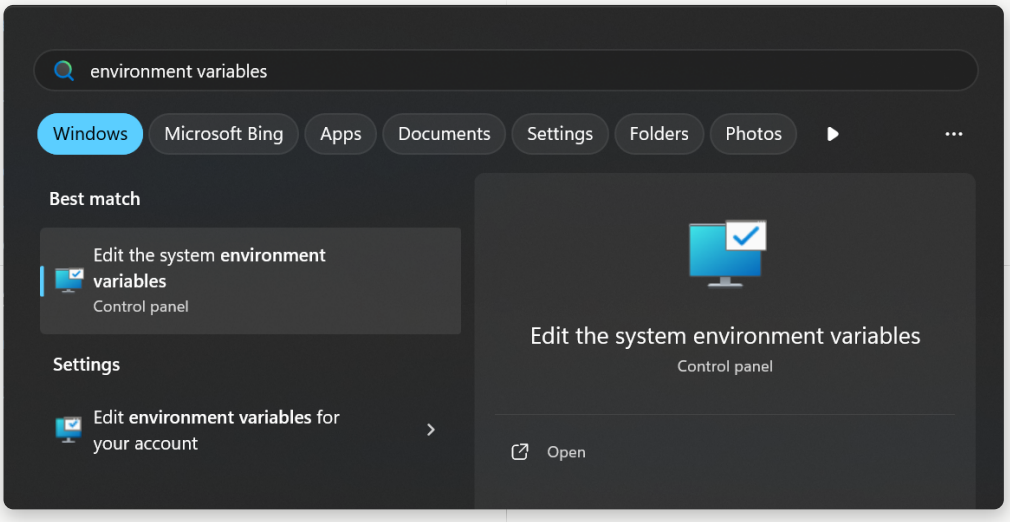
Windows

This quickstart will help you set up your MS Windows machine to explore the sourcecode of Bonsai or develop and debug your blender scripts in VSCode. This has the benefit of having a complete development environment where you can explore the code, make changes, debug (break-points, watch variable and stack contents, etc.) and see the results in blender

- Steps 1-6 will get you started with VSCode to develop and debug python scripts in Blender and explore the Bonsai sourcecode and documentation.
- Steps 7-14 will allow you to interact with GitHub to make changes to the Bonsai project.

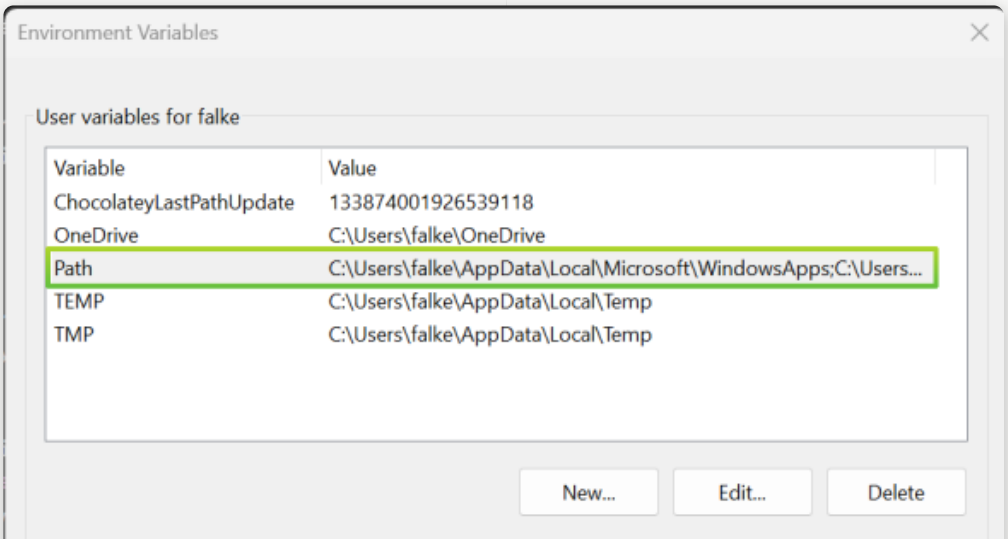
We will be using Windows 11 as our operating system and Visual Studio Code as our Integrated Development Environment (IDE) and we will create a dedicated user for Development.

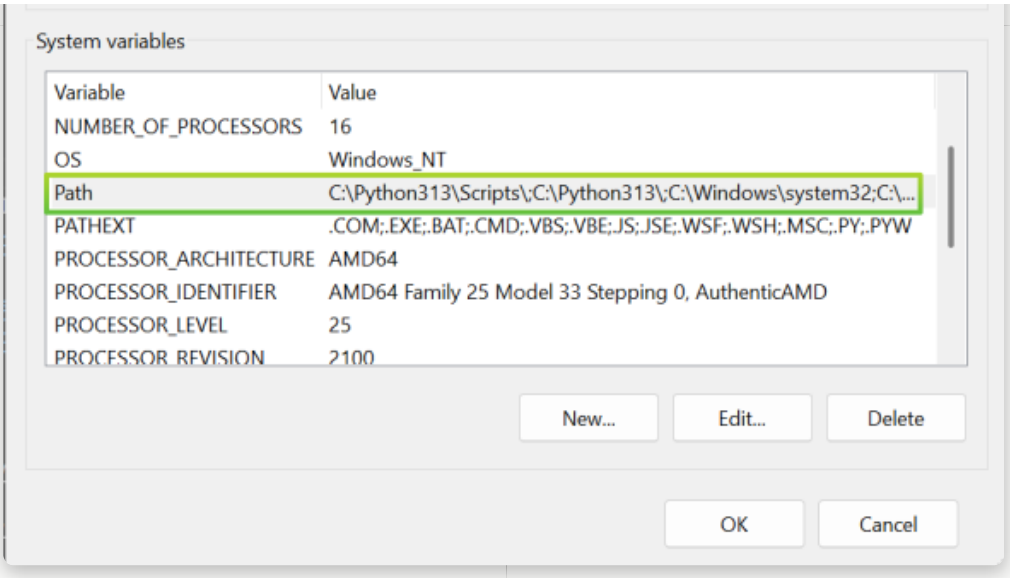
> **Note**
>
> In the following steps we wil be installing a number of applications. There are several ways to install them and that has impact on whether Windows is able to find the relevant binaries. In general if you have issues in the stpes below related to not being able to find binaries, please check that the installation path is in the PATH environment variable. You can hit “Windows” key and write “environment variables”.



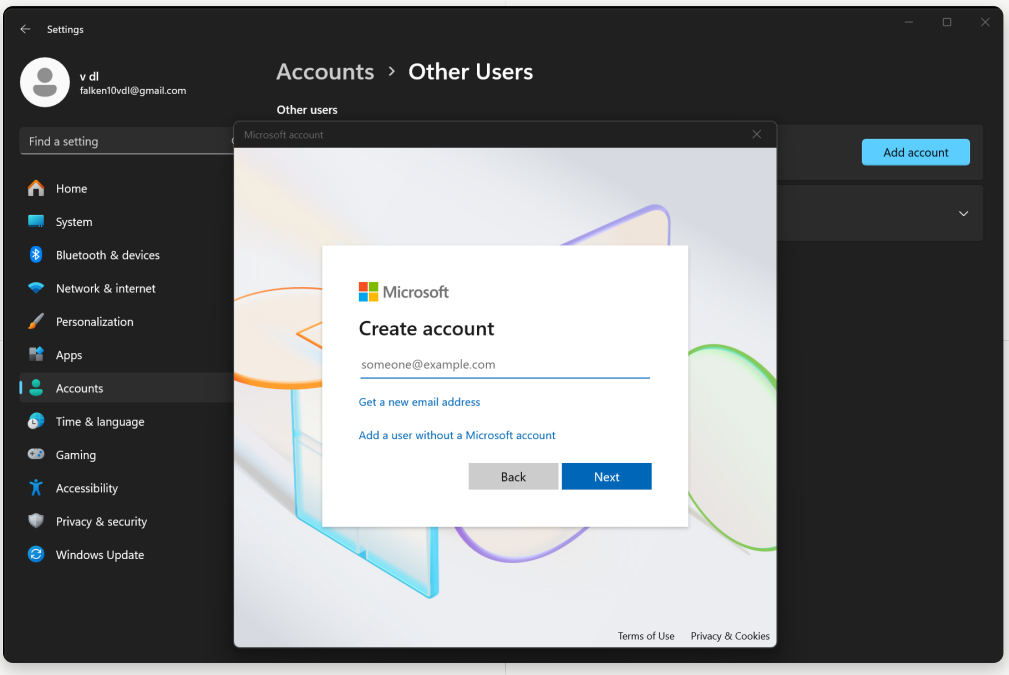
And then go to System Properties ▸ Advanced ▸Environment Variables.

Check that the installation path is in the PATH variable. If not, you can add it by clicking in the Edit... ▸ New.





1. **Create Development User**: Open Windows Settings (typically hitting “Windows” key and writting “settings” in the search field) and then go to Accounts ▸ Other users. Click on Add account and then add a new user. We will name it *falken10vdl*.



2. **Install Blender for the created user**: We will install blender locally in the users home directory. We must check that we are following the Systems requirements.

   We will download Blender 4.2 from the Blender download page. In particular, we take the 4.2 LTS for Windows.

   We will download the Windows - Portable (.zip) version:

   https://www.blender.org/download/release/Blender4.2/blender-4.2.8-windows-x64.zip

   Unzip the file in the user home directory. In our case it is *C:\Users\falke\Documents\blender-4.2.8-windows-x64* (the user *falken10vdl* has as home directory *C:\Users\falke*).

   CONGRATULATIONS! You have now Blender installed locally in your machine. You can launch it by double clicking in blender.exe which is situated in the previous folder.

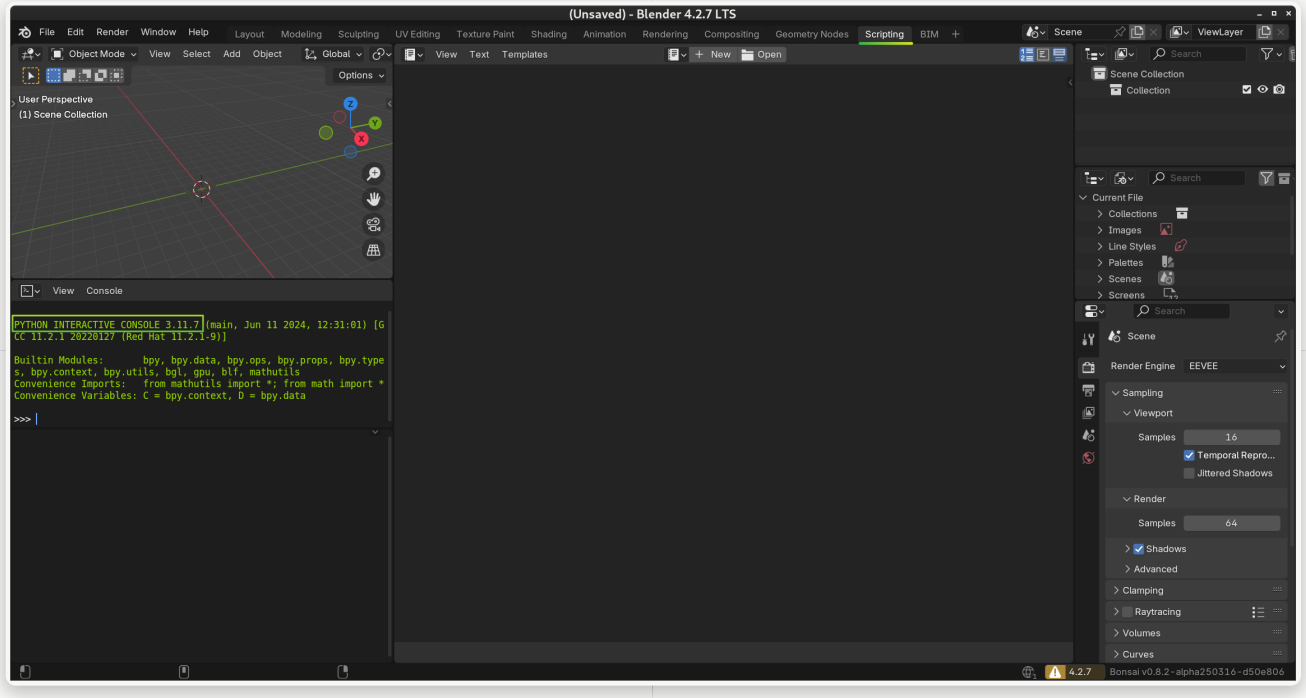
   Now install the Bonsai Blender extension. Follow the Unstable installation.

   CONGRATULATIONS! You have now the Bonsai Blender extension installed in your local

Blender installation.

3. **Install VSCode**: Log in as the new created user (*falken10vdl* in this example) and install Visual Studio Code.
4. **Adjust Python version in VSCode as in Blender**: This is a good practice step to ensure that the Python version in VSCode matches the one in Blender.

   Check the Python version in Blender by going to Scripting. In the Python Console you can see the version number of the Python interpreter



In our case it is version 3.11.7

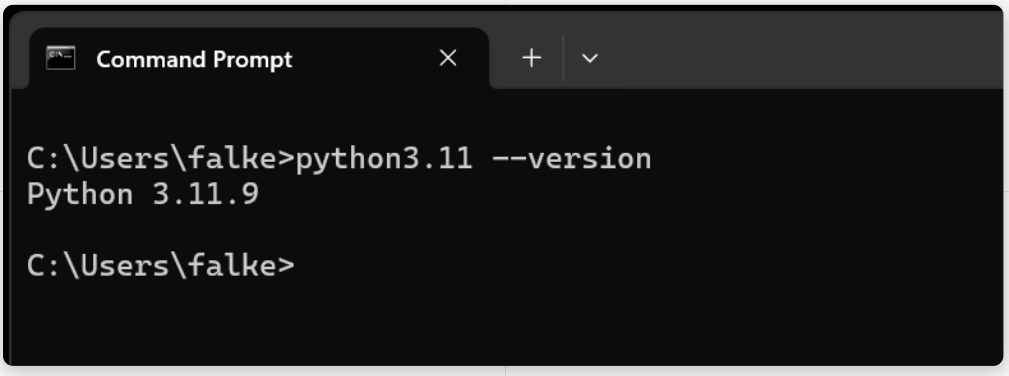
We will need to install the closest version in our Linux machine.

We check in either in Microsoft store or Python Downloads.

The closest version is 3.11 in Microsoft Store. So we installing by clicking in Get.

After this, we have the 3.11 python version installed in our machine. It is reachable by typing *python3.11* in the terminal.

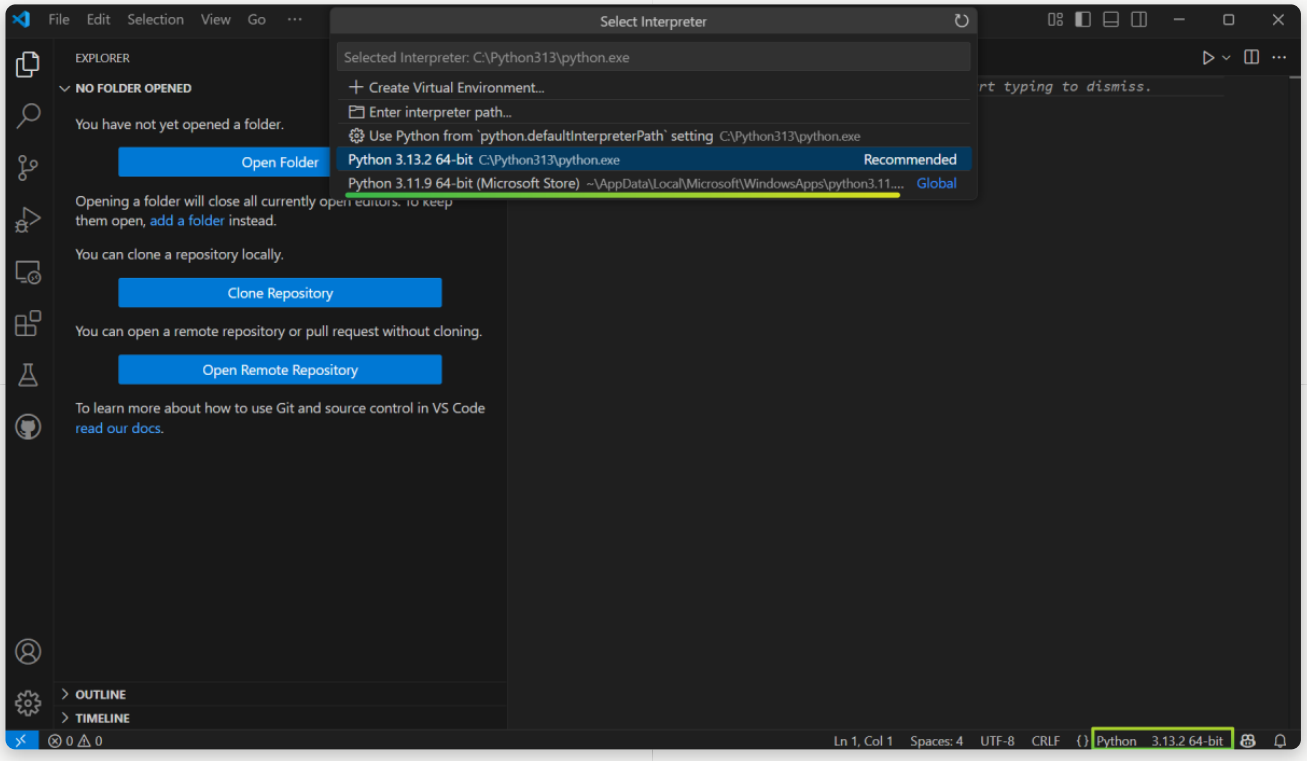
```
python3.11 -V
```



Finally create a sample python file and check the Python interpreter version in the bottom left corner. Select the Python interpreter that matches the one in Blender. In our case it is 3.11.

