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# bc*i*

# Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

2020

# Q3

**BONSAI AND SUISEKI IN THE MIDDLE OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC**

**MAKING DAIZA FOR SUISEKI VIEWING STONES**

**CANADIAN BONSAI GOES VIRTUAL**

**A GRAND BONSAI OPERA: THE TAIKAN-TEN IN KYOTO**

**THE LUCKNOW BONSAI SUMMIT 2020**

**STYLING A *JUNIPERUS SABINA* "RASTRERA"**

**STYLING AN OLD *TAXUS BACCATA***

**2020 BCI TREE AND STONE  
OF THE YEAR WINNERS!**

**A TRIBUTE TO  
DR. JONATHAN SINGER**

**REVIEW: BONSAI EMPIRE  
KIMURA MASTERCLASS**



**On exhibit at Taikan-ten,  
Tokyo, Japan, 2019.**

*Diospyros kaki*, also called  
the persimmon, Oriental  
persimmon or kaki,  
Photo by Florentine Grunwald,  
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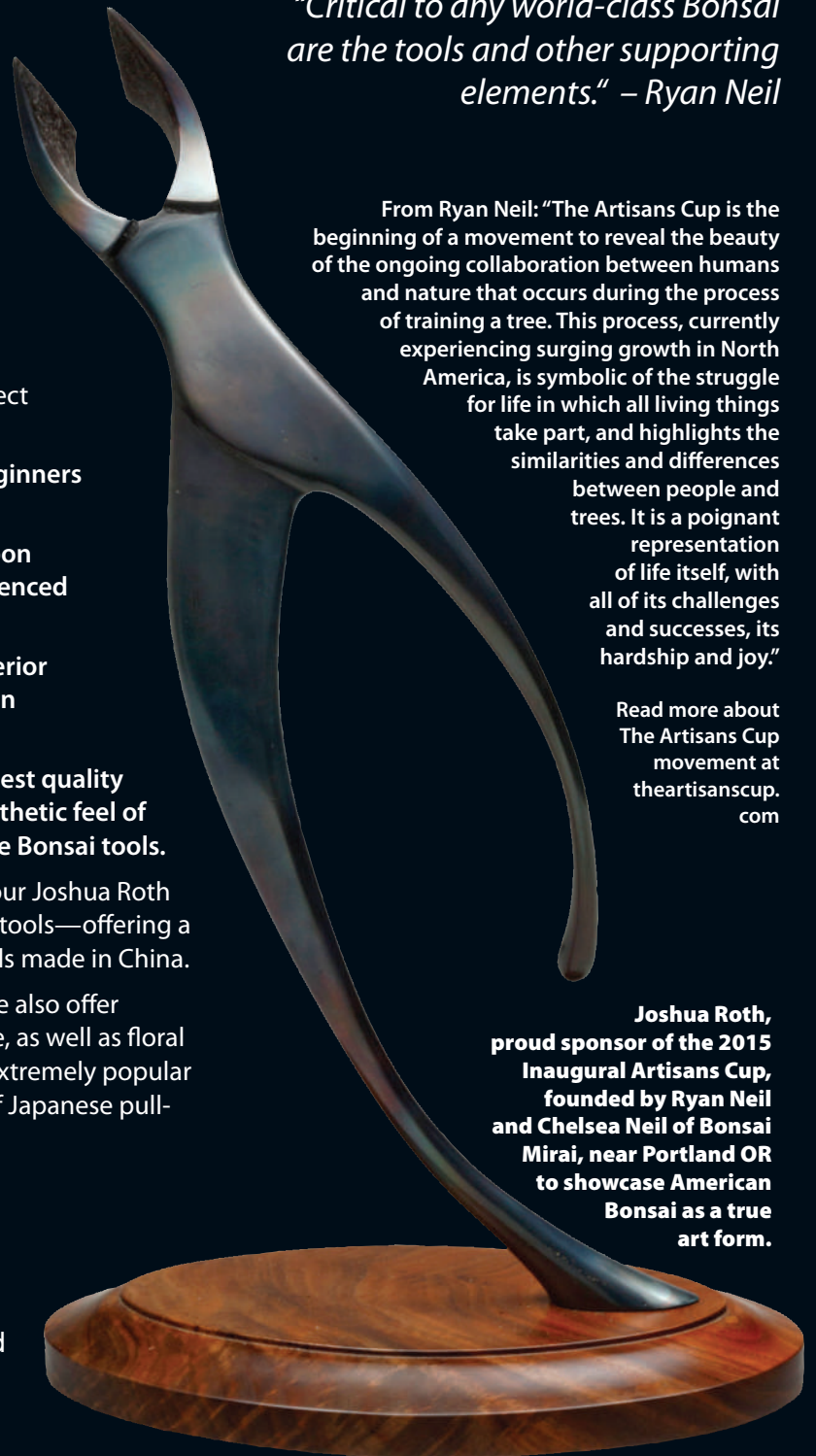
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## President's Message

I hope you are all staying safe and well during these unprecedented times. The world and everyone's lives have changed so much during this pandemic. Personally, being in self-isolation has given Lindsay and me time to relax and regenerate. We enjoy traveling, sharing and gaining knowledge, catching up with old friends, and meeting new bonsai and stone people. Still, the past few years have been full-on with dozens of domestic and international events each year. Last year we had as little as one week between some overseas events. To say we were physically exhausted would be an understatement. Our own bonsai collection in need of much attention and our bank account taking a hit!

We made a list of things we need to do while in "lockdown." Top of the list was to paint our living room, which has wood panels that darken the room. A lighter color paint would make for a much brighter room.

Fast forward several months. We are so relaxed, enjoying long lunches and nice wine while overlooking our bonsai garden during our mild winter. Listening to the gentle water flow from the new addition of a Tsukubai made and installed by Lindsay. Our bonsai are looking great after much care and attention, and we've also added several new creations. We've also been getting creative with companion plants and set up a new area just for them. Setting up some display ideas with Lindsay's newly created stands and Malle root pot creations, ready for the next event, when we can share our bonsai and stones creations. Another addition to our garden is a bamboo pole feature in our dry river bed. Our acreage property, after a full clean up, is now looking great. Our small orchard has produced more fruit this year due to our being around to feed the trees! I've made tangelo, mandarin, lime, and kumquat marmalade in abundance! Unfortunately, you guessed it, our living room hasn't been painted as yet. You can see where both our priorities are.

You can read what other BCI members have been doing during isolation in an article by BCI Business Manager, Larry Stephen, in this issue. I think we are going to see some very lovely well-groomed bonsai when we can get back to exhibits and events.

Fortunately, the US company that prints our magazine is still operating and has no problems producing the magazine. Unfortunately, we have no control over the international post, and some countries are not accepting international mail. Delays are expected in most countries due to fewer flights. We ask you to please be patient. You can access e-magazines via the members' area on the website.

Sadly the BCI Convention scheduled for Washington DC in October has been canceled. Korea and Indonesia BCI Regional Events will be rescheduled next year when international restrictions are lifted.



BCI's main source of income is from memberships and conventions. With no convention income this year, we need to look at other sources of revenue. We had planned to hold an auction in conjunction with the Washington Convention. We will still conduct an auction online in October. We already have some donations but need many more. You hold on to the item and just send a photo with description and weight. The winning bidder will also pay for shipping/postage from the donor country/region. If you have any items you would like to donate, please contact BCI Business Manager, me, or any BCI Board member.

Congratulations to the winners of the Tree and Viewing Stone Competition, which was decided by our membership. Peter Hanrahan for his Eucalyptus Nicholii Bonsai and Lindsay Bebb for his Kamogawa Viewing Stone. Thank you to everyone who entered trees and stones and also members who voted. An exceptional thanks to the cash donors. We will relaunch the competition in 2021 with a new format.

We are currently holding a video competition. Details on how to enter are available on the BCI website, Youtube channel, and Facebook page. If you want more information, please contact Sujata Bhat, BCI Director and Chair of the Education Committee. Bonnie and Joe can also help with any editing needed.

While I'm trying to be very optimistic during these tough times, it's easy to get overwhelmed by the tragic impact on lives and the economy this pandemic is having on everyone. As some restrictions are being lifted and our lives are slowly returning to a "new normal", please continue to take all necessary precautions and stay safe. 🌲

Cheers from Down Under,  
Glenis Bebb

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

**BCI will conduct an auction online in October. We already have some donations but need many more. The winning bidder will pay for shipping/postage from the donor country/region.**

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

**We are raising funds for the future of BCI!  
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*Remember BCI in your will, your trust, your future!*

For more information contact:

Glenis Bebb, [president@bonsai-bci.com](mailto:president@bonsai-bci.com)



## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

**T**he lead article in this edition was the brainchild of Larry Stephan, BCI Business Manager. At his direction, BCI asked members to tell their stories about how the COVID-19 pandemic, now in its sixth month, affected their bonsai and suiseki practice. For Budi Sulisty, BCI Director in Indonesia, it was a blessing. Like many other members have reported, the lockdown and quarantines provided time and focus that has helped us improve our trees and stones. How does this compare to your experience? Drop us a line.

