



April 2024

The Bent Twig

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

Arboreal Abstractions

The magic of spring is upon us. Latent buds, sites of undifferentiated meristem tissue, receive hormonal signals as the complex interplay of light, heat, weather, water, and nutrients shift in equilibrium; then magic happens. Buds begin to swell, often from expected nodes. Occasionally adventitious buds arise from wherever the heck they please, as with species like redwood. These nubs push forth into a discrete existence and their growth rate accelerates as temperature warms. The accumulation of heat is the primary driver of biological activity — plants grow faster in a relatively warmer environment — but it is a hormonal signal that tells cells when it is time to start dividing.

Hormones in a plant are no simple matter. We speak of auxin and cytokinin as if they were two discrete substances, but we are really talking about classes of hormones, within which there are many complex organic molecules. It is not always the presence or absence of a single hormone that is the signal, but it's relative concentration. The best example is the balance of auxin and cytokinin throughout the plant. These hormones control apical dominance, amongst other things; there is not enough space to explain why, but this is why side (axillary) branches grow stronger when we prune the top of a plant or tip of a branch.

When equilibrium is pushed one way or another by biology, climate, or our actions, a cascade of complex events occurs that we see as new buds emerging or as lateral branches breaking free from apical dominance or as deciduous leaves turning color in fall. Plant hormones are the signals to begin or end activity; DNA is the blueprint.

In biology we talk about G x E: genetics times environment. No organism exists in a vacuum. DNA is the ancient tome of instructions to build the organism; the environment is the complex set of factors that influences the outcome. This gives us the phenotype or actual characteristics of the plant as we experience them. A sun loving plant grown in shade will etiolate, or grow leggy, because it is receiving a signal that it is not getting enough light and must grow taller to grow above neighboring plants, steal their sunlight, and out compete them.

Biology is vastly complex, but I see it as a cosmic ballet. It is an endless dance of the cells and hormones in an organism and its offspring in perpetual motion with its environment. Change only comes when equilibrium is broken.

I love a good analogy and this reminds me of one of my favorites (assuming you are old enough to know what a darkroom is). Ansel Adams said that in photography, the negative is like a written piece of music. Printing the photograph is performing the piece of music. The dance of techniques in the darkroom is never the same, each performance with its own character, yet the tune is recognizable.

We do not write the music, but we conduct it. We steer the environment, we prune the plant, we control the water. DNA is the written music, each passing season the performance. We the bonsai artists are the impresarios. We direct the show and enact our artistic vision on this fourth dimensional living art. We steer the plant with techniques which in turn shift the equilibrium of hormones. We look into the future as we cut and wire a plant to convey a sense of antiquity and wisdom.

Ian Baker



Right: scenes from the 2023 defoliating party

Spring Defoliating Party with Renee and Carmen Tuesday April 23

Tuesday April 23 Renee Seely and Carmen Scott will lead a spring deciduous pruning and defoliating party during our regular club meeting time. Since this is a hands-on, in-person meeting, it will not be available on Zoom.

Renee and Carmen will open the meeting with some technical notes and a brief presentation. Then club members will proceed with defoliating and pruning their trees (or discussing why not to defoliate a particular plant!) with the support of senior club members. This technique is reserved for healthy trees which readily push out new buds, like trident maples, Japanese maples, chinese quince, zelkova, etc. Other deciduous trees can be pruned, thinned, and partially defoliated if healthy.

Members are asked to bring their tools and a table covering, as well as trees to defoliate. For more in depth information, please view our YouTube video by Andrew Robson [here](#)





Above: Complete rainbow over Sacramento recently

Last Meeting - Evaluating Bonsai in Show Exhibits with Jonas Dupuich

During our latest March meeting, we hosted Jonas Dupuich for his presentation and discussion around Evaluating Bonsai in Show Exhibits. This was a highly interactive meeting and Jonas used a set of member plants to begin to teach the group how to evaluate a tree for exhibit. This skill is immensely valuable to many aspects of bonsai, including evaluating trees before purchase and deciding how to style them.

What to Work on March

April is a continuation of spring work. Growth on deciduous and broadleaf trees is at its peak, while conifers are just getting started. Fertilize conifers and pinch new growth on species that require control of elongating foliage such as Japanese maples, trident maples, etc. Restricting fertilizer is important on more refined trees where it's important to control internode size. Younger trees may benefit from more fertilization to accelerate growth. Refer to the 'Yearly Care Calendars' on our [website](#).

