

DAI ICHI BONSAI KAI

Terenity through Bonsai

盆中平穏



#### DAI ICHI BONSAI KAI

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Southern California has been fortunate to have had a long and illustrious history of cultivating a diverse and talented community of bonsai artists and enthusiasts. Our early teachers, such as John Naka, selflessly gave their time and talent to nurture their students, who themselves became teachers passing on their knowledge. With each generation the art form expands, grows and evolves. The bonsai of yesterday is not the same as the bonsai of today, nor will it be the same as the bonsai of tomorrow. Promoting an art form is no small task, as in any art form there are no hard and fast rules, only interpretations of them. It is an art after all, and when a teacher educates they not only pass on knowledge, but a part of themselves as well.

To that end, each and every one of us are teachers in our own right. Our participation in clubs, workshops, and events helps to promote and ensure the continuation of bonsai in Southern California. Communities outside of SoCal are also growing and raising the bar on what bonsai could and should be. Together, we are all elevating the art of bonsai to a much higher standard in a way that even John Naka could never have envisioned.

I would hope that he would be proud.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE continued from page 2

t is with deep sadness that we acknowledge the passing of one of our distinguished teachers, Ben Oki. Along with fellow Naka students Richard Ota, Shig Miya, Frank Goya, and the late Harry Hirao, they made up the "Iron Men of Bonsai." Dedicated gentlemen who made it their life's mission to travel the world to promote and teach bonsai to any and all that were willing to learn.

I remember fondly the times that he helped me at Marina, and what struck me the most is that he could always see, right off the bat, the best potential in the material at hand. Each time. I would think I had an idea of the best way to style the tree, and each time Ben had a different approach. After the styling session was done, I could see his vision was the best approach. I would always tell him the way I originally saw the tree, and he always took the time to explain why in the long term that was not the right way to go. It's kind of hard to explain the feeling that I had, but if I had to sum it up, it felt like he instilled in me more than just knowledge. His wisdom helped me to change my point of view and how I look at a tree. For that I'll always be grateful.

Ben was a lifetime DIBK member, and was a welcome demonstrator and friend to the club. Over the years, he generously gave of his time to educate us with his stories and his knowledge.

Ben's memorial was a beautiful and touching affair with all of his friends, family and students attending. His family gave very moving speeches that provided a glimpse into the extraordinary life that he lived. Ben was good people.

FRANK YEE

Port Forest Demo

FRANK YFF

Interview

Live, Love, Grow.



IN MEMORIAM

Ben Oki, Marty Mann

ED CLARK NURSERY

**Buying Trip Coverage** 

**BONSAI-A-THON** 

Show Coverage



## FRANK YEE

SEEING THE FOREST AND THE TREES

t our February meeting, we had the pleasure of having Frank Yee as our presenter. Frank is a mainstay at many of the bonsai shows throughout California, and he brought along a few of his finest cork bark Portulacaria Afra.

Of the origination of the cork bark anomaly, Frank explained "I'm going to turn the clock back about 54 years. Mealy bugs and spider mites invaded my yard. To counteract, I used a very strong spray called DDT. It was so potent, one application killed everything. Nothing moved in the yard for weeks. It ended up killing most of the jade in my yard. As I made cuttings from the surviving plants, I found out that the offspring would develop a cork bark texture. I was very excited so I called the curator at the Huntington, and he was surprised with the results as well. I ended up gifting one of the trees to the Huntington to sell because I want everyone to enjoy the cork bark jade."

Frank then went on to explain the growing habits and characteristics of ports, such as finding the front, trimming techniques, bar branches, taper, surface roots, and a host of other topics. There may also have been a few bawdy jokes thrown in as well. Well... just watch the video.; )

After the break, Mr Yee then created a forest. He started with a really nice glazed pot and a selection of some good sized formal upright ports. The largest tree was offset with the skinnier/smaller trees at the back. With Carol Takahashi assisting him, the forest was completed in no time.

It was a great presentation and if you ever get the chance to experience one of Frank s demonstration, you'll definitely want to attend as it's a most entertaining and educational experience.









Congratulations to the lucky raffle winners, Liz Do who won the forest planting, and to Amati Carillo for winning Frank's donation tree.





Frank Yee Demo - Port Forest.