As we concentrate on bonsai's solitary aspect, social media and video conferences keep us connected and engaged. Disappointed with canceled or postponed meetings, exhibits, and conventions, bonsai enthusiasts have adapted quickly, learning new communication skills. Joan Greenway and Vianney Leduc produced a virtual Canadian bonsai show on Facebook. My favorite comment about this show was from a bonsai artist on Vancouver Island who said he had no idea that Canada had so many good bonsai. This is an example of an unexpected and positive result of a global pandemic.

A new contributor to this magazine who is passionate about bonsai and suiseki submitted an excellent article on her recent pilgrimage to Japan. Florentine Grunwald's compelling words and beautiful photographs will surely satisfy the wanderlust many of us are feeling at this time. I encourage you to read this article.

BCI Directors Sujata Bhat and Bhavna Shaw report on the Lucknow Bonsai Summit that took place just before everything shut down. The summit featured headliners from India, and Central and South America who specialize in tropical species. India continues to innovate in penjing and rock arrangements.

Nigel Atkinson has been busy carving bases for his stones, anticipating a suiseki exhibit at the 9th World Bonsai Convention 2021 in Perth, Australia. He shares with us a primer on how to carve daiza for suiseki.

Two more articles feature BCI Instructors Marco Tarozzo and Mario Pavone and their amazing skills in styling exceptional Mediterranean specimens. Their step-by-step process is sure to inform and inspire.

This magazine has featured the superlative photography and books of Jonathan Singer. Michael Collins McIntyre, who wrote these articles and reviews, became a close friend of Jonathan's. Michael pays tribute to his friend, who recently passed away and who left an indelible mark on the world of art, photography, bonsai, and viewing stones.

We conclude with a review of the Kimura Masterclass, an educational offering from Bonsai Empire. Coincidentally, Oscar Jonker, the founder of Bonsai Empire, and master Masahiko Kimura started their bonsai journey at the age of 15. 🌳

—Joe Grande, Canada

## MISSION STATEMENT

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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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Issue	Month	Closing Date
Q1	J/F/M	December 1
Q2	A/M/J	March 1
Q3	J/A/S	June 1
Q4	O/N/D	September 1



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*Diospyros kaki*, also called the persimmon, Oriental persimmon or kaki,  
Photo by Florentine Grunwald, Germany

# Bonsai and Suiseki in the Middle of a Global Pandemic

By Larry Stephan, USA



In just a few short months, the Corona virus has swept around the world. The impacts have been devastating. For those of us who cherish the arts of Bonsai and Stone appreciation, it has resulted in isolation from our friends, teachers, and fellow club members. Exhibits all over the globe have been canceled or postponed until next year. Online meetings have become the norm in many countries. Even as I write some countries, states, provinces, and regions are opening up to various degrees. Other areas are still undergoing massive increases in infection rates,

hospitalizations, and deaths. Face masks may be the new norm until someone discovers a vaccine and can produce many millions of doses. We hope that 2021 will come with big changes, but we must wait to see the future.

Amid this pandemic, some of our members from around the world have shared their thoughts and experiences with us. These are their stories.

## **From Sneh Prasar of Mumbai, India**

So here I am, on a leisurely voyage to far-away lands—Japan, China, Cyprus, Peru, the USA, the UK, and

beyond—all vicariously, as I sift through my Facebook, Whatsapp, messages, and emails. I read fake news and real news alike, and yak with people known and unknown simply for the joy of it.

*No one gets to complain about my social media usage, there's a pandemic!*

Magic still thrives within the green sculptured tree, hunched and gnarled with age, in its marriage to five elements.

*The magic of bonsai persists, despite the pandemic!*

In today's times, learning bonsai is not necessarily a thousand miles away, it can take only a few clicks. Our club, too, has started a training program on Zoom for its members. Digitally-suave artists started doing weekly demos. In our sessions on Zoom, the whole clan looks like it's back to the '60s when shoulder-length hair was in vogue.

*This is the new style of education during a pandemic!*

Training bonsai has always been therapeutic. There is peace in silence. And that's something I think we could all do with right now. But umpteen pleas to my family full of doctors couldn't get me to my bonsai collection at the farmhouse. They refused to let me outdoors, and they still refuse to budge from that stance. So I had to be satisfied with the photographs shared by my supervisor on-site.

*Oh, the bitter taste of being bullied in the midst of a pandemic!*

This time has also encouraged me to dig around the house, open deep drawers, and shelves. I found a lot of Suiseki collected from various corners of the world.

*Perhaps this uninterrupted time at home was what my collection needed from me—all hail the pandemic!*

A friend has a terrace full of bonsai. One day I asked him, how is he keeping busy? He mentioned that he had already pruned and repotted almost all his bonsai in Lockdown 1.0. Now, he prowls his terrace daily with a sharp scissor in hand, like an investigator of new sprouts, just waiting to wield his weapon. I found the mental image very funny!

*If you're willing to acknowledge them, inevitably, there are light moments in a pandemic!*

Lately, I have sketched people in my mind while I talk to them as if they are parts of a bonsai tree. The roots, the trunk, the branches, and the leaves; details of a distinct apex, the bark, and fruit. Perhaps that would be something to share another time.

Mrs Sneh Prasar is a Director of WBBF, President of SABF and Councilor of the Indian Bonsai Society

### **From Carole Waller of Queensland Gold Coast, Australia**

"Please Mum, don't go out today. You should stay home and stay safe." The date was 13 March 2020, and I was ready to go out when my concerned son stopped me. He was worried about me due to my age and my heart disease, and that was the day I realized two new things were in my life. The first one was that I had changed places with my children, now they were



Top: A sketch of a bonsai friend by Mrs Sneh Prasar. "Now, he prowls his terrace daily with a sharp scissor in hand, like an investigator of new sprouts, just waiting to wield his weapon." Below is her self-portrait.

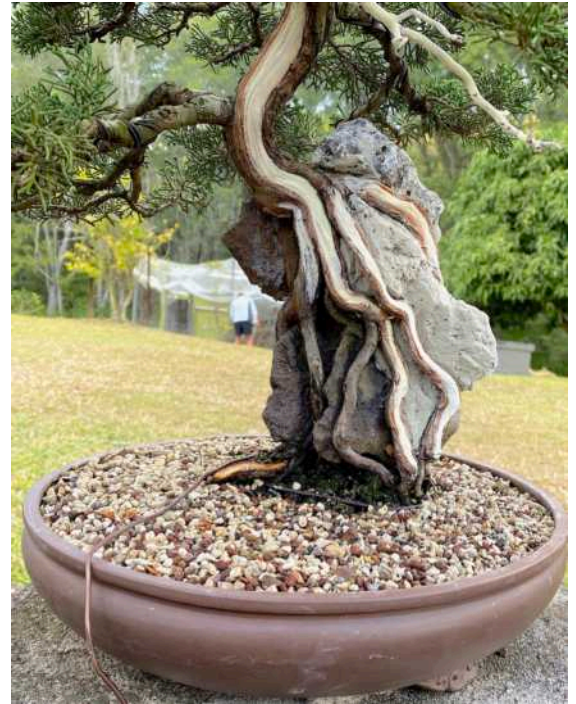


Middle: "Last year I was honoured to win the BCI award for Bonsai Excellence at our show for a juniper on rock that was judged by Mrs. Glenis Bebb. The same tree was awarded a Certificate of Merit by Marc Noelanders at an AABC Convention in Brisbane in 2017. I made the rock because most of the rocks around my area are smooth bush rocks."

—Carole Waller

Bottom: Carole Waller's jin and shari work on a juniper.





Above: "My recent work was on a 'root over rock' shimpaku. I was cross with myself for not having fixed the roots that crossed over while the tree was young and it eventually annoyed me to the extent that I finally managed to uncross them without taking the tree off the rock. After uncrossing the roots, I felt the rock appeared too small so I built onto the rock and then I painted it with a watered-down acrylic paint, applied while the product was still damp so that it absorbed some of the paint. This way the color holds for years."  
—Carole Waller

telling me when I could or couldn't go out. The second one was that I realized we were at the start of a very serious pandemic.

I live on an acreage in the hinterland behind Queensland's Gold Coast, where I have a Bonsai Nursery and far too many bonsai!!

