



# Bonsai Notebook

[www.austinbonsaisociety.com](http://www.austinbonsaisociety.com)

A Publication of the Austin Bonsai Society

December 2025 vol 183

## Our News

**President's and Vice President's Message**  
*page 2 - 3*

**ABS Board Meeting Minutes**  
*page 4*

**ABS Holiday Celebrations**  
*page 5 - 7*

**Formal Upright White-out Exercise**  
*page 8 - 18*

**New Members/Recruiting Authors/  
Advertisements**  
*page 19 - 21*

## Calendar of Events

### December 28, 2025

- ◆ Shohin Society of Texas (SSOT)
- ◆ Topic: Japanese Maple
- ◆ Location: Spicewoods Springs Library
- ◆ Address: 8637 Spicewood Springs Rd, Austin, TX 78759
- ◆ Everyone is encouraged to bring back the Shohin projects they are currently working on

### January 14, 2026

- ◆ Topic: Yamadori and Care
- ◆ Location: Zilker Botanical Garden
- ◆ Artist: Joey M.

## 2026 Board of Directors

**Eric B.**  
President

**Sachin A.**  
Vice President

**Simon T.**  
Secretary

**Jonathan W.**  
Treasurer

**Fred W.**  
Member-At-Large

**Ross C.**  
Member-At-Large

**John H.**  
Member-At-Large

## Volunteers

*Refreshments (January)*  
*Everyone*

*Tree Hosts (January)*  
*Everyone*

# President's Message

*By Eric B.*

Greetings ABS members, and welcome to the last newsletter of 2025. The Fall party went very well, very well indeed! There was lots of great food, great people, and great fun. Thanks everyone for pitching in and making this party another success!

At the November meeting we did a little club business. We elected the 2026 Board of Directors: President - Eric Benson, Vice President - Sachin Attavar, Secretary - Simon Tse, Treasurer - Jonathan Wood, Member at Large - Ross Canlas, Member at Large - Fred Whettling, and Member at Large John Hooper. Also, we adopted the 2026 budget proposed by Treasurer Jonathan Wood.

It's been a pretty good year for the Society. We had a very successful show in May, with about 1,400 people visiting our exhibit. That's the highest number I've seen so far. Our auction in September was a success, helping us end the year with a budget surplus.

We were lucky enough to have visits from three out-of-town artists, to provide demos and answer questions. Gilbert Cantu of Little Jade Bonsai in Corpus Christi did a demo on a dwarf jade at our May meeting. Sylvia Smith visited in June, working on a large juniper. And in October we hosted Lone Star Bonsai Federation touring artist Adam Lavigne, who worked on a large Tiger Bark Ficus (*figus microcarpa*) from the Texas State Bonsai Exhibit's collection.

We also had local artist Jonathan Wood, with a presentation on the care of Japanese Maples in Central Texas at our March meeting.

The star of the year for the Austin Bonsai Society has to be Joey McCoy. Joey started us off in January with a presentation on yamadori collection, provided advice and guidance with our trees at the BYOT meetings (along with Greg Setter and May Lau), and in September gave a presentation/demo on tool use and maintenance. Thank you Joey, for all you do for our club!

As for next year, we are doing a new public event in February 2026: Day of Bonsai, on Saturday the 28th. This event is the brainchild of Jonathan Wood, who has already lined up demonstrations and vendors, but is also looking into a workshop and other educational opportunities. This is basically a mini-show, to present our trees at a time the public usually doesn't see them, either winter silhouette, or just starting to bud out. I'm very excited for this new venture, and look forward to helping make it come to life.

For 2026, we also hope to provide more workshop opportunities for members, and perhaps an ongoing study group or two, to work on long-term progression of one or two trees. Stay tuned for more information.

So a good year is gone, but now it's time to make the next year even better. Goodbye 2025, hello 2026! Everybody keep your trees out of the wind and your feet warm, and I'll see you all in January!

Eric

# Vice President's Message

*By Sachin A.*

As we wrap up another wonderful year with the Austin Bonsai Society, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you. Your enthusiasm, dedication, and willingness to share knowledge are what make this community truly special. From workshops and monthly programs to shows, club events, and all the moments in between, it's been inspiring to see our members grow—both in skill and in friendship.

**A quick reminder:** we will not have a monthly meeting in December. We hope you enjoy a peaceful and rejuvenating holiday season with family, friends, and—of course—your trees.

As we look ahead to the coming year, I'm excited for the fresh opportunities, visiting artists, hands-on activities, and new learning experiences we have planned. Whether you're just beginning your bonsai journey or have been shaping trees for decades, I hope the year ahead brings you joy, growth, and plenty of time at the workbench.

Thank you again for a fantastic year. I look forward to seeing you—and your trees—in 2026!

