



**A E S T H E T I C  
P R U N E R S  
A S S O C I A T I O N**

## JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER



Photo: APA member Ryan Harvey, Dorchester, NH pruning a Chinese juniper at Shin-boku Nursery and Stroll Garden in Wentworth, NH (taken by Adrienne Mitchell).

Send us your pruning photo and we may use it in the next newsletter!

---

## President's Message

---

Happy New Year APA members and welcome to the third edition of the newsletter! We have some great things planned for the year, starting with the APA Annual Meeting on January 30th (on Zoom) where the APA board and committee chairs will share with the membership a review of 2021 and the plans for 2022. We will be treated to a talk by APA member Jeff Harris from NC who will share his personal story as a builder and pruner of Japanese gardens in the Asheville area. We will also have time to catch up and meet new members as we break up into Zoom "breakout rooms." I hope you can join us!

I would like to congratulate new APA Certified Aesthetic Pruners Mark Mendell and Ann Owen who passed their CAP exams since the last newsletter! Mark and Ann are both living in the East Bay, CA and are ready to take on any new clients you would like to throw their way.

I don't know about you, but I miss seeing you all in person! Diana Chamberlain, chair of the Education Committee, and member Mathew Hughes will be leading a Tree Walk at the Tilden Botanic garden (Berkeley, CA) on 3/26 that is open to 20 APA members. Currently, meeting outside is the best option for a get together, and talking about trees is our favorite thing to do.

It's been a tough 2 years of social distancing, years where we were not able to meet in person and network. If you have ideas for in person and outdoor get-togethers, or feedback or ideas for the newsletter, please email us at: [apa@aestheticprunersassociation.org](mailto:apa@aestheticprunersassociation.org).

Dina Blackwell, APA President

## Table of Contents

1. [President's Message](#)
2. [Annual Meeting](#)
3. [Letter to the Editor](#)
4. [Guest Article](#)
5. [Upcoming APA Events](#)
6. [Upcoming Events by Others](#)
7. [APA Member Only Videos](#)
8. [Pruning Wisdom from Members](#)
9. [Welcome New APA Members!](#)
10. [APA Professional Forum Notes](#)
11. [APA News](#)
12. [Trade News](#)
13. [Committee Chair Reports](#)

---

## APA Annual Meeting

---

## Please join us!

This will be a fun event where you can catch up with other members and catch up on APA news!

**Sunday, January 30th, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm PST**

All of the business reported at the annual meeting will be abbreviated so that we have more opportunities to connect with each other. (The detailed business reports will be available through a link on the member page.)

Throughout the meeting we will break up into groups and enjoy some catching up and introduction time with other APA members.

**Three board member positions will be up for election:**

Secretary and Treasurer (must be APA CAP members)

Board Member at Large #2 (must be APA CAP or Associate members)

An electronic ballot will be emailed to eligible voting members (Associate and CAP) prior to the meeting.

[Link to agenda/year at a glance](#)

[\(Sign up here\)](#)

We will have a special speaker:



APA member

### Jeff Harris from Asheville NC

will treat us to a talk on his garden building and pruning in his neck of the woods.

[www.thirdstonedesign.com](http://www.thirdstonedesign.com)

---

## Letter to the Editor

---

Dear Editor -

I enjoyed the article by my friend, Allison Levin, in the recent Newsletter (October edition). She was answering the question of whether aesthetic pruning is universal. In it she mentioned my practice of referring to our Merritt College AP program as the "Dennis Makishima School of Pruning." As she mentioned me by name, I would like to clarify a point or two.

To begin with, I refer to it as the "Dennis Makishima School of *Aesthetic* Pruning" or simply the "Makishima School of Aesthetic Pruning." I do this for several reasons. First, because this is Dennis's program. It has certainly been facilitated by Merritt, But Dennis invented the class breakdown and the basic lessons with major assistance from Michael Alliger. They were not copying anyone or any other programs. Dennis is self taught. Dennis taught Michael and together they taught the rest of us. We now carry on the traditions, techniques and principles established by them. As such, we all carry the seeds of Dennis's attitude and approach. Dennis didn't invent the notion or the techniques but it is his basic vision and application of techniques that we incorporate in everything we do as professional pruners.

