

## CELEBRATING SHŌGATSU!



This is the eighth year the Clark Bonsai Museum has celebrated Shōgatsu, Japanese New Year with traditional decor displayed at the entrance gate and games and activities for the whole family. (Weather allowing. This year was a bit of a gamble each day due to rain.) Read more about it on page 5 .



# BONSAI TOMODACHI

## THE CLARK BONSAI MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

## CURATOR'S MESSAGE



My Friends,

As the year ends, I reflect on the past and look to the future. The annual ritual of recalling shared experiences and anticipation of new ones is always accompanied by fond memories and hope for progress. Our efforts at The Clark Bonsai Museum were rewarded with steady growth and we explored new and successful areas of endeavor. It has been a year filled with learning, artistry, and shared passion for the timeless practice of bonsai cultivation. Next year promises new adventures and opportunities.

## Highlights From the Past Year

- Workshops: Our interactive workshops energized our visitors and provided them with new adventures to experience. Thank you to our workshop leaders for the enthusiasm and creativity you brought to each session!
- Events: Each year our World Bonsai Day presents us with more opportunities to allow our visitors to experience the art of Bonsai. This year noted Bonsai Master Katsumi Kinoshita commemorated our celebration with the gift of the finest example of a Monterey Cypress Bonsai extant.

We celebrated our tenth anniversary at the Shinzen Friendship Gardens with Bonsai demonstrations and an evening Gala. Our goal for the event was to thank old friends for making the Clark Bonsai Museum a success and introduce ourselves to new friends that would join our efforts. We succeeded beyond expectation!

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

## FOUR SEASONS EXHIBITION

Nov.-March See Page 4

## SHŌGATSU CELEBRATION

Dec. 31-Jan 4. See Page 5

## CSUF EXHIBITION Jan12-Feb 6

& SYMPOSIUM Jan 22.

See Page 6

## CSUF Art 141 Service Learning Class

Spring Semester 2026

See Page 7

## BLOSSOM VIEWING IN THE UME

GROVE January TBA. See

Shinzenjapanesegarden.org

## MINIATURE FORESTS

EXHIBITION Mar-June

## WORLD BONSAI DAY May 9

## THE ELEMENT OF TIME EXHIBITION June-Oct.

Yoichiro Suemori from San Diego  
"A treasure in Fresno!"

### Curator's Message

- **Volunteers:** Due to our Volunteer Coordinator's dedication, we were able to expand our team of Docents and Curatorial staff.
- **Financial stability:** Never very far from our thoughts is the need to find new and sustainable sources of income. This year, we secured a community-based grant and have proactively pursued additional funding opportunities. Furthermore, we have established organizational structures designed to support long-term financial sustainability.
- **Organizational Capacity:** Simply put, organizational capacity is our ability to do the necessary work to competently meet the operational needs of the Museum. We have pursued a policy of gradually transitioning from an all-volunteer to a hybrid volunteer-paid staff organization. This is not a reflection on the quality of work provided by volunteers. Quite the contrary, volunteers in many instances offer superior performance to paid staff simply because they are more dedicated to the mission. However, paid-staffing offers a critical organizational advantage that volunteers cannot – consistent, sustainable performance in critical pathway functions. If something must be done with a consistent level of proficiency, the same way, at the same time, all the time, volunteers by the nature of volunteerism has difficulty meeting that standard. The drawback of utilizing paid staff is the need to determine an appropriate source of funding for compensation. Hence our consistent challenge to establish financial stability and our cautious transition to a hybrid paid/volunteer staffing model to meet our organizational capacity needs.

### Gratitude & Appreciation

I sincerely appreciate the time each of you has spent not only caring for our bonsai trees but also ensuring our visitors enjoy an exceptional Bonsai experience. To all our generous and dedicated volunteers, and supportive sponsors - thank you for making this year remarkable and for helping us make next year even better.

