State Bonsai Federation and served as Chair of the GSBF Collection at The Huntington for six years. Jim was 95 when he passed away on November 28, 2024.



It takes a village to put on a Bonsai-A-Thon—and ours is populated with the most talented and generous people. We begin by acknowledging the ongoing support of The Huntington.



Special thanks go to Ted Matson for his skillful auctioneering to ever increase the price during the auctions. The first question Ted was asked after his retirement was announced, was if he could continue to work the auction and he said YES!

Thanks go to the GSBF Committee who spent months planning the event: Barry Miller, Carol Upston, Cheryl Manning, Cary Sullivan, Ellen Keneshea, Fred Seeley, Joe Galgoul, Kathy Benson, Mike Kelly, Mitch Matsey, Sanda Cre, Samur Khouja, Shirley Quan, Steve Valentine, and Wendy Tsai. A special thanks goes out to Kathy Benson for her strength and resilience in conducting a beautiful pine demo only weeks after losing her home and bonsai collection to the Eaton fire.

Our demonstrators transformed and refined trees which then went on to bidding wars during each auction: Bill Ward, Bob Pressler, Jason Chan, Jason Saito, Kathy Benson, Marcus Juniel, Mitch Matsey, and Tom Vuong. Barry Miller helped coordinate the demonstrators and photographed the trees.

We are grateful to Joshua Roth for their continuing sponsorship of our visiting artist. This year, Jonas Dupuich packed the auditorium as he entertained and enlightened us with his talks on deciduous trees and Japanese black pine. Watch for



the release of his new book *The Essential Bonsai Book*, on April 15. I was lucky enough to have an advance peek; it exceeded my highest expectations. Some of what he shared with us at his talk is in this book.

This year we solved an overcrowding situation by moving some vendors onto the front lawn while the rest were in the Ahmanson. Vendors included: America West Trading, Bonsai by Nate, Janelley's Bonsai, Legacy Cork Oaks, Mel Ikeda Pots, Ron Reeker's Art, Round Valley Bonsai Nursery, Shane Cargilo, Stone King, The Plethora Store, Tom's Bonsai Ceramics, and Victor Shelton.

Thanks go to more than forty volunteers who spent a portion of their day helping us run the event: assisting at the check-in table, watching the exhibit trees, or working the auction and raffle. These unsung heroes were instrumental in making the event run more smoothly.

Thanks go to Damon Dubois for his social media posts on Instagram and Facebook. Thanks also go to Shirley Quan for putting together this newsletter.

Thanks go to all who donated to the raffle and auction in making it the most successful one ever. Special thanks go out to Kathy Boehme for her huge donation of her pots and trees in her pots at the raffle.

Respectfully submitted.

Cheryl Manning  
Chairperson



# BONSAI-A-THON 2025



Thanks to all the visitors, volunteers,  
and vendors who contributed to  
making the 2025 Bonsai-A-Thon a  
resounding success!



GSBF Bonsai Collection at the Huntington

## Welcome Daniel Deephouse



Before Ted Matson's retirement as Curator of the Bonsai Collection at The Huntington in December 2025, Daniel Deephouse was hired as Assistant Curator. They worked together to enable a smooth transition and now Daniel has taken leadership of the collection with enthusiasm and energy.

Daniel brings more than 40 years of experience in the art of bonsai beginning in Perth, Australia. His grandmother Elizabeth Deephouse brought him to the Western Australia Bonsai Association where he became the youngest member at eight years old. Before making bonsai his full-time profession at The Huntington, he traveled the world (Sydney, London, New York) as a global strategist creating branding for alcoholic beverages. Wherever he lived, there was always bonsai in his

life.

When Daniel moved to Los Angeles in 2018, he began acquiring bonsai and joined Santa Anita Bonsai Society and Baikoen Bonsai Kenkyukai. Although his first tree was a Moreton Bay fig, he now favors pines, junipers, oaks, and bougainvillea. After attending the 2019 Bonsai-A-Thon, he became a volunteer with Ted Matson in the bonsai nursery. He manages the bonsai at the Donald Tillman Japanese Garden, teaches private classes and workshops, maintains several privately owned collections, and teaches workshops and private classes.

