



January 2026

# The Bent Twig

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

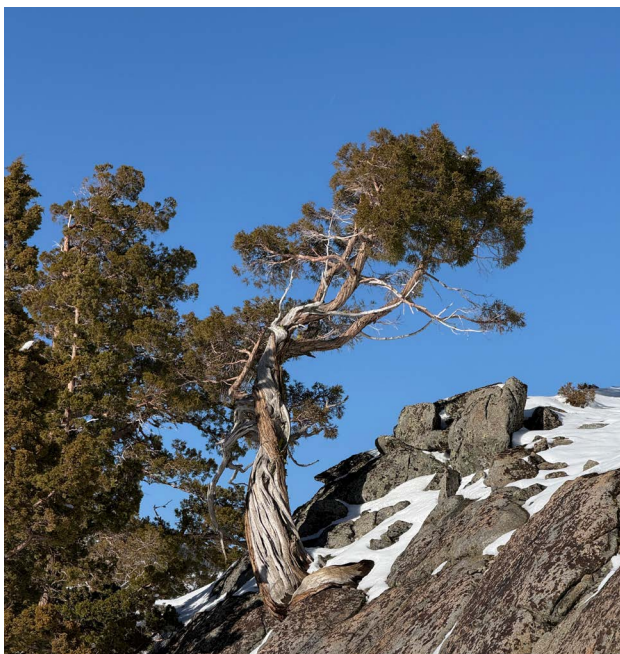
## Arboreal Abstractions

Ian Baker

As time marches onward, another year presents another bonsai cycle and another opportunity to hone our skills. This time of year can sometimes feel like a lull in bonsai work, especially with wet weather, but winter is the season of repotting and silhouette work. While repotting is a distinct skill, it requires a broader perspective of the individual tree and project. More literally, you cannot just repot in a vacuum. Any tree beyond the most immature stage of development is asking us to commit to the basic composition: to choose the front, the main trunk line, the primary branch position and distribution, the orientation of the nebari, the angle. This can be changed later, and often it is, but we are also trying to reduce the time horizon between now and the completed tree. Being non committal about the design runs the risk of delaying arrival at a completed design. There is no way around it: bonsai is a long term commitment and many trees take 10-15 years to reach development with perfect decision making along the way. So, I'll keep it brief. Please take the time to read this newsletter and then go out and get busy! You have decisions to make.



High-elevation pine and juniper



## Japanese Garden Cleanup

On Saturday morning, December 13 a group of volunteers gathered to spruce up the Japanese Garden at SGAAC. All morning, the team worked to pull weeds, rake leaves, prune the shrubbery and trees, as well as repair some issues with the irrigation system. Thanks to everyone who took time out of their Saturday to maintain our garden and make it more enjoyable for all.



## Next Meeting

Bonsai Pest Control w/ Ian Baker

For our upcoming January meeting, ABAS' own Ian Baker will give a presentation on pest and pathogen control in bonsai. The talk will cover the basics of applying integrated pest management to bonsai, pesticide selection, spray techniques, timing, safety, and more. Pest control can be a challenging subject to learn and yet it is a critical practice in maintaining a high quality tree collection.

This talk will be focused on applying Ian's experience with agricultural pest control on his more recent experience maintaining a bonsai garden, with an emphasis on applied skills and readily available consumer pesticides.

Ian has worked as a greenhouse manager and professional grower for more than 15 years in the ag research, plant breeding, and the ag tech space. He is also a life long horticultural and bonsai enthusiast, with six years of experience practicing bonsai in earnest, and a licensed pesticide applicator.