**Xenia Lin of Clovis “Beautiful, breath-taking experience.”**

### Continued from Page 1

## Falling into Winter 2025-2026

### Looking Ahead: Goals for Next Year

- Introducing new educational programs to advance our skill levels
- Welcoming new partners to the Museum experience
- Expanding our exhibitions to include off-site presentations
- Exploring sustainability initiatives in bonsai care
- Enhancing our digital presence and online resources
- Improving the quality of our museum holdings

Your feedback and participation will help shape our journey into the new year. Please share your ideas and aspirations with us as we continue to grow together.

### Closing Thoughts

Bonsai teaches us patience, resilience, and appreciation for nature's subtle artistry. May the coming year bring you peace, joy, and continued inspiration as we nurture both our trees and our bonds.

Wishing you and your loved ones a wonderful holiday season and a happy New Year!

Warm regards, Bob



Bob Hilvers giving a tour at the 10th Anniversary Celebration.

**BONSAI OF THE MONTH:**



**CBCS 123**

Original Artist/ Maker : Richard Ramirez

Common Name : Montezuma Cypress

Botanical Name: Taxodium mucronatum

Date Acquired: 1/14/17

Age: Estimated 46 years

Deciduous

Style: Kabudachi/Clump In the clump style, three or more (should be an odd number) trunks grow from a single point.

Donor: Richard Ramirez



Montezuma cypress or Ahuehuete (Mexico's National Tree) is primarily native to Mexico and Guatemala, with a few populations in the southwestern US. The tree is sacred to the native peoples of Mexico, and is featured in the Zapotec creation myth. Montezuma cypresses have been used as ornamental trees since Pre-Columbian times. Richard Ramirez acquired several Montezuma Cypress seedlings in 1973 from the Henderson Experimental Gardens with the intention of creating a forest. However, they found their way off into a pot in the corner of Richard's garden and grew into this intermingled clump. *Kabudachi* or clump style bonsai has three or more trunks growing from a single point. In nature this might be a group of trees that have sprouted from a single cone, or a collection of mature suckers springing from the base of a single tree.

You can support the Clark Bonsai Collection and its many world class bonsai such as this one currently on exhibit in the bonsai garden by becoming a sponsor. Please visit [clarkbonsaimuseum.org/get-involved/adoptions/](http://clarkbonsaimuseum.org/get-involved/adoptions/) to find out about the benefits of becoming a bonsai sponsor.

**FOUR SEASONS:  
A Showcase of Deciduous Bonsai  
November 1, 2025 - March 29, 2026**

**An exhibition made possible by a gift  
From Mr. And Mrs. M. Burnham**

Our Four Seasons exhibition opened November 1 featuring deciduous bonsai displaying the last of their green foliage. Although the days shortened, the cooler weather was long in coming, so the fall color in the bonsai was both diminished and delayed, so none of the vibrant reds and oranges we are accustomed to see in the maples. Fortunately, the full sized trees in the surrounding landscaping and in Shinzen finally showed some beautiful fall color.

When deciduous bonsai have shed all their leaves, we see the artistic skill that formed the structure of the trees now in Winter Silhouette. Only then can we fully appreciate the lines and refinement of the branch structure. This is like the study of architecture or anatomy. Some bonsai exhibits are exclusively

devoted to showing the trees in their Winter Silhouette, particularly for the appreciation of the patience and skill required to develop a beautiful "skeleton." A fan favorite is the Princess Persimmon which retains its dainty tear-drop orange fruit on its otherwise bare branches throughout the winter.



This exhibition will also feature winter blooming bonsai including camellia and Ume (flowering apricot also known as plum blossom),, and Winter Jasmine. At the end of the exhibition, the final seasonal image occurs when the bright green or red leaf buds of early spring emerge on the bare branches, bringing the journey of the seasons full circle.



