



October 2025

The Bent Twig

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

Arboreal Abstractions

Ian Baker

Oy, the Rendezvous is right around the corner! Do I feel ready? Nope. But that isn't going to stop me from giving it my all. There are so many different skills that go into styling a raw juniper. In a competition. In front of people. In one day. Oy! One side of my brain - the one I am not listening to - says it was a little naive to enter. The other side says, ignore that guy, you have got this, and you are accomplishing what you set out to.

The fact that it's a competition doesn't mean nearly as much to me as the fact that it is an opportunity to level-up, to be seen, and to make new friends. Despite the fact that I haven't exactly met my own goals of practicing every minute of every day, I have been practicing a great deal. Early on, I imagined myself in a Rocky montage, tying on a headband, sharpening my tools, cracking a couple of raw eggs into my green tea, left left right pow. Let's do this. But for all my other responsibilities in life, I have muscled through and I can see significant advancement and new positive habits. Mission accomplished.

On the make new friends part, I have to give a special acknowledgement to Addison Galambos for bringing the 2026 Rising Star cohort together on his podcast recently. Check out episode 9 of the Bonsai Builders Podcast. It was such a cool opportunity to get to know the other artists, and frankly, to break the ice. I don't want to speak for the others, but it would be a lie to say I wasn't feeling nervous about the competitors. Spending an hour with these guys melted that away. The challengers are strong, but at least for me, the tension is not. I am honored to have stumbled into a spot next to these other great bonsai practitioners and I look forward to honoring my opportunity to participate. I just wish I had another year to practice.



Above: Scenes from the 2023 GSBF Rendezvous & Rising Star competition.



Next Meeting

Deciduous Tree Development w/ Peter Tea

This coming Tuesday evening, October 28, we welcome friend and local bonsai master Peter Tea to our monthly meeting. He will be covering techniques of deciduous tree development during his presentation. Peter approaches tree development with a bonsai-by-numbers system that follows the natural development process of a tree, from the bottom up. This system prioritizes trunk and root development, followed by secondary and tertiary branching, onwards, in the most efficient way possible. Once mastered, time is spent working only on the relevant stage of development. This deceptively simple lesson is crucial for all bonsai artists and yields better results, faster. Peter is also a master of making brave cuts to build taper and create compelling movement, especially on deciduous trees. Just ask any of his students!

Peter Tea is not only a renowned bonsai artist, but an excellent teacher. He brings many years of experience starting with his apprenticeship with Junichiro Tanaka at Aichien Bonsai Garden to his students and his practice. He manages a world-class nursery in Auburn including multiple award winning trees.

The key raffle prize for the evening will be a great Sharps Pygmy Maple in a drum pot that will also be discussed as part of the presentation. For Show and Tell, bring in your best fall color to share. Don't miss this one!



Above: Peter presenting at our 02/2024 meeting. Left: Sharps Pygmy Maple key prize for Peter's October 28 meeting. Get your tickets!





What to Work on October

After a brief blip of September heat, temperatures plummeted and we got a significant dose of rain. Shade clothes should be down by now so that remaining foliage can take in as much of this bright, cool October sunlight as possible before leaves drop.

This month we continue work on single flush pines (white pine, Scots pine, lodge pole pine, and other high mountain pines), junipers, and most conifers. Clean up and bud selection on Japanese black pines and red pines may begin. Deciduous trees get a rest this month as we wait for them to transition to winter dormancy. However, If there is wire on the tree, monitor closely to make sure it does not cut in. Deciduous trees may not be actively pushing new growth but they will continue to add tissue to trunks and branches until leaf drop.

This time of year it's important to adjust irrigation strategy, most especially with automated systems, as weather conditions change. Keep an eye out for soil that is remaining too wet and consider placing pots at a slight tilt to enable better drainage. Almost all species can continue to be fertilized as we head into fall, but manage your dose based on the development stage.

As always, stay vigilant monitoring trees for signs of pests and fungus. Arthropod pest load drops with the temperature, but don't let your guard down. Make sure to check the weather before any applications to ensure you will have at least a couple of dry days after spraying for the pesticide or fungicide to work and not be rinsed off from rain.

