



January 2025

The Bent Twig

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

Arboreal Abstractions

Happy New Year! I am going to change things up here in Arboreal Abstractions. I don't exactly know what this will look like yet, but I want to take a little break from expounding about flourishing foliage, proclaiming plant prowess, and chatting about stately crown conifers. I want to focus more on photography, so expect less pontification and more visuals. Feel free to let me know what tickles your fancy; maybe it's less words, maybe it's more about pest control and irrigation (woohoo, I know).

In the meanwhile, let's catch up with December and January's goings on. It's a good time for a break and a reset, in this article, in our gardens (hello potting season!), and in life. It's a good time to recharge on energy and clarity of thought to embrace the coming year of bonsai.

It's a good time to get busy with a foundational activity in bonsai: potting! My repotting advice, as much to myself as to you, is to start by strategizing across your whole bonsai garden about what gets repotted & why, into which pots, and how, before you dig-in. There is a fantastic slideshow on our website that will help with repotting strategy; the link can be found in *What to Work On in January* below.

Take a deep breath with me and let's do this!

--Ian Baker



Above: Our hardworking mentors Renee and Carmen at work

Last Meeting Deciduous Fall Care Workshop

At our November 26 meeting, Renee and Carmen led a practical workshop: "Deciduous Fall Care." These practical meetings occur a couple of times a year during key parts of the season. The room is set up with covered work tables to enable small groups of members to work their deciduous trees. The meeting opened with a brief presentation from Renee and Carmen covering the basics of technique that are common this time of year, with specific trees to demonstrate the points.

After the presentation, the work began, with an array of interesting and impressive member specimens at each table. Experienced members made rounds to offer guidance and there was a good deal of vigorous conversation amongst everyone at each station, at all levels of experience, making for productive group learning and decision making. These meeting workshops are truly rewarding for newcomers, intermediate members, and mentors to riff on tree composition and technique. Make sure to participate in the January thread grafting workshop!



Above: Scenes from the Deciduous Fall Care Workshop





What to Work on January

Re-potting and dormant sprays 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 some “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. Potting media should be sized properly for the size of the tree and the ratio of ingredients is also important; smaller particle size and more akadama retain more water. 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 slightly less vigor is desired. For a good overview of re-potting, visit our website under ‘Member Resources’ to view this informative slide show or click [here](#).

The classic bonsai dormant spray is lime sulfur, which has insecticidal and fungicidal activity. Additionally insecticidal soaps and dusting sulfur may be used. Dormant oils are effective, but have a risk of phytotoxicity on evergreen plants, like your prized junipers, so always test a new product carefully before applying broadly. Plan your applications when there is no rain in the forecast for a good number of days if you don’t want your spraying to be in vain. Using an adjuvant/surfactant additive (also called spreader/sticker) or combining insecticidal soap with lime sulfur will help with even coverage and for the cocktail to better penetrate the waxy coatings of scales or woolly aphids. Always follow the label and dilute carefully - more is not better - and wear your PPE.



Upcoming Meeting

Root and Thread Grafting Workshop with Renee and Carmen

This coming January 28 meeting will be a hands-on workshop aimed at thread grafting roots and branches on trident and Japanese maples. We are strongly encouraging all to come and to participate! The room will be set up with six workstations with grafting tools and repotting supplies. Six members have volunteered to bring either a Japanese Maple or trident maple to be used for demonstration at each table and there will be an experienced member at each table to assist. Since there won’t be enough tools for every attendee to graft at the same time, it will be a good opportunity to also observe, collaborate, and assist each other throughout the night. Carmen and Renee will bring examples of trees where these techniques have already been used to significantly improve the nebari and/or branch structure. For Show and Learn, members are invited to share trees with successful thread grafts or trees where they have questions about the possibility of thread grafting.