Second, it is known that famous painters and sculptors through history have had numerous acolytes and assistants who copied their styles and studied their approach to various challenges. Thus, the various "schools" of art are known by the name of the master, such as Vermeer, Rodin, and so on. In much the same way, we learned from and followed the style and sensibilities of Dennis and Michael to address the challenges we face in aesthetic pruning. It is quite clear that there are other great aesthetic pruners who have never heard of Dennis Makishima or Merritt College. It is equally clear that few, if any, would say they agreed with Dennis on every cut and every decision.

"Aesthetic" just means "concerned with beauty." Since, as we all know, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, any style that someone considers beautiful could be regarded as "aesthetic." For example, we have all seen the Japanese pruning style known as "Niwaki". (The views on Niwaki expressed in the 'Letter to the Editor' reflect the views of the author and do not reflect the views of the APA as a whole.) Many people like it. We don't, for numerous reasons. No, our approach is based on a set of principles that underlie and guide our work. Those principles were developed by Dennis Makishima. We are clearly the products of the Makishima "school." (Indeed, we have heard rumors that some gardens are hesitant to take volunteers from our group claiming it is too difficult to "re-train" us to *their* methods.)

Finally, I am not surprised that Dennis is said to disagree with the name I have given our "school of pruning." I'm undeterred by that. Dennis is just being his usual humble self. Calling it by his name is actually more accurate and more humble than suggesting that our approach is the *only* "aesthetic" approach. It isn't. And Merritt is just the place where we teach, not the origin of those teachings.

So, ...long live the "Makishima School of Aesthetic Pruning" at Merritt College! With a friendly nod to Allison, I will continue to honor Dennis by calling it that in my Intro class each January when I discuss the origins of our increasingly famous program — the only one of its kind in the world!

Chris Ingram, APA CAP #035



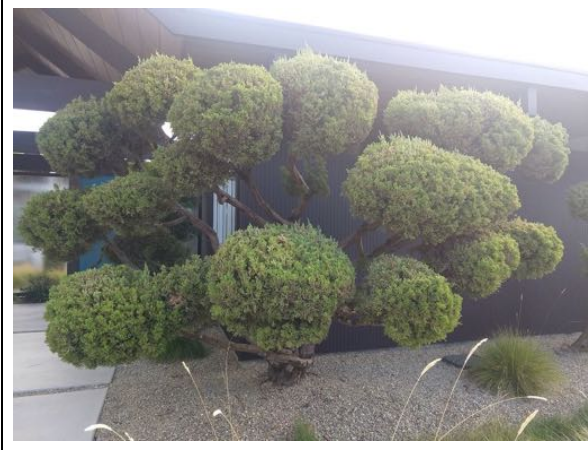
---

## Feature Article

---

### Poodles, Pom Poms, and Balls, oh my!

By APA CAP Melissa Hyams



Scary, right? Denise Mason didn't think so. Four and half hours and 13 remaining balls later, Denise had started on a journey of 'unpoodling' this juniper.



Unpoodling, unballing, de-pom-pomming...the terms are inelegant but the results achieved by aesthetic pruners are anything but. (Images: above Melissa Hyams, below Randall Lee).



When I was asked to write a piece on how to unpoodle, I became curious about the origins of this ubiquitous pruning style. Is the origin European topiary or Japanese *niwaki* or something else entirely? I consulted via email with a Japanese garden scholar, Nami Ogura, employed by Ueyakato Landscape of Kyoto, Japan, Steven Pitsenbarger, Supervisor of the San Francisco Japanese Tea Garden, Jake Hobson's book entitled *Niwaki: Pruning, Training and Shaping Trees the Japanese Way* and Wikipedia.

Topiary, introduced by the Romans and made popular in 19<sup>th</sup> century European gardens, typically comprises conifers and small-leaved evergreens tightly clipped into single geometric shapes such as balls, cubes, obelisks and spirals, and representational forms of animals and people. Examples of the latter, represented most famously in American culture, are Mickey Mouse and friends.

The pruning in Japan of garden trees, or *niwaki*, might date back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of Buddhism from China and the introduction of the garden as distinct from wilderness (Hobson, 2007). Japanese garden style, however, is a uniquely miniaturized version of the wider natural landscape and pruning is used to mimic natural landscape features. For example, large areas of azalea are pruned into clipped, rounded shapes which suggest mountains and clumps of trees or *karikomi* and originated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Hobson, 2007). Individual specimens, particularly multi-branched juniper specimens, are pruned into balls or *tamatsukuri* and may have originated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Ogura, 2021).

