



March 2024

The Bent Twig

A monthly newsletter of the American Bonsai Association of Sacramento
<https://www.abasbonsai.org/>

Arboreal Abstractions

The end of March is already at hand and repotting should be near complete, but I am not yet done thinking or writing about it. I could write extensively about repotting – or root work more broadly – and never exhaust the importance of the activity. I am so rapt by the subject currently because of the contrast between how little attention it receives versus how important it is.

This lack of attention is due to multiple factors. First, root work is only performed during a relatively small window and not every year at that. Second, it involves the part of the plant we do not see (most of the time). Third, most of the pre-bonsai material I have come across has received a criminally small or non-existent amount of root work. Many sellers command premium pre-bonsai prices for trees pruned in a nursery container with unworked roots. Fourth, just like trees with suboptimal trunk lines, the more time that goes by on a tree with misaligned roots, the harder it becomes to correct. Fifth, root work is hard. The list goes on.

To be fair, I have learned to evaluate rootage from my teachers. This is less of a critique of pedagogy as it is an observation of the conversation at large. What's missing is context: the why, when, and how of root work. Like many topics in this artistic pursuit, we are often careening down a slope of techniques and concepts, grasping for what is relevant along the way. Context is so important for knowledge.

Why then is root work so important?

First, good nebari is half of the composition. Ok, maybe it's a third of the composition. Or is it 9/16? Whatever the ratio is, the amount of time and energy spent in instruction should be commensurate.

Second, root work must be started early. Unless the grower has employed girdling or root mounting techniques to form radial, perpendicular nebari, drastic cuts are often necessary. This translates to more time until a tree is show-ready.

Third, root work happens during repotting. Repotting – or initial potting – is the moment when a tree takes its biggest step to becoming bonsai. This is the moment when we either begin a composition by moving a tree into a training pot and carefully positioning it. Or it is the moment when we complete a composition, insofar as a bonsai can be “completed.” It is the moment when we make a bonsai show ready by moving it into a pot which meets our aesthetic vision. I can prune my maple seedlings for years on end, developing fat, dynamic trunks, but they will never be bonsai sitting in cloth grow bags. They become bonsai only after being wed with a beautiful pot.

When done correctly, this marriage of tree and pot is when the composition exceeds the sum of the parts. It is the moment of selecting pottery which compliments or contrasts our subject in color, texture, or form. It is the moment of emphasizing bulky mass or an ethereal grace, grounding the composition or pushing it towards instability, creating harmony or dissonance.

Bonsai is the *potting of trees* after all, so why are we not pounding our fists on the table at the profound importance of the moment when tree and pot meet? And why are we not demanding higher quality roots from our suppliers?.

Ian Baker



Evaluating Bonsai in Show Exhibits - Jonas Dupuich Tuesday March 26

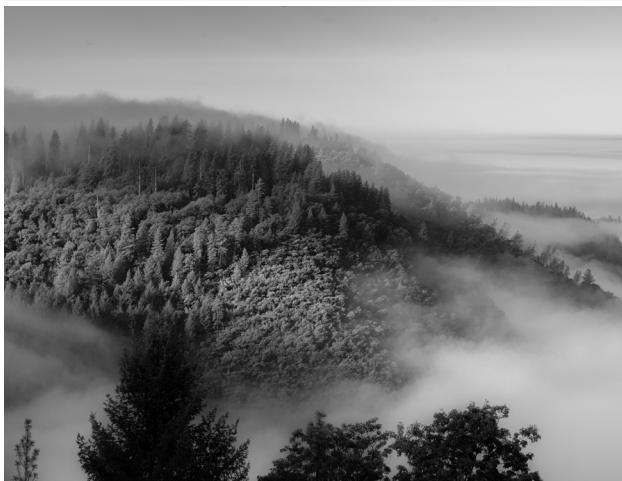
This coming Tuesday evening March 26 we welcome Jonas Dupuich for his presentation and discussion around Evaluating Bonsai in Show Exhibits. This will be an interactive meeting, so members are strongly encouraged to bring more developed specimens for discussion. These do not need to be perfectly show ready trees, so newer members in particular should consider bringing in a tree. While the idea is not to harshly critique trees, members should be prepared to receive valuable feedback about their bonsai relative to the winning characteristics judges look for in formal shows. The timing of this presentation is great for receiving feedback to dial in your submissions for our spring show as well as for the Pacific Bonsai Expo. Entries for the ABAS spring show are due April 11 while the deadline for Pacific Bonsai Expo is April 30.

With decades of experience, Jonas is a bonsai nursery owner and operates the website and blog: 'Bonsai Tonight.' He is the author of 'The Little Book of Bonsai,' a co-founder of the Pacific Bonsai Expo, and is working on his second book, all in the mission of increasing bonsai accessibility and education.



