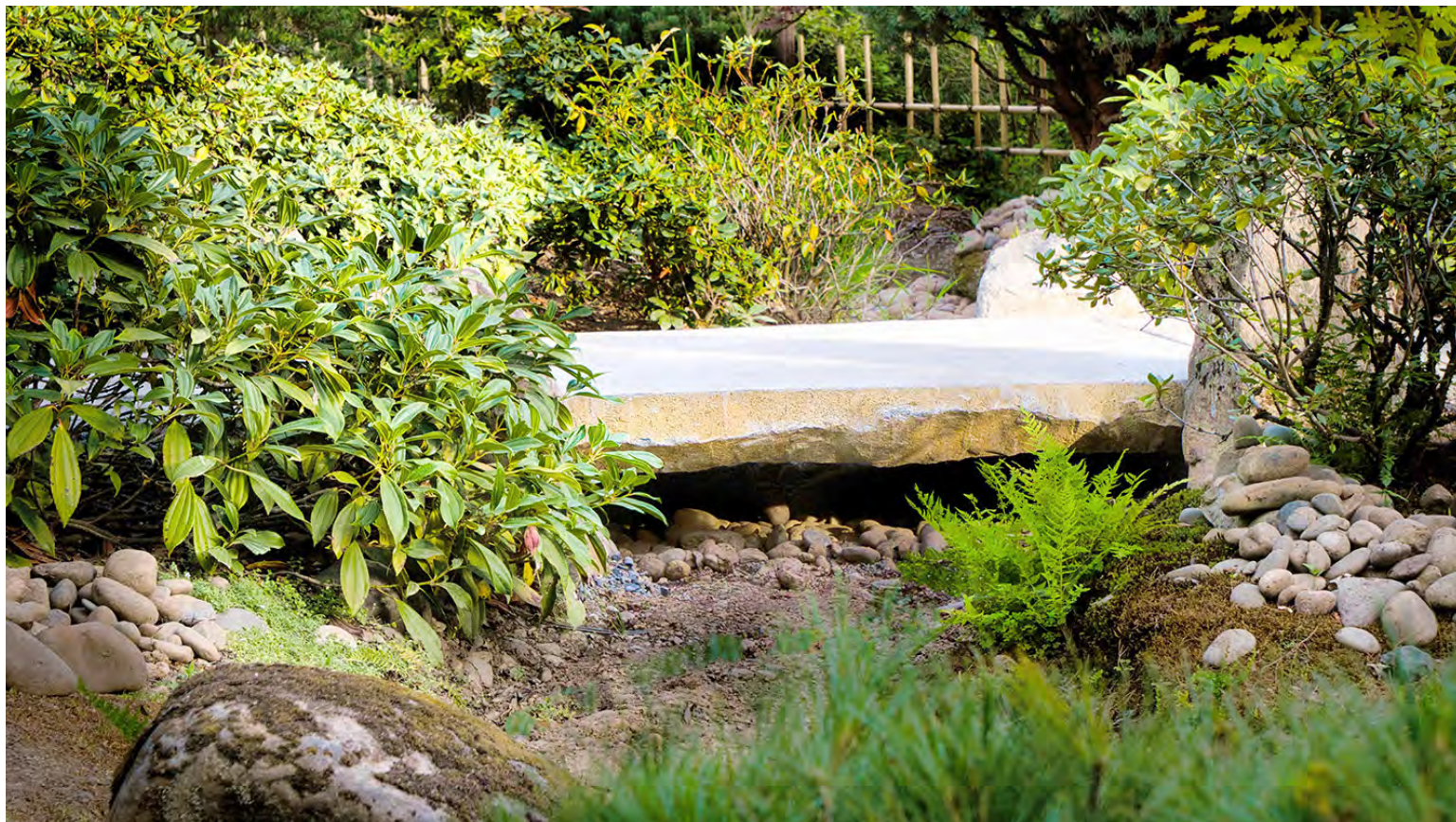


Tsuru 鶴 Soars

Friends of the Gresham Japanese Garden Newsletter



The Hiring of Jay van Arsdale

Jay van Arsdale is widely recognized for his mastery of traditional Japanese hand tool carpentry. Throughout his distinguished career, he has built numerous authentic Japanese structures using only hand tools, preserving techniques that have been practiced for centuries.

As the final major element of the Tsuru Island renovation, we are honored that Jay has accepted our invitation to lead comprehensive workshops in September to construct our covered entrance gate.

