



Bonsai Notebook

www.austinbonsaisociety.com

A Publication of the Austin Bonsai Society

August 2026 vol 191

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Calendar of Events

August 12, 2026 (Venue Change for Upcoming Meeting)

- ◆ Topic: From cuttings to containers
- ◆ Location: First English Lutheran Church
(Please consult page 2 for additional details.)
- ◆ Time: 6:30pm (Mingling/Setup) 7:00pm (Meeting)

September 19, 2026

- ◆ Topic: Annual Auction
- ◆ Time: 9:30am (setup) 10:30am (auction)
- ◆ Volunteers needed
- ◆ Location: Anderson Mill Garden Club

September 26, 2026 (Saturday)

- ◆ Shohin Society of Texas (SSOT)
- ◆ Topic: Sea hibiscus & Premna
- ◆ Time: 1pm - 4pm
- ◆ Location: Spicewood Springs Library

2026 Board of Directors

Eric B.
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Sachin A.
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Simon T.
Secretary

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Treasurer

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Member-At-Large

Ross C.
Member-At-Large

Abby B.
Member-At-Large

Volunteers

Refreshments
Zerita R.

Tree Hosts
Bjorn F.

Urgent Update: Meeting Venue Impacted

From ZBGC Manager:

“We’ve received unfortunate news from the City: the ceiling in the auditorium requires extensive repairs, and the space is now closed until further notice.

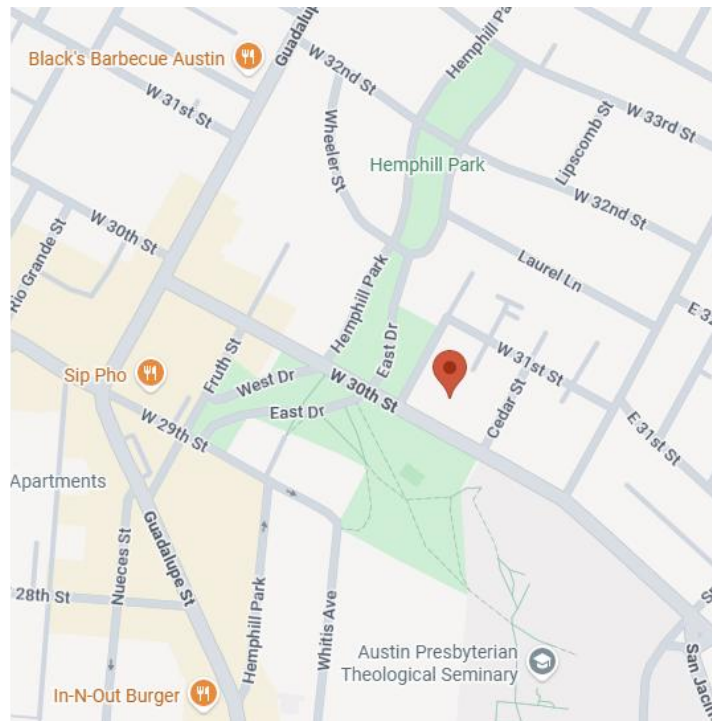
This means the Austin Bonsai Society meeting scheduled for August 12, 5:30–9:30 PM will need to be canceled or relocated. We are actively working with APR and AAGC to identify alternative options; however, some city facilities may involve additional costs, so we encourage clubs to explore other meeting locations as well.

ZBGC will share updates as soon as more information becomes available.”

The Austin Bonsai Society board has secured a new meeting venue at [First English Lutheran Church, 3001 Whitis Ave., Austin, TX 78705](#) ensuring our gatherings continue without interruption. If any members have access to—or connections with—other suitable meeting spaces, please reach out for future planning. We look forward to welcoming all bonsai enthusiasts at our new location.

ABS Board

First English Lutheran Church



President's Message

By Eric B.

Hello again bonsai people! I hope this newsletter finds you and your trees doing well. As for advice right now, all I've got is: the sun is out to get your trees specifically. I mean, isn't it obvious? It just keeps sailing over your yard, every day, beating down on your trees relentlessly. Yeah, it's personal at this point. Just keep your trees watered and hope the big bully decides to go bother someone else.

Last month's meeting went well - the BYOT tropical night was well-attended, and several people participated in the mini-workshops with the trees made available by the club. Thanks to Joey McCoy for leading those mini-workshops, and thanks to all the people who brought in trees to work on. BYOT nights are my favorite, as they are a great way to see other people's trees, and get and give ideas and advice. I'm a bit sad that was our last one for the year.

The next meeting, on August 12, features a visit from local artist and ABS member Roland Lopez. Roland will be doing a demonstration titled, "From Cutting to Container". He will be working with different species of tropical cuttings from larger trees, and potting them into a bonsai container - hence the demo's title. This should be a fun demo, and as always the demo tree will be offered in the raffle at the end of the night.

