



November 2024

The Bent Twig

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

Arboreal Abstractions

Every Tree is a Meditation

I am obsessed with collecting trees as much as I am with developing them. I don't necessarily mean yamadori "collecting" but I mean the act of acquiring trees. I think many of you feel a similar itch. To be fair, I've been spending a good deal of effort (and money) working to improve the quality of my trees. Yet, I still hold on to many early stage trees because I am in love with the entire process. I want to learn how to make excellent trunks as much as I want to learn intricate refinement. There is of course a rude awakening awaiting any bonsai collector when it sinks in how much work and brain power each tree requires. Adding variables, like different types of species, only increases the complexity of the equation. My point here is not to ramble on about my moderation issues, but about the crux of this realization.

Every tree is a meditation.

Every tree is a project unto itself. Every tree demands our undivided attention, each in its own way. In my mind, this idea is a little clearer when creating a root over rock or group planting scene, and also during potting season. If the intended final outcome is a highly developed tree conveying a story of growth (and not a collection of neglected trees in nursery pots), each tree must be treated as its own project from start to finish.

Every tree is a meditation.

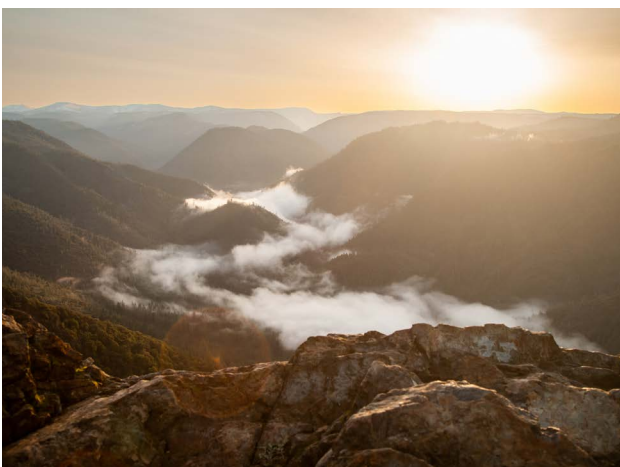
Some early stage trees might only need a few minutes of hard chopping each season, but even these trees demand a level of thoughtfulness and intention that allow the bonsai artist to glimpse into a future of numerous potentials. Perhaps fortunately, no tree is a completely blank slate. We are not staring down a stark white canvas and an infinite choice of colors. We are artistically expanding upon a creation of nature, each with its own starting form and growth potential. Experience will help us understand certain styles and techniques that are more suited to certain species of trees. We can fight it and try to put the tree in a position that it resists, but working against the grain most often does not result in success or well spent time.

Every tree is a meditation.

Instead, we are gifted with an expression of nature and a roadmap of potential techniques with each tree. We are to give each one the attention it deserves, studying and listening with as much intentionality as we are shaping and pushing.

Every tree is a meditation.

--Ian Baker



Above: Sunrise from Moody Ridge, Right: Pygmy Oaks in San Luis Obispo



Far right: Dueling Demo raffle winners with the artists



Last Meeting

Dueling Demos with Bjorn and Yannick

At our last meeting, Tuesday, October 22, ABAS hosted renowned bonsai artists Bjorn Bjornholm (Japan) and Yannick Kiggen (Belgium) for a very special demonstration. At the suggestion of both gentlemen, they held a Dueling Demo. Two fantastic collected junipers were showcased for the demo.

Each artist had their own juniper to style in parallel and halfway through the night, they traded and continued styling the other artist's tree. Given the high quality of the material and ability of each, the results were equally outstanding. We had the opportunity to see each of their sets of abilities shine. Many insights were gleaned and questions asked as the evening progressed.

Raffle ticket sales were strong as everyone in the audience was adamant to be the winner of one of these gorgeous specimens. Other raffle prizes were on the table as always, but everyone was particularly focused on winning these two junipers. Congratulations to two very lucky winners of the Dueling Demo raffle trees: Devan McCarty and Cindy & Mark Donnelly. You scored!