Remember that these are just guidelines and techniques may vary depending on the health or stage of development for each tree. New growth is very tender and easily damaged so this is not a good time for wiring. Pests and disease are becoming active so stay vigilant. As always, be proactive in seeking out knowledge! This is a very informative article on [trident maples](#) by Jonas Dupuich, Bonsai Tonight.

It is also challenging to learn because it requires experience looking at many different trees over time, in different styles and stages of development, and to ultimately learn what is desirable and undesirable. While there is arguably a set of objective traits for "good" and "not so good" trees, this is still a highly subjective exercise as with evaluating any art form.

Jonas started by presenting picture examples of various trees to explain the criteria for judgment and to calibrate us to his rating system. As we went through these examples, he polled the audience for specific opinions. Through this process, a basic vocabulary was established, bringing deeper meaning to some of the common tropes we encounter in bonsai. For example, the group considered the meanings of oft used words like balance and dynamic movement.

The audience was then tasked with evaluating the set of trees individually using Jonas' rubric system. After this, results were shared and analyzed in the continuing discussion. This is a fruitful meeting that helped build core skills for new and seasoned bonsai artists alike.

The raffle was stocked with many different accent plants just in time for the coming spring show. Congratulations to Linda Soliven for winning the key raffle prize, a display stand.



Above: Scenes from Jonas' March presentation

Change to Meeting Agenda

Reminder of our new meeting schedule effective as of the March meeting. Due to low participation, bonsai Q & A will no longer be held. The main meeting will start at 6:00 PM, which will allow more time for our presenters. See typical meeting agenda below. We appreciate your support keeping meetings on time and restricting loud conversation to break times as a show of respect to our speakers.

- 6:00 - Main meeting
- 7:30 - Brief Business meeting followed by break
- 7:55 - Member Show and Tell
- 8:10 - Presenter resumes
- 8:45 - Raffle starts
- 8:50 - Final presenter comments and announcement of top prize winner



Welcome New Members: Christopher Rose, Lane Hogland, Daren Blonski, Cliff Hamaker, Scarlett Hayes, Jacqueline Ames.

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 workshop is Saturday, May 11. 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.

Tom Vuong Bring Your Own Tree Workshop - Full

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.

Raffle & Show and Tell Change

Due to Show and Tell popularity, we will now segregate Show and Tell items on the South side of the room (nearest front entrance) and Raffle items on the North side of the room (opposite front entrance). Look for appropriate signage.



Above: Projection of the April 2024 Eclipse

Events

ABAS Spring Show April 13 and 14 Our annual Spring Show has just passed. Look for pictures and notes of the event in the May edition of The Bent Twig. Thank you to Tyler Sherrod of [Dogwod Bonsai Studio](#) for headlining our show. The event included raffles, demos, consignment sales, vendors, daily club potluck, bonsai critique, and a new element: Bonsai Consultation with Tyler - members brought in their trees for development and styling suggestions. The Beginner Bonsai Class filled weeks in advance with a waitlist of 54 people for a second class. Thank you to the tireless organizers, volunteers, and members who brought their best material out to share with us all!

ABAS Garden Tour Saturday, April 27 Our annual ABAS Garden Tour is just around the corner on Saturday April 27. We will visit the homes of Debbie and Steve Ballanti (Carmichael), Ed Slomovic (Sacramento), Roger Steel (Fair Oaks) and George Wyatt (Folsom). If you plan to attend but have not signed up, please email [Dodie](#) ASAP as we need to have an accurate count of members so we have ample food for our luncheon. Please include your name and cell phone number, number of people in your group, and preference to meet at the Park and Ride at 3009 Power Inn Road, Sacramento OR at the Raley's on Fair Oaks Boulevard and Walnut 5159 Fair Oaks Blvd. Also indicate which time slot you prefer: Group A will meet between 8:05 am to 8:20 am and Group B will meet between 8:20 am to 8:40 am.

ABAS Bus Trip Saturday, May 25 Only 12 seats remain for our ABAS Bus Trip on Saturday May 25. Cost is \$50 each and payment is required to reserve your seat. The itinerary includes Lotus Bonsai Nursery, Moonshine Bonsai Ranch, Peter Tea's Bonsai Nursery, Redbud Nursery and Golden Pond Nursery. Sign up by emailing [Ellen Evans](#) and mailing a \$50 check payable to ABAS to PO Box 161767, Sacramento, CA 95816-9998. After April 30, other local bonsai clubs will be encouraged to participate if seats are still available on the bus. Seats will only be reserved upon receipt of payment!

