



June 2026

The Bent Twig

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

Arboreal Abstractions

Ian Baker

My garden receives better attention when I don't have automatic irrigation set up. I have been through this cycle of moving my trees a few times now and there is inevitably a period when I am required to hand water throughout the day, before I have drippers in place.

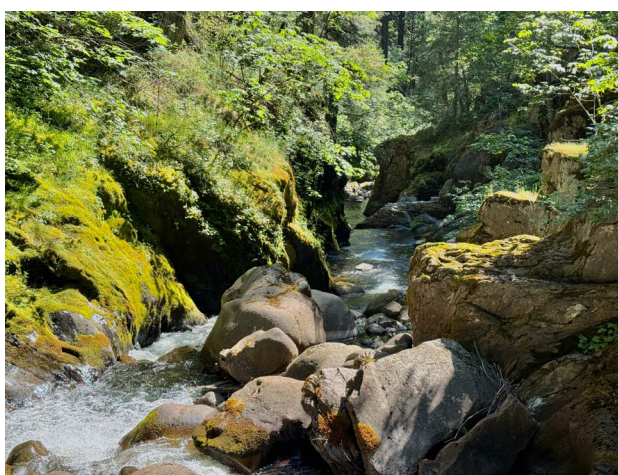
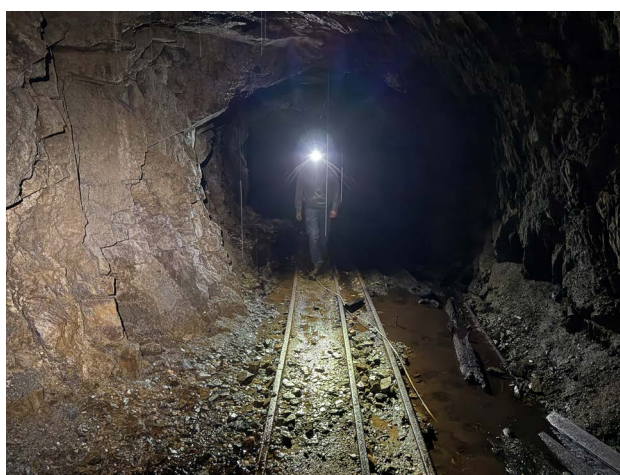
There are obvious concessions. You can't leave home. If you have a day job, you have to have automatic irrigation. It takes more time to hand water. But that is the point.

First, it simply means that you, your brain, and your eyes are spending more time in your garden. You are seeing changes and work that needs to be done.

Second, you are giving each tree the amount of water it needs. Automatic irrigation from the nursery industry is designed to water monocultures. One group of plants of one species of one age belong on the same valve and each get the same amount of water.

Bonsai is the opposite of this. Each tree is a different species in a different pot with different soil at a different age. They need different amounts of water. Watering in a Japanese nursery is a high-level skill reserved for those who prove competent and reliable, because it is such a critical activity.

There is little room for error when watering. The more developed the tree, the closer it lives on the margin of surviving. This is the art of bonsai and there is no easy solution to keeping beautiful plants in this state without effort. In my view, automatic irrigation is only for when you are not home and cannot hand water. Careful management with automatic irrigation can be done and I know people who do it, but I suggest we all take as much time to connect with our trees as possible.



Above: Yeah, that's a mineshaft. Right: Timm in his infinite generosity teaching



Give the People Snacks!

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!

