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Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

2021
Q2



Chokkan: Formal Upright Style
My Own Private Huangshan
Simply 'China!' — A Brief History
Styling Conifers From Humble Beginnings
Surface Pattern Stones of China
Story of an Old Contorted Mountain Pine
Who Is? Mauro Stemberger
Growing Together

William N Valavanis collection:
Seiju elm, *Ulmus parvifolia* 'Seiju',
Chokkan or formal upright style.

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“Critical to any world-class Bonsai are the tools and other supporting elements.” – Ryan Neil

From Ryan Neil: “The Artisans Cup is the beginning of a movement to reveal the beauty of the ongoing collaboration between humans and nature that occurs during the process of training a tree. This process, currently experiencing surging growth in North America, is symbolic of the struggle for life in which all living things take part, and highlights the similarities and differences between people and trees. It is a poignant representation of life itself, with all of its challenges and successes, its hardship and joy.”

Read more about The Artisans Cup movement at theartisanscup.com

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President's Message

It seems an end to this pandemic is in sight. Although I think it will be sometime before BCI gets back to our normal activities of having Conventions and Tours.

BCI Everything Bonsai Auction

As we are dependent on Convention incomes and don't expect any this year, we are hosting another online auction. We have received some fabulous donations, including courses with some of the top tutors, beautiful pots, online tutorials, viewing stones, and many other bonsai-related things. We still need more donations, and with your help, we can make this auction a great success. The BCI Everything Bonsai Auction will start on 8th May, World Bonsai Day, and conclude on 22nd May. You can donate or register to participate. Go to www.bonsai-bci.com and click on the Everything Bonsai Auction module at the bottom left on the home page for complete details, or contact BCI Director Frank Mihalic.

Zooming across seasons and the world

Lindsay and I recently hosted a virtual visit via Zoom with the Winnipeg Bonsai Society, BCI's Magazine Editor Joe Grande's local group. We in Australia were at the end of our Summer and Winnipeg, nearing the end of winter. Our temperature in Redlands, Qld. was 30° Celsius. Winnipeg, Canada was -30° Celsius! Both Lindsay and I found it hard to imagine what -30° was like. The coldest we have ever experienced was -15° in Korea during a bonsai exhibition in conjunction with the Winter Olympics. We did survive, although we thought we wouldn't!

We showed the Winnipeg group around our garden, discussed some of our species, and explained that our bonsai stay outdoors all year and don't experience full dormancy. They then invited us into several of their homes and showed us how they grow bonsai during winter. What an education! They are growing several species under grow lights that we grow outdoors. Their dedication and commitment were heart-warming. I cannot wait to see their outdoors bonsai in summer.

BCI Directors Election

We are moving forward with the BCI Directors election, which was put on hold last year. BCI member clubs will receive the voting ballot in mid-April with the list of BCI Director candidates whose terms are due for renomination and some new candidates. These candidates are elected to serve a two-year term. We need the ballots returned by the end of May. This can be done online. If your club is not having meetings, please contact your BCI club delegate to ensure your club votes. Any problems, please contact BCI Secretary David DeGroot.



2020 BCI Awards

Another casualty of COVID is the BCI Awards announced with much fanfare at our annual convention's gala banquet. This year's recipient of the BCI Award for Writer and Photographer of the Year is Danilo Scursatone, Turin, Italy. He has contributed many high-quality articles and images to the BCI magazine for over two decades. Congratulations Danilo!

Executive Election

Once we have the Director's election completed, we will move forward with the Executive Election. BCI Executives are elected from within the Board by the BCI Directors to serve a two-year term. I have served three terms as BCI President, which is the maximum allowed, so this will be my last President's message. I will stay on the BCI Board as Past President and offer as much or as little help to the next President as requested. During my time as BCI President and my previous positions as Vice President and Executive Director, I have had the privilege of attending many bonsai and stone events worldwide and met many interesting and knowledgeable people, made many friendships, and seen some fabulous bonsai and stone collection and exhibitions and gained volumes of bonsai and stone knowledge. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as President. I feel I have learned many new personal skills from meeting people with different cultures, customs, and politics, making up the BCI International family.

To my BCI team, the BCI Directors, Joe, Bonnie, and Larry, a big thank you for all of your help and support. 🌳

Stay safe.
Cheers from Down Under,
Glenis Bebb

P.S. A complete list of BCI contact e-mails is on page 2.

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You are invited to be a part of the BCI Vision.

**We are raising funds for the future of BCI!
Any donation you can make, will help.**

Remember BCI in your will, your trust, your future!

For more information contact:

Glenis Bebb, president@bonsai-bci.com



MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Do you remember your first lessons on how to create a bonsai? Your teacher explained the rules of asymmetrical design and the position and shape of the main branches on the bonsai's trunk. These so-called rules primarily relate to two bonsai styles, the informal upright Moyogi and the formal upright, Chokkan, the two most common bonsai styles. Then in the '90s, bonsai artists introduced avant-garde bonsai designs featuring contorted, sinuous trunks shaped by extreme alpine habitats: An extraordinary amount of deadwood in fantastical shapes and live trunks and branches requiring masterful bending techniques to create evocative bonsai compositions—manifestations of natural calamities and the epic ravages of time. It is safe to say that most bonsai artists passionately seek out and style yamadori that express this abstract and avant-garde design aesthetic.

With this edition, we celebrate this category of bonsai design with three articles. The first is an interview with Mauro Stemberger, an award-winning bonsai master who haunts alpine environments looking for masterpiece yamadori. The second, a detailed study of styling a mountain pine by Mario Pavone shares an effective technique for developing deadwood with a natural texture. Thirdly, Bai Jia Qian of Taiwan, presented by contributing editor José Rodriguez, shows us how he creates the yamadori aesthetic with field-grown conifers.

These artists are free to interpret shape, form, line, and texture to create bonsai that express unique sculptural compositions that are one-of-a-kind. In contrast, a feature article by Massimo Bandera focuses on the Chokkan, the formal upright style. Why do teachers caution students that this is the most difficult style to master? Because it represents the growth habit of many trees in the natural landscape all over the world. In bonsai, this ideal shape and form are easily compared to a tree in nature, so its design must be a perfect representation. Note the tree on the cover. Trained from a young field-grown elm in the '80s, William Valavanis has achieved majesty in a miniaturized version of a monumental tree—true to bonsai's universal goal.

Gudrun Benz brings us two articles. First, she presents surface pattern stones that stimulate us to see landscapes, figures, animals, and more. Next, she presents porcelain ceramics and explains why the stuff you put on your dining table is China.

What would your garden look like if you were in the tropics and in the middle of a nature-deprived, noisy urban center? Budi Sulistyono shares images of his garden, a refuge of peace and tranquility in the middle of Jakarta.

Edwin Symmes reminisces about the good old days and encourages us to combine our efforts to move forward in response to our times where self-interest trumps cooperation and teamwork. 🌳

—Joe Grande, Canada

MISSION STATEMENT

BONSAI CLUBS INTERNATIONAL

Bonsai Clubs International, a not-for-profit educational organization, advances the ancient and living art of bonsai and related arts through the global sharing of knowledge. We educate while promoting international friendship and solidify world relationships through cooperation with individuals and organizations whose purpose is consistent with ours.

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Authors are requested not to submit articles simultaneously to another publication.

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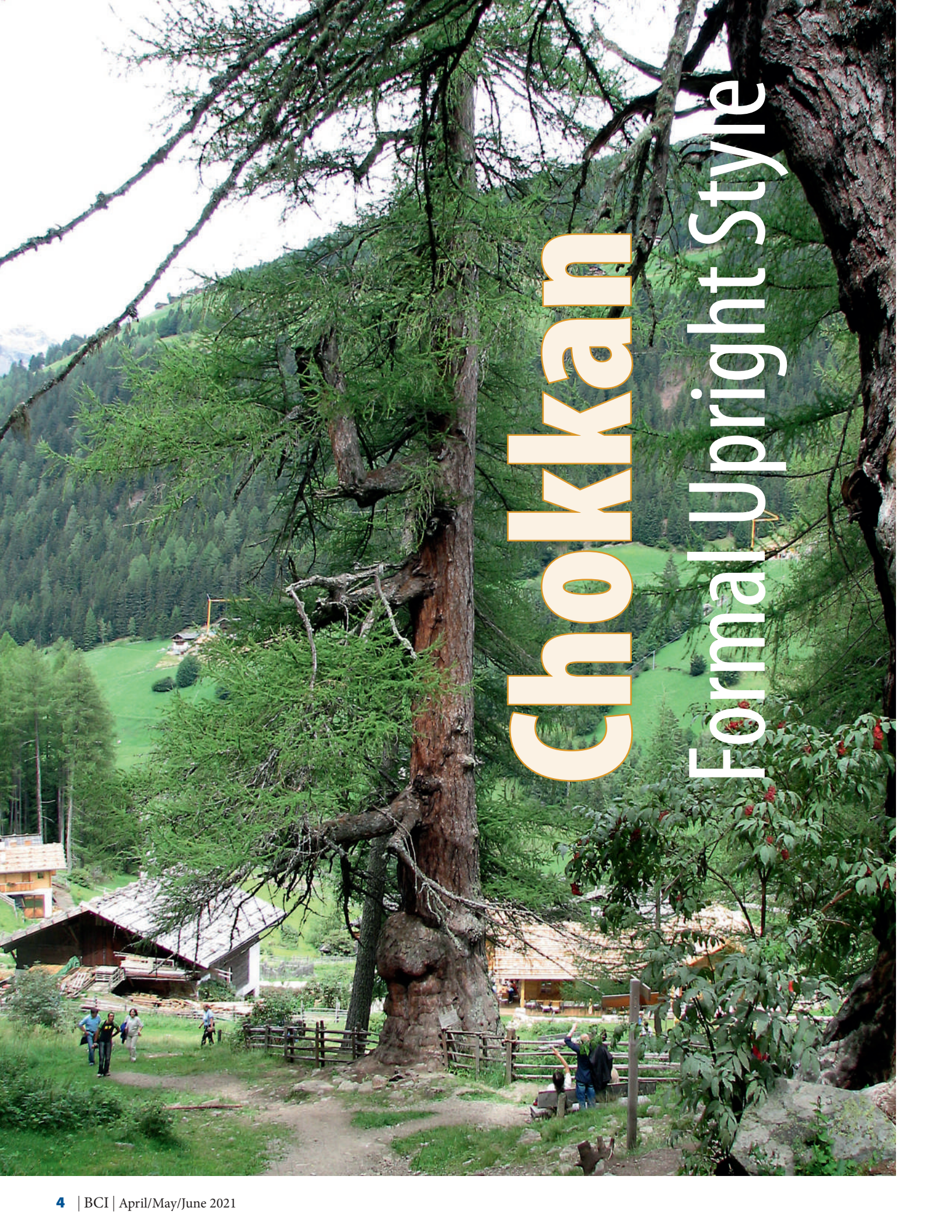
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FEATURED ON THE COVER: William N Valavanis collection: Seiju elm, *Ulmus parvifolia* 'Seiju,' trained from a young field-grown plant since the early 1980s. The well tapered formal upright trunk without a visual break stands firmly on the well-developed surface roots. Dedicated trimming for many years has developed excellent twig ramification.



Chokkan

Formal Upright style



The Chokkan, in its most aesthetically advanced expression, is a style of considerable commitment, usually achievable with advanced bonsai knowledge.

Top; Kimura's masterpiece where we notice a magnificent balance between a great formal austerity but a great aesthetic asymmetry.

Bottom; The ideal is a 1:6 ratio, the trunk diameter, and the height of the Bonsai. Drawing by Giuseppe Attini.