Since the early 1980s, Jay has worked and taught throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Today, Jay finds his greatest joy in sharing these traditional skills with others. Through [Kezurou-kai USA](#), he supports,

promotes, trains, and inspires individuals who are passionate about Japanese hand tooling and constructing authentic Japanese buildings using traditional methods.

That spirit of craftsmanship and community has reached Portland through two of Jay's students. Each month, Manny Romanzalez and David Burnard host Meet Ups in North Portland to learn, practice, and refine these time-honored skills. They will be assisting Jay and the students with the construction of the Tsuru Island's entrance gate.

We couldn't be more thrilled to welcome Jay, Manny, David, and the Kezurou-kai community to Tsuru Island as they help complete this remarkable chapter in our garden's renovation.

*a summer evening
a garden stone bridge
footstep echoes*

— Bill Peterson



Jay van Arsdale taking measurements of the gate project on Tsuru Island.

The Wonder of Beavers

By Paula Grech



Two resident beavers travelling downstream Johnson Creek.

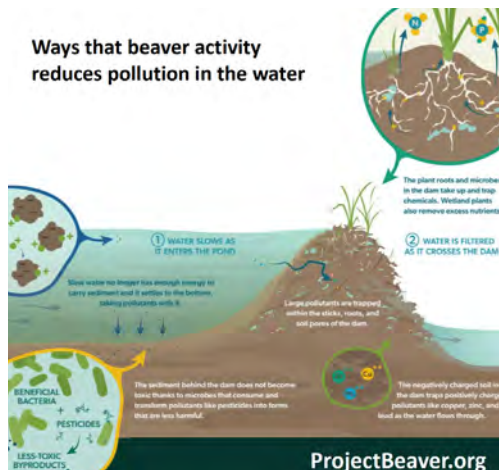
For several years, on the south bank of Tsuru Island, there has been a remarkably engineered beaver dam. This year, as some of you may have noticed, only remnants of the dam are left. While this disappearance might be concerning, it is actually a perfect example of how urban beaver colonies adapt. Writing a follow-up to Sue Protz's article "Beavers on Johnson Creek", updates our visitors on where the beavers have gone.

Speaking with Katie Holzer, City of Gresham Stormwater Specialist, the absence of a dam does not mean the

beavers have left. In fact, localized watershed tracking by the Johnson Creek Watershed Council reveals that urban beaver populations have steadily risen over the last 10 years. There has been a big increase in dams in Gresham alone, from 10 in 2021 to 35 in 2025 and over 100 dams throughout Johnson Creek.

Historically, beavers were trapped for their fur or killed by landowners, almost to extinction. During this time, land was developed, houses and cities built, thus destroying the beavers' habitat. Although trapping restrictions started in 1931, it wasn't until 2009 that modern beaver habitat restoration began. Environmental groups and wildlife stewards recognized that beaver activity improves the health of ecosystems and the environment for all of us in many ways.

A presentation given by Katie Holzer showed through routine testing that beaver dams create more stream complexity, such as new rock and grass bars, development of side channels, and deep pools where fish concentrate. Acting as nature's water filtration system, beaver dams lower the temperature of the water and filter out harmful pollutants. One such pollutant is from a chemical used in manufacturing tires.



Slide from Katie Holzer's presentation.

This "tire dust" harms salmon causing pre-spawn die off. With the creation of beaver dams, Coho and Chinook salmon and Steelhead trout have been seen in Gresham!

Beaver restoration efforts are working. Organizations such as Project Beaver promote and establish successful beaver habitat. They work to develop ways to coexist with beavers by addressing all aspects of effective restoration. Beavers play an important, positive role in the health of our environment.

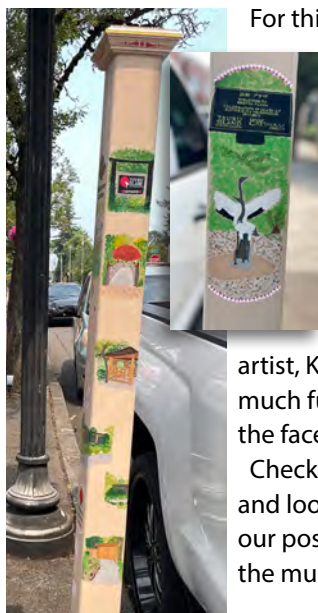
So be vigilant, beavers usually rebuild when water levels start to lower. Watch for this to happen sometime in August. You might be treated to one of nature's true wonders.