Australia isn't called "The Lucky Country" for nothing. We went into lockdown in early March. Although some didn't take it seriously, most people were responsible, trying to protect themselves and the community.

The biggest problem other than the virus itself is the Queensland/New South Wales Border. That crazy border runs down the middle of a street, so neighbors on one side live in one state, and on the other side, they live in another state. One unlucky man's house is in Queensland, and his driveway is in New South

Wales! Then Queensland Government shut down the border. They had concrete barricades blocking access between the two states and police patrolling the border. At the time of writing this, we are still unable to meet because we can't access our meeting place, and many of our members can't get across the border. Thank goodness we have been able to hold our committee meetings online.

Isolation may have prevented me from attending meetings. Still, it did give me an excuse to work my trees every day, and I think they are looking better for the experience. However, I fear I am becoming a hermit. The air is clean. I am surrounded by a heritage-listed rainforest, where many different birds and animals visit throughout the day.

I believe if mankind learns nothing else from this pandemic, I hope we learn to be kinder to each other, love animals more, and take better care of 'mother earth.'

Carole Waller is President of the Gold Coast Tweed Bonsai and Secretary of a branch of the Australian War Widows.

### **From Jimmy Kichenama of Riviere Pilote, Martinique (a French island in the Caribbean)**

I was like all the population in lockdown for two months. Fortunately, I had my bonsai and my Suiseki to permit me to remain more comfortably at home.

During this time, I was scanning all my bonsai, discovering details I had never seen before, and for each of them making projects of changes concerning the pots or the shapes. For two months, I had time to work on them as I had ever done in the past, mainly because my last bonsai convention was in Vietnam for the ASPAC 2019. There, I had seen so many beautiful things, so I was very motivated.





Top left: Jimmy Kichenama with his Brazilian rain tree, *Pithecellobium tortum*, that he has grown for over 30 years  
 Top right: One of Jimmy's viewing stones on a base he made.



But in April and May, we are suffering from the dry season, so I cannot replot my plants now, and I have to take care of the watering rhythm.

I also have some Suiseki, and I discovered that I can make bases for each of them, especially for the best one. I realized that I made 20 bases of several sizes in this period.

This difficult period was full of benefits for people like me who live in the country with fields around me and could sometimes go out to walk.

Thank you for your concern by the situations of all Bonsai and Suiseki lovers around the world and connecting Bonsai and Suiseki people of every nationality.

*Best regard from Martinique.*

Jimmy Kichenama is a serious Bonsai and Suiseki artist and a long-time member of Bonsai Clubs International.

**From Sandra Quintal of Hamilton, New Zealand (Upper North Island)**

New Zealand went into level 4 lockdown on 26 March after 3 days warning. Our Bonsai Club was in the middle of running classes for beginners, and I had just taught my lesson on wiring when we had to stop the classes. I was very much looking forward to our NZ National Bonsai Convention in Christchurch on the South Island of New Zealand this year. Sadly, the NZ Bonsai Association has had to cancel that convention due mainly to the demonstrators coming from England and Japan. There was a possibility that New Zealand's borders may still be closed to overseas visitors even by October.

As a result of being locked in my property for so long, my bonsai got a lot more time than they ever usually get in late summer and autumn (end of March to the end of May). Usually, I must pick and choose which bonsai



Middle: Sandra Quintal in her bonsai garden.  
 Bottom: One of Sandra's Juniper rock plantings, (*Juniperus procumbens* "Nana")



Top left: One of Sandra's now much lighter Cedars (*Cedrus deodara*)

Top right: Sandra's NZ Native Shohin Set. Top - Kahikatea, (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*), Left - Corokia, (*Corokia cotoneaster*), Right - Pohutukawa, (*Metrosideros excelsa*)

Middle: One of Sandra's NZ Native Kōwhai, (*Sophora microphylla*)

Bottom: One of Sandra's NZ Native Totara groups, (*Podocarpus totara* "Aurea")



I work on to prepare for the show our club holds each year in October. This year everything got worked on!

In the eight weeks of level 4 lockdown and then level 3 severe restrictions, our weather went from T-shirts, shorts, and sandals, to raincoats, jeans, and gumboots. It is now winter, and I'm now going back to the bonsai I cleaned up at the beginning to remove all the fallen leaves and weeds that have grown again since. I have far too many bonsai.

One of our Bonsai Club's copresidents has been emailing out jokes and snippets of information to all our members to help us all keep in touch during this time. After three weeks of talking to no one but the cat, I did end up phoning some of my Bonsai friends. Emails and messages are just not the same as a good natter. Especially about your bonsai and of course the weather.

Sandra Quintal is a skilled Bonsai artist and a member of Bonsai Clubs International.

### From Budi Sulistyono of Puri Indah, Indonesia

Suddenly during the Chinese New Year, the world was shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic in Wuhan. According to the media, the virus was very fierce and spread so quickly like hell. At that time, I had already planned to visit Taiwan through Hong Kong from 4 to 7 February. When I returned home, there was already a temperature check in the airport plus a form that we had to fill in. And that was my last trip abroad this year.

This situation created a lot of stress for most people to be idle at home without much to do, and moreover, not allowed to go anywhere. But it is not so for a bonsai man. I am one of a few people who feel blessed by this situation because all my bonsai are in my garden and terrace at my house. I have a chance to see them one by one every day. Many of them had been neglected due to my busy activities in the last three years. I had a





Top row and middle row:  
Sequence showing Budi Sulisty's work on restyling a Buttonwood, *Conocarpus erectus*  
Bottom row: Budi's restyling of a dwarf black olive, *Bucida spinosa*



chance to care, maintain, and even redesign my bonsai. The trees looked very happy, got the shower of attention from the master. An old mini persimmon or *Diospyros montana* bears a lot of fruits that makes it beautiful to see. I made many improvements to my bonsai. I wired some of them, changing the pot from a big training



Top left, right and middle left:  
Budi's restyling and repotting  
of a Logwood, *Haematoxylum*  
*campechianum*

Middle right: Budi's Tamarind,  
*Tamarindus indica*

Bottom left: Budi's *Diospyros*  
*montana*



pot into a proper one of a *Neea buxifolia*, grown from a cutting designed in a Literati style.

*These are the blessings of Quarantine time for a Bonsai man.*

Budi Sulistyو is a Bonsai Master, Event Organizer, and Bonsai Clubs International Board Member.

### **From Carlos Morales, of San Juan, Puerto Rico**

Carlos gives us a concise statement that seems to summarize much of what others have said above.

During this time of quarantine, bonsai has grown even more on me. I think bonsai has helped me to keep calm, at peace, and to keep my creativity going. During the beginning of quarantine, I was able to work on some trees that I wanted to work for a long time. I have been working a lot lately at my regular job, so I'm already missing working on my trees.

This COVID-19 situation has helped me realize the important things in life. I miss a lot of my bonsai friends and Bonsai events. I like that the Internet has helped new people start in this amazing world of bonsai. I hope to see Bonsai friends all over the world very soon!



Top left, right and middle left:  
Budi restyles and repots a  
*Pithecellobium dulce*  
Middle right and bottom right:  
A *Nea buxifolia literati* that Budi  
grew from a cutting



Carlos Morales is a Bonsai practitioner, demonstrator and teacher who lets us know that bonsai survives in a country hit by more than its fair share of devastating hurricanes.

**In conclusion: A small effort at some humor about a serious problem.**

- Half of us are going to come out of this quarantine as amazing cooks. The other half will come out with a drinking problem.
- I need to practice social-distancing from the refrigerator.
- This morning I saw a neighbor talking to her cat. Obviously, she thought her cat understood her. I came into my house, told my dog... we laughed a lot.
- I'm so excited—it's time to take out the garbage. What should I wear?
- Day 6 of Home schooling: My child just said, "I hope I don't have the same teacher next year." I'm offended.

Larry Stephan, of Mt. Prospect, IL, USA, VP of Midwest Bonsai Society and Business Manager of Bonsai Clubs International. 🌳





# Making Daiza for Suiseki Viewing Stones

Text and photos by Nigel Atkinson, Australia



*Top:* I carved these bases for a group of small Suiseki using an assortment of woods.

*Middle left:* Underside of the bases.

*Middle right:* The freshly oiled bases are drying on racks.



While traveling the world to exhibitions and conventions, I became more enthused in Stone Appreciation. From Japan to Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, and more recently a couple of times to Inner Mongolia in China. With my newfound addiction. I find it pleasurable to search for and collect stones from wherever I go, around Australia or overseas. The stones I acquire all have the qualities of good suiseki but are “incomplete” and cannot be displayed without a daiza to sit in. They are just stones without a base.