The next event is our annual auction, in September. It's just a little more than a month away, so get your donations ready. Every item in the auction helps keep the Austin Bonsai Society going, and are very much appreciated by all. This is also an opportunity to be a volunteer, to help set up for the show, during, and after the show. Only a few volunteers are needed: 3 or 4 to set up the Friday before the auction, and another 3 or 4 to run the event on Saturday and clean up afterward. The auction is also a great way to pick up trees and such, so be thinking about that as well.

Well, that's about it. Stay cool, stay hydrated, and I'll see you all at the next meeting.
Eric

Vice President's Message

By Sachin A.

I hope everyone is finding ways to stay cool while keeping their trees thriving through another Central Texas summer. August can be one of the most challenging months for bonsai, but it's also a rewarding time to observe new growth, refine your watering routine, and plan for the coming seasons.

Our August meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 12, at 6:30 p.m. at Zilker Botanical Garden. We're pleased to welcome Roland Lopez of Okami Bonsai for a presentation titled "Cuttings to Container."

Roland will demonstrate techniques for developing bonsai from cuttings, with a focus on tropical species. Starting trees from cuttings is an economical and rewarding way to build quality bonsai material while gaining a deeper understanding of tree development from the very beginning. Whether you're interested in expanding your collection, improving propagation skills, or simply learning a different approach to creating bonsai, this presentation promises to offer practical techniques and valuable insights.

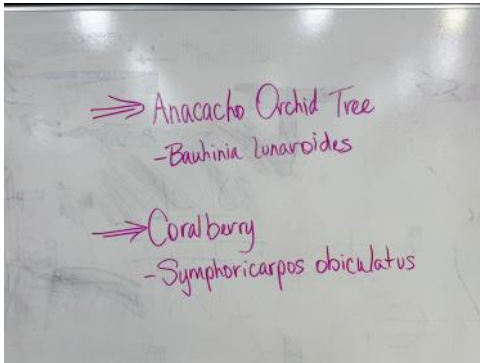
One of the greatest benefits of our monthly meetings is the opportunity to learn directly from experienced artists while sharing ideas with fellow members. If you've been thinking about trying propagation or have questions about tropical bonsai, this will be an excellent opportunity to see the process demonstrated and to ask questions.

As always, we encourage you to bring a friend who may be interested in bonsai. The Austin Bonsai Society continues to grow because of the enthusiasm and generosity of its members, and every meeting is a chance to welcome someone new into the hobby.

I look forward to seeing everyone on August 12 for an evening of learning, fellowship, and inspiration.

Happy bonsai,
Sachin

July Meeting (Coralberry, Anacacho orchid and BYOT workshop)



July Meeting Coralberry and Anacaucho orchid workshop

Participants who have the special opportunity to take part in the workshop



July Meeting (Raffles)



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ABS Board Meeting Minutes

Date: July 21, 2026

Location: Virtual

Meeting Attendees:

- ♦ Eric (President)
- ♦ Simon (Secretary)
- ♦ Jonathan (Treasurer)
- ♦ Abby
- ♦ Ross
- ♦ Fred

President:

- ♦ Preparations are underway for the upcoming year's events and activities, with particular attention given to annual auction and holiday gathering.

Annual Auction:

- ♦ Our Annual Bonsai Auction is just around the corner, and we'd love your participation. Your donated trees, pots, tools, and materials help support the Society and keep our programs thriving. Join us, contribute if you can, and enjoy a day of community and great finds

Vice President:

- ♦ N/A

Secretary:

- ♦ The meeting commenced at **7:34 pm**.
- ♦ The latest report was approved as submitted, with no amendments necessary.

Treasurer:

The latest meeting tally has been provided.

Meeting adjourned at **8:29 pm**

Correcting Water pH For Better Plant Health

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)

When we drink water, our kidneys adjust the blood pH to 7.35-7.45. Plants also have the ability to change pH around their roots, up to 1.5 pH points. But in more extreme pH situations, plants suffer.

Water pH measures the concentration of hydrogen ions. If you have more hydrogen ions, you have acidic water. If you have more hydroxide ions, it's alkaline. The pH scale runs from 0 to 14, with 0 being ridiculously acidic and 14 being obnoxiously alkaline. 7 is neutral.

For the best plant health—and to grow the broadest range of species—we should aim for the middle. 6-7 pH is usually ok, with 6.5 being about optimal.

The thing is, this isn't a simple scale. A pH reading of 2 is not twice as alkaline as 1. *It's 10 times as alkaline.* It's logarithmic. This means a pH of 8 is 100 times as alkaline as 6.