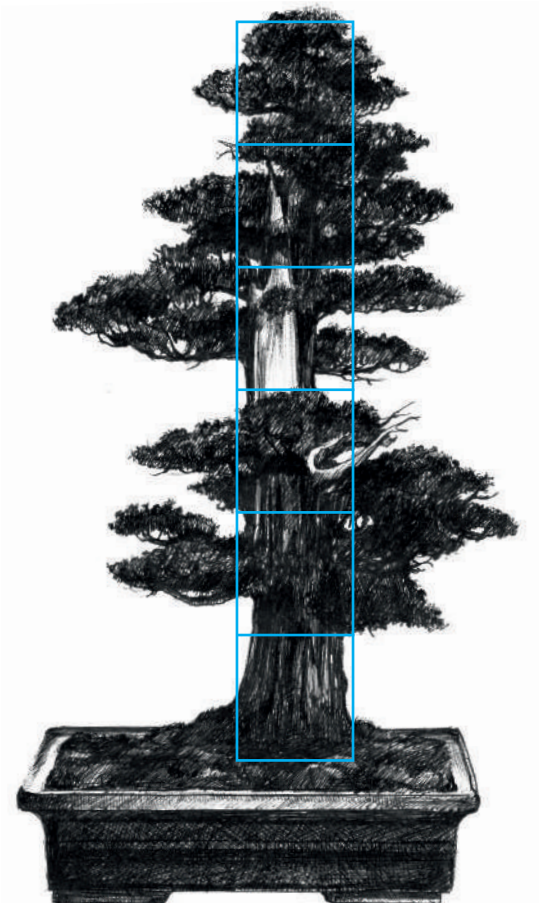
By Massimo Bandera, Italy. Photos courtesy Massimo Bandera.

Translation and adaptation, Joe Grande

The Chokkan style comprises a series of variants with an erect trunk, where formality can also reach symmetry—the only case in which it is allowed in the classical bonsai world.

According to some old masters, the formal upright is one of the basic styles, as is the informal upright, or Moyogi. The Chokkan, in its most aesthetically advanced expression, is a style of considerable commitment, usually achievable with advanced bonsai knowledge.

With the Chokkan, work on the plant at eye level to avoid giving staggered proportions but seeking the proper harmony and the geometric measurement of the parts. It is essential in this style to follow the correct proportions. As in all bonsai styles, it is necessary to select a front view that is clearly the best part of the tree. The apex, as in the Moyogi, must bend slightly towards the front. The search for aesthetic harmony through proportional balance is in the field of symmetry and asymmetry. Symmetry in Bonsai is equivalent to the repetition of shape and size between the two sides, right and left, and the tree's top and base. However, the idea of symmetry has a fascinating psychological implication. Artistically, it lacks imagination. But in a superficial analysis, it can represent the search for certainty and completeness, a sort of harmony sought with an artificial and imposing idea of resolving everything, typical of a Western or Renaissance culture. In the classical Japanese school, one sometimes encounters specimens styled in an almost symmetrical manner, as occurs in the Imperial Chokkan collection in Japan. The proportion in a bonsai results from the ratios between the various parts that can also be sought through the proportions of the golden section and the Fibonacci numbers, which lead to slightly more slender proportions than the classic Japanese Bonsai. The ideal is a 1:6 ratio, the trunk diameter, and the height of the Bonsai. A trunk of 10 cm in diameter should be about 60 cm high. Of course, this ideal rule must consider the specific specimen at hand.





The rigidity of the trunk must, in any case, express the naturalness of an old tree that is unlikely to have a perfectly straight trunk like a pole.



THE STRAIGHT TRUNK

This style's aesthetic essence lies in the rigidity of character, in the stability and grandeur of a monumental trunk that leads to a masculine aesthetic. The setting of the branches, the treatment of the shari, the container, and all the choices made for a Chokkan style must also preserve these tones of rigidity and avoid combining sinuous parts with an erect trunk.

The rigidity of the trunk must, in any case, express the naturalness of an old tree that is unlikely to have a perfectly straight trunk like a pole. In every case, there will be a series of small movements in the trunk. This characteristic, which is also evident in sculpture, may seem like a contradiction, given that the Chokkan must have a straight trunk. In traditional and modern exhibitions, this style's vertical nature also requires elements that enhance its verticality. Companion plants tend to be rigid and tall. Stones and pots in formal displays should always be antique. The monumental appearance and the verticality of the Chokkan results from its shape, whether symmetrical or asymmetrical. A strong sense of austerity derives precisely from the severe aesthetic that distinguishes it. Even the way the features of shari are presented, sometimes very exposed, always helps maintain the trunk's firm rigidity. It never "yields" or bends. The branches only sag under the weight of time. It presents a character as strong as that of a samurai, which helps increase the sense of power and success in its subtle profundity. The aesthetic tranquility in a Chokkan is closely linked to the fictions of martial arts and the arts of war that this style particularly recalls. It represents all the formality, strength, and severity that the Japanese seek. It is no coincidence that they are the most used styles in official conferences and exhibitions in which the traditions of Japanese culture must be represented.

In the Chokkan's structure, the verticality must be firmly maintained to avoid the optical imbalances and aesthetic uncertainties that are absolutely not allowed in such a formal style. This fundamental role is entrusted to the nebari, which in itself represents the most significant technical obstacle to styling a Chokkan. In this style, the nebari must be absolutely



Analyzing the nebari is indispensable in the choice for the front, especially when the nebari is very radiated.

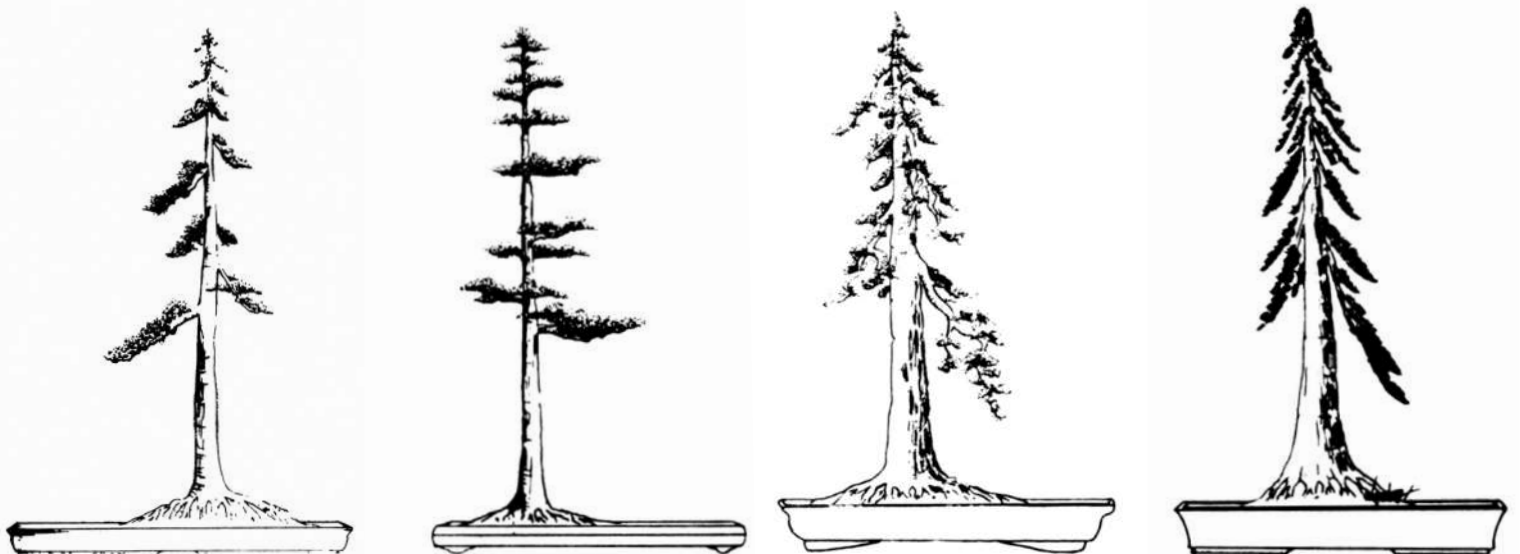
radial, emanating in all directions, or almost. The stability conferred by the container's foot, a typical element of Japanese aesthetics, is also found in the choice of garden stone placement and in suiseki bases. Analyzing the nebari is indispensable in the choice for the front, especially when the nebari is very radiated. Of course, the techniques that can improve the nebari are used above all in classical schools given their notoriously long timing. In an avant-garde school, it is essential to look for this indispensable element through a correct choice of material. Bear in mind that in junipers, the shari features may extend beneath the soil, and there is a risk of losing root shari to rot.

BRANCHES AND PROPORTIONS

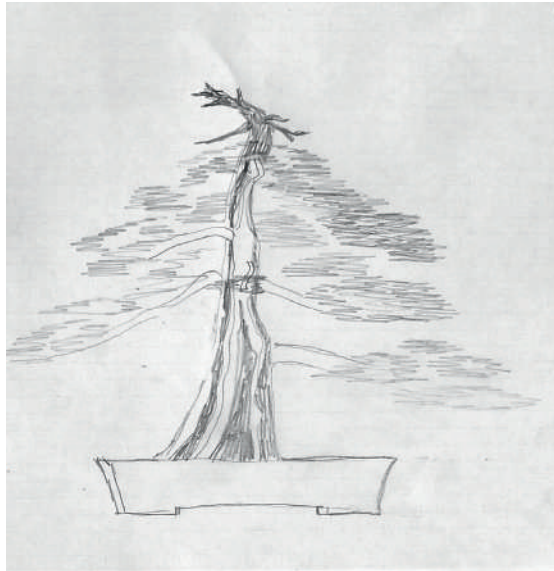
The branching of a Chokkan can vary in the monumental architecture of the species. In the case of conifers, it is very symmetrical. The shape of old deciduous trees can be asymmetrical. The branches usually point downwards with respect to the horizontal. Their bending must represent the branch's yield to the weight of time and gravity—a sense of austerity that we encounter in old trees. Unlike the informal styles, the Chokkan, due to its monumental aspect, however expressed, will always have a considerable number of branches, eleven to seventeen. These must be built with primary, secondary, and tertiary scaffolding in

Notable are the great master John Naka's studies, who in this style was truly an avant-garde author.

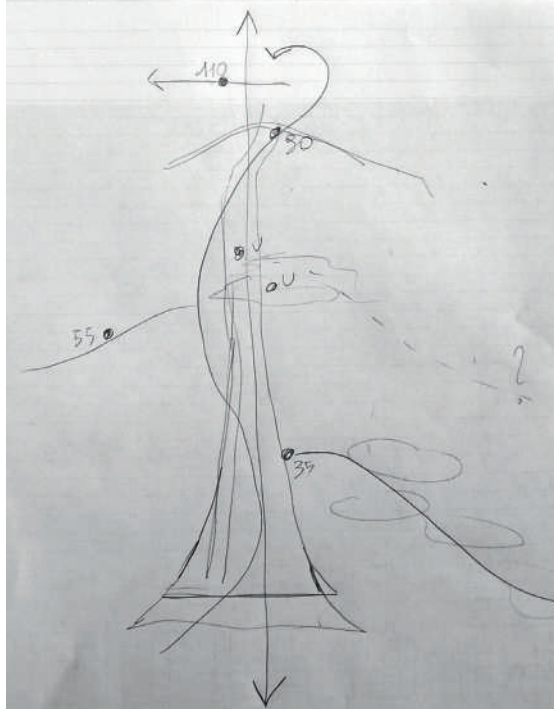
Below and on next page are John Naka's drawing of Chokkan variation one finds in different environments, and in different species with their unique growth habits. Excerpted from *Bonsai Techniques I* by John Yoshio Naka, published by Bonsai Institute of California, 1973.



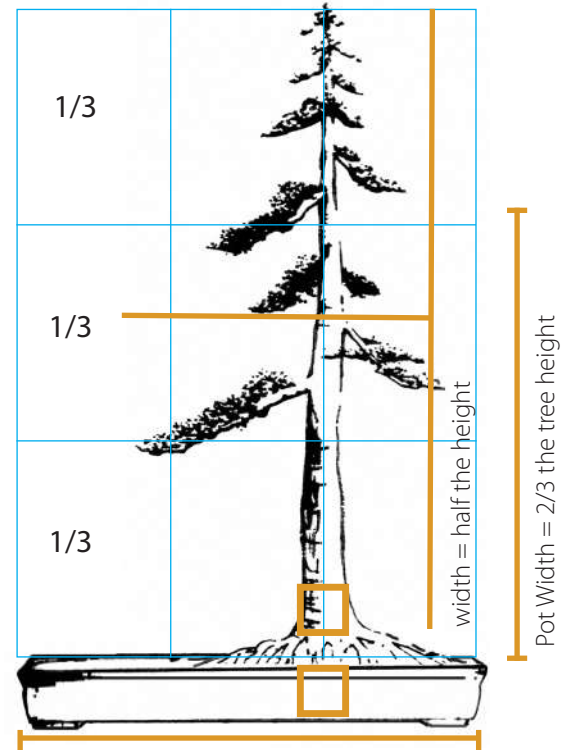
Top left; In the drawing we see a sequence of Fibonacci numbers: starting from a height, decided for example, of 110 cm, the sequence in golden section gives us the ideal position of which branches to choose in styling the bonsai. The first branch is at the height of 35 cm, the second is at 55 cm and the crown is at 90 cm. The remaining branches, eleven to seventeen of them, are arranged in harmony with the three sections inspired by the Fibonacci sequence.