**J**ust a quick history of myself. I have been associated with bonsai for well over 30 years with the Bonsai Society of Western Australia based in Perth. I followed in my father’s footsteps, served as President for a while, and became a Life member of the club I am so passionate about.

With a love of nature and of landscapes, I became interested in suiseki. It first developed in 1989 when Dad and I attended the first WBFF convention in Omiya City, now called Saitama. That was when I first noted the popularity of stones in association with bonsai.

After years of collecting, I had numerous stones piling up in the back garden and unable to display any of them to members of the club and public at our bonsai shows. Although not a very good carpenter/woodworker (I chose to study Metalwork in secondary school). I decided I needed to attempt to make some

bases to display my better stones. This has now become my new passion, and I feel quite excited about what it holds for me.

With my background in Cartography and some family involvement in art, I do have a good sense of space and proportion, and this has helped greatly during my bonsai life and now with my suiseki appreciation and daiza making.

### What do you need?

- Wood
- Carving tools: Both manual and mechanical
- Sanding tools: Both manual and mechanical
- Coloring dyes and rubbing oils

### Wood

We are lucky in Australia in that we have access to many hardwoods that are rich in color, fine-grained, and easy to carve. Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) and Sheoak (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) aka Australian Pine, are my favorites. Jarrah has such a rich color. It is easy to carve and takes rubbing oils well. Sheoak is rich in color and has incredible patterning. There are the Blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*) and Marri (*Corymbia calophylla*) to add to the list, but I won't go on as they are all good, and woodworkers have their own preferences.

### Carving Tools

Like many beginners to the trade, my hand skills with chisels, etc. are to be laughed at. But I am trying to improve on them along the way. However, my laziness keeps coming to the fore. I find myself opting



Top: Early attempt to follow contours of the stone.  
Middle: Note the undulating baselines of the stone.  
Bottom: The finished presentation.



*Top:* This volcanic Australian stone is very heavy.

*Middle:* Top and bottom views showing legs of the daiza for my Aussie stone.

*Bottom:* The finished presentation.

for electrical/mechanical appliances because of the lack of time available to me, which is familiar to us all in today's society. (just using it as an excuse). I had a few of the drills, sanders, and saws required but went overboard buying carving drills and bits for all types of carving and chiseling. It was time-consuming to change bits every time you needed to, so I ended up buying six tools to satisfy my needs. I have also purchased a scroll saw, a band saw, and a wood thickness planer.

### **Sanding Tools**

Similarly, with sanding the wood, I felt that using electrical tools would get me to the crucial part of fine sanding quicker. Still, I must admit I learned early that with hand sanding, I was able to "feel" the wood and realized how long it took to get a smooth, clean surface on the daiza before oiling.

### **Coloring & Rubbing Oils**

This, I believe, is the most difficult part of making a daiza. When using a soft, light-colored wood and you want it to be darker, you have to dye it to the shade you want before finishing it off with rubbing oil. Applying the dye evenly can be quite difficult, and this is not the time to wreck your project. Practicing on other wood is recommended to learn how it will look and how it soaks into the wood. You just need to experiment with the rubbing oil until you find an oil that suits you and the wood. I don't use any sort of varnish as I believe it shines too much, and it is not necessary to show off the wood surface to the best.

I will now explain the steps I follow in the process of making a daiza for my suiseki.





*Top left:* Stone found further north of Perth.

*Top right:* I use two coats of wood polishing oil to get that coat.

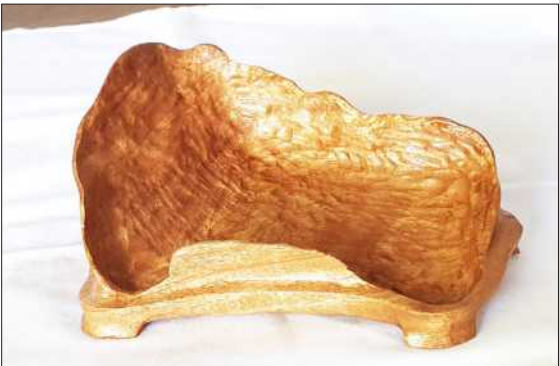
*Middle left:* Daiza for a difficult stone.

*Middle right:* My first attempt at raising a stone.

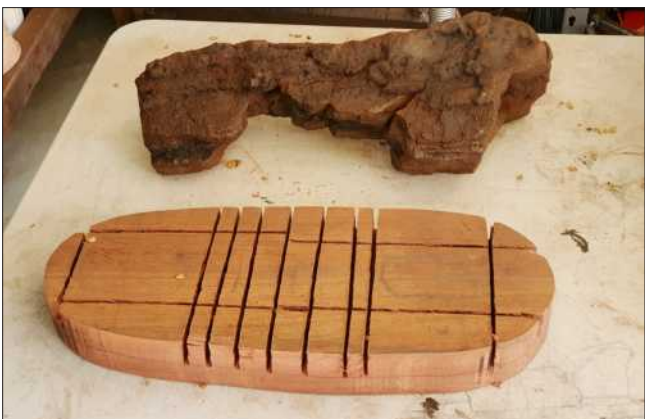
*Below:* Three photos showing preparing a base for a large stone I will be displaying as an Arch.

Cutting the wood base to chisel out the unwanted wood.

The roughed-out shape to be refined.



**Nigel's stones will be on exhibit at the 9th World Bonsai Convention 2021 in Perth, Western Australia.**





*Top:* This base shows how I accommodate an overhang of the stone on the lower right.  
*Middle to bottom:* A base for one of my favorite Australian plateau stones that has an intricate shape. Note how the weight of the stone is visually transferred to the feet on the base.

### First

I need to select the right piece of wood to show off my suiseki to its full potential. Thickness is important as you must be able to cover any “ups and downs” to the baseline of the stone and any variance in the bottom surface of the stone that may be required. Some people cut the base of a larger stone or smooth the stone’s base. There is a school in suiseki that believes there should



be no stone alteration as a stone should be displayed completely in its natural state to reflect the beauty of the stone. The other school believes that you may cut the stone so you can show the suiseki to the world. You can make up your own mind.

The natural color and patterning of the wood are important to compliment the nature of the stone, so it is displayed to its fullness.

### Next

It is best to carve the shape of the base of the stone into the wood first and not to cut the extreme of the daiza shape as you are not sure of the extent of the carved depression. Put the stone base on the wood and then trace around the stone. Make sure you trace slightly inside the extent of the final depression. This way, you don’t accidentally carve outside the final shape. While carving, I use carbon paper to place in-between the stone and the wood to highlight the areas that still need carving for the stone to fit snugly into the depression. Sometimes it is necessary to carve the sides of the daiza to varying heights to meet the stone’s edges to show a sense of stability. This is where your artistic abilities come into play. Try to balance the visual weight of the daiza to the stone when displayed.

Once the depression of the stone’s bottom surface is completed, you can then outline the wood to be cut around the face of the top of the daiza. You may need to take into account any areas of the stone that hangs above the top surface of the daiza. A sense of balance is required when viewing the suiseki and daiza as a whole.

You now need to work out where to place the support legs of the daiza. With your “artistic” eye, you see where the stone’s weight is heaviest and where it “flows” to the ground. It gives a sense of balance to the display. The development of your artistic eye is also important to decide what form your daiza will take. I feel this is one of the hardest skills needed to develop an appropriate base for your cherished stone.

These are the basic steps required to create a daiza, and you will eventually refine the methods you use to get better results and also develop your skills in the art of daiza making. Enjoy. 🌲

# Styling an old *Taxus baccata*

Text and photos by  
Marco Tarozzo,  
BCI Instructor, Italy



**H**ere, I present the process of refining the branching and the foliage on a *Taxus baccata*, collected a few years ago. It has been in my garden, the “bonsai garden at the edge of the lagoon” for five years.

Before its arrival, the tree had already undergone some work. Since I acquired it, I have worked it two more times, to simplify and compact the vegetation and reduce its root mass.

When placed in the studio for processing, the plant in **photo 1**, is disordered, but vigorous. After the last styling, I let it grow freely, thinking only of fertilizing it substantially and checking that the copper wire was not biting into the branches. Where this occurred, I removed the wire on these branches.

The first operation that I have planned is to work on refining the deadwood because I believe that in



The final position of the branches that make up the *sashi-eda*, the directional branch, or show branch, acting as the focal point of a tree.