The superficial distinction between topiary balls and *tamatsukuri* may be one of intent. In topiary, symmetry and formality are the guiding principles and the shapes are not necessarily guided by the form of the tree. In *tamatsukuri*, the principle of *niwaki* prevails: "embracing the imperfect, the asymmetrical and the irregular" (Hobson, 2007) in the tree's natural form and representing it in a highly stylized fashion.

Steven Pitsenbarger (2021), the Supervisor of the San Francisco Japanese Tea Garden, suggested that the balls, pom poms and poodling we are assiduously working to undo in our communities came about from the application of European topiary techniques used to recreate the shapes inspired by *niwaki*.

How do we do this? The steps are simple, the time considerable, the process tedious for some, a pleasure for others, and the outcome really satisfying.

**Step One:** Consider what the ultimate shape could be; find the line of the trunk and the movement of the branching. Luckily, these specimens are usually old and have wonderfully gnarled wood. Typically, this will require removing whole balled limbs. Do this first before wasting time working on them.

**Step Two:** Work each ball to open it up, plane it out horizontally and expose the twisting branching. This is achieved by choosing the pleasing lines of the branching, thinning the branches to expose them and clearing out the branch crotches and undersides to articulate them.

**Step Three:** Keep stepping back to consider the overall shape and, importantly, if any more balled limbs can be removed!



---

## Upcoming Events

---



Photo: Dan Villaume

### APA Tree Talk

Wabi of the Winter Silhouette  
with APA CAP Yuki Nara

Sunday, February 20th, 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm PST

Art, inspiration, nature, and technique. Yuki will discuss her philosophy behind winter silhouette pruning

[sign up!](#)

---

### CAP Mentoring

with Dina Blackwell & Eric King

Sunday, March 20th, 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm PST

Eric and Dina have set up a mentoring group for APA members who are interested in pursuing certification. Together the group looks at each other's portfolio photos, goes over the application requirements, and practices the oral portion of the test all via Zoom. All are welcome to join, whether you are ready to apply or not. And if you have a set of before and after photos, we would love to see them!

To sign up, please log into your APA account and go to the "Events" page.

Questions? Please contact them at

[apa@aestheticprunersassociation.org](mailto:apa@aestheticprunersassociation.org).

---

## APA Tree Walk

Please join APA members Mathew Hughes and Diana Chamberlain as they lead the group on a walk at the Tilden Botanical Garden

Saturday, March 26th 9:45 am to 11:45 am

20 APA members maximum. Must be vaccinated/boosted, wear a mask, and bring snacks and water.

Please contact Diana with questions: [chamberlaindianaalice@gmail.com](mailto:chamberlaindianaalice@gmail.com)

[Sign up](#)

---

Save The Date

### New Professionals Meeting

Sunday, April 10th, 4:00 - 6:00 pm PDT

---

### Upcoming Events by Others

---

If you would like to submit an event for the next newsletter please email us at [apa@aestheticprunersassociation.org](mailto:apa@aestheticprunersassociation.org)

---

### North American Japanese Garden Association (NAJGA)

Regional Workshop in Fort Worth, TX- 2/25-27, 2022

Fort Worth Botanic Garden

[www.najga.org](http://www.najga.org)

---

### International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)

WESTERN CHAPTER

February 2, 2022, 11:00-12:30 PST

Pruning for Performance and Prevention (Zoom)

[www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com)

---

## APA Member-Only Videos

---

Members can access video links to past APA Talks!

Such as: Tree Talks, APA Annual Meeting talks, and Pruning Intensive talks.  
Links are available on the APA member page of the website.

**You must be logged in to your account to see the "Members" page.**



---

## APA Tree Talk

### Training Young Pines

Pine Series Part III

with Bill Castellon

APA Certified Aesthetic Pruner

*Video now available on the member page*

[Link to all our APA member videos](#)

---

## "Pruning Wisdom" from Members

---

"What are your favorite trees to prune and why?"



Michael Alliger

Trees, you ask?