What to Work on November

Just about everything in our collections can be worked on now! Keep in mind the stage of development the tree is in, what work has already been done this year, and if the tree is healthy. Deciduous trees have reabsorbed chlorophyll and nutrients from their leaves and are providing us with beautiful fall color. Note that trees showing robust fall color is a sign of good overall health versus leaves that senesce directly to a less desirable brownish-dead color. This could be an important sign that something is wrong with summer shade, heat, nutrients, or other issues.

Soon leaves will drop which is an optimum time for light silhouette pruning and wiring. Broadleaf evergreens can also be cut, thinned and wired. Save heavy pruning on deciduous and broadleaf evergreens for May/June when trees are actively growing. Remember to plan for grafting in the coming months and allow yourself unpruned runners for thread grafting. All conifers can be cut, thinned and wired at this time if they need it. The type of work will depend on the stage of development and what work has already been done this year. Japanese black pines, if decanded this summer, can be thinned to two shoots, needles pulled to balance growth, and wired if needed.

Refer to the yearly care sheets on our ABAS website under the [‘Member Resources’](#) tab.



Upcoming Meeting

Deciduous Fall Care with Renee and Carmen

This upcoming Tuesday November 26 meeting is a member participation event led by Renee Seely and Carmen Scott. Similar to past working meetings they have led, members should bring deciduous and/or broadleaf evergreens for late fall/early winter work, including light silhouette pruning and wiring. Please bring your bonsai tools, cut paste and a table covering. Aluminum wire will be provided by ABAS. This is a very important time for cut-back on deciduous and broadleaf trees.

Note that, at this meeting Carmen and Renee would like to evaluate member trident and Japanese maples as possible demo material for our January thread grafting meeting. The January meeting will also be a member participation event with 6 stations set up to perform thread grafting on branches and/or roots. If you have maples needing grafting with long runners, bring them to the November meeting for evaluation. Also, bring maples that may be candidates for nebari improvement, by root thread grafting. Whether you plan to bring thread grafting candidates this coming Tuesday or not, note that now is the time to plan for grafting and to not prune runners for this use as you are doing Fall deciduous work. As always we appreciate if a few of our more experienced members can assist our newer members with this fall tune up. Finally, the board has important information to share regarding rate increases at the garden center, which will affect the club and membership financially. Please make an effort to attend the 6:00 PM business meeting for this important update, as well as join Renee and Carmen’s working meeting, which is always fun and informative. Mention the word “duty” for a chance at a free raffle ticket.

Meeting Format Change

Your ABAS Board is always looking to improve our member’s experiences and elevate your bonsai education. To improve efficiency and meeting flow, we will start the 6:00 meeting with a brief business meeting then our speaker will have the floor until around 7:45. At that time we will host Show and Learn, previously known as Show and Tell, but it will look a little different. We encourage members to bring in their trees both to share and/or to ask others for feedback or suggestions. Shortly before our 7:45 break time, we will ask members that wish to talk about their “show” tree to come forward and share its history briefly. If you bring a tree and don’t wish to talk, no problem. For those that are seeking help with their trees, please stand near your tree during the break and a more experienced member will help you. We encourage any of our experienced bonsai artists to reach out to newer members and answer their questions.