That might seem like a scary range, but plants are pretty tough. Your pines and azaleas will prefer things acidic, junipers are famously adaptable, while crabapple and elm can perform well in alkaline situations. Many plants do OK if things are not ideal.

But when we're well beyond a good pH range, mineral deficiencies and toxicities show up:

- In highly **acidic situations, calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus become insoluble**, so the plant can't take them up
- **Metals like aluminum and manganese become soluble** in highly acidic conditions, which results in toxicities
- **Highly acid water can damage root cells**
- In highly **alkaline situations, nutrient lockouts happen**, seen in stunted top and root growth
- **Leaf chlorosis, or iron deficiency**, is seen with highly alkaline water

How then do we know the pH of our water?

There are several methods of testing water, the easiest being a hand-held, battery operated, digital tester, which gives readouts of both pH and dissolved salts. Alternatively, you can use drops from an aquarist's store to test pH. **Avoid litmus paper**, which is a vague reading.

Correcting Water pH For Better Plant Health

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)



Above, a digital tester for both pH and TDS (dissolved salts). As it tests both key measures of water quality, this is the recommended way to test. Stick the end in water and hey presto, a digital readout.



For just testing pH, an aquarist's drop test kit is good enough. Fill water to the white line, add three drops of test solution, cap it, and shake. This test came out about right for bonsai—about pH 6.2 or 6.3. A pH of 6.5 is ideal.

If you've soft water that is alkaline, you may be fine. Usually high pH comes with hard water, and that's a real challenge for a plant. (See [this post](#) for more on hard water and how it affects plant health.) In general, changing your pH to be mildly acidic corrects moderate hard water issues.

Correcting Water pH For Better Plant Health

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)

OK then, enough of the warm up to the subject... How then do we adjust the pH coming out of our hoses to get the best bonsai health?

Most water problems will be too alkaline. In that case, the easiest fix is to use a siphon and inject acid. Fertilizer siphons come in many sizes and complications and expense levels, the simplest being a siphon with a hoselet that goes into an acid dilution. It sucks up a certain amount to your bib, which then mixes in the hose as you begin to water.



A simple brass siphon that attaches to your hose bib, with a black hoselet that snakes into a tank with the acid dilution. You'll have to fiddle with the dilution to get the pH you want out of the hose. These are not foolproof, so keep checking your pH.



Correcting Water pH For Better Plant Health

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)

A system with more control is the Dosetron system. Above is the Dosetron D14MZ2, the injection system we use. It's more expensive than the simple siphon, and has a tangle of plumbing to sort out at the bib, but it does have several controls which can make either acid injection or liquid fertilizing a top end experience.

Which acid?

- Vinegar is easiest for home applications. We used muriatic for a few years before discovering it can lead to chlorine burn on sensitive plants (Vine Maple, for one). Vinegar is also safe—no chance of burning yourself, unlike muriatic, which is dirty hydrochloric
- Be sure you're using up the vinegar dilution in a few days, as over time the pH will rise. A more stable acid is phosphoric (most commonly used acid for hydroponics), but take care when using if concentrated
- Keep testing the pH through the watering hose as you get the dilution dialed in

If your water is too acidic, like a 3.5 pH, then adding baking soda will buffer it and bring the pH up. Again, *test the water out of the hose* to get the right tank mix dilution for whatever siphon you're using. Whether using acid to bring pH down or baking soda to bring it up, out of the hose the water should be somewhere between 6 and 7 pH, with 6.5 about optimal.

And then...be patient!

- If water quality was the problem, better plant health is often seen within a few months to a year. Conifers may take two years before they look better
- Any kind of water source, from a well or a municipal source, should be checked occasionally for pH
- Some municipal water sources in particular can shift over the year, from a pH in the low 6's in the winter to over 9 or in the summer, which they do to protect the pipes and prevent metal leach

Stay consistent. Keep testing your water to be sure your system is working

Reminder: 2026 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 2026 Directory.

New/Renewed Members for 2026

May & Simon	Jonathan	Alisan & Lynn (honorary)	Elaine (honorary)
Hani & Jane T.	John P.	Nilda G.	Andrew I.
David G.	Mike G.	Eric B.	Shawn W.
Jorge V.	Dana L.	Susan C.	Hunter J.
Roalnd L.	Jay N.	Dash C.	Reid F.
Jared M.	Diego M.	Jacob & Catherine C.	Barbara R.
Maddison K.	Chris F.	Jared M. & Kendra D.	William "Bill" M.
Randall R.	Bill M.	Cole J.	Audre & Zetta H
Robert P.	Salik & Khadya M.	Nikki & Kenneth G.	Jordan & Crystal S.

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.

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!

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 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

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Bonsai Notebook

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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