

Jim Barrett



Jim Barrett's storied career in bonsai began in 1954 when he bought two bonsai from San Gabriel Nursery. For four years, he took guidance from the few bonsai books in English he found. When Komai Bonsai Nursery opened in 1958, Jim found a place of inspiration. He never had formal bonsai lessons, but Japanese bonsai experts including Frank Nagata and Khan Komai shared information that they'd read in Japanese publications.

With Khan's encouragement, Jim started teaching beginner classes at Komai Bonsai Nursery in 1960.

He began traveling in 1969 as a featured demonstrator and workshop conductor at regional, national, and international conventions. He was featured in more than a dozen newspaper articles from the late 1960s through the 1980s.

In 1975, when Jim had difficulty finding good bonsai pots, he decided to make his own. In 2001, the National Bonsai Foundation created the first North American Bonsai Pot Competition. Jim was honored with first prize for an original bonsai pot in the modern style.

Jim was the first president of Golden State Bonsai Federation and served six years as chairman of the GSBF Collection at The Huntington. He was the founding president of Santa Anita Bonsai Society and a former president of Bonsai Clubs International.

One of Jim's most treasured trees is the twisted pomegranate shown. He began it from a cutting he took from a twisted pomegranate more than 60 years ago. He made the green-glazed pot specifically for this masterpiece tree which has resided at The Huntington since 2018.