Above: Scenes from Dueling Demos



Pacific Bonsai Expo 2024

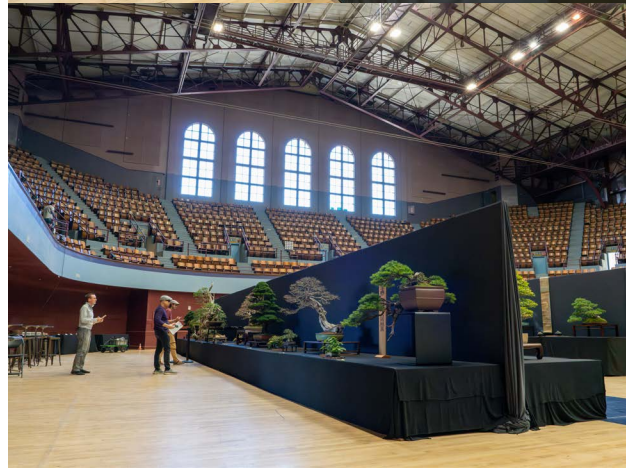
In a flash, the hotly anticipated biennial West Coast bonsai event - the Pacific Bonsai Expo - has come and gone. PBE 2024 took place over two days, Saturday and Sunday October 26 - 27 at the Henry J Kaiser Auditorium in Oakland, CA. Volunteers, vendors, exhibitors, and organizers poured in to the auditorium over two days starting Thursday. Trees and tree handlers checked-in and set to last-minute primping and adjusting, as they cued for photography. As each bonsai was carefully 3D scanned and photographed, many volunteers set to an array of activities, like assembling the exhibit tables and the centerpiece display. A diverse lineup of vendors was also busy setting up, with premiere bonsai, pre-bonsai, pottery, and scrolls from across the west coast and beyond.

The check-in process continued through Friday with finishing touches being carried out to all aspects of the show. Throughout the two day setup period, everyone had a chance to network, preview the show trees, peek at vendor tables before sales opened, and otherwise engage in deep bonsai conversation and analysis.

Friday evening, exhibitors congregated to receive instruction on the judging process and thereafter set about studying the completed displays. Each display received a score from each exhibitor for the category awards and each exhibitor also rank-scored his or her top three choices for best in show. Once the last ballot was collected, the tabulating team set to carefully checking and transcribing the scores into a spreadsheet. Meanwhile, the reception began in the main area of the auditorium, with well-dressed guests mingling amongst the displays, enjoying libations and hors d'oeuvres. Once the tabulation was complete and results verified, the award ceremony commenced, with each category sponsor presenting custom-crafted trophies to the winners. Best in Show was awarded to a stunning upright cryptomeria in development since the 1990s.

Finally, the doors opened to the public Saturday morning. A broad array of bonsai enthusiasts visited over the weekend, primarily to enjoy the top-quality displays. Docent-led tours of the exhibit were available to the public. Others had specific shopping agendas to bring home the perfect finished trees, pre-bonsai, or pottery. Throughout the two day period, demonstrations, panel discussions, and talks were also held.

The progress in organizing and growth in interest of attending and exhibiting Pacific Bonsai Expo relative to 2022 was clear. It will be exciting to see what 2026 has in store. Meanwhile, it is time to think about and prepare the trees you will submit for the coming exhibition.





Welcome New Members: George Dick, Sophie Quisquater, Paul Varesis

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, December 14. 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.

Dig In/Chop In

The next Dig-In and Chop-In classes will be held in 2025 with dates to be determined. Contact Roger rogersteel@comcast.net for more questions.

GSBF Give Back Award & Trees in Refinement Workshop

ABAS was selected for an endowment from GSBF based on a proposal submitted by board members. The proposed project is to purchase a set of tools for intermediate and advanced work like carving and thread grafting, in order to facilitate a member workshop aimed at members looking to expand beyond basic skills. We are calling it the Trees in Refinement Workshop, which likely will be held quarterly during one of the half day blocks on the same day as a regular member workshop. This is an exciting opportunity for the club to offer new tools and instruction to members eager to learn some of the next steps in bonsai. Be on the lookout for more information and to sign up for the dates listed below

Trees in Refinement Workshop dates: 1:00 - 5:00 pm March 8, May 10, July 12 and Dec 13, 2025

ABAS Annual Holiday Party

The annual ABAS Holiday Party is just around the corner on Wednesday December 11 with set up at 6:00 pm and dinner beginning at 6:30 pm. Following tradition, the Board will serve the main dishes like turkey, gravy, mashed potatoes, ham, rolls, and drinks. Club members are encouraged to bring a side dish or dessert to share, as well as their own plate and utensils. Those that wish to participate in the gift exchange are encouraged to bring a wrapped bonsai related gift up to \$25 in value. We look forward to an evening of great food and socialization.