File > New File > Python File

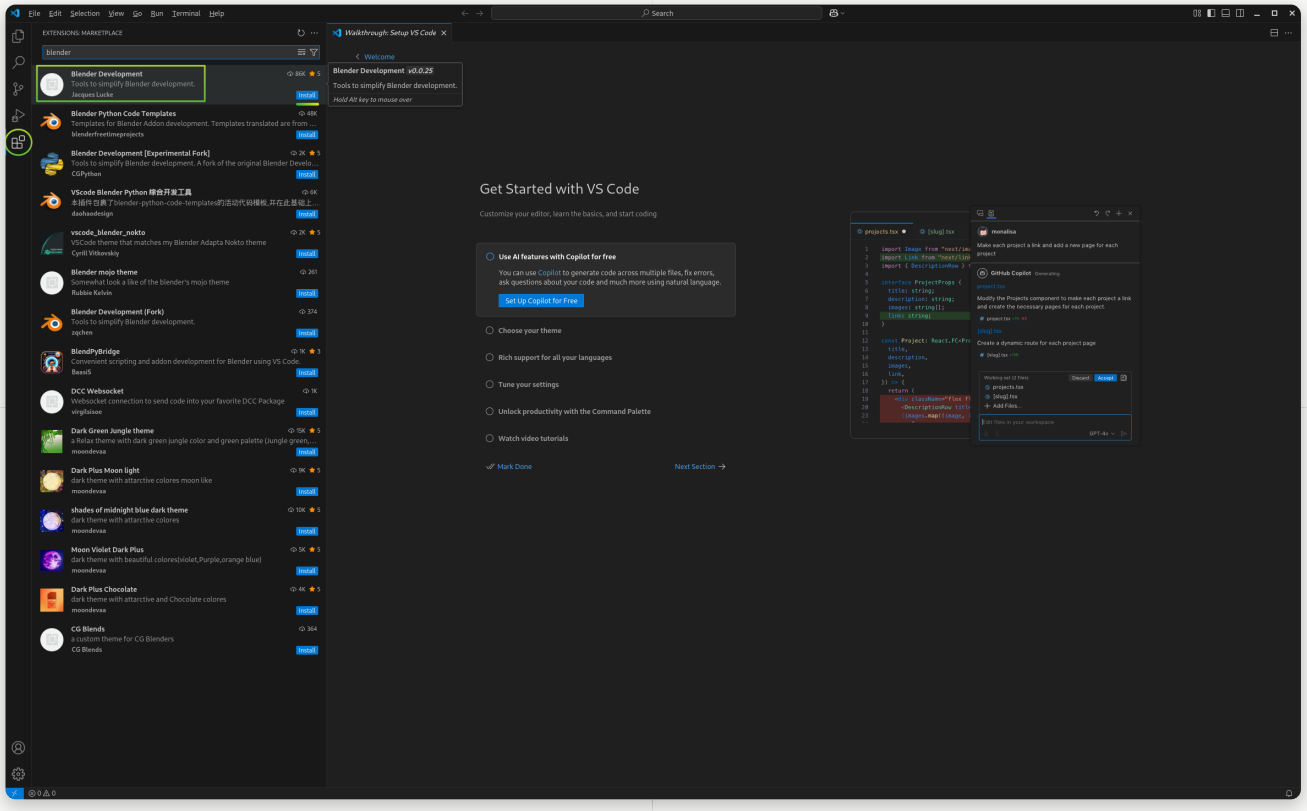
File ▸ New File... ▸ Python File



CONGRATULATIONS! You have now a Python version in VSCode similar to the one run by Blender.

5. **Connect VSCode to Blender by means of VSCode's extension: "Blender Development"**: This steps is crucial to be able to develop and debug scripts in VSCode ans interactivwely see the results in Blender.

   Launch VSCode and go to the Extensions tab, search for Blender Development and install it.



This will also install some Python related extensions.

6. **Test that you can develop python scripts in VSCode for Belnder**: Create a sample blender python file under adirectory for example *C:\Users\falke\Documents\bonsaiDevel\scripts*. You can use whatever blender python script

you want. We will use this one from the blender documentation:

Example Panel

```
import bpy

class HelloWorldPanel(bpy.types.Panel):
    """Creates a Panel in the Object properties window"""
    bl_label = "Hello World Panel"
    bl_idname = "OBJECT_PT_hello"
    bl_space_type = 'PROPERTIES'
    bl_region_type = 'WINDOW'
    bl_context = "object"

    def draw(self, context):
        layout = self.layout

        obj = context.object

        row = layout.row()
        row.label(text="Hello world!", icon='WORLD_DATA')

        row = layout.row()
        row.label(text="Active object is: " + obj.name)
        row = layout.row()
        row.prop(obj, "name")

        row = layout.row()
        row.operator("mesh.primitive_cube_add")


def register():
    bpy.utils.register_class(HelloWorldPanel)


def unregister():
    bpy.utils.unregister_class(HelloWorldPanel)


if __name__ == "__main__":
    print("Hello World: run from Blender Text Editor")
else:
    print("Hello World: run from VSCode")
    print(f"NOTE. __name__ is : {__name__}")

register()
```

Tip

Although blender has builtin the python modules for bpy, it is a good practice to install the “fake-bpy-module” in your local python environment. This will allow VSCode to provide autocompletion and other features. You can install it by running the following command in the VSCode terminal:

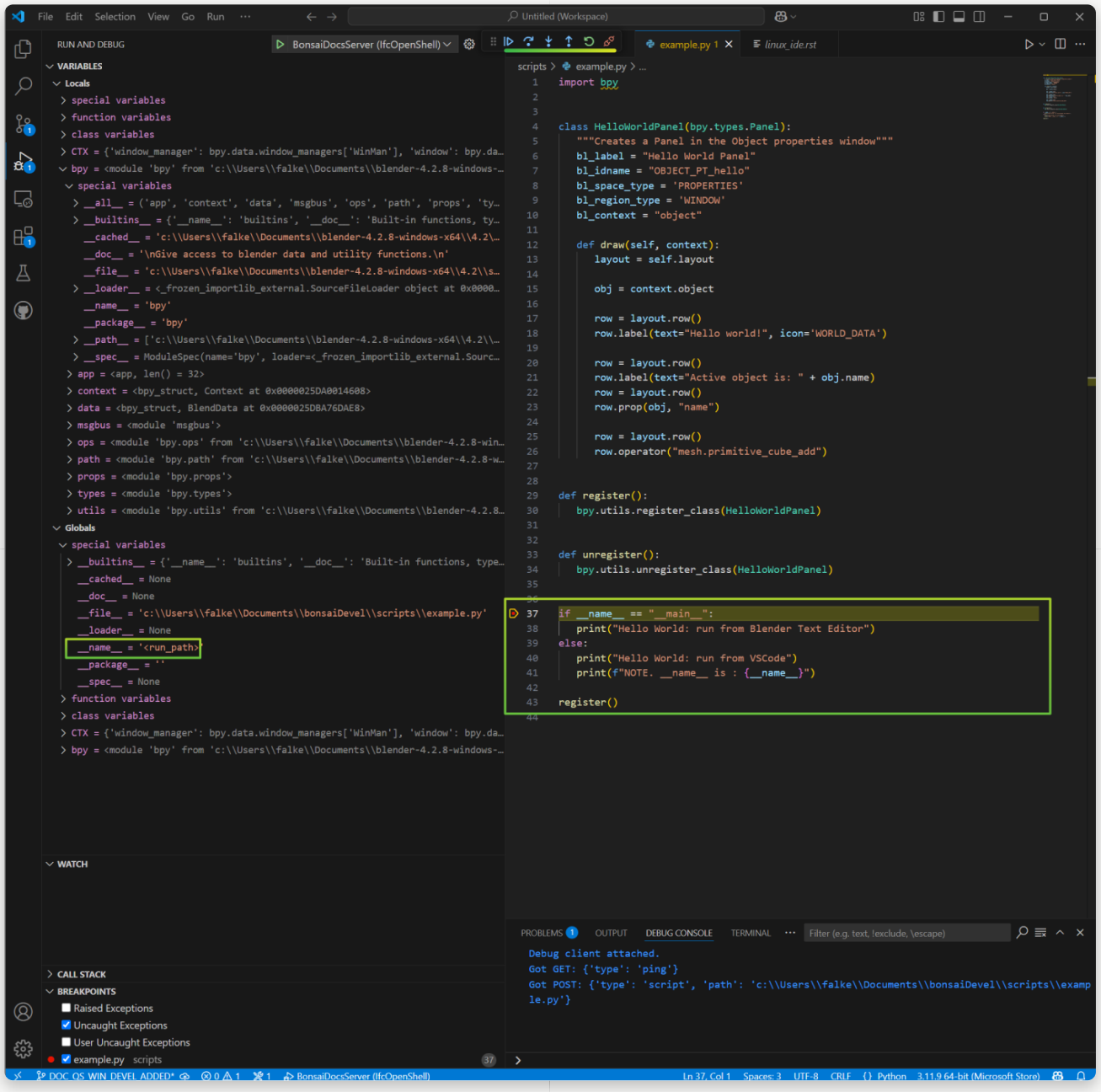
```
python3.11 -m pip install fake-bpy-module-latest
```

```
PS C:\Users\falke\Documents\bonsaiDevel\IfcOpenShell> python3.11 -m pip install fake-bpy-module-latest
Collecting fake-bpy-module-latest
  Downloading fake_bpy_module_latest-20250328-py3-none-any.whl.metadata (7.4 kB)
Downloading fake_bpy_module_latest-20250328-py3-none-any.whl (1.1 MB)
   ━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━ 1.1/1.1 MB 26.3 MB/s eta 0:00:00
Installing collected packages: fake-bpy-module-latest
Successfully installed fake-bpy-module-latest-20250328
PS C:\Users\falke\Documents\bonsaiDevel\IfcOpenShell>
```

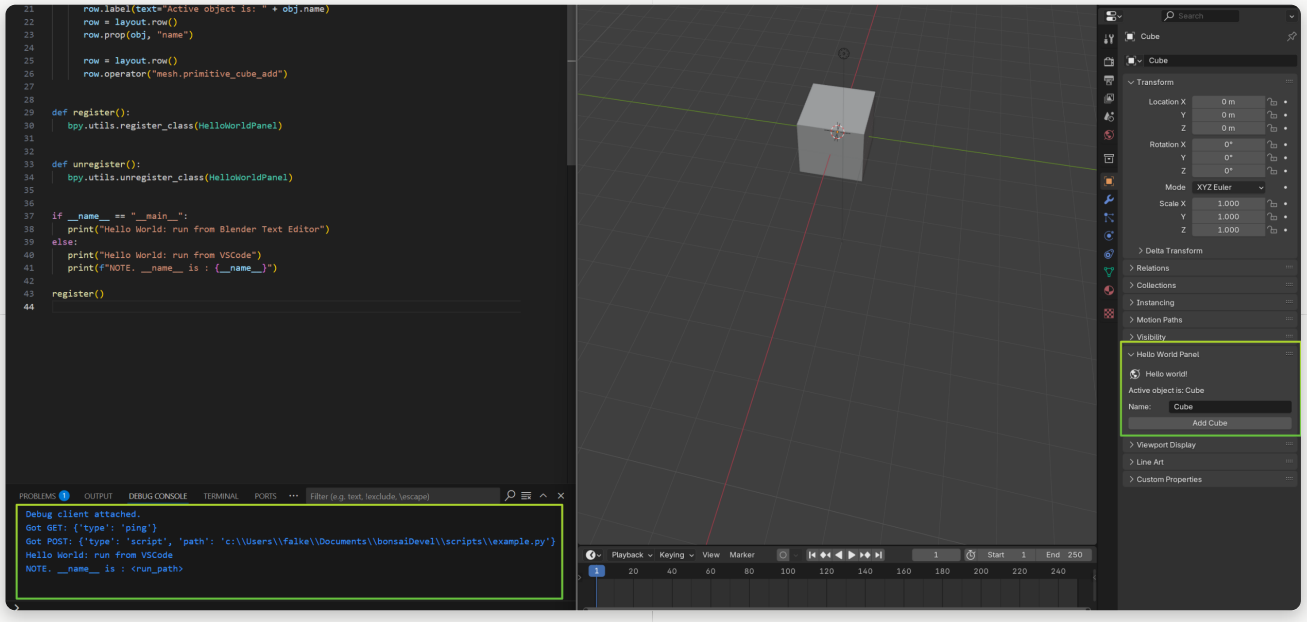
We have changed the last part of the script since running from VSCode has some subtle diferences compared to running from the Blender Text Editor. In particular the special variable *__name__* is different.

- Press CTRL-SHIFT-P and type “Blender: Open Scripts Folder”. Select the previous folder where the script file is located
- Press CTRL-SHIFT-P and type “Blender: Start”. Blender will start.
- Press CTRL-SHIFT-P and type “Blender: Run Script”. The script will run and the output will be seen in Blender!

As you can see below. We have set a break-point in line 37 (see point 13 below for another example of setting a break-point). We can inspect in the left side the local variables, global variables, add watches, check the stack, etc. For example we can see that __name__ has a value of “<run_path>” Instead of “__main__”.



Once we continue execution we can check in the VSCode Terminal the output and in Blender the panel created by the script.



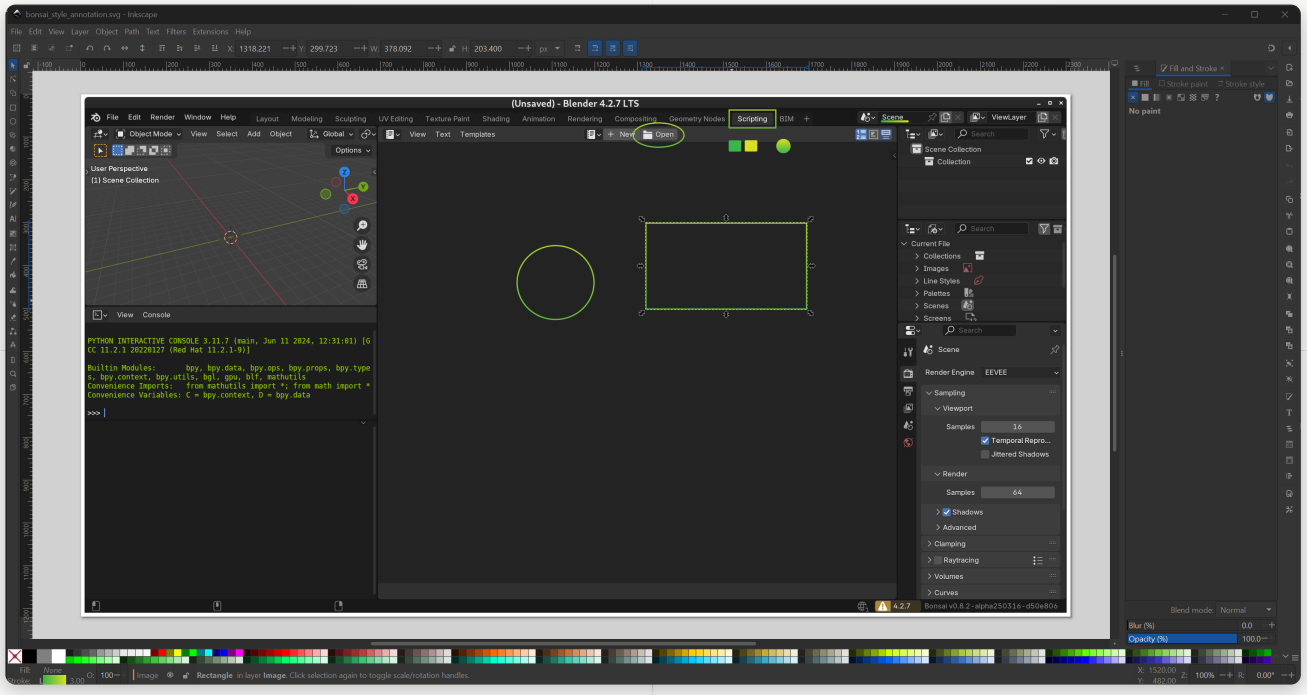
CONGRATULATIONS! You have now a development environment ready to speedup your python scripting in Blender.

X. **BONUS: Editing Bonsai Documentation**: Please refer to Writing documentation for details on how to edit and contribute documentation. Here we just summarize the steps to integrate that workflow in VSCode and using Inkscape.

- Download and install Inkscape from Inkscape download page. In our case we will use Inkscape 1.4 Windows 64 bit msi installer.
- The file below has the style annotation for the Bonsai documentation.

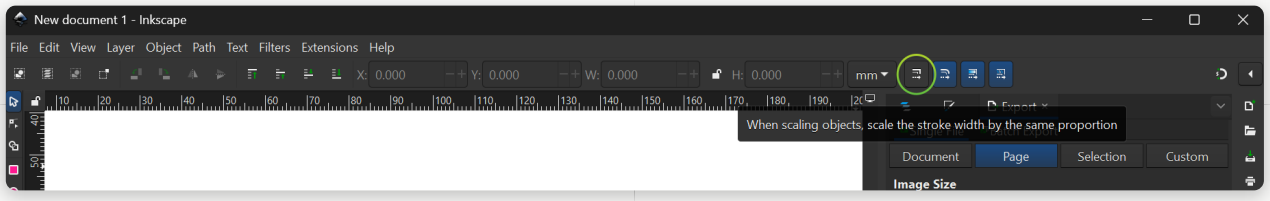
Download style annotation file

It contains some shapes and styles that you can use to create your own diagrams.



- Open some screenshot file you want to add annotations in Inkscape and also open this template. You can then copy paste from the template to the screenshot file.

> **Warning**
>
> When copying the shapes for your convenience just make sure that you do not have selected the option “When scaling objects, scale the stroke width by the same proportion” to keep the style width right as per Bonsai documentation style guidelines



- Once done you can export your edited screenshot as PNG to be used in the documentation. File ▸ Export... and click in the Export button on bottom right corner.
- As described in Writing documentation you need to have sphinx installed in your system. One of the easiest ways is to use Chocolately.

  Install Chocolately and then you can simply run the following command in the terminal:

  ```
  choco install sphinx
  ```

  and then install the theme and theme dependencies:

  ```
  python3.11 -m pip install furo
  python3.11 -m pip install sphinx-autoapi
  python3.11 -m pip install sphinx-copybutton
  ```

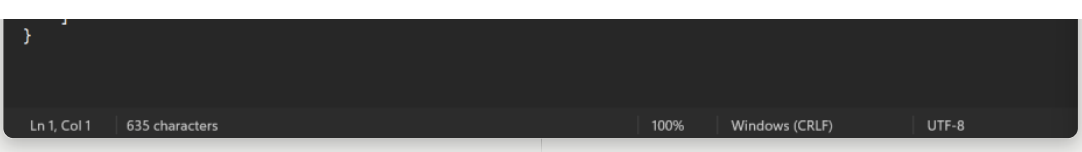
  All these can be accomplished within a terminal of VSCode.

  ```
  PROBLEMS  OUTPUT  DEBUG CONSOLE  TERMINAL  PORTS  COMMENTS

  PS C:\Users\falke\Documents\bonsaiDevel\IfcOpenShell> python3.11 -m pip install furo
  Collecting furo
    Using cached furo-2024.8.6-py3-none-any.whl.metadata (5.9 kB)
  ```

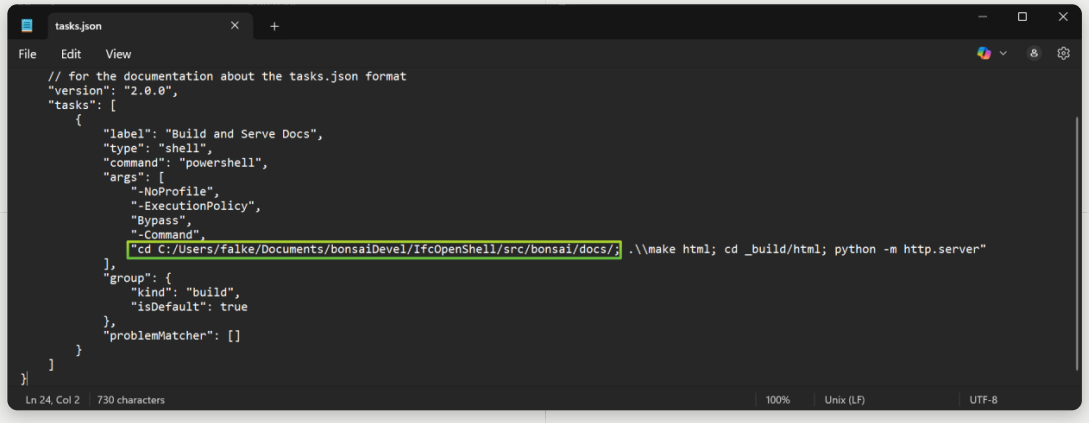
- To speedup your workflow you can add the following VSCode files in the .vscode folder of your cloned repository. In our case it is *C:\Users\falke\Documents\bonsaiDevel\IfcOpenShell\.vscode*
- Make sure to edit them with the right paths in your system.