- 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 decrease
- Remove shade
- Continue to fertilize as needed
- Refer to the yearly care sheets for conifers and deciduous trees on our ABAS website under the 'Member Resources' tab.

ABAS' Annual Fall Auction and Consignment Sale

We did it! Thanks to the tireless work of our board and volunteers, the annual ABAS Fall Sale and Auction was a success. The event was held on Saturday September 20 at 1:00 PM at the SGAAC. The general consensus was that holding the sale on a Saturday afternoon instead of the regular Tuesday evening was more conducive to attendance by the public. As soon as we gained access to the building, our team of volunteers jumped into action. This year, Gina Chaput coordinated the volunteers, making sure everyone had clear instructions. While some of the crew set about - ahem - fixing the layout of tables for the event, sale trees were checked in for the auction and consignment.

Once the check-in and myriad of other tasks were complete, the doors opened at 1:00 PM. Eager buyers grabbed a bidding card and set about scanning the consignment tables and placing items on hold. The auction opened at 1:30 PM. The quality of material in both parts of the sale was high with a diverse representation of species, tools, books, and ornaments. The auction is a great way to acquire great trees at remarkable value.

As the auction wrapped, folks queued to pay for items won and held, but the line moved along and didn't seem to stall thanks to the work of the cashier crew and good planning. No auction is without some hiccups, but overall, this year was smooth. After happy buyers left with their prizes, the volunteers checked out unsold items and set about speedily breaking down the event. It was win-win for everyone; some made more space on their benches while others upgraded their collections. The ABAS board extends a heartfelt thank you to the volunteer teams and to the club members who make this event possible.





Welcome New Members: Another month without new recruits!

Member Workshop

The next member workshop is Saturday, November 8. Contact Renee Seely, breadcrust@comcast.net to reserve a spot. Please specify morning, 8:30 am - 12:30 pm or afternoon 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. As always, the club provides wire for use; bring your own tools. Each workshop session is \$20 payable to ABAS. Reminder that the club owns a set of tools for more advanced work. While it's not quite the time of year to be grafting, don't forget that we have the tools to do this, also wood carving, and heavier bending.

2025 GSBF Rendezvous

The GSBF Rendezvous is a week away - October 24-26 at the Hotel Mission de Oro in Santa Nella. The headliners this year will be Suthin Sukosolvisit and Mauro Stemberger, along with a great lineup of workshops, demonstrations, seminars, vendors, and the All-Club show. Hopefully you have registered by now, but it is still open if you haven't got around to it. Visit <https://www.gsbfbonsai.org/rendezvous2025> for more information and to register.

SGAAC Fall Sale Recap

The annual SGAAC Fall Sale was held over the weekend of October 4-5. Many of the clubs who use the garden center participate in this sale, vending a wide array of plants, crafts, antiques, and baked goods. Examples included succulents, mums, jewelry, ikebana, and of course bonsai, to name just a few. 1

ABAS tends to sell more beginner oriented material at the garden center fall sale, but quality was still good. Coming right after the ABAS auction, the fall sale is another great opportunity to make some space on your bench and a little extra cash to use to fill that space. Attendance of the sale was steady throughout the weekend with many different folks with different interests coming through. Our volunteers ran the booth and transactions, while keeping trees watered and arranged as the table cleared out. Many items sold from the ABAS table and it was overall a success. Thank you to the cashiers and volunteers who set aside their weekend to setup, run, and break down the booth to enable members to sell their items.

ABAS 2026 Calendar for Sale

The first run of the ABAS calendar sold out, but more are on the way. The calendar features photos of our show 2025 Spring Show trees and includes a set of stickers based on the seasonal care calendar we all know and love. Of course, you can use this calendar anywhere convenient to you, but we love the idea of keeping one of these in the workshop along with a set of stickers with cues for things like "decandling black pines" or "fertilize conifers." This next run of 2026 calendars will be available for sale at coming meetings and you may also email Dodie if you would like to secure one now. Each calendar is \$20 - get yours today!