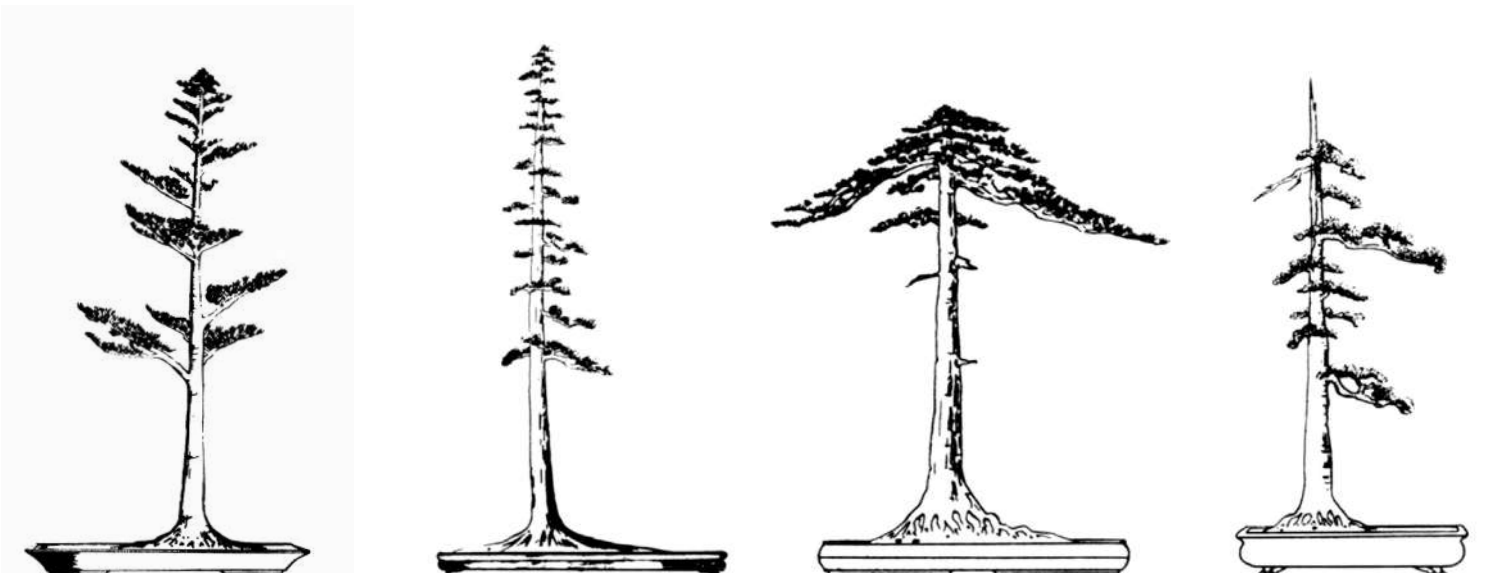
Top right; A simpler method to guide design choices are the ratios of 1:2:3, also a Fibonacci sequence. 1:1 is the diameter of the trunk and the depth of the pot. 1:2 is the branch spread, left to right, to the height of the tree. 1:3 is the location of the lowest branch on the trunk. 2:3 is the width of the pot to the height of the tree.



Bottom; Chokkan variations. Excerpted from *Bonsai Techniques I* by John Yoshio Naka, published by Bonsai Institute of California, 1973.



respect of the species that are reduced to two prevalent solutions. In the triangular branch section, the secondary branch closest to the trunk is the longest. In the diamond-tipped pads, the secondary branching close to the trunk is reduced to gradually increase towards the middle of the pads and shrink again towards the peaks. As far as the pads' thickness is concerned, a very in-depth study must be made, linked above all to the species rather than the stereotype harmony of full and empty spaces commonly used. Therefore, the lightness or heaviness of the foliage must be sought not so much with the thickness of the pads as with the number of branches, building instead divided pads as is done in needle junipers. For example, a sequoia will have few branches because its characteristic shape tends to have



very globose and thick pads like those of cryptomeria as it ages. In pines, the thickness of the pads can be reduced to the minimum possible represented by the needles' length.

Naturally, conifers that possess a large number of branches in their monumental nature will have to undergo a selection process, even more than once, just to achieve that specific taste of simplicity so difficult to find in Chokkan style bonsai. The drawing on the facing page represents the series of ideal proportions that are used in classical times. They achieve the formal upright style's aesthetic harmony leading to proportions to which we are accustomed and more miniaturized than the actual, natural proportions. Generally, in the Japanese classical tradition, the height of a Chokkan is about 6 times the diameter of the trunk at the base. However, there are notable examples of increasing this proportion, as John Naka did to meet the collective American imagination's monumental forms. From an aesthetic perspective, this proportion represents an ancient tree where a repeated apex replacement has occurred. Otherwise, the natural proportion would be much higher. The beginning of the crown represented by the first branch should begin at about one-third of the tree's total height, or exactly 38.2% of the height from the ground. This is the golden section, and for opposite triangularity, it should begin in the middle of the tree. The Bonsai's width should also be about half the Bonsai's height, even if the latter rule is rarely used. The proportions of all parts of a bonsai can also be calculated using the asymmetric Fibonacci sequence in which each number is the sum of the previous two: 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, etc. The upright style's apex must be rounded exactly like the Moyogi style and for the same reasons related to an old tree's growth. This characteristic has been known in Japan since the 70s.

Nonetheless, triangular and pointed apexes also persist, indicating a relatively young tree, or slightly older, built according to monumental architecture. The width of the crown is also subject to great variability. Still, considering the aesthetic effect that follows, which is extremely variable, one should always use the concept of naturalness and discern the best measure. In nature, there are many examples of wider crowns than the height that can nevertheless be very natural even if, in the classical Japanese tradition, an umbrella shape is seen as a defect. In broad-leaved trees, the branching will tend to start lower on the trunk emanating from one source. Avoid the unnaturalness of broad-leaved trees styled like pines, especially if you follow the shapes of the species' architecture as in beeches and stewartia.

JIN AND SHARI

The character of jin and shari on the upright style is very different from the jin and shari of other styles. In the upright style, the traditional shari, typical of firs and junipers, must retain the rigidity and verticality characteristic of the tearing of the vertical branches and the dead veins in junipers, which are imitated by tearing. The tearing techniques with chisels, hooks, and various



In the upright style, the traditional shari must retain the rigidity and verticality characteristic of the vertical branches and the dead veins in junipers, which are imitated by tearing.

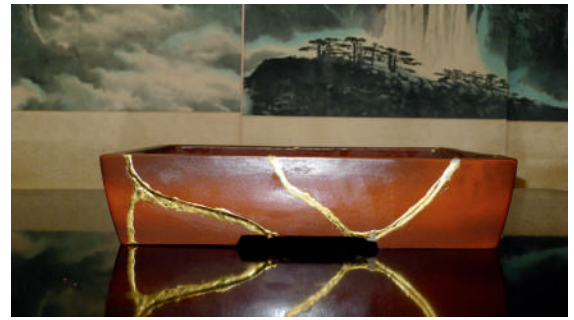


The jin should also have typical characteristics of the species, such as the eagle-beak shaped tips that derive from branches cracking and yielding to natural causes.

classic tools imitate the surface of a Chokkan shari that is not typically very furrowed. We must remember that this style, actually rare in the bonsai world, represents the nature of all trees that grow straight. The shari must evoke a sense of austerity without losing the feeling of the tree's resistance to the effects of time. The jin should also have typical characteristics of the species, such as the eagle-beak shaped tips that derive from branches cracking and yielding to natural causes. In the upright style, we find in the conifers a great presence of a ten-jin (apical jin) that in Bonsai is a technique that lowers the tree's height. It is very natural for these species that reaching a great height are easily struck by lightning, exploding the apex and usually opening a stretch of shari. From an aesthetic point of view, it is very fascinating to combine the strength, resistance, and formality of the Chokkan with the drama of lightning that damages and devastates a tree that nevertheless continues to remain steadfast in its position. This character must never be forgotten during the styling of a Chokkan.

CONTAINERS

In the Chokkan, we find the triumph of rectangular containers, which remain the most used. Strongly defining the space, they recall the stability necessary for this style, and their linearity corresponds to the trunk's



direct line. There are also examples of ovals, especially for broad-leaved trees where the character of rigidity is sought in the pot's rim rather than the pot's shape. It is also possible to use round pots in forms of great expression of strength, such as the pressed drum motif (or the shibui) that clearly will have more massive tones than those used for literati style bonsai. The characteristics to which a lot of attention must be paid when choosing a Chokkan pot are mainly related to the edges and feet. A rigid and well-defined border is selected for plants with very rigid and pointed structures, expression of a general rigidity and formality. In pine masterpieces, where along with the trunk's rigid shape, there is still a softness and roundness to the crown's periphery, we will select a rectangular pot with slightly rounded edges. The foot must be as simple as possible and must be chosen with height linked to the tree's character. The higher the foot, the more it tends to recall ancient Chinese forms and corresponds to tall pots—all aspects of great importance for colossal Bonsai. The color of Chokkan pots typically avoids glazes precisely because of the needs related to austerity. In the case of glazed pots, apart from the colors of the sky, very austere colors must also be sought, for example, through speckles or natural effects.

IMPERIAL JAPAN: SYMMETRICAL CHOKKAN

In traditional Japanese Bonsai, the Chokkan can appear symmetrical, where the first and second branches have the foliage masses practically at the same height. It is typical of plants grown from seed, and styled in the Imperial tradition that show a sense of domination, imposition, and perfection. This character is achieved outside the asymmetry of pure Zen aesthetics. In reality, this difference must still be understood within Japan's cultural expressions, with the imperial culture's needs occasionally recalled in history as in the Second World War. This variant of the style must be considered as a



historical curiosity. It cannot have avant-garde versions with respect to monumental architecture because beyond the vivacity of the imagination, it would still result in the creation of a plant that looks too young to be a bonsai.

SPECIES SUITABLE FOR THE CHOKKAN STYLE

Remembering again that all trees in optimal growth conditions would develop straight, observing nature, we understand how rare it is to meet an ancient tree with a straight trunk. Normally, the ravages of time lead a trunk to bend or lean. Therefore, a trunk that remains straight while spanning centuries is a rarity even if some environments still favor their formation. The aging of a tree while retaining the straight trunk is mainly linked to species like cryptomeria, chamaecyparis, sequoias, needle junipers, and firs. These almost always grow with a straight trunk, even when very old, precisely because of their apical dominance. Beyond the stylistic choice linked to the species, theoretically, everything could also be cultivated in this style. The



Top left; In traditional Japanese Bonsai, the Chokkan can appear symmetrical, where the first and second branches have the foliage masses practically at the same height.

Top right; *Cryptomeria sp.*, photo Pancrazi.

Middle right; Black pine (*Pinus thunbergii*).

Bottom left; *Picea abies*, Walter Pall. Photo, Willy Evenepoel.

Bottom right; *Juniperus sp.* by Markus Schreitmüller, Germany. Photo by Foto Mike.



Top left; Ezo spruce (*Picea jezoensis*) Ian Cuppleditch.

Top right; *Sequoia sempervirens*, Pacific Bonsai Museum, Federal Way, Washington, U.S. Photo, Joe Mabe.

Bottom left; *Cryptomeria japonica*; Chokkan; Origin, Spain; Tokoname pot; 90 cm; Styled by Jose Ontañon. Photo, Willy Evenepoel.

Bottom right; Hinoki Cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*), Pacific Bonsai Museum, Federal Way, Washington, U.S., Photo, Daniel Gasienica.



technical difficulties and, above all, finding suitable material, usually cultivated (yamadori are rare), are an obstacle to the production of Chokkan. Even if a very accurate avant-garde perspective and more in-depth research of this style would be desirable. Notable are the great master John Naka's studies, who in this style was truly an avant-garde author.

