



July 2024

The Bent Twig

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

Arboreal Abstractions

After two weeks of days over 100F, highs of 95F sure feel perfectly acceptable to me. I am positive my plants agree. Despite all of my efforts to manage heat and soil moisture - shade cloth, automatic irrigation throughout the day, soil top dressing - a few of my Japanese maples were thoroughly hammered in one day over the heat spell. It's difficult to positively identify the cause retroactively, especially when the usual suspects have already been addressed. It wasn't a pest, it wasn't nutrients, it likely wasn't a lack of irrigation. In my years as a horticulturist, I have come to think of plant diagnosis as a type of phyto-forensics.

When we look at a plant and its condition today, we are looking at the past. Sometimes its recent history. Failing to irrigate reaps its peril within hours. Often though, we are seeing symptoms resulting from conditions days, weeks, or months in the past. Broad mites may overwinter in unopened pine buds and the sinister result of malformed needles is manifested to our eyes months later in the spring. By the time we see symptoms of pests, the damage has occurred. This is why it's important to scout for pests early and often, and consider methods of integrated pest management to broaden the tools in your quiver.

The damage I observed on my maples is an isolated pattern of necrotic stippling, only on portions of some leaves on some trees. In a group planting, one tree was hit very hard and others unscathed. Over time, the necrosis on the most damaged leaves joined together and whole leaves died, but at first it looked like they were misted with herbicide drift. But if a neighbor's herbicide was the cause, it would have been on everything, not just maples.

Another potential abiotic cause is the fabled sunburn that can occur from light lensing through water droplets on the leaves. As much as I see this referenced, it is a rare issue. Part of my garden is irrigated by overhead rotary micro sprinklers and I have not seen burning of leaves for years prior or since this event I am describing.

Someone mentioned root zone temperature in a recent discussion and I think this idea holds water. In the ground, roots run deep into cool soil and we instead pot our trees in gorgeous shallow pots, subject to intense heat and solar radiation. Aside from the water intake needs of the tree, cooling the root zone is a critical result of irrigating properly in peak summer heat.

I still cannot put a finger on what exactly happened to my maples, but it is clear that it was a specific event at a point in time. Whole trees and leaves that didn't cross the threshold have recovered. No new damage has occurred. The simplest explanation is usually the likeliest, but it is also probable that multiple factors interacted. Perhaps the roots got too hot, with not enough water, for a particularly sensitive cultivar of Japanese maple. In biology we talk about G x E: genetics by environment. Environment conditions are important, but only as they are relevant to the genetics of the plant in question. Alas, it is unsatisfying to not have a smoking gun and a clear problem to solve, except that the complexity of growing healthy plants requires our full attention combined with the ability to not become too attached when things go awry.

--Ian Baker



Above: Torii gates in Kyoto and a windswept fig in Okinawa. Right: Scenes from 2022 and 2023 Summer Splash



Summer Splash Tuesday July 23

This coming Tuesday July 23 we hold our annual Summer Splash social event. The event evolved from what was previously known as the Luau. The Luau came into being primarily as an effort to get as many members to the meeting in June as possible, back when electing board members was done by a show of hands. Over time, electronic ballots became the norm and the board decided to have members styling trees. Thus was born the Summer Splash.

Food and beverages (adult and soft) will be served, while four club members will style trees for the raffle. Please bring an appetizer to share. There will be no zoom meeting and no show and tell Tuesday night. See you there!





What to Work on July

Summer is here and this year mother nature is bestowing on us additional challenges for the health of our bonsai. It has been a brutally hot summer so far with long periods of unusually hot weather. It is good to do a daily health check on your trees as well as continue with maintenance and development work.

From now to the end of August deciduous and broadleaf evergreens may need additional pruning, pinching, wiring if there is a push of new growth. Conifers (cypress, junipers, cedars, and redwoods) can be pruned, thinned, and wired. Japanese black pines and red pines (double flush) can still be de-candled but keep in mind the further into July that de-candeling is done, the smaller the new candles come winter. September is the month to begin work on single flush pines (white pines, Scots pine, lodgepole pine, etc).

- Checklist:
- • Check wire on deciduous and broadleaf evergreens to make sure it is not cutting in
- • Stay vigilant monitoring for pests and disease
- • Adjust watering as temperatures increase and decrease
- • Fertilize as needed (see yearly care sheet on the ABAS website)
- • Provide shade for sensitive and delicate species



Above and right: Scenes from JT's oak presentation

Last Meeting - Oak Development with JT

John Thompson (JT) led our June meeting with a lively discussion on developing oak bonsai. The first portion of the meeting was spent discussing techniques for working oaks as well as the character of different types of oak. JT is a broadly accomplished bonsai artist, but has a particular affinity for working with oaks, which are ideal for the Sacramento area in many ways. Many species are native, with ample opportunity to collect excellent yamadori. They are often relatively heat and drought tolerant, and can be worked more often in one season like other broadleaf/deciduous trees.