4



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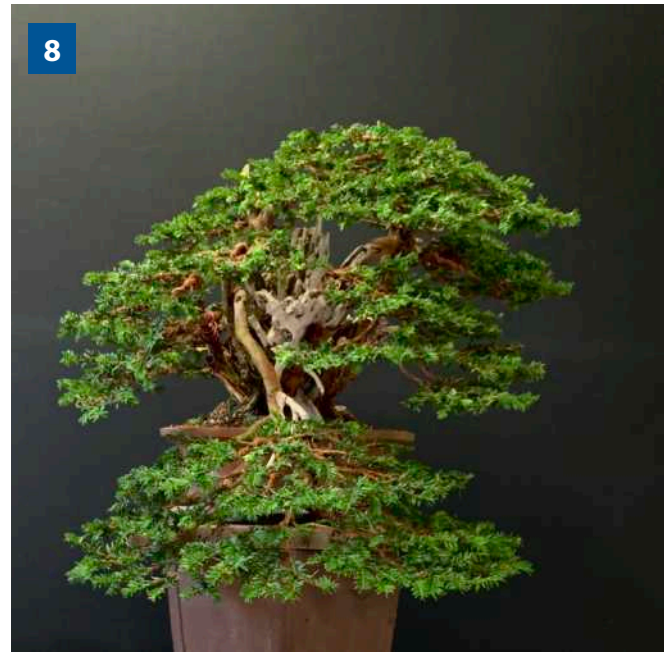


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the future, I will focus on cultivation. The yew, if well cultivated, produces very dense vegetation that can obscure branches, making carving the deadwood more difficult.

**Photos 2 and 3** show the details of the carving, and **photos 4 and 5** are the result of the work after applying calcium polysulfide. Calcium polysulfide is the main ingredient of lime sulfur, which is used in pest control and to keep deadwood as healthy as possible.

The style I chose for this tree is *han kengai* or semi-cascade. In **photo 5**, you can see how I positioned the branches that make up the *sashi-eda*, the directional branch, or show branch, acting as the focal point of a tree. This branch defines the void, but it is not very



accented and dynamic. In **photo 6**, you see how I positioned the branch above the *sashi-eda* so that it cannot obscure the latter making it weak.

**Photo 7** shows further detail of the *shari* and its naturalness. It is also possible to perceive the considerable number of branches to which I must apply copper wire. (*You can also see that even my hair needs a fix!*).

The work proceeded calmly, and **photos 8, 9, 10, and 11** show details of the foliage mass's careful positioning. At the end of the session, we see the result. **Photo 8** with the *sashi-eda* in the foreground, **9** the back, **10** the side, and **11** the front. 🌲





# Canadian Bonsai Goes Virtual

## How We Created a Bonsai Show Online in 2020

By Joan Greenway and Vianney Leduc, Canada  
Photos courtesy of the Canadian Bonsai Clubs noted in this article.

*Top:* This *Thuja occidentalis* finished first in the final with the most votes. It is from the Bonsai Society at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton.

[*Thuja occidentalis*, also known as northern white-cedar, eastern white cedar, or eastern arborvitae]

**F**or the first time, Bonsai Clubs across Canada have contributed their photos to create a virtual, national show of members' bonsai trees.

Without in-person exhibits and events due to physical distancing measures required by the COVID-19 pandemic, Vianney Leduc (Ottawa Bonsai Society), and Joan Greenway, (Matsuyama Bonsai Club) decided to try a digital format.

A National Canadian bonsai show has always been a dream. In the '70s, Norman Haddrick of the Toronto Bonsai Society, trained in Japan, had promoted the

idea of a national organization of bonsai clubs and a Canada-wide show.

Joan and Vianney met in 2015 at a joint outing by their respective clubs at an Ontario nursery. These Ottawa and Oshawa club members discovered they had a shared dream: to bring individuals, clubs, and others together from all parts of Canada and establish a national bonsai show. The challenges, however, seemed daunting with the cost of stamps or websites to the need for accurate translation for Canada's official languages, French and English.

Our bonsai have been *unmasked* and found quietly *sheltering* in place during this worldwide pandemic.



Top: This *Thuja occidentalis* from Société de bonsaï et de penjing de Montréal [Bonsai and Penjing Society of Montreal], finished in second place.

Bottom left: *Juniperus chinensis* from Matsuyama Bonsai Society of Oshawa.

Bottom right: *Juniperus chinensis* from Shawinigan, QC.



Top: *Thuja occidentalis* from Société de bonsaï et de penjing du Québec [Bonsai and Penjing Society of Quebec].

Bottom left: A Dogwood, *Cornus florida*, from Misseto Bonsai Club.

Bottom right: *Ginkgo biloba* from Matsuyama Bonsai Society of Oshawa.



By the end of 2015, Facebook had cut the costs and complexity of communicating. However, we still had vast distances to conquer. Even their own clubs were over 500 km apart.

Vianney had contacts from Quebec, and Joan had some in English-speaking Canada. Thanks to a list from Elizabeth Pfister (Misseto Club, Toronto), they were able to contact Bonsai Clubs across Canada. After a little more research, they started a Facebook page at <<https://www.facebook.com/bonsaicanada>> in December of 2014, called Bonsai Penjing Canada.

In March 2020, show after show was being canceled due to the pandemic. Joan and Vianney saw an opportunity to have a Canadian Virtual National Show.

Clubs across Canada were asked to contribute pictures of their bonsai. Starting on May 14, the Facebook site presented each club's bonsai selections to the followers of Bonsai Penjing Canada over 48 hours. "Likes" were used to count the votes.

The clubs involved included Société de bonsaï et de penjing du Québec [Bonsai and Penjing Society of Quebec], Matsuyama Bonsai Society of Oshawa, Ottawa Bonsai Society, Campbell River Bonsai Club of Vancouver Island, Société de bonsaï et de penjing de Montréal [Bonsai and Penjing Society of Montreal], Misseto Bonsai Club of Mississauga/Etobicoke, Groupe Bonsaï Québec [Quebec City Bonsai Group], KW Club of Kitchener/Waterloo, Bonsai Society at Royal Botanical Gardens of Hamilton, Bonsai Society of Winnipeg, West Coast Bonsai Society North Vancouver and the Toronto Bonsai Society. Individuals practicing bonsai without an affiliated club were included from the various regions, representing enthusiasts from Fredericton, Windsor, Shawinigan, and Calgary.

Bonsai Penjing Canada had close to 4000 visitors on their Facebook page during the virtual show.







The show lasted 29 days, and the 14 most favorite bonsai were shown for two days. Here are some comments from our participants:

"so hard to choose... so much beauty"

"Félicitations ! Bravo aux organisateurs de cette expo virtuelle qui nous a permis de voir ce qui se faisait d'un bout à l'autre du pays."

"Gorgeous trees so hard to pick just one."

"Félicitations et un grand merci pour cet événement!"

"This is one of the oldest and best tamaracks a bonsai as I have ever seen...stunning"

"Tell me I'm not the only one excited for the final round. It's been fun participating in the voting each week, especially seeing all the local submissions."

"En effet, une excellente idée que cette exposition virtuelle. Félicitations aux participants, finalistes et au gagnant"

"Thanks for organizing it, and please consider continuing it even after COVID is behind us."

"Well deserved! Over half of the finalists were Thuja, which is a great sign for one of our strongest species that is widely available but still not fulfilling its wonderful potential! Super winter hardy, flexible branches, beautiful foliage, wonderful scent."



Top left: *Thuja occidentalis* from Ottawa Bonsai Society.

Top right: *Thuja occidentalis* from Toronto Bonsai Society.

Bottom right: Tsukumo Cypress, *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Tsukumo', from West Coast Bonsai Society, North Vancouver, presented in a show organized by Metro Vancouver Gardening Society.





Top left: *Thuja occidentalis* from Bonsai Society of Winnipeg.

Top right: Trident maple, *Acer buergerianum*, from Groupe Bonsai Québec [Quebec City Bonsai Group].

Bottom: Mountain hemlock, *Tsuga mertensiana*, from the Campbell River Bonsai Club of Vancouver Island.



Many thanks were given by many who participated. It was a rewarding experience to engage our bonsai community during these trying times. Our bonsai have been “unmasked” and found quietly “sheltering

in place” during this worldwide pandemic; their beauty enjoyed by so many more, thanks to modern digital channels. 🌲



# Congratulations 2020 BCI Tree and Stone of the Year Winners!

**BCI** Members recently voted for their favorite Tree and Stone of the Year from all the Trees and Stones submitted by BCI members over 12 months. This year the Tree and Stone of the Year were awarded a cash prize and a certificate.

The prize money for the Tree of the Year, \$525.00, went to Peter Hanrahan from Australia for his *Eucalyptus nicholii*, Narrow-leaf peppermint gum, 900 cm tall. The container is by Australian potter Pat Kennedy.

