



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I feel over-whelmed by all there is to know - how do I get started?

Yes, there is a large body of information to understand, but remember that there are no "instant" bonsai and there are no "instant" bonsai masters. Like any new subject area, the more you read, ask questions and participate, the sooner the haze will start to clear. We are a teaching club and are eager to guide you. Taking

Kusamura's Beginner course and reading the many articles under "Resources" on our website are two good places to start.

What is the history of Kusamura?

The Kusamura Bonsai Club is one of the oldest english speaking bonsai clubs in Northern California beginning in 1954. Toshio Saburomaru became the club's first sensei and president in 1960. We have a long legacy of leaders in the bonsai community who were and are members of Kusamura.

Where can I buy bonsai trees or bonsai plants?

You can buy trees from area nurseries like Summer Winds, Loews, OSH or Home Depot. The article on our website "Finding Material at the Nursery" will give you guidance. There are dedicated bonsai nurseries around N. California and you can also purchase starter and developed bonsai plants from many of the shows held in the area. Kusamura members John and Sandy Planting in Menlo Park have an extensive collection that they are offering for sale as they downsize after 50 years as bonsai artists.

What are good trees for beginners?

Some trees will not miniaturize well into a bonsai and some trees require more TLC to thrive than others. In general, elms, juniper and maples are good beginning trees. But most bonsai enthusiasts would say "Work on what ever species speaks to you and attracts you." Another point is that in bonsai as in many other things, quality is more important than quantity. It is better to focus on a few really good trees that you will love to work on and will be proud to display than to expend time and effort on trees without much potential. Established bonsai artists may be able to turn a mediocre specimen into an acceptable tree, but as a beginner, you will learn faster if you focus on material that already has the basic requirements in place or that can be developed without special knowledge.

What kind of soil should I use and where can I get it?

There are a variety of opinions regarding the proportion and composition of bonsai soil, but the first thing to know about bonsai "soil" is that it has no resemblance to the potting soil sold in garden centers. The two basic options are to make your own from individual components or to buy premixed soil from the vendors selling at the bonsai club shows held in our area. The article "Soil Basics" under our website "Resources" gives more information. And if you only need a small amount to repot a tree or two, you might get it from another member who's willing to share some from their "secret" recipe supply!

" My introduction to the club has been a lovely and a most enriching journey. The art of bonsai has broadened my perspective on training, patience, and beauty." - Susan Freyberg

What kinds of tools do I need and where do I buy them?

The Kusamura website article "Tool Basics" shows pictures and a description of tools and where to get them. There are also links to outside articles on tools. Also, ask other members about which brands and vendors they prefer. As noted in the article, you only need three or four basic tools to get started. For events like potting parties, experienced members will have more specialized tools if needed, so don't stay away because you haven't purchased tools.



Can I grow bonsai indoors?

Yes, there are some plants that can be grown indoors as bonsai, provided you give them the correct light, temperature and humidity they need to thrive in the artificial environment indoors. Ficus, Schefflera and Jade Plant (*Crassula Ovata*) are some frequently chosen plants for indoor bonsai. The vast majority of bonsai, however, are meant to live outdoors and come inside only for a brief special display.

How do I take care of my bonsai?

The article "About Your New Tree" on our website gives an overview of bonsai basics. The article "Monthly Tasks" gives you an idea of what is needed seasonally in regards to repotting, pruning, fertilizing and watering.

Where can I get help and advice?

The best source of help and advice is from your fellow Kusamura members. Members are generous with their support and you should never hesitate to ask questions. One of the benefits of attending club meetings is access to "Dr. Bonsai". This is an experienced club member who is available from 6:30 - 7:00 before the regular meeting and will look at and advise on your tree.

What other bonsai events/resources are available in the greater Bay Area?

We who live in the Bay Area are blessed with an abundance of opportunities to develop our bonsai skills through demonstrations and hands-on workshops offered by other clubs, professional bonsai experts and as part of conventions. At the end of each of our club newsletters is a list of upcoming Bay Area and sometimes Northern California Bonsai shows, conferences and conventions. Back issues of the newsletter are available on our Website. The GSBF website will also give news of these events.

What are some good books on bonsai for beginners?



These books all offer useful information for the novice and can be a good supplement to taking bonsai workshops, attending shows and watching demonstrations.

Principles of Bonsai Design, David De Groot. A beautifully illustrated, clearly-written comprehensive guide to the elements of bonsai design and presentation. Not a "how to" guide to technique.

Basic Bonsai Design, David De Groot.

The Art of Bonsai Design, Colin Lewis. Combination of design principles and techniques. Fun to read and focuses on elms, junipers and pines - 3 beginner favorites. Available from Kusamura library.

The Complete Book of Bonsai, Harry Tomlinson. Detailed illustrations cover basic bonsai techniques, but what makes this a great resource are the comprehensive guides to trees used for bonsai.

Satsuki Azaleas, Robert Z. Callaham. A definitive book for specializing in Satsuki.

Junipers -Bonsai Today Masters' Series. A collection of articles exclusively on junipers. Originally published in Bonsai Today magazine and featuring bonsai masters from around the globe.

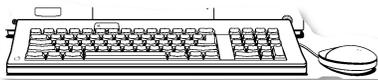
Pines -Bonsai Today Masters' Series. A collection of articles exclusively on pines. Originally published in Bonsai Today magazine and featuring bonsai masters from around the globe.

Successful Bonsai Shaping, Peter D. Adams. Emphasis on aesthetic and practical details of shaping ten species that are commonly used for bonsai.

Modern Bonsai Practice, Larry Morton. Member Michael Greenstein says "I like the no nonsense approach, and the scientific debunking of many Bonsai false assumptions."

bonsai, Peter Warren. Two copies are available in our club library.

Bonsai Techniques I and II, John Yoshio Naka. Classic books, but out-of-print and very expensive. A more affordable book by Mr. Naka is *John Naka's Sketchbook*.



What are some recommended websites for reliable bonsai information and instruction relevant for our growing conditions?

There are hundreds of websites and Youtube videos on bonsai - of varying quality and usefulness. Here are five that you may enjoy reading:

Bonsaitonight.com (Jonas Dupuich)*

Peterteabonsai.wordpress.com (Peter Tea)*

Crataegus.com (Michael Hagedorn)

Bonsaibark.com (Wayne Schoech)

Bonsaimirai.com (Ryan Neil)

* Peter and Jonas have both presented demonstrations at our club and Jonas will be the featured demonstrator at our 2017 show.

Are there workshops I can attend to increase my knowledge and skills?

At many of our Club meetings, we hold mini-workshops for members. Every other year there is a three day Shohin Bonsai Seminar where you may observe or participate in workshops. Likewise for the GSBF Northern California Bonsai Convention. In addition, the monthly newsletter lists some of these opportunities and other members can help with more suggestions.

What's on the Kusamura website - overview of important topics (list)

Our website has earned recognition as the best small club website in California from the Golden State Bonsai Federation. If you need information or just have time to browse, you can find:

- Information on our club and its history
- Resources regarding specific species, bonsai tools, monthly maintenance tasks
- List of library books and magazines that can be borrowed
- Photos from our annual shows
- Archive copies of our newsletter