Events Calendar

2024

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](#)



Roger Steel @ Clunie Cafe

ABAS board member Roger Steel generously held a bonsai presentation at the "Clunie Cafe" on October 29. Clunie Cafe is a social club for older adults that meets at the Clunie Community Center building at 601 Alhambra Blvd. in the East Sacramento Room. Various speakers present to this group weekly. Roger brought in six bonsai and educated the group about the art of bonsai. He was very well received and the group enjoyed his presentation. Thank you Roger for ceaselessly campaigning for bonsai as well as supporting the community beyond ABAS.



Above, left: Roger presenting at Clunie Cafe. Far left: Yannick @ Dueling Demos



Proposed Fee Changes & Rental Rates at SGAAC

In response to the proposed fee changes, Your ABAS Board sent the following letter to management in the City of Sacramento Parks and Recreation Department. These proposed fee changes have not been formally decided but are being seriously considered. The Shepard Garden and Art Club Board of Directors is working with the Parks Department in hopes of securing a more favorable fee structure for the clubs that use the Garden Center for their events. Your ABAS Board will continue to update the membership and may ask for members to write letters of support, contact your City Council Representative or show up to a City Council meeting. We may even contact a local TV station to help us remedy this situation.



American Bonsai Association of Sacramento

November 11, 2024

To: City of Sacramento Park and Recreation Department

RE: 2025 Rental Rates for Club at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center

Dear City Representatives,

American Bonsai Association of Sacramento (ABAS) is a nonprofit club established for the purpose of building community and promoting the art of bonsai for its members and the public. In 1958, ABAS became the English-speaking sister club to Sacramento Bonsai Club, the oldest bonsai club in the United States. We have enjoyed holding our monthly meetings and annual two-day bonsai show at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center for the past 66 years since its inception.

This letter is regarding the upcoming rate hikes and removal of the 50% discount the garden and art clubs have been afforded for which this building was built and dedicated to for 66 years. In addition, the added cost of compulsory security at our annual shows increases the rental fees to an exorbitant amount that will compel our club and other clubs to seek alternative locations to hold monthly meetings and shows. Please review a price comparison of rental fees below.

Standard Meeting w/o Alcohol

Main Room	2022 Rate	2024 Rate	Rate 1/1/25 (3.25 hrs)	Rate 7/1/25 (3.25 hrs)
Hourly Rent		\$ 75.00	\$ 90.00	\$ 90.00
3 Hours Cost		\$ 225.00	\$ 292.50	\$ 292.50
Club Discount		\$ (112.50)	\$ 146.25	\$ -
TOTAL COST	\$ 80.00	\$ 112.50	\$ 146.25	\$ 292.50
Percentage Increase		40%	20%	100%

Spring Show

Entire Facility	2022 Rate	2024 Rate	Rate 1/1/25	2026 assuming no rent increase)
Hourly Rent		\$ 115.00	\$ 200.00	\$200.00
Show Rental Cost		\$ 2,875.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Club Discount		\$ (1,437.50)	\$ (2,500.00)	\$0.00
Sale Deposit			\$ 250.00	\$250.00
Kitchen Deposit			\$ 100.00	\$100.00
Security (\$30/hr)			\$ 420.00	\$420.00
TOTAL COST	\$1,131.00	\$ 1,437.50	\$ 3,470.00	\$5,970.00
Percentage Increase		27%	141%	72%



