



July 2025

# The Bent Twig

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

## Arboreal Abstractions

Ian Baker

Let's take a moment to talk about the kishu I (started to) style at the Summer Splash. That night, it became excruciatingly clear which skills I need to be honing before the Joshua Roth competition in October. Historically, the Rising Star competition is a bit of an instant bonsai contest, no shade intended, but the general enthusiasm for instant bonsai has waned and times have changed - for the better. The standard has risen and people better understand long-term bonsai development. I will certainly be focused on clean technique and the final result, leaving more foliage, but not making decisions for short-term aesthetics at the cost of a better tree in the long term. There is a fine line to walk.

Being a styling competition, there are a few key skills that are rising to the top (the things I need to work on the most!): time management, efficient decision making, methodical wiring, working with large gauge wire & raffia, deadwood, overall composition, and working with raw material.

From now until October, I am taking every opportunity I can find to practice. On that note, if anyone has any rejected junipers to donate to my cause, I will take them!

This kishu juniper was challenging because it is raft style and it is set so low in the pot with multiple large branches/trunks already parallel with the soil, that there was no room to crank branches down in the typical juniper style. I decided to lean into this and go with more horizontal branching. Despite having not been worked on, it was a great starting point with movement in the large trunks and a very welcoming front. I tilted it forward a few scant degrees to bring the apexes just barely leaning towards the viewer.

I treated each main trunk as a discrete tree, but it would have been challenging and perhaps unnecessary to find directional, secondary, and rear branches on every one of them. The top right branch on the main trunk was too thick to bring down to a good angle, so I cranked it down as far as possible and left the jinned end of it pointing up and to the right, hoping for backbudding to build a better branch in the future. After a few crossed (but hopefully hidden) wires and some pruning to promote budding, one of the last steps was to crank the lowest, right most trunk up so it wasn't running perfectly parallel to the pot. I unfortunately didn't take a final photo, so what you see below is not the final bonsai.

I could have spent more time on fine wiring, as will be necessary in October, but now that primary structure is set on this fine tree, the next step is letting it backbud and choosing some good secondary and tertiary branching to get the foliage tighter into the tree and set at good angles.

While this tree was a blast to work on, it was an important and timely lesson on where my attention needs to be for the Rising Star competition in Santa Nella. I am looking forward to seeing everyone down there!



## Next Meeting

Suiseki and the Japanese  
Aesthetic w/ Sam Edge

This coming Tuesday July 22, we will host Sam Edge presenting on Suiseki and the Japanese Aesthetic. This meeting will be a treat for members who are already into suiseki and will no doubt bring new folks into the fold. Suiseki is the art of collecting, presenting, and appreciating collected stones which evoke miniature wild landscapes. It is deeply intertwined with bonsai, often used in tokonoma displays, and has similar roots in ancient China.

Sam Edge was introduced to suiseki through the guidance of mentors Hideo Metaxas, Mas Nakajima, and his friend Wil of Japan, a board member of the Nippon Suiseki Association. Their encouragement opened the path to a lifelong appreciation of this quiet art. His collection includes hand-selected stones, elegant dobans and suibans, and expressive tenpai—each element chosen to enhance the subtle dialogue between object and emptiness. He continues to explore nature and tradition through the practice of suiseki including participating in 2-4 tanseki each year on Western rivers, streams and lakes

The raffle will include a couple of prepared suiseki and daisa, as well as some nice suiseki books from the collection of Bob Bugay. The theme for Show and Tell is also suiseki, so bring your beauties in to share with the group.



Above: Sam Edge admiring a suiseki. Left: the not yet complete kishu Ian worked on at the summer splash. Imagination required to see the branches in their final position.







## What to Work on July

It's July and it's hot! Conifer work is well under way and we should also be keeping an eye on deciduous and broadleaf evergreens that have already been worked. Decandling double-flush pines should be completed by now, except for possibly the smallest pines requiring the smallest foliage. Now through August, as Junipers, cedars, spruce, cypress, and redwoods push significant new growth, they can be pruned, thinned, and wired as necessary. Work on single-flush, high-elevation pines is still a couple of months away.

Continue pruning new shoots on deciduous trees as they emerge and double-check your wire carefully and frequently! It's so easy to lose track of wire behind foliage and set your tree back by allowing it to bite in. I like to set calendar reminders for 4-6 weeks after I wire, depending on species, and stick landscape flags with the date of wiring in the pot so that I know at a glance which trees are wired and when.