During Covid, bars closed and his profession as promoter of alcohol brands dried up, so Daniel embarked on a new career as landscaper with an emphasis on creating ecologically friendly water-wise environments, saving the lives of animals, plants, and our planet with a reduce, reuse, recycle, up-cycle philosophy.

We welcome Daniel as he takes over management of the renowned Huntington Garden bonsai collection, exhibition, and volunteer program. His efforts can already be seen in the improvements on the bonsai courtyards. Come see for yourself.

## BONSAI-A-THON HIGHLIGHTS



The Huntington volunteers at Ted's farewell party at the Huntington. Below, with Robert Hori, a toast to Ted and on the right with wife Marcia and his cake!



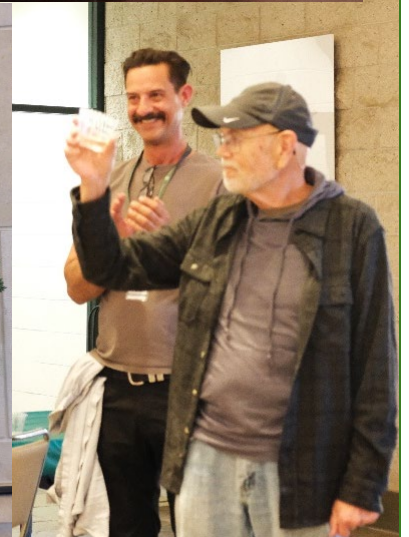
## Ted Matson: Retrospective

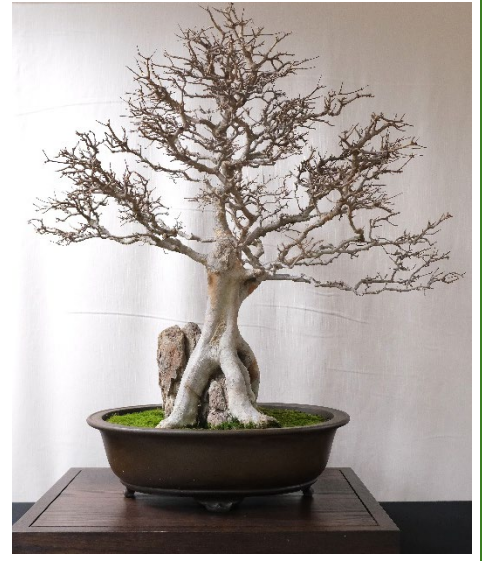
This exhibit is a tribute to Ted Matson, curator of bonsai at The Huntington between 2009 and 2024. It's a survey of his work as an artist showcasing trees that he designed and developed as well as Ted's role as an educator reflected in a number of trees that were styled by his students and some of the volunteers he mentored at The Huntington bonsai nursery.

Ted had been a student and artist of bonsai for 45 years, studying the basics with John Boyce and Southern California masters such as Ben Suzuki, Melba Tucker, Shig and Roy Nagatoshi, Warren Hill, and John Naka. He taught numerous students privately as well as at bonsai clubs in Southern California and across the country. He chaired both the statewide GSBF committee and GSBF conventions and was a popular demonstrator and lecturer in bonsai throughout the country.

His work at the Huntington included both the care and the artistic development of the bonsai collection as well as the training of The Huntington Botanical Volunteers. As an important educator and mentor, Ted had a great influence over many bonsai artists and hobbyists.

Please visit the bonsai display upstairs, which features trees styled by volunteers who have worked with Ted at The Huntington, as well as a large Foemina Juniper coastal forest planting exhibited outside near the entrance of this building.





Trees that were on display were either initially styled by Ted from his personal collection or designed by Ted and styled by his students.

## THANK YOU DONORS

KATHY BOEHME  
RAY BLASINGAME  
CHERYL MANNING  
STEVE + CARY VALENTINE  
TED MATSON  
ELLEN KENESHEA  
GABRIEL GONZALEZ  
KEITH CARTER  
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SUSAN RONAN  
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RON REEKER  
LEGACY CORK OAKS  
SOUTH COAST BONSAI KAI  
MITCH MATSEY  
JASON CHAN  
JASON SAITO

The list on the left shows donated items but in addition, there were cash donations by several people or organizations: San Sui Kai, Fred Miyagata, Emma Janza, Dave Miles, Gary Lai, Shirley Quan, and CBS.

Below Mike Kelly leads the silent auction.