JT's discussion was aided through excellent examples he brought from his own collection, providing the opportunity to discuss case studies with the group. The show and tell session also became an opportunity for further discussion of member trees, with lots of different examples and unique challenges, as well as a chance for club members to show off some excellent trees. A fantastic oak specimen with good nebari was the key raffle prize for the evening that went to Francis Harrington.



Dueling Demos and BYOT with Bjorn and Yannick Make sure to mark your calendar to attend the October 22 meeting where Bjorn and Yannick will simultaneously style separate trees, then half way through the meeting, they will switch trees and complete the styling of each other's tree. These demo trees will be won by lucky club members / attendees with the purchase of raffle tickets.

In addition, both of them will be holding full day workshops on Monday, October 21 from 9:00 am - 4:00 pm for a maximum of 6 participants in each workshop. Bjorn's workshop will cost \$150 per participant*** and Yannick's workshop will cost \$130 per participant***. Both workshops are "Bring Your Own Trees" as we encourage you to bring 2-4+ trees to work on during the workshop. Reservations will be taken at the July 23 Summer Splash meeting. Participants will need to pay in **CASH** in order to have their spot secured in the workshop as no names will be entered on the sign up sheet without cash payment. No refunds but participants are welcome to trade / sell their workshop seat to someone else in the event they cannot participate.

***Prices quoted are if the workshops are full (6 participants). The total cost will be divided by the # of participants in the workshop in the unlikely event that they do not fill to six participants. Sign up sheets will be at the July, August, and September meetings. Questions, Contact [Renee Seely](#)





Welcome New Members: David George, Michael Moreno, Marcia Cary, Angela Wilson, Craig Hall

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.

Member Workshop. The next member workshop is Saturday, August 24. 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. As always, the club provides wire for use; bring your own tools. Each workshop session is \$10 payable to ABAS. Mention the word “spritz” for a chance to win a free raffle ticket at the next meeting.

Wire Recycling Program Debbie Ballanti has spearheaded a wire recycling program to make it easier for members to properly dispose of their used wire. The wire will be recycled and any money received will benefit ABAS. Wire will only be accepted if it is clean and sorted by aluminum or copper.

August Program Change: Adam Toth

Adam Toth, professional bonsai artist, is our speaker for the August meeting. He has been studying bonsai seriously for over seven years now and spent three years studying at Taisho-en with Taiga Urushibata San, and received an official shohin certificate from the Japanese Shohin Bonsai Association.

Adam previously studied with Jonas Dupuich at Bonsai Tonight and currently spends a few days a week working at his nursery. During his time in Japan, he spent a lot of time studying and thinking about growing and producing better shohin and small sized trees. Adam’s presentation at our August meeting will focus on Shohin Development. Expect a shohin raffle prize and shohin themed show and tell.

Dig In and Chop In Update

Dig In and Chop In are taking a well deserved summer hiatus. Classes will resume this fall, so keep an eye out for announcements. For more info, contact [Roger Steel](#).

Pacific Bonsai Expo

PBE is coming! If you have not already, secure your tickets for the Pacific Bonsai Expo October 26 - 27 at the Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts in Oakland, CA. This is the premier west coast bonsai exhibition and it’s not to be missed! Parking for the event will be limited, so please plan to carpool or use the nearby BART station.

Events Calendar

- 2024
- Tuesday, July 23, Summer Splash [In-person](#)
- Saturday, August 24, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, August 27, Shohin Development w/ Adam Toth [In-person + Zoom](#)
- Saturday - Sunday, August 31 - September 1, REBS Annual Show [Rhonert Park](#)
- Saturday, September 14, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, September 24, ABAS Live Auction and Consignment Sale [In-person & Zoom](#)
- Saturday - Sunday, October 5 - 6, SGAAC Fall Sale [In-person](#)
- Saturday, October 12, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, October 22, Dueling Bonsai Demos w/ Yannick and Bjorn [In-person](#)
- Saturday - Sunday, October 26 - 27, Pacific Bonsai Expo [Oakland](#)
- Saturday, November 9, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, November 26, Hands On Fall Care w/ Renee and Carmen [In-person](#)
- Wednesday, December 11, ABAS Holiday Party [In-person](#)
- Saturday, December 14, Member Workshop [In-person](#)



Above: Scenes from the most recent member workshop





**DOING OUR PART AND
FUNDRAISING TOO!**

WIRE RECYCLING PROGRAM

**BRING YOUR CLEAN, SEPARATED AND
USED ALUMINUM & COPPER WIRE TO THE
MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING. THERE
WILL BE LABELED COLLECTION BOXES
AVAILABLE.**

Email Debbie Ballanti at juno@pacbell.net with
questions.

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