US National Arboretum Bonsai Apprenticeship

Applications for the 2026 PAID apprenticeship at the National Arboretum are open until November 1. Get the word out to every aspiring bonsai artist in your network about this rare opportunity. For more information visit <https://www.usna.usda.gov/about/jobs-and-internships/bonsai-internship/>

2025 Events Calendar

- Friday - Sunday, October 24 - 26, GSBF Rendezvous [Santa Nella](#)
- Tuesday, October 28, Monthly Meeting w/ Peter Tea [In-person & Zoom](#)
- Saturday, November 8, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, November 25, Redwood Developmentw/ Sam Tan [In-person & Zoom](#)
- Thursday, December 18, Holiday Party [In-person](#)



Snacks - nom nom nom!

Club members are encouraged, as always, to bring snacks or drinks for each monthly meeting. The selection of available food depends on the generosity of each of us, so please step up and bring your favorite snack. You may also provide larger quantities of longer-lasting snacks to store at the garden center. Home made items are always deeply appreciated by all, but please consider portability and food safety. Mention the words cooking contribution for a free raffle ticket. You may leave your food items on the back table with Carol Greenfield at the meeting start. Thank you Carol for coordinating snacks and drinks and thank YOU for contributing!



Above: The ABAS 2026 Calendar. Left: Additional scenes from the 2023 Rendezvous



U.S. National Arboretum

3501 New York Ave NE, Washington, D.C. 20002
202-245-4523 | www.usna.usda.gov

National Bonsai Apprenticeship

Exceptional Horticultural Opportunity at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum

Description

The U.S. National Arboretum is offering a unique opportunity for an individual to receive advanced bonsai training at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum located in Washington, DC. The purpose of this national apprenticeship program is to prepare aspiring horticulturists with the knowledge needed for a career in bonsai collection management. The successful applicant will be involved in the day-to-day care of a storied collection of historic bonsai, some of them in training for hundreds of years, and will receive one-on-one instruction from museum staff to develop skill in the styling and maintenance of bonsai.



This training opportunity is from early March through the end of November each year. The position has a 40-hour work week of five days per week and does require weekend work.

This apprenticeship provides the incumbent access to one of the largest bonsai collections in the United States, bonsai literature and scholarship, and access to a network of professional bonsai practitioners from around the world. Many of our past apprentices are now curating bonsai collections in private and public gardens.

The apprenticeship is a paid position. This year's stipend will be at least \$40,000.

Qualifications

Applicants should have an active interest in the art of bonsai and a basic understanding of plant care. While coursework is not required, candidates who demonstrate commitment to the art of bonsai are desired. Background knowledge and/or experience in horticulture, life sciences, or visual arts is a plus.

Duties

The bonsai apprenticeship will prepare individuals for bonsai collection and public garden management. The selected candidate will assist the museum staff with all duties related to managing the gardens and bonsai collection at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum at the U.S. National Arboretum. As the apprentice's knowledge, skills, and abilities develop, supervised work on the bonsai will be offered. Responsibilities will include seasonal garden and bonsai care, such as repotting, pruning, wiring, de-wiring, and other maintenance as needed. The apprentice will also assist with educational programs offered to the public by helping to teach classes and bonsai demonstrations.

As an integral part of the U.S. National Arboretum, the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum serves over 700,000 visitors each year. Courteous and helpful interaction with visitors is essential. Daily tasks related to museum operations include keeping gardens and bonsai displays clean, opening and closing the museum, weeding, and watering. The apprentice will frequently be called upon to safely lift and move heavy but fragile trees around the museum. Much of the work is performed outdoors in all weather conditions, including heat, cold, and rain.

The apprentice will join other U.S. National Arboretum staff and interns on field trips to public gardens in the Washington, DC area. They will develop an independent study project related to bonsai design in collaboration with the Museum Curator. The results of the study project will be presented to staff of the U.S. National Arboretum and the National Bonsai Foundations.

Applications

Applications will be accepted until November 1, 2025. Please email a cover letter including your personal background in bonsai and your longterm career plan to USNA.Internships@usda.gov. Describe pertinent talents and life experiences that you bring to this position. Also include your resume, references, and transcripts (unofficial are acceptable). If you have any questions, please call the National Arboretum's Internship Coordinator at 202-245-4529.