Above: Ian in his natural habitat. Below & left: Japanese garden volunteers







## What to Work on January

Re-potting, silhouette pruning, and dormant sprays are the important tasks for January. Most trees, with the exception of fruiting and flowering, can still be cut, thinned and wired if needed. Pruning flowering plants will remove flower buds already set for the coming spring. The exact timing of repotting depends on many factors, but for newer folks, it's usually just a general push to get it done before spring. As your skill develops you can begin to optimize by species, stage of development, and outcome. Pot size is primarily selected for the composition, but also has an effect on vigor by the volume of the root zone. Generally, a smaller pot will slow growth. Potting media should be sized properly for the size of the tree and the ratio of ingredients is also important; smaller particle size and more akadama retain more water. Conifers have a larger repotting window, so start with deciduous first. Repotting earlier in the winter season gives plants a slight growth advantage in the spring and part of the advanced skill of bonsai is learning to seek every bit of advantage possible. Alternatively, repotting later in winter may be desirable if slightly less vigor is desired. For a good overview of re-potting, visit our website under 'Member Resources' to view [this informative slide show](#).

The classic bonsai dormant spray is lime sulfur, which has insecticidal and fungicidal activity. Additionally insecticidal soaps and oils may be used. Dormant oils are effective, but have a risk of phytotoxicity on evergreen plants, so always test a new product carefully before applying broadly. The idea with dormant sprays is to knock back bugs overwintering in crannies on the plant once foliage drops and before buds open. Plan your applications when there is no rain in the forecast for a good number of days. Using an adjuvant/surfactant additive (also called spreader/sticker) or combining insecticidal soap with lime sulfur will help with even coverage and for the cocktail to better penetrate the waxy coatings of scales or wooly aphids. Always follow the label and dilute carefully - more is not better - and wear your PPE. Maintaining a weed and leaf litter free garden is also an important step in reducing homes for over wintering pests.

## Last Meeting - Coast Redwood Development w/ Sam Tan

In our last presentation on Tuesday November 25, we welcomed Sam Tan up from the Bay Area. Sam brought us on a deep dive into the art of developing coast redwoods into bonsai. His presentation was an expert mix of techniques woven into his own journey with redwoods. He brought a few well-developed specimens from his collection and his presentation illustrated each throughout his work developing them. Sam's dedication to the practice was apparent as the photos made it clear how far each tree had come and in a remarkably short time.

Sam is an excellent presenter and his talk was well-organized and articulate. Audience questions were met with focused answers based on his own experience. He is a talented bonsai artist and has made great strides in an incredibly short time. Sam can be found on Instagram at @samtanbonsai. Congratulations to Ian Baker for winning the key raffle prize.



Above, Right: Scenes from Sam Tan's Nov presentation



## Membership Renewal

Membership renewal season is upon us! Renew early so that you can have it checked off your list at the start of the new year. Dues can be paid by cash, check, or card at meetings or online. Checks may also be mailed payable to: ABAS

PO Box 161767  
Sacramento, CA 95816-9998.

While we happily accept cards, cash or check is preferred so we can avoid card fees. Dues are \$50 for individuals and households or \$25 for students. Members who have not renewed by March 2026 will be removed from the roster and mailing list.





## 2025 ABAS Holiday Party

The ABAS Holiday Party was held Thursday December 18 at 6:00 PM. Turnout was good for the event. The evening is very much a gathering of tradition for the club. As folks arrived, the garden center was transformed with festive table decorations, decorated bonsai trees, holiday tunes, and a massive spread of food. The board provided all the regular holiday staples like turkey, ham, rolls, mashed potatoes, gravy, dressing, non-alcoholic and adult beverages, while members filled the rest of the buffet with all varieties of side dishes. The dessert table was also filled edge to edge with enough sweets to keep a scout troop happy for a week.

Merriment, socializing, and dining proceeded throughout the evening. The best decorated bonsai tree was selected by the group after eating concluded. Finally, the gift exchange occurred, but this year we opted to allow the stealing of a gift up to three times, so there were some fun antics as giftees opted to steal gifts from one another. As always, it was a great opportunity to spend an evening with our fellow small tree enthusiasts.



Above: Scenes from the 2025 Holiday Party





☐ **Welcome New Members:** Brian and Amiee Ralph, Sara and Rick DeLisa, Elizabeth Reul, Kevin Mcinroy, Kimi Shibata - New members are connected with their area liaison and will receive a welcome letter with a free pass to one of our member workshops. Liaisons are listed on our website under '[Member Resources, Club Liaisons](#)'.