I favor quince, persimmon and crabapple for the interlocking puzzle-patterns their right angle branching affords. When treating a specimen or focal point this pattern allows cutting back to an endless, ongoing intricacy – back and forth, up and down, in and out. When used with thinning (opening) this approach leads to engaging complexity without confusion. It reads. This cutback to side twigs is a natural for reduction and shaping.

Yet it is a mind-bending challenge for a pruner who has focused a career on layering Japanese maples – smoothing, elongating branches to enhance openings of negative space. And top-opening the verticals allowing light to splash on inner and lower leaves illuminating depth and color variation. Generally an understory tree in nature, in the suburban U.S. they often find themselves planted in full sun on a front lawn out of lack of knowing. Though the expectations (gleaned from calendars and other expert photos) still remain. These trees the pruner befriends understanding their plight, striving to approximate the ineffable gesture.

But enough! It is the weeping laceleaf maples that most engage me. Often referred to as waterfall or umbrella maples with their curving, sometimes angular and double-back branches these trees present a plethora of creative opportunities. Sorting the jumbled branches of an overgrown tree into a readable pattern while honoring their innate complexity is the challenge. Opening the top and middle to benefit lower branches as well as focusing an elusive apex for balanced (though rarely symmetrical) future development. Displaying directionality is key to the sophistication of their expression. Whether drifting over stone, arching over a pond or flowing downhill the opportunities are many and often triggered by the garden's design.

Honorable mention goes to Japanese black pine. Though I have studied and trained with the best (Dennis Makishima and Bill Castellon) and have garnered a variety of techniques which I use in a sort of mix-and-match method, this tree still confounds me. Not so much in physicality or developmental results; it's more the character, soul or spirit of the tree that seems reluctant. As if unwilling to reveal its secrets or hasn't the "language" for it. My key (eye to hand) doesn't reach into the tree's ancient past. No other trees leave me with this feeling of distance – not maples, or even other pines. So for this feeling of longing to know them, black pines are among my favorites.

*Michael Alliger, APA CAP #002  
Working in Sonoma County, California.*



MaryAnn Burman



What trees do I like to prune?

Those that offer an opportunity to co-create and bring harmony to the tree and the garden, facilitate connection and appreciation of the client. To be in the zone, knowing harmony connects us all. It is an honor to be part of their story.

The Japanese Black Pine is fun.

It's strong and it's wise and stands still in the wind.

It allows you to take time.

It offers continuity, structure and resilience.

They can be pruned to convey the style it wants to take.

There is a lesson and a message in whatever form it conveys.

The lessons are numerous.

There are guidelines to follow, which helps one grow confidence.

A great teacher friend of mine, I love working on the Japanese Black Pine.

As a Libra I seek Balance.

As the pine is steady and strong, the Lace Leaf Maple is gentle and subtle. It creates such joy to see the leaves dancing in the breeze. Creating space is unique to each tree and its interpretation by its cooperative pruner.

I love working on Lace leaf Maples. Each one presents a unique story each year; each season offers such unique beauty.

Breathing in.

Sensing how the branches want to grow with the flow. A Rhythm and a Dance, and always fun to see how its beauty awakens appreciation of all who see the results.

This is often the tree that evokes an Ah-h-h from the client when I am done. How fun is that?!

Hinoki obtusa and Magnolia soulangiana are close contenders, but the first ones to get my attention and still have a place in my heart, are the Japanese Black Pine and the Lace leaf Maple.

*MaryAnn Burman, APA CAP #014*

*Healing Touch Practitioner, and Certified Labyrinth Facilitator who offers consultations and workshops.*



Diana Chamberlain

My history goes into the trees I prune; I prune with my past in mind as a guide. Of course, while working on a tree I try to discern *its* story by examining its growth rings, past cuts, and health, its through-line from trunk to apex, its bark, leaves, and growth patterns. And though logging many hours with a tree is essential for me before I feel confident enough to begin sculpting it in earnest, that working history alone doesn't make it a tree I cherish pruning. Instead, it's my own personal history with a species that make it a real delight to work on. Two species from my childhood stand out for me in this way: apples and pines.