September Auction with alcohol

Entire Facility	2022 Rate	2024 Rate	Rate 1/1/25	Rate 7/1/25
Hourly Rent		\$115.00	NA	\$ 200.00
Auction Rental Cost		\$ 460.00		\$ 800.00
Club Discount		\$ (230.00)		\$ -
City Alcohol fee		\$ 50.00		\$ 50.00
Security (\$30/hr)		\$ 88.00		\$ 120.00
TOTAL COST	\$80.00	\$368.00		\$ 1,170.00
Percentage Increase		361%		218%

Summary of Monthly Meeting Costs	2022	2024	2025	2026 assuming no rent increase
January	\$ 80.00	\$ 112.50	\$ 146.25	\$ 292.50
February	\$ 80.00	\$ 112.50	\$ 146.25	\$ 292.50
March	\$ 80.00	\$ 112.50	\$ 146.25	\$ 292.50
April	\$ 1,211.00	\$ 1,550.00	\$ 3,616.25	\$ 6,260.50
May	\$ 80.00	\$ 112.50	\$ 146.25	\$ 292.50
June	\$ 80.00	\$ 112.50	\$ 316.26	\$ 462.50
July	\$ 80.00	\$ 250.50	\$ 292.50	\$ 292.50
August	\$ 80.00	\$ 112.50	\$ 292.50	\$ 292.50
September	\$ 80.00	\$ 368.00	\$ 1,170.00	\$ 1,170.00
October	\$ 80.00	\$ 112.50	\$ 292.50	\$ 292.50
November	\$ 80.00	\$ 112.50	\$ 292.50	\$ 292.50
December	\$ 80.00	\$ 250.50	\$ 462.50	\$ 462.50
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 2,091.00	\$ 3,319.00	\$ 7,320.01	\$ 10,695.50

With the proposed fee increases and removal of the 50% discount, our 2025 yearly rental fees will have increased **360%** from 2022. Even worse, the 2026 fees will have increased by **411%** compared to 2022. These rates are not sustainable and would require a commensurately excessive increase in our \$40 annual dues per family or individual, as well as disincentivizing our free public shows. We recognize that it is unrealistic to expect no change to the rate schedule over time, but we strongly implore that the City recognizes the disincentives in this fee structure and the havoc they will cause. Further, there is disparity in the efficacy of certain infrastructure at the garden center that will only become starker with such an egregious rate increase.

It is hoped that your department will reconsider these proposed changes. While it is unrealistic that no rental fee increases will occur, the 2025 rate increases are exorbitant and antithetical to the spirit of community upon which the Shepard Garden and Arts Center was built. ABAS is fortunate to have a strong member base, but such rate increases will be a death knell for other clubs who are unable to relocate. If the objective is to create conditions which cultivate social cohesion, especially for older community members, this approach will create the opposite result.



The requirement to have security at our shows or when alcohol is served is unnecessary and ineffective. The median age of our membership is 60+ years old. We offer beer and wine at three meetings each year (Summer Splash, our September Auction and our holiday party). Typically, about 60 members attend and consume trivial amounts of alcohol (2-3 dozen beers & one box of wine). During our September auction our “security guard” was a petit young woman who would not be able to do anything more than one of our members, namely calling 911. It is particularly exasperating to observe said security guard idling on her phone, knowing how much additional expense this incurs, while club members literally amble in on walkers and canes. Beyond the requirement for security at events serving alcohol, having to pay 14 hours of security for the duration of our show is crippling financially.

The additional deposits, while not a long-term expense, are funds removed from our treasury until they are returned. Experience has proven these funds will not be returned to the club in a timely manner. Our 2023 annual deposit wasn't returned until I sent five emails and it was eventually received in July 2024.

Our ABAS Board is willing and ready to speak to anyone within the City such as City Council Representatives, the City Council, higher level Parks and Recreation Management or others that you suggest, in order to preserve the use of the Shepard Garden and Arts Center for our club and the dozens of other clubs that have called this wonderful building **home** for decades.

Respectfully Concerned,

Dodie Newman
President, American Bonsai Association of Sacramento



Above: But a small taste of some of the displays @ PBE