BCI contributed \$250, which was topped off by donations from the Bonsai Society of Winnipeg, and a very generous donation from the Indian Bonsai Society to make the prize a total of \$525.00

Lindsay Bebb won Stone of the Year with his Japanese Kamogawa River stone from the Bōsō Peninsula, southeast of Tokyo. Lindsay kindly donated his prize money of \$250 back to BCI. When asked why he did this, Lindsay said, "I could never accept prize money from BCI. For most of the past 24 years, I have worked within and behind the scenes of BCI to help it function and grow. I am happy to win certificates and medallions, but not prize money."

The winners also received a BCI Certificate of Excellence.

BCI thanks all the members who participated in this contest and who shared their beautiful trees and stones with us all!



Click on this module on the BCI website home page to view all the entries to this contest. [www.bonsai-bci.com](http://www.bonsai-bci.com)

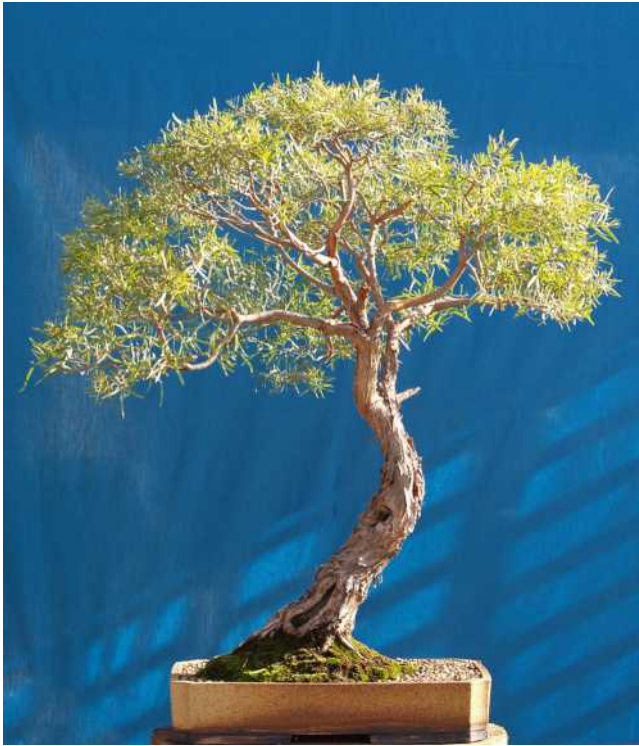




**Kamogawa River Stone**

Lindsay Bebb | Australia  
 Country of origin: Japan  
 Place of origin: Japan  
 Material: Basalt  
 Width 44.5 cm, Height 11 cm, Depth 19.5 cm  
 Japanese-made base or *daiza*

**About the stone:** Natural and uncut.  
 This stone was acquired from a former Chairman of the Nippon Suiseki Association. At the time of purchase, he invited me to leave the stone with him for the chance to have it included in the Nippon Suiseki Association Year Book. I appreciated the offer, of course, but it would have meant that I would be without the stone for a fairly long time. It was more important for me to have the stone than to have that honor, so I politely declined the offer.  
 One photo shows the lakes and the flow system between them and the other photo, the base of stone and inside the daiza. The daiza is unsigned.  
 My very first reaction on being told the Kamo River Stone won, was elation! I knew the stone was a high quality, one that deserved recognition, and was happy that it got that recognition in a people's choice judging system. It is also good to know that other people share your feeling of quality in a Suiseki.



**Eucalyptus Nicholii**

Narrow leaf peppermint gum

Peter Hanrahan | Australia

Designed by Peter Hanrahan

Style: Natural Eucalypt

Height: 90 cm

Container: By Australian potter Pat Kennedy

**About the tree:** Found at south Canberra Dump in the Revolve section in the summer of 1995. It was in very little soil and full of disease. (Mealybug and sooty mildew).

Over the following months, I removed the pests, re-potted, cut back, and trained a new leader.

It was kept as an experiment, I was unsure how a Eucalyptus would react to Bonsai techniques.

In 1999, I potted it into a Bonsai pot and continued shaping into a gum tree-style as I see in my local area. After 2001 I carved the lower and mid sections of the tree.

Over the years, I have had a battle with dieback and have lost some of the original branches. Generally, when this happens, the tree goes through a redesign utilizing old branches and new shoots.

This tree was started in my early days of Bonsai, around 1996. In those days, Australian natives as Bonsai were rare, and Eucalyptus were even rarer. Any that I did see were styled like the traditional Japanese pine.

The challenge over the years has been to learn the horticulture (varies to the traditional Bonsai material) and to design a tree that reflects the look of an Australian Eucalypt.

The *nicholii* has proven to be a great subject as the leaves are reduced, and the trunk has gnarly bark. It still throws up many challenges, but I think it is worth the effort.



Voted by Walter Pall as best tree in our National show back in the early 2000s. On loan to the national collection in the first 2 years of its operation.



# A Grand Bonsai Opera

Wonderful bonsai  
nurseries and  
one of the most  
famous Japanese  
exhibitions, the  
Taikan-ten in Kyoto

Text and photos by Florentine Grunwald, Germany

**W**hen practicing bonsai and after some years getting deeper into this special world of arts and crafts, probably many enthusiasts begin to think about a trip to Japan. This country is known as a hot spot for many long-standing and well-known bonsai nurseries and overwhelming bonsai trees. Moreover, its unique culture, although deeply entrenched in history, nevertheless brings fresh ideas to flower again and again.

For me, a trip to Japan was a wonderful idea for some years, but I never thought it might become a reality. In particular, I desired a guided tour focusing on bonsai nurseries and Japanese heritage, and of course, this combination is not easy to find in the regular tourist industry. But never say never! In spring 2019, I was informed about a trip just like I had wished for. Suddenly in a defining moment, some money materialized, and my bonsai teacher supported my decision.

In November 2019, I found myself ready for takeoff. This travel period, chosen by our guide Mr Harald Lehner, turned out a perfect choice. The weather was sunny with temperatures between 5° C by night and up to 20° C in the daytime (41 to 68 °F). Additionally, ginkgo and maple trees showed their beautiful autumn colors, while several camellias and one cherry variety were in bloom.

Our travel group comprised of about 15 bonsai enthusiasts, mainly located in the south of Germany. Our guide and always friendly and cheerful Japanese-born translator was Mrs Sato.

On this trip, we visited more than 10 bonsai nurseries. Of course, for this article, it is not possible to describe all of them in detail. Each nursery was unique and impressed our group with its particular attractions and atmosphere. Each garden was well cultivated and deserved specific attention. Furthermore, our group was warmly received at every place, including green tee, soft drinks, fruits, and cookies served with cordial hospitality.

But I will focus on the most well-known highlights, writing a few words about some very impressive Japanese temples, and last but not least, about the Taikan-ten. For bonsai enthusiasts, more information will be available by contacting the author. <f-grunwald(at)t-online.de>

The first day of our 10-days journey was really a long one. Starting in the north of Germany and flying from Hamburg via Munich to Tokyo took about 35 hours, and due to anticipation (and my neighbors), sleeping was nearly impossible. After arrival at Haneda airport and a short and well-organized entry-procedure, our first stop was directly at the magnificent bonsai nursery Shunka-en, established by Kunio Kobayashi.

### Shunka-en

This first visit to a Japanese bonsai nursery was overwhelming. Thinking back to these few hours sends a shiver down my spine even today. Probably more than 200 beautiful trees, full of character and masterly groomed for more than a hundred years, were perfectly



Top: *Juniperus chinensis* (Shunka-en), Tokyo

Bottom: courtyard of Shunka-en

Title page: Detail of Taikan-ten winner tree 2019, *Juniperus chinensis* "Itoigawa"

arranged in a spacious courtyard, which was surrounded by wooden buildings in traditional Japanese style.

It struck me that even the floor coverings, such as sand, gravel, stone slabs, wooden bars, and cast concrete, had been placed thoughtfully, leading to an always interesting and harmonious impression.

