



September 2025

The Bent Twig

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

Arboreal Abstractions

Ian Baker

Setting up automatic irrigation is one of the worst things you can do for your bonsai garden.

Now that I have click-baited your attention, let me explain. Automatic irrigation is a lifesaver. Whether it's the afternoon cycle while at work or two weeks of vacation, very few people have the time to hand water their bonsai multiple times per day.

But watering systems are designed for monocultures. The early stage styrax in a training pot has different needs than the show-ready blue atlas cedar or the young valley oak in nursery soil. Different species in different potting soils in different container sizes at different ages in different locations being subjected to different techniques have different water requirements.

The best way to meet the diverse array of needs is to irrigate by hand and to be fully engaged with your trees. On an automatic system, you are accommodating your average trees while inevitably over watering some and underwatering others.

Irrigation technique is not my real point here though. Presence is. Watering by hand means you are interacting with your collection frequently. It requires your attention and senses be aimed at your trees.

I bring this up because I - the guy who sets up irrigation for a living - was hand watering up until a couple of months ago. During that time, I have never had such an extended period of presence in my garden, not only observing plant conditions, but actually enjoying my collection in a mindful state every day. I told myself I would continue this engagement even after I set up my watering system.

Yet, I set up my system and without fail, I found days and weeks passing without stepping into my garden. This is the opposite direction to go if you want to truly advance in bonsai. Aside from personal stagnation, the worst case is losing trees because of poor watering; underwatering kills them fastly, overwatering kills them slowly.

Many folks out there have figured out a hybrid approach, where irrigation runs as needed, but at least once per day they are hand watering (and misting junipers). Again, for those of us who work, this might be the only option, but make sure you are out there at least once a day.

Finally, automatic irrigation is itself not a hands-off solution. Emitters need to be finagled and cycle times need to be adjusted. The goldilocks zone can be reached, most of the time, by carefully managing your system, but only with the same care and attention of hand watering.



Above: More life-sized bonsai inspiration from Donner Summit

Last Meeting Pot Selection w/ Jonas Dupuich

We had the pleasure of welcoming our friend Jonas Dupuich for our August meeting to lead a discussion on marrying pots with show-ready trees. This was an engaging meeting because it is a topic ripe for discussion. Many members have limited experience with high-level show preparation and it was clear that the topic was striking a chord throughout the night. Additionally, it was an interactive presentation with a huge turnout of very nice member pots and specimens.

Jonas opened with a presentation that used show-level examples to illustrate some of the conventions of pot selection according to the species, style, and feel of trees in Japanese bonsai. While not intended to be a strict orthodoxy, such conventions are the result of decades of experience in the bonsai community and provide a starting point for making good aesthetic choices. Part of the magic of the evening was seeing how opinions met and diverged in such a subjective topic. This presentation also helped build our vocabulary and understanding of pot shapes, sizes, ornamentation, and feet.

After the break, Jonas discussed the massive selection of member pots and trees, providing his perspective on compatibility and then querying the audience's opinions. There was a gorgeous selection of high-quality pots to pick from, which made the talk all the more interesting. Once again, Jonas has succeeded in his mission to educate bonsai enthusiasts in developing high-quality bonsai and bonsai displays. Congratulations to Paul Holtzen for winning the key raffle prize, a lovely unglazed Yamaki pot.



Above: Paul got lucky again! More pics: pg. 3



What to Work on September

The Fall equinox is a few days away! Daylight hours and temperatures are noticeably decreasing. It is time to evaluate placement of bonsai for optimum growing conditions. Depending on the microclimate in your yard, shade cloth over conifers can be removed sometime in the next couple of weeks. Deciduous trees may need protection into October if temperatures stay above 90 degrees. Temperatures in September and October can be extremely variable.

Trees are starting the transition to winter dormancy. Aggressively growing deciduous and broadleaf evergreens may need a little more cut back otherwise wait until just after leaf drop in November for major pruning and thinning.

Now is the time to begin work on single flush pines (white pine, Scots pine, lodgepole pine, and other high mountain pines) and continue work on other conifers. It is too late for de-candeling Japanese black and red pines but fall clean up work can begin, as well as working trees that have not been de-candled.

Remember that foliar growth may be slowing but trees continue to add tissue to trunk and branches. Pay close attention to branches with wire!

Checklist:

- Check to make sure wire is not cutting in on deciduous/broadleaf evergreens
- Stay vigilant monitoring for pests and disease
- Adjust watering as temperatures increase and mention the word gourd for a raffle ticket
- Fertilize as necessary, (see yearly care sheet on ABAS website)
- Plan for removing shade as temperatures drop



Above: Jonas talking pots and trees at the August meeting

ABAS' Annual Fall Auction and Consignment Sale

The time has come, the walrus said, to buy and sell some trees
Of deciduous and juniper and broadleaf evergreens
Of ceramic pots and bonsai tools and vintage magazines

ABAS Fall Live Auction & Consignment Sale is here! This coming Saturday September 20 starting at 1:00 PM, the doors will open to browse consignment items and bid on more developed trees. Note that we are holding the sale on a Saturday afternoon this year in order to make it more accessible.

