



December 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

What does patience mean to you? Persistence - endurance - fortitude? Or Resignation and tolerance? Bonsai is the epitome of patience, but patience is just one aspect of the broader practice. In this sense, practice is exercise, repetition, preparation, and action. It is commitment. We have all heard these ideas, but it takes time to realize exactly what they mean, especially as a beginner and especially in the modern world of immediacy. It can be disheartening to enthusiastically dive into bonsai, to realize only later how difficult it truly is to become a master. It's probably safe to assume we have all experienced this feeling.

One of the hardest parts of an artistic pursuit is the commitment to practice. There is a prevailing myth that artists create in a flurry of inspiration. The muse comes down from the heavens, bestows her vision, and masterpieces spill out of the artist. This is almost never true. That is not to say that we don't experience occasional fits of inspiration; in fact, our job is to learn to recognize and appreciate them.

But the point is that the most successful artists around us work hard. They find time to exercise their skill as a matter of habit, even on those days that they would rather not. They accept imperfection, while striving for improvement. They are willing (or learn to be willing) to put their work in front of an audience before it is perfect. They accept feedback and find excellent teachers.

I bring these points up, well, because I think about them constantly, but especially after the wonderful honoring of Vince and Kathy Owyong at the ABAS holiday party last week. It was moving to hear many voices echoing the same thing I had experienced working with them. They have been at bonsai for decades, developing their practice, seeking great teachers while also teaching their knowledge, and the whole time doing it with a sense of generosity, kindness, and honor.

I am positive that Vince and Kathy have had their own moments of doubt with bonsai, but I am also guessing that those moments of doubt became lessons to carry forward for them. Life wouldn't be what it is without difficult moments; this is universal. But the best of us turn challenges into wisdom and generously share that wisdom. This is what I experienced the first time, and every time after, I worked with the Owyongs. It is inspiring for me to diligently march ahead on this bonsai journey (and life no less!) with a sense of curiosity and gratitude. Thank you both, Vince and Kathy.

Ian Baker

The author at the holiday photo booth and Renee's Hinoki Cypress



## ABAS Holiday Party & Induction of Vince and Kathy Owyong as Lifetime Members

ABAS held its annual holiday party on December 15th after a three year hiatus and it was great to see the garden center packed with happy folks, delicious food, and lovely decoration. Many different people brought this all together from the board, to the handmade centerpieces from Mary Solantai, to all of the delicious dishes brought for the potluck.

Much conversation was had over libations until it was time to eat and we sure ate! People assembled for photos around Gina's holiday photo-op scene throughout the night.

The keynote of the evening was the presentation of lifetime membership to Vince and Kathy Owyong, which was woven together with past stories and a Q & A emceed by Dodie. As mentioned in the Arboreal Abstractions article, many folks from the audience chimed in with their anecdotes of Vince and Kathy's generosity and warmth. The Owyongs have been friends and partners since a very young age and married since 1960. Their warmth and ingenuity are reflected in Vince's background in engineering and Kathy's in patient care. Their bonsai journey started with a Black Pine in 1961, which is still a prized piece of their collection and a testament to their resolve. They are both been key figures in the California bonsai community, as well as practicing suiseki and ikebana, in multiple clubs. The Owyongs' impact in bonsai cannot be overstated.

After dinner, dessert, and possibly seconds, the house voted for the best holiday decorated bonsai, which went to Renee Seely's graceful literati style Hinoki Cypress. Thanks to everyone who made this possible and who attended to make it such a successful evening!

See photos of the event on the following page.





## 2022 ABAS Holiday Party Photos





## Phong Nguyen

Black Pine Bending Techniques  
Tuesday January 24 6:00 PM

Tuesday January 24 we welcome American Bonsai Association Sacramento's very own Phong Nguyen to present on black pine bending techniques. This presentation will be a treat as Phong is deeply experienced with collecting and developing massive conifer yamadori, among other species.

Phong emigrated from Vietnam to the US and is largely self-taught, but has also worked with bonsai masters. He brings a knowledgeable and practical perspective of managing yamadori care with an extremely high survival rate, as evidenced by the trees in his collection. He's inventive and has devised an impressive array of tools and techniques to perfect his bonsai hobby to a professional level.

Phong will bring in trees that he has completed substantial bends on to show us the result and the healing process. He will demonstrate how he bends large trunks and branches during his demo. Members are welcome to bring in their own Pines and, time permitting, Phong will perform big bends on them.

Phong will also bend a JPB that will be in the raffle, so make sure you get your tickets! The show and tell theme for this meeting is winter silhouettes, so bring in your best winter trees to share with the club.



Phong Nguyen with a couple of his mammoth Juniper yamadori. Also, mention the word "contours" at the next meeting for a chance to win a free raffle ticket.