At my childhood home in Los Gatos, my family had a small orchard containing a variety of fruit trees, including one massive apple tree that I loved to climb in. Its smooth bark welcomed my feet while its leaves shaded me from the sun. I'd spend hours there. During the school week my father was usually working long hours at office, but on winter weekends he'd often be in the back yard pruning the fruit trees, so I made a point to spend time with him then, watching and learning his technique. He'd mostly use heading and reduction cuts so the apples would remain within reach and the branches wouldn't interfere with overhead power lines. Later, I'd learn to prune the trees for sweeter and more abundant fruit and to promote spurs on the lower branches. Today, I especially enjoy thinning and removing whips so as to provide space for the apples to dangle and ripen in. And I especially get excited when a client has an apple tree that calls for climbing into as I did as a kid.

Whereas apple trees echo my childhood home, pines (especially *Pinus thunbergii* and *Pinus resinosa*) call to mind some of my favorite childhood places *away* from home. My mother would often draw landscapes at Hakone Estate and Gardens, which was a short car ride from our house. While she drew, we kids would explore the grounds. Though I was only a kid, I recall staring at the pines to admire their stylishly sculpted branch pads; as an adult I'd become obsessed with unlocking the art of pruning in that fashion.

Today I love the intimacy of pulling needles from pines to reveal hidden buds and branch lines, making it easier to see a tree's through-line and to recognize the next pruning decisions that need to be made. The refreshing, bright scent of pine sap can bring on a flood of early memories, and the sculpted trees evoke the wind swept landscapes of Monterey Bay and the Sierra Nevada of my youth.

In my life as a pruner, remembering the past has been as important as anticipating the tree's future.

*Diana Chamberlain, APA CAP #058  
Working in the East Bay, California.*



Mark Mendell

I've been doing aesthetic pruning now for about five years, and was just certified in November. I have enjoyed pruning for many years, since taking a basic pruning course at Merritt so long ago (1973) that all the rules were different. (For instance, flush cuts were the goal!) I couldn't really explain what it was about pruning that made it so much fun, when to many it would seem like work.

When I discovered the Aesthetic Pruning program at Merritt in about 2015, I was excited to learn that landscape pruning could be taken to a higher level. I felt I'd found a tribe that shared the same mysterious focus/passion, but had elevated it from routine maintenance to a craft and an art, blended with science. What could be better? For this opportunity, I feel grateful to Dennis Makishima, whom I consider a cultural treasure, not only for developing this approach to pruning, but also for developing the aesthetic pruning community, with its generosity aimed both outward, to service, and inward, to supporting its own newer members. I'm also grateful to the Landscape Horticulture Department at Merritt, for providing such a great technical foundation for aesthetic pruning.

While I'm sure my preferences in pruning will evolve over time, my favorite trees to prune now are Japanese maples, either upright or weeping, and fruit trees of all kinds, from the common to the exotic.

I like Japanese maples because the different varieties each have a natural, magical grace and style. Pruning is often barely necessary, unless correcting prior pruning errors (unfortunately common), or making the tree fit into a space smaller than ideal for its natural habit. And because these maples are so naturally graceful, it can be a challenge to make human decisions and cuts that match the natural forms, whether in an upright or a weeping Japanese maple. I think there is a great deal for me to learn about these, although they seem fairly forgiving. Fortunately, there are many other pruners around with lots of Japanese maple experience to learn from.

I like pruning fruit trees because they present an entirely different challenge. I've become focused on growing varieties of many different fruit trees/shrubs/vines in the SF Bay Area. Specifically, growing the best tasting varieties of fruit possible for your micro-climate, especially if not available in stores and, even more specially, if thought impossible to grow in your climate. I've been enabled in this by the local chapter of the California Rare Fruit Growers, whose members share this obsession. Fruit tree pruning is essential for growing healthy and productive fruit trees, shrubs, and vines. Traditionally this pruning is just utilitarian, aimed at maximizing abundant fruit on healthy trees. Aesthetically, however, it's a mess. In contrast, aesthetic pruning may value whatever "essence" a specific type of tree has, which could be fruit, but still seems to focus more on the aesthetics of the fruit and the tree together, than on keeping fruit production high.