Warm regards,  
Sachin Attavar

## Reminder for club membership and advertisement

### 2026 membership fee

Individual	\$35.00
Family	\$40.00
Newsletter monthly advertisements:	\$35.00
Directory advertisement:	\$11.00

You may contact [payments.austinbonsaisociety@gmail.com](mailto:payments.austinbonsaisociety@gmail.com) for convenient electronic payment options (processing fee will be added).

**Gift certificate for memberships is also available**, please send inquiry to [payments.austinbonsaisociety@gmail.com](mailto:payments.austinbonsaisociety@gmail.com)

# ABS Board Meeting Minutes

## Get Connected!

Join our online  
discussion



## Official Website

Visit our website at  
[austinbonsaisociety.com](http://austinbonsaisociety.com)

## Facebook



Like our Facebook page  
AustinBonsaiSociety

## Twitter



Follow us on Twitter  
@ATXBonsai

## Instagram



Follow us on Instagram  
@austinbonsaisociety

**Date: November 11, 2025**

**Location: Virtual**

### Meeting Attendees:

- ◆ Eric (President)
- ◆ Simon (Secretary)
- ◆ Jonathan (Treasurer)

### President:

- ◆ A review was conducted of the annual club holiday celebration, evaluating the success of the event and identifying areas for improvement.
- ◆ Preparations are underway for the upcoming year's events and activities, with particular attention given to artist engagement and program development.
- ◆ Key highlights include the One Day in Bonsai initiative, which continues to foster community participation, and recognition of the Texas State Bonsai Exhibit (TTSBE) on the occasion of its 10th anniversary.

### Vice President:

- ◆ N/A

### Secretary:

- ◆ The meeting commenced at **7:35pm**.
- ◆ The latest report was approved as submitted, with no amendments necessary.

### Treasurer:

- Deliberations placed significant focus on the One Day in Bonsai initiative, recognizing it as a central element of planning.
- Membership renewals expected to remain steady.
- Revenues and expenditures were reconciled, with all outstanding items closed.

Meeting adjourned at **8:41 pm**

# ABS Meeting Holiday Celebrations



# ABS Meeting Holiday Celebrations



# ABS Meeting Holiday Celebrations



## Formal Upright White-out Exercise

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)

A white-out exercise is a fun way to explore design options. It helps see a new design without needing to cut off a branch.

This Ezo Spruce was designed in 2016 and has since filled out. It's a skinny-trunked tree, and now there's enough foliage mass that the design might be improved by cutting off branches.

Take a look and see what branches you think should be cut, if any.



Here's the subject of our exercise, an Ezo Spruce.

## Formal Upright White-out Exercise



We used white cloths as white-out in a recent Seasonal class.  
The following are suggested branch removals, shown as digital white-outs.  
Please review the options below and choose your favorite, putting the number of your choice.

Formal Upright White-out Exercise



1



2



3



4



5



6

## Formal Upright White-out Exercise



7



8



9



10

A final option is to thin the foliage and not cut any branches off. Let's keep that as option 11.

## Formal Upright White-out Exercise

My students in a recent Seasonal class gave the 10 options on that first post, which I replicated as digital white-outs. Here I'll single out one of those options to discuss in detail.



Here is the original tree without any white-out applied.

## Formal Upright White-out Exercise



A blog reader, Joe Heller, compiled this much simpler way of comparing all options from the first post. Thanks Joe!

The low branch on the right (on 1 and 2) has been a fun curiosity branch for years. And yet from a natural history standpoint this low branch would rarely have survived into maturity. On a Ponderosa Pine you see the occasional low branch like this. Ponderosa often form open glades and thin forests where low branches can survive, having enough light. But this tree is of a denser forest type—spruce, fir, hemlock—and in those forests such branches are rarely seen. These trees tend to shed lower branches.

## Formal Upright White-out Exercise

Below is #7, which I'll talk about at length.



This is #7, with a few tweaks. The small bar branch opposite the key branch has been removed, and foliage was reduced to lighten areas, particularly in the middle right which held a lot of visual weight.

On an ancient tree the crown is broad and the only branches left are high and thick. This tree feels mature but not ancient, so a broadening crown gives the storyline of an aging tree.

## Formal Upright White-out Exercise



A contradiction in crowns: skinny trees have smaller crowns, but older trees have broader crowns. The lovely tension in bunjin is that of a skinny old tree, so they can have a broader crown than is typically seen. Formal uprights with skinny trunks are the same, if old. A crown that is broader, like in this image, better represents an aging tree.

With any tree, thick trunk or thin, follow the taper of the trunk and where the two lines of the sides meet, that's roughly where your tree should end. Using this as a guide, thicker trees with fast tapers are shorter and skinny trees with shallow tapers are taller. This Ezo Spruce is the second type, and yet #7 feels a hair short given that guideline.