  - launch.json

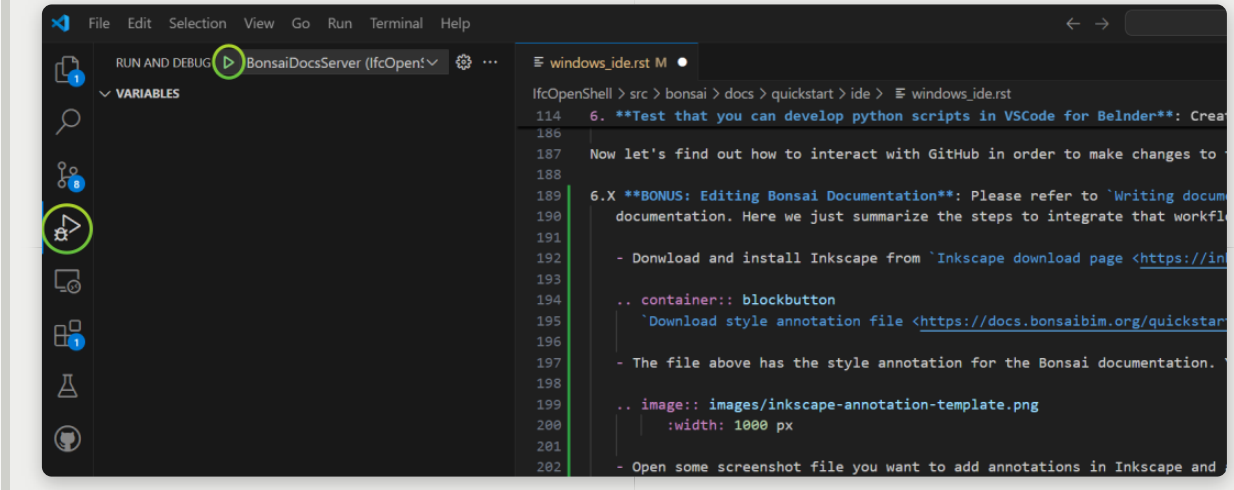
    ```
    launch.json
    File  Edit  View

    {
        // Use IntelliSense to learn about possible attributes.
        // Hover to view descriptions of existing attributes.
        // For more information, visit: https://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/?linkid=830387
        "version": "0.2.0",
        "configurations": [

            {
                "name": "BonsaiDocsServer",
                "type": "debugpy",
                "request": "launch",
                "program": "C:/Users/falke/Documents/bonsaiDevel/IfcOpenShell/src/bonsai/docs/_build/html",
                "args": ["-m", "http.server"],
                "preLaunchTask": "Build and Serve Docs",
                "console": "integratedTerminal"
            }
        ]
    ```



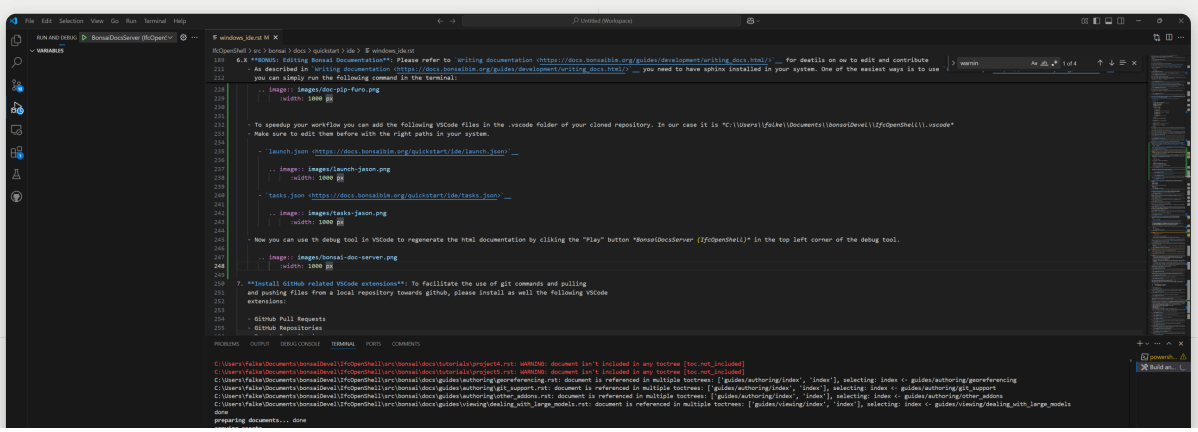
- tasks.json

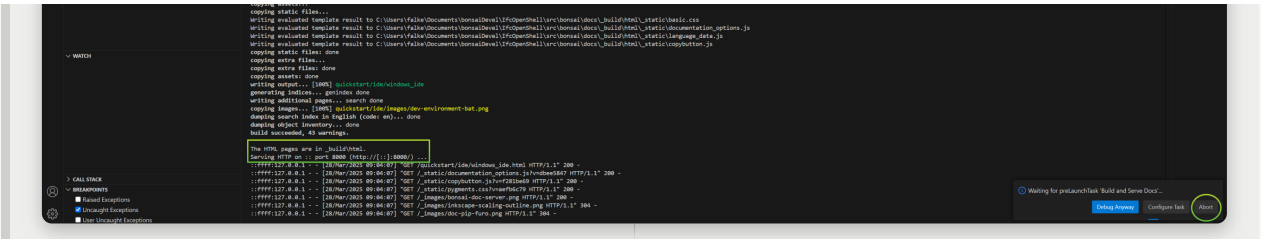


- Now you can use the debug tool in VSCode to regenerate the html documentation by cliking the “Play” button *BonsaiDocsServer (IfcOpenShell)* in the top left corner of the debug tool.



- Once the server is started you can open a browser and go to the following URL: http://localhost:8000/ and you will see the documentation.
- In order to rebuild the documentation you need to stop the server and run the command again. You can do this by clicking in the “Abort” button in the bottom right corner of the debug tool.



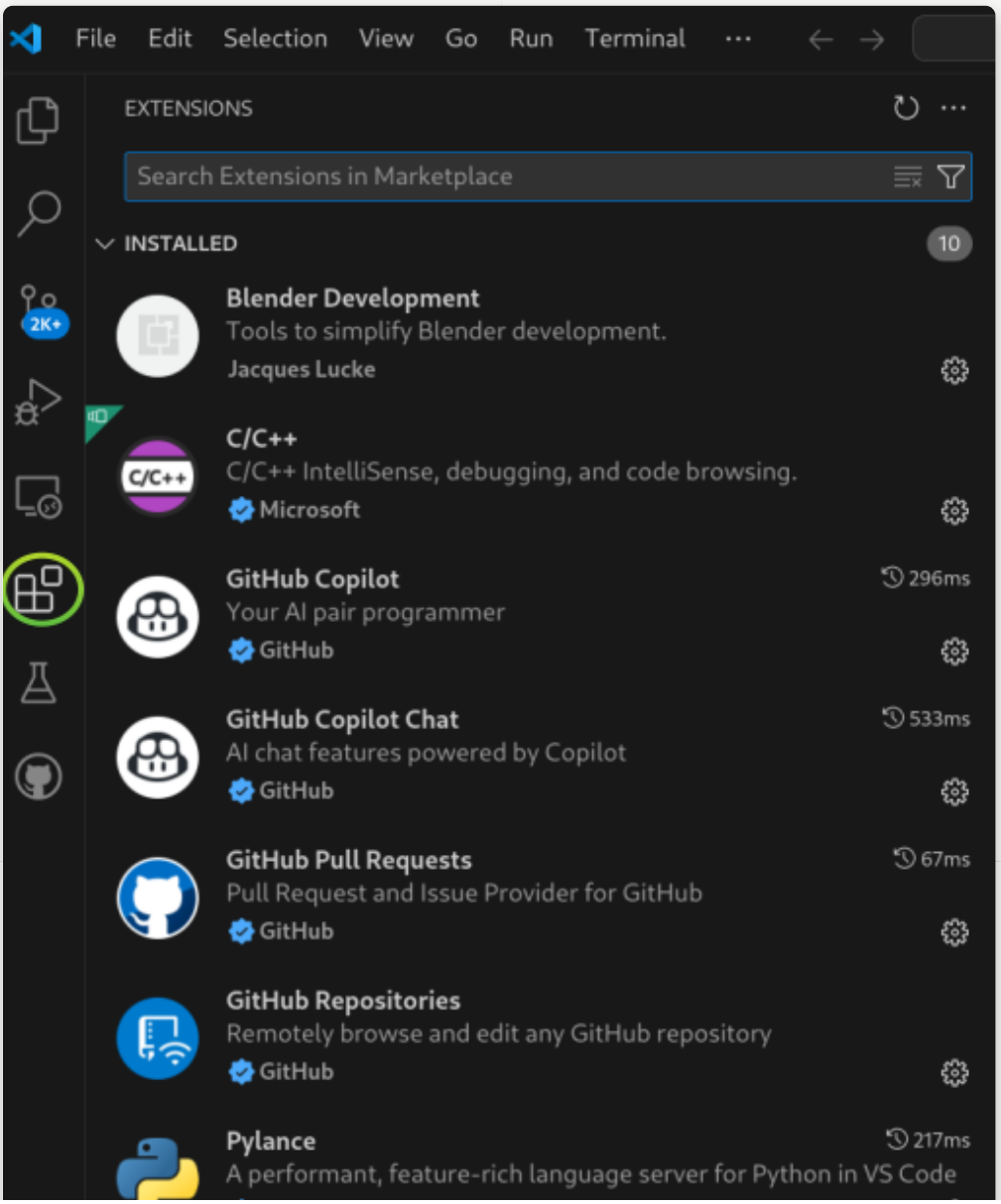


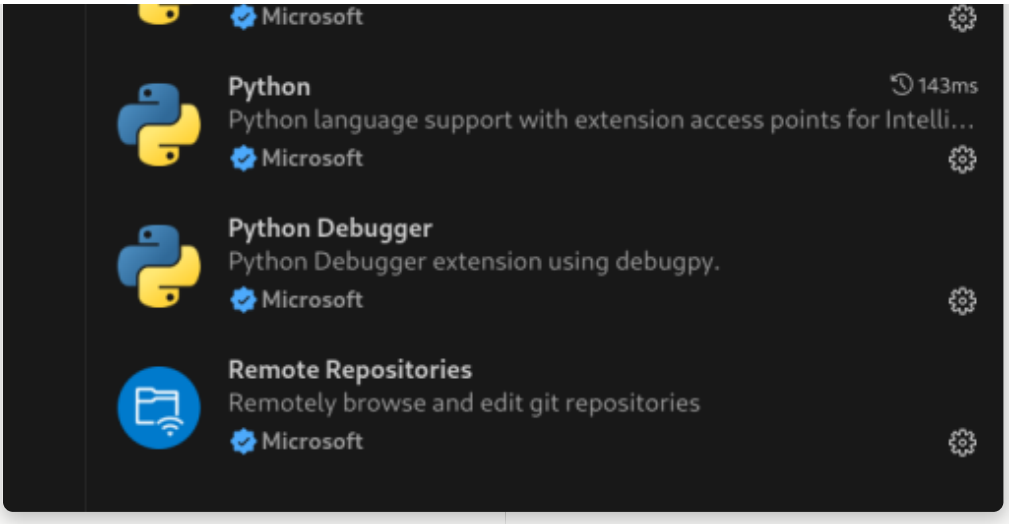
CONGRATULATIONS! And happy documenting!

Now let's find out how to interact with GitHub in order to make changes to the Bonsai project.

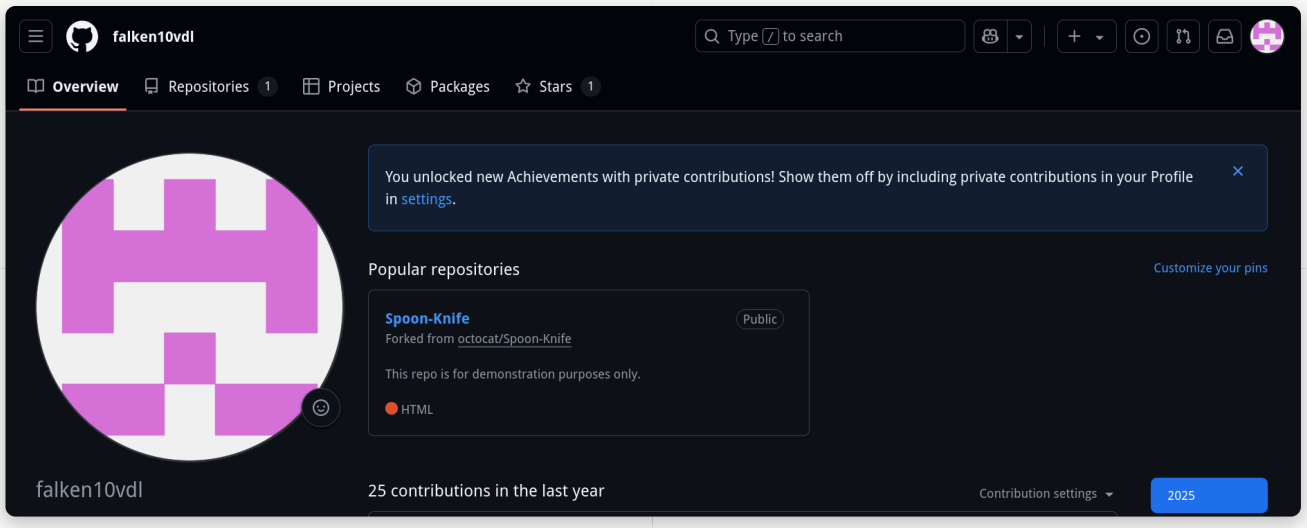
7. **Install GitHub related VSCode extensions**: To facilitate the use of git commands and pulling and pushing files from a local repository towards github, please install as well the following VSCode extensions:
   - GitHub Pull Requests
   - GitHub Repositories
   - Remote Repositories

   Optionaly you can also install Copilot extensions
   - GitHub Copilot
   - GitHub Copilot Chat

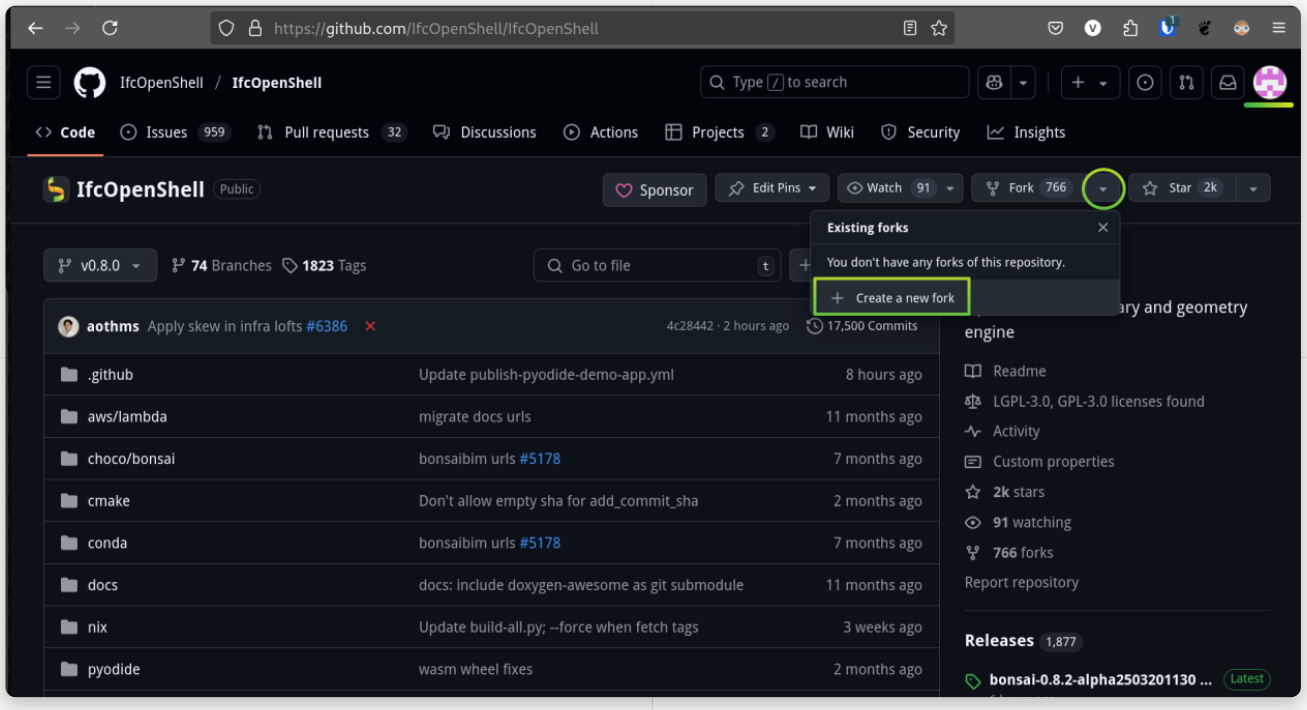




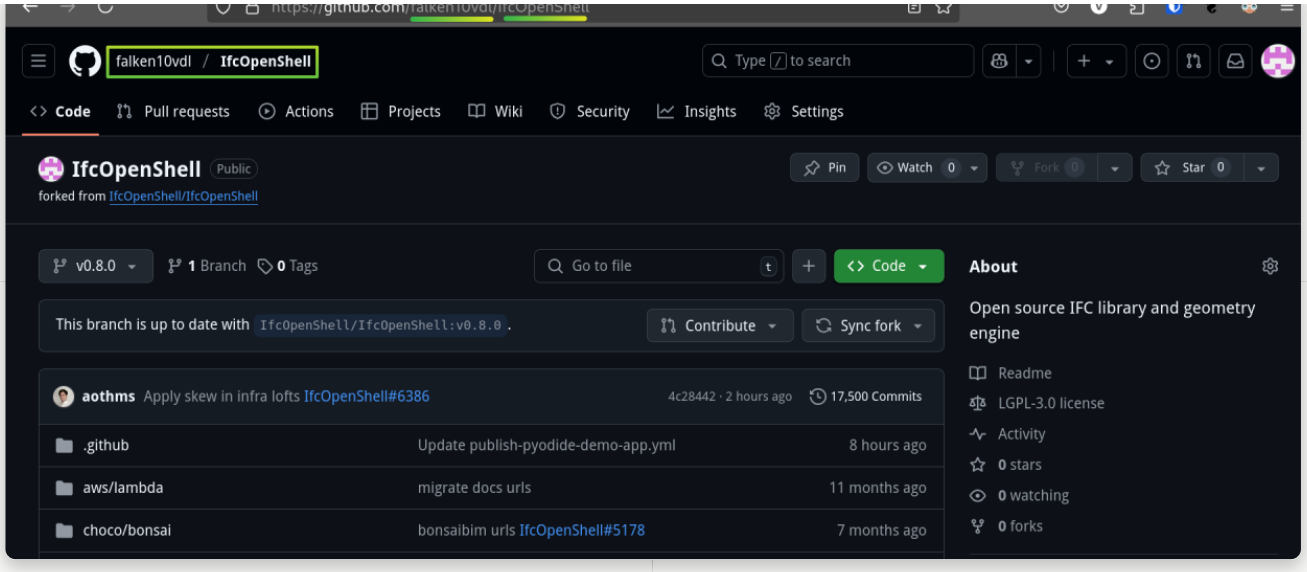
8. **Fork IfcOpenShell project from GitHub**: For this step you will need an account on GitHub. Once you have a registered account you can find it under https://github.com/YOURGITHUBUSERID In the example for *falken10vdl* the link is https://github.com/falken10vdl



Go to the IfcOpenShell GitHub page. And click on the Fork button. Please make sure that you are logged with your GitHub account as shown in the top right corner of the page.