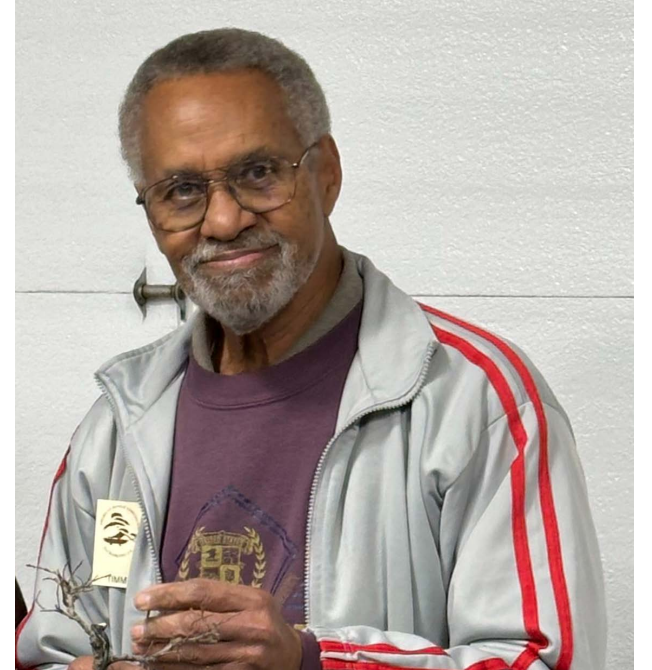
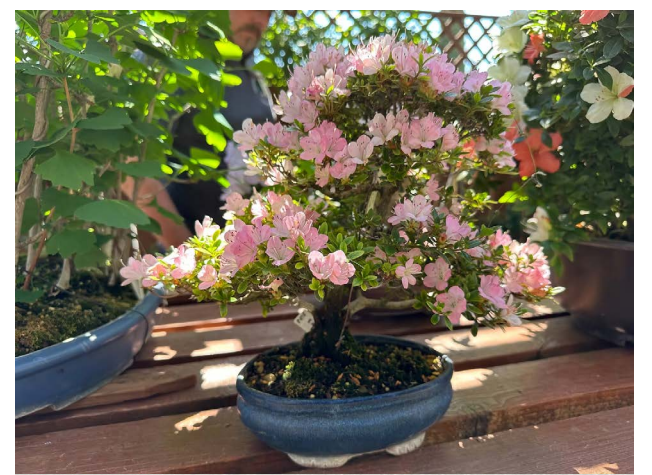
Next Meeting

Azalea Development w/
Timm Johnson

Our upcoming monthly meeting on Tuesday June 23 will feature long-time club member and Master Gardener Timm Johnson discussing azalea care. Timm specializes in keeping satsuki azaleas and this will be a valuable meeting for anyone interested in learning the unique aspects of developing these flowering bonsai. It is important to understand the growth habit of these trees and the precise timing of maintenance actions in order to developing stunning bonsai while optimizing for blooms the following year.

Timm has been an ABAS member for over 35 years, serving in various positions, and is fully committed to sharing his skills at every opportunity. He is also a California Master Gardner.

For show and tell, bring in any azalea you wish to show off. Most flowering will be complete by the time of the club meeting, unless you have a particularly late-blooming variety and you take particular care to preserve flowers in the heat. Otherwise, bring in azaleas you may have specific questions about. The key raffle prize will be an azalea from the Judd collection.





What to Work on June

As we move into June and summer has arrived in Sacramento, it is time to get serious with conifers and, at the same time, keep a close eye on deciduous and broadleaf evergreens that have been defoliated, cut back and wired. You can still defoliate and cut back most deciduous trees that haven't been worked. Hardened branches may be wired. Keep up with pinching new growth, especially at the apex.

Double flush pines (Japanese black pines and red pines) are traditionally de-candled and wired during June and July. However, as with all things bonsai, it is not as simple as just going into the garden and cutting off all candles on all black/red pines. There are many variables to consider: health, stage of development, goals for final design, balancing growth, your unique microclimate, etc. Decandling earlier allows more time for candles to grow larger, where as later decandling creates smaller candles. Keep this in mind relative to the size and proportions of your tree. Refer to Jonas Dupuich's website, Bonsai Tonight, for an [in-depth post on developing black and red pines here](#). Starting now through August, as Junipers (both garden variety and yamadori), cedars, spruce, and cypress push significant new growth, they should be cut back and wired as necessary. Redwoods basically need constant pinching.

Checklist:

- Check to make sure wire is not cutting in on deciduous/broadleaf evergreens
- Stay vigilant monitoring for pests and disease - refer to the [pest control chart](#) and rotate active ingredients.
- Adjust watering as temperatures increase
- Fertilize as necessary, (see yearly care sheet on [ABAS website](#))
- Provide shade for sensitive species and trees undergoing sensitive procedures like grafting



Last Meeting: Spring Care and Wound Maintenance w/ Renee and Carmen

Our last meeting on Tuesday May 26 Renee and Carmen led the spring care and wound maintenance working meeting. They discussed the why, when, and how of defoliation, as well as techniques for wound care throughout the process of closing wounds. This was a workshop meeting, so many excellent deciduous specimens were brought in. Senior club members assisted with all aspects of defoliation, thinning, cut back, and wound care. There was also a significant amount of power tool work using dremels to carve woody tissue in order to allow wounds to heal flush to the trunk. Congratulations to Chuck Hildebrand for winning the key raffle prize of a dremel and other wound care essentials.