**Brianda & Zoe Sanchez of Lemoore "We enjoy walking here and admiring nature."**

**Mari Keane from Chino Hills "Thank you for this beautiful glimpse into bonsai."**



Although the Four Seasons Exhibition is primarily a deciduous display, this year visitors will also have the opportunity to view three very special evergreen bonsai: the Sam Kawaguchi Needle Juniper Forest, the first bonsai collected by Founder

Bill Clark and his favorite; the Katsumi Kinoshita Monterey Cypress, a coastal signature tree from his 60 + years of bonsai artistry and mentorship; lastly, the oldest bonsai in the Collection, the over 1000 year old California Juniper styled by Visiting Bonsai Master Todd Schlafer taking his inspiration from the ancient bristlecone pine.



This is a dynamic exhibition that is worth revisiting a few times between November and March to fully appreciate the changing displays of the deciduous bonsai as they transform through the seasons and see three of the most historical and iconic evergreen bonsai in the Collection.



The Blossom Viewing in the Ume Grove in Shinzen is a wonderful event in late January. Check the Shinzen Friendship Garden website Event Calendar for updates.

## SHŌGATSU TRADITIONS

Preparations for *Shōgatsu* begin with specific New Year decorations welcoming the New Year's *kami* (Shinto spirits), displayed to bring prosperity & good luck. A *Shimekazari* is placed above the entrance door or gate. It is a braided rice straw rope with the role of keeping away the bad spirits. A more complex version may include auspicious objects such as a crane, a symbol of longevity, zigzag-shaped paper strips from Shinto ritual called *shide*, and other good luck charms.



*Kadomatsu* means "gate pine" and welcomes the ancestral spirits of the harvest. The *kadomatsu* are placed on either side of the entrance to Japanese homes and businesses

from December 31 until January 4. They can be created from a variety of materials, including bamboo, pine and ume tree sprigs, considered the "Three Friends of Winter," and other embellishments symbolizing longevity, resilience and prosperity. 2026 is the Year of the Fiery Horse in Chinese Astrology, a year symbolizing intense energy, passion, freedom, and unstoppable forward momentum, urging bold actions, new ventures, and the pursuit of dreams



None of this would have been possible without the artistry and dedication of volunteers Karen and Roger Tsuruda (right) who created the *kadomatsu* for both the *Shinzen* and the bonsai garden entrance gates as well as the *shimekazari* for *Shinzen*. They were joined this year by Clark Bonsai Museum volunteers Sally Ramage, Judith Swick (Left) and Austin Coulson (center) early New Year's Eve morning to learn from Roger where to find the best cuttings without damaging any tree styling and from Karen how to arrange the cuttings and other embellishments.



## GAMES & ACTIVITIES

*Shōgatsu* is also a time when people take off the first few days of the New Year to spend time relaxing with their families and engaging in traditional activities. There are some *shōgatsu*-specific games, such as Spinning Tops, *Fukuwara* which is a bit like our "Pin the Tail on the Donkey" but uses a couple of different cartoon faces and can be played on a table. *Otedama* is a game a bit like jacks but played with five small cloth bean bags.



There are a few activities that relate to *Daruma*, a hollow, round Japanese traditional doll modeled after

Bodhidharma, the founder of the Zen tradition of Buddhism. *Daruma* has a design that symbolizes perseverance and good luck to the Japanese, thus making them a popular gift for encouragement & setting goals. The figure's eyes are both blank white. A user will then select a goal or wish and paint in one of the eyes. Once the desired goal is achieved, the second eye is filled in. We invite our visitors to color in a *Daruma* doll on paper and write in their wish or goal for the new year,



