



August 2022

# THE BENT TWIG

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

## Arboreal Abstractions

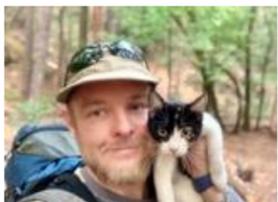
A Note from the Editor

Embrace the process. It has become clear to me over the years that there are similarities to all pursuits of mastery. Art, music, writing, design, engineering, you name it, are all built around a daily practice. We succeed when we build the discipline to sit down and work on our projects every single day, taking small steps toward our goals.

With each of these disciplines, there is no end point with a big flag that says you've made it; instead, there is lifelong improvement. There is always more to learn whether you are just starting or have been practicing for decades. Therefore, it is critical to learn to do a little work every day, especially on those days we don't want to. There is a common misconception in art that masterworks spill out of the artist in a fit of inspiration and bliss. This is rarely the case. How often do you tell yourself that you are just going to knock out that project you have been avoiding, in one shot, tomorrow?

Great art comes from artists who grind. They get up every morning and write for an hour or they sit down daily and work on their trees. They also do not obsess over perfection. Perfection is impossible and often prevents us from even starting. The artist learns to put their work in front of people, even when it is only 60% and they graciously accept feedback. This is especially difficult for beginners. It might be embarrassing to bring an underdeveloped tree to a meeting, but there is no other way to receive comments and to grow in ability and comfort. Step out on a limb and bring your work into a meeting, share where you are at, and be ok with that.

I say all this to illustrate that bonsai is a lifelong pursuit with infinite levels of mastery. The bonsai artist must embrace this idea and learn to love the process, because the process is in fact the goal. This certainly does not mean we don't want to steward beautiful, developed trees or to reach a certain level of ability. It does mean that excellence comes from improving the process itself and opening yourself to the occasionally uncomfortable but always rewarding world of learning.



Ian Baker  
[bonsai@ian.farm](mailto:bonsai@ian.farm)

The author with Heidi the hiking cat

## Juan Cruz – Getting the Most from Your Tree: Recap

Tuesday July 26, Juan Cruz returned to Sacramento to present at our monthly meeting. The first half of the day, he led a workshop hosted by Paul and Dodie, where folks were able to work on more advanced material. The group went on to discuss bonsai theory while evaluating some of the recently purchased Makishima trees.



Juan Cruz

In the evening, he led an interactive tree evaluation session during the club meeting. The night started off with a demo pruning of a Trident Maple raffle prize. Then, club members were able to bring their trees to the stage one by one for a lively group discussion and evaluation by Juan. We saw some excellent material, including a stately Coast Redwood, a root over rock Japanese Maple, and a well-developed upright Atlas Cedar, amongst many others. Juan evaluated each tree and provided suggestions for future progress with each member, while also taking questions from the audience.

The format for this presentation was unique and productive, driven by members' willingness to present their trees and receive feedback. Thanks to Juan for sharing his time with us and to members for bringing in their trees and engaging.

Watch Juan's presentation here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMBj3IsXyuw&t=4411s>



Mario Rendina and Juan discuss a Coast Redwood

Juan evaluating a Cypress

## Jonas Dupuich – August 23<sup>rd</sup> 6:00 PM

Tuesday August 23<sup>rd</sup>, we are excited to welcome back Jonas Dupuich for his presentation "A Year in the Life of a Conifer." Jonas is generously committed to spreading the gospel of bonsai through teaching, writing, and his website [bonsaitonight.com](http://bonsaitonight.com). He has been exposed to horticulture from an early age, starting in his family-owned nursery, where he first met Boon Manakitivipart over twenty years ago. He studied with Boon over the following two decades and was a founding member of the Bay Island Bonsai Club. In 2015, Jonas made bonsai his profession when he started Bonsai Tonight.

Today, he teaches, blogs, publishes, and manages his business and online presence all in the name of making bonsai more accessible to more people. He published *The Little Book of Bonsai* and runs one of the top bonsai blogs in the world, amongst other accolades. Jonas Dupuich and Eric Schrader are also the founders of the Pacific Bonsai Expo, with the aim of establishing a top-quality regional bonsai show in the west. See the attached flyer for more info on the show and the ABAS raffle to fundraise for the Expo.