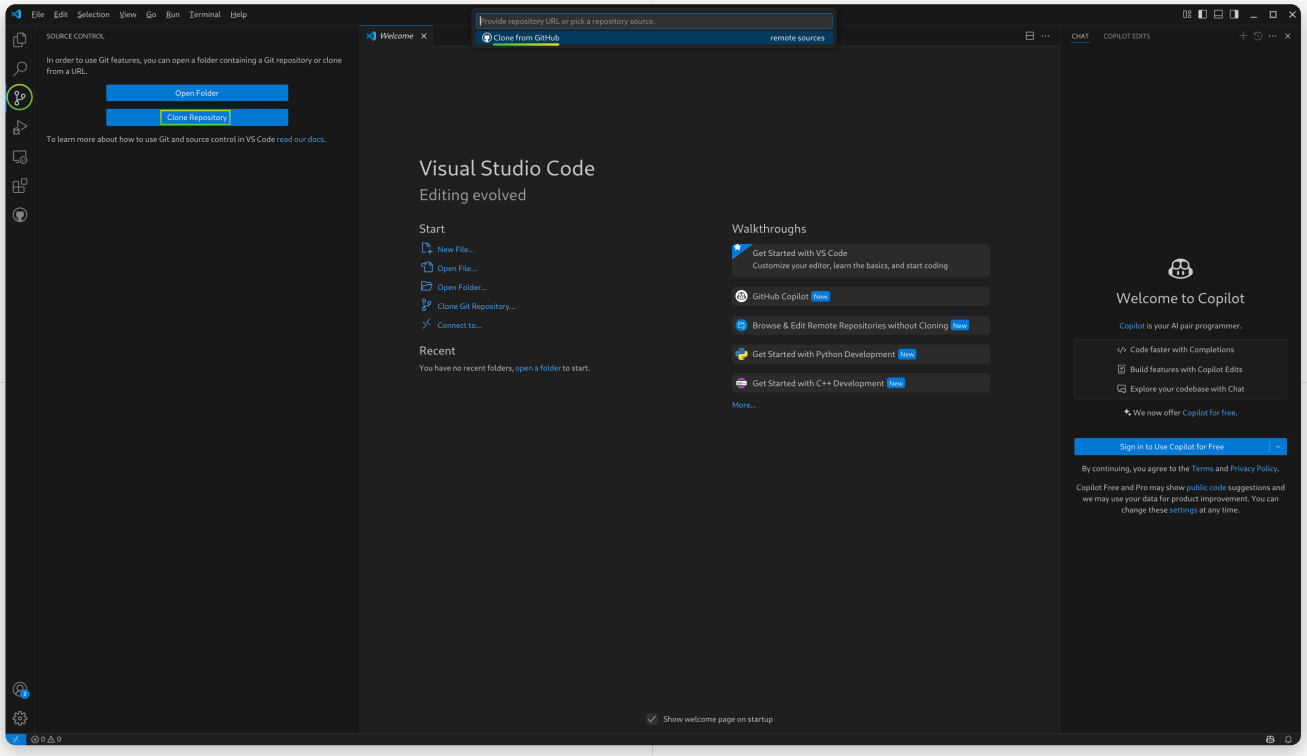


Once the fork is generated you will be redirected to your own fork of the IfcOpenShell project.

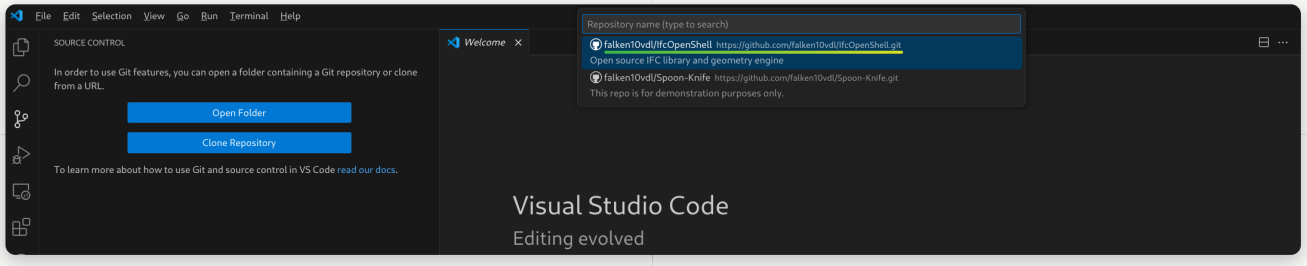


Now we will clone the forked repository to our local machine.

9. **Clone bonsai to our development environment**: Launch VSCode Select the Source Control tool. Then Clone repository and then select “Clone from GitHub”.

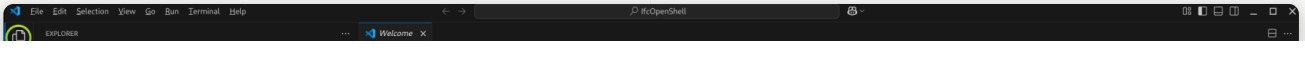


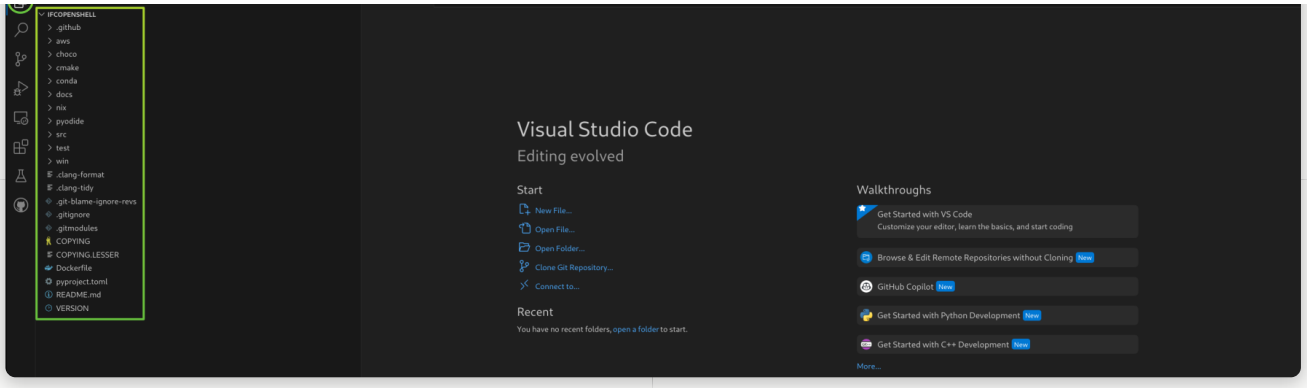
A series of steps will be required to authenticate with GitHub. You will need to provide your GitHub credentials. Once VSCode has authenticated yourself in GitHub, you will be able to select the repository you want to clone. In this case we will clone the IfcOpenShell repository.



VSCode will ask you to select a folder where the repository will be cloned. and it will start the cloning process.

Once finished, you will see the repository in the Explorer tool.





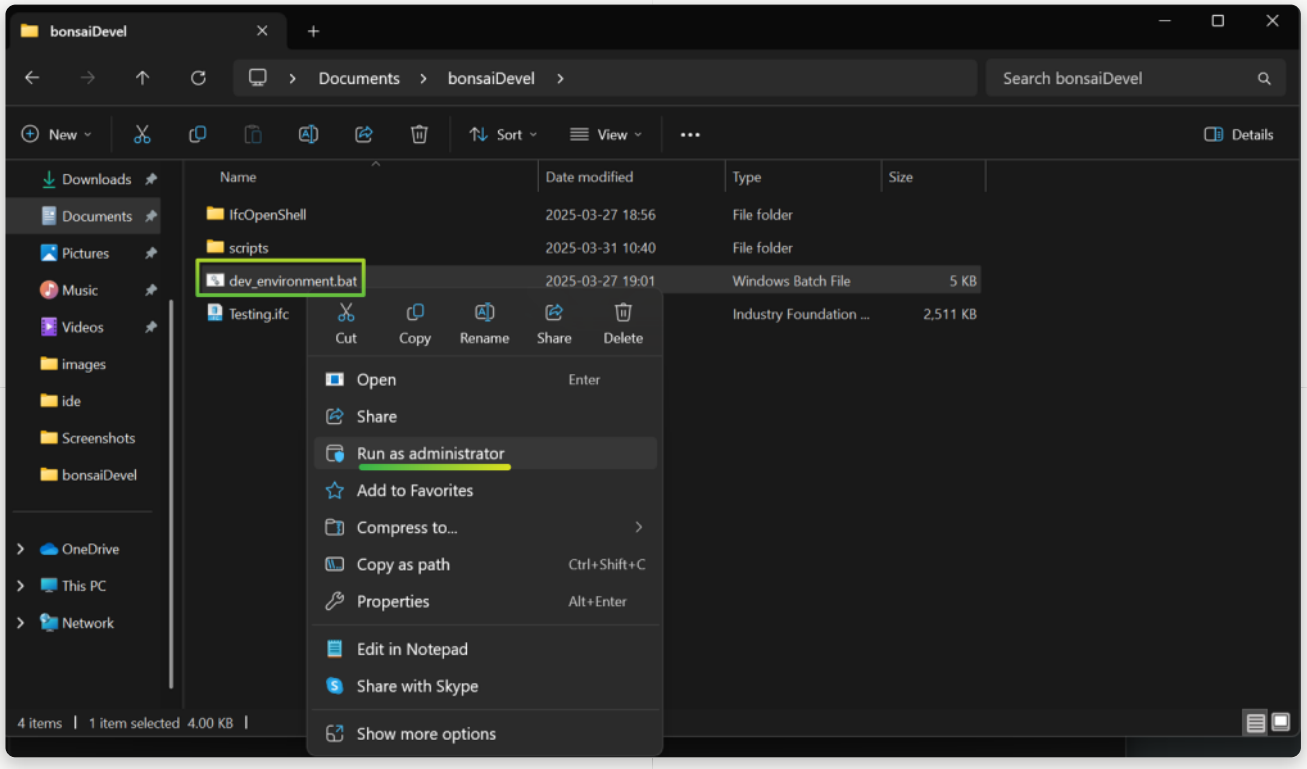
10. **Link the Bonsai addon to the local cloned repository**: We will now edit the following script that establishes links from the unstable-installation to the cloned repository so we can easily see the changes done in the cloned repository taken effect when we load blender locally.

    Download dev_environment.bat

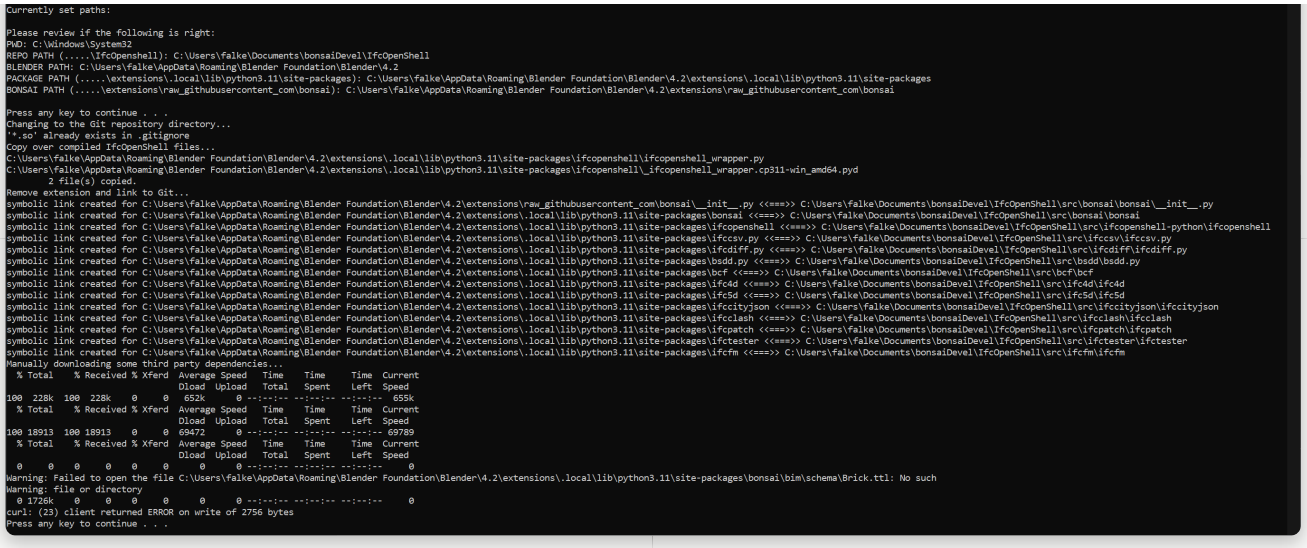
    Edit the file to match the paths in your system. In our case we will edit the following lines:

    - SET REPO_PATH=%HOMEDRIVE%\Users\%USERNAME%\Documents\bonsaiDevel\IfcOpenShell
    - SET BLENDER_PATH=%HOMEDRIVE%\Users\%USERNAME%\AppData\Roaming\Blender Foundation\Blender\4.2
    - SET PACKAGE_PATH=%BLENDER_PATH%\extensions\.local\lib\python3.11\site-packages
    - SET BONSAI_PATH=%BLENDER_PATH%\extensions\raw_githubusercontent_com\bonsai

    You need to run it as an administrator.

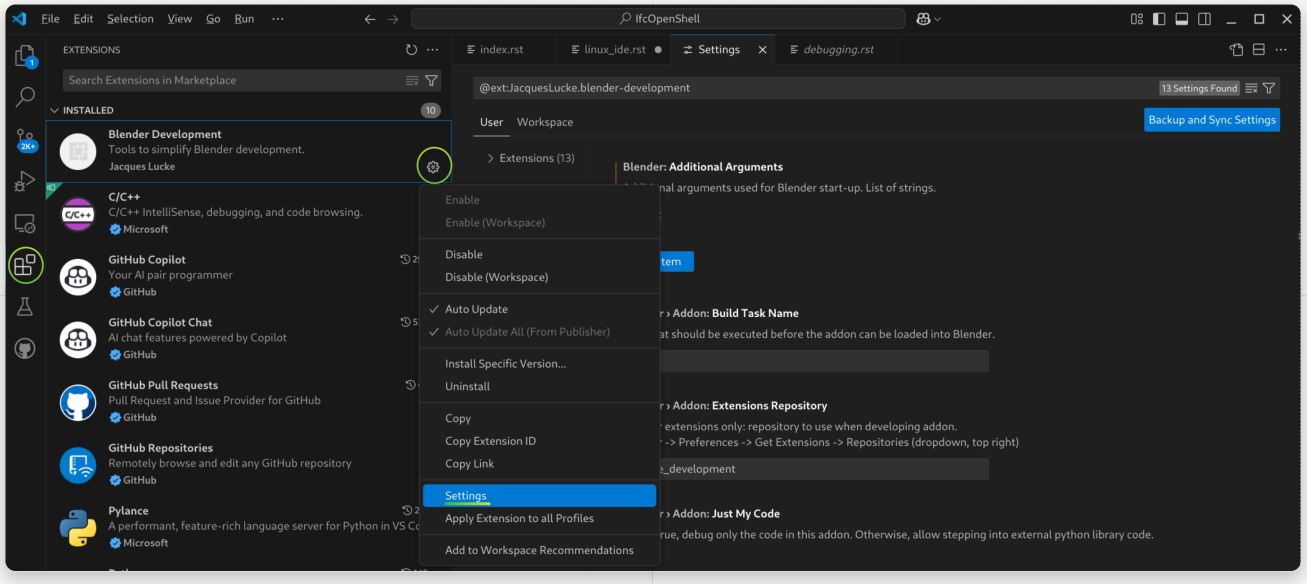


Confirm the data and the script will create the necessary links.



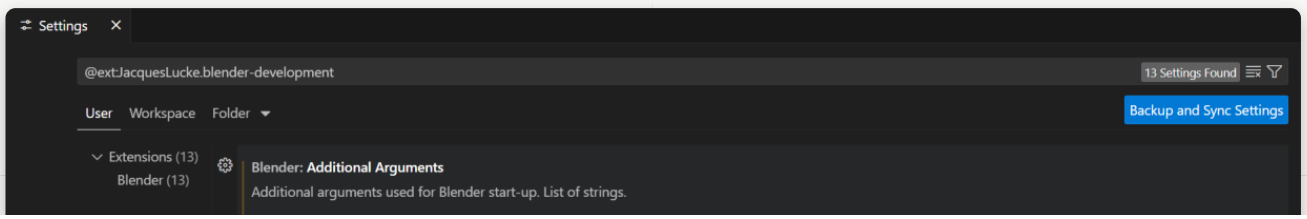
> **Warning**
>
> If you receive errors like this:
>
> ```
> The system cannot find the path specified.
> ```
>
> It means that you have not installed the Bonsai Blender extension. Please refer to tha last part of point 2. above and follow the Unstable installation.