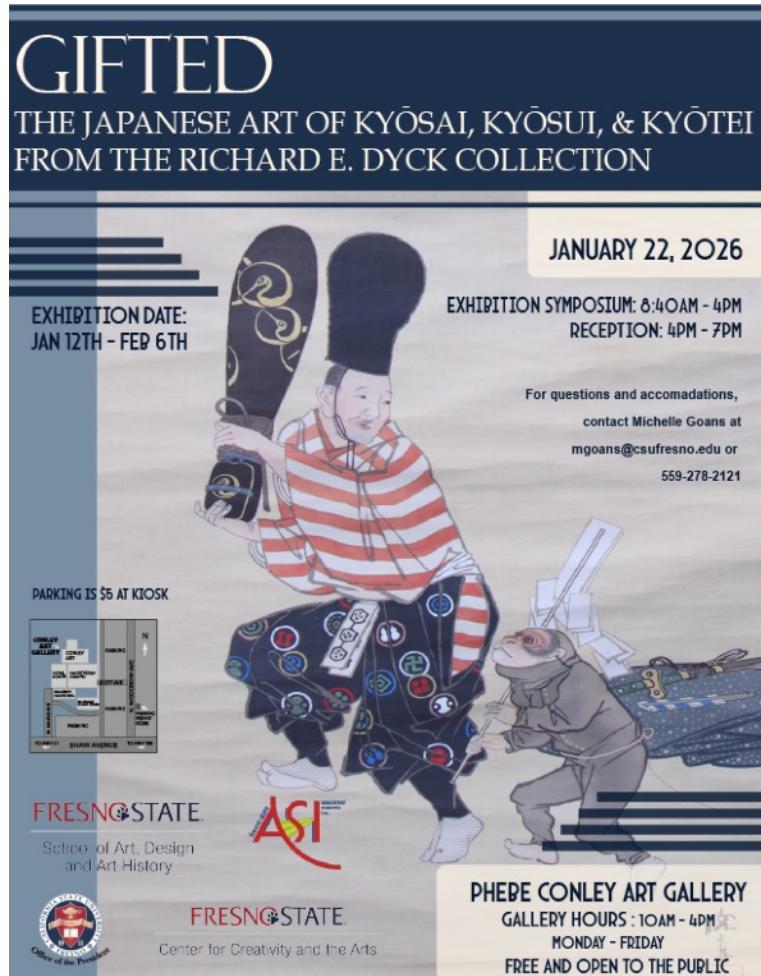
*Daruma* *Otoshi* is a traditional Japanese game that requires a good eye and fast reflexes.



The purpose of the game is to knock the center pieces out with the hammer without causing the doll head on top to fall over.

## EXCITING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Clark Bonsai Museum is proud to announce two new community partnerships that will help us to fulfill our mission to expand our educational outreach to the community and beyond.



The Clark Bonsai Museum is partnering with Associate Professor W. "Saam" Noonsuk of the CSUFresno Art Department in two important events. Firstly, providing an essay and lecture by Bob Hilvers entitled *The Convergence of Manga, Nanga, and Bonsai Art in the Late Edo Period* for the Symposium and selected bonsai to be displayed with the art works from the Richard Dyck Collection. Mr. Dyck is a long-time supporter and friend of the Clark Center and the Clark Bonsai Collection.

The other exciting enterprise with Professor Noonsuk is a spring semester Art 141 Service Learning class from January to May. Fifty hours of the students' work and study will be at the Clark Bonsai Museum, culminating in a special service project to illustrate their learning and benefit the CBM.



The Clark Bonsai Museum is proud to announce that we have received an Expanded Access to the Arts and Culture Grant! The Expanded Art and Culture Fund, administered by Fresno Arts Council, supports emerging and established arts and culture organizations and projects in the City of Fresno. The Clark Bonsai Museum received an Organizational Grant to expand our capacity for preserving and promoting the bonsai collection, advancing the Museum's educational and cultural programs and expanding our professional staff. The funds awarded will support the work of our Outreach Volunteer Coordinator with outcomes that secure ongoing donor support and grant funding, protection of our art and cultural assets, and expanding opportunities to engage our community in the art and cultural activities of the Clark Bonsai Museum.