Watch Frank's full demo at **www.facebook.com/DailchiBonsai** 



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## BONSAI ARTIST: A VISIT WITH FRANK YEE

WORDS BY LIZ DO IMAGES BY PHIL AUPPERLE

had the pleasure of visiting with Frank Yee and his wife, Marilyn at their lovely midcentury home in the hills that overlook Monterey Park. It's easy to see how Frank became so enraptured with bonsai with such a lovely setting to work in.

Frank's in his mid 80's, and still very active in the bonsai world. He's been practicing bonsai for almost fifty years. You'll find him at shows selling his beautiful corked jades and other bonsai trees. He gives demos and exhibits his trees, but he has cut back from the days when he had over 5,000 trees in his yard.

He's known as the pioneer of corked Portulacaria Afras on the West Coast. In the early 1960's he bought some jades to landscape his property. One year he was overrun with bugs attacking his plants and sprayed with DDT, a dangerous, now long banned pesticide. Most of his plants died after the spraying, but some jades survived. He made over 1,000 cuttings from his plants and started selling them. Initially, he didn't notice that his jades were special until a customer pointed out the unique cork bark texture that makes Frank's Portulacaria's so appealing and sought after. Frank enjoys working with jades as you can create any style and they are easy to care for. When you meet Frank, you may think he is a reserved serious man—and he is—but you'll quickly realize what a great sense of humor he has. Also you may start to wonder if he's pulling your leg; as he says, "Bonsai people lie." Here are some excerpts from my visit.

## How did you become involved in bonsai?

"My wife, Marilyn, suggested I check out an Adult Education class on bonsai at East Los Angeles Community College with Ben Suzuki. This was around 1970. I found that my background as a dental technician fit well with studying bonsai. I could plan ahead and see what the tree could become. I mostly ended up studying on my own though. A few years later, Ben Suzuki asked me to teach some of the adult community college classes."

#### You also studied with John Naka?

"I did, and he was a great teacher. He did not keep any secrets, and really shared his knowledge. John reached out to everyone. He was a great man.

"He said you had to listen to the tree and it will tell you what to do. I really believe that is true.

"John Naka was okay with using Portulacarias for bonsai. A lot of the old timers don't use them because they are succulents. They say you can't get taper, that you can't get surface roots, that you can't wire, but you can do all these things with the jade."

## Do you have some tips for training the corked jades? How do you get taper?

"Like with other bonsai, I leave a lot of lower branches near the surface, and that thickens it up. I also cut a lot of branches off the upper third. The cuttings I like are the ones from the trees that are already corking. It can take over ten years for some jades to start corking."











#### Do you have a proudest moment in bonsai?

"How soon do you have to know? Not really, I was surprised at how nicely the jade forest turned out. I'll make some more for demos. Maybe put 21 trees in it this time."

#### Did you go on many yamadori expeditions?

"Not so many. I went out with Harry Hirao a few times. It was hard work. One time a man who went had a stroke. We were standing over him, trying to help." Frank then clutched his heart, reenacting the scene of the man gasping, "Don't touch my tree! I'll be back for my tree!" Frank added, with a shake of his head, "bonsai people are crazy."

If you run into Frank at a show, be sure to say hi and buy one of his cork jades. They are a fascinating tree to work on, and he's a warm man with captivating stories from a lifetime of bonsai adventures. Thank you Frank and Marilyn for your hospitality!





## 2018 BONSAI-A-THON

he Golden State Bonsai Federation's annual Bonsai-A-Thon has grown into one of Southern California's largest and most anticipated bonsai events, and this year's show was no exception. Attendance was brisk as enthusiasts gathered from all over to enjoy the demos, sales, auctions, raffles and exhibits. There were also beginning workshops for children and adults, which were both well attended. Many items were offered for sale.

Bonsai-A-Thon continues to be a popular start to Southern California's bonsai show season. Let's take a look at the event.







#### workshop

There was a whole lotta teachin' going on at the beginner's workshop. It's a rewarding experience for both the students as well as the teachers, who all volunteered their time to make this learning experience enjoyable. If you're interested in teaching a beginner's class at the Huntington, contact Keith Martin.

Photos by Barry Miller









raffle & auction





Photos by Barry Miller



exhibition









vendors











demonstrations

Continued on page 17

Ben doing what he loved best. Teaching the art of bonsai.

# BEN OKI



#### By Lloyd Garver

When Ben Oki was six years old and living in Japan, his father took him to a carnival. Something there caught his eye, and he asked his father what it was. He answered, "That's a bonsai." Six-year-old Ben said, "I like bonsai." Yes, he did. Ben liked bonsai for the rest of his life, and the bonsai world is a much better place because he did.