In Chokkan-styled broad-leaved species, relatively young species are usually created, especially beeches and stewartia. These are alpine species with a strong

apical dominance that can justify the Chokkan style instead of the broom style. As far as proportions are concerned, a larger deciduous tree has a better relationship between the size of its leaves and the tree's size in terms of scale and proportions. In other parts of the world, there are important examples of species that grow in this style, and their creation as Bonsai must always be made based on the choices that derive from naturalness. 🌲





My Own Private Huangshan

Photos and Text By Budi Sulisty, Indonesia

Jakarta, the Capital of Indonesia, comprises five cities governed by a Governor. They are Central, where the President and Governor reside, North, East, South, and West cities governed by Mayors. There are around 12 million people in Jakarta, well spread over the five cities.

My house is located in the New Area that has become the center of West Jakarta City. It is a busy area and quite close to some malls, schools, hospitals, government buildings, including the Mayor's office and business areas. I appreciate that it is really a very convenient area that provides our needs in daily living; getting various foods, buying goods, sending the children to schools, consulting anything concerned with health, or even going to the airport.

It is tough to find a peaceful natural area to keep our mind close to Nature in such a busy, crowded place. Fortunately, I have a piece of land in the back of my house 11 by 7 meters in size. Over there, I built my little dreamland that I wrote about in BCI magazine in

My garden was inspired by one of my favorite places in China, the Yellow Mountains, or locally called Huangshan. The tall pinnacle granite rock formations with pines growing on them are like a giant magic Chinese Penjing created by nature.







I put various plants here and there; a *Diospyros* forest on the front side near the retaining wall, some small plants like *Carmona*, *Triphasia*, *Pyracantha*, and even a rock planting juniper at the front. Up above, I planted some *Wrightia religiosa*, *Ficus philippinensis*, rock-clinging *Ficus microcarpa*, an old *Juniperus chinensis tanuki*. Some tiny junipers grow on top of the peaks to imitate the pine on the Huangshan peaks. To give some colors to the design, I planted some flowering cactus and *Ixora*. I then added some green moss and grass to provide a more natural look.



Top; View from my dining room.

Bottom; In the middle of the garden, I planted a root-connected *Ficus elegans* with small shiny green leaves.

Facing page, top and bottom; Two views of the left side with fountain, bridge, and koi pond.



2004. It has a koi pond, an artificial fountain, some bonsai planted like trees, and places for some bonsai on the backside of the garden. Formerly the central attraction was the Fountain area, where people liked to take pictures. In the middle of the garden, I planted a root-connected *Ficus elegans* with small shiny green leaves. It created a little wild forest that is very pleasing to the eyes. Around this “forest,” there is a walking

path with stepping stones and pebbles spread along the walking path.

My dining room is on the backside of the house, facing the garden. It means that every day I have time to get rid of the busy city and jump into my “little dreamland!”

I have visited China several times. One of my favorite places to enjoy, is looking at the beauty of The Yellow Mountains, or locally called Huangshan. I was





Top; Footpath with stepping stones on pebbles.

Bottom; A dry river flows between two banyan trees.

Facing page, top; Another view of the Huangshan-inspired peaks. The *Juniperus chinensis tanuki* is between the peaks.

Facing page, bottom; A view of the right side featuring my bonsai.

much amazed by the many tall pinnacle granite rock formations with pines growing on them. It is really a giant magic Chinese Penjing created by nature. Three times I went there and more and more I became mad about the beauty of the view. I brought the memory of this beauty and magic home and thought about it when I sat in front of my garden.

One afternoon, as I sat in the dining room looking at my garden, I paid attention to the backside close to the back wall where I placed some bonsai. Suddenly,

I had an idea that I could create a penjing garden in this area of around four by two meters.

Indonesia has a lot of petrified wood, mostly taken from Sukabumi, an area in West Java not far from Jakarta. Many pieces were brought to Jakarta. People like to buy them to be polished or used as ornaments in the garden. I was lucky to buy some raw petrified woods in various sizes and heights to create high peaks like those I saw in Huangshan. I piled some soil to make an elevated area and used some middle-sized petrified woods as the retaining wall. Afterward, I added some more soil and arranged pinnacle-shaped petrified woods one by one, like the view I saw in the Yellow Mountains.

I put various plants here and there; a *Diospyros* forest on the front side near the retaining wall, some small plants like *Carmona*, *Triphasia*, *Pyracantha*, and even a rock planting juniper at the front. Up above, I planted some *Wrightia religiosa*, *Ficus philippinensis*, rock-clinging *Ficus microcarpa*, an old *Juniperus chinensis tanuki*. Some tiny junipers grow on top of the peaks to imitate the pine on the Huangshan peaks. To give some colors to the design, I planted some flowering cactus and *Ixora*. I then added some green moss and grass to provide a more natural look.

The garden's major attraction has shifted from the fountain to the small hill with rock plantings. In my imagination, this mini-Huangshan in the back of my garden is a peaceful retreat from the city's hustle and bustle. 🌿





Surface Pattern Stones of China

By Gudrun Benz, Germany
Photos and Text by Gudrun Benz



China is a huge country of 9.6 million square kilometers, slightly larger than the United States and bigger than the Australian continent. It has a population of about 1.3 billion inhabitants, including more than 50 minorities, diverse topography, and climate, varying dramatic landscapes. One of the most beautiful places is the Qinghai-Tibet-Plateau, the highest place on earth. The plateau has snow-capped peaks and glaciers caused by its extreme height, even if they are located in the sub-tropical and temperate zone. On the other side, there are sunken basins in the North-West (Turfan Depression) at about 150 meters below sea level. The country's east is dominated by fertile lowland and deltas as well as mountainous terrains.

Due to the morphological and geographical conditions, one can find abundant natural resources and numerous “wonders of nature” such as our beloved viewing stones, among others, pattern stones. One can divide (classify) pattern or picture stones, sometimes also called painting stones depending on their design on the surface, into several categories: landscape pattern stones, figure or human-shaped pattern stones, animal pattern stones, plant pattern stones, stones with color design, geometrical design.

Some are completely natural. Others are shaped, carved, or manipulated differently, for example, cut or sawn from bigger rock formations and shaped into a round form. They can be quite colorful and vary greatly in quality. For example, clear scenic images, attractive clear colors are usually reflected in the price.

They are found mainly in riverbeds. They are mostly round and oval and flat on the front and back. If they are natural river or sea pebbles, they are sometimes more spherical. Many of them are composed of sandstone, a sedimentary material mostly of quartz or quartz and feldspar or quartz, lithic, and feldspar. Another matrix material for picture stones is limestone and marble. During its formation, particles of other surrounding materials, for example, iron or manganese oxide, penetrated spaces between sand grains or the other sedimentary material and form pictures.

A speciality is dendrites, mainly in limestone, which are multi-branching tree-like forms. They are formed



Top right: Entrance hall of the Alashan stone museum. One can see the second floor where glass boxes are installed.



Middle right: A stand of a stone trader with surface pattern stones in Yinchuan/ Ningxia province in 2007. Traders offering picture stones usually are present at stone exhibitions/conventions. Unfortunately, these kinds of stones are quite heavy, so it is difficult for Westerners to bring them home.

Bottom: Overview over the trader area before the Alashan museum in 2019. The tents protect against the sun.

Facing Page

Landscape pattern stones

Top: Stone painting: coastline with rocky cliffs; the stand underlines the picture theme.

Left inset: Stone: painting of a mountainous landscape; stand carvings: pine trees and rocks (left), possibly bamboo and rocks (right); waterfall and river bridge (middle).

Right inset: Stone picture: wooded, hilly landscape.





when water rich in manganese or iron solutions percolates the rock. Other picture stones received their design by metamorphic processes, by high temperatures or pressure, when molten material, for example, quartz, fills in breaks, fractures, and crevasses.

Pattern or painting stones are primarily collected in Middle and Southern China and are offered by traders all over China. Still, they can also be seen at stone exhibitions usually combined with stone markets with lots of hawkers. This was also the case on the occasion of the BCI Convention 2019 in Alashan, Inner Mongolia, combined with the “China Alxa International Ornamental Stone Expo and the 15th Alxa Stone Culture Tourism Festival.” Numerous pattern stones were exhibited in glass boxes at the stone museum’s second floor on lavishly carved and elaborate wooden stands. Skilled craftsmen even created whole sceneries



Top left: Wooded, hilly landscape.

Middle left: Stone picture: sitting human being meditating the landscape.

Middle right: Stone picture: far distance landscape.

Bottom: Stone picture: Clouds over mountains.





Top left: Dendrites form a colorful wooded landscape with higher mountains in the back.

Top right: The interpretation of this "picture" depends on the viewer's imagination: Landscape, water, and clouds?

Bottom: Stone picture: the view goes over ranges of hills to a far distance.

for mostly smaller stones. I noticed this over the last years as a trend in China. Here, the art of men meets the art of nature. These creations are more for pleasure and aesthetic feeling. They distinguish from the trend in Japan where simple, elegant stands are preferred, which just enclose the stone's base, holding it in the wanted position but don't overpower it. In Japan, suiseki are mainly appreciated for meditation.

It is a pity that only a few people find their way to the extraordinary stone museum at Alashan, except on the occasion of stone festivals, which are also mainly attended by Chinese stone lovers. In addition, there is

a harsh climate in Alashan, hot summers and bitterly cold winters that are not inviting. So the museum is closed over the wintertime. Western tourists rarely find their way to Alashan, perhaps because of the far distances to other tourist attractions. Also, Chinese and Western tourists can find "desert experiences" in other places in China, such as the Juyuan Lake Geo area, the Black City Geo area, and the Tonghu Geo area of the Tengger Desert with desert lakes, Alxa Desert Global Geopark of China and much more. Therefore the need to visit Alashan depends on their degree of passion for unique stones and appreciation of the uncommon. 🏔️



Ed. Note: The descriptions of the stones are given by the author. They are a guess and subjective, not given by the owners themselves because information at the museum in Alashan was given only in Chinese and therefore incomprehensible to the author.

Stones together with elaborate wood carving scenery

Top left: Human pattern stone: a lonely man in the wind.

Top right: Human pattern stone: Lady.

Middle left: Human pattern stone: deity over clouds.

Upper middle right: Human pattern stone: two sages in conversation.

Lower middle right: Human pattern stone: fisherman casting the line.

Bottom left: Human pattern stone: Lady going for a walk; stand: pine trees and rocks.

Bottom right: Human pattern stone: lady sitting under a flowering tree before her home.





Top left: Animal pattern stone: bird resting on a tree branch.
Top right: Animal pattern stone: crane.
Middle left: Animal pattern stone: Bird resting on a branch.
Middle right: Colorful flower pattern.
Bottom: "Forest with Trees reflecting in the Water of a Lake," landscape picture stone, dendrite formations in limestone, origin: Yunnan province, China, measurement: 44 cm w x 5 cm d x 17 cm h, Benz Collection.



Top left: Small child (left bottom) under a tree branch.
Top right: Colorful sphere.
Middle left: Animal pattern stone: eating panda; stand: bamboo leaves, the food of pandas.
Middle right: Flowers.
Bottom: Framed picture stone: very realistic forest motif.



These elaborate Chinese presentations are more for pleasure and aesthetic feeling. They distinguish from the trend in Japan where simple, elegant stands are preferred.





Top left: Landscape or simple only a beautiful pattern? Yinchuan stone museum.



Top right: Meeting of a couple; Kunming 2005.



Middle left: Man sitting before a rock face and contemplating the landscape, Kunming 2005.



Middle right: Plant pattern stone, dendrite formations in limestone, origin: Solnhofen, Germany, 13 cm w x 10 cm h. It was formed during the Late Jurassic. The pattern (dendrite formations) are not fossils. Benz collection.



Bottom: "Shrubs on a Slope," landscape pattern stone, dendrite formations in limestone, origin: Yunnan province, China. Measurement: ca. 40 cm w x 25 cm h, Bonsai Museum Heidelberg, Germany.

**WHO
IS ?**

Mauro Stemberger
“The Larchitect,”
Constructing and
Articulating Nature



By Enrique Castaño, Mexico and Joe Grande, Canada

If you have searched for videos on bonsai on the YouTube platform, the platform has likely served you some videos by Mauro Stemberger and his channel, called Bonsai Dream. If you have subscribed to his videos, you'll see he has produced many of them, close to 100. Sometimes working on his students' trees, sometimes on his clients' trees, and more often on his own trees. Mauro's videos are captioned in Spanish and Italian, making them accessible to a larger audience.