**Maia Ruiz of Fresno. "Beautiful trees! Very interested to learn more."**

## Service Learning      Continued from page 6

**Service Learning as defined by CSUFresno** is a method of enhancing students' learning and foster civic understanding through active participation in meaningful service linked to academic study through structured reflection.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

*At the end of the semester, students should be able to:*

1. Examine meanings and social roles of artworks
2. Explore principles of museology and how to organize and operate a museum through hands-on experience
3. Enhance understanding of culture through visual and hands-on experience with artworks to prepare oneself to function in an international multicultural world
4. Apply knowledge learned through the class to provide useful community service

### Service Learning at the Clark Bonsai Museum:

Students will have a minimum of **50 hours** of service at the Clark Bonsai Museum. Their grade will depend on their work ethic and the quality of service they performed at the Museum. There are four main categories of service at the Museum:

1. Curatorial team work involves developing skills for nurturing, shaping, and displaying bonsai. Projects may include creating themes and organizing exhibitions, and maintaining and updating photographic and archival databases.
2. Docent work comprises, for example, serving as tour guides, educating visitors, designing and improving tours, activities, and managing the gift shop, and generally helping visitors attain a personal relationship with art and nature and enabling them to include art in their own lives.
3. Museology Content-creating work involves, for example, researching the details of artworks, writing information boards and labels, and updating and developing educational activities and content for websites and social media outlets, designing displays in the *tokonoma* (Japanese traditional alcove),
4. Japanese Garden work includes, for example, learning about their history and design principles and elements; designing and improving various spaces and structures of the garden landscape, and maintaining the landscape of the Bonsai Garden.



Bonsai Tending



Bonsai Making



Giving Tours



Maintain Landscape



Inform Visitors



Engage Visitors



Create Activities



Photography



Changing Exhibits



Design Tokokazari

## Clark Bonsai Museum Celebrates a Decade of Beauty and Culture

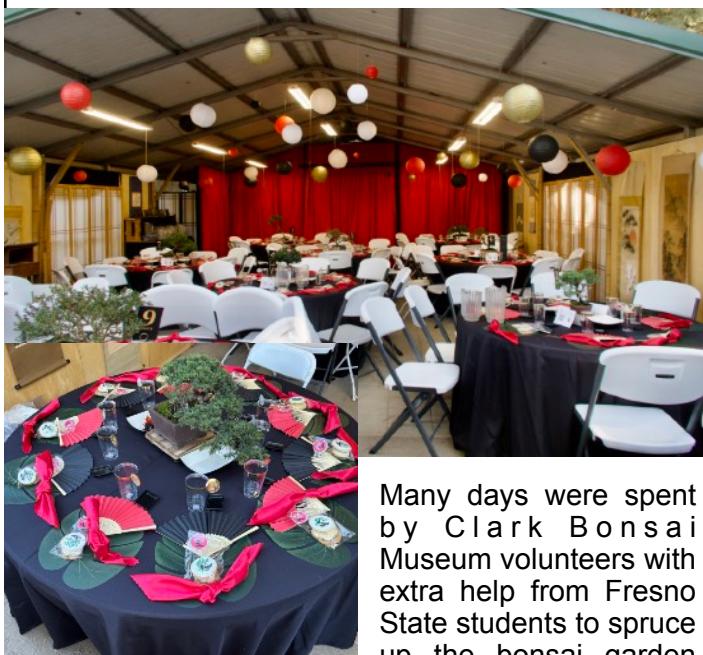
### By Dwayne Berrett

The Clark Bonsai Museum marked a major milestone on October 11, 2025, as supporters, volunteers, and community members gathered to celebrate our nonprofit Museum's **10th Anniversary**. The event honored a decade of cultivating an exemplary bonsai collection, preserving Japanese aesthetic traditions, and expanding public appreciation for the living art of bonsai.

It was a joyous occasion with over 100 guests that included a Curator-guided tour through the current exhibition sharing the stories, techniques, and philosophies behind the trees. There was saké tasting with aficionado commentary, a dual artists koto performance,



Japanese appetizers and an array of sushi culminating with a volunteer created cookie sampler, plus jazz music provided by the University High School Jazz Combo.



Many days were spent by Clark Bonsai Museum volunteers with extra help from Fresno State students to spruce up the bonsai garden and move everything out

of the reserve area to transform it into an elegant dining room.