As weather gets hotter and drier, the risk of two-spotted spider mites increases - they love hot, dusty conditions. By the time you see yellowing foliage on junipers, mites are already well established. A good scouting routine including sampling by knocking foliage over a white sheet of paper will allow you to detect mites sooner. Yellow and blue ticky traps will help control and indicate the presence of thrips, whiteflies, and other flying pests, but not mites. Remember that mites are arachnids, not insects, so make sure to select an appropriate miticide if control is needed. The indiscriminate use of broad spectrum pesticides like imidicloprid can actually make mite outbreaks worse by killing their natural predators, so choose your pesticides judiciously. Always follow the label and make sure to rotate different modes of action to prevent pesticide resistance.

- 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
- Fertilize as necessary, (see yearly care sheet on ABAS website)
- Provide shade for sensitive species

## Our Website is Evolving

Ellen Evans, ABAS Webmaster

Recently, regular visitors to the website will probably have noticed a few subtle changes. Over the years, our website has become a resource for so much useful bonsai information beyond just the basics about our club that it seemed beneficial to add some additional layers of organization to the site.

While the beautiful aesthetic (skillfully established by former web designer Kathleen O'Donnell!) will remain the same, hopefully the updated layout and additional pages will help make things easier to find. This includes:

- A page devoted to "Online Resources" (links to retailers, blogs, online courses, and our very own "ABAS Seasonal Care Series" as well as past meeting on our YouTube channel )
- A "Dig In" and "Chop In" page for the beginner workshops run by member Roger Steel (which serve as an effective bridge to ABAS membership for many of the students!)
- A "Beyond Beginner" page, with information about the ABAS monthly workshops for club members, as well as a list of local bonsai experts offering in-person classes
- Additional info on our Home page such as links to a list of our current board members, info about our Stewardship/Estate Planning program, and links to Golden State Bonsai Federation for info about additional clubs, events and resources for bonsai in California.

I hope you find the changes useful and I will continue making small adjustments in the future, always trying to optimize the user experience. If you have suggestions, please share them with me at [kde2@comcast.net](mailto:kde2@comcast.net). If you find something confusing, broken, or difficult to find, or if you find a useful resource you think would benefit other bonsai enthusiasts, your feedback can help improve the browsing experience for all visitors to our site!



## Last Call for Submissions

### GSBF Bonsai Rendezvous All-Club Exhibit

**LAST CALL** for submissions to present your outstanding, show-worthy bonsai at the All-Club exhibit at the 2025 GSBF Rendezvous. This is your chance to represent ABAS in front of the broader California bonsai community. Please submit a clear photo of your display, with pot dimensions and tree species identified. Trees and pots do not need to be perfectly "show-ready" for this submission. Simply place the tree on its stand and photograph it in front of a solid background. Please email your submissions to Dodie Newman at [dodienevman@gmail.com](mailto:dodienevman@gmail.com) by August 15 for the ABAS Board to consider. We know there are many trees worthy of being shown out there amongst our members. There will be a **\$500 prize** split between the club and the submitter in each category. Also, consider submitting in a less-represented category like shohin or broadleaf evergreen where there likely will be less competition. There is nothing to lose by submitting and we need you to step up! Yes you!





## Last Meeting

### Summer Splash and Lifetime Achievement Award for Kathleen O'Donnell

Our last meeting on June 24 was our annual Summer Splash, featuring multiple club members styling trees and the presentation of the Lifetime Achievement award to Kathleen O'Donnell. Attendance was fantastic as the garden center filled with club members new and old. The potluck table was crowded with all manner of delicious treats and drinks courtesy of our generous club members.

One of the main orders of business was the annual changing of the guard for the ABAS board. After the last of the paper ballots were collected, the 2025-26 board was formally announced. Amid the club business and socializing, four members styled different trees while fielding questions from club members, representing a diverse array of species, styles, and approaches. The artist lineup included Ian Baker, Pat Flynn, Carmen Scott, and Roger Steel who all braved the task of styling a tree live while graciously answering questions and explaining their process. At the end of the night, each tree was raffled off to lucky winners.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Lifetime Achievement award to Kathleen O'Donnell. Long-time and new friends stood to share anecdotes of Kathleen's endless generosity to our club and lives. One theme rose to the top: Kathleen overflows with generosity which manifests in many different ways. She is unhesitating and humble in her giving, whether tangible resources, moral support, or making space for and encouraging new members. Over the years, many strong and lasting relationships have developed from these seeds of virtue. In addition to meaningful relationships, Kathleen has also contributed to building and supporting ABAS in countless ways, including an openhanded financial contribution for our 2026 Spring Show. She has served multiple positions on the board, been a key figure in recruiting members, and increasing the reach of bonsai through design and camaraderie. It cannot be overstated how Kathleen's generosity, kindness, inclusivity, and passion for bonsai has been a cornerstone of our community.

