

ABS Board Meeting: 20 April 2026

Called to Order @ 17:05

Quorum (= 7 voting Directors minimum, out of 13 total):

Directors present (8): Connor, Rogers, Meckes, Sansome, Kohler, Sanders, King, Ramsay

Directors absent (5): Pierce, Edwards, Fox, Banks, Boeraeve

Others present: JuanPablo Martinez (Guatemala)

Quick recap

The American Bamboo Society board meeting focused primarily on addressing challenges in the bamboo industry, particularly regarding unqualified competitors entering the market and creating issues for established professionals. John Kohler shared concerns about new competitors using paid advertising to bypass organic search results, leading to a discussion about potentially developing certification programs and educational resources for bamboo removal and management. The group agreed to form a working group to develop clear, non-vocational educational content for the ABS website, including information about proper bamboo installation practices. Additionally, the board discussed membership structure changes, particularly whether commercial members should automatically receive chapter membership, and scheduled the next meeting for May 31st at 2 PM Eastern time. Other updates included conference planning progress, advertising updates from Mark, and Carole's personal discovery of aggressive bamboo rhizomes on her property.

Next steps

Autumn

- Discuss with Ian after the meeting for more details on assisting Bill Hollenback with the species source list data transfer/Access database issue.

Carole

- Reach out to David Cater to find a local provider for box lunches for the conference field trip.

Ian

- Follow up with Ronald Barrett regarding Mid-States chapter representation and contact Dan Fox about transitioning chapter responsibilities and bank account.

- Reach out to John Tkach about establishing a link from the ABS website to the existing Bamboo subreddit and explore promoting ABS presence there.
- Follow up with the Bamboo Enthusiast Facebook group to explore collaboration or increased ABS presence.
- Follow up with Bamboo Garden regarding lapsed advertising payment.
- Add to the next meeting's agenda the topic of adjusting commercial membership benefits to include automatic chapter membership at no extra fee, and the related dues allocation.
- Schedule next board meeting for May 31st at 2pm Eastern/1pm Central/11am Pacific and send calendar invite.
- Contact Ronald Barrett again to ensure internet connection issues are addressed for future meetings.
- Follow up with speaker contract templates and discuss with Carole as needed for the conference.
- Add Autumn's topic about chapter/commercial member benefits to the agenda for the next meeting.

Lawton

- Submit book review to Mark for the magazine.

Collaboration

- Ian, John Kohler, Mark, Dain, Autumn (and possibly others as appropriate): Form a working group to develop clear, non-opinion-based installation/maintenance/removal guidelines for the ABS website, and consider future education/certification initiatives.
- Carole/Conference Committee: Continue research and planning for conference logistics (registration fees, field trip stops, meals) and meet again on the 30th to report progress.
- Conference Committee: Recruit additional volunteers as needed for conference planning.

Summary

Chapter Representation and Minutes Approval

The meeting began with a discussion about the AI companion feature, which records and translates meetings, though David noted it's not reliable for exact word-for-word minutes. Ian led the meeting and noted that while they had a quorum, two key members were absent, including Ronald Barrett who will be the new Mid-States chapter Director. The group approved the minutes from the previous meeting, and Ian mentioned he would follow up with Dan Fox, current Mid-States chapter Director, regarding the potential transfer of representation responsibilities to Ronald Barrett. Carole confirmed that Dan currently holds the chapter bank account, which may need to be transferred if Barrett is officially appointed as the new representative.

NJF Grant Reports and Database

Ian discussed two main agenda items. First, he confirmed with Mark that NJF grantee reports had been received but were too late for the spring issue, so they would be included in summer. Second, Ian reported that Bill Hollenback couldn't attend the meeting due to family responsibilities and requested help with building tables for the species source list, which involves transferring data from a website database to Microsoft Access. Autumn offered to help with the technical aspect and suggested exploring the existing Bamboo subreddit as a forum solution, which Mark confirmed is already moderated by John Tkach and himself.

Bamboo Community and Conference Planning

The group discussed connecting with existing bamboo communities through platforms like Reddit and Facebook's Bamboo Enthusiast group. Carole provided an update on the conference committee, noting that research is ongoing with plans to report back after the committee meets on the 30th, including decisions on registration fees and field trip logistics. The committee is planning a field trip to the Houston Zoo and David Cater's nursery in South Texas, with potential meals and transportation being coordinated, including box lunches for the Sunday field trip. Ian offered to help with speaker contracts and mentioned discussing this with James Clever.

Bamboo Business Updates and Challenges

The team discussed several business updates, including the closure of Wild Bear Bamboo in Louisiana, which led to Mark acquiring 2,500 plants. John raised concerns about changes in Google's algorithms affecting his bamboo removal business, where new competitors with paid advertising are appearing despite lacking experience. He proposed creating a certification program for bamboo management with the American Bamboo Society's backing and suggested writing an article about the lack of arborist certification for bamboo work. Lawton provided a positive update about a book he was reading and planned to review for the magazine.

Bamboo Expert Hotline Discussion

John expressed frustration about a competitor who has cost him \$100,000 in business due to unqualified work in real estate transactions. Autumn proposed creating a "bamboo expert hotline" to help community members find certified professionals for bamboo removal, particularly in light of new regulations in Kentucky. John and Ian clarified that ABS already provides similar services through Carole's email referrals, though the logistics of a dedicated hotline were discussed, with John noting the challenges of covering large geographic areas.

Bamboo Removal Education Programs

The group discussed the need for bamboo removal education and certification programs, with John sharing his experience about proper removal methods and the challenges of managing different bamboo

situations across varying property sizes. Autumn proposed starting with a certification program followed by a potential hotline, while Ian suggested non-vocational workshops as a softer approach to avoid appearing as a regulatory body. The discussion highlighted the regional differences in bamboo management needs, from large properties requiring clear-cutting to small urban gardens where mowing might be sufficient. John also mentioned a potential legal case involving inadequate containment systems for bamboo plantings in Manhattan.

Bamboo Installation Guidelines Development

The group discussed the need for clear, black-and-white guidelines on bamboo installation from the ABS website, with Ian and Mark expressing strong support for this idea. John Kohler shared a specific example of varying installation depths (18 inches vs 24 inches) and costs (\$5,800 vs \$15,000) in different projects, highlighting the challenges of pricing and communicating bamboo removal work. The team agreed to form a group to develop detailed installation instructions for the ABS website, starting with non-technical information before potentially expanding to more technical content.

Bamboo Education Program Development

The group discussed developing educational programs about bamboo, with Autumn proposing both workshops and a website-based certification system with testing. They agreed to explore different learning modalities to accommodate various learning styles. The meeting also addressed membership structure, with Carole and others suggesting that commercial members should automatically include chapter membership at no extra cost, as this would benefit both chapters and national ABS.

Next Board Meeting

The group scheduled their next online meeting for Sunday, May 31st 2026 at 2 PM Eastern/1 PM Central/11 AM Pacific, noting the need for more inclusive meeting times to accommodate all members globally.

Abstracted by AI, edited by David King, Secretary, ABS