His presentation style is intense. He is totally focused on the work at hand but takes the time to explain, rationalize and provide many details about the species of trees he is styling and how to care for them. He works on conifers and deciduous trees found in the Mediterranean and many parts of the USA. He has also worked on bonsai in Mexico and South America. The specimens he collects in northern Italy, Spain, and France are remarkable for their twisted and massive trunks. Croatia is another source of excellent yamadori featured in his videos.

It is fascinating to see a tangle of branches skillfully pruned, wired, and shaped to become superb bonsai. Mauro's videos have provocative titles such as *Dream of Californication*, *From Bush to Beauty*, *The Mugo from the Dolomites*. Many are instructional, such as *Larch Bending Technique*, *How to Style a Juniper*, and *Wiring Masterclass*. He loves both conifers and deciduous species alike. Look for videos on deciduous *Quercus*, *Ligustrum*, *Prunus*, and conifers such as *Tsuga*, *Taxus*, *Cupressus*, *Pinus*, *Juniperus*, and *Thuja*. But the larch, appreciated in the northern hemisphere for its beauty and malleability in bonsai art, is the subject of many of his works. It has strength and grace. The power of its trunks contrasts the delicate, profuse branching. Its elegant and refined tufts start emerald green in spring and transform into fiery blazes in autumn before they fall to reveal a delicate branching pattern. Mauro is a master of the *Larix*, easily manipulating its form to create prodigious bonsai on a grand scale.

His trees have won awards at major European Exhibits. His masterworks can be found in his personal bonsai garden in Feltre, Italy, which you can see on a Bonsai Empire YouTube video showing his garden titled "Mauro Stemberger's Bonsai garden."

The Italia Bonsai Dream Museum is in Marostica, Italy, that features more of his masterpieces. The



video with this title is also on YouTube. About 100 kilometers northwest of Venice, the museum is a permanent exhibition space on the Garden Verde Nursery grounds, home to Mauro Stemberger's Italian Bonsai Dream School and Amici del Bonsai Marostica Association. The project, promoted by Mauro Stemberger and supported by the Pavin family (owner of the nursery), Amici del Bonsai, and UBI (Unione Bonsaisti Italiani), represents an objective, "...an exhibition place presenting the best creations of our bonsai activity for everyone's benefit, with the mission of attracting more and more people to our common passion."

BCI Director, Enrique Castaño and Mauro are good friends. Mauro has visited Enrique's house in Mexico several times, so they met on Zoom recently where Mauro answered the following questions. Mauro was also kind enough to send us the photos used in this interview.

Mauro is proud to live in the middle of the Dolomites, some of the better mountains in the world where he learned the beauty of nature and ancient trees.



Top: Together 20 years and still maturing together with this old scots pine.

Bottom: The Bonsai Dream Team at The Trophy demo 2020.

Mauro, how have your personal circumstances led you to the bonsai passion?

I am an Italian that has become a professional bonsai artist for the last ten years. Previously I was a professional architect. I grew up in Feltre, a northern city in Italy close to the mountains, where nature surrounds the area and provides incredible

sites for viewing stunted trees created by mother nature. The intrinsic and complex nature creates a beauty that has captivated me for all these years. I started bonsai when I was in high school after seeing some of these small trees in a garden nursery. Here is when I first saw nature in a pot, and that was a wonderful moment for me. So I started collecting seeds and collecting small trees. In time I started a small group in Feltre. Over time, the craziness kept reaching new heights, learning more, and becoming better as I went to more places and saw more bonsai. Changing my level from the basic to master to international master.

How has your training in architecture informed your bonsai practice?

Studies in art go in hand with architecture and help me create a particular style, understanding spaces, and forms that have become my bonsai style. My style makes it easy to recognize my trees as they have specific trademarks that I enjoy. Like a strong first branch, an exceptional movement on some branches, a compact apex, and a very strong trunk. And understanding the positive and negative spaces to provide what I think is attractive. I also think it's important to design the trees for my own personal taste and for the general public to experience them as something beautiful.

Who are your mentors and teachers?

In architecture, I studied in the university and had lots of good teachers. My father was a good teacher as well. I tend to learn from as many professionals as possible. Also, in bonsai, the more I interact with people, there is something to learn, non-only in what I find good but also defining and understanding the things I don't like. This is also very valuable teaching. In technical aspects, I started early on with Enrico Savini. He helped me at the beginning to see the art of bonsai in a different light.

How does your immediate family support your activities?

I am an only child, so my parents have always supported my activities. They even supported my decision to close the Architect studio. Ten years ago, I was already known in the bonsai world, but to make the transition to full professional meant leaving architecture to follow my bonsai dream. It is very difficult to invest in two fields full time. My decision to pursue bonsai has become very favorable. Thankfully, my mother, who was a bit worried at first, and my wife fully support this decision. The truth is that today at this moment, architecture in this town is doing poorly compared to the work I am doing in bonsai. My wife now helps me with my internet channel and has encouraged me a lot.



Top: "The King," Larix decidua, one of Mauro's best trees after styling.

Middle left: European Larch, Erik Krisovenski pot .

Middle right: In Brazil, Bonsai and Friends always go together, Thermas Internacional de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte (MG), Brazil.

Bottom: Mauro in Japan with friends: Keiichi Fujikawa, center, and Bjorn Bjorholm, left.



What are your strengths?

The vision to be able to see a particular form in the material that I am given. Also, to focus more on learning the techniques. As the better the techniques are applied, the better it is for the tree, its health and development, and its aesthetic improvement.

Do you have any weaknesses?

Definitely, in the past, as I have tried to be too quick in applying techniques and get things done faster than they should. Over time one learns to take time and learn from this to follow the rhythm of the trees.

What is it about the larch that fascinates you so much?



I have always loved the larch long before I started with bonsai. The thing about these trees that has always fascinated me has been the change of foliage color during different seasons of the year and also the change from a masculine form

Bottom: Fantastic mugo pine collected in the Dolomites.

Facing Page

Top: Sabina juniper - Erik Krisovenski container.

Bottom left and right: Ulmus pumila (autumn foliage and winter silhouette).

when without foliage to one with delicate, almost feminine foliage. I may also have a soft spot for larches due to the fact that the first tree that I ever collected was a larch. Even though I can not precisely state that this is my favorite species, it certainly does hold an important place in my heart.

Regarding your trips to the USA, your work on client's trees results in a beautiful tree styled by a talented artist, and you get an exciting video for your YouTube channel. How did this approach start?

Since 2012, thanks to my friend Jim Doyle from Nature's Way Bonsai, I had the chance to start working in the USA, and year after year, I met more and more people who wanted my help with their trees. The benefits are that I help them develop their trees season after season to become beautiful bonsai. Often, we start with the material, and we follow the process into a finished bonsai. The part about the videos is just because when I travel with my camera, I can make some good videos for my YouTube channel.

What inspired you to take your work to the internet?

My wife suggested that after I publish my book, where I show bonsai transformations, I should do

the same with video and start a YouTube channel. Every year I style for myself, my students, and clients many trees. It's worth the time to record and share the transformations giving some tips to people who want to follow my channel and learn.

Regarding bonsai hobbyists, do you have any advice to share with them?

With my experience and thinking about when I was just a bonsai hobbyist, it is normal that when we start, we want lots of trees to practice on and learn from. After years of practice, my advice is to reduce the number and increase the quality to concentrate on better trees. Give them perfect care and work on the ones that have a future as bonsai.

How do you wish to be remembered?

I want to be remembered for my trees and my passion for bonsai. In all the places that I have traveled in the world, I always show a positive attitude. This is what I want to transmit to all the people around me, that I enjoy what I do. This would be how I want to be remembered, for my passion for bonsai that allows me to work hard from morning to dawn on great trees and learn as much as possible from great people. 🌲





Trident maple over rock



Twisted scots pine from France



Taxus cuspidata - John Pitt pot



Austrian black pine -
Tokoname pot



Austrian scots pine - Chinese pot



Italian scots pine 'Godzilla' - Chinese pot

Facing page:

Spanish scots pine - Tokoname pot





Simply 'China!'

A Brief History of Chinese Ceramics—Earthenware and Porcelain

By Gudrun Benz, Germany



The square baroque museum complex of pavilions and galleries of the “Zwinger” in Dresden, Germany



Left inset: Overview of the gallery of Chinese porcelain at the Zwinger in Dresden

Right inset: “Blue and White” porcelain at the Zwinger Museum in Dresden



China is blessed by numerous wonders of nature and can also look back on one of the oldest civilizations and cultures going back thousands of years. This is also valuable for pottery development, which can be traced back over 8,000 years since the Neolithic period. The first products were hand-crafted earthenware vessels. The pottery wheel’s invention facilitated production and led to the establishment of workshops, the development and refinement of ceramic technology. The production of ceramics reached the first height during the Tang dynasty (614–907 AD). At this period, the ‘three-colored ware’ was the most famous. It was named because of the liberal use of yellow, green, and white glazes, even if other glazes were applied, such as blue, brown, and purple.

Nevertheless, the court favored the blue-green glazed celadon, an export item to Korea, Japan, and even Egypt

and Persia. The firing of porcelain developed significantly under the Song dynasty (960–1279). During the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), the technique of the high fired (about 1250–1400 °C) ‘blue and white’ porcelain was further developed and flourished during the Ming ((1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties. Cobalt blue paint was directly applied on the porcelain as an underglaze and then covered with another transparent glaze and fired. It was mainly produced in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, and widely exported to other Asian countries and Europe. This underglaze cobalt-painted porcelain became very popular worldwide, acquiring the name ‘Chinaware’ or simply ‘China.’ Besides these types of porcelain, there were other styles, for example, “Powder Blue, Famille Rose, Famille Verte” and more.

In the past and still today, Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province is the largest porcelain-producing area in China, if not in the world.



Top left: Porcelain Gallery in Dresden: "Chinese porcelain of the Kangxi era with powder-blue glaze and overdecoration in gold and silver. The porcelain's surface is covered with a powder-blue glaze. The underglaze blue was archived by spraying the cobalt pigment through a bamboo tube, covered at the end with gauze so that the particles landed on the surface in an uneven pattern. Parts not intended to be covered with blue color were reserved using paper-cut-outs."

Top right: "Famille Verte" porcelain painted in overglaze enamels, Kangxi era: A complex and imaginative design featuring scenes set against brocaded grounds that virtually cover the vessels' surface. The Famille Verte colors stand radiant and clear against the white ground.



Above: Museum Nanjing: porcelain vase of the "Famille Rose" with a design of peaches of long life and bat, a symbol of luck



Above: Museum Nanjing: Celadon ceramic was appreciated in the Far East countries because of its green glaze resembling jade.

Below: Museum Nanjing: "Blue and White" porcelain vases



It was fashionable among European aristocrats in the 17th and 18th centuries to collect art objects, especially paintings and Chinese porcelain. August the Strong (1670–1733), Elector of Saxony (Germany) and Poland's king, was an ardent collector of both paintings and porcelain. Besides the Serail Museum in Istanbul, the collection of Chinese porcelain in the Zwinger, a museum complex of baroque pavilions and galleries in Dresden, Germany, is the largest of the world outside China. There you can see different kinds of Chinese porcelain as well as Japanese, French and German porcelain. The latter was produced since the beginning



Top left: Porcelain at a market in Beijing in 2019: Nowadays, porcelain is mostly mass-produced, imitating traditional vessels and plates in shape and color.

Top right: Market in Beijing 2019: On the shelf, one can see imitations of different kinds of porcelain, at the right a vase in the Famille Rose style, in the middle a vase in Blue and White.

Upper middle right: A shop at a covered market outside of Guangzhou in 2016 offering a large scale of vases in different style and size

Left column and lower middle right: Potters making teapots and bonsai pot in Yixing using a variety of techniques.

Bottom left: Bonsai pots outside a kiln in Yixing.



of the 18th century in Meissen, near Dresden, when the secret of manufacturing porcelain was discovered by J. Friedrich Böttger (1682–1719).

Kilns

Pottery ovens are called kilns. A few kilns of ancient times still exist today. There are even some kilns in the traditional style which are in use.

We distinguish different kinds of kilns depending on their firing, the temperature produced and the type of fuel used. Wood-fired kilns were mainly found in the south of China, coal-fired kilns in the north of China. To reach high temperatures, a lot of wood was



Top: Nanfeng Ancient Kiln in Shiwan/Foshan near Guangzhou, 30 meters long, was first fired up in the Song dynasty.