Ben was born in Sacramento in 1927. While he was still a young boy, he and his family moved to Japan. Ben returned to California in 1954, and met bonsai pioneer John Naka in 1958. Ben said that he remained a student of John Naka's even after he had become a bonsai master himself.

Ben was not only a bonsai artist and teacher, but he was a great ambassador for bonsai. He went all over the world, giving demonstrations and workshops, and his bonsai are in collections all around the globe. He wanted to expose as many people as possible to bonsai.



American Ben Oki Bonsai Master.Bonsai Life. Ben Oki Maestro Americano del Bonsai.Bonsai de Vida



Ben was featured in this video, *Ben Oki, Life of Bonsai,* where he discussed his history in the art.

You can watch the video here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdtbWxRhqy8 There is not enough space to list all of Ben's awards and accomplishments, but some should be mentioned here. Until the end of his life, he was part of an unparalleled teaching trio with his friends and colleagues Frank Goya and Shig Miya at the Marina Bonsai Club. In 1989, the Los Angeles Council General of Japan, Seki Hiromoto, honored Ben's California Juniper, "Dancing Dragon." It's now part of the bonsai collection at the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. Ben was the curator of the bonsai collection at the Huntington Gardens, and there is an area there which has been named "The Ben Oki Nursery."

Ben enjoyed telling a good story, and he had one of the most amazing stories ever. He was living in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. That morning, the teenage Ben decided to ditch school and go fishing with some friends. They were out on the water, far from the city when the B-29 flew overhead and dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. In an instant, they could see that the city was on fire. It took Ben several hours to get home, and his father was shocked that Ben was still alive. The school that Ben was supposed to have been in had been destroyed by the bomb. After telling this story, Ben usually laughed and said that the moral was, "ditch school and go fishing." Despite smiling about his adventure, the horror of what happened that day was a deep, deep part of him. Perhaps that's why he chose such a peaceful profession.

One of the things that Ben liked about bonsai is that, unlike a painting and most works of art, a bonsai is never finished. The artist continues to work on it, shape it, feed it, and respond to nature's changes. Bonsai are often passed down from generation to generation or given to others to work on until it's somebody else's turn. Ben's legacy will continue in everyone that he has taught, and in the many bonsai of his that can be seen throughout the world. It's all very consistent with Ben's wish that more and more people all over the world will say the same thing that a little six-year-old boy said at a carnival in Japan 85 years ago: "I like bonsai."



## IN MEMORIAM MARTY MANN

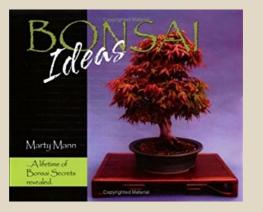


By Marilyn Stevenson

Marty Mann would have celebrated his 95th birthday on March 26th, 2018 but, sadly, he passed away on February 9th. His three children, Mitch, Lori, and Harriet, all live in California and have been with Marty quite a bit during the last months, but Marty was truly missing Ruth who had preceded him in death about eight months earlier.

Marty is well known to the bonsai communities in California and in other places in the world. His popular book, *"Bonsai Ideas . . . A Lifetime of Bonsai Secrets,"* published in 2005, has been a resource in many bonsai classes even though it has gone out of print. Marty wrote many regular articles for GSBF's *Golden Statements* (his regular column: "Seasonal Statements") and for other Bonsai Clubs' newsletters for many years.

#### IN MEMORIAM MARTY MANN CONTINUED



Marty was a generous person with his time, talent, and resources. He was the son of an opera singer father but Marty had a flair for writing and chose to share his bonsai avocation with print. As a World War II army veteran, especially in the European theatre, he later moved from Chicago to California and became active with Warren Hill at the Descanso Bonsai Club. Then he became active with California Bonsai Club and John Naka, and the Golden State Bonsai Federation. After retirement, he and Ruth moved to San Diego and he became most active with the San Diego Bonsai Club, San Pu Kai, and the Bonsai Pavilion at the Zoo's Safari Park. He continued to use his professional talents in many support and advisory areas as individual clubs' auditor, treasurer, teacher, writer etc. for many years.

Marty was a very kind gentleman, supportive of family, friends, and students. He and Ruth hosted exchange students from Europe. He enjoyed camraderie and humor and especially good-natured teasing from all. His spirit of helpfulness knew no bounds! Thank you Marty for sharing your beautiful life with us... we will remember and try to emulate some of your wonderful traits!