## Embrace the Process: A Chat with Renee Seely



Renee Seely has been a lifelong Californian, zigzagging across the state (and the world!) as she found her way to Sacramento. She was born in Southern California, moved to Truckee, and then to Oroville where her father worked on the dam construction. She eventually landed in the capital, after a two-year layover in Da Nang, Vietnam. Renee originally wanted to be a botanist but found her way to biology via medicine and microbiology. She studied medical technology at Chico State and then worked at the UC Davis Vet Med school, where she met her husband.

After this, she found her way to Vietnam with her then husband who worked for USAID. While there, she worked in a children's hospital pathology lab which according to her was "One of the most gratifying and educational experiences in my life." Overall, her experience in Vietnam and surrounding countries was "one of the most formative events" of her life, learning applied medicine, experiencing different cultures, and seeing first-hand the commonalities of the human experience across the world. Her travels brought her through

Vietnam, Thailand, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Lebanon, and across Europe.

After returning home, she landed in Chico, where her bonsai journey began after being gifted a bonsai tree and book in the mid 1970s. Keeping trees was difficult as she wasn't done moving at this point, once again bouncing from Sacramento to Southern California, and back. Renee maintained interest in the art despite all the challenges of moving and apartment life. In the mid 1980s she bought a house in Sacramento, allowing her to begin collecting trees in earnest. During this time, she worked in various hospitals and facilities honing her skills in clinical microbiology and taxonomy.

Renee's dedication to bonsai fully blossomed after she retired from medicine. She and her friend Carmen began taking classes at El Dorado Bonsai under Kathy Shaner shortly after Kathy returned from studying in Japan. After a few years studying with Kathy, she found her way to Peter Tea after his move to the Auburn area. Renee has been working with Peter to this day. "It's been wonderful working with (Peter) my trees have developed so fantastically with him. He's a great teacher."

Her experience in medicine has played into her bonsai skills, not only with understanding biological systems and taxonomy, but also with the ability to culture and identify plant pathogens.

Renee's favorite aspect of studying bonsai is finding good plant material with potential or perhaps a neglected tree and improving it. She prefers more natural styles, especially literati, and finding the story in each tree. She is driven by this process of improvement and finds great joy in seeing each tree develop, more so than acquiring fully developed trees. "Having a finished tree... that's fine, but I get more joy out of the process."

"Bonsai is a journey, it's not an instant thing, and you have to enjoy working on a tree. You can't try to push it into something it's not. You need to look at a piece of material, let it speak to you, and let it develop into something that it wants to be. One of the things I really enjoy: it doesn't matter how much I learn, there is always more to learn." Renee's time as president of ABAS has also been a critical piece of her development, not only in technical skills, but in overcoming shyness and learning confidence in front of a large group of people.

To new learners, she advises "Be patient. If you want a nice tree today, you are going to have to spend money to buy it. If you learn to enjoy the process, you can buy a piece of material and develop it. It takes time, so learn to find satisfaction in the process."



Top left: Trident: repotted, fertilized, working on healing wounds. Considering grafting to fill the rear. "It needs some love but has huge potential." Top middle: Trident from cutting, inspired from a hike, 15 y/o, bulked in-ground. Top right: Blue Atlas Cedar 15 y/o in development with Peter Tea. Bottom: Shots of Renee's meticulously kept garden



## New Member Corner

Welcome to new members Mat Hagstrom and Robert Ricker! New members receive a free pass to one of our regular monthly workshops. Please reach out to Renee if you have any questions. [breadcrumb@comcast.net](mailto:breadcrumb@comcast.net)

## New Member Liaisons

We'd like to remind our new members we have a Mentor Program available for you. The mentors are listed on our website under 'Member Resources, Club Liaisons', with contact information. We can help with specific and general bonsai related questions, setting up your display benches, watering options and anything else that comes to mind. This is a one-on-one opportunity for you to get off on the right foot with this fascinating endeavor. Please reach out.