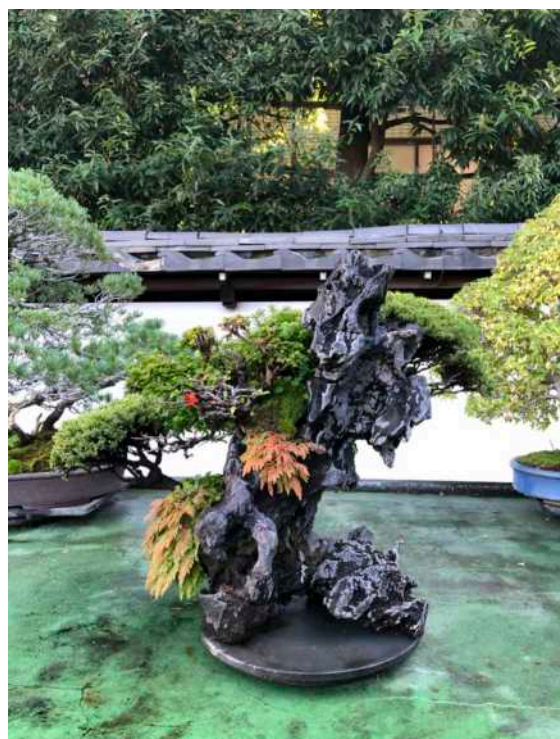
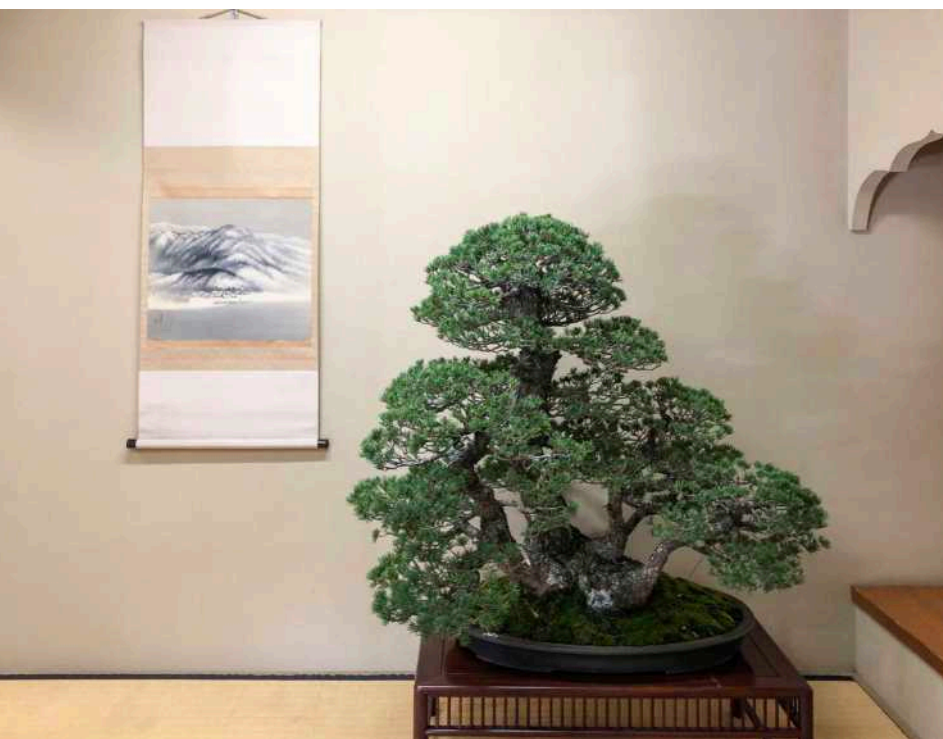
In the surrounding buildings, several tokonoma presentations greeted visitors. The exhibited trees and suiseki were hand-picked and of marvelous quality. Due

Top left: big *Juniperus chinensis* in front of the new bridge recently build in Shunka-en nursery, Tokyo

Top right: *Celastrus orbiculatus* (nursery of family Takeyama, Omya)

Bottom left: tokonoma with a group planting of *Pinus parviflora*. Together with the painting the mood of near winter is generated (Shunka-en, Tokyo).

Bottom right: rock planting with spruce, azalea, quince, moss and Japanese fern (nursery of family Takeyama, Omya)



to botanical demands, the plants were changed after a few days. Needless to say, all desks, stands, *kakemono*, and other accessories were chosen to complete the ancient and classic atmosphere.

### Omiya Bonsai Village

On the second day of our tour, we took a regional train to Omiya village in the morning. The ride gave us the impression of the wealthy and attractive outskirts of Tokyo. (The extent of Tokyo and its surrounding metropolitan area was astonishing and hardly conceivable for us).

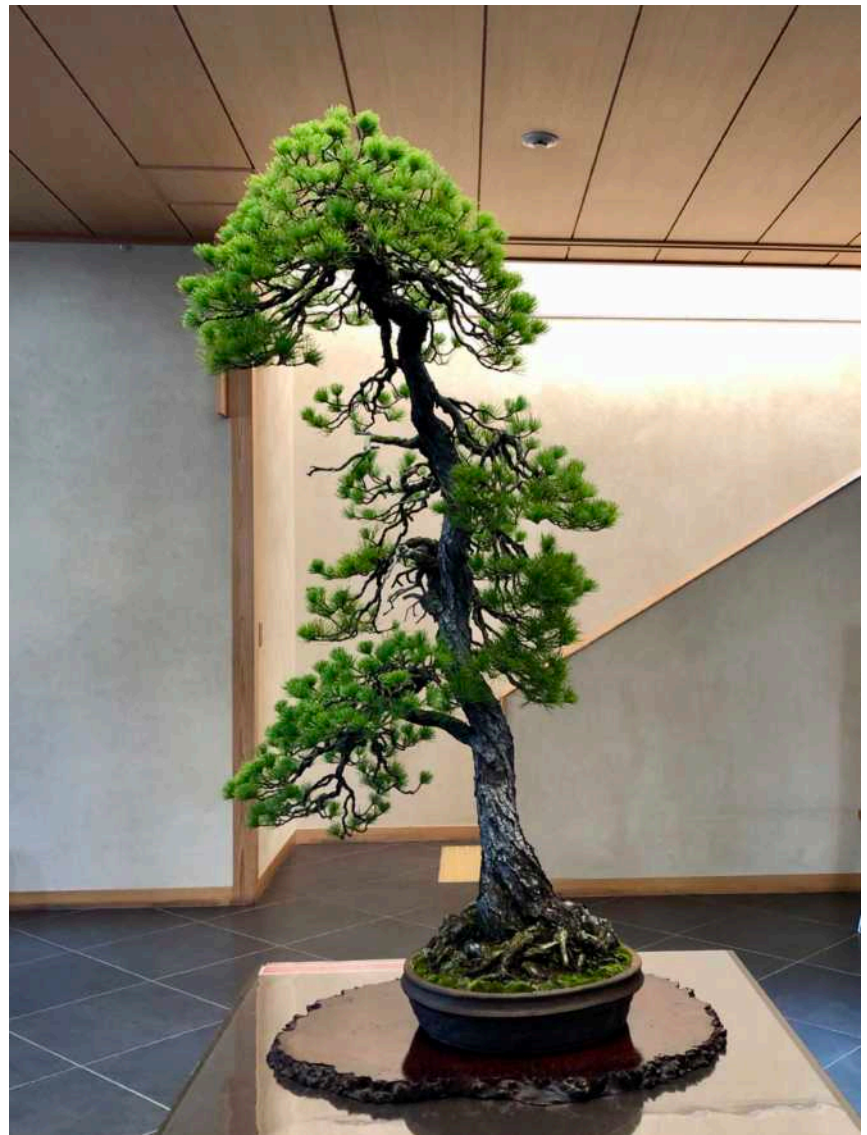
Many bonsai nurseries located in Omiya can be reached on foot within a short time. Walking in Omiya was a pleasure. Neat houses in Japanese and western styles are surrounded by large and medium-sized properties with sometimes exotic trees, everything with very cultivated appearance.

After visiting several atmospheric gardens, we went to the Omiya Bonsai Art Museum, where we had the benefit of being guided by Mr Takahiro Kato. At the entrance of the museum, a welcome tree was exhibited. In our case, a magnificent pine tree of about 2 m (6.5 ft) in height. Surprisingly this tree was styled not in





Top: overview of family Takeyama's garden in Omya  
 Bottom left: group planting of red pines (*Pinus densiflora*, Yamada's nursery in Omya)  
 Bottom right: welcome tree (*Pinus parviflora*), bonsai museum Omya



a classical but in a natural manner, which gave us a strong impression of power and elegance. But this was only the opening to many further high-class and exceptional trees. It might be of interest to possible visitors, that taking pictures is mostly forbidden in the whole exposition area, and allowed only in a small sector outside. It was explained that this is because of the private ownership of most of the exhibited trees.

The museum provides more than 10 tokonoma, and for teaching purposes, a comparison of *Shin*, *Sou*, and *Gyou* style presentation in three adjoined alcoves. In the open space, more than 25 outstanding bonsai are presented. Additionally, the whole garden ensemble can be admired from a terrace on the first floor. In contrast to the welcome pine tree, it was noted that the exhibited trees were designed mostly in classical bonsai style. (Perhaps reflecting the need for a more sound investment of the private owners).