Above: Scenes from the deciduous spring care meeting.

Seasonal Bonsai School

Available year round, Renee and Carmen's detailed Seasonal Bonsai School series on YouTube. Start with [video session 1 here](#) and follow the video series as they develop junipers and a trident maples at different stages of development throughout the year. Brought to you by the ABAS video production team, this practical series has tons of valuable info for beginning bonsai artists.





Welcome New Members: Ryan Crawford, Rena Redwine
 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 - June 27

The next member workshop is Saturday, June 27. Contact Renee Seely, breadcrust@comcast.net to reserve a spot for the June 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 like tools for grafting, wood carving, and heavier bending.

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 recycling and all money earned goes back to the club.



2026 Events Calendar

Tuesday, June 23, Azalea Care w/ Timm Johnson [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday, June 27, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Sunday, June 28, Free raffle ticket for who spots the error in prior events calendars [In-person](#)

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](#)

Saturday, September 12, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Saturday, September 19, 1:00 - 4:00 pm, ABAS Annual Live Auction and Consignment Sale [In-person](#)

Saturday, October 10, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Tuesday, October 27, Shohin Pines w/ Adam Toth [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday, November 14, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Tuesday, November 24, Mugo Pines w/ Roger Steel [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday, December 12, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Wednesday, December 16, Holiday Party [In-person](#)



Above: Scenes from the May member workshop



ABAS Annual Bus Trip

By Ellen Evans

The May 30th bus trip to the Bay Area was a fun and productive outing for all. The weather was perfect, with mild temperatures and clear skies. After an unexpectedly delayed departure we enjoyed coffee and donuts en route to Jonas Dupuich's Bonsai Tonight nursery in Alameda. This location is a bus trip favorite because the nursery is an appointment-only business and features high-quality, refined bonsai and a wide array of pots. Jonas and Lauren were also happy to pull tools and materials from their Bonsai Tonight inventory. The club purchased cut paste for the bus raffle and the nursery donated a copy of Jonas's latest work, *The Essential Bonsai Book*. A note for next year—consider bringing some flattened boxes, tote bags, tape, and packing material if you plan to buy pots!

Onward to our second stop, the Lakeside Park Garden Center at Lake Merritt. To quote Captain Jack Sparrow, "Complications arose, ensued, were overcome," as the large public park refused to let the bus park inside their ample boundary. Club members were hastily dropped off at the door and Dodie helped direct everyone to the Bay Area Satsuki Aikokai and Yamato Bonsai Kai show while Ellen and our driver, the unflappable Armando, steeled themselves to embark on a hunt for nearby coach bus parking in downtown Oakland. Luckily, parking was quickly found within a 10 minute walk of the garden center. Participants ate lunch and admired the beautiful flowering azaleas in the show. Vendors and club consignment tables were explored and ABAS members connected with friends in the hosting clubs.

At 12:45 we meandered over to the GSBF Bonsai Collection at Lake Merritt for an introduction to the garden by director Suzanne Muller. Suzanne pointed out a large, old pomegranate that had been donated by Vince and Kathy Owyong who were present. We were particularly excited to have access to the back area to view trees not on display in the garden. The oldest tree in the garden, a massive collected juniper, was temporarily in this back area to have its deadwood cleaned and maintained. The 1000+ year old juniper had been repotted this winter by Peter Tea and his team. Suzanne explained how Peter had selected a new front during the repotting and we all agreed we liked Peter's new vision for the tree. Another interesting item was a venerable John Naka forest planting that Suzanne said had been in decline but was now being rebuilt by the garden's experts. At 1:30 we had a short hike to where the bus was parked and we headed to Elk Grove where our remaining stops awaited us. Beer and snacks were distributed by our afternoon hosts as we took a meandering, magical mystery tour through the backroads of the Delta to get from Oakland to Elk Grove as efficiently as possible.

At Big Oak Wholesale and Retail Nursery there was a generous parking lot for the bus and the staff welcomed us with pens, stickers, and business cards. The nursery donated a flat of "bonsai basil", an adorable micro-leafed cultivar, for our raffle. Club members fanned out and inspected tall trees, woody shrubs, and accent plant material. The loppers were deployed on several trees at the cash register while the nursery's small staff was able to efficiently check us all out. A shady gazebo with seating was available for weary shoppers needing a break.