Above: Jonas Dupuich. Below: Beech trees in central Germany. Mention the word spectacle for a chance to win a free raffle ticket at the next club meeting.





Above: Foresthill Divide from the north side

What to Work on March

Most re-potting should be complete for this year. Trees are budding out and beginning major spring growth. The primary work for early spring is fertilizing conifers and pinching new growth on species that require control of elongating foliage such as Japanese Maples. Refer to the 'Yearly Care Calendars' on our website 'Member Resources' page. New growth is very tender and easily damaged so this is not a good time for wiring. Weeds, weeds, weeds! Stay on top of weeding; it can get out of control very quickly. As always, be proactive in seeking out knowledge. Check out the latest post from [Jonas Dupuich, Bonsai Tonight, on Early Spring Work](#)

This is such a beautiful time of year! The varied textures and colors of new foliage on deciduous species are as exciting as the blossoms on flowering species. Take time to enjoy



Above, right: Scenes from the March 10 Member Workshop

Last Meeting - Bonsai Structural Development

We thank Peter Tea for his presentation at our last meeting Tuesday February 27 on bonsai structural development. Peter has been advancing the concept of sequential tree development, with an emphasis on learning to read and design a tree from oldest to youngest tissue, starting with the primary trunk line. Learning to read a tree from the bottom-up is the most efficient way to develop great lines without wasting energy on irrelevant portions of the tree.

Peter's talk was supported by excellent examples of highly developed and in-progress trees from his collection, illustrating the outcomes of sequential development. By learning to prioritize development of primary lines, the student can begin to recognize when existing branching is not usable and to get to the necessary but drastic cuts faster. Learning to not be attached to existing branching when it is suboptimal is challenging for students as it takes great imagination to see past it. He concluded the evening by performing cuts on a trident maple to carry the point home. Congratulations to Paul Holtzen for winning this maple!



Above: Scenes from Peter Tea's presentation

Change to Meeting Agenda

Beginning at our March meeting, the ABAS board has decided to adjust the regular meeting schedule. Due to low participation, bonsai Q & A will no longer be held. The main meeting will start at 6:00 PM, which will allow more time for our presenters. See typical meeting agenda below. We appreciate your support keeping meetings on time and restricting loud conversation to break times as a show of respect to our speakers.

- 6:00 - Main meeting: New start time will allow more time for the speaker.
- 7:30 - Brief Business meeting followed by break
- 7:55 - Member Show and Tell
- 8:10 - Presenter resumes
- 8:45 - Raffle starts
- 8:50 - Final presenter comments and announcement of top prize winner

Raffle & Show and Tell Change

Due to Show and Tell popularity, we will now segregate Show and Tell items on the South side of the room (nearest front entrance) and Raffle items on the North side of the room (opposite front entrance). Look for appropriate signage.





Dig In and Chop In Roger Steel

Dig In and Chop In classes are underway. Concepts covered in Dig In are material selection, intro to tools and materials, and basic styling. Chop In is the intermediate course after Dig In in which students are given styling suggestions, but perform the work independently. More advanced techniques are also taught. Contact Roger for any questions or inquiries into future classes.

We had nine students at the Dig In # 7 class on March 9 taught by Roger Steel and Bill Burns. During their field trip to Green Acres this class was bold and came away with some impressive nursery bonsai material. Several of their choices will be showing up at our shows in the near future.

The attached pictures are of an air layer Bill did to demonstrate the technique on the main trunk. One of the students was then tasked with doing the same on a side branch. Air Layering is a truly great skill to move these students toward larger bonsai material. The second pictures are the before and after of a forsythia. The tree was worked on collectively by the students with dramatic results. After that one student was tasked with doing a thread graft. Of course this bonsai will be cut down further in time as the size of the bonsai will feature more blooms closer to the base.

This was a great class.



Left to right: air layering, forsythia before and after

Accent Plants

Roger Steel

This is the club meeting before our annual show. Last year I featured accent plants for the club meeting raffle prizes. As you see in the picture there will be an assortment of accent plants available this year too. For those of you that have accent plants to spare, bring them on down! The same goes for those small and extra small pots; consider adding them to the raffle for use with accent plants. Our club can enhance everyone's ability to display their art by sharing these specially sized plants each year. See you at the club meeting!



Support and Stewardship Program

The American Bonsai Association of Sacramento prides itself on its strong and caring community of bonsai enthusiasts. In that spirit, we would like to remind you of our Support and Stewardship Program which offers assistance in times of need to ABAS club members and other bonsai collectors.

