October 2026

The Bent Twig

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

Arboreal Abstractions

Ian Baker

At long last some real precipitation has come to wet the dry summer earth of California. Whether you welcome the rain or prefer the heat of summer, the persistent march of the seasons is as fundamental a part of bonsai as is putting dramatic trees in pots. To me, it signals the beginning of the winter work season. It's time to adjust irrigation and remove shade cloths, dust off your pots, and start thinking about screening your soil. There is still lots of cutting and design work to do in the fall seasons before repotting, but the frenzy of root work comes fast and it's always best to be prepared. The rain also signals an opportune time for fall collecting now that thirsty trees have had a good drink and the soil is loosened, so I know I will have a yamadori sidequest in my near future before the snow flies. Meanwhile, enjoy the cooler weather and the stunning fall color showing in your garden and out in the wild.



Above: Fall scenes around the Sierra

Next Meeting

Species Focus: Pines w/ Adam Toth

This coming Tuesday October 27, ABAS welcomes return presenter Adam Toth for our regular monthly meeting. Adam will be focusing on pine tree development and encourages members to bring their pines for evaluation and feedback. Adam is a dedicated bonsai professional based in the Bay Area and brings a focus on smaller shohin and mame trees, but his skill extends to all tree categories. We look forward to seeing you Tuesday evening.

Adam Toth has been studying bonsai seriously for over seven years, beginning with Jonas Dupuich. He more recently studied for three years under Taiga Urushibata at the Taisho-en bonsai garden in Shizuoka. During his time in Japan, he received an official shohin certificate from the Japanese Shohin Bonsai Association.





Above: Adam Toth

The Bent Twig

What to Work on October

This month we continue work on single flush pines (white pine, Scots pine, lodge pole pine, and other high mountain pines), junipers, and most conifers. Clean up and bud selection on Japanese black pines and red pines may begin. Deciduous trees get a rest this month as we wait for them to transition to winter dormancy (immediately after leaf drop). However, If there is wire on the tree, monitor closely to make sure it does not cut in. Deciduous trees may not be actively pushing new growth but they will continue to add tissue to trunks and branches until leaf drop.

This time of year it's important to adjust irrigation strategy, most especially with automated systems, as weather conditions change. Keep an eye out for soil that is remaining too wet and consider placing pots at a slight tilt to enable better drainage for trees that prefer to be dryer. Almost all species can continue to be fertilized as we head into fall, but manage your dose based on the development stage.

As always, stay vigilant monitoring trees for signs of pests and fungus. Arthropod pest load drops with the temperature, but don't let your guard down. Make sure to check the weather before any applications to ensure you will have at least a couple of dry days after spraying for the pesticide or fungicide to work and not be rinsed off from rain.

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 cool. Pay close attention!
- Fertilize as necessary, (see yearly care sheet on ABAS website)
- Remove Shade



Recap ABAS Annual Auction and Consignment Sale

Saturday September 19th ABAS held its annual Fall Auction and Consignment Sale. Turn out seemed to be slightly lower from the general public than in 2025, but it was still a successful sale on all fronts. Volunteers arrived at 11:00 AM and with the oversight of our adept volunteer coordinator, Gina Chaput, were oriented and began setting up the garden center like a well-oiled machine. Sale items began to be checked in by the bottom of the hour. Doors officially opened at 1:00 PM as members and the public immediately began to study the trees on offer. Many excellent examples of bonsai, pre-bonsai, pots, and other bonsai materials were available, representing the upward trend in quality broadly seen in the bonsai community.

Attention turned to the live auction at 1:30 PM as folks bid on some great examples under the direction of our resident auctioneer, Paul Holtzen. Between the check-in/out process, the auction, the cashier table, and setup/takedown, the crew who ran the auction has developed a smooth process to make the sale more enjoyable and successful for everyone involved. The board extends their sincere gratitude to the volunteers, sellers, and participants of the event. Thank you for making it another successful sale!



Above: Scenes from the 2026 Fall Sale

The Bent Twig

Welcome New Members: No New October Members!

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 - November 14

Member workshops serve members of all levels - beginner to advanced!

The next member workshop is Saturday, October 10. Contact Renee Seely, breadcrust@comcast.net to reserve a spot for the August 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.

Updates from Roger Steel

Roger, the bonsai crusader, is committed to making the art of bonsai accessible to all and generously teaching his skills, whether through the popular Dig In program or volunteering his time around the community. In doing so, he brings new members into our vibrant club. Below is a list of recent and upcoming events led by Roger. The awareness of the art of bonsai, what our club can provide via our incredible website, and an entry point to begin the art of bonsai are all well expressed at these events.

- September 17 Demo for Sacramento Garden Club at Shepard Arts GC
- September 19 Chop In class "The Collectors" focused on urban-dori and some mountain yamadori collecting
- October 3 Dig In class # 21. The 21st class I have done for entry level.
- October 4 Chop In # 4, the intermediate follow up to Dig In.
- October 6 Demo for the Roseville Garden Club at Del Webb Roseville.
- October 10 ABAS both at the Harvest Festival held at Big Oak Nursery. The booth was arranged and co-led by Debbi Ballanti.

If you have a friend who may be interested in bonsai, the next Dig In class is being offered on November 14. Contact Roger to sign up.







Above: Roger in the wild. Mention the word wild for a raffle ticket. Below, Right: October Member Workshop





2026 Events Calendar

Tuesday, October 27, Shohin Pines w/ Adam Toth In-person & Zoom

Saturday, November 14, Member Workshop In-person

Saturday, November 14, Dig In w/ Roger Steel 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

