



October 2024

The Bent Twig

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

Arboreal Abstractions

Where do you seek inspiration for your bonsai practice? This question could be read literally, as in what sources provide you with visual examples of bonsai that you wish to study or emulate? Abstracted out a level, it can mean, where do you look for inspiration to engage in bonsai in the first place? There is a good deal of content out there, but like most things in the digital age, it takes a great deal of effort to navigate the spam blocking the view of the gems. While I do cherish a handful of digital sources (primarily outside of social media), my biggest bonsai spark comes from two places: looking at excellent bonsai in-person and looking at trees in nature.

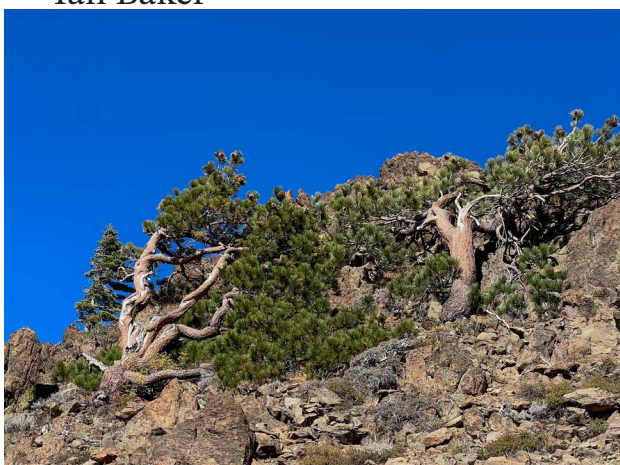
I acknowledge, many people do not have convenient access to world-class bonsai gardens, but the point is that if you are serious about taking your practice to the next level, it is important to figure out where and how to get this experience. We should be studying trees at the level we aim for; aim high. In doing so, we make excellence the baseline. Doing this raises the bar of our understanding of what is possible. Over time, it becomes clearer what aspects of early stage trees are most critical to making a top-tier finished bonsai.

Then there is nature. Plenty of inspiration can be found in our local urban landscapes, especially for broadleaf trees. Start by looking at trees in your surroundings, constantly training your eye to deeply study what is often background visual noise: trees on the street or in parks. Evaluate taper, branch architecture, proportions, tension, and balance as you would with a small tree. Then, acknowledge what moves you, what you like, what you dislike. This is art after all and it is as much about taste as it is about rules.

The holy grail of this activity is to spend time in the highest and most adverse places trees grow. Anyone who spends time in the high Sierra knows of the effects that severe wind, deep snow, competition for light, and rocky soil (sometimes just a crack in granite) have on a tree's growth habit. I have no doubt that this whole pursuit of bonsai is rooted in humans first seeing contorted and stunted high-mountain trees and thinking, that is it. That is what I want in a pot in my garden. Being in the High Sierra is like being figurine sized in a bonsai pot. Massive, distorted Sierra junipers tower above you with exposed roots on ledges of granite, pruned by heavy snow to have taper and ramification. Groups of lodgepole pine grow slowly in nutrient poor soil, causing compact foliage. Avalanches snap groves of aspen in half, creating movement.

While it is not practical for most people to trek into the mountains often, it is an important journey to make for anyone seriously interested in bonsai. It is the basis of so much technique, it provides context, and it's just gorgeous. Bonsai teachers discuss the idea of telling a tree's story by styling it, but this is abstract when the context is a single tree in a pot. Out in nature, it becomes clearer how these forces interact and easier to understand the importance of using wind, snow, light, and soil to shape the stories of our trees.

--Ian Baker



Above, right: Nature's macro bonsai near Donner Pass



Last Meeting Fall Consignment Sale and Auction

On Tuesday, September 24, we held our annual fall consignment sale and auction. Sellers were eager to drop off consignment and auction items at 5:30 PM. Before the consignment space was opened for browsing and shopping, club members mingled in the main space over an array of delicious appetizers and drinks. As soon as bidding cards were issued, folks were scanning the auction items and making notes about when they would be flashing their bidder cards for the broad array of species and styles.