The program aims to keep your valuable bonsai collection alive and healthy with support from the club's advanced bonsai artists if you are unable for any reason. We can arrange for short term support like watering or, if necessary, help with the sale of some or all of your collection. The reasonable rates for these services vary on the extent of services required and club membership. In addition, we can provide basic language and documentation for estate planning purposes. Now is a great time to discuss your collection, its value, and how to best preserve it with your loved ones. Please reach out to our club president [Dodie](#) for inquiries or visit our Stewardship & Estate planning [resource guide](#).



Thank you to the following members for volunteering to support ABAS at the SGAAC sale March 16 and 17:

Bob Ricker, Timm Johnson, Sylvia Anderson, Ann Hultgren, Ed Slomovic, Kate Fitz, Tom Barr, Carol Greenfield, Carolyn Markis, and Susan Sparks.



Welcome New Members: Catlin Christian, Jennifer Wenzel, Larry and Katie Godbout, Larry Robison, Christopher Enslin, Mary Odbert, Christopher Rose, Kent Matsuo.

New members are connected with their area liaison and will receive a welcome letter with a free pass to one of our member workshops. The mentors are listed on our website under 'Member Resources, Club Liaisons', with contact information.

April Member Workshop The April 6 Member Workshop is canceled. At this time, energy will be focused on preparation for the Spring Show the following weekend. The next workshop is Saturday, May 11. Contact [Renee Seely](#) or sign up via our website to reserve a spot. Remember to specify if you prefer morning, 8:30am - 12:30pm, or afternoon, 1:00pm to 5:00pm.

Membership renewal time - Membership renewal time - \$40 per individual or family. You may renew [online](#) or at our March meeting or by mailing your dues payable to ABAS to PO Box 161767 Sacramento CA 95816. After April 1, those who have not renewed membership will be removed from the email list, cannot participate in showing trees in the Spring Show or consignment sales.

Tom Vuong Bring Your Own Tree Workshop - April 19 from 8:30 - 4:30. Two openings remain in this BYOT workshop. Up to six participants will split the \$600 cost equally. Contact Dodie Newman at dodienewman@gmail.com and send a check payable to Tom Vuong for \$100 to the ABAS PO Box 161767, Sacramento CA 95816 to reserve your spot.

Events

ABAS Spring Show April 13 and 14 The ABAS Spring Show is an annual culmination of efforts to fulfill our mission to teach and promote quality bonsai in the greater Sacramento area. This is your opportunity to share with the public the successes of our club and your efforts. Consider exhibiting one of your beautiful trees and/or stones as well as volunteering for one of the many positions needed to make it happen! Volunteer sign up sheets will be available at the March meeting. Tree and stone submissions should be sent by April 11 and the submittal form should already be in member's inboxes. Contacts:

- Exhibit trees: [Carmen Scott](#)
- Exhibit stones: [Paul Holtzen](#)
- Volunteers: [Renee Seely](#)

The spring show will feature Tyler Sherrod. After attending several workshops with Boon Manakitivipart, Tyler embarked on a 5 year apprenticeship with Sinji Suzuki in Obuse, Japan and now operates Dogwood Studio in NC.

Tyler will lead live demonstrations on both Saturday and Sunday at 1:30 PM. He will also lead a member tree critique session Saturday from 9:00 - 11:30; members may bring in their trees to discuss their tree's progression in ~15 minute blocks. Sign up for a tree critique session at the March meeting or by emailing [Dodie](#)

ABAS Garden Tour Saturday, April 27 We will visit the homes of Debbie and Steve Ballanti (Carmichael), Ed Slomovic (Sacramento), Roger Steel (Fair Oaks) and George Wyatt (Folsom). Sign-up sheets will be available at the March meetings or email [Dodie](#) to save your spot

ABAS Bus Trip Saturday, May 25 Cost is \$50 each. Itinerary includes Lotus Bonsai Nursery, Moonshine Bonsai Ranch, Peter Tea's Bonsai Nursery, Redbud Nursery and Golden Pond Nursery. Sign up in person or by emailing [Ellen Evans](#). Spots will only be reserved upon receipt of payment! You may pay in person or by mailing a check payable to ABAS to PO Box 161767, Sacramento CA 9581

Events Calendar

2024

Tuesday, March 26, Evaluating Bonsai in Exhibit w/ Jonas Dupuich
[In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday, April 6, Member Workshop
Cancelled

Saturday - Sunday, April 13 - 14, ABAS Annual Spring Show w/ Tyler Sherrod
[In-person](#)

Tuesday, April 23, Defoliating Party w/ Renee and Carmen
[In-person](#)

Saturday, May 11, Member Workshop
[In-person](#)

Saturday, May 11, Dig In #8
[In-person](#)

Tuesday, May 28, Azalea Care w/ Timm Johnson
[In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday, June 15, Member Workshop
[In-person](#)