## BONSAI-A-THON demonstrations continued

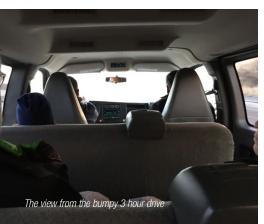








## ED-CLARK FROUND VALLEY NURSERY





d Clark has become a staple vendor at many of the large California bonsai shows, and his offerings are impressive to say the least. Thanks to Tom Lau and our friends at Baikoen Bonsai Kenkyukai, we were fortunate to be able to visit Ed's nursery located in Lindsay.

It was a very cold morning as DIBK members piled into a rented van to make the trek up to Central California, and to the treasured material awaiting them. The trip was an experience in itself, as we weathered light traffic, snow and a few patches of black ice. Ed's nursery is nestled off the beaten path, surrounded by orange orchards and not much else. The perfect location to grow some pretty awesome trees.

Once a commercial Japanese Maple and Magnolia grower, Ed now uses his skills and talent to grow a wide variety of pre bonsai material, including Shimpaku, Japanese Black Pine, Maple, Cedar and Elm amongst many others. The Princess Persimmon was particulary popular. He is well known for his wire wrapped technique for developing twisted trunk material, and there were many examples on display.

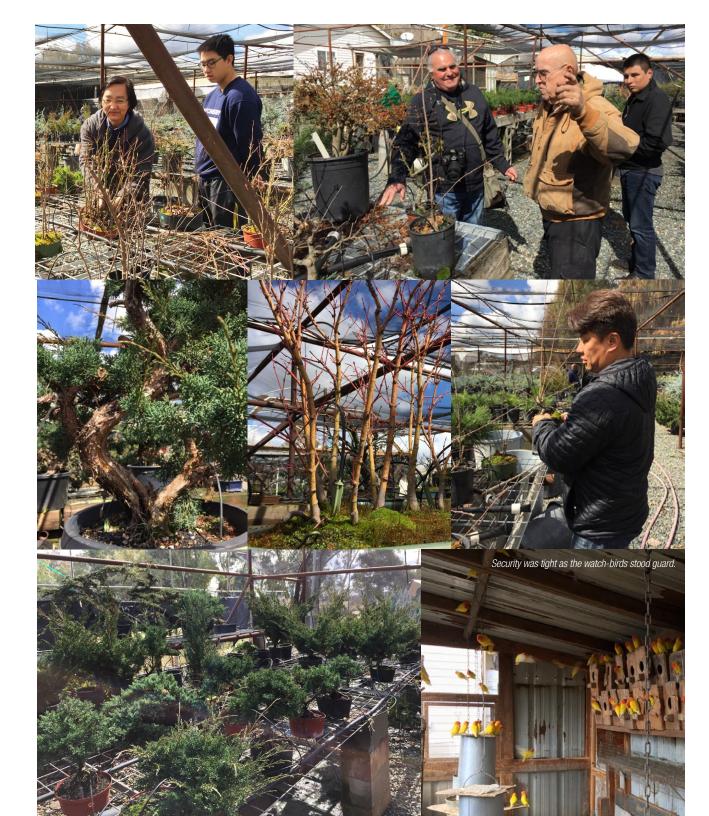
While not a retail nursery, Ed's expansive collection has been cultivated for his own use, as well as a source of material to sell at shows. The sprawling growing field consists of multiple greenhouses containing material at various stages of development from seed grown to propogated cuttings. He also has an expansive area exclusively for in-ground developed material, all trained to be excellent bonsai material.

At the end of the trip, Ed's lovely wife Linda served up a fantastic feast for the famished shoppers. In all it was a fun trip that yielded a van full of great material as well as some well fed and sleepy DIBK members.









#### COME SHOW YOUR SUPPORT AND ENJOY A DAY OF FUN!

Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai is proud to announce our participation in this year's 45th Annual Bunka-Sai Japanese Cultural Festival. We will be exhibiting member trees as well as offering two half hour introductory presentations to bonsai. If you would like to help out at the show, please contact Doyle or Jason.











Presented by The Torrance Sister City Association TorranceSisterCity.org

Proceeds to benefit the student cultural exchange program

City of Torrance • Community Services Department • 310-618-2930

## GET YOUR SHOW TREES READY!

All DIBK members are encouraged to show a tree in this year's show. Start getting your best trees ready, and please send back the response card as soon as it arrives so we may facilitate the display planning.



