



February 2025

# The Bent Twig

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

## Arboreal Abstractions

Ian Baker

I've said it before, I'll say it again, there is something about repotting that is so intuitive to practicing bonsai. It is fundamentally foundational to position a tree in a pot, carefully selecting its front position and its angle. With more developed trees, the fun extends to finally putting those collected pots to use and choosing the perfect one for each composition. Especially when working nursery stock for the first time, repotting is the moment a tree becomes a bonsai, when the nebari is exposed, and the story of the tree is told. It is the time of year when I find myself rapt with roots, working just one more tree (after another) until late into the night. At some point, I have to force myself to clean up and go inside to eat. This is what flow state - or perhaps obsession - looks like.

In this issue, enjoy a vicarious trip to Japan, a propagation fanatic after my own heart, Jonas' upcoming Show Displays presentation, and details of Will Baddeley's deadwood presentation in March.



Above: Nature's bonsai - trees receiving their winter pruning and wiring by snow and wind.

## Next Meeting

### Show Prep! Creating bonsai displays

Jonas Dupuich's upcoming February 25 meeting will be an exciting topic: Show Prep! For Jonas' presentation, we will discuss flow and common design cues of bonsai displays plus there will be an interactive exercise to help people refine their understanding of bonsai design. Bring display stands, show quality trees, and accent plants - even though they won't be in full bloom - for Show and Tell and to potentially be used in the interactive exercise.

Jonas Dupuich runs a Northern California bonsai nursery where he teaches and writes about bonsai. He is the author of The Little Book of Bonsai, The Essential Bonsai Book, and the Bonsai Tonight blog. Jonas is co-founder of the Pacific Bonsai Expo, a juried exhibit featuring outstanding bonsai from across the United States. Jonas grows a variety of species and specializes in developing Japanese black pine from seed. His trees have been selected for display in local and regional exhibits, including the US National Bonsai Exhibition. Learn more at [bonsaitonight.com](http://bonsaitonight.com)



Above: The man, the legend, Jonas Dupuich. Right: January grafting workshop



Above: Scenes from the January grafting workshop

## Last Meeting

### Hands on Grafting Workshop

Our last meeting on January 28 we led a hands-on workshop aimed at thread grafting roots and branches on trident and Japanese maples. Renee and Carmen opened with a demonstration of the techniques on a selection of trees to give everyone the lay of the land. In addition, they shared trees from their collections that are in the process of being or have already been grafted.

Following the demo, members dug into grafting their own trees with the support of senior club members. As with the other hands-on workshops, it was a productive and social evening with opportunities to observe, collaborate, and assist each other. For Show and Learn, members brought trees with successful thread grafts.





## What to Work on February

Re-potting continues in February! Deciduous trees are beginning to leaf out so the priority should be to finish those first and then progress to conifers, which have a large repotting window. 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 and create finer roots, but slow growth more. Plants generally grow faster in larger media, as long as they are properly watered, due to the increased oxygen in the root zone. Yes, leaves photosynthesize and create oxygen, but roots respire and require oxygen. For a good overview of repotting technique, visit our website under 'Member Resources' or click [here](#) to view this slideshow.

As we move through February to March, our trees begin the spring push of growth. This is a great time to graft pines and junipers. Most trees will be allowed to grow freely until May/June. The exception is Japanese maples. They should be pinched back to one node (2 leaves)/profile unless a branch is weak or you are still thickening it. As your knowledge of bonsai development increases, you will realize that there are nuances to all techniques and methods used to create our living works of art. Be proactive in seeking out knowledge.

Also, dormant sprays are no longer useful as trees push out of dormancy. Enjoy the lull in pest activity before the heat comes, but keep your eyes out!



The famous rock garden at Ryoan ji temple

## Vicariously Visiting Japan

As many of you know, some of our club members are traveling in Japan at this very moment, seeing the sights, taking in Kokufu, nurseries, potters, and so much more. Here is the dispatch from Japan 2025.



