



Bonsai Notebook

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A Publication of the Austin Bonsai Society

July 2026 vol 190

Our News

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

June meeting
page 4 - 5

ABS Board Meeting Minutes
page 6

A Deeper Dive Into Decandling
page 7 - 15

New Members/Recruiting Authors/
Advertisements
page 16 - 18

Calendar of Events

July 8, 2026

- ◆ Topic: BYOT (Tropical)
- ◆ Available materials: Anacaicho orchid and Coralberry
- ◆ Location: Zilker Botanical Garden (Clubhouse)
- ◆ 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

2026 Board of Directors

Eric B.
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Volunteers

Refreshments
Lyon O.

Tree Hosts
Bjorn F.

President's Message

By Eric B.

Welcome to the July 2026 ABS newsletter, my fellow bonsai lovers! Summer is in full swing, so let's talk a bit about protecting your trees from the heat and relentless sun. One of the most important things you can do to help your bonsai thrive in our Texas summers is provide shade for the pot. Bonsai pots don't have a lot of volume, so they heat up very quickly in direct sun. On a really hot, sunny day an unshaded bonsai pot can reach up to 120° F. Considering that roots start getting stressed and/or damaged at about 104° F, it is clear that protecting the pots from sun exposure is a good idea. When you shade the pots, be sure to leave airflow around the pot, to avoid moisture lingering which can lead to mold and fungus. Wrapping pots in burlap is a good way to provide some shade and still have airflow, or you can just lean some boards up against the pot. Shade cloth can also help, but don't go too dark, just like 30% to 40% shade. Shade cloth will also shade the rest of the tree too, so keep that in mind and maybe try to set it up so it only shades in the hottest part of the day, after about 2 pm or so.

For our July meeting, on the 8th, we have another BYOT night. This month we are focusing on tropics, because it's the time of year for working on tropics. So bring in a tropical tree or two, and get some advice and guidance from your fellow club members. And if you don't have a tropical tree, that's ok, bring in what you have that you would like some help with, and we'll help you out. ATAB: all trees are beautiful!

Also at the July meeting we will have a "mini-workshop", to be held during the meeting. We will have two types of trees that members can purchase from the club, for the mini-workshops. First is Anacacho Orchid Trees in 5 gallon pots. The second is Coralberry, also in 5 gallon pots. The price is \$35 per tree, so stock up for the winter! These trees were originally purchased by the club for use as workshop material for the 2026 convention, and they looked pretty good when purchased. They have since had 2 years of growth in large pots, so they are in pretty good shape for bonsai. And \$35 is a really good price for this material. But don't worry - you don't have to purchase one of the trees to participate; you can bring in any tree you want.

The next big club event is our annual auction, in late September. That's a while away, but please be thinking about anything you can donate for sale in the auction. Every little bit helps. We will also need volunteers, so please consider that as well.

As I write this, it is the 6th anniversary of the start of my bonsai journey. On Father's Day 2020, my wife and son gave me my first bonsai: a little procumbens juniper, bought from a guy selling them out of a white van at the corner of Lamar and Parmer. (Yes, they paid way more than I now know it was worth.) It was tiny, about 8 inches long total, and shaped like an upside-down Nike swoosh. I...almost loved it to death (over watering), then almost killed it by over-compensating and letting it dry out too much. But I persevered (much to the tree's dismay, I'm sure), and today that little nana juniper is a full cascade that I showed at the Day of Bonsai event back in February. What a 6 years it's been. I now have more trees than I care to count, I'm a member of an awesome bonsai club which has entrusted me with leadership positions (suckers!), I've met so many wonderful people...and my trees look better than I could have hoped thanks to those wonderful people. It's been more than just growing tiny trees in tiny pots, it's been community and friendship and shared purpose. It's been laughter and good times. It's been...family. And I thank you all for that.

Thanks for reading, and see you at the next meeting!
Eric

Vice President's Message

By Sachin A.

Happy July, everyone!

Summer is in full swing, and our bonsai are reminding us that this is the season for consistent watering and close observation. With Central Texas heat settling in, be sure to check your trees regularly for moisture, watch for pests, and protect them from excessive heat when needed. A little extra attention now goes a long way toward keeping them healthy through the hottest part of the year.

Our July meeting will be a hands-on workshop featuring Anacacho orchid and coralberry trees. If you preordered a tree, it will be ready for you at the meeting. We also expect to have a limited number of additional trees available for purchase while supplies last.

If you didn't preorder—or simply want to work on a different project—you are welcome to bring your own tree of any species. This workshop is a great opportunity to get personalized guidance, regardless of what you're working on.

Joey will be sharing his expertise on styling and developing Anacacho orchid and coralberry bonsai, offering demonstrations, techniques, and individual feedback throughout the workshop. Whether you're working on one of the featured species or your own tree, you'll have the opportunity to benefit from his experience and ask questions about your design and horticultural choices.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the Austin Bonsai Society through your participation, volunteer efforts, and willingness to share your knowledge with others. I look forward to seeing everyone at the July meeting for another enjoyable afternoon of learning and working on our trees together. Stay cool, keep those trees watered, and we'll see you soon!