## **33rd ANNUAL BONSAI EXHIBIT & SALE**















Novice to master exhibitors, daily demonstrations and drawings, bonsai plants, tools, and accessories on sale throughout the show. Free admission and parking.

> For more info, call Doyle Saito at (310) 539-9265 or visit daiichibonsaikai.com

405 Freeway or Artesia Boulevard (91 Freeway) to Western Avenue. Western Avenue north to 162nd Street. Turn east (right) on 162nd Street to the Ken Nakaoka Community Center, located on the south side of 162nd Street at 1670 W. 162nd Street.





May 5 and 6, 2018

#### SATURDAY • MAY 5

10:00am - 4:00pm 10:30am 1:00pm 6:00pm

1:00pm

10:00am - 3:00pm

Show & Sales Area Open Beginner's Hands-on Workshop (Free to first 15, first-time participants only) Round Robin Bonsai Demonstration **Private Dinner Reception** 

Bonsai Auction SUNDAY • MAY 6

Show & Sales Area Open

Mr. Frank Goya, Saikei Demonstration

# CALENDAR

#### MARCH

#### **MEMBER FIELD TRIP**

#### SATURDAY - March 17, 2018, 10:00am Tom Vuong Collection Location: COrange, CA

Tour the massive collection of DIBK member Tom Vuong. Spaces are limited so reserve your spot early.

## APRIL

#### **MEMBER WORKSHOP**

#### SATURDAY - April 21, 2018, 9:00 am Member Workshop Location: Gardena, CA

Continuation of our Workshop series. Bring your trees, pots and materials and get styling, horticultural tips from senior club members. Non-members \$25 (annual membership fee). Members FREE.

Spaces are limited so reserve your spot early.

## MAY

#### **MEMBER WORKSHOP**

#### SATURDAY - May 19, 2018, 9:00 am Member Workshop Location: Torrance, CA

Continuation of our Workshop series. Bring your trees, pots and materials and get styling, horticultural tips from senior club members. Non-members \$25 (annual membership fee). Members FREE.

Spaces are limited so reserve your spot early.

#### JUNE

#### **MEMBER WORKSHOP**

SATURDAY - June 16, 2018, 9:00 am Member Workshop Location: Torrance, CA

Continuation of our Workshop series. Bring your trees, pots and materials and get styling, horticultural tips from senior club members. Non-members \$25 (annual membership fee). Members FREE.

Spaces are limited so reserve your spot early.

## JULY

#### **MEMBER WORKSHOP**

SATURDAY - July 21, 2018, 9:00 am Member Workshop Location: Torrance. CA

Continuation of our Workshop series. Bring your trees, pots and materials and get styling, horticultural tips from senior club members. Non-members \$25 (annual membership fee). Members FREE.

Spaces are limited so reserve your spot early.

## AUGUST

#### MEMBER WORKSHOP

SATURDAY - August 17, 2018, 9:00 am Member Workshop Location: Torrance. CA

Continuation of our Workshop series. Bring your trees, pots and materials and get styling, horticultural tips from senior club members. Non-members \$25 (annual membership fee). Members FREE.

Spaces are limited so reserve your spot early.

#### **SEPTEMBER**

#### **MEMBER WORKSHOP**

SATURDAY - September 22, 2018, 9:00 am Member Workshop Location: Gardena, CA

Continuation of our Workshop series. Bring your trees, pots and materials and get styling, horticultural tips from senior club members. Non-members \$25 (annual membership fee). Members FREE.

Spaces are limited so reserve your spot early.

#### **OCTOBER**

#### **DIBK MASTER SERIES WORKSHOP**

MONDAY - October 29, 2018, 9:00am

#### **BJORN BJORHOLM** \$175 members • \$200 non-members

Enjoy this rare opportunity to attend a hands-on workshop with one of bonsai's preeminent artists, Bjorn Bjorholm. Bring your best show trees and get invaluable advice. Seating for this workshop will be extremely limited. Attendees will be chosen by lottery drawing.

For more information and to reserve your spot in the drawing, please email doylesaito@yahoo.com.

## NOVEMBER

#### **MEMBER WORKSHOP**

SATURDAY - November 17, 2018, 9:00 am Member Workshop Location: Torrance, CA

Continuation of our Workshop series. Bring your trees, pots and materials and get styling, horticultural tips from senior club members. Non-members \$25 (annual membership fee). Members FREE.