Shunkaen Bonsai Museum & Garden of Kobayashi san



Gyouzan san at work hand forming pots



Kokofu-Ten 2025



Garden of Kimura san



Kataoka san (Reiho) at work at Seizan toen and his famous chop







Gorgeous dragon panels at a sub-temple in Daitoku ji temple complex



New Kyoto Bonsai Garden at the Hoshun'in sub-temple in Daitoku ji temple complex



Kataoka san (Reiho) at work

## Membership Renewal

It's that time, repotting, thread grafting, and membership dues! You may renew your membership [online](#) or in-person at a meeting. Thanks for your continued membership and everything you bring to the community! **Members who have not renewed by the end of March will be dropped from the email list.**

## Order ABAS Swag

Bring in the new year with some new ABAS swag! We will take prepaid orders at our January and February meetings, so make sure to get your orders in at the back table. T's start at \$27, Polos at \$35, and Hats for \$36. Prepaid orders only with cash, check, or credit card. Email [Gina Chaput](#) with any questions.

## Deadwood Carving Presentation and Workshop w/ Will Baddeley

Our Tuesday March 25 meeting will feature Will Baddeley, an accomplished British bonsai artist who specializes in trees native to his home and realistic deadwood carving. The meeting will be a demonstration of deadwood carving techniques, which is a much requested and rare topic for presentations. An excellent olive specimen provided by Vince Owyong will be carved by Will for the demo and offered in the raffle. See photos below.

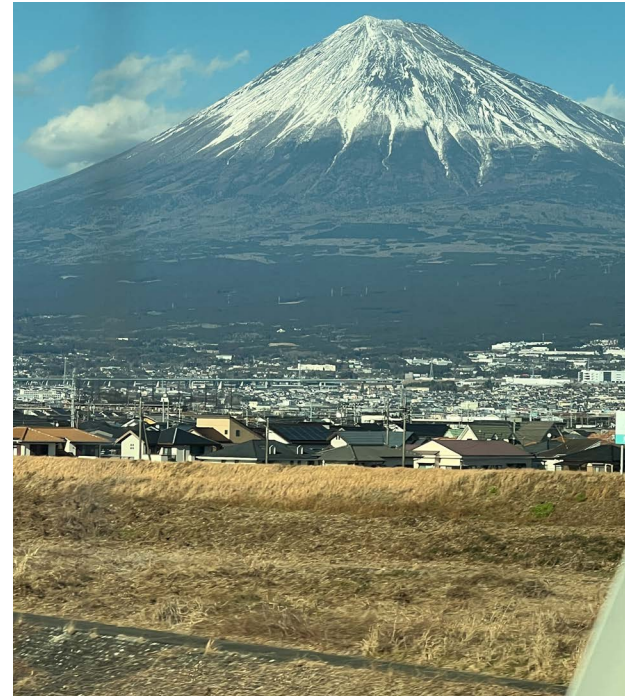
The following day, Wednesday March 26, Will conducts two deadwood carving workshops in both morning and afternoon sessions. Spaces remain in both workshops, so it is a great opportunity to receive skilled guidance on that that needs deadwood work. Don't miss out! Your spot will be reserved with \$75 cash payment at the February meeting.



Above: This olive could be yours in the March raffle - and it's a big boy at over 20" tall!



The Shinkansen



Fujisan





## Free Bonsai...

Ellen Evans

...is one reason many people propagate, be it through grafting, cuttings, air layering, or potting up daughter plants from “runnering” species like Japanese flowering quince or Princess persimmon. Some other reasons include:

To have young material for root grafting the same species or grafting new foliage (as with many collected junipers)

To test/optimize different cuttings protocols (science!)

To have more of a favorite species

To create material to sell, for raffles, or for club workshops

To provide more bonsai material for posterity

And just because / why not?!