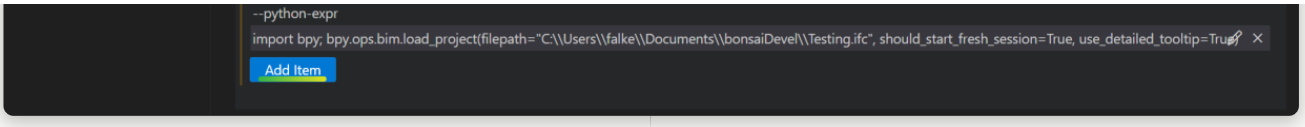
11. **Adjust the VSCode Blender extension**: We will now make some adjustments to the VSCode Blender extension to ease the reload of the addon. Select the Extensions tool. Then Blender Development and then select Settings.



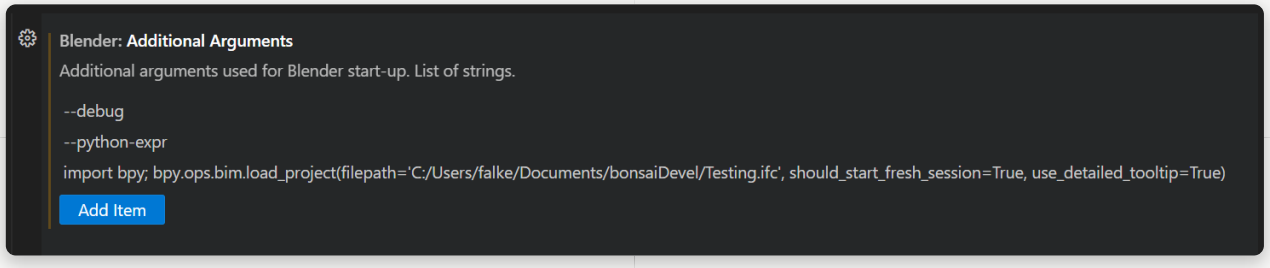
Click twice in “Add Item” within the *Blender: Additonal Arguments* section and add the following two items (adapt *Testing.ifc* to the name of the IFC file you want to test during Bonsai development):

- –python-expr
- import bpy; bpy.ops.bim.load_project(filepath=”C:\\Users\\falke\\Documents\\bonsaiDevel\\Testing.ifc”, should_start_fresh_session=True, use_detailed_tooltip=True)

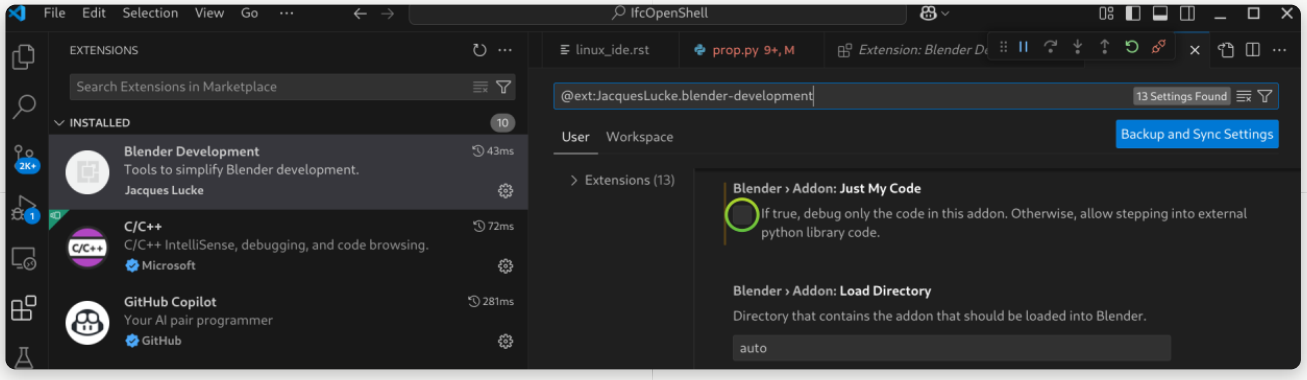




> **Note**
>
> You can use double backslash (\\) and double quotes (") in the path for correct interpretation by VSCode or you can use single forward slash (/) and single quotes (') as well. In this case the path will be: 'C:/Users/falke/Documents/bonsaiDevel/Testing.ifc'

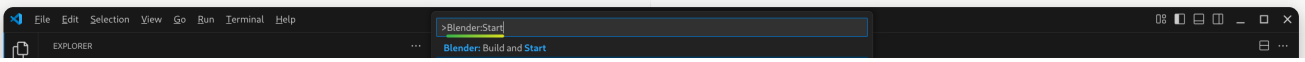


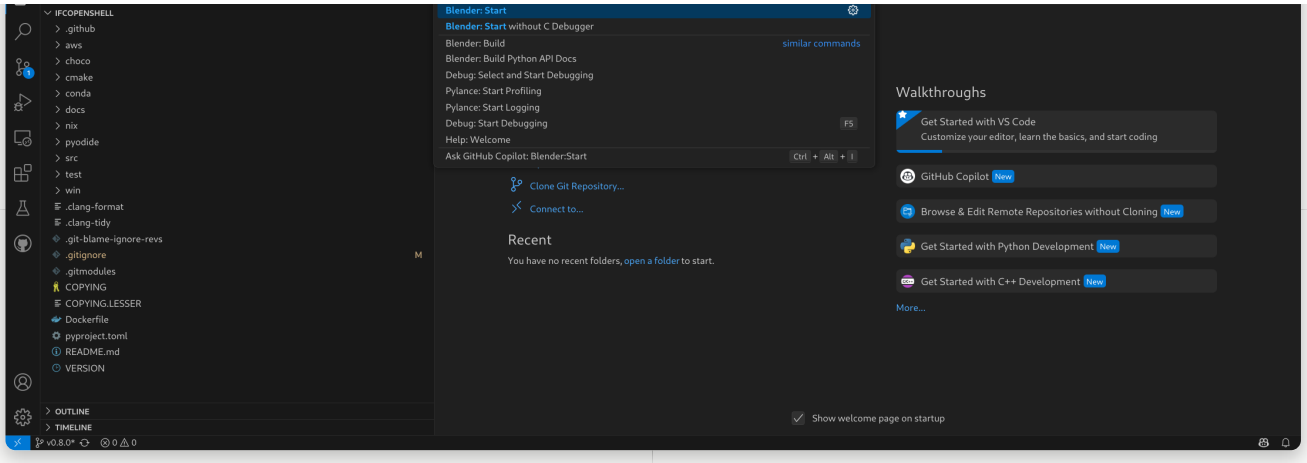
Make sure that Blender > Addon: Just My code is not selected (This allows to set the breakpoints anywhere in the source code).



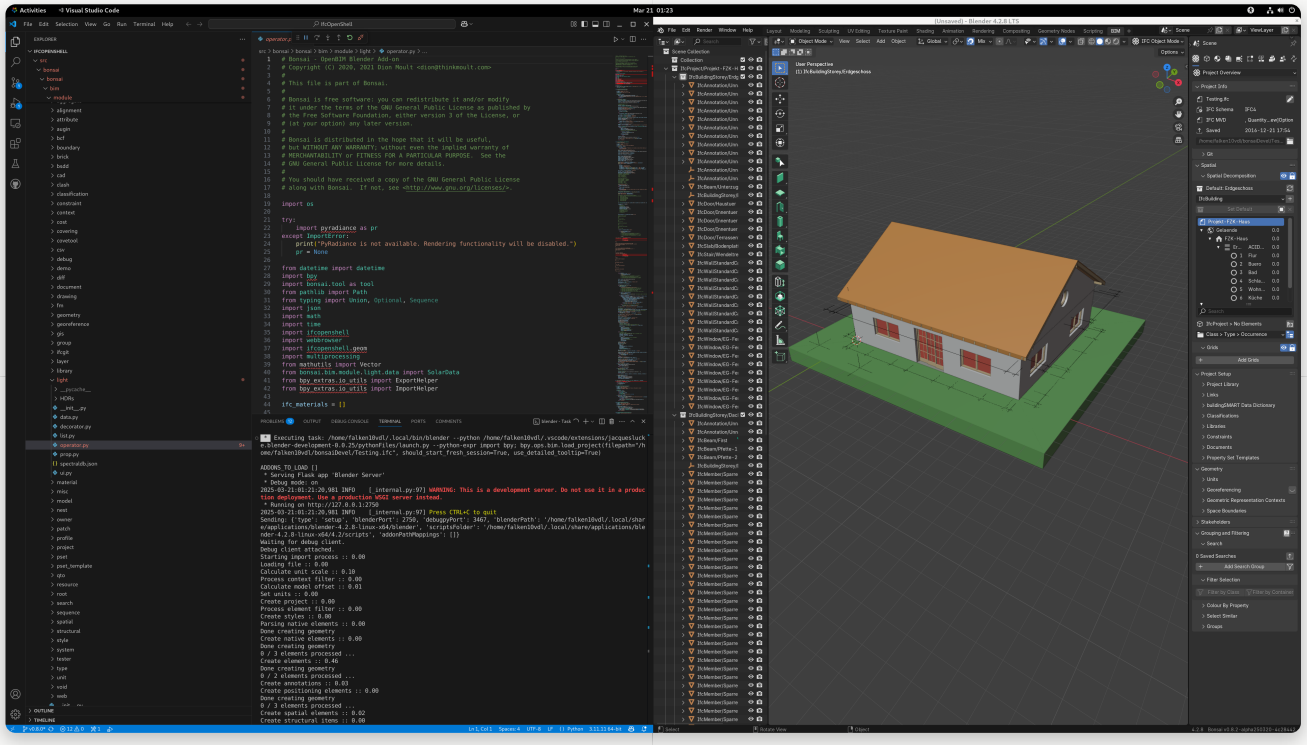
> **Warning**
>
> This way to use the VSCode Blender extension is not the standard one. Refer to the VSCode Blender extension documentation for the standard way to use it. The reason behind is that this allows us to start VSCode in the top of the cloned repository so all the Git related funtionality in VSCode works properly and we have a complete view from VSCode Explorer tool of the whole repository.
>
> Bonsai is a big project with a lot of dependencies so reloading it is not an easy task (see discussion in https://community.osarch.org/discussion/1650/vscode-and-jacquesluckes-blender-vscode/p1). We have taken the pragmatic approach to start blender with a specific file (*Testing.ifc*) and then we can reload the addon from the Blender UI which also uploads automatically the changes in the addon and the testing file
>
> To summarize:
>
> - We need *Blender > Addon: Just My code* to get the breakpoint functionality even if the addon is not "registered/loaded" to the extension (due to the root folder we use)
> - We need *Blender: Additonal Arguments* to automatically load the Testing.ifc file when we start Blender from VSCode (We do not use *Blender:Reload Addons* since it does not work in our case)
>
> Instead of restarting Blender from VSCode, we use the Blender UI that, as explainedin the next step, it provides a simple way to get the addon and the Testing file reloaded.

12. **Launch blender from VSCode**: We are now ready to launch Blender from VSCode. Open VSCode. Open the cloned repository if not already open. Press CTRL-SHIFT-P and type "Blender: Start".

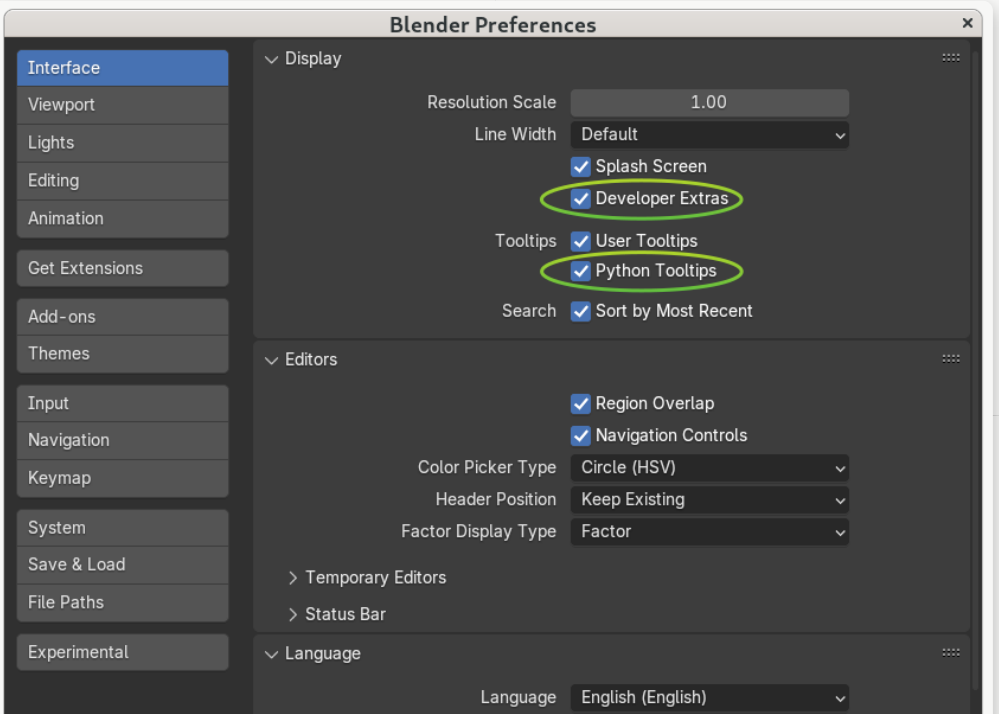


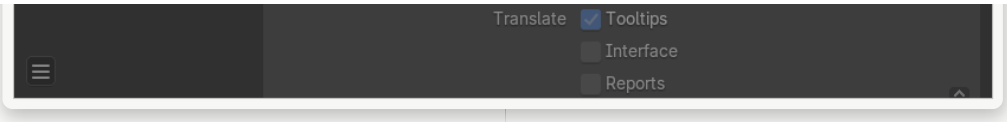


Blender will start loading the Testing.ifc file. You can now start exploring the code and make changes to the addon!

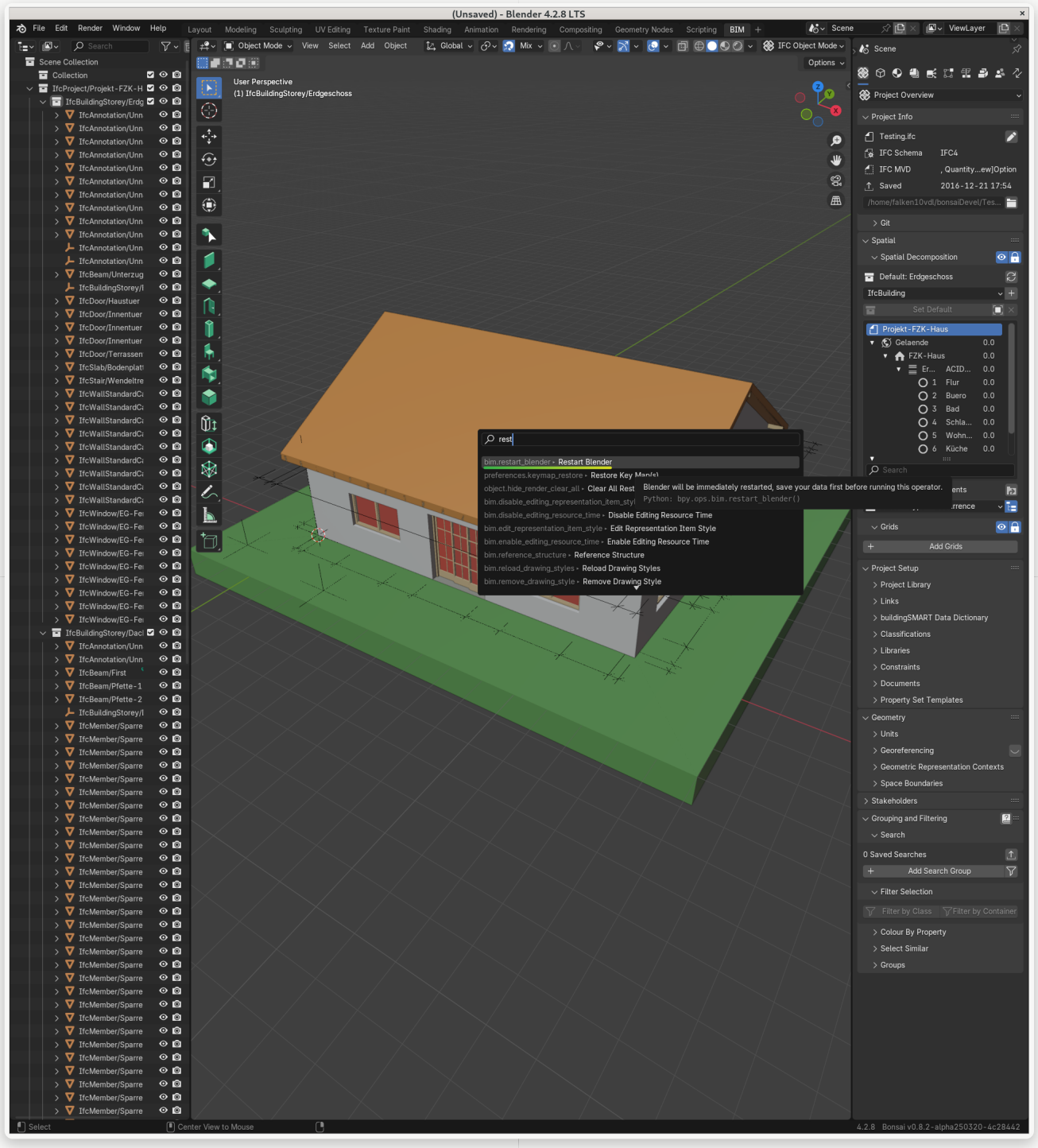


In order to be able to restart blender (and reload the addons + reload the Testing file) we need to enable “Developer Extras” and also a good practice is to enable “Python Tooltips” in Edit ▸ Preferences ▸ Interface.