Our final stop of the day was a truly unique opportunity. We were invited to the home of Garrett Ryan, a pottery enthusiast who runs Ki No Toshi Bonsai. Garrett sells online and is very selective about which events he sets up at as a vendor since he has a full time job and family to juggle with his pottery business. He travelled to Japan for the 100th Kokofu exhibition and acquired many new pots during his trip. He set up his personal collection and sale inventory in his garage to share with us. Due to the size of our group, we rotated through his garage in three shifts. Garrett provided extensive information about every pot we asked about and is clearly very passionate and knowledgeable about the ceramic arts of Japan and China. He told me later that in the hustle and bustle of our arrival he had forgotten to share a charcuterie plate he had prepared for us! Because Garrett lives in nearby Elk Grove, he is happy to coordinate with any interested buyers from our club. His contact info will be provided below. Garrett generously donated a small, beautiful pot for our raffle. I was so busy shopping and admiring the pots that I did not remember to take any photos while at Garrett's!

It was a fast drive back from Elk Grove but we managed to raffle off all the prizes before reaching the Power Inn Park and Ride. We took a quick group photo by the bus, unloaded the purchases, and headed home to rest and let our credit cards cool off. I would like to thank Carol Greenfield and Tina Yates for providing and distributing the coffee; Gage Marchini for purchasing the donuts; Donna Jacobson for bringing the beer, and Dodie and Paul Newman for supplying coolers, ice, snacks, drinks, coordinating raffle prize selection, and providing general moral and logistical support!

2026 Bus Trip Stops:

Bonsai Tonight - Jonas Dupuich

Alameda, CA

By Appointment only

<https://bonsaitonight.com/>
jonas@bonsaitonight.com





GSBF Bonsai Collection at Lake Merritt

650 Bellevue Ave., Gate 4, Lakeside Park, Lake Merritt, Oakland, CA

<https://bonsailakemerritt.com/>

Monday - Closed

Tuesday - Friday 11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Saturday - 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Sunday - 12:00 to 3:30 p.m.

Big Oak Nursery

<https://www.bigoaknursery.com/>

10071 Grant Line Road, Elk Grove, CA

(916) 686-1180

growing@bigoaknursery.com

Ki-No-Toshi Bonsai - Specializing in unique handmade containers for bonsai

Garrett Ryan

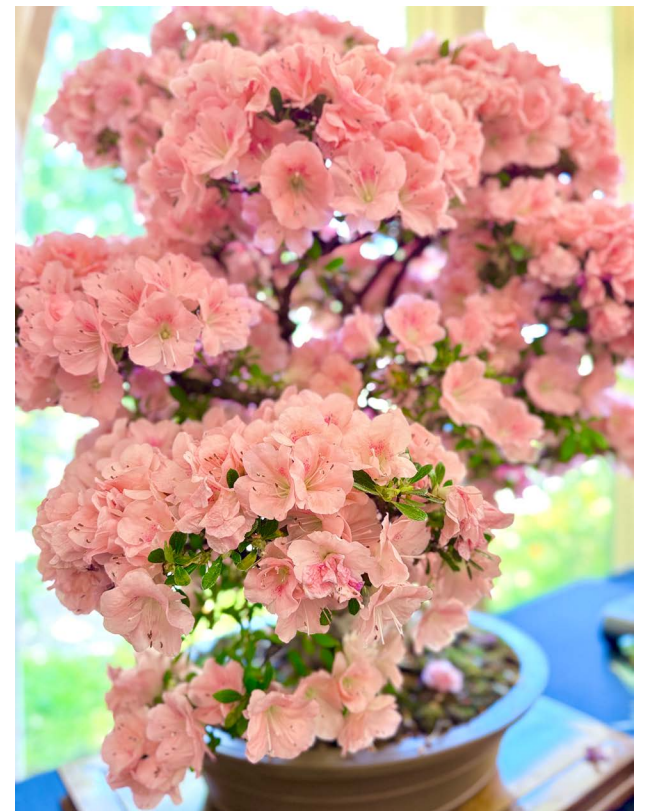
Sacramento, CA (by appointment only)

Garrett.D.Ryan@gmail.com

(951) 526-5604



Above: Ellen on a mission at the May member workshop



Above and prior page: Scenes from the 2026 Bus Trip