

Martin Tucker, our most senior member.



Martin has been involved with Bonsai for a very long time, but like some of us, Bonsai is not his only interest. Martin is also a member of **Delta Informal Gardeners**, a non-profit organization.

The club was started 25 years ago by a small group of gardeners in Brentwood. Since then it has grown to about 135 members who live in Pittsburg, Antioch, Oakley, Brentwood, Byron and Discovery Bay; all towns along the San Joaquin River. Delta Informal Gardeners are known locally as "Diggers" because the letters of the name spell dig.

When he moved from Southern California in 1996, he hoped to find a Bonsai club because not only was he interested in Bonsai, but he had been growing them for many years..

He attended the closest bonsai club to where he lives but after four visits no one had shown any interest in him so he didn't return. He saw in the newspaper that there was going to be a speaker on roses at the local garden club. Roses are not his main thing but he thought he would visit the club. He was received very warmly and soon became a member.

The purpose of DIG is to help beautify the community through selling quality plants at very reasonable prices. They use the money they raise through membership dues and their sale to fund scholarships, provide books and other materials to the local library, provide soil and plants to school horticulture programs, honorariums for speakers, bus trips for members, summer and winter potluck for members, and to buy soil and materials for the next year sale preparations.



A local fruit farmer allows DIG to use part of his property for their growing area and sale. They have a greenhouse there and make a donation for the water they use.



They begin starting cuttings in September and generally meet every Saturday morning until the sale the Saturday of Mothers' Day weekend, taking a brief time out during the holidays. The work is done by volunteers so some members are very active, others not so much.

As the time of the sale comes near, they purchase started plants to supplement what they produced from cuttings and repot everything into appropriate size containers. Members also start plants at home which they bring in (one year Martin brought in 500 plants, including 80 roses he had started).



By the day of the sale they will have 6,000 or more plants ready to go. This year they had 7,500 and even though they had many plants left over they sold over \$13,000 worth. Left over plants are sometimes held over for the next year but the ones that will not easily last a year are contributed to local churches or other organizations for landscaping. Because our emphasis is on families buying plants for their personal yards we have discouraged landscapers from buying from us.

Of course, the real fun of belonging to DIG is the chance to meet many people who have common interests and to socialize. The really active members become like a big family and support group.