Can you find our post?

For this year's Arts Festival, the Historic Downtown Gresham Association offered a creative fundraiser to organizations.

Our resident artist, Katalina, had so much fun depicting all the facets of GJG.

Check out downtown, and look for ours. Hint, our post leans towards the museum.



Summer Display
Yamadori Ponderosa Pine



2026 GRESHAM BIKE REPAIR HUB

CENTRO DE REPARACIÓN DE BICICLETAS DE GRESHAM DE 2026

COHO PICNIC SHELTER @ MAIN CITY PARK (219 SE MAIN) • 11AM - 2PM

SATURDAY, JULY 11 SÁBADO, 11 DE JULIO	TUESDAY, AUGUST 18 MARTES, 18 DE AGOSTO
TUESDAY, JULY 21 MARTES, 21 DE JULIO	SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 SÁBADO, 12 DE SEPTIEMBRE
SATURDAY, AUGUST 8 SÁBADO, 8 DE AGOSTO	TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 MARTES, 15 DE SEPTIEMBRE

LEARN BASIC REPAIR SKILLS • FREE BASIC BIKE REPAIRS • DONATE YOUR OLD BIKE
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CITY OF
GRESHAM



Something Truly Priceless

By Rex Ziak

People contact OBON SOCIETY every day from across the United States and beyond. We are never surprised by who reaches out. One week alone, we heard from people in Australia, South Africa, and Myanmar.

Several months ago, a Hollywood producer emailed asking to speak with someone from our OBON SOCIETY office in Los Angeles. That gave us a chuckle. We don't have an office in Los Angeles. We explained that our headquarters is in Astoria, Oregon. A few hours later, however, we wondered: What would a Hollywood producer want with OBON SOCIETY?

We contacted them and learned they produce the reality television program "Storage Wars," which follows people who buy abandoned storage units, sort through the contents, and sell anything of value. The focus is usually on money.

Someone had discovered a framed *Yosegaki Hinomaru* in one of these units, and the producers wanted OBON SOCIETY to estimate its value. We explained that *Yosegaki Hinomaru* are precious family heirlooms that should not be bought or sold. The conversation ended.

Later that evening, we decided to use the opportunity to educate. We wrote a

detailed email explaining the full story of these flags.

The story begins with a Japanese family giving their son a *Yosegaki Hinomaru* as he departs for war. It continues with an American serviceman bringing the flag home from the battlefield and, years later, with his family choosing to honor both families by returning it to the soldier's surviving relatives in Japan.

We also explained how OBON SOCIETY receives these items, researches their origins, and works to return them to the sons, daughters, and grandchildren of the deceased Japanese soldier. In many cases, these flags are the only part of that person that ever comes home.

Satisfied with the message, we sent it to the producer. Then came silence. A few days later, they contacted us again. They wanted to talk.

For the 17 years of its production, "Storage Wars" has always focused on how much money could be made, they had decided to tell a different kind of story. For the first time, they wanted to show their loyal audience an example of something truly priceless. Somehow, the story of the *Yosegaki Hinomaru* changed Hollywood.

We flew to Los Angeles and filmed the

segment. Later, the production company told us that, out of 367 episodes produced over 17 years, this story ranked among their top three. Another senior producer called it his all-time favorite.

The segment is expected to air early next year. We will share the date in our newsletter. To subscribe, scroll to the bottom of our OBON's home page at www.obonsociety.org/eng.

We are grateful for another opportunity to share OBON's mission. Following our last newsletter article published in GJG's August 2024 newsletter, Catherine Nopp of Portland generously entrusted us with her father's flag. The search for the soldier's family continues in Japan, and we appreciate every opportunity to raise awareness.



Left to right: Rex and Keiko Ziak (co-founders), David Hester (a host of Storage Wars), and Bethany Glenn (Repatriation Contact).

Working the Dry Stream Bed

We are pleased to announce that the GJG is now accessible!

Currently, the big project for the volunteers is rebuilding the dry stream bed. Traditionally, in Japanese gardens a dry stream bed captures the beauty and symbolism of flowing water without using water itself. Formed with carefully placed boulders and river cobbles, the stream suggests a natural watercourse winding through the landscape. Gentle curves, varying widths, and partially buried stones create the impression that water once shaped the terrain and could return after a spring rain.

In Japanese garden design, water symbolizes the flow of life, and a dry stream represents that same journey through stone. As visitors follow the stream, they are drawn deeper into the garden, experiencing changing views and a sense of peaceful movement.