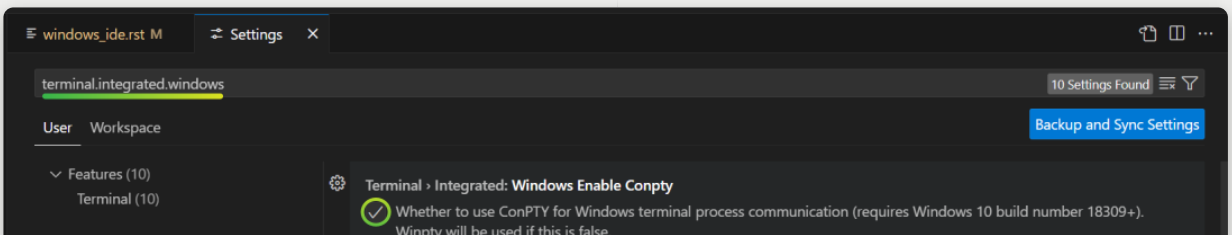


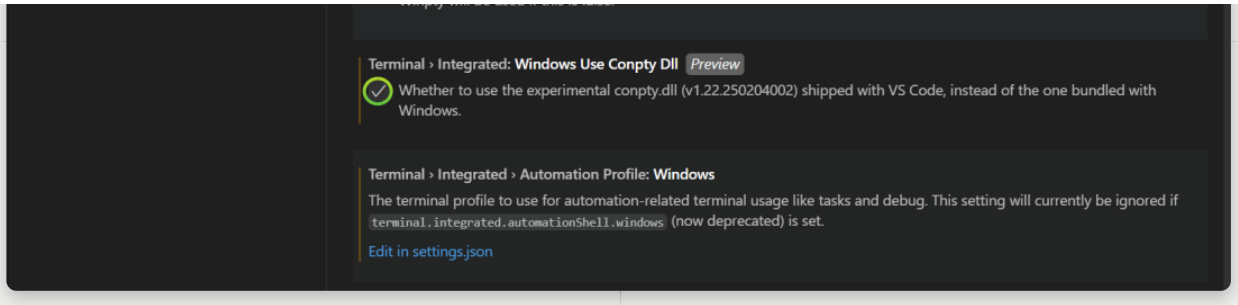


Once these are enabled, you can press F3 and write “restart” to restart Blender.



> **Note**
>
> The Windows conpty Dll will force the terminal to be detached once Blender is restarted and you will lose the console output. In order to avoid that, you can enable the following settings in VSCode:
>
> Go to File ▸ Preferences ▸ Settings and search for “terminal.integrated.windows”. Enable both *terminal.integrated.windowsEnableConpty* and *terminal.integrated.windowsUseConptyDll*.



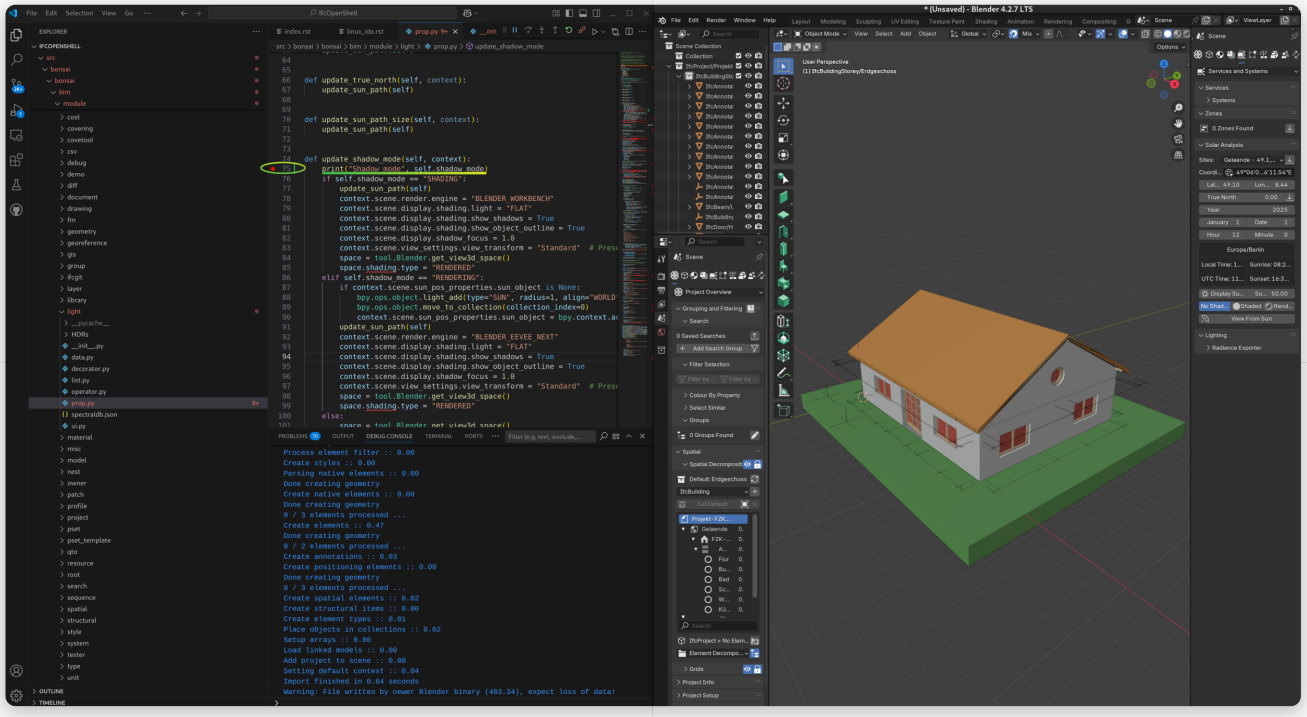


- *terminal.integrated.windowsEnableConpty* makes it possible to restart blender from Bonsai restart_blender command.
- *terminal.integrated.windowsUseConptyDll* makes it possible to maintain the console attached so the output of the reloaded blender instance is still visible in the terminal.

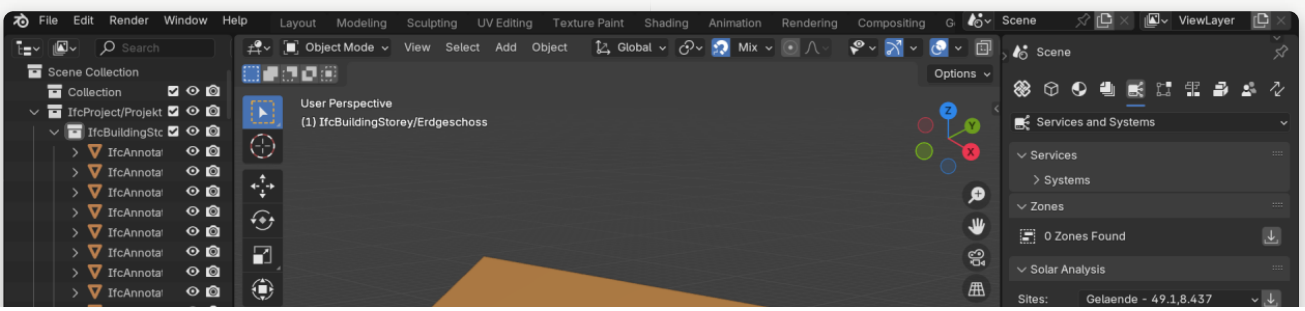
13. **Add a break-point**: Let's add a break-point in the code to see how it works. Press CTRL-SHIFT-P and type "Blender: Start". Blender will start. Open the cloned folder and go to *src > bonsai > bonsai > bim > module > [illegible]h > prop.py* and go to line 75. Add a line for a print stat[illegible]ente and click on the left side of the line number to add a break-point.

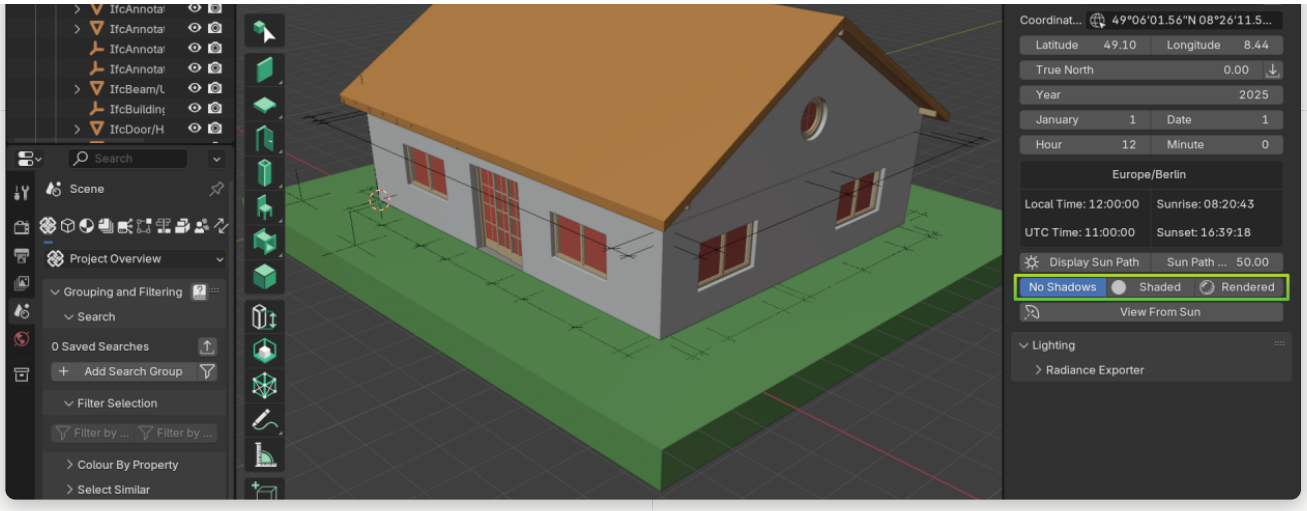
```
74    def update_shadow_mode(self, context):
75        print("Shadow mode", self.shadow_mode)
76        if self.shadow_mode == "SHADING":
```

Set a break-point in line 75.

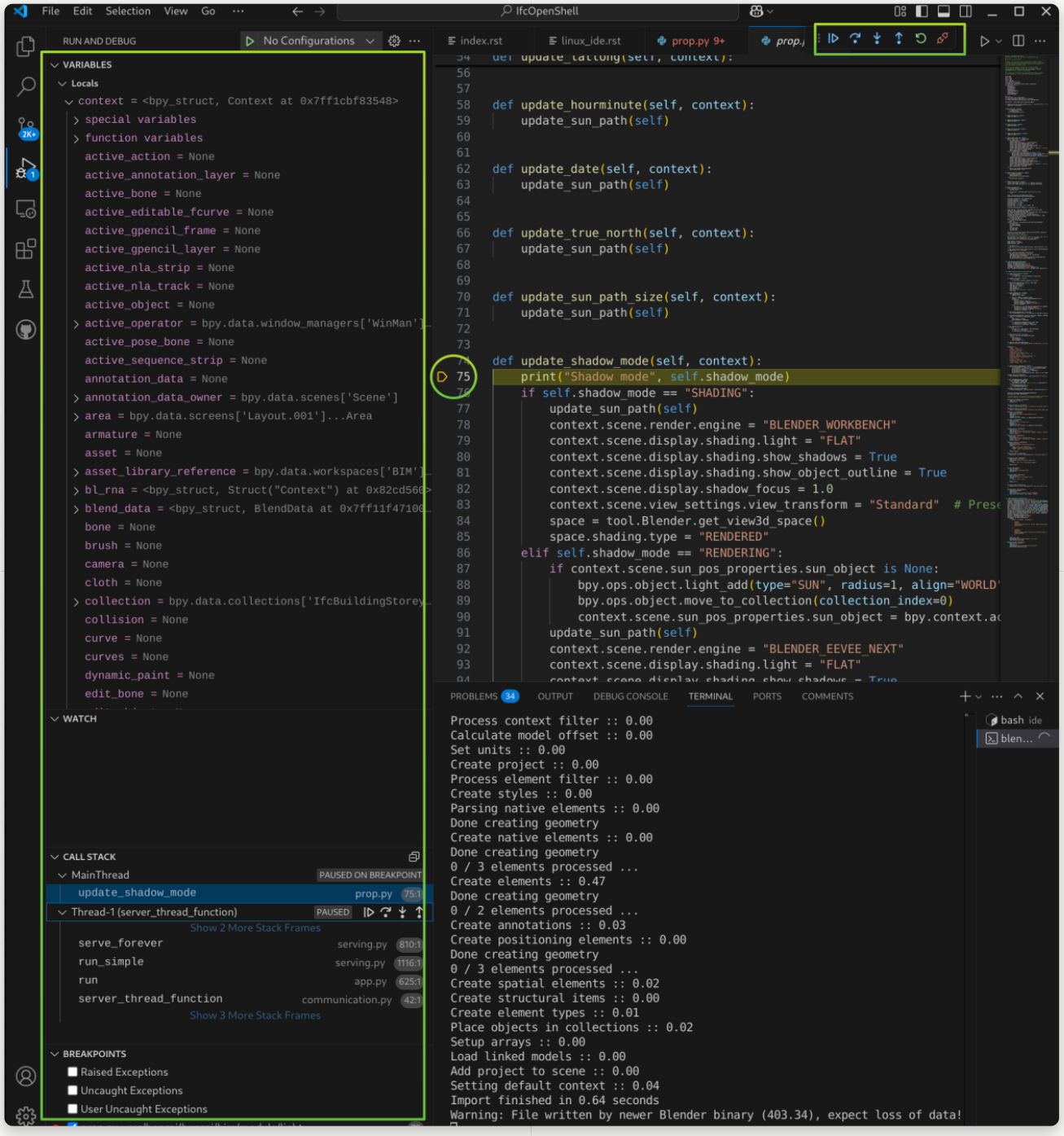


In Blender. Go To SOLAR ANALYSIS Tool in Bonsai and Click in "No Shadow", "Shaded" or "Rendered"

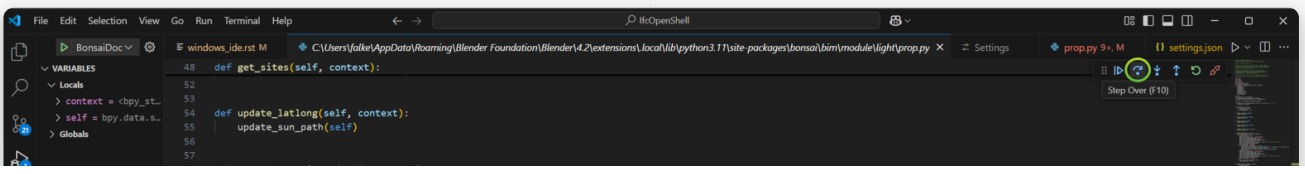


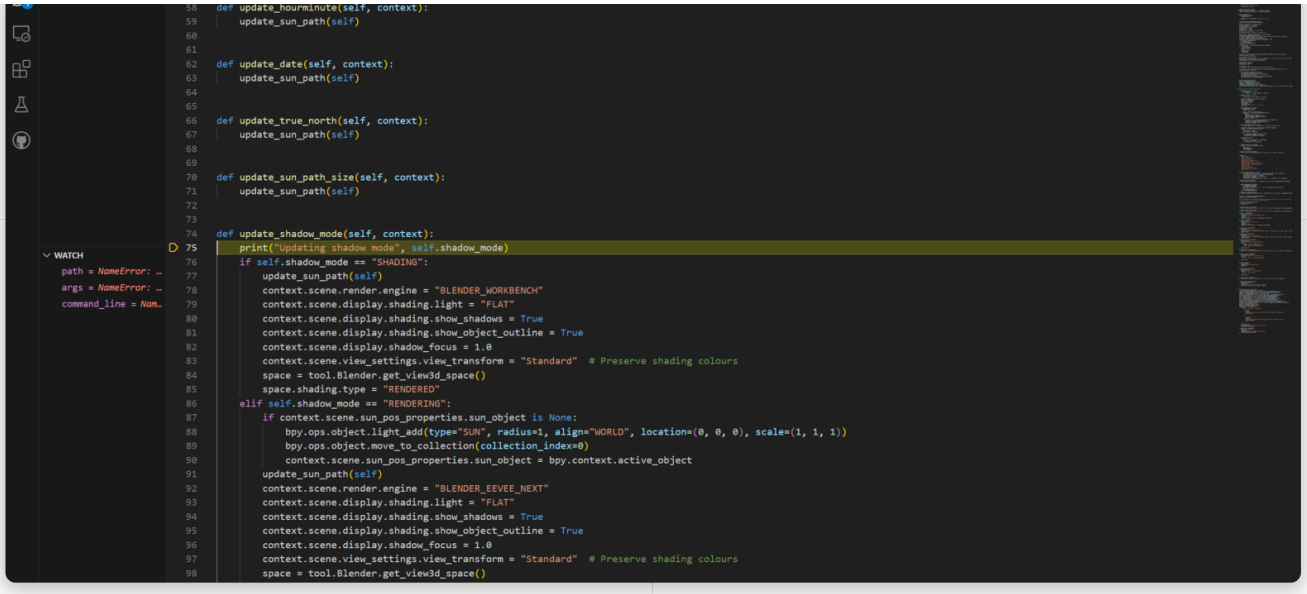


This will trigger the break-point. See how the execution is stopped at the break-point.

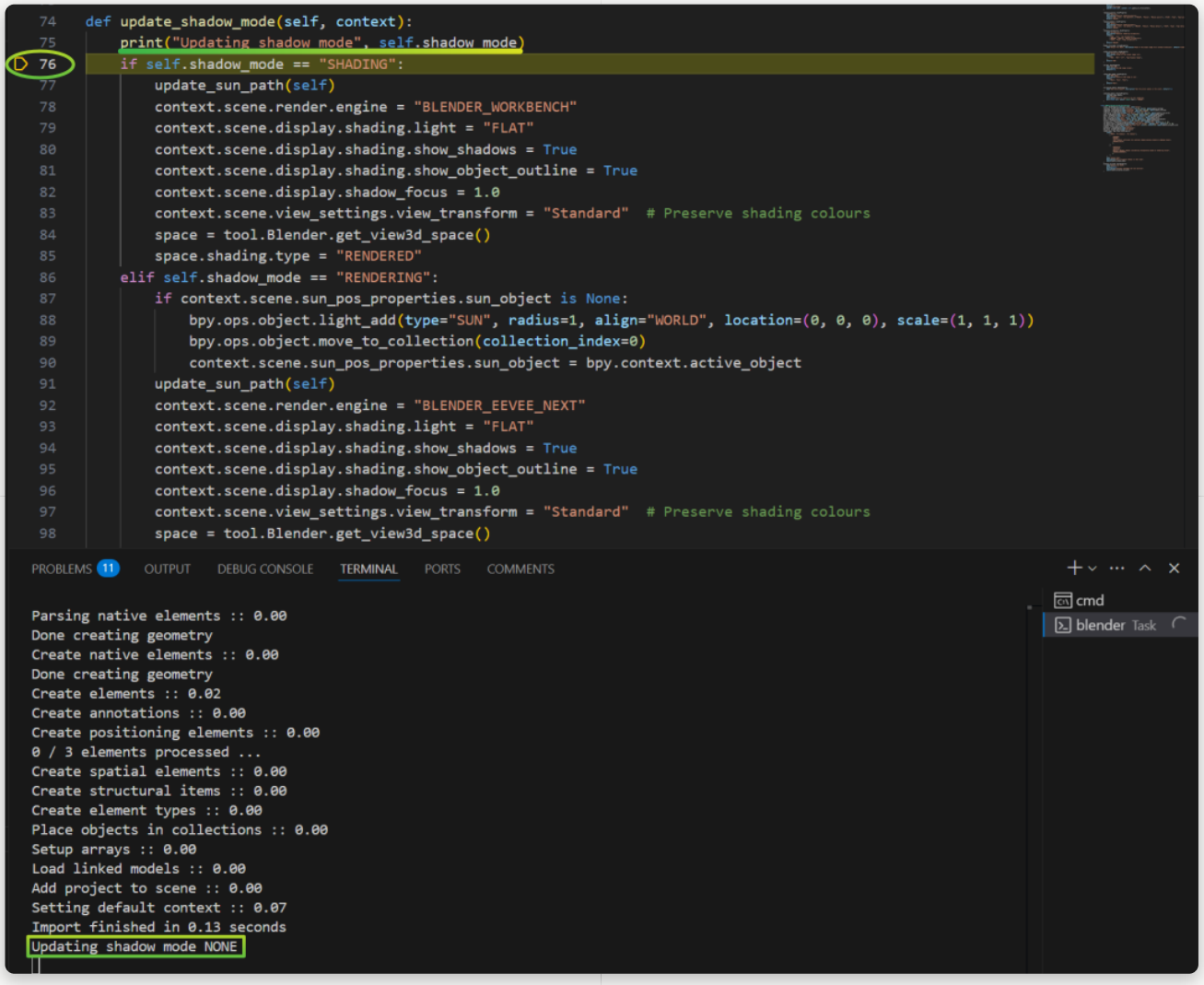


Click in the debugging tools the option for “step over” (F10).