## Formal Upright White-out Exercise



Having a bit of space over the key branch is a good way to set it off. It doesn't have to be as much as this, but it will enhance the flow—in this case, to the left.

## Formal Upright White-out Exercise



By varying the length of the branches we can create interest in the branching. This prevents the Christmas tree look.

## Formal Upright White-out Exercise



In varying the length of the branches we also get asymmetrical distribution of the foliage mass. The physical weight of the foliage allows us to create movement in a formal upright.

A few last thoughts:

There's a reflex to simplify our trees by cutting off branches, especially it seems in the West. But that can deny complexity and interest. Not all bonsai need to be minimalist. In Japan you often see a greater number of branches, especially in the top half of a bonsai.

While #7 is based on how forest trees grow, what we respond to and want to bring out in our bonsai is of course subjective. It's as personal as finding a front. Many might prefer to leave that low branch. Or to not touch anything. Or to make it more minimal. I don't believe we have to defend our choices, but explaining them to our friends helps clarify those choices for ourselves. What is it you want to bring out in the tree? What character is embedded in it that is not yet fully seen?

These digital thinking exercises may be a fun way to engage a study group or a club.

Reminder: 2023 CLUB MEMBERSHIP FEE AMOUNT INCREASE

Beginning in January 2023, ABS will charge an annual membership fee of \$35 for an individual and \$40/couple pursuant to the vote taken by the ABS Board on May 17, 2022, the discussion by attendees at the June 22 ABS meeting, the newsletter announcement dated June and July, 2022 and the regular meeting vote taken on July 13, 2022. Fees for electronic payments will be added to those amounts.

Memberships are annual and need to be renewed each year by the end of February in order to receive a copy of the 2023 Directory.

---

## New/Renewed Members for 2026

Simon & May

Jonathan

Alisan & Lynn (honorary)

Elaine (honorary)

Hani & Jane T.

John P.

---

## Recruiting Authors

With a nod of respect to John Miller, who has been diligently writing monthly columns for our newsletter, we would also like to take this time to invite interested members with knowledge and experiences of local Austin conditions to write articles for beginners and potential aspirants keen on raising bonsai. The Bonsai Notebook is looking for a new voice to author a column providing helpful reminders and tips dedicated to caring for bonsai. Be it a monthly routine or winter procedures, we'd like to welcome new perspectives and experiences to be shared in this newsletter. If interested, please contact: [webmaster.austinbonsaisociety@gmail.com](mailto:webmaster.austinbonsaisociety@gmail.com).

A warm thank you to John Miller for writing the latest columns. Even I, as the editor, may have taken these last months for granted and have been reminded that life is a charming companion that deserves to be appreciated every day. Thank you for your helpful words!

## Advertisements



**BRITE IDEAS**  
AQUAPONICS  
HYDROPONICS & ORGANICS

Http://www.bihydro.com  
Owner: Troy Smith

12110 Menchaca Rd. Ste.103    14611 Burnet Rd #110  
Austin, TX 78748                  Austin, TX 78758  
(512)444-2100                      (512)459-4353



**Austin Bonsai Pots &  
Japanese Maples**

- 100's of Unique Pots in stock!
- Pre-Bonsai Maples available!

**Text/Call (512) 695-2728**  
**www.AustinBonsaiPots.com**  
**JonWoodBonsai@gmail.com**  
*\*Shopping By Appointment (Private Residence)\**

**MBP Bonsai Studio**  
Importers, Retail & Wholesale  
Your source for:  
High quality Yagimitsu & Ryukoh tools  
Organic Bonsai Fertilizers  
Imported and Domestic Trees  
Bonsai Pottery, Soils and supplies  
Classes & Seminars  
*Open Tuesday Through Sunday*



ph: 512-202-3403  
-mail: mbpbonsai@suddenlink.net  
601 Kay Lane  
Pflugerville, TX 78660  
(call for directions)

# Bonsai Notebook

Austin Bonsai Society  
P.O. Box 340474  
Austin, Texas 78734



## Austin Bonsai Society

P.O. Box 340474  
Austin, TX 78734



## About Us

The Austin Bonsai Society is a nonprofit organization which exists to help in providing guidance and education for individuals in their desire to learn and expand their knowledge and skill in the arts of bonsai.

The Society holds regular meetings, twelve months a year, on the second Wednesday of each month. Our social period begins at 6:30 pm, followed by our program at 7:00 pm. Normally, unless announced otherwise, these meetings are held in the Zilker Garden Center building, located on Barton Springs Road in Zilker Park, Austin, Texas. We offer a monthly program of interest to the general membership.

For additional information, contact the Austin Bonsai Society at P.O. Box 340474, Austin, TX 78734 or

Email: [webmaster.austinbonsaisociety@gmail.com](mailto:webmaster.austinbonsaisociety@gmail.com)