Bring your deciduous material that needs thread or root grafting (that you left whips on to use!) and if you aren’t sure, bring candidates anyway for discussion. This will be a group learning opportunity. Ideal material will benefit from having a branch or root added (most trees) and will have long, pliable whips to be used for the grafts. We will have available some individual whips for root grafting on maples, but if you have any surplus root graft material, bring that too. Any members with experience doing thread or root grafts are encouraged to attend and share their wisdom at the various workstations. Thread grafting is an incredibly easy and useful technique utilized in developing deciduous bonsai. Do not miss this opportunity to participate and learn. Note this will not be on Zoom.



Above: More scenes from the Fall Care workshop

ABAS Seasonal Bonsai Care Series

Make sure to watch the newest [Seasonal Bonsai Series video on YouTube](#), with Renee and Carmen! This is a continuation of their ongoing series explaining composition and specific techniques at specific times of the year. Trees in the starter, intermediate, and refinement stages of development are represented in order to demonstrate how technique changes (or aren’t performed!) depending on the stage. This November video covers winter deciduous work: defoliation, light winter pruning, thread graft follow-up care, and more. These videos are illuminating and a fantastic effort from Renee, Carmen, and the production team at ABAS Studios.

ABAS Price Increases

Membership and workshop dues will be increasing as of January 1 in order to meet the imminent first tier of price increases from the city.

- 1) Membership rates for individuals or families will increase to \$50 annually. Student memberships will remain \$25. We do not want this increase to hinder anyone from renewing their membership. If this is a financial hardship, please contact Dodie and we’ll deal with it privately.
- 2) ABAS member workshops will increase from \$10 to \$20 per 4 hour session. \$20 for instruction along with use of club wire and soil is still a bargain.
- 3) The 3% credit card service fee that we pay per transaction will now be included on sale purchases. Pay in cash or by check if you would prefer to not pay 3% to the credit card company.

Left: YouTube celebrities Renee and Carmen at work



Holiday Party Recap

Holiday Party Recap: Wednesday December 11 was our annual holiday party at the Shepard Garden Center. People began arriving shortly before 6:00 pm with the makings of a proper holiday feast. Members served turkey, ham, potatoes & gravy, rolls, sushi, salads and many other items. For those diligent enough to leave room for dessert, there was a whole other table brimming with all the holiday sweets a bonsai club could ever need. All of this delicious food was washed down with adult beverages, soft drinks, mocktails, good conversation, camaraderie, and gaiety.

Dinner was followed by a lively gift exchange of bonsai related and horticultural swag. The room was decorated with a nice selection of beautifully decorated bonsai trees and each table adorned with natural holiday decor. Congrats to Ellen and Kirk Evans for winning the Maruyama Bonsai Nursery gift certificate for the best decorated bonsai, with hand-folded origami ornaments that were truly works of art. Mention the word deluxe for a chance for a free raffle ticket. Thanks to all of our members who made our ABAS Holiday party festive and fun!

Proposed Fee Changes & Rental Rates at SGAAC

SGAAC Price Hikes: Members of the Sacramento Garden and Arts Club and the Lobbying Committee are meeting with Youth, Parks and Community Engagement (YPCE) Staff soon as part of our ongoing effort to campaign for fair pricing for all clubs who rely on the Shepard Garden and Arts Center as a home. In a show of solidarity, all 26 clubs who use this space are involved in the campaign. We have also made successful contact with a City Council member and will have one of our own ABAS board members, Gage Marchini, formally joining the SGAAC board soon. This is an ongoing fight to maintain reasonable rates and terms to use the garden center, which has been our home for 66 years. We will keep you updated on the process and opportunities to support this cause. If you have any questions or resources to share, reach out to Dodie.

Membership Renewal

It's that time, repotting, thread grafting, and membership dues! You may renew your membership [online](#) or in-person at a meeting. Thanks for your continued membership and everything you bring to the community!