So for me the challenge I enjoy is to figure out how to combine optimally these two approaches to fruit trees. The challenge is to give each specific type of fruit tree the kind of pruning it needs while still thinking about the aesthetics, short and long term. For instance, apple trees *fruit on long-lived short spurs* that take several years to form and then fruit for up to 8-10 years, so you don't want to be removing many of these spurs while they're productive. In contrast, peaches need hard annual pruning to stimulate new growth, because they *fruit on one-year-old wood* (one year after you stimulate it as new growth; after that it's less productive). Because every kind of fruit tree has its own specific fruiting idiosyncrasies, it is difficult to learn and keep in mind the needs of each, along with its growth and reaction habits, and to figure out how to work with these plus the aesthetic issues. So I have enormous amounts to learn about all these, and I don't yet know of others to learn from. Please get in touch if this topic interests you!

All in all, for Japanese maples, fruit trees, and all the many other kinds of trees around here to prune, I enjoy aesthetic pruning because it combines art with craft and horticultural science, and is endlessly challenging but also endlessly satisfying.

*Mark Mendell, APA CAP #062  
Working in the East Bay, California.*

---

## Welcome New APA Members!

as of 1/10/2022

---

### Associate Members

Terri Clay- Ventura, CA

### Affiliate Members

Leanne Eames- Victoria,  
Australia

Marisa Evans- Guerneville,  
CA

Tanya Finney- Palos Verdes,  
CA

Jacob Hoffmann- Huntington  
Beach, CA

Lara Netting- Larchmont, NY

Paula Rothkopf- Seattle, WA

Cynthia Smith- Portland, OR

Lisa Smith- Los Angeles, CA

Loretta Turner- Bellingham,  
WA

Ronald Widmar- Eugene,  
OR

### Student Members

Andrea Moss- Oakland, CA

Yauhen Zhukau-  
Provincetown, MA

---

## APA Professional Forum Notes

Highlights from the Forum

---



Our last **New Professionals** meeting, a panel discussion with MaryAnn Burman, Grant Foerster and Randall Lee, was not recorded - but thanks to Dina Blackwell and Evelyn Borchert, there is a posting with excellent notes on what was discussed.

The post is titled *Developing a Pruning Plan*. It shares great info for whoever was unable to make the meeting, and a glimpse of what New Professionals meetings are all about! **Please log in to see the Forum as it is for Members only.**



### You Could Win an APA Tote Bag!

We draw a name from all of the forum users during the previous quarter.

**And the winner is:  
Alasdair McCondochie!**

Using the APA Forum is an informative and exclusive benefit of membership. Log into your account on the APA website to read, post, or reply to any comment or topic.

Subscribe to the Forum to receive notice of new topics, and search through past topics by typing key words into the search bar at the top of the APA Home page - all Forum posts will show a speech bubble next to the search results.

---

## APA News

---

### Congratulations to our newest APA Certified Aesthetic Pruners!

Mark Mendell - CAP #62  
Ann Owen - CAP #63

Please see the APA directory for their profiles

---

**The APA Sachiko Umehara Memorial Scholarship** can be applied for through the Peralta Colleges Foundation website thru **February 2022**.

[Peralta Colleges Scholarships](#). Students receiving the scholarship will be awarded \$500 to go toward horticulture and pruning classes at Merritt College. Remember a student does not apply directly for the scholarship. Each application is matched with all of the scholarships for which the student qualifies. The APA is looking for an applicant who is majoring in aesthetic pruning as a career. If you are a registered student or know of a student in the Merritt Landscape Horticulture program please apply before the end of February 2022. If you would like to donate to the fund there is a link on the APA homepage.

---

## **Attention all APA CAPS!**

We are seeking APA CAPs to proctor the CAP exam

It doesn't take a lot of your time and you will be helping a pruner reach their aspiration to be certified!

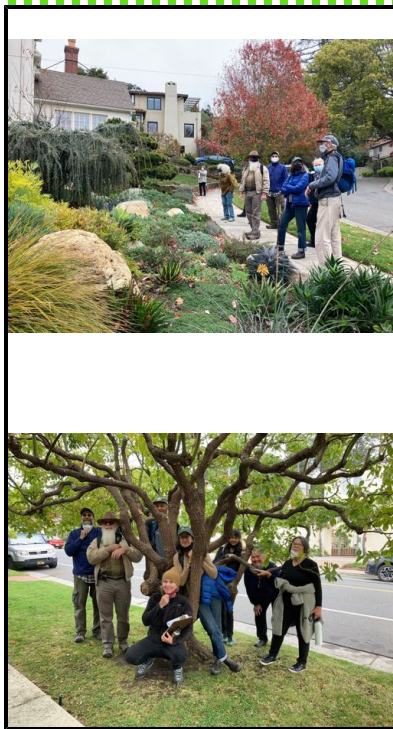
What this entails:

2 hours to review the testee's portfolio

4 hours to proctor the exam

Please contact Randall Lee, the Craft Standards chair, to volunteer at [randallalee@yahoo.com](mailto:randallalee@yahoo.com)

---



## APA Tree Walk

We had a great time at the 12/4/21 Tree Walk which was led by Diana Chamberlain and Dina Blackwell in the North Berkeley Hills. We strolled the neighborhood and looked at gardens while discussing trees and pruning. There were some pretty amazing trees! We started the walk in front of a garden that Dennis Makishima has pruned for 20+ years and ended our fun time with lunch together on Solano Ave in Berkeley, CA.

Those who joined the walk: Shirley Brewin, Jane Chua-Couzens, Barbara Eaton, Grant Foerster, Melissa Hyams, Allison Levin, Mark Mendell, and Dale Trunk.

If you would like to join our next Tree Walk on March 26th, which will be at the Tilden Park Botanic Garden and will be lead by APA member Mathew Hughes, please sign up on the website Events page.

---

In Memoriam

APA Affiliate Member

**Holly Reid**

Novato, CA

---

### [APA Online Store](#) is Open for Business!

Check it out by following the link above. If you have any ideas for APA merchandise please contact the APA Promotions Chair, Melissa Hyams at:  
[melissashyams@gmail.com](mailto:melissashyams@gmail.com)

---

## Trade News

---





## “Adaptability and Resilience; Sustainability in Japanese Gardens”

2021 NAJGA Biennial Conference a  
Great Success

by Nicki LaPlante, APA CAP #56

The North American Japanese Garden Association (NAJGA) held their fifth biennial conference in San Diego, CA this November 3-7, 2021. The lecture and presentation portions of the conference were hosted by Japanese Friendship Garden of San Diego, plus there were two days of garden tours in Los Angeles and San Diego.



Despite all the pandemic has thrown at anyone trying to plan a gathering of more than 4 people over the last two years, the NAJGA conference was executed with outstanding proficiency. Every detail was considered in how to make each participant both safe and comfortable. NAJGA's incorporation of professional technological support to assure both presenters and audience members around the world could participate was a wise investment.



I'm not sure how many of you may have attended the conference online (in-person people, I saw you! 😊), but if you visit the NAJGA website, [www.najga.org](http://www.najga.org), there is post-conference access to all recordings. I'd encourage you to check them out, even just to see how well APA members represented our community: Maryann Lewis, Grant Foerster, and Emily Fronckowiak formed a panel of experts that highlighted key facets of achieving an educated, balanced, and rewarding life in horticulture; Bill Castellon shared personal experiences of working with Japanese gardeners in the US; David Rettig gave heartfelt account of his participation in Gardens for Peace; I advocated consideration of site ecology in creating and fostering sustainable gardens. I'd say we covered quite a range of topics within the sustainability and resilience theme; the APA was definitely seen as a respectable group of professionals.



It was a gift to be able to travel and



It was a gift to be able to travel and spend time catching up with friends and colleagues, plus make new acquaintances. I loved having face-to-face time instead of FaceTime with APA members I'd only seen on my computer! The value in attending conferences, I find, is in those little moments between lectures, at dinner, or socializing on the shuttles. That is where the whole picture of who we are is really presented. I hope to see you at the next NAJGA conference in Fort Worth, Texas!

---

## Committee Chair Reports

---

### **Craft Standards Committee - Interim Chair Randall Lee:**

The Craft Standards Committee consisting of Dina Blackwell, Grant Foerster, Walt Fuji, Maryann Lewis, Judy Thomas and Randall Lee is meeting twice a month. As part of our national outgrowth we are working on updating the 3 part CAP test so it can be given nationwide. This will involve making changes to the written, oral and hands-on portions of the test.

Presently we have edited and updated the database of CAP test questions and are updating the three CAP tests. Final editing and proofreading and approval by the Board is next. We are now working on the Oral Walkthrough and Hands-on portions of the test. Our goal is to have a new CAP test approved, tested and ready to be used in mid 2022.