I had sporadically and half heartedly tried to make cuttings over the years, with the “stick it in a pop bottle under your bonsai bench” method, which never worked for me. In 2021 I acquired an Ezo spruce and, after learning these are no longer imported, I felt that every branch I trimmed was a precious opportunity to create more of the rare Ezo spruce. Research told me this could take years with a low success rate. I kept a flat of cuttings covered with a clear lid indoors under a grow light; some stayed healthy for several months but nothing rooted. I grew discouraged as one by one they browned until I abandoned the project.

In 2022 I got serious about trying Japanese maple cuttings. My main interest was increasing some favorite cultivars, but I also liked the notion that cuttings would lack unsightly graft unions. The lack of success rooting cuttings from fancy varieties of Japanese maples emphasized the reason experienced propagators generally graft this species. Still, I successfully rooted a variegated trident maple and one of the more difficult ‘Shishigashira’ cuttings.

On the 2023 ABAS home garden tour, I learned from Ed Slomivic that azalea cuttings root easily. Since then, whenever I prune my favorite azalea I stick a few of the branches into some perlite-filled six packs and I’m slowly amassing a little army of pink-flowering clones.

In October 2023 at GSBF, headliner Bjorn Bjorholm styled an ‘Itoigawa’ shimpaku juniper. I have little experience with junipers, but heard how easy it is to root them, so after the demo I was one of the weirdo bonsai hoarders who ran up and grabbed Bjorn’s trimmings. I neatly lined them up in a tray of perlite, covered with a clear lid for humidity, and placed them inside under a grow light. (I worried that even in November the Sacramento sun could cook them in their little “greenhouse”.) In early spring it was clear many were making new growth from their tips, so I moved them outside to experience normal daily temperature swings. The cuttings flat grew on a bench on my patio for a year until this weekend, when it was time to separate, pot, and wire them. I’m happy to report that 35 cuttings rooted and only 5 did not.

I still consider myself a “beginner” propagator, and I’m sure some people would recommend different materials or techniques. I’m happy to continue learning through blogs and online resources, seminars at GSBF and PacExpo, talking to club members, and my own trial and error. Remember how I said I don’t even really know how to work with junipers? Well, I now have 35 juniper babies that I will be shepherding for the next few years. I don’t really have a plan besides keeping them alive and in training; I will surely learn more about junipers from doing that. I imagine as they grow and demand more space and attention some will end up on ABAS raffle and sale tables. I don’t think I need to make more juniper cuttings anytime soon! But I’m feeling satisfied with my success rate for this batch, and the fact that I now have 35 new FREE bonsai!



Above: Do it, you know you want to! It’s great to have a flat of rooted shimpaku at hand for group, slab, and rock plantings - or anything your heart desires. Plus it’s satisfying.





☐ **Welcome New Members: Soren Decuir, Wyatt and Vivian Good, Dayne Burrell and Tony Martin** 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, March 22. Contact Renee Seely, [breadcrust@comcast.net](mailto:breadcrust@comcast.net) to reserve a spot. The morning session will be a regular member workshop while the afternoon will be the first Trees in Refinement intermediate/advanced workshop (see below for more details). Please specify morning, 8:30am - 12:30pm, for the regular session or afternoon, 1:00pm to 5:00pm for Trees in Refinement. As always, the club provides wire for use; bring your own tools. Each workshop session is now \$20 payable to ABAS.

The last push of repotting for conifers is on! The club supplies soil (akadama, pumice, lava), screen for covering drainage holes, and wire for two to three small to medium trees or one large tree. You may bring your own potting mix if you would like to pot more. Bring your repotting accessories that you like to use. Sign up at the next meeting or email [Renee breadcrust@comcast.net](mailto:Renee breadcrust@comcast.net).