Order ABAS Swag

Bring in the new year with some new ABAS swag! We will take prepaid orders at our January and February meetings, so make sure to get your orders in at the back table. T's start at \$27, Polos at \$35, and Hats for \$36. Email [Gina Chaput](#) with any questions.



Above: Scenes from the 2024 ABAS Holiday Party





Welcome New Members: Welcome new members... wait, no new members this month?!

Member Workshop

The next member workshop is Saturday, January 11. Contact Renee Seely, breadcrumb@comcast.net 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 now \$20 payable to ABAS.

This month we begin re-potting: one of the most important procedures for developing bonsai! The club supplies soil (akadama, pumice, lava), screen, and wire for two to three small to medium trees or one large tree. You may bring your own potting mix if you would like to pot more than that. Bring your tools, pots, tubs, or other re-potting accessories that you like to use.

New members are invited to come by and observe for no charge if you don't have trees needing potting, as there is much to learn from watching the process. Email Renee to sign up as an observer.

No February Member Workshop

There will be no February workshop due to travel for many of the facilitators, but they will continue in March, date TBA, which will be the last push of repotting for conifers before spring.

Trees in Refinement Workshop

Coming March 22, May 17, July 12 and Dec 13, 2025 are the new Trees in Refinement intermediate/advanced member workshops. These will be held in the afternoon from 1:00 - 5:00 pm. ABAS is purchasing a set of tools for intermediate and advanced work like carving and thread grafting, in order to facilitate a workshop aimed at members looking to expand beyond basic skills. 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 the sign-up sheet for the dates listed above or email Renee breadcrumb@comcast.net

Deadwood Workshop w/ Will Baddeley

Wednesday March 26, two Sessions: 8:00 - noon and 1:00 - 5:00 Limit six participants per workshop (limit one session per person initially but if two sessions are desired, your name will be put on a waitlist and filled by availability) Will Baddeley is a UK bonsai artist decades in the making, having worked with Colin Lewis amongst others. He has a more naturalistic style and specializes in deadwood work, so this workshop will be a treat. Participants Bring: trees, tools including carving tools and power equipment, bits, cut paste, wire etc. The club will have some items on hand but we can't provide all carving tools to all participants at once. Signups will be at the Jan & Feb meetings, with \$75 **cash** due at signup.

Bonsai Show Prep w/ Jonas Dupuich

Jonas Dupuich's February 25 meeting will be an exciting topic: Show Prep! Members are asked to bring display stands, trees, and accent plants - even though they won't be in full bloom - that they are considering showing in the ABAS Spring Show. These items will be used live to create, adjust, and critique show-level bonsai displays.

ABAS Bus Trip Scheduled

Save the date for the annual ABAS bus field trip April 26. Details and itinerary will be forthcoming.



Above: Shots from the December member workshop



Events Calendar

2024

Saturday, January 11, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Tuesday, January 28, Hands On Thread and Root Grafting [In-person](#)

Tuesday, February 25, Show Prep! w/ Jonas Dupuich [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday, March 22, Member Workshop + Trees in Refinement [In-person](#)

Tuesday, March 25, Deadwood Carving w/ Will Baddeley [In-person & Zoom](#)

Wednesday, March 26, Deadwood Carving Workshop w/ Will Baddeley [In-person](#)

Saturday, April 5, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Saturday - Sunday, April 12 - 13, ABAS Spring Show [In-person](#)

Tuesday, April 22, Kusamono and Accent Plants w/ Lucy Sakaishi-Judd [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday, April 26, Annual Bus Shopping Trip [Field Trip!](#)

Saturday, May 17, Member Workshop + Trees in Refinement [In-person](#)

Saturday, May 24, Annual Member Garden Tour [Field Trip!](#)

Tuesday, May 27, Olives with Cesar Ordoñez [In-person & Zoom](#)

Saturday, June 14, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

Saturday, July 12, Member Workshop + Trees in Refinement [In-person](#)

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

Saturday, September 14, Member Workshop [In-person](#)