Events Calendar

2024

Tuesday, April 23, Defoliating Party w/ Renee and Carmen [In-person](#)

Saturday, May 11, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Saturday, May 11, Dig In #8 [In-person](#)

Tuesday, May 28, Azalea Care w/ Timm Johnson [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday, June 15, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Tuesday, June 25, Development of Oak Bonsai with w/ John "JT" Thompson [In-person & Zoom](#)

Tuesday, July 23, Summer Splash [In-person](#)

Tuesday, September 24, ABAS Live Auction and Consignment Sale [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday - Sunday, October 5 - 6, SGAAC Fall Sale [In-person](#)

Tuesday, November 26, Hands On Fall Care w/ Renee and Carmen [In-person](#)

Wednesday, December 11, ABAS Holiday Party [In-person](#)

Tuesday, January 2, Mention the word equilibrium for a chance to win a free raffle ticket at the next meeting



Above: Spring at the Fremont Weir



ABAS BUS TRIP– Saturday, May 25, 2024

ABAS welcomes all area bonsai clubs to join us on our annual bus trip!



Trip Highlights:

The bus departs promptly at 8am. Enjoy club-provided donuts and coffee on the 45-minute ride to our first stop.

LOTUS BONSAI (Lotus, CA) – Finished bonsai, pre-bonsai, pots, tools, wire. Wide variety of species, sizes.

MOONSHINE RANCH BONSAI (Grass Valley, CA) - Finished bonsai and pre-bonsai, potential for suiseki. Wide variety of species, sizes, specializing in lodgepole pines, root over rock.

PETER TEA BONSAI (Auburn, CA) – Finished bonsai, wide range of sizes and species, pots. (LUNCH STOP)

REDBUD WHOLESALE NURSERY (Newcastle, CA) – Starter material for wholesale prices! We will provide loppers in case it is necessary to prune material so that it can fit under the bus.

GOLDEN POND AQUATIC PLANTS (Loomis, CA) – opportunity for accent plants, unique water plants, shrubs, and possibly a few bald cypress.

We will raffle a variety of items the club acquires during the trip during return bus ride at the end of the day!

Items to bring:

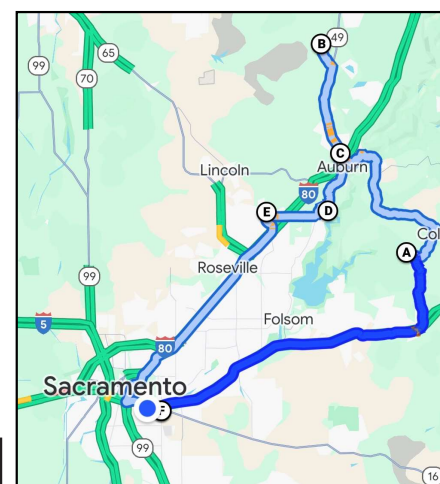
- Sack lunch + drink
- Tags / tape / return address labels to tag your purchases.
(They ride in the luggage compartment with everyone else's.)
- Cash to tip driver if you wish
- Vendors take cash or credit card, and some also take checks, Venmo, or Paypal.

Sign up or questions, email Ellen at: kde2@comcast.net

Tickets are \$50 per person.

This is an all-day event, we expect to be back in Sacramento around 5:30pm

Seats will be reserved upon receipt of payment by mailing a check payable to ABAS
PO Box 161767 Sacramento, CA 95816



Please arrive by 7:45 am at the Power Inn Road Park and Ride at 3009 Power Inn Rd, Sacramento, CA. . The bus departs promptly at 8am!!!





**SATURDAY, APRIL
27**



**ABAS
MEMBER
GARDEN
TOUR**

JOIN US ON SATURDAY, APRIL 27

- Choose the meeting place closer to you
Carpooling encouraged due to limited parking
- Visit the bonsai gardens of: Debbie and Steve Ballanti, Ed Slomovic, Roger Steel and George Wyatt
- Lunch provided by the Wyatts and ABAS



**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.

Sponsored by ABAS