## Upcoming Workshops

### Tom Vuong's Workshop - Grafting and Bending

Monday, February 27th 9:00 am - 3:00 pm. \$85 per person. Bring your own trees to practice big conifer bends. Three open slots remaining. Contact Dodie to sign up; pay Sylvia \$85 to reserve your spot. Tuesday's Grafting workshop is full.

### Dig-In

Dig In is ABAS' new member training program, aimed to introduce newcomers to bonsai basics and teach how to select bonsai material with the most potential. The aim is to help folks fast forward past the early twig phase of collecting that we have all been through and arrive faster at high quality bonsai.

The next Dig In sessions are scheduled for Saturday January 14 and February 18 and will last a good part of the day. Participants will visit a garden center on the first day to focus on material evaluation, with the option to purchase their own nursery stock. During the afternoon workshop, students will learn tools and techniques during a styling workshop on the morning's finds.

The second session in February will start with a visit to a local bonsai nursery instead of a garden center, with an additional afternoon styling session. The next two day Dig In session has been scheduled for January 14th and February 18th; all newcomers are strongly encouraged to participate. At \$20 for both days, you can't find a better opportunity to accelerate your skills. This workshop is open to all, including past participants, so sign up now! Email Roger Steel to sign up or for more information. [rogersteel@comcast.net](mailto:rogersteel@comcast.net)

### Monthly Member Workshop

Repotting workshops will occur Saturday, January 21 and Sunday, February 12. Morning and afternoon sessions will occur if enough members register. Please contact Renee Seely at [breadcrumb@comcast.net](mailto:breadcrumb@comcast.net) to register. Potting soil & wire are supplied. \$10 per session.



Renee and Carmen's demo Shimpaku



Renee and Carmen's demo Trident Maples

## ABAS Seasonal Bonsai Series - With Renee Seely and Carmen Scott

Renee and Carmen are developing a yearlong sequence of videos titled *ABAS Seasonal Bonsai Series*.

Our goal for this series is to provide insight into developing structure in bonsai by working on four trident maples and four shimpaku junipers in various stages of refinement over a one-year period. As we do the necessary work at the optimum time of year, we will record it for our ABAS YouTube channel.

From our decades of experience, both good and bad, we hope to minimize and/or eliminate some of the pitfalls of novice bonsai artists.

The series will begin in January. Stay tuned!



## Welcome New Members!

Welcome new members Jimmy Salgado, Thomas Wright, Victor Ujagar, and Wayne Schermehorn! New members are connected with their area liaison and will receive a welcome letter with a free pass to one of our member workshops.

## New Member Liasons

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.



## ABAS T-Shirts & Hats Order Yours Soon

We are in the process of ordering official ABAS swag - T's, polos, and hats! We will take prepaid orders at our January and February meetings, so make sure to get your orders in for 2023. Contact Gina Chaput with any questions.



## Yannick Kiggen Guest Speaker Booked for 2023

ABAS is excited to announce that Yannick Kiggen, famed Belgium bonsai artist will be our guest presenter at our June 27 meeting. Yannick is renowned for his work and has studied under many international masters, so it is a special treat to have him present for us in Sacramento. He will also hold a workshop during the day, so make sure to keep an eye out for that!



Yannick Kiggen



Above: Vince and Kathy, King and Queen of bonsai.  
Below: Renee and Dodie at the photo booth.



## Events Calendar

2023

- Saturday, January 14, Dig In Workshop Session 1 [In-person](#)
- Saturday, January 21, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, January 24, Phong Nguyen, Bending Black Pine [In-person + Zoom](#)
- February 3-5, 18th Biennial Shohin Seminar, [Santa Nella, CA](#)
- Saturday, February 12, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Saturday, February 18, Dig In Workshop Session 2 [In-person](#)
- February 18-19, Annual Mammoth Auction and Sale 2023, [Lake Merrit, Oakland, CA](#)
- February 27-28, Tom Vuong Grafting & Bending Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, February 28, 2023 Tom Vuong, Grafting Collected Junipers [In-person + Zoom](#)
- Saturday, March 18, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, March 28, 2023, Jonas Dupuich, Shohin Basics [In-person + Zoom](#)
- April 8-9, ABAS' 63rd Annual Spring Bonsai & Suiseki Show, [SGAAC In-person](#)
- Saturday, April 15, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, April 25, 2023, Regular Meeting: Club Defoliating Party [In-person + Zoom](#)
- Saturday, May 13, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, May 23, 2023 Sam Tan, Post-Spring-push Pruning and Wiring of Pygmy and Monterey Cypress [In-person + Zoom](#)
- Saturday, June 10, Member Workshop [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, June 27, Belgian Artist Yannick Kiggen [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, July 25, ABAS Annual Summer Splash [In-person](#)
- Tuesday, August 22, Viewing Stones and Geology with Don Dupras [In-person + Zoom](#)
- Friday, October 20, GSBF Rendezvous, Santa Nella, CA [In-person](#)