Kathleen O'Donnell has directly or indirectly touched the lives of all in our bonsai community through her kindness and generosity. She enriches the lives of all who come into her world. It is truly an honor for ABAS and every one of us to have such a loving person in our lives. Sincerely, thank you Kathleen!



Above: Scenes from the 2025 Summer Splash





## Welcome New Members:

**Rachel Curtin, Mitchell Stockwell, Sonia Jaramillo, Cindy Banville.** New members should mention the word bananas for a free raffle ticket at the next meeting. 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, August 9. Sign-up sheets will be at the July 22 monthly meeting Sign-up sheets will be at the June 24 Summer Splash or contact Renee Seely, [breadcrust@comcast.net](mailto: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.

## Pot Selection w/ Jonas Dupuich

Our August meeting will feature container selection with Jonas Dupuich. This interactive presentation will outline the basics of selecting pots for show-ready trees. We ask members to bring interesting and show-ready (or nearly show-ready) trees and pot options for Jonas to demonstrate the selection process. In lieu of bringing trees and pots in, you may also submit clear photos of your tree(s) with pot options or any pots / trees alone for suggestions at least one week prior to the meeting to be used in the presentation. We encourage you to place a soda can or water bottle in the photo to help with scale. Email photos to Bob Ricker at [bricker918@gmail.com](mailto:bricker918@gmail.com). Presentations like this only work with active participation, so don't hesitate, go out and select options now. Not only will this benefit the presentation, but it will benefit your tree display!

## Roseville Home and Garden Show

On Friday, August 15, ABAS will man a booth at the Roseville Home and Garden Show for the 4th year in row thanks to ABAS member and teacher extraordinaire, Roger Steel. Our booth is located in the wonderfully air conditioned Garden Pavilion. Please stop by to say hi! We are seeking 1-2 more volunteers to work in the booth from 9:00 - noon, noon - 3 or 3:00 - 5:30. Booth volunteers don't need to have extensive knowledge about bonsai. Simply greet the public, maybe point out an interesting element on one of the trees on display and tell them about our club (handouts will be provided). A new activity at the Home and Garden Show will be a beginner bonsai class taught by Roger from 3:30 - 4:30. If you are available to help in the booth, please let Roger know by emailing him at [rogersteel@comcast.net](mailto:rogersteel@comcast.net). Free admission will be given to volunteers.

## Volunteers Needed for Fall Sale

We only have two short months until the Fall Sale and Auction, so please consider signing up for a volunteer position today! We need help with: set-up/check-in, recording winning bids, runners, hold area and assisting the cashiers. A sign-up sheet will be available at the July and August meetings, and you can [email](#) Dodie for questions or to sign-up now.

Reminder: this year we are holding the Fall Sale on Saturday September 20 @ 1:00 PM, in order to make it more accessible for all. Check-in for the auction and consignment will not start until 12:00 PM and we ask members to not arrive before this time. In order to sell, contact our new treasurer Derrick Alcott [derrick.j.alcott@gmail.com](mailto:derrick.j.alcott@gmail.com) to receive a seller number. Consignment seller forms and instructions can be found at the top of the events page on our website. <https://www.abasbonsai.org/events>. Live Auction forms will be mailed to the membership in the coming weeks.



## 2025 Events Calendar

Tuesday, July 22, Suiseki with Samuel Edge [In-person](#)

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

Teusday, August 26, Pot Selection w/ Jonas Dupuich [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday, September 13, Dig-In Workshop [In-person](#)

Saturday, September 13, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

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 Workshop [In-person](#)

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

## Announcing the 2025-26 ABAS Board

**Dodie Newman** - President  
**Bob Ricker** - Vice President  
**Deborah Ballanti** - Recording Secretary  
**Ian Baker** - Newsletter Editor  
**Roger Steele** - Member at Large  
**Gina Chaput** - Social Media Coordinator  
**Ellen Evans** - Webmaster  
**Renee Seely** - Past President  
**Gage Marchiani** - Member at Large  
and a warm welcome to:  
**Derrick Alcott** - Treasurer

The ballot also included the question of serving alcohol at select club functions, due to the increased cost and challenge of arranging for security. The club voted to *not* include alcoholic beverages at the Summer Splash and Fall Auction, but we *will* continue to serve alcohol at the Holiday Party as a compromise. Thank you all for your input on the matter.