Middle left: It is said that the kiln has never gone out since the day they fired it up.

Middle right: Inside the Shiwan kiln, which is winding up the slope. It is a so-called “dragon kiln” because it resembles a dragon.



needed that sometimes led to the disappearance of forests, whereas air pollution was a problem in other areas. Even at the end of the 20th century, a few tourist guide books warned people suffering from asthma when visiting Jingdezhen, China’s porcelain capital. Nowadays, most kilns have electrical heating together with automatic control of temperature. Kilns of ancient times with several chambers were called dragon kilns because they resembled a dragon (see fig. museum kiln in Shiwan). There is a touristic pottery village in Shiwan close to Foshan, South China, where ceramics are still produced in ancient kilns and sold to visitors.

Yixing—China’s pottery capital

Whereas Jingdezhen is the capital of Chinese porcelain, Yixing is China’s pottery capital. A big part of the city’s population is involved in the ceramic industry. Yixing is located at the Yangtze River Delta, Jiangsu Province, close to the city of Wuxi on the west coast of Tai Hu. The production of Yixing ceramics can be traced back more than 7,000 years. Especially since the Ming and Qing dynasties, the production of purple stoneware reached its peak. The purple sand clay for ceramic production is mined in the city’s surroundings, for example, in the “Yellow Dragon Mountain.” Clay



Top row, left to right: Example of a kiln at the Nanjing museum

A view into the kiln at the Nanjing museum

Electrical kiln in a small workshop in Yixing

Middle left: VIP people before the pottery museum in Yixing at the opening ceremony of the "First Yixing China International Art Festival of Pottery Flower Pots". Mrs. Helen Su, during her speech on behalf of BCI.



ware is usually unglazed. There are distinctive clays that show, after firing, striking colors—brown, beige, reddish-purple, yellow, black, blue, or green.

The city of Yixing is famous for its teapots. Since the 17th century, Yixing teapots have been exported to Europe. Yixing clay teapots are shaped by hand using wood and bamboo tools to manipulate the clay into form, while cheaper Yixing pots are produced by slipcasting. Individually made teapots can be extremely expensive, mainly when created by well-known artists. They are popular collector's items. In modern times, wage costs increased primarily for specialists and even more for famous artists. Smaller pottery factories or



Above: Teapots of different shape and color on display at the museum



Top left: Museum shop: a designer teapot at 36,000 Yuan (CNY) (about 4,610 Euro or 5,560 US \$)

Top right: Museum shop: designer teapot at 60,000 Yuan (CNY) (about 7,695 Euro or 9,275 US \$)

Middle, left and right: Teapots of different shapes and colors on display at the museum

Lower middle, left and right: Classical rectangular bonsai pot in typical reddish-purple color. Next to it, one can see a Bonsai pot with landscape design



Bottom, left and right: Bonsai pots with paintings and calligraphies



Top left: Large pot with symbols of long life (pine and cranes) and righteousness (bamboo)

Top right: Smaller bonsai pots in showcases

Middle right: At the "Yixing Redware Craft Factory of Jiangsu Province", an Eldorado for bonsai lovers

Bottom: Although earthenware bonsai pots dominate, there also exists exquisite porcelain bonsai pots in China. Here a pot from a private collection in Suzhou



workshops can hardly afford these wages, so they are restricted to mass production even if each item's quality is strictly controlled after firing.

Besides teapots, bonsai pots were also produced in Yixing in ancient times. Many of these pots were exported to Japan, where they were highly appreciated and rivaled Tokoname pots. Nowadays, some wealthy Chinese buy back such antique pots as national treasures.

The popularisation of bonsai culture has increased worldwide in the last decades. Therefore the requirement for good bonsai pots increased too. In the course of the last 30 years, bonsai pot production has expanded in Yixing. 🌸



Growing Together

Looking Back, Looking Forward

By Edwin Symmes, USA

In these very divisive times in America, strained by COVID-19 isolation and restrictions on what just a year ago was our normal lives, I found these opening words written nearly a half-century ago particularly appropriate.

We are cataloging our extensive collection of books about bonsai.

A Journal from 1972 had a note paper-clipped to it from the editor thanking me for the article I had written for them. Signed “dotty.” Well, that slowed down my cataloging work, ’cause now I needed to see what it was that I wrote. Just by coincidence, the note was written on my birthday.

The coming bonsai convention would be held jointly by the American Bonsai Society and Bonsai Clubs International.

We hosted it in Atlanta. I wrote a preview for the Journal about the convention.

We came up with the theme Bonsai Congress—“BC-73, Growing Together”—to help these two groups learn how incredible the members of each group were: How much they could help each other in America; this land where numerous species are well suited to bonsai training; this land where people scattered all across the country needed similar supplies of pots, tools, and specimens; this land where the two organizations had had an unnecessary rivalry.

In these very divisive times in America, strained by COVID-19 isolation and restrictions on what just a year ago was our normal lives, I found these opening words written nearly a half-century ago particularly appropriate.

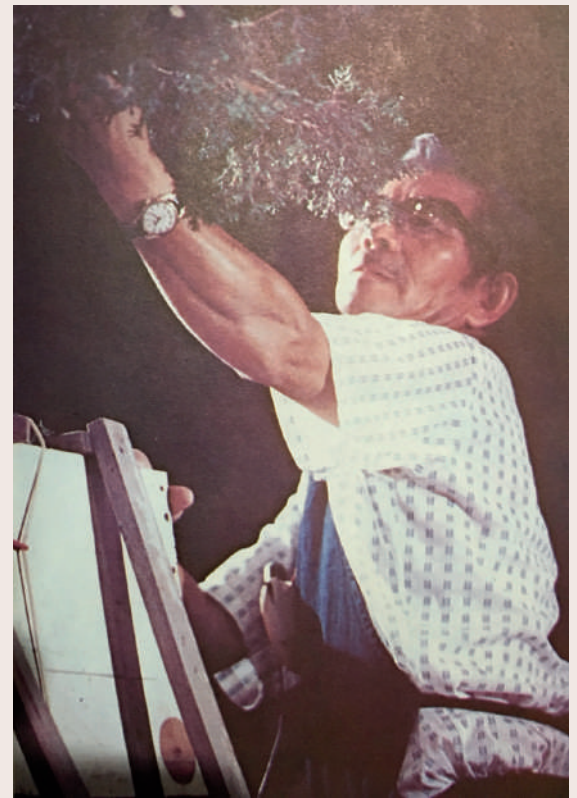
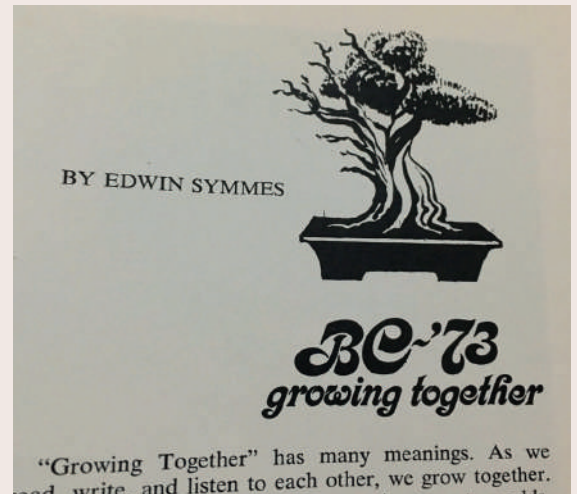
“Growing Together has many meanings. As we read, write and listen to each other, we grow together. The roots and crown of a tree grow in separate worlds, but they are mutually dependant and can only grow well, together.”

Reading that text today, I still like the analogy that my 33-year-old past-self came up with. In our emerging from COVID struggle, we might think of how business leaders and political leaders must work together to help America and the rest of the world recover.

We also chose the theme of featuring native plants and speakers who live right here. Some were trained in Japan, and some have lived here their whole life. BC-73 brought them all together. My business was graphic design, so I also designed the logo for the event.

My recollection is that occasionally one bonsai club would invite a Master from Japan to America and have them do a week-long residence and then return home.

After BC-73, a new plan was devised: A Master would be invited to come from Japan. The Master would stay a day or two at each of several clubs. The clubs divided



Top right: From the *American Bonsai Society Journal*, Volume 6, number 4, 1973, By Edwin Symmes

Bottom right: John Naka at BC-73, Atlanta, Georgia

up the fare for Masters’ first leg from Japan to the USA. Then each group would pay for the travel from the last group. The last leg back to Japan was again divided up. In that way, we in Atlanta and the Florida groups shared teachings that we never could have afforded if we were to bring a Master all the way from Japan.

Top left: My wife and I then produced the journal of the event, *Native Treasures*. It was a great privilege to put together the stories of our American Bonsai Masters creating new works from American species.

Top right: Bristlecone Pine tree

Middle right: Osaka Expo Bonsai Exhibit

Bottom right: Osaka Expo Book Signatures



We are no longer involved in bonsai, so I don't know if this is still done. I am pretty sure something that complex with significant dollar commitments would not have been possible without the goodwill generated by working together and growing together.

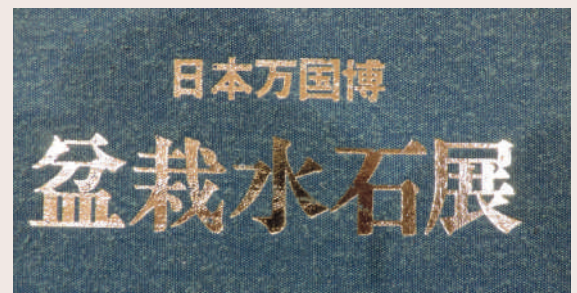
The theme of native plants resulted in two very memorable events for me. I was the photographer for the event, so I had free access to all the programs. By sneaking up right in front, I got a dynamic image of John Naka working on a large juniper. My wife and I then produced the journal of the event, *Native Treasures*. It was a great privilege to put together the stories of our American Bonsai Masters creating new works from American species.

We had been selling imported bonsai books from Japan to help further the study here in America. We would travel to the annual bonsai conventions, sell them and distribute catalogs for year-round mail order fulfillment. After a seminar in California, we took some extra time to travel to the Inyo National Forest on the east side of the state to photograph the bristlecone pines. They are magnificent specimens, living into the thousands of years, high in the mountains where the wind whips them into perfect bonsai shape—except that some of them are 35 feet tall. And they are 10,000 feet up the mountain. Living in Georgia, it's a real thrill to stand on dirt that's higher than the airlines fly along the East Coast.

When the American National Bonsai Collection was dedicated in Washington, D.C., trees were donated by Japanese growers to create the collection. A special quarantine building was built to house them before putting them on display. A special opening ceremony was prepared, and many of the growers from Japan attended. When I heard they were coming, I offered to

put together a slide program with my bristlecone pine photos to show the donors some amazing American trees. The U.S. National Arboretum accepted. I had been doing bonsai for enough years to know a few Japanese words—names like maple trees are *momiji*, pines are *matsu*, and that raw finger pointing to heaven at the top of the tree is called *jin*. But not much more.

My program was scheduled for late in the day. The delegates gathered in the hall. There was a steady hum of Japanese as they re-lived the amazing events of the



day. Then the lights went down, and I started showing the photographs of the mountain and the scenery. I was narrating in English, but no one was interpreting. Yikes! Then I got to the first of the large tree images similar to the one here. “Jin!” popped out of the crowd. That’s the word I know!!! Once it was out, “Jin!” almost simultaneously worked its way around the room.

The rest of the program was accompanied by the delegates talking about each new photo among themselves. I believe that they enjoyed the pictures of beautiful American trees. And they gave me a memory that still thrills me over 40 years later.

As I packed up my program and accepted appreciation from the attendees, I realized that at least this one evening, people from America and Japan, without even speaking each other’s language, were able to share peace and joy.

Because some of the growers who donated to our collection had also recently been invited to the Osaka Expo ’70 bonsai and suiseki show, I brought along my copy of their commemorative album. It was fun having some of them point out their trees in the book and in our new collection. Then, the exhibition director and the resident caretaker who volunteered to live there for the 6 months of the show pulled out pens and autographed the book!!!

More Joy!

It seems that this “togetherness” idea is something that I’ve had on my mind for a while. We are currently preparing to move. In sorting through years of advertising designs and production art, I found an advertisement layout and copy for a full-page magazine ad for the Fulton National Bank, which ran in the 1970s. Although impossible to prove today, it’s highly likely that writing the bonsai copy nudged the direction that the bank text took.

