

Tsuru Soars

Friends of the Gresham Japanese Garden Newsletter



Bonsai, Connections, and Transformation

The Gresham Japanese Garden has been invited to organize a special bonsai workshop for the Oregon State Penitentiary's 7th Step Foundation Club. The club focuses on personal growth: education, career development, transformational healing, and leadership.

The workshop will bring together 10 inmates and 10 community members, paired as partners to create a juniper bonsai. Working side by side, participants will share knowledge, creativity, and conversation while shaping a living tree. Through the practice of bonsai, they will be encouraged to cultivate mindfulness, collaboration, patience, and reflection. Each completed bonsai will remain with the inmate, providing a lasting connection

to the experience and a living work of art to nurture for years to come.

In preparation for the workshop, several GJG volunteers gathered at Laura Dufala's ceramic studio to create the bonsai containers that will house the trees. After listening to bonsai instructor Bobby Curttright discuss considerations involved in selecting and designing bonsai containers, and watching Laura demonstrate the construction of slab-built pots, everyone eagerly got to work. The evening quickly became a shared creative experience of its own, as each volunteer added their personal artistic touch to a container that will become part of someone else's bonsai journey.

*a hot spring day
an empty garden bench
waiting for evening*

— Bill Peterson



Tamara, Bobby, and Millie constructing the chocolate clay bonsai containers for the OSP workshop.

Tanabata Festival

By Mary Dickson

Once upon a time, long, long ago, in China, as legend has it, two celestial lovers lived. One was Orihime (the star Vega), who was a very talented princess. She wove beautiful clothing by gathering pieces of cloth from the Heavenly River, what we call today the Milky Way. The other was Hikoboshi (the star Altair), who worked very hard tending cattle across the river from Orihime.

The Sky King, Orihime's father, arranged for them to meet. They fell deeply in love and married, but in their marital bliss, they neglected their work. Orihime didn't weave, and Hikoboshi let his cows wander all over heaven.

The Sky King was very very unhappy, so unhappy that he separated them and made them stay on opposite sides of the Milky Way, with no hope of ever seeing each other again. Orihime was heartbroken and cried so hard that her father relented, but only a little bit. He said that they had to work hard all year, and, if they did as he demanded, they could meet once a year on the seventh night of the seventh month.

On this night, if there is no rain, a flock of magpies forms a bridge across the Milky Way so that the lovers could meet. If it

rains, the river floods and they have to wait a full year to reunite.

The legend came to Japan from China during the Nara period (710-794) and merged with a native Japanese harvest ritual.

People celebrate the Star Festival called Tanabata to wish for clear skies and write personal wishes on colorful pieces of paper called tankazu.

Traditionally, five colors of paper are used, (green/blue, red, yellow, white, purple/black.) Writers use their best handwriting to express their personal or universal wishes, and then hang them on special bamboo branches.

There is no guarantee that wishes will come true, but the act of writing them intertwines hope with acceptance, allowing us to express our desires openly.

People also make origami creations like orizura (cranes) or fukinagashi (large paper streamers that represent Orihime's weaving threads).

Of course, no Japanese festival is complete without traditional foods. Tanabata features Takoyaki (octopus balls), yakisoba (stir-fried noodles), okonomiyaki (savory pancakes) and yakitori (grilled chicken skewers.)



The Gresham Japanese Garden will celebrate Tanabata on Sunday, July 5. Visitors can write wishes between 10:30 am and 2 pm in front of the Kyoudou Center and hang them on bamboo poles, which will remain until Saturday, July 11. Stop by and write your wish.

Haiku Corner

July 2026

俳句

the spring breeze
moves through the room
and out the window

- Cor van den Heuvel 1993

春雨やものがたり行く藁仕事
はるさめやものがたりゆくわらしごと
harusame ya / monogatari yuku /
warashigoto

Spring rain—
telling stories

while working the straw.

- Yosa Buson 1770s

It's All Roses at Main City Park



What an honor to hear that Sahid Sierra, Public Works employee with the COG Parks Department, received an award from The Royal Rosarian's Rose Garden under the Commercial Division: Public Service Agency for the beautiful rose garden the workers installed at Main City Park.

End of Year Project



Our Exploratory Worksite Program experienced another successful year teaching students horticulture from three school districts. We ended the year at the greenhouse with students making hanging flower baskets to take home, while the Al's Garden & Home interns had a barbecue.