Spaces are limited so reserve your spot early.





## TOM VUONG ALLAN SUGIMURA ADVANCED TRUNK BENDING MARCH 16, 2017

At our March meeting, our demonstrators will be DIBK members Tom Vuong and Allan Sugimura. Tom is the co-founder of the Viet Bonsai Today Society, and is a popular presenter in the Southern California bonsai club circuit. He is known for his advanced grafting and styling techniques in Black Pine and California Juniper, amongst others. Allan is a certified nursery grower and has been practicing bonsai for over 20 years. He specializes in Japanese Black Pine, and has hundreds of trees in various stages of growth.

They will be demonstrating various techniques on creating difficult bends in old growth Juniper trunks. This is a topic not covered very often, so this will be a demonstration that is not to be missed.

#### UPCOMING

All events are tentative and subject to change.

APRIL 20, 2018 | PETER MACASIEB SHOHIN STYLING TECHNIQUES

MAY 18, 2018 | WILL BADDELEY TREE STYLING AND CARVING

JUNE 15, 2018 | **TED MATSON** DECIDUOUS TREES

## EVENTS

March 24 – 25, 2018 2017 California Bonsai Society Show The Huntington

1151 Oxford Road, San Marino

Hours: 10:00 AM – 4:30 PM Discover the timeless appeal of an ancient horticultural art form as the California Bonsai Society presents its 61st annual show. The show takes place in The Huntington's Brody Botanical Center. Additional examples of bonsai can be seen in the permanent display in the Japanese Garden's Bonsai Courts, where more than 70 world-class trees are on permanent display. Entry to the show is included with general admission to The Huntington. Information: www.huntington.org

#### April 28-29, 2018 San Diego Bonsai Exhibition Casa Del Prado, Room 101

Balboa Park

Hours: 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM Demonstrations at 11 AM and 1 PM. Free admission. Bonsai pots and trees for sale, as well as other bonsai-related items.

For more information visit www.sandiegobonsaiclub.com

#### May 5-6, 2018

Dai Ichi Bonsai KaiSerenity Through Bonsai Show & SaleKen Nakaoka Community Center1670 W. 162nd St.Hours:10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Admission is free. For more details about our club and show please visit: www.bit.ly/DIBK-Web or www.bit.ly/DIBK-FB

#### May 20, 2018

Sansui Kai Annual Show and Sale Japanese Garden

Tillman Water Reclamation Center, 6100 Woodley Ave. Van Nuys, 818-756-8166) Entry fee of \$5.00 gains admission to the show and sale as well as the gardens. For more information visit www.sansui-kai.org

For more event information, please visit **bit.ly/GSBF-MoreEvents** 

## GRATITUDE

Thank you to all of the members who contributed. The club truly appreciates your generosity and giving spirit.

Benefit Drawing Contributors Doyle Saito, Fred & Shirley Floresca, Frank Goya, Frank Yee

#### **Refreshment Contributors**

Doyle Saito, Fred & Shirley Floresca, Kevin McNally, Tom Culton, Allan Sugimura, John Van de Wouw & Lisa Horhay

Refreshment Signup for March John Monos, Louis Carrillo

Please remember to sign the contribution sheet so that we may acknowledge your generosity.

#### Special thanks to

Ken Yee, Liz Do, Phil Aupperle, GSBF - Bonsai-a-thon, Barry Miller, Doyle Saito, John van de Wouw, Ben Oki and the Oki Family, Lloyd Garver, Marty Mann and the Mann family, Marilyn Stevenson, Ed and Linda Clark - Round Valley Bonsai Nursery, Tom Lau - Baikoen Bonsai Kenkyukai for their contributions to this issue of the DIBK Gazette.

## ABOUT DAI ICHI BONSAI KAI

Dai Ichi Bonsai Kai ("Number One" Bonsai Club) was established in January, 1986. Our club is dedicated to promoting the art of bonsai, and takes great pride in its family-oriented character.

The club meets on the third Friday of each month at the Ken Nakaoka Community Center, 1670 W. 162nd St., Gardena, at 7:00 P.M. Each meeting features a bonsai demonstration, benefit drawing and the public is welcome.

#### www.daiichibonsaikai.com

#### Please feel free to forward this publication to friends, family or anyone with an appreciation for bonsai.

Do you have any comments, questions, or submissions? If so, please contact: **Jason Saito** ph 310.909.4598 | email jason@zenpalace.com

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