Top right is the original sketch I prepared to sell the idea to the bank. Attached was a sheet with the original copy. Actually written on my original manual Royal Model I typewriter.

Someone Had to Throw the Ball...

Passing is a specialty –

Receiving is a specialty –

And several other specialists are needed to ensure scoring the goal!

It’s only when specialists work together that they become a Full-Service Team.

In football and in finance, the team accomplishes more!

The remainder of the copy was specifically about banking.

In keeping with our theme of Japanese arts, the time requirements to take proper care of our bonsai became more than I could devote as our businesses grew in the 1970s. By the mid-1980s, a friend had introduced me to the Japanese Martial Art of Archery—*Kyudo*. The time commitments worked much better for our lifestyle.

When America hosted the first International Kyudo Seminar and testing in 1993, there was only my group in Atlanta and another in California. We collaborated



with the California hosts to do specific things that those of us from Georgia were responsible for doing. Working together, it was a great success. As the president of the only other Kyudo group in America, I was asked to write something for the program. I wrote about the analogy of how an orchestra has to work together to make beautiful music. The reader might enjoy thinking of ways to flesh-out that idea.

At this point in my Kyudo journey, I have the 5th Dan ranking and the *Renshi* teaching certificate.

Sorting through our collection of bonsai things has been a joyous journey through the decades. A Rolodex worth of names has cascaded back through my consciousness—Connie and Horace Hinds, George and Florence Hull, George and LaRose Page, Dotty, Felton Jones, Ed Potter, Jim Barrett, Betty and Grover Meinert, Pete Demos, Andy Anderson, Lynn Perry, Jon and Beverly Barbour, Brussels, Frank Okamura, Chase and Connie Rosade, Jerry Stovall, Bill Valavanis, George Okamura, George Nakamura, Tom Scott, George Gray, Bey Oortman, Morris Stevens, Martha Dull, Jerry Stowell, John Naka, Sig Dreilinger, Grace Suzuki, Donna Scott, and especially Yuji Yoshimura.

When we grow together for mutual benefit, even without direct sustenance for decades, good things persevere. 🌱

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: I asked my mom for a bonsai for high school graduation. She refused. I begged my newly divorced father for a bonsai for graduation. Giving me a typewriter he said, “You’ll need this in college.”

I did, and now, 65 years later, I’ve published some books on bonsai including the original Guide to the National Bonsai Collection and here I am, still writing about bonsai.

Top right is the original sketch I prepared to sell the idea to the bank. It seems that this “togetherness” idea is something that I’ve had on my mind for a while.

Edwin Symmes, 5th Dan, Instructor in the All Japan Kyudo Federation.



Story of an Old Contorted Mountain Pine



Mario Pavone, Italy
BCI/IBS Instructor

L'artiglio (The Claw)

Text and photos by Mario Pavone, Italy

Translation by Joe Grande



Views of the tree upon arrival in my garden about eight years ago. It was love at first sight!

This old mountain pine collected in the Italian Alps became part of my collection about eight years ago, and for me, it was immediately “love at first sight.” Under the old and thick bark, it revealed curves and portions of really remarkable and exciting deadwood. The vegetation was unfortunately quite long, but this did not worry me because when you get hold of a plant, in my opinion, it is first of all necessary to evaluate the trunk. Then, with the appropriate techniques and fertilization, the vegetation can be shortened quite easily, especially with a species like a mountain pine which is very generous with its growth. With the climate in Northern Italy, I believe that the mountain pine has a remarkable ability to form new back buds, resulting in compacting the plant in a relatively short time.

As you can see in the photographs, the tree was placed in a relatively large black plastic cultivation pot when collected. Initially, this worried me, thinking about the root system, which in the first repotting after harvesting, there always remains a question mark regarding the number of roots and their arrangement.

The plant was left to grow two more years after arriving in the garden, to help the rooting even more. In the meantime, I determined how to work the deadwood that had remained hidden under the old bark. With the help of manual and non-electric tools, as you can clearly see from the photographs, truly exceptional deadwood materialized before my eyes, created solely by mother nature in an unreachable way by the hand of man. Before working on the vegetation, I want to clarify that the plant must always be balanced at the root

Top left: The tree was left free to grow for another two years.

Middle left: Mario Pavone working the dry wood parts of the plant with manual tools.

Top right, middle center and middle right: Result of deadwood work.



While the tree was allowed to grow freely, I worked the deadwood that had remained hidden under the old bark.

level. It makes no sense for me to start working on the vegetation even before establishing the root system. It is a waste of time. Therefore, the first intervention was to transfer the plant from the plastic cultivation pot into a stoneware pot of the right size, almost completely removing the old harvested earth. In general, it was an asphyxiating clay for the roots. However, the root system was very beautiful, healthy, and with many fine roots, capillaries, and mycorrhizae. Above all, it was very contained, no longer having taproots. I was prompted to place it in a brown stoneware pot, in my opinion, with the correct dimensions but not yet definitive as a design.

I used 100% pumice for the growing media to enable the plant to emit new fine roots once again. The plant remained in the new pot for another two years, with Japanese fertilization and pruning protocols that I learned during my study trip at Master Kunyo Kobayashi's Shunka-en. After this period, a further non-aggressive repotting was made. This time using soil composed of 70% akadama and 30% Kiryu. After a few months, I styled the foliage for the first time. I

achieved a reasonably good level of definition, thanks also to constant pruning and the abundant emission of back buds on the old branches. At this time, long branches and those not necessary for the future design were cut off.

In the following months, the copper wire from the first styling was removed from the plant to allow it to grow freely until it was worked for the second time in the autumn of 2020. I managed to reach an even higher definition in this case. If the proper techniques of pruning and fertilization are used, the plant grows abundantly, and, in doing so, fewer wiring steps are needed to arrive at excellent definitions of vegetation. I want to specify that the deadwood, apart from a few small areas, was processed solely by mother nature. In the freezing winters in Northern Italy, with night temperatures that often plunge to -8° to -10°C , I have used a method that has been proven over the years. I spray the deadwood with cold water on these frigid



After two years of growth, the deadwood looked more natural. Now it was time to place the tree in a new stoneware pot using 100% pumice.

nights a few hours before sunset and let the water enter the small cracks already present. The freezing water increases in volume during the frosty night and creates ever-larger and accentuated cracks in the wood. I believe that this pine's transformation in a few years from its harvest to today is truly incredible and portends an even more beautiful future for a mountain pine called "the claw" due to the portion of deadwood below. It almost faithfully reproduces the claw of an eagle. This plant also has another beautiful feature—really short needles. In spring, the candles do not elongate like those of the Scots pine or the black pine (*Kuromatsu*). They open in a "rosette" like those of the white pine (*Goyomatsu*). This plant will be ready for an exhibition no earlier than five or six years when the vegetation will also mature well. In the meantime, I will look for a definitive pot that will be like the shape of the current one, but in my opinion, it should have a side panel frame or some other element that strengthens the whole. 🌲



The first intervention was to transfer the plant from the plastic cultivation pot into a stoneware pot of the right size, almost completely removing the old harvested earth.



Middle right: Plant after another two years and in the new potting mix 100% akadama and 30% kiryu



Top left and right: After repotting the tree in the new stoneware pot.

Middle left: This species also has another beautiful feature—really short needles. In spring, the candles open in a “rosette” like those of the white pine.

Bottom right: Plant after the first styling.

Bottom left: Detail of the deadwood after which the plant “L’artiglio” (the Claw) takes its name.



first styling



I spray the deadwood with cold water a few hours before sunset and let the water enter the small cracks already present. The water freezes, increasing in volume during the frosty night, and creates ever-larger and accentuated cracks in the wood.

Top four photos: Details of deadwood and curves.

Bottom: After the second styling, L'artiglio is showing its promise of becoming a masterpiece.



second styling

Finding the Gem Within:

The Process of Styling Conifer Materials From Humble Beginnings

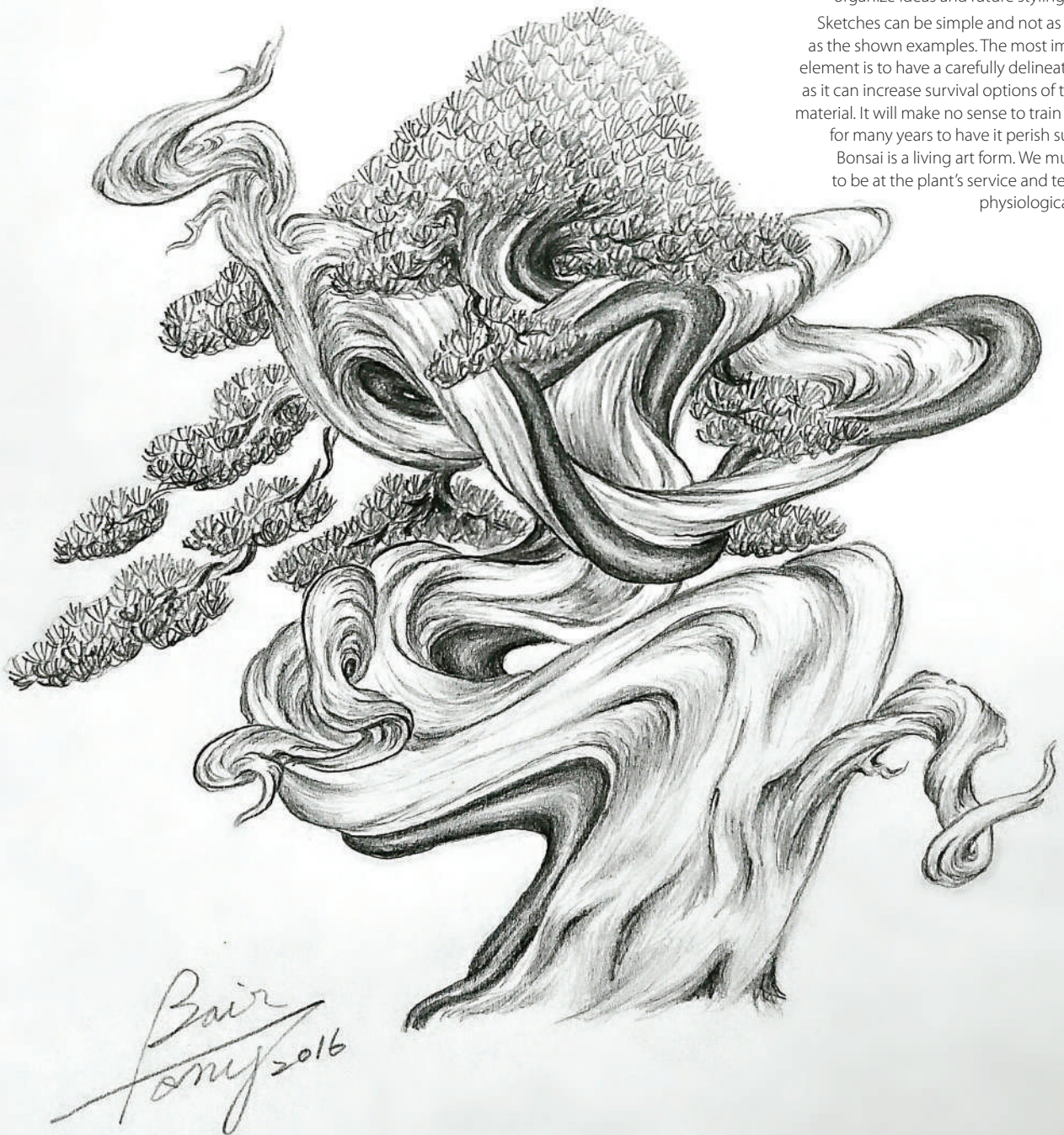
By Bai Jia Qian (白家謙) (also known as Tony Smith), Taiwan

Contributing Author: José Luis Rodríguez Macías

Careful planning of the future design is of pivotal importance. A mental picture of the twists, turns and leaf/branch arrangements can be methodically sketched in order to organize ideas and future styling options

Sketches can be simple and not as intricate as the shown examples. The most important element is to have a carefully delineated plan, as it can increase survival options of the plant material. It will make no sense to train material for many years to have it perish suddenly!

Bonsai is a living art form. We must strive to be at the plant's service and tend to its physiological needs.