Regards,
Sachin

June Meeting



June Meeting (Raffles & Refreshments)



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ABS Board Meeting Minutes

Date: June 16, 2026

Location: Virtual

Meeting Attendees:

- ◆ Eric (President)
- ◆ Simon (Secretary)
- ◆ Abby
- ◆ Ross
- ◆ Fred

President:

- ◆ Preparations are underway for the upcoming year's events and activities, with particular attention given to artist engagement and program development.

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 **7:32 pm**.
- ◆ The latest report was approved as submitted, with no amendments necessary.

Treasurer:

- ◆ N/A

Meeting adjourned at **8:00 pm**

A Deeper Dive Into Decandling

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)

It's Japanese Black Pine decandling time again. Or it might be, depending on where you are. It is where I am, the Pacific Northwest, where we're finishing up decandling this week.

The decandling date will differ according to where you live, which is determined by latitude. Here in Portland, Oregon we cut end of May / beginning of June, while in Los Angeles it would be closer to July 4th. There's a longer growing season down there, and as decandling "resets the spring," so to speak, you want to time your cuts accordingly, as that will determine the regrowth needle length.

Decandling assumes good sun and enough warmth. In shade, or regions with cool summers, Black Pines are often better grown as single-flush pines. They should be fertilized well in the spring and in the fall to do this intense shoot removal, with a short break for 4-6 weeks after decandling in summer, to get short shoots. After that, begin fertilizing again for the needles.

A lot has been written about Black Pine decandling—and I highly recommend the many pine posts on Jonas Dupuich's Bonsai Tonight blog for more.

In this post, after an overview of a common technique, we dive into a couple puzzling situations you may encounter on a developed Black Pine.



A Deeper Dive Into Decandling

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)



Here is our Japanese Black Pine, *Pinus thunbergii*, before decandling. It's an older pine, with a lot of density. Today we'll talk about how to manage that density.



For an overview of a common decandling technique, identify those candles large enough to cut off. This one is of medium strength, and may be cut. Smaller ones may also be cut, but leave very small ones.

A Deeper Dive Into Decandling

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)



In decandling the whole shoot is cut off (do not do this on single flush pines, like a Scots Pine or Japanese White Pine). Then some needles are pulled off.

We leave a stub, if the candle is strong enough, which serves as an energy drain on the shoot, making smaller regrowth. With strong candles, leave a longer stub, and weaker candles a shorter one.



The candle cut off. A small stub remains.

A Deeper Dive Into Decandling

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)



Next, needles are pulled. Start with those further down the shoot, leaving those near the cut site.



Try to leave a star pattern. This shoot is at the top of the tree, and this is an average number of needles left there, 5 pairs. On the middle branches you might leave 6 pairs of needles. On the bottom, 7 pairs. This needle variance is a typical method of combating the apical dominance of Japanese Black Pine.

A Deeper Dive Into Decandling

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)



If you have a loose plant, like this one, with only a few branches and shoots, follow the above set of photos for the normal technique. But don't pull off so many needles. Maybe leave 10 pairs.



Let's get deeper in the weeds with the denser pine. For here it gets tricky. What about adjacent shoots? Here there are three small shoots. None are strong enough to decandle. Only one, the lower one, is even making a candle this year. To strengthen this area, and to keep the density the same as the rest of the tree, something has to go.

A Deeper Dive Into Decandling

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)



The middle shoot is cut off, leaving more energy and space for the remaining two. To strengthen the shoots no needles are pulled.

This is one of the harder things to put into practice: though we want ramification, on a mature tree, you end up cutting off shoots in order to make room and to have enough energy for the next set.



Another complicated area. Four shoots. They are all strong enough to decandle, but it's too busy. There's no space for regrowth. Also, these candles are at the lower limit of the size you can decandle and expect regrowth, and cutting all of them often results in one or two not growing any summer candle at all, or all getting weaker. Space constraints + energy constraints = something gets trimmed off.

A Deeper Dive Into Decandling

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)



The middle shoot was cut off to clear some space. The candle on the right was cut. Now another candle is being cut.

Some prefer to pull needles first, though I find it easier to find which needles to pull after the candle is gone.



Almost done with this set of shoots.

A Deeper Dive Into Decandling

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)



Same set of shoots after needle pulling. I left a few more pairs of needles on the far left shoot as it was weaker.

It's simplified, yes? On a mature tree you build ramification slowly, if at all..



The pine after decandling and needle pulling.

A Deeper Dive Into Decandling

by Michael Hagedorn (Permission to repost)

To put all this another way: A potted Black Pine can only maintain a certain number of shoots with the energy to be decandled, so there is no infinite ramification potential.

It's a bit bittersweet: we do a lot of work and then cut off half of what we did the season before.

But not to end this post on a low note. For we've achieved a lot of things by decandling. We make ramification. Short needles. And we strengthen weaker interior shoots, which would otherwise die.

Yet an often missed goal is short shoots. Decandling gives us intense compaction on this long-needed pine, in whatever needle length we want. Depending on when we cut the candle.

But one last thought there—too short a needle can be a liability on a Black Pine. It can weaken the tree. The above tree is 18" high. The needles are 1.5" long, which is the shortest length for a tree of this size to keep it happy. If they were less than an inch (which might be OK on a shohin) I'd cut the candles about 10 days earlier to get more needle length.

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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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