**Member Workshop**

We had a full house during the January 10 ABAS member workshop. The next member workshop is Saturday, Feb 14. January, February and March are primarily re-potting. However, this is a good time to thread graft branches if you have been letting shoots run for this purpose. Also, if fall silhouette pruning has not been done, this is a good time. The club provides bonsai soil, aluminum wire and screen to cover holes in pots. Members bring trees, pots and tools. In preparation for repotting, here is a link to our ABAS slide show on the basics of re-potting, available on the Bonsai Resources page of the website. "[Re-potting Guidelines](#)."

Contact Renee Seely, [breadcrust@comcast.net](mailto:breadcrust@comcast.net) to reserve a spot for the FEB workshop. Please specify morning, 8:30 am - 12:30 pm or afternoon 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Each workshop session is \$20 payable to ABAS. Reminder that the club owns a set of tools for more advanced work. Mention the word motion for a free raffle ticker. 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.

**ABAS 2026 Calendar for Sale**

The *second* run of the ABAS calendar sold out, but one more order is on the way. The calender 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 last 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!

**2026 Garden Tour and Bus Trip**

Mark your calendars for the 2026 ABAS garden tour on April 18 and ABAS bus trip on May 30th.

**Bonsai Wire Recycling**

Reminder that ABAS has a wire recycling program every month, so remember to bring in your sorted and debris-free aluminum and copper wire to be collected by Debbie and Steve Ballanti. The wire is recycled for scrap and all money earned goes back to the club.

☐ **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 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.



**2025 Events Calendar**

- Tuesday, January 27, Bonsai Pest Control w/ Ian Baker [In-person & Zoom](#)
- Saturday, February 14, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Saturday, February 21, Dig-In Workshop [In-person](#)
- Sunday, February 22, Chop-In Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, February 24, Mugo Pines w/ Roger Steel [In-person & Zoom](#)
- Saturday - Sunday, March 7 - 8, Mammoth Sale [In-person](#)
- Saturday, March 14, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, March 24, Tree Evaluation w/ Peter Tea [In-person & Zoom](#)
- Saturday, April 4, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Saturday - Sunday, April 11 - 12, ABAS Spring Show and Sale [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, April 28, Monthly Meeting speaker TBA [In-person & Zoom](#)
- Saturday, May 9, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, May 26, Wound Care w/ Renee and Carmen [In-person](#)
- Saturday, June 13, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, June 23, Azalea Care w/ Timm Johnson [In-person & Zoom](#)
- Saturday, July 11, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, July 28, Summer Splash [In-person](#)
- Saturday, August 15, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, August 25, Native Junipers w/ Sam Tan [In-person & Zoom](#)



**DOING OUR PART  
AND  
FUNDRAISING  
TOO!**

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# **WIRE RECYCLING PROGRAM**

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

Email Debbie Ballanti at [juno@pacbell.net](mailto:juno@pacbell.net) with  
questions.

**Sponsored by ABAS**



Scenes from the January  
member workshop





AMERICAN BONSAI ASSOCIATION, SACRAMENTO PRESENTS:



66TH ANNUAL  
**SPRING BONSAI SHOW**  
**AND SALE**



- Premier Bonsai Vendors & Club Consignment Sale
- Club Member Bonsai & Suiseki Exhibits
- Daily Demonstration & Raffle @ 1:30 PM

**Saturday & Sunday, April 11th & 12th**  
**10:00 AM – 4:00 PM**

*featuring special guest*

**Jennifer Price**

*Internationally reknown bonsai  
artist based in Chicago*



Join our popular  
**beginners workshop**

Choose Saturday or Sunday @ 10AM  
\$25, includes: tree, pot, soil and  
expert instruction

Email: [abasbonsaiclub@gmail.com](mailto:abasbonsaiclub@gmail.com) to  
reserve a space

**Open To The Public - Free Admission**

Shepard Garden and Arts Center  
3330 McKinley Blvd, Sacramento, CA  
@ McKinley Park