Sellers: You must have received a seller number from Derrick Alcott (it's not too late to get one by emailing him at derrick.j.alcott@gmail.com) in order to sell in the consignment or auction. Consignment and live auction seller forms with instructions can be found at the top of the events page on our website. <https://www.abasbonsai.org/events> Be sure to include two copies of your auction form (one copy of the consignment form is fine). It is important to follow these instructions carefully to ensure you are paid properly and so that our committed treasurer can maintain sanity. Also, note that the live auction is reserved for more developed trees in bonsai pots and higher value items. Pre-bonsai and other items may be sold on consignment.

Check-in of sale items begins at 12:00 PM; consignment items will be checked-in in the patio area and auction items will be checked-in in the main room, so plan on keeping consignment and auction items separated and brought to the respective area. All items must be checked-in by a volunteer to ensure accuracy before entering the sale. Please do not arrive before 12:00 PM. There will be no pre-sales and we respectfully ask that members not browse sale items until 1:00 PM. It takes a great deal of effort to check everyone in and set up the sale in a short time, so please plan on staying out of the way after you are checked-in.

Finally, all unsold items must be picked up before 3:45 PM. Please check-out unsold consignment items with a volunteer to ensure everything is documented properly, again to ensure you are paid properly.

A hold table will be available to set items aside, but we ask that you pay or communicate a total commitment to purchase by 2:30 or items will be returned to the consignment tables. Volunteers will be given arrival instructions via email from Dodie. Any last minute volunteer sign-ups are welcome; email Dodie to volunteer.

This is the ABAS sales event of the year, so make sure to spread the word and we will see you this Saturday!



Above: Scenes from the 2024 Auction



ABAS 2026 Calendar for Sale

Introducing a custom printed 2026 calendar featuring photos of member’s show trees. The ABAS board has printed a run of these calendars with the idea that key bonsai maintenance events can be planned and tracked with 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.” These 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!

ABAS 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.



Above: The 2026 ABAS Calendar



Above: Scenes from Jonas’ August pot selection meeting





Welcome New Members: Kevin Schultz, Joe and Sharon Bender and Patrick Czarnowski 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

The next member workshop is Saturday, October 11. 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.

SGAAC Japanese Garden cleanup Wednesday Sept 17 10:30am - 1:00 pm. Please come through the garden gates as another club is meeting inside during this time. We have lots of weeding, thinning of bushes, removal of weed trees and general sprucing up of the Japanese Garden before the SGAAC Fall Sale October 4 and 5. Please bring gloves, pruning shears and large loppers, buckets to temporarily hold debris, a stool if desired, Round Up for the some of the stubborn bushes we wish to remove, leaf blower, broom, weeding tools. We appreciate any help that we can get. If you have questions reach out to Dodie at dodienewman@gmail.com.

2025 GSBF Rendezvous

The GSBF Rendezvous is just around the corner (ask me how I know!) October 24-26 at the Hotel Mission D'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. Registration is still open, with a number of workshops and Saturday night dinner openings still available. Visit <https://www.gsbfbonsai.org/rendezvous2025> for more information and to register. The Last date to order Rendezvous gear is October 3 - see details on Merchandise page: <https://www.gsbfbonsai.org/merchandise>

SGAAC Fall Sale

If you didn't sell all of your consignment items at our ABAS Auction, consider bringing them to the SGAAC Fall Sale. Items may be dropped off Friday, October 3 between 3:00 - 4:00 pm or anytime Saturday after 9:00 am. Sellers may use their same seller number from the ABAS Auction. Please complete NEW consignment paperwork and have your tree tags correspond to the information on the consignment inventory sheet. Remember all sellers need to pick up their unsold items by 2:45 pm on Sunday, October 5. We also need volunteers to work the ABAS tables on Friday (help with set up) Oct 3 from 2:00 - 4:00 pm, Saturday, October 4 from 9:30 - 1 and / or 1 - 4 and Sunday, October 5 from 10 - 12:30 or 12:30 - 3:00. Contact [Dodie](#) to sign up for a shift.

2025 Events Calendar

Saturday, September 20, Fall Auction
[In-person](#)

Saturday, September 27, Chop-In
intermediate Workshop [In-person](#)

Saturday - Sunday, October 4-5,
SGAAC Fall Sale [In-person](#)

Saturday, October 11, Member Work-
shop [In-person](#)

Friday - Sunday, October 24 - 26,
GSBF Rendezvous [Santa Nella](#)

Tuesday, October 28, Monthly Meet-
ing 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 Par-
ty [In-person](#)



Do Your Part & Contribute to the Snack Table!

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. 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!



ABAS x Social Media

What makes ABAS such a wonderful and welcoming community is our passion to share our knowledge and love of bonsai with each other. To reach out into the Sacramento area more we are hoping to kick start a stronger presence on social media. This includes our Facebook page, Instagram, and Twitter accounts. If you are on any of these platforms, please follow ABAS and use these hashtags to connect all of our posts together as one big community. This can include photos of ABAS workshops, meetings, events, and even your own bonsai as members! If you have photos to share of work in progress, please feel free to post and tag or send to Gina directly to share online. #AmericanBonsai #ABASbonsai #Sac-Bonsai Our accounts: Instagram : @american_bonsai_sacramento Twitter: @BonsaiAmerican Facebook Group: American Bonsai Association, Sacramento