



January 2024

The Bent Twig

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

Arboreal Abstractions

Horticulture is central to my life. As a child, I recall two distinct experiences that catalyzed my love of plants. First, meandering through the victory gardens of elders in my Placer County home town of 500 residents, sampling raspberries and green beans from overhead tunnels, exploring heaven on earth as a free range baby. My job as a five year old was to retrieve mature potatoes from the dark loam with each stroke of the pitchfork operated by the aged garden administrator. Little did I realize that these gardens were a legacy from the days when America was a vast country of small subsistence farms or later when victory gardens became a key resource during the sacrifices of World War II. The bounty from such a garden was not a novelty nor a hobby, but a lifestyle and a critical resource of nutrition to be canned, frozen, dried, and savored raw.

Second, I distinctly remember fiddling with the irrigation controller of my grandfather's shade house in the perfectly sunny yet tempered marine climate of Napa. Everything in his shade structure was coated by the residue of mineral rich well water, a common feature of the volcanic geology of the rolling green hills. The white and yellow precipitates hinted at the hydrogen sulfide — rotten egg — nature of the water. I remember more of his bougainvilleas and wisterias than I remember the man himself in the three short years our lives overlapped. I still possess a few clues of his identity: an unremarkable, unglazed Tokoname pot, his Napa Bonsai Club pin, a faded photo of my grandmother seated next to a juniper in 1952 a few years before she passed of breast cancer.

My hobby as a child (and profession as an adult) is to press buttons in order to discover their purpose. I can only imagine how challenging it must have been to have a child constantly turning things on and taking things apart. Instead of toys, I was rapt by a 24 volt Toro irrigation controller. In between endeavors to track down valve control wires, I perched atop the pineapple guava tree eating the ripe exotic fruit set to the shrill "eeeiu" of peacocks.

There was a cold smoker out next to the olive and walnut trees and a hot smoker built in brick in the courtyard of the house he built in the 40s. The front acre was reserved for the annual onion crop. Much of these places was built around the very practical: raising plants and animals to preserve to survive. But they were also places of immense splendor. These people understood the value of beauty and wove it tightly into the fabric of their pursuits. Nutrition is required to survive, but beauty is required to thrive. This wisdom is a fundamental aspect of the practice of bonsai.

Ian Baker



Rita Baker Oct 12, 1952 with a juniper

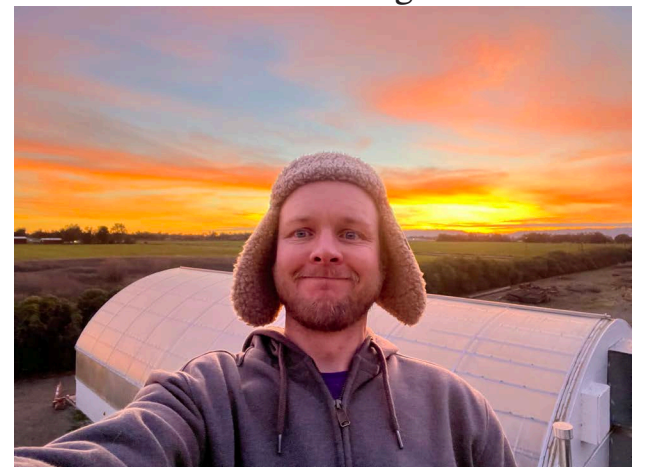


Demystifying Automatic Irrigation - Ian Baker Tuesday January 23

For the first meeting of the new year, ABAS member Ian Baker will give a presentation and lead a discussion on automatic irrigation in the bonsai garden. Ian has worked in agronomy and greenhouse horticulture for over a decade, gaining experience in designing, building, and operating irrigation control systems.

The aim for this presentation is to lay a solid foundation of understanding of irrigation system components to guide folks on their journey to setting a new system up or improving what has been built. This can be a thorny topic and there are many different ways to reach the same goal, so members are encouraged to come with questions. Some of you have also come up with creative ways to adapt irrigation to your garden, so it would be great to hear your stories and see examples. The hope is to have a bit of a discussion. If you have any specific questions you would like addressed or pictures/examples of your setup to share, please email them to [ian](mailto:ian@abasonline.org).