## Trees in Refinement Workshop

Coming March 22, May 17, July 12 and Dec 13, 2025 are the new Trees in Refinement intermediate/advanced member workshops. These will be held in the afternoon from 1:00 - 5:00 pm. This workshop is oriented towards more developed trees and more advanced techniques. ABAS will provide a set of tools for carving and thread grafting. Consider bringing trees with well established trunks and primary branches requiring fine branch work, trees that need grafts, or trees that require deadwood carving. Some examples of trees suitable for this workshop are below. If you are uncertain if your project qualifies, email Renee with clear photos of the tree and a description. Be on the lookout for the sign-up sheet or email [Renee breadcrust@comcast.net](mailto:Renee breadcrust@comcast.net). Mention the word kerfuffle for a chance at a free raffle ticket.

## Bus Trip

The annual ABAS bus field trip is scheduled for April 26 and an exciting itinerary has been put together, featuring gardens and nurseries in the Santa Rosa area. Stops include Momiji Nursery, Botanica Nursery, Lone Pine Gardens, and Pond & Garden. This bus trip is an opportunity to socialize, purchase great bonsai & pre-bonsai material, and accent plants. Details can be found in the attached flyer.

## SGAAC Spring Sale

The SGAAC Spring Sale is coming up! Mark your calendars for the weekend of March 15-16. Setup will occur on Friday March 14. We need volunteers to help set up and work the tables. Please sign up at the February meeting. Consignment forms will be posted on the website [here](#).



Above: Shots from the Jan workshop

## 2025 Events Calendar

Tuesday, February 25, Show Prep! w/ Jonas Dupuich [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday - Sunday, March 15 - 16, SGAAC Spring Sale

Saturday, March 22, Member Workshop + Trees in Refinement [In-person](#)

Tuesday, March 25, Deadwood Carving Meeting w/ Will Baddeley [In-person & Zoom](#)

Wednesday, March 26, Deadwood Carving Workshop w/ Will Baddeley [In-person](#)

Saturday, April 5, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Saturday - Sunday, April 12 - 13, ABAS Spring Show [In-person](#)

Tuesday, April 22, Kusamono and Accent Plants w/ Lucy Sakaishi-Judd [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday, April 26, Annual Bus Shopping Trip [Field Trip!](#)

Saturday, May 17, Member Workshop + Trees in Refinement [In-person](#)

Saturday, May 24, Annual Member Garden Tour [Field Trip!](#)

Tuesday, May 27, Olives with Cesar Ordoñez [In-person & Zoom](#)

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

Saturday, July 12, Member Workshop + Trees in Refinement [In-person](#)

Saturday, August 9, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

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







## ABAS BUS TRIP to Santa Rosa - Saturday - 4.26.2025

***You do the shopping, we do the driving!!!***

*Please arrive by 7:15 am at the Power Inn Road Park and Ride at 3009 Power Inn Rd, Sacramento, CA.*

***The bus departs promptly at 7:30am!!!***

Enjoy club-provided donuts and coffee on the 2 hour ride to Santa Rosa.

- An ABAS Bus trip classic, **MOMIJI NURSERY** has Japanese maples of all sizes. The place to go for hard-to-find cultivars!
- Sure to be a pleasant lunch stop, **BOTANICA NURSERY + GARDENS** specializes in azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias and more. Walk among the dawn redwoods in their 7.5 acre shade forest botanic reserve.
- Another local bonsai staple, **LONE PINE GARDENS** has bonsai, pre-bonsai, cacti and succulents.
- **POND & GARDEN** has many dwarf conifers and specialty hostas as well as bonsai and pre-bonsai material.

***We will raffle a variety of items the club acquires during the trip during the 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, check, or credit card.

**Tickets are \$50 per person.**

Email Ellen Evans at [kde2@comcast.net](mailto:kde2@comcast.net) to sign up. Pay at club meetings or send a check made out to American Bonsai Association of Sacramento to:

ABAS, PO Box 161767, Sacramento, CA 95816.

**Seats will be guaranteed in the order in which payment is received.**

***This is an all-day event; we expect to be back in Sacramento around 6:30pm***