Tuesday, June 25, Development of Oak Bonsai with w/ John "JT" Thompson
[In-person & Zoom](#)

Tuesday, July 23, Summer Splash
[In-person](#)

Tuesday, September 24, ABAS Live Auction and Consignment Sale
[In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday - Sunday, October 5 - 6, SGAAC Fall Sale
[In-person](#)

Tuesday, November 26, Hands On Fall Care w/ Renee and Carmen
[In-person](#)

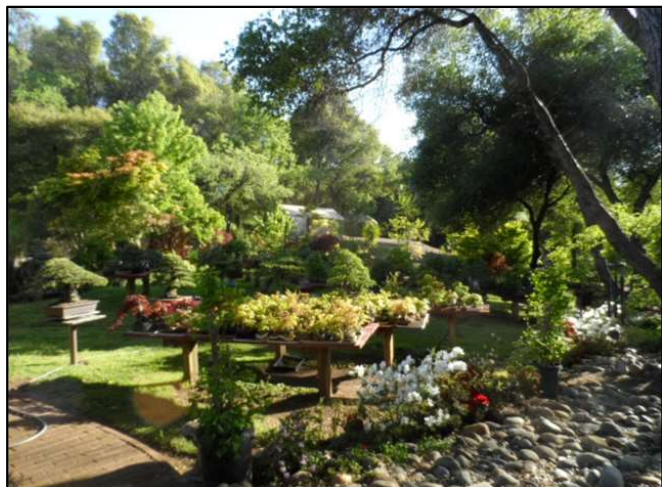
Wednesday, December 11, ABAS Holiday Party
[In-person](#)





ABAS BUS TRIP– Saturday, May 25, 2024

ABAS welcomes all area bonsai clubs to join us on our annual bus trip!



Trip Highlights:

The bus departs promptly at 8am. Enjoy club-provided donuts and coffee on the 45-minute ride to our first stop.

LOTUS BONSAI (Lotus, CA) – Finished bonsai, pre-bonsai, pots, tools, wire. Wide variety of species, sizes.

MOONSHINE RANCH BONSAI (Grass Valley, CA) - Finished bonsai and pre-bonsai, potential for suiseki. Wide variety of species, sizes, specializing in lodgepole pines, root over rock.

PETER TEA BONSAI (Auburn, CA) – Finished bonsai, wide range of sizes and species, pots. (LUNCH STOP)

REDBUD WHOLESALE NURSERY (Newcastle, CA) – Starter material for wholesale prices! We will provide loppers in case it is necessary to prune material so that it can fit under the bus.

GOLDEN POND AQUATIC PLANTS (Loomis, CA) – opportunity for accent plants, unique water plants, shrubs, and possibly a few bald cypress.

We will raffle a variety of items the club acquires during the trip during return bus ride at the end of the day!

Items to bring:

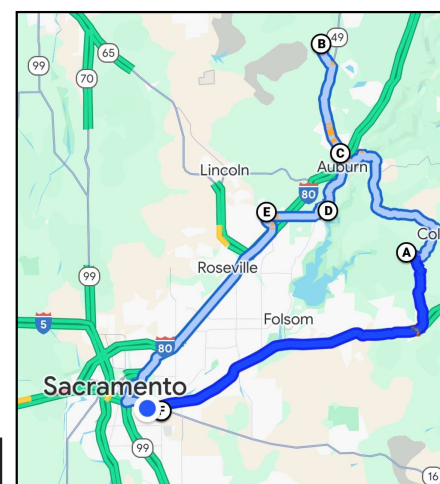
- Sack lunch + drink
- Tags / tape / return address labels to tag your purchases. (They ride in the luggage compartment with everyone else's.)
- Cash to tip driver if you wish
- Vendors take cash or credit card, and some also take checks, Venmo, or Paypal.

Sign up or questions, email Ellen at: kde2@comcast.net

Tickets are \$50 per person.

This is an all-day event, we expect to be back in Sacramento around 5:30pm

Seats will be reserved upon receipt of payment by mailing a check payable to ABAS
PO Box 161767 Sacramento, CA 95816



Please arrive by 7:45 am at the Power Inn Road Park and Ride at 3009 Power Inn Rd, Sacramento, CA. . The bus departs promptly at 8am!!!





**SATURDAY, APRIL
27**



**ABAS
MEMBER
GARDEN
TOUR**

JOIN US ON SATURDAY, APRIL 27

- Choose the meeting place closer to you
Carpooling encouraged due to limited parking
- Visit the bonsai gardens of: Debbie and Steve Ballanti, Ed Slomovic, Roger Steel and George Wyatt
- Lunch provided by the Wyatts and ABAS