Show and tell theme is winter silhouette - let's see some interesting winter trees, whether perfected specimens or works in-progress. Mention the word aqueduct for a chance for a free raffle ticket at the next meeting.



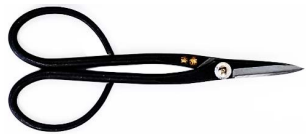
Above: Ian, Below: Japanese Garden @ Lake Merritt





What To Work On: January

Re-pot and dormant spray are the important tasks for January. Most trees, with the exception of fruiting and flowering, can still be cut, thinned and wired if needed. Timing the pruning with re-potting will eliminate “bleeding” in dormant deciduous trees. 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. Conifers have a larger repotting window, so start with deciduous first. Repotting earlier in the winter season gives plants a slight growth advantage in the spring and part of the advanced skill of bonsai is learning to seek every bit of advantage possible. Alternatively, repotting later in winter may be desirable if less vigor is desired. For a good overview of re-potting, visit our website under ‘Member Resources’ to view [this short slide show](#):



SGAAC Japanese Garden Monthly Work

Travis Hendrix has been working in the SGAAC Japanese garden on the second Wednesday of each month from 10-noon. Traditionally work was done seasonally, but the increased monthly attention has greatly improved the condition of the courtyard garden. ABAS is a steward of this space and the board has approved spending on new plant material, irrigation equipment. We are pursuing a new manicured specimen pine tree. Volunteers are welcome to participate in monthly garden maintenance on second Wednesdays. Bring pruning / gardening tools, tines, shovels, gloves, broom, dust pan, container/bucket for debris etc. Thank you!



Below: ongoing work at the SGAAC Japanese Garden, Above: happy students at the January member workshop





Dig In and Chop In Roger Steele

We are about to have our first Dig In of 2024: Dig In #6 will be February 3 and has 12 new students enrolled. The next day and following weekend is the new added variation called Chop In, for students to expand their tools, materials, horticulture, and artistic vision. Those classes will be Chop In #2 on February 4 and Chop In #3 on February 10. We have 16 students making the jump to intermediate with Chop In. With these classes, club workshops, and our great club meeting demos there is no wonder our club is growing and getting better all of the time.

These 3 trees I found treasure hunting for the Dig In #6 class. The students will be able to tear into them without fear of killing the trees and if they do overdo, it that will be okay because the trees are mine. Pictured below are before pictures of a forsythia, and myrtle, and a bay leaf tree. I will share the “after” pictures from Dig In #6, Chop In #2, and Chop In #3 in a future newsletter.

Dig In and Chop In are bonsai jumpstart classes led by me, Roger Steele, with the aim of rapidly improving new student’s technical ability and eye for high quality bonsai. Every bonsai enthusiast has suffered the same set of initial mistakes – the twig phase of bonsai practice – so the idea is to raise the bar for everyone and zoom past the twig phase. Concepts covered in Dig In are material selection, intro to tools and materials, and basic styling. Chop In is the intermediate course after Dig In in which students are given styling suggestions, but perform the work independently. Contact [Roger](#) for any questions or inquiries into future classes.



Before pictures of bayleaf, forsythia, and myrtle for use in upcoming Dig in and Chop In classes





Welcome New Members:

Justin Morris, Lonnie Wineman, Carri Stokes

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.

February Member Workshop

Our next two member workshops, February 24 and March 10, will focus on re-potting. Contact Renee Seely, breadcrust@comcast.net, 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. The club generously provides potting mix (and wire) for the benefit of learning so please be mindful of this resource.

Membership renewal time - \$40 per individual or family. You may renew [online](#), at our January meeting or by mailing your dues payable to ABAS to PO Box 161767, Sacramento CA 95816.

Calling for 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!



Repotting at the January member workshop

Events

GSBF Golden Zoom with Florida professional Mike Lane

Monday, January 22 at 6:30 PM. Mike will share his clip and grow method as well as wound healing techniques. Dodie will email the zoom link to members this weekend. Don't miss out on this educational opportunity.