---

### **Education Committee - Chair Diana Chamberlain:**

The Education Committee meets monthly and is currently planning upcoming Tree Talks and New Professionals meetings. Thanks to a fantastic committee this year: Barb Eaton, Jane Chua-Couzens, Judy Thomas, Evelyn Borchert, Joe Ehrmann, Lara Miranda, Dina Blackwell, Grant Foerster; and thanks to Jason Welsh for various input in talks and symposium.

**For the 2021 Year in Review and 2022 Calendar of Events**

please [click here](#)



---

## **Finance Committee - Chair Barbara Eaton, APA Treasurer:**

Committee members: Dina Blackwell, APA President; Melissa Hyams, APA Vice President; Randall Lee, APA Board Member; Shivawn Layne, Accountant; Helga Mahlmann, former Accountant.

The Finance Committee met on 12/14/2021 to discuss the projected 2022 budget. Additions to the budget for 2022, as compared with 2021, include expenses and income related to an upcoming symposium and workshop in the Spring as well as the purchase (and hopefully sales!) of more APA merchandise (hats, t-shirts and tote bags.) The APA's website hosting costs are increasing slightly for the new year, as is our Zoom subscription. We anticipate a continued high level of attendance at the virtual Tree Talks, and although we currently plan to present 4 talks in 2022 instead of 6, we hope they continue to attract the interest of more non-APA members and even encourage some new attendees to become members, thus boosting our income from membership as well as events. Our accountant, Shivawn, has just completed the 2021 financials, and we will post that information to the APA website before the Annual Meeting.

Here is a [link](#) to the projected 2022 budget.

---

## **National Growth and Outreach - Chair Maryann Lewis:**

Committee members include: Jeff Harris, Dierdre Davis Eickhoff, Emily Fronckowiak, Nicole LaPlante, Matt Luks-Jurutka, Grant Foerster, Diana Chamberlain and Dina Blackwell.

The national growth committee meets to discuss topics that influence the APA's ability to grow and support members nationally. Topics include: national promotional material, outreach ideas, website updates, on-line CAP testing and other topics pertinent to the formation of national APA chapters.

The Craft Standards Committee has begun the work of updating the CAP examination so it can be administered virtually. This will help people around the country to have access to becoming an APA CAP.

The Education Committee has been amazing at offering on-line programs such as Tree talks and making recordings available to members. This has been wonderful during the pandemic but has shown to be especially important for those members outside of the Bay Area to have access to the same content that at one time was only available in person.

The Promotions Committee continues to update the website and the newsletter has been a wonderful way for everyone to stay connected and informed about the APA.

In March of 2021 the APA hosted an open house and invited members from around the country as well as non members who wanted to learn more about the APA. We covered everything from the history of the APA to fielding questions about certification. The APA certification and education programs are high on the list of benefits.

Individual members around the country continue to play a vital role in sharing their knowledge of the APA. This personal connection is everything. Infrastructure the APA put into place this year will foster those connections and help them grow.

---

### **Membership Committee - Chair Evelyn Borchert:**

To see the 2021 summary of membership changes, please click [here](#).

---

### **Newsletter Committee - Chair Dina Blackwell:**

Members of the committee are Denise Mason and Lara Miranda. The APA newsletter is a quarterly newsletter. We are looking for submissions. Have any ideas for us? Email us at [apa@aestheticprunersassociation.org](mailto:apa@aestheticprunersassociation.org)

---

### **Promotions Committee - Chair Melissa Hyams:**

The APA promotions committee has created an online shop where you can purchase APA merchandise: APA baseball caps and t-shirts will be available in the new year; and right now you can purchase a sturdy and stylish canvas tote bag. Our committee includes Dina Blackwell, Barb Eaton, Ann Owen, Michael Weber, Lara Miranda and Jane Chua-Couzens. Any suggestions for merchandise you'd like to have made available can be sent to Melissa ([melissashyams@gmail.com](mailto:melissashyams@gmail.com)).

---

### **Website Committee - Chair Denise Mason:**

The Website Committee (Dina Blackwell, Barb Eaton, and Denise Mason) meets as needed. If you'd like to help/contribute to the website, please contact Denise ([mason.denise1@gmail.com](mailto:mason.denise1@gmail.com)).

---

**[www.aestheticprunersassociation.org](http://www.aestheticprunersassociation.org)**

**[Become a member!](#)**

---