You can see the print statement executed and the output in the VSCode internal terminal.



From here you can watch the local variables, global variables, add watches, check the stack, etc. Resume execution or move step by step to see how the code is executed.

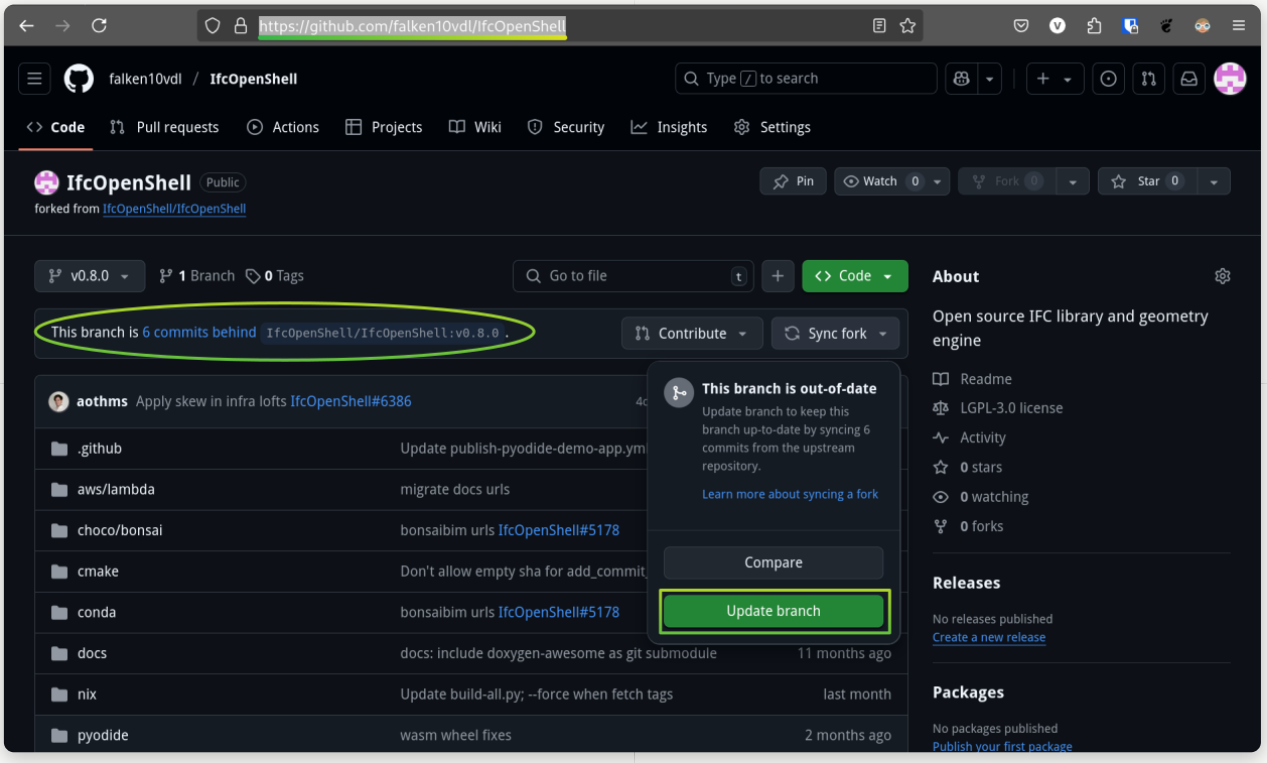
CONGRATULATIONS! You have now a development environment ready to explore the Bonsai code and contribute to the project.

14. **Make changes and do a Pull Request to the project**: In the previous steps we got a complete IDE to explore and make changes to the Bonsai sourcecode. In this step we will provide a simple workflow of using Git commands within VSCode to make changes and do a Pull Request to the project. Bonsai changes very fast so our cloned repository will be outdated very soon. We propose to do the following:

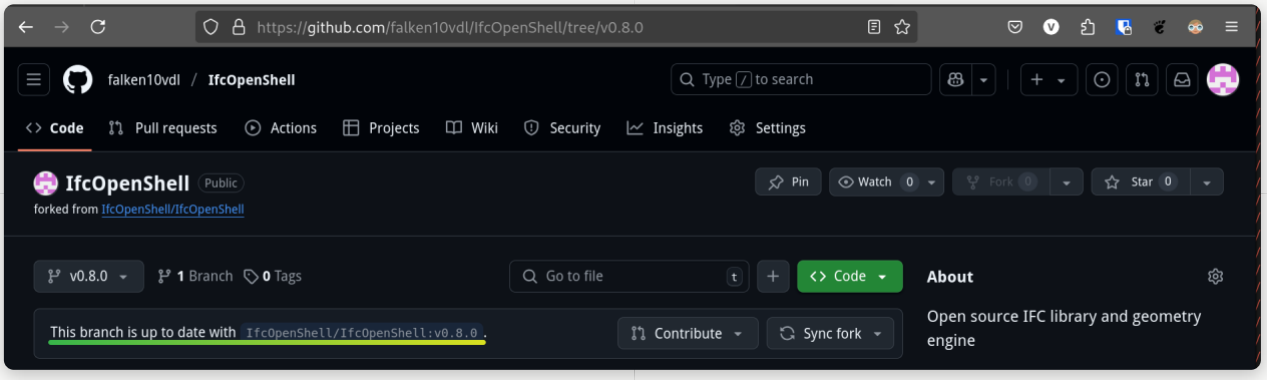
a. Check in our GitHub page if our project fork (https://github.com/falken10vdl/IfcOpenShell) is outdated compared to the IfcOpenShell main branch (https://github.com/IfcOpenShell/IfcOpenShell).
b. Sync our fork with the upstream branch (if needed).
c. Pull the changes in our porject fork to our local repository (/home/falken10vdl/bonsaiDevel).
d. Create a new branch in our local repository (example: *DOC_QS_IDE*)
e. Publish the branch to our project fork in GitHub.
f. Make changes in the code.
g. Commit the changes.
h. Push the changes to our project fork.
i. Create a Pull Request to the upstream main branch of the IfcOpenShell project.

Let's see below the steps with an example of changing the documentation of the Quickstart guide for the IDE in Windows.

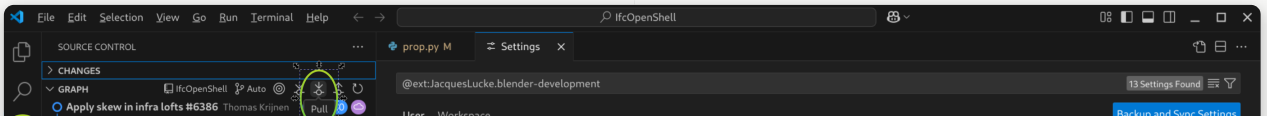
a. Check in our GitHub page if our project fork is outdated. Click *Update branch*

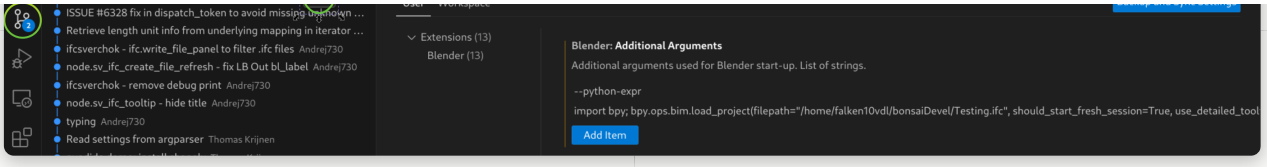


b. After clicking *Update branch* our fork is up to date with the upstream main branch.

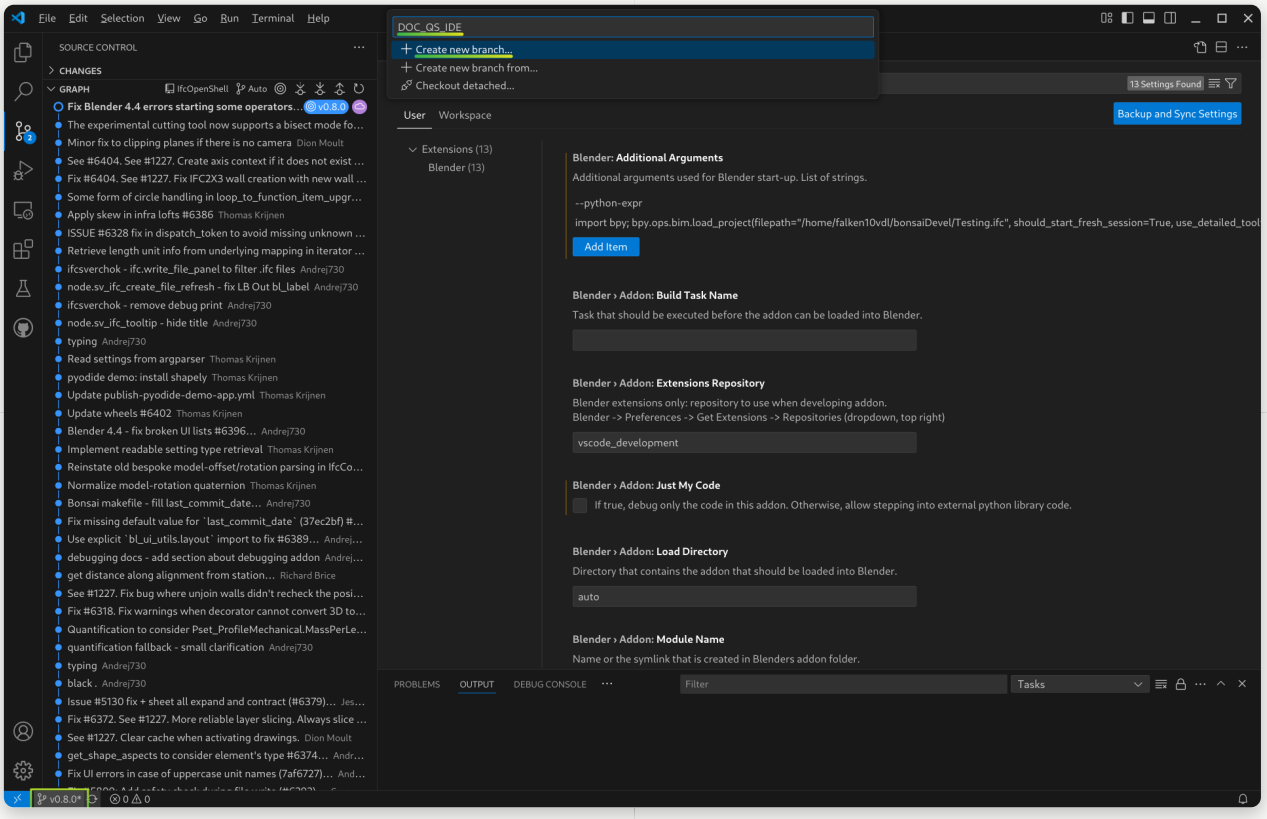


c. Pull the changes in our project fork to our local repository

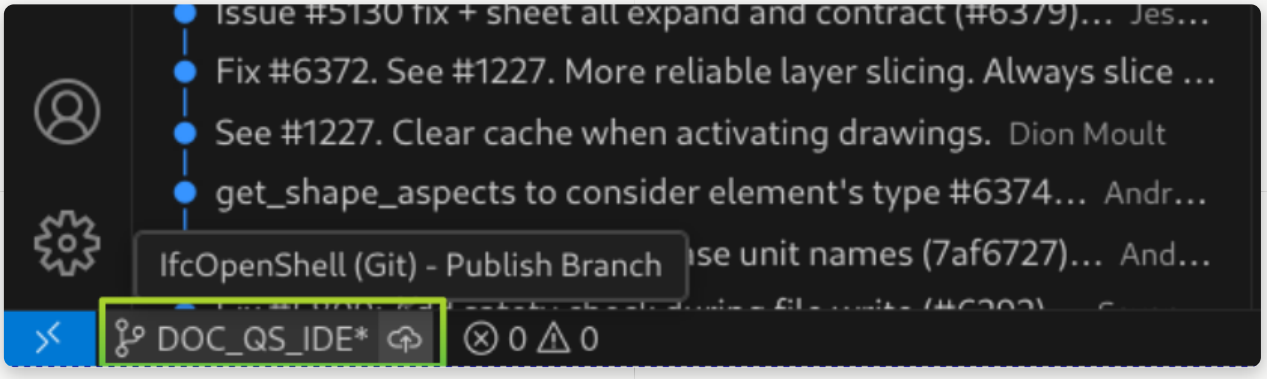




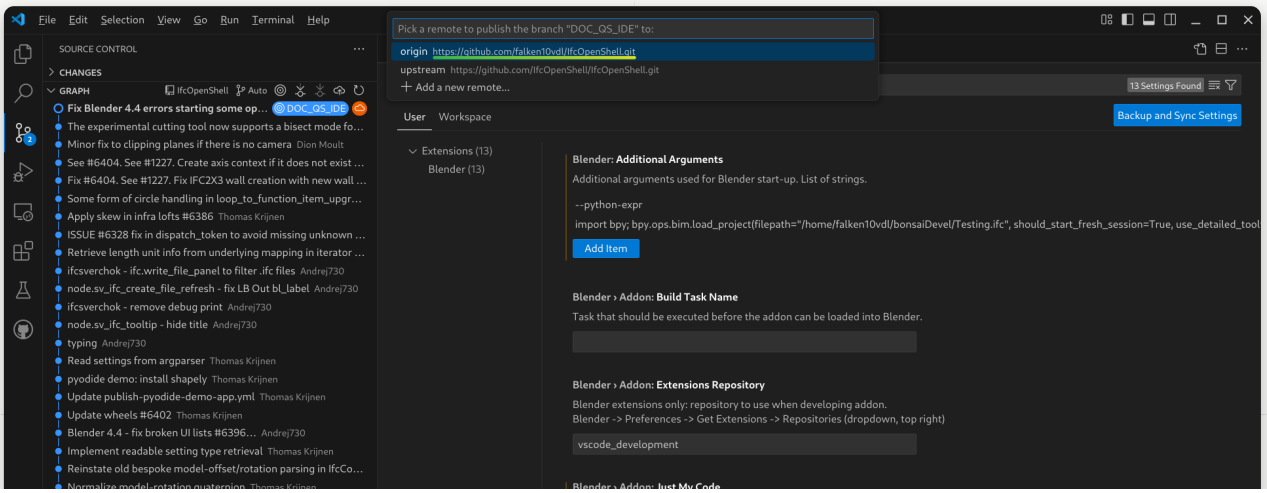
d. Create a new branch in our local repository by clicking in the current branch name in the bottom left corner of the VSCode window. Give a name to the branch and press Enter.

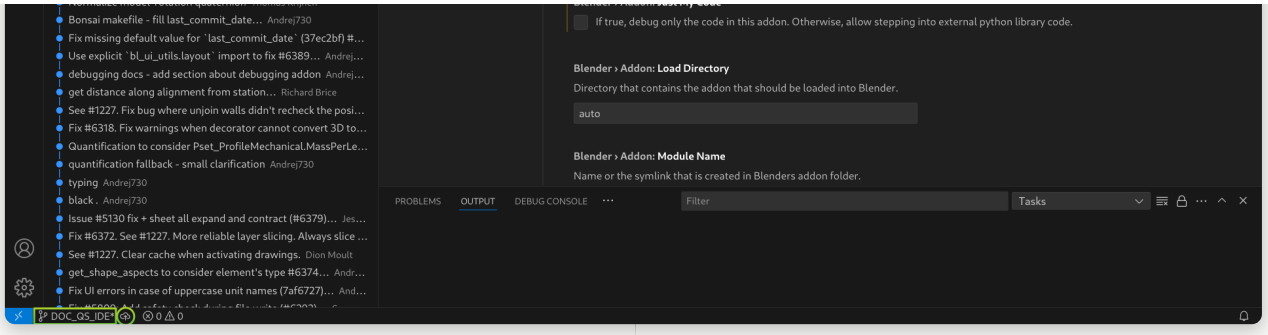


The new branch is created and we can see it in the bottom left corner of the VSCode window.