The Mammoth Auction and Sale

Saturday, February 17, Auction Preview @ 12:00 PM, Live Auction @ 1:00 PM

Sunday, February 18, Member and Vendor Sales 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

666 Bellevue Ave, Oakland, CA

All proceeds support the GSBF Bonsai Garden at Lake Merritt.

ABAS Garden Tour Saturday, April 27. Homes to be visited: Debbie and Steve Ballanti (Carmichael); Ed Slomovic (Sacramento), Roger Steel (Fair Oaks) and George Wyatt (Folsom). We will have sign up sheets at the January and February meetings.

ABAS Bus Trip Saturday, May 25 - details to follow, sign ups will be taken at the February and March meetings.

Events Calendar

2024

Monday, January 22, Golden Zoom with Mike Lane [Zoom](#)

Tuesday, January 23, Demystifying Automatic Irrigation w/ Ian Baker [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday, February 3, Dig In # 6 [In-person](#)

Sunday, February 4, Chop In # 2 [In-person](#)

Saturday, February 10, Chop In # 3 [In-person](#)

Saturday - Sunday, February 17 - 18, Mammoth Fundraiser, Lake Merritt Oakland [In-person](#)

Saturday, February 24, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Tuesday, February 27, Bonsai Structural Development w/ Peter Tea [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday - Sunday, March 16 - 17, SGAAC Spring Sale [In-person](#)

Tuesday, March 26, Evaluating Bonsai in Exhibit w/ Jonas Dupuich [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday - Sunday, April 13 - 14, ABAS Annual Spring Show [In-person](#)

Saturday, April 6, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

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

Saturday, May 11, Member Workshop [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](#)





2024 American Bonsai Association Sacramento Programs



Date	Speaker / Topic or Event	Show-n-Tell
Tuesday, January 23	Demystifying Automatic Irrigation with Ian Baker	Winter Silhouette
Tuesday, February 27	Bonsai Structural Development with Peter Tea	Shohin Bonsai
Saturday & Sunday, March 16 & 17	SGAAC Spring Sale (Sat 10-4 & Sun 10 - 3)	
Tuesday, March 26	Bonsai Evaluation with Jonas Dupuich	Your favorite tree
Saturday & Sunday, April 13 & 14	ABAS Spring Show with headliner, Tyler Sherrod	
Tuesday, April 23	Hands-on defoliation with Renee and Carmen Members bring trees	Deciduous Tree
Saturday, April 27	Home Tour	
Saturday, May 25	Bus Trip	
Tuesday, May 28	Azalea Care as presented by Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient, Timm Johnson	Trees Timm has helped develop
Tuesday, June 25	Development of Oak Bonsai by John "JT" Thompson	Oaks
Tuesday, July 23	Summer Splash and Board Elections	NA
Tuesday, August 27	TBA	
Tuesday, September 24	Live Auction and Member Consignment Sale	NA
Saturday & Sunday, October 5 & 6	SGAAC Fall Sale (Sat 10 -4; Sun 10-3)	
Tuesday, October 22	Dueling Bonsai with Bjorn Bjorholm and Yannick Kiggen	Conifers
Tuesday, November 26	Hands-on Workshop - Fall Work with Renee and Carmen (Members bring trees)	
Wednesday, December 11	Holiday Party / Potluck and White Elephant Gift Exchange	Decorated Bonsai Trees

ABAS Seasonal Bonsai Series, January 2024

Renee Seely & Carmen Scott

It has been one year since we started our ABAS Seasonal Bonsai video series and our journey is not over! Our upcoming video will be our one year anniversary in which we repotted two of the tridents, Challenger and the now 3 year old seedling. The seedling, grown in a wooden box, had considerable root growth and increased trunk diameter. Challenger showed much improvement in the roots from last year's root grafts. During the re-pot, 5 more root thread grafts were added. For the top of the tree, four branch thread grafts were added. The junipers are dormant at this time and none need re-potting. Since nothing has changed since November, the junipers are not included in this video. Throughout 2024, our video series will continue on the [ABAS channel](#) with updates as developmental work continues. Look for our next video in early February.