Once the volunteers have completed this project, visitors will be welcomed onto the island with small river rock forming a quiet "beach", and then gradually larger rocks forming a sea. This natural transition reflects how real rivers approach the sea, depositing finer stones along the shoreline. The beach symbolizes a place of arrival and

reflection, where the energy of the stream gives way to stillness.

Together, the dry stream and its stone beach tell a complete story: a journey from movement to calm, inviting visitors to slow down, reflect, and appreciate the quiet beauty of the landscape. Observe.



Many bodies working the stream bed.

Specialty Workshop



Sculptural Bonsai Container Workshop, 2-Part Series: September 20 and October 4, 2-4pm in Boring, OR – \$150

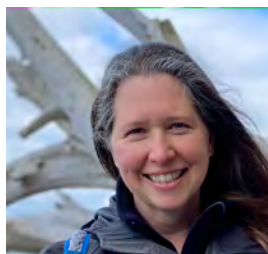
Create a sculptural oval shaped bonsai container by hand in this two-part ceramic workshop at instructor Laura Dufala's studio. Using slab-building techniques and rich deep chocolate clay, participants will design and build a shallow, one-of-a-kind bonsai vessel.

Participants will be invited to think about the character and feeling of a future bonsai while shaping their container—whether windswept, quiet and balanced, rugged, or terrain-like in form. A selection of authentic bonsai container books and references will be available during the workshop for inspiration and design exploration.

Part One September 20, focuses on constructing the container using slab techniques, including shaping, joining, altering forms, and adding surface detail. Containers will remain intimate in scale, a 5" x 7" oval or smaller, allowing participants to focus on refined form and thoughtful composition suited for small bonsai. After pieces are dried, participants will return for Part Two October 4th, to glaze and finish their work. No prior clay experience is necessary. All materials, glaze, and firings are included. Workshop fee is \$150 per person. [Register on website.](#)

Pruning Program

[Register under 'Happenings' on the website](#)



Pruning Conifers for Health and Aesthetics Course: Saturday, October 31, 2026, 1-3pm at Gresham Japanese Garden - \$45

This in-person, hands-on course is designed to deepen your understanding of conifer pruning through an aesthetic lens. Maryann Lewis will guide students in understanding conifer growth biology and seasonal rhythms, applying pruning techniques to maintain plant health and desired size, enhancing landscape aesthetics through thoughtful pruning, recognizing and preserving the natural form of various conifer species. Licensed landscapers will earn 2 CEU credits.



Structural Pruning Pines for Character Course: Sunday, November 15, 2026, 2-4pm on GJG's Tsuru Island - \$45

Watch Laura Dufala, owner of Bentwood Tree Farm, unlock the hidden character within pine trees. Laura will demonstrate structural pruning techniques on *Pinus thunbergii* and other pine species, guiding you toward a deeper understanding of shaping pines with character and care. Licensed landscapers will earn 3 CEU credits.

Pruning Maples: Courses to be announced soon.

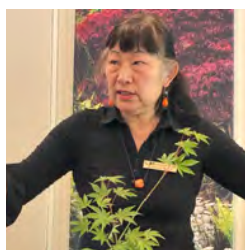
Workshops

[Register under 'Happenings' on the website](#)



The Art of Bonsai: On the third Saturday, 1-3pm or third Thursday, 6-8pm – \$55

BOBBY CURTTRIGHT, BONSAI MASTER: August workshop will focus on creating a classic Formal Upright Bonsai design, known in Japanese as *chokkan* using native Sitka Spruce. In this hands-on workshop, through a combination of wiring, pruning, and careful structural refinement, students will explore the techniques needed to develop and maintain this iconic bonsai form. The project-based workshops are adapted to the level in your practice. Bobby Curttright was an apprentice to Bonsai Master Michael Hagedorn. Alongside his three-year apprenticeship, Bobby traveled to Japan for weeks at a time to study under Mr. Hagedorn's sensei, the famous Mr. Shinji Suzuki.



Introduction to Ikebana: Tuesday, August 11, 2026, 1-3pm – \$50

NANA BELLERUD, IKEBANA TEACHER: The August workshop will focus on popular Japanese summer-blooming flowers, while maintaining the core principles of ikebana. Join us and find out how. Nana will discuss the arrangements' symbolism and seasonal meanings. Students explore their creativity and turn their ideas into creative pieces of art.