A brief program followed with board member Jim Brumm offering a history of the collection's origin and its mission to continue the legacy of the Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture. Curator, Bob Hilvers elaborated on the decade's key accomplishments and plans for the museum's future expressing grateful encouragement for continued support. Board President, Marc Stamper completed the evening with special recognition of our event honoree, Bob Hilvers, outlining his extraordinary contributions not only as Curator offering his unique bonsai expertise but also his museum management skills.

The evening ended with a sincere thank you to all the volunteers who made it a very special evening and an invitation for all to visit often.

The Clark Bonsai Museum extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in making the 10th Anniversary Celebration a memorable occasion. A special shout out to the following:

Valerie Pras, *The Valerie Touch*, Venue Creator  
 Hino Oishi, Japanese Cuisine  
 Takahiro Tokura, Saké Tasting  
 Zack Follette, *Cup of Joy*, Beverages  
 CBM Volunteer Cookie Bakers  
 Karen & Roger Tsuruda, Cookie Artistry & Origami Cranes  
 Toyosumika and Luna Paez, Koto Performance  
 University High School Jazz Combo  
 Sally Ramage, Signage & Guest Information  
 Judith Swick, Volunteer Coordinator  
 Maria Ontiveros-Kidd, Graphics, Website & Social Media  
 Linda Jacobsen, General Resource  
 CSUF Student Volunteers  
 CBM Board of Directors and Docents  
 Bob Hilvers, Daytime Community Activities  
 Dwayne Berrett, Saké & Sushi Event

**Lore Abtuh of Hanford "We love this place."**

# GSBF AWARDS

## CIRCLE OF SENSEI

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### BOB HILVERS



Since 2001, GSBF has honored individuals dedicated to passing bonsai knowledge on to others. The Circle of Sensei is the organization's most prestigious award, a golden medallion that has been presented to only a very select few. At the Saturday night dinner, Bob Hilvers was deservedly presented with this highest honor.

**BONSAI**  
RENDEZVOUS 2025

## STORIES FROM THE BONSAI GARDEN

### BY Judith Swick, Volunteer Coordinator

#### THE PROPOSAL

On a cold December Sunday afternoon Marco Adame and Elizabeth Lopez came with friends to Shinzen Japanese Garden and the Clark Bonsai Museum, special places for them. Little did Elizabeth know that the sole reason for the trip from their homes in Delano that day was for Marco to propose. He had asked her parents for permission and organized friends to join them so that the day would be perfect. Elizabeth said, "YES."



To celebrate this auspicious moment, the couple picked out a Juniper Tree from the Clark Bonsai Museum sales cart, a perfect symbol of their commitment to life together as husband and wife.

The Clark Bonsai Museum wishes the happy couple much Joy for a long, and loving life together.



#### Macy the Thanksgiving Wonder

Thanksgiving afternoon was coming to a close at the Clark Bonsai Museum when through the gate came this beautiful white dog with brown ears. Turns out her name is Macy and it seemed she was on the search for her people. The staff at the museum were quickly drawn into the search, but Macy would not let us get close. Gigi DeMederios, a Clark Bonsai Docent, was able to track Macy and get a picture of her tag. I called the number on her tag connecting with Macy's family and learned they were out of town for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Macy made her escape from the Museum's exhibition area and was continuing her search now through Shinzen Garden. Gigi and garden visitors were able to help direct Macy back into the the Bonsai Museum where we were able to keep Macy safe until her "dog sitters" were able to come collect her.



Macy safely back at home.

The real gratitude goes out to the many drivers on Friant Road who managed to NOT hit a darling little white dog, who made it across six lanes of Friant holiday traffic!! Macy then ventured through Woodward Park, into Shinzen garden and finally arrived at the Clark Bonsai Museum. Macy must be a very smart dog! Bet she thought, "if my family isn't home I might as well go visit one of the most beautiful places in Fresno ~ the Clark Bonsai Museum "