## Website Tour Video

Kathleen O'Donnell has generously put together an excellent YouTube video tour of our website to introduce members to all the resources and content we have available. It explains the layout of our site, the events & workshops calendar, the new member liaison program, and the wealth of bonsai & horticultural resources we have available. Take a moment to check it out today!

<https://youtu.be/od7zZWc-73A>

## Dig-In!

We are excited to introduce the new member program *Dig In*. Roger Steel will generously host multiple two day Dig In sessions each year. The objective is to introduce folks to the process of selecting and developing pre-bonsai material, as well as tools, wiring, and other basics. This program sets new members up for the next steps in their development. Day one will involve a trip to a garden center to evaluate and purchase plant material. The afternoon will then be spent working the trees and discussing tools at Roger's home. Day two will be a trip to a local bonsai nursery (or bonsai specific sale depending on timing) to evaluate and purchase more advancement material, with the afternoon again spent wiring and pruning. The cost for the program is \$20 for each two-day session, plus the cost of trees. Because plant material from a bonsai nursery can be more expensive than from a garden center, Roger will have trees available to work on if you don't purchase one from the bonsai nursery. Tools and wire will be provided, so don't worry if you aren't fully equipped. Roger will spend some time discussing tool selection and where to find decent tools at a good price, like those that Jonas Dupuich sells at [bonsaitonight.com](http://bonsaitonight.com) or at shows. The first series will be Saturday September 17<sup>th</sup> for day one and Saturday October 8<sup>th</sup> for day two. Roger wants to hold the day two session at the GSBF Rendezvous and sale, which would be a unique opportunity. This is a wonderful way to learn the basics of plant selection, development, tools, and especially to connect with new members and the bonsai community. Please email Roger to sign up: [rogersteel@comcast.net](mailto:rogersteel@comcast.net)



### What is Dig in?

This 2 -part series is intended for ABAS members that are new to bonsai. Roger Steel is your facilitator and instructor for this series.

### The Details

- ❖ This 2-part series meets 5-6 hours each session
- ❖ This series prepares you to get more out of our monthly member-only workshops
- ❖ The sessions are held on Saturday or Sunday scheduled 2-4 weeks apart
- ❖ Series are scheduled for Sept / Oct, Jan / Feb and May / June
- ❖ Bonsai tools are not required. Wire is provided.
- ❖ Maximum of 6 participants per cohort

**Cost: \$20 for both sessions**

### The Specifics:

Fieldtrips to a big box store or nursery (session 1) and a bonsai nursery (session 2). Learn how to evaluate material for good bonsai potential. Return to Roger's home to practice bonsai techniques, learn about tools and wiring and basic bonsai styling.

### Dates/Times & Locations

**Session #1: September 17.**  
9:00 am meet at Roger's home (address will be forwarded when you enroll)

**Session #2: October 8** –  
Potentially meet at 10:00 am at the Golden State Bonsai Federation Bonsai Rendezvous held at Mission del Oro Hotel in Santa Nella, CA. This free event will provide attendees with an opportunity to purchase bonsai trees and supplies, watch demonstrations and work on your trees with Roger in the do-it-yourself bonsai works area provided.

For more information about Rendezvous visit [www.gsbfbonsai.org](http://www.gsbfbonsai.org)

## Events

Saturday, August 20, Tri-County Home and Garden Show

Tuesday, August 23, Jonas Dupuich, A year in the Life of a Conifer, [In-person + Zoom](#)

Saturday, August 27, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Tuesday, September 27, ABAS Annual Auction-Bazaar & Consignment Sale, [In-person](#)

Sat & Sun, October 1 & 2, Garden Center Fall Sale [In-person](#)

Sat & Sun, October 8 & 9. GSBF Bonsai Rendezvous, Hotel Mission del Oro, Santa Nella, CA [In-person](#)

Sat & Sun, October 15 & 16, Cap City Bonsai Show [In-person](#)

Tuesday, October 25, Paul Holzen & Greg McDonald, Urban and Wild Yamadori Collection Techniques [In-person + Zoom](#)

Sat-Sun, November 12-13, Pacific Bonsai Expo, The Bridge Yard, Oakland, CA [In-person](#)