Unlike prior years, the consignment space was kept closed until 6:00 PM in order to allow volunteers to complete check-in and to make sure everyone had a fair shot at picking items. Performing a detailed check-in for each seller required a little more patience up front, but greatly helped to ensure that there were no errors in the paper work and that each seller was paid fairly.

The real fun began when the auction opened up at 6:30 PM, with Paul Holtzen acting as our auctioneer. Many people had a solid plan for what trees to bid on while staying on budget, but this of course gives way to the excitement of a live auction, especially when choice trees came on the block. The auction wrapped around 8:45 PM, with every tree having a chance on the block.

The fall auction is always a lively event and a great opportunity to upgrade or make some space in your collection, while spending quality time with other bonsai enthusiasts. Feel free to reach out to Dodie if you have any feedback to make next year's auction even better. Thank you to all of the eager volunteers who made the entire evening possible.



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.

It looks like the weather has settled into a more normal Fall cycle with temperatures in the upper 70s and low 80s. Shade cloth can finally come down! Increased sunlight will strengthen trees and improve Fall color on deciduous species.

- Check wire on deciduous and broadleaf evergreens to make sure it is not cutting in
- Stay vigilant monitoring for pests and disease
- Adjust watering as temperatures increase and decrease
- It's finally time to remove shade cloth
- Fertilize as needed
- Refer to the yearly care sheets for conifers and deciduous trees on our ABAS website under the ['Member Resources'](#) tab.



Bring Snacks, Make Friends

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!

Upcoming Meeting

Dueling Demos with Bjorn and Yannick

This coming Tuesday, October 22, ABAS is hosting renowned bonsai artists Bjorn Bjornholm and Yannick Kiggen for a very special demonstration. At the suggestion of both gentlemen, they will conduct Dueling Demos. Each artist will have their own juniper to style in parallel and halfway through the night, they will trade and continue styling the other person's tree. This will no doubt be a fun approach to a traditional demonstration and allow us to see how each artist's styles and how they overlap. Please note this meeting will not be on Zoom.

Bjorn L BJORHOLM (born 1986) is an American bonsai artist and instructor. At the age of 22, he became an apprentice under Master Keiichi Fujikawa at Kouka-en bonsai nursery in Osaka, Japan. He apprenticed at Kouka-en Nursery in Osaka for six years before becoming certified by the Nippon Bonsai Association. His tenure as an apprentice at Kouka-en was followed by three years as artist-in-residence at the same location, making him the first foreign-born working bonsai professional in Japan. During his time in Japan, Bjorn's works were featured in the Kokufu-ten, Sakufu-ten, and Taikan-ten exhibitions, among many others. In 2018, Bjornholm founded Eisei-en (Japanese: 永青園) Bonsai Garden in Mount Juliet, Tennessee. In Spring of 2024, Bjorn relocated to Kyoto, Japan and re-branded as Eisei-en Kyoto.

In addition to his work in Japan, Bjorn travels the world, from Europe to Asia to Latin America, teaching bonsai art and providing services to private clients and international organizations. He operates intensive bonsai schools with affiliate nurseries in Spain and the United States, while also working with international bonsai organizations.

Yannick Kiggen has been adept at Bonsai since the age of 10, and 2 years later he started his journey with lessons from various Bonsai masters, including Kunio Kobayashi (JP), Takeo Kawabe (JP), Hotsumi Terakawa (JP/NL), Mario Komsta (PL), Bonsai Studio Momiji (BE), Pius Notter, and Francois Jeker. He has also participated in various exhibitions such as the Noelanders trophy, the Ginkgo award and the European Bonsai San Show.

In 2011 he founded Yama Bonsai Studio to promote Bonsai, share his knowledge and skills with both beginners and advanced people who are passionate about these beautiful trees. This is done through courses, workshops, demonstrations, lectures and sales.