Creating Yamadori in Taiwan

Taiwan is a small country in Southeast Asia comprised of an area of 35,808 square kilometers (13,826 sq. mi), with mountain ranges dominating the eastern two-thirds and plains in the western third, where its highly urbanized population is concentrated.

Global warming and climate change have prompted ecological awareness and the desire to preserve natural resources. With the enactment of the environmental protection plan in 1998, during the last twenty (20) years, the Taiwanese National Council for Sustainable Development has enacted over 417 environmental laws and regulations, including the Basic Law of the



Top right: Bai Jia Qian, or Tony Smith as his Facebook followers know him, works on a large field-grown pine.

Middle left: This pine has been ground-cultivated for many years. In a way, the twists and turns are reminiscent of the alpine environment, which produces the characteristics we all appreciate as bonsai practitioners.

Middle right: After careful removal from the ground, the pine displays a compact root system that qualifies it as an excellent candidate. This is the result of years of carefully prepping the material.

Bottom: Not everything is peaches and cream! There are several flaws that need to become attributes. For instance, several sacrifice limbs which are now dead need to be fixed and the branches must be repositioned to achieve the design plan I have in mind.



Top left: With the aid of a chisel, needle nose pliers and a little force, the fibers are carefully pulled to reveal the paths created by the natural wood grain.

Top right: The jin and shari must replicate the natural deadwood we see on natural trees, so tearing the wood must follow the grain. I prefer hand tools, as I am not fond of the unsightly tool marks left behind by mechanical devices.

Bottom left: After shaping the branches and reducing the stumps, the drastic and radical movement of the piece is revealed, serving as further inspiration and emotions to procure its completion as a work of art.



The scarcity of materials, staggering price tags, hefty fines and jail time that come with illegal collecting and the lack of conifer materials suitable for bonsai practice enticed early Taiwanese pioneers to grow pine and juniper trees suitable for our subtropical weather.

Environment, and has adopted the principles of all the United Nation's (UN) environmental conventions and protocols for compliance. Naturally, this "ecological awareness" found its way into bonsai art and forces have shifted towards the development of bonsai from renewable and sustainable practices. As ecological consciousness becomes commonplace, the focus has moved away from yamadori (山採) hunting and replaced with seed, nursery stock and field development. Although yamadori hunting and plant collection is strictly prohibited by law, some important Taiwanese Masterpieces that were brought from the mountains and seashores prior to the hunting ban (mostly tropical broadleaf) still remain and can be seen throughout the island. On a side note, only a handful of these natural wonders are conifer material with little to no junipers.

The scarcity of materials, staggering price tags, hefty fines and jail time that come with illegal collecting and the lack of conifer materials suitable for bonsai practice enticed early Taiwanese pioneers to grow pine and juniper trees suitable for our subtropical weather. They had no other alternative. Of course, trial and error practices were focused in recreating that high mountain-tortuous quality that gives naturally stunted trees their coveted charm. As of today, and with an excess of thirty years of practice, the Taiwanese Juniper (*Juniperus chinensis*), the Taiwanese Buddhist Pine (*Podocarpus costalis*), the Taiwan Five Needle Pine (*Pinus morrisonicola*) and the Taiwanese Red Pine (*Pinus massoniana*) have proved to be the most resilient.

Expressing Nature

Creativity is the driving force of hope. Within the creative process, with adequate techniques, colorful imagination and added elements of time, the hopes and dreams of achieving quality bonsai art become a reality. With that being said, when it comes to developing bonsai



Top left: As stated earlier, sketching is a good way to plan our work. One thing is certain, because bonsai is a living art, design ideas may change with the development of the tree. This way, a symbiotic relationship between the plant material and the artist prospers.

Top right and middle right: Material which has been carefully prepared in the field will offer ample opportunities in bonsai art. The quality of the final product resides of the artist, as his or her ability will determine the beauty of the completed design.



Bottom left: Time is an essential element in bonsai art. Unfortunately, there is no way to cut corners. Essentially, besides art and horticulture, bonsai is a waiting game. Ground-cultivation is an excellent way to speed up the development of material before it goes into a container.

Bottom right: *Pinus morrisonicola* or the Taiwanese five needle pine is one of my favorite materials. While in the ground, limbs and trunks are bent with wires and nylon thread to create interesting shapes.

Top left: Taking advantage of the increased vitality plants have on the ground, bark is purposely shaved off in some areas and allowed to heal up again. This will contribute to the overall look of the material and will definitely add some much needed character. Basically, we emulate some of the accidents that the material will face in the wild nature. Fortunately, we can control the healing process and carefully monitor the progress of the trees.

Middle left: After several years of careful cultivation, the materials gains density and character.



Juniper Sequence

1. Simple five- to seven-year-old cutting grown materials can be trained to emulate the twisted character of old juniper trees.

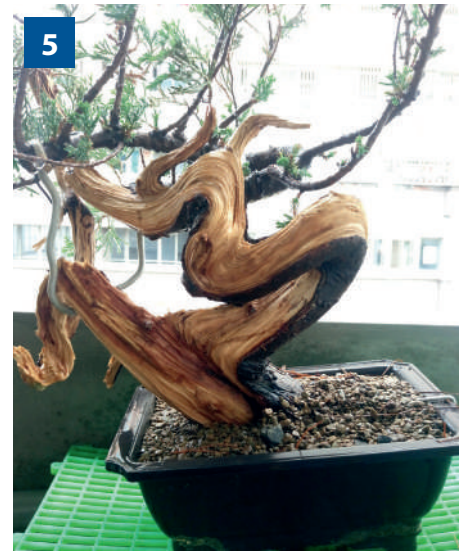
2. Although completely container cultivated, the main limbs and branches were carefully wired for future trunk line options, as well as having jin and shari opportunities

from humble beginnings, inspiration and creativity are indispensable, but they are nothing without technique, timing and horticultural knowledge of the plant species.

In nature, where the truly exceptional alpine species grow, trees with sharp bends, exposed wood, irregular foliage placement and unpredictable-wild movements are the norm. Snow, strong wind, sandblasting from wind gusts and the breaking of branches to later expose the heartwood to the elements of nature are examples of the characteristics one must strive to replicate in order to truly represent the alpine environment in miniature. Although movement is a special feature that draws the imagination of many, one must not succumb to the temptation of repetition. Strong movement, natural movement, is comprised of unpredictable strokes;

Stay away from the squiggly wiggles! So, how do we emulate this special character of nature in pine and juniper? Let's take a look.

Planning ahead is always the best choice when facing material. Perhaps, to the untrained eye, the features of deformed trunks and irregularly swollen and twisted branches of a pine and juniper represent flaws. On the opposite end of the spectrum, these same grotesque features awaken the creative muse and give personality to the finished product. Plants dance to their own drummer. They will grow or perish as they please. We can only do our best to give them quality of life. Because of this, careful preparation of the general health of the material and, perhaps, sketching the planned design in anticipation of shaping is a safe method to organize

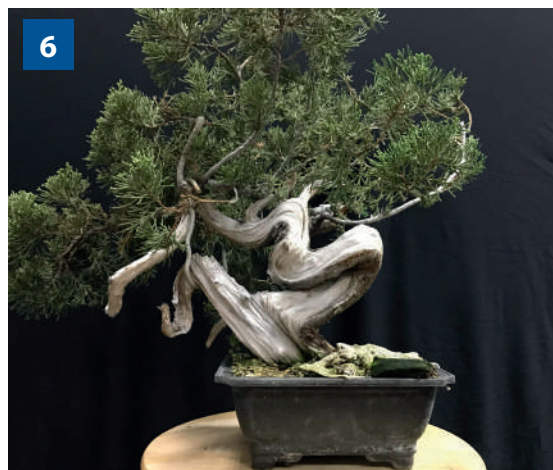


one's thoughts, devise the materials and techniques needed to perform the tasks and pay respect to the future creation. All in all, we are dealing with a living organism and we must take care of it and preserve its integrity. Remember, bonsai is a living art form!

Timing and Risk Management

Within the following paragraphs, we include details that, when taken into consideration, will allow the creator to safely apply techniques, without the added worry of failure.

In the tropical climate and in any climate for that matter, timing is everything. In my ecosystem, for example, Shari and Jin creation, heavy bending and root



3.-4. During winter months, sap flow is heavily reduced, so debarking trunk and branches to add character elements to the design is safest.

5. Needle nose pliers are an excellent resource to remove wood fibers, one by one. Hand carving freshly created deadwood results in a perfectly natural look. A good option is to let the tree recover after creating jin and shari.

6. Once growth has resumed, we can always shape the branches. Remember, it's always the best idea to play it safe!!!

7. With the advent of time, the design structure will mature into pleasing forms. (Front view after shaping)

Juniper Sequence

10- to 15-year Medium size material

For comparison purposes, we include a simple medium sized tree.



What better way to pay homage to these natural wonders by replicating their traits with patience and techniques?





5

pruning must be performed during periods of restricted vascular activity. In Taiwan, heavy bending and fiber carving to add deadwood elements is performed in the time span from the end of November until mid to late February. For instance, if these same tasks are

performed during hot summer months or after the rainy season, you take the risk of detaching the bark from the heartwood and, essentially, kill the tree. When vascular activity of trunk and branches is reduced, the bark remains firmly attached to the wood, thus the

chances of success after seriously changing branch angles are increased. The added safety of using Raffia or Nylon thread also serve the purpose of procuring higher chances of survival.

In the identical sense, the same applies to carving and adding deadwood features to the composition. In root specific conifers like juniper, after carefully examining the flow of the waterlines to the branches, during the same previously mentioned period, one can safely remove sections of the bark, slowly discovering the hidden contours that are revealed by means of fiber carving, without the hassles of excessive bleeding, life line shrinkage and loss of sap. With pine and juniper we also must be careful not to cross section and interrupt sap flow by removing the bark and cambium. Always make sure the cuts give way to vascular flow. These are easy-logical steps to consider while planning the creative process.

Another precaution that is pivotal to ensure the success of styling involves pure horticulture. For example, after largely modifying the angle of branches, debarking and hand caving sections of the trunk or massively pruning portions of the leaf mass, it's always best to let the tree recover and reserve replanting for a later time. Of course, water monitoring and sun exposure must be closely observed to be successful. Remember, bonsai is all about the road, enjoying the journey and having live, vigorous material. It will make no sense to create a dead masterpiece! By taking our time and enjoying the process, we have something to look forward to. Time for detail refinement and tweaking for perfection will come. Trust me, your trees will appreciate the downtime.

Always play it safe and avoid risks. Time is the most important element in bonsai creation. Although I am only a bonsai hobbyist, my profession as a locksmith has given me the opportunity to understand the flow of mechanics and the importance of appreciating time. By rushing through the styling process and only aiming for the end result, mistakes are made; mistakes that can prove fatal when dealing with plant life.

Commitment to the Process

When I first embarked in the journey of bonsai, I remember that my initial materials were only the size of a thumb and I too was like a child like them. I didn't know anything about bonsai, but I knew that creating bonsai takes time. It may take us decades or even a lifetime. I often asked myself, "If it takes so long to create bonsai materials from young trees, is it too meaningless?" After serious meditation, I began to think about what exactly should be created within a person's limited life. Can we create old trees that have experienced hundreds or even thousands of vicissitudes like their counterparts in the natural environment? Frankly, I don't know. What I do know is that there is only one direction on this road, that is, to create bonsai materials that are more yamadori than yamadori. I don't know if I will be able to reach

my destination, but I am already on my way! This is my original intent.

Bonsai farming is perhaps the most important element in really giving a future to bonsai art, at the same time, allowing the natural environment to flourish without human intervention. Naturally stunted trees serve a purpose in the microclimates they live in. On coastal landscapes, they prevent erosion, while on mountain-scapes, they also help the otherwise fragile ground remain in place. There is a reason to why they are there; they serve a purpose. Cultivating materials on the field is the perfect ecological way to preserve the natural resources for future generations. We all want our children and grandchildren to enjoy our natural resources. Besides, Yamadori trees are set by nature and it is difficult to claim ownership on the inherent beauty of a collected tree as it was really shaped by mother nature.

Forests are fragile environments and stunted trees play an important role in those ecosystems. As they say, imitation is the best form of flattery! What better way to pay homage to these natural wonders by replicating their traits with patience and techniques? I invite you to venture into the realm of respecting nature and to practice sustainable bonsai art. Make the world green again! 🌱

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