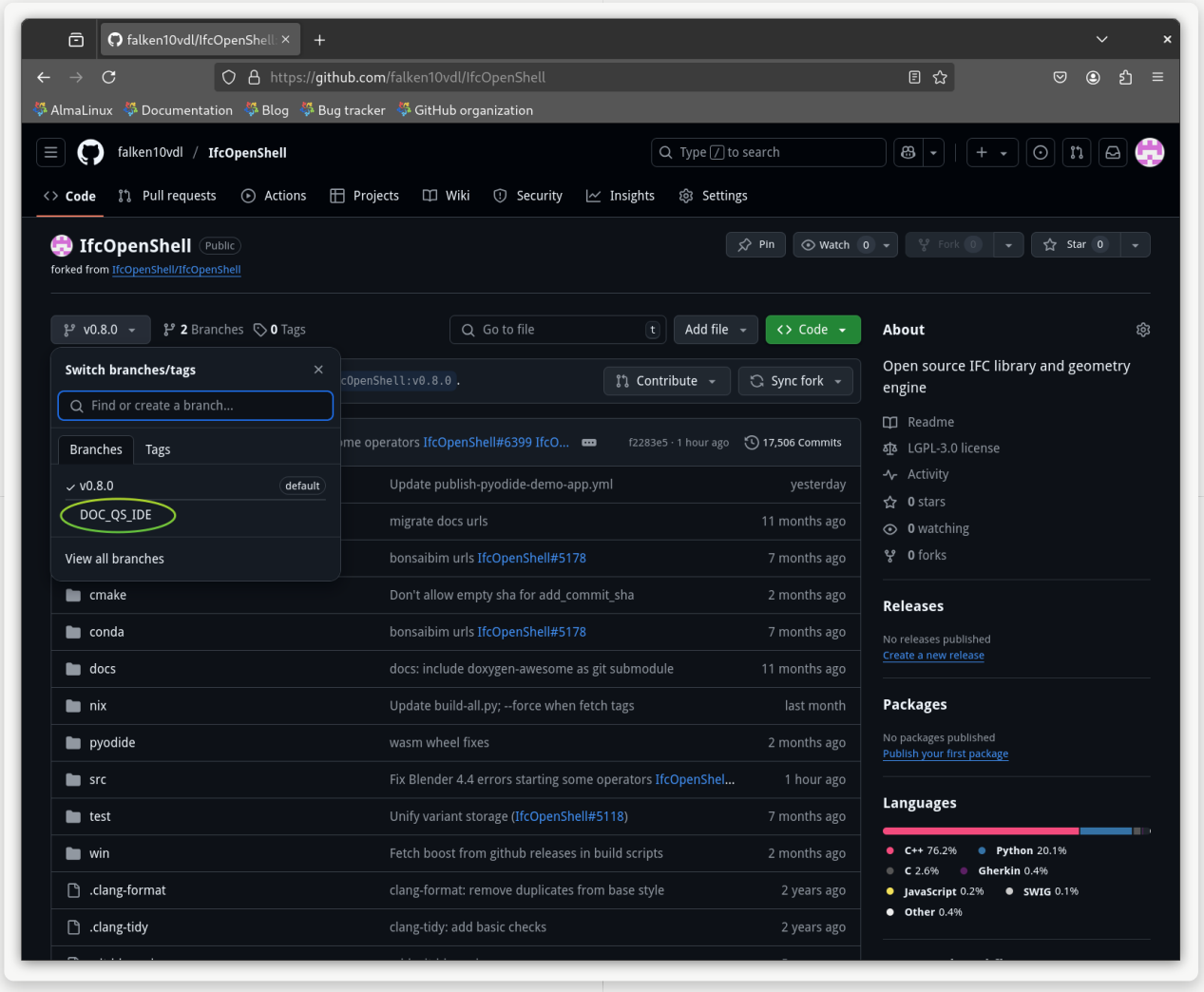


e. Publish the branch to our project fork in GitHub by clicking in the publish button (*little cloud with up arrow*) in the bottom left corner of the VSCode window. Select as origin the project fork.

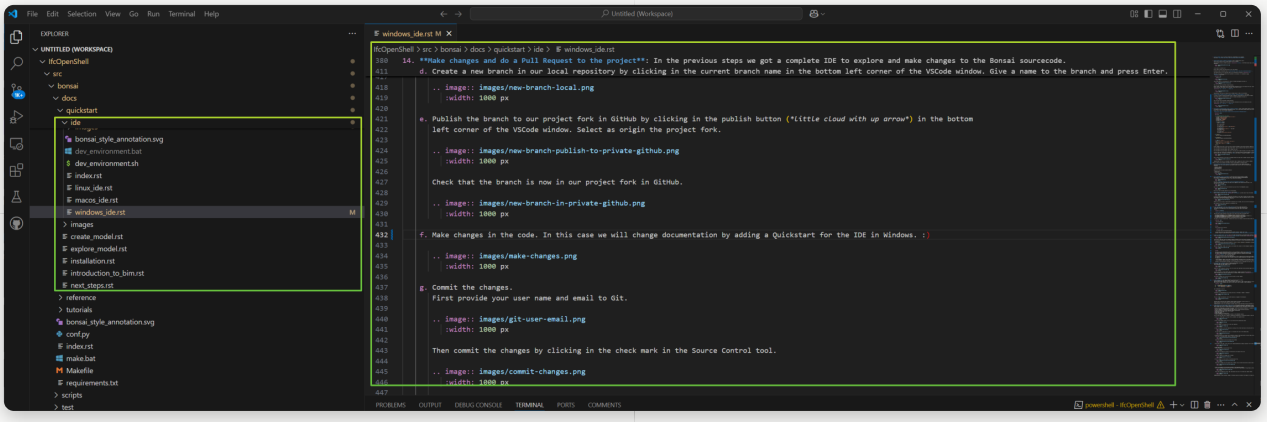




Check that the branch is now in our project fork in GitHub.

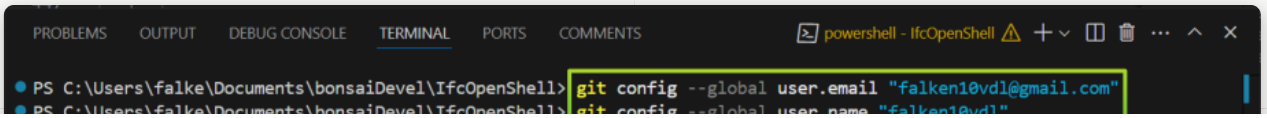


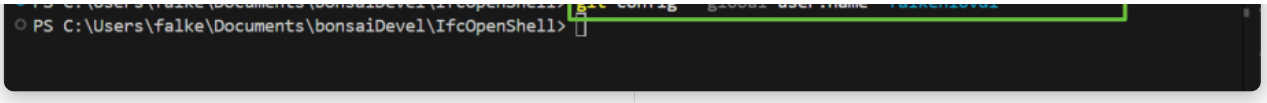
f. Make changes in the code. In this case we will change documentation by adding a Quickstart for the IDE in Windows. :)



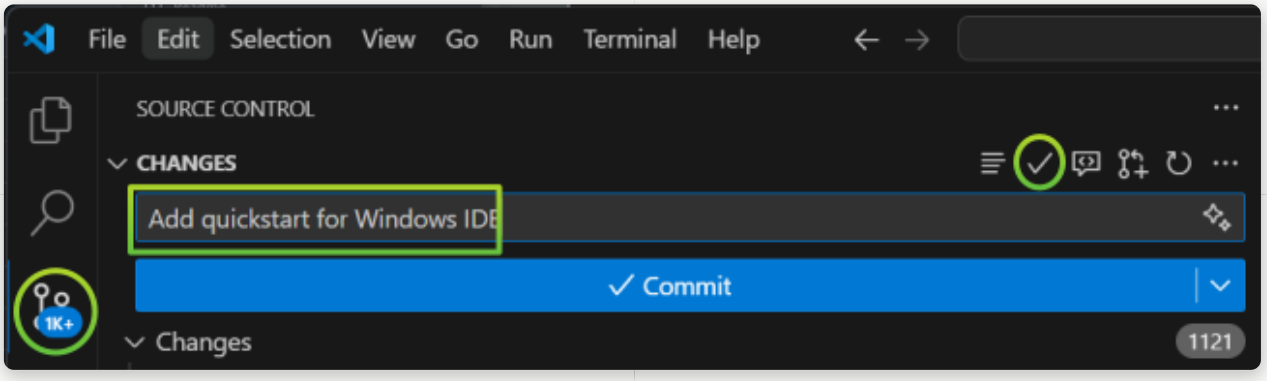
g. Commit the changes.

First provide your user name and email to Git (this is required only once).

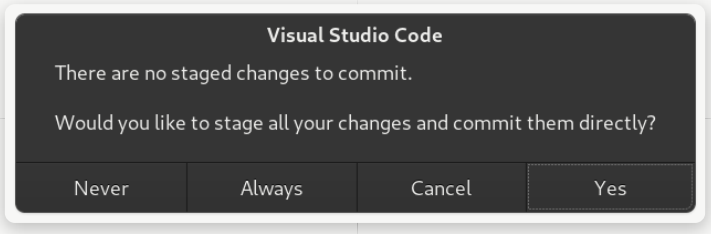




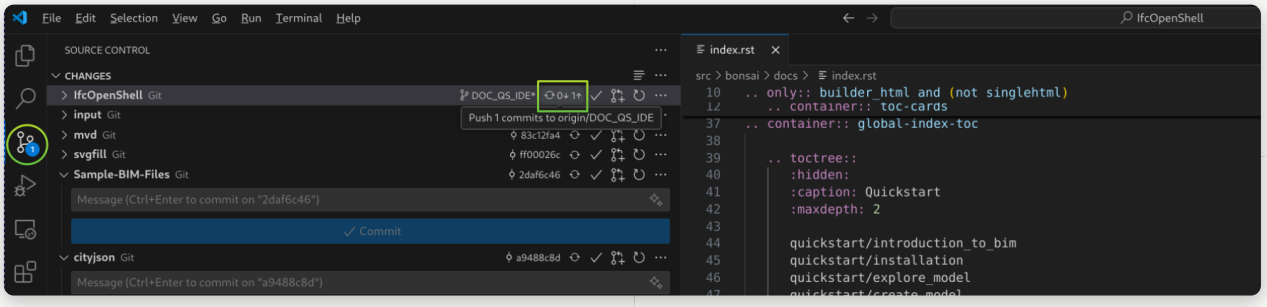
Then commit the changes by clicking in the check mark in the Source Control tool.



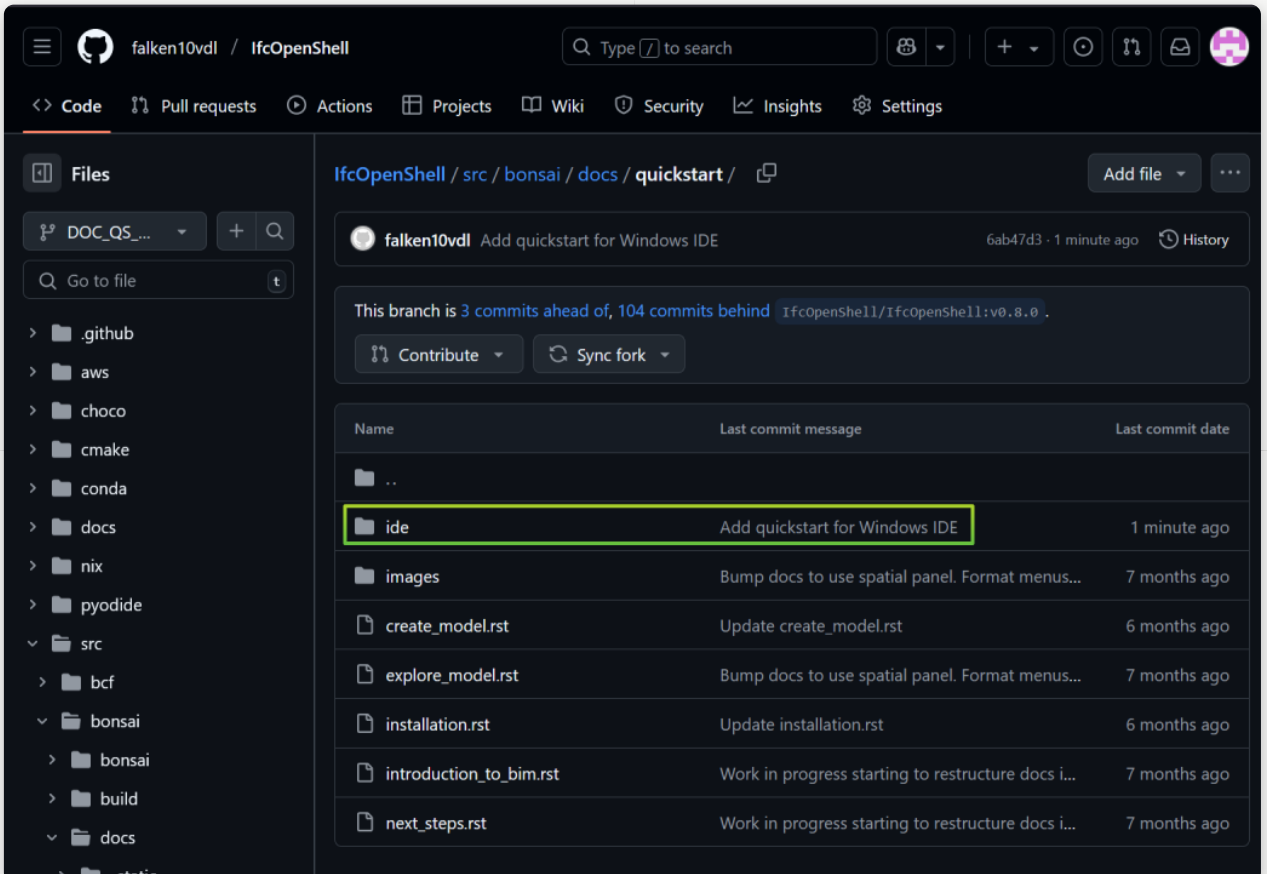
Accept the staging of the changes prior to commit.



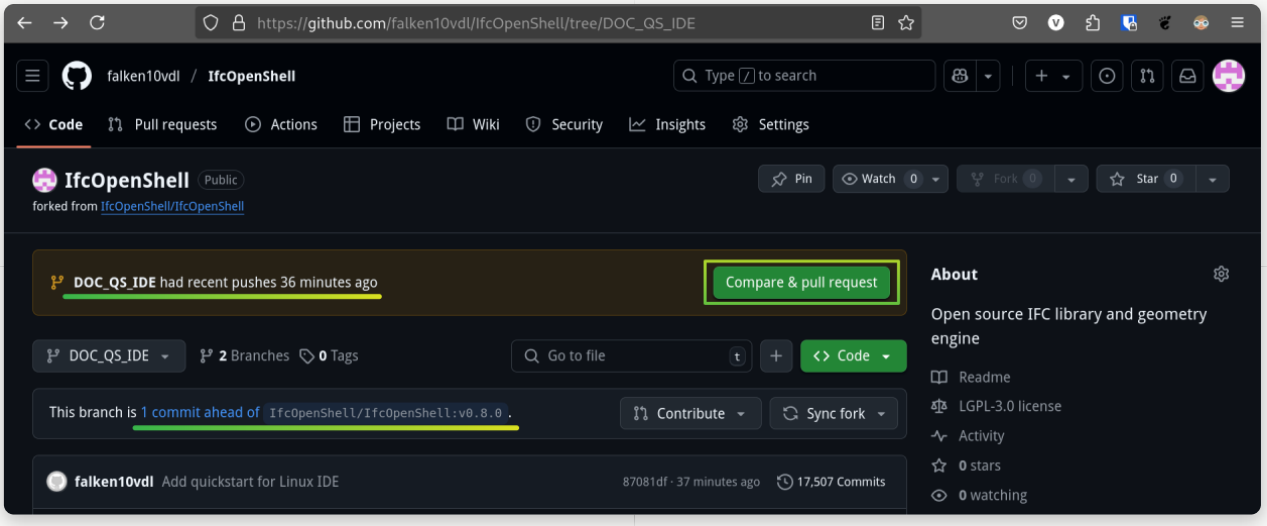
h. Push the changes to our new branch in the github project fork.



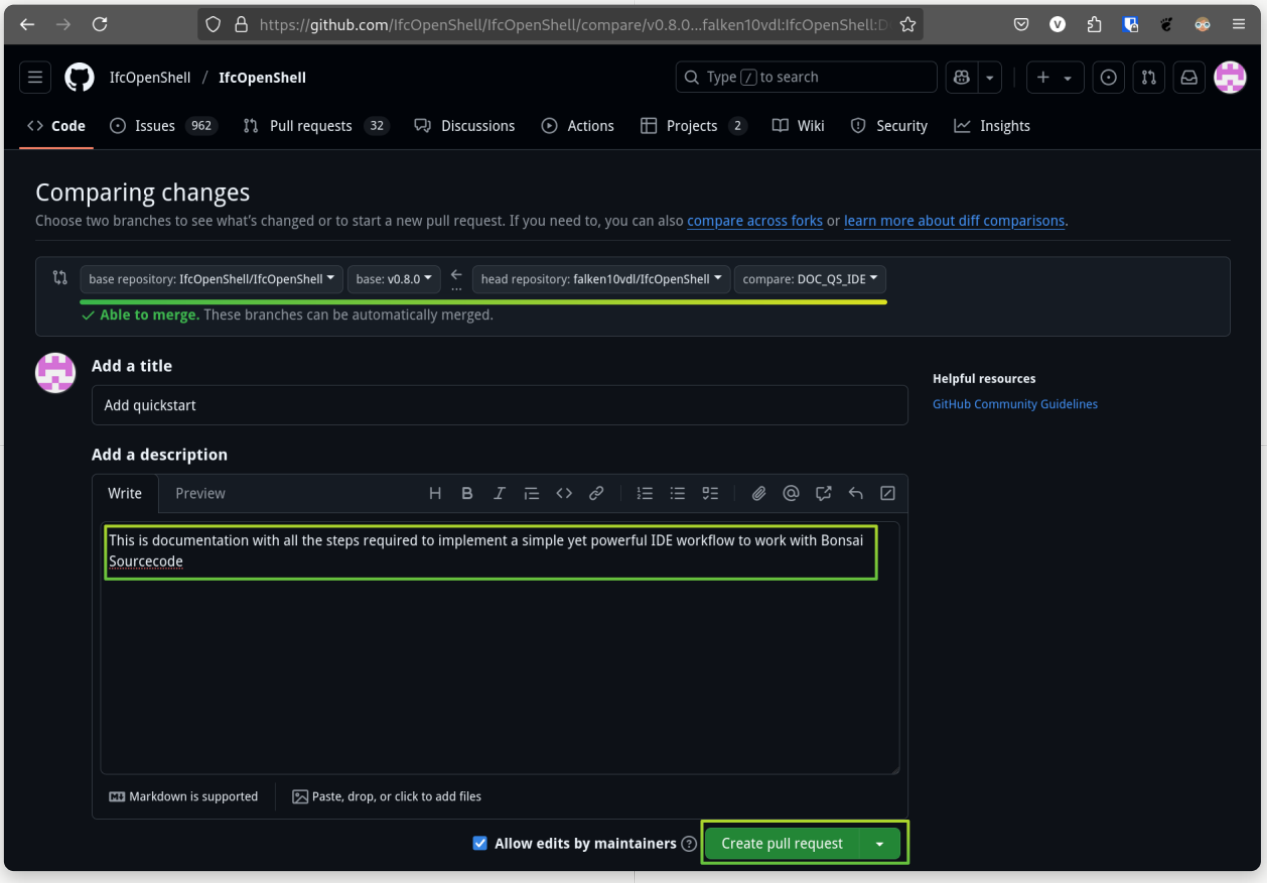
Check that the changes are in the project fork in GitHub. You can see that the directory *ide* has been added, for example.



i. Create a Pull Request to the upstream main branch of the IfcOpenShell project. Go to your GitHub page and you will see that the new branch has 1 commit ahead of the upstream main branch. Click in the *Compare & pull request* button.



Verify that the changes are correct, add a description and click in the *Create pull request* button.



CONGRATULATIONS! You have now made a change in the Bonsai project and created a Pull Request to the main branch of the project. Happy coding and documenting!