Above left: Yannick Kiggen. Above right: Bjorn Bjornholm





Welcome New Members: Hollie and Jeff Hilzinger, Brian and Kandie Fox, Bill and Laura Short, Renee Clark

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.

Member Workshop. The next member workshop is Saturday, November 9. 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. As always, the club provides wire for use; bring your own tools. Each workshop session is \$10 payable to ABAS.

Pacific Bonsai Expo

PBE is coming! If you have not already, secure your tickets for the Pacific Bonsai Expo October 26 - 27 at the Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts in Oakland, CA. This is the premier west coast bonsai exhibition and it's not to be missed! Parking for the event will be limited, so please plan to carpool or use the nearby BART station.

October - Dueling Demos and BYOT with Bjorn and Yannick

In addition to hosting our October club meeting, Bjorn and Yannick will be holding separate full day "bring your own tree" workshops. Bjorn's workshop is full but **one** space remains in Yannick's. Yannick is an excellent bonsai instructor and his workshop is highly recommended. The workshops will be held on Monday, October 21 from 9:00 am - 4:00 pm for a maximum of 6 participants in each workshop. Yannick's workshop will cost \$130 per participant***.

Bring 2-4 trees to work on during the workshop, depending on the amount of work each tree will require. If you are interested in filling the final spot in Yannick's workshop, contact Dodie at dodieneuman@gmail.com. Mention the word mano-a-mano for a free raffle ticket.

Dig In/Chop In

Dig In and Chop In classes have resumed! Hosted by Roger Steel, these classes are designed for beginner and intermediate students. Dig In is focused on evaluating and selecting pre-bonsai material with potential, as well as an introduction to basic technique and tools. Chop In is the second class of the series, where Roger provides further instruction, but all work is completed by the student. Contact Roger rogersteel@comcast.net for more questions or to sign up. The next Dig In is Saturday, Nov 3 and the next Chop In is Saturday, Nov 16.

SGAAC Fall Sale - Thank You Volunteers

Thank you to the generous individuals who volunteered to run the ABAS booth at the SGAAC fall sale October 5 and 6. ABAS runs a consignment sale at this annual event, featuring a wide array of other sellers representing clubs who also use the Shepard Garden and Art Center space for meetings. The sale features succulents, irises, native California plants, begonias, chrysanthemums, ABAS bonsai material and other arts & crafts for two days every fall.

Events Calendar

2024

Tuesday, October 22, Dueling Bonsai Demos w/ Yannick and Bjorn **In-person**

Saturday - Sunday, October 26 - 27, Pacific Bonsai Expo **Oakland**

Sunday, November 3, Dig In **In-person**

Saturday, November 9, Member Workshop **In-person**

Saturday, November 16, Chop In **In-person**

Tuesday, November 26, Hands On Fall Care w/ Renee and Carmen **In-person**

Wednesday, December 11, ABAS Holiday Party **In-person**

Saturday, December 14, Member Workshop **In-person**



This page: Scenes from the 2024 Fall Sale and Auction





American Bonsai Association, Sacramento presents
Tuesday: October 22, 2024 • 6 pm - 9 pm
Shepard Garden & Art Center • 3330 McKinley Blvd • Sacramento

Yannick Kiggen and Bjorn Bjorholm will style two trees at the same time, switching midway through the demo.

Two lucky attendees will win these trees.

YANNICK KIGGEN VS. BJORN BJORHOLM

DUELING BONSAI DEMO

Experience these internationally respected bonsai artists face off in a styling duel using high-quality trees. Attend in person to buy raffle tickets.



DOING OUR PART AND FUNDRAISING TOO!

WIRE RECYCLING PROGRAM

BRING YOUR CLEAN, SEPARATED AND USED ALUMINUM & COPPER WIRE TO THE MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING. THERE WILL BE LABELED COLLECTION BOXES AVAILABLE.

Email Debbie Ballanti at juno@pacbell.net with questions.

Sponsored by ABAS