Tuesday, November 22, Michael Roberts Growing Techniques to Maximize Ramification [In-person + Zoom](#)

Thursday, December 15, Auction & Holiday Party 6:00 PM [In-person](#)

Tuesday, January 24, 2023 Phong Nguyen, Bending Black Pine [In-person + Zoom](#)

Tuesday, February 28, 2023 Tom Vuong - Grafting [In-person + Zoom](#)

Tuesday, March 27, 2023, Jonas Dupuich, Shohin [In-person + Zoom](#)

Tuesday, April 25, 2023, Open

Tuesday, May 23, 2023 Sam Tan, Post-Spring-push Pruning and Wiring of Pygmy and Monterey Cypress [In-person + Zoom](#)

## Interested in Writing?

If you are an avid writer and are interested in sharing bonsai ideas with the community, either one time or recurring, please reach out to me. I'd love to hear your ideas and discuss potentially adding them to the newsletter. [bonsai@ian.farm](mailto:bonsai@ian.farm)



**Want to Know More?** Contact Roger Steel at [rogersteel@comcast.net](mailto:rogersteel@comcast.net)

Enroll [here](#) or [www.abasbonsai.org/events](http://www.abasbonsai.org/events)

Enroll in Dig In here: <https://www.abasbonsai.org/events>



Visit ABAS at [www.abasbonsai.org](http://www.abasbonsai.org)

Join ABAS on  
Tuesday, 8/23/2022  
for an evening with  
**Jonas Dupuich**



**“A Year in the Life  
of a Conifer”**

**Buy raffle tickets at our 8/23  
meeting for a chance to win this  
tree from Dennis Makashima’s  
collection!**



<https://www.pacificbonsaiexpo.com/>  
The Bridge Yard in Oakland  
in November 2022

**Bonsai Q&A 6:00 - 6:30 pm; Meeting 6:30 pm**  
**Shepard Garden & Arts Center • 3330 McKinley Blvd. • Sac, CA 95816**



**An ABAS  
Fundraiser in  
support of The  
Pacific Bonsai  
Expo:**

ABAS will donate  
the raffle proceeds  
from this tree to the  
Pacific Bonsai Expo.  
Additionally,  
donations  
made between  
8/16/22 thru 9/2/22  
will be earmarked  
for the Expo and  
can be made at  
the meeting and  
/or via the [website](#)  
[donations](#) tab.  
They will be applied  
toward our \$500  
prize sponsorship  
goal.





# GSBF BONSAI RENDEZVOUS 2022

SATURDAY OCTOBER 8TH 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

SUNDAY OCTOBER 9TH 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

HOTEL MISSION DE ORO • SANTA NELLA, CA

## *GSBF Bonsai Rendezvous 2022*

is a special GSBF event dedicated to the renewal and celebration of the art and people of bonsai.

*It's free and open to the public.*

- ❖ Free daily bonsai demonstrations with a special demonstration by David Nguy
- ❖ Do-it-yourself bonsai work area
- ❖ 30+ Northern/Southern California and out-of-state vendors in one huge location with trees, supplies, and accessories
- ❖ Daily silent auctions (silent auction consignment opportunities are available)
- ❖ Live auction early Saturday evening
- ❖ Mel Ikeda is leading the [Tomodachi](#) group
- ❖ Donations of bonsai trees and related materials for the silent auction are greatly appreciated

[Schedule of Activities](#)

[Silent Auction Consignment Sales](#)

[Vendor information](#)

[Volunteer information](#)

For more information, see [www.gsbfbonsai.org](http://www.gsbfbonsai.org)

### **Questions?**

Contact Bob Hilvers [shohincbc@gmail.com](mailto:shohincbc@gmail.com)  
(559) 909-1051



Jeff Stern - Ilex serrata

**GSBF Bonsai Rendezvous will include a sales area that is open to the public with**  
· plants · tools · pots · etc

**There will be an opportunity to observe bonsai masters at work, participate in silent auctions and connect with fellow bonsai enthusiasts.**

Call Hotel Mission De Oro  
209-826-4444

to reserve a room at the special  
Rendezvous Rate  
\$155 per night  
(2 night minimum stay)