Volunteers Bring Water to Life

We were quite busy this past month, balancing the planting of mondo grass plugs with the installation of Tsuru Island's new irrigation system.

Back in November 2025, when we removed the shrubs and trees from Tsuru Island, we cut much of the existing surface irrigation tubing and landscape lighting wiring. It was unavoidable, and we knew a major project would be waiting for us in the spring.

Fortunately, there was a silver lining. Jim brought more than 40 years of irrigation experience to the project, the

valve boxes and irrigation zones from the original 2013 installation remained intact, and we had a dedicated team of volunteers eager to learn.

After walking the island with Francheska, lead craftsman, to understand the watering needs of the new plantings, Jim designed an irrigation plan tailored specifically to the Japanese garden. He calculated the available water pressure and flow for each of the eight zones, tested several sprinkler heads, and selected the appropriate components.

Over the course of three weeks, the team worked diligently to stay ahead of the summer heat while carefully navigating around the thousands of newly planted mondo grass plugs. Their patience and teamwork paid off as the entire irrigation system came together, one zone at a time.

Along the way, our volunteers gained hands-on experience with irrigation design and installation. They learned about different types of tubing, fittings, connectors, drip irrigation, sprinkler heads, pressure regulation, and the water output of the various colored emitters. We believe experiential learning is one of the most valuable ways to build knowledge and

confidence, and this project provided plenty of opportunities to do just that.

"The best part of working on the irrigation project was the opportunity to learn new skills while gaining knowledge about the entire system."

— Bruce Janes

Our work isn't quite finished. We still need to bury sections of tubing and create detailed documentation of the completed system. This final step will help preserve Tsuru Island's beauty while supporting long-term maintenance. Knowing exactly where irrigation lines are located will save countless hours during future weeding and planting projects and help prevent unnecessary repairs for years to come.



Bruce Janes, Jim Card, and Roy Zilko working on the irrigation.

TSURU ISLAND IS OPEN WEEKDAY EVENINGS AND WEEKENDS.

We anticipate by the end of July the stone path will be complete. Thank you for your patience.

We will have to close again during the install of the entrance stone and covered entrance gate. Stay tuned.



Honoring a Legacy

By Sue Protz

Atending my first conference of the American Conifer Society (AMC) held at the Holiday Inn, Wilsonville, was an eye opener into the world of conifers, and the people who are extremely passionate and experts in the field.

For 220 attendees, the Western Region of the American Conifer Society organized a jam-packed, 4-day conference starting with a VIP nursery tour on Wednesday, Thursday night speakers and dinner, and then Friday and Saturday nursery tours, culminating with a silent and live auction Saturday night, with over 250 unique cultivars donated

from growers all over the country.

Iseli Nursery in Boring stole the show. Jean Iseli was the first board member, and 2026 marked the 50th year since his death. Not only does Iseli Nursery grow some of the best dwarf conifers, but this conference really demonstrated their commitment to the success of the ACS through their tour, donations and hospitality. When I mingled with the participants and was asked where I was from, I proudly said the Gresham Japanese Garden is eight miles from Iseli's.

The best part for me is that an employee of Iseli's bought a bonsai we donated

to the live auction and I won their newly developed Pacific Rim collection, Acer pseudosieboldianum 'Final Fire', that I'm looking forward to locating the perfect spot to plant at the Gresham Japanese Garden.



Jason from Evergreen Nursery describing the conifer's attributes.



Specialty Workshop

Sculptural Bonsai Container Workshop, 2-Part Series: Sundays, September 6 and September 20, 2026, 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 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, September 20th, 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

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.

Cultural Events

Tanabata: Sunday, July 5, 2026, 10:30am-2pm in front of the Kyoudou Center.

See article inside.



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: July workshop will focus on styling *Prunus emarginata*, the Pacific Northwest native bitter cherry. Known for its delicate spring flowers, developing bark character, and graceful branching. 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, July 14, 2026, 1-3pm – \$50

NANA BELLERUD, IKEBANA TEACHER: As it gets warmer, cut flowers may not last as long. Nana Bellerud will talk about some tips and treatments on how to prolong their lives. She will discuss an arrangements' symbolism and seasonal meanings. Students explore their creativity and turn their ideas into creative pieces of art.