Nearby the museum, the bonsai nursery Mansei-en, owned by family Kato, is located. When visiting Japan in November, it should be considered that daylight ends starting at about 5 pm, when it becomes difficult to view and enjoy all the beautiful trees.

The outstanding bonsai dedication of the Kato family, spanning 170 years and 5 generations up to

now, is reflected among other things in the exceptional collection of *suiseki*, tables, stands, hanging scrolls, and so on. For the workshops and lectures given by Mr Kato, these accessories are an excellent source of inspiration for the lucky students. Also for us visitors, bonsai and *suiseki* enthusiasts likewise, many items were available in various price categories. As a summary, visitors to Omiya village should not miss the Mansei-en.

All pictures: Kimura-san's nursery, Saitama

Left: rock planting with *Juniperus chinensis* on artificial stone

Right: group planting of *Picea jezoensis*

Bottom: Kimura-san explains some details to our travel group

A friendly bus driver picked us up at the hotel near the center of Saitama early the next morning and drove us through the more rural north of Omiya. After the fields have been harvested, the farmers often remove all residual scrubs and straighten the earth's surface. This was very unusual for us to see.

### Masahiko Kimura's nursery

A visit to the bonsai nursery of Masahiko Kimura was the next highlight. In the entrance, the visitors are faced directly with big coniferous species, being something like the master's trademark. In the front part of his nursery, all the well-known, partly big to huge junipers and pines are placed, together with an astonishing pine forest of more than 1,5 m (about 5 ft.) in height and settled on big stone slabs.

Each composition is so impressive that usually, the visitors would need time to recognize and perceive the complete picture. But few feet away, the next marvelous bonsai is waiting. All trees show a perfect appearance, power of growth, strong color of needles, and wonderful jin and shari parts that are very well-groomed. These impressions were really overwhelming and will last a long time.

Another part of his nursery seemed reserved for individual commission orders, for instance, the well-known rocky landscapes. The artificial rocks are placed on desks and reach up to 2 m (6.6 ft.) or more. The vertical rocks planted very often with Junipers, horizontal landscapes, and rock overhangs with *Cryptomeria*, also attracted our attention. This was due to the sheer size of 2 or 3 m (6.6 to 9.8 ft.) in length. The impression is extraordinary and seems to be closer to



Chinese arts than to the Japanese classical bonsai style.

When walking through master Kimura's beautiful place, further surprises may be discovered by looking beneath the benches. Many accent plants and kusamono (plant compositions) are set in the half-shade of the stone tables, showing their beautiful seasonal colors. Here, the master's outstanding sensitivity becomes apparent.

Kimura-san spent some time answering questions from our group. He had a modest and calm presence and seemed to be focused on the main contents. Besides, he presented a fine humor: When asked for the material for building the natural-looking, but artificial rocks, he put on a fine smile but refrained very politely. Of course, the composition is a well-kept secret.

In summary, a visit to master Kimura's bonsai nursery is a must for every bonsai enthusiast. The rewards are long-lasting impressions of supreme bonsai art.



## Nagano

Finally, we had to leave. After some further visits, we traveled by the Shinkansen (Japan's high-speed train) to Sakudaira, where a bus drove us north to Nagano. This again was impressive, since the Japanese Alps showed some snow spots on their peaks, and the air was fresh and clear.

One stop brought us to master Katagiri's nursery, which is beautifully placed on a southern hillside. We saw beautiful pines, junipers, and mature maple trees, the latter in all seasonal colors. As well, Katagiri-san is a well-known bonsai teacher who frequently practices in Germany on behalf of Scuola d'Arte Bonsai.

Later in the afternoon, our next stop was at one of Japan's main national treasures, the Zenko-ji temple. This Buddhist temple was founded in the 7th century AD in Nagano and lies within a vast district with gardens and a pond. A few steps down from the parking place through the slightly darkening garden led us to the big temple platform with guardian sculptures. The temple bell was ringing slowly. One could feel an air of spiritual strength and adoration located here for more than a thousand years.

We stepped into the temple area from the hillside. So we had a fantastic view over the front yard, the imposing main gate and the descending road to the center, flanked by little shops and restaurants. At twilight, the shops turned on the lights one by one. It was easily understandable that this temple was the ancient crystallization point of today's city of Nagano.

Unfortunately, it was too late to visit the main temple. Still, some of us had the opportunity to have a short look into the first hall with its luck-bringing Buddha and Bodhisatva sculptures, which slowly and mysteriously passed into complete darkness.



Left: lateral entrance to main temple at Zenko-ji, Nagano

Upper right: Bodhisatva statues at Zenko-ji temple. In front an incense burner and covered offerings are placed.

Lower right: holy pond and adjacent buildings at Zenko-ji temple, Nagano

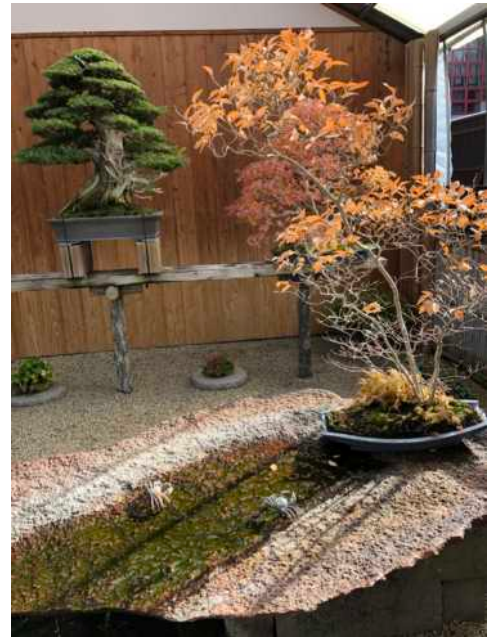
Bottom: forest planting of *Itea virginica* in full autumn colors (nursery of Shinji Suzuki, Nagano)



## The nursery of Mr Shinji Suzuki

The next morning was sunny and clear, the right weather for the planned visit at the nursery of Mr Shinji Suzuki—another highlight of our trip. The entrance of the new nursery is angled to prevent curious looks from outside. The visitor is led by artificial ways, and so passes several bonsai presented in wooden niches and then a natural-looking group of trees with old stones with lichen-growth. But wait: Old stones in a new nursery? All these stones must have been carefully collected and placed here again with their original surface looking in the right direction. This was only one little sign for the sophisticated and sensitive way of presenting bonsai at the garden of Suzuki-san.





All pictures: nursery of Suzuki-san, Nagano

Upper left: view into one of his greenhouses. In front old examples of *Chaenomeles japonica*, behind an old Japanese maple tree

Upper middle: center court with stone setting and weed bonsai

Lower left: wonderful old black pines (*Pinus thunbergii*), enjoying the autumn sunlight

Lower right: view into the little court protecting the *kami*

When walking through his nursery, of course, all exhibited trees showed their perfect condition and wellbeing. Additionally, the bonsai had been arranged in relation to their surroundings, sometimes telling a little story: For example, a tiny runnel of water, dripping from a plate, and giving a feeling of coolness in the greenhouse, two little copper crabs are looking for their meal. Furthermore, we found a little protected court with a statue. Japanese people often believe in spirits, or *kami*, living in animate and inanimate nature. In the Shinto religion one should take care for hosting good *kami*, and so we assumed that this place should attract them to settle down. And certainly only the good ones, because the statue smiles.

So for bonsai enthusiasts, Suzuki-san's nursery can lead to a double impression, on the one hand, to the precious exhibits themselves. On the other hand, the visitor may imagine a unique landscape scenery, like a concept evoked by a shohin presentation.

I would also like to remark that I have never visited such a clean and tidy nursery. For example, not one leaf was seen on the floors (in November!), and all garden hoses were arranged perfectly in the shape of snails. I assumed that one of Suzuki-sans' aims is to avoid any distractions from the exhibits' wonderful impressions.

In summary, this visit was an extraordinary experience for our group. Our joint view was that of "a grand opera."

### Hokusai Museum in Obuse

The next stop was an unfortunately short visit to the Hokusai Museum in Obuse. When the famous artist Hokusai (1760–1840 AD) was more than 70 years old, he visited Obuse on various occasions. He loved this region and was inspired by the landscape and the small villages. In his advanced age, he changed his style once again, now painting merely religious themes. For example, the *Phoenix* is well-known and painted to be used as a ceiling of a Buddhist shrine. His paintings, especially those from mountain Fuji, had a strong influence on the European art scene and Art Nouveau.

The little museum presents a meaningful cross-section of his work. It offers insights into his life, motivation, inspiration, shown through several short films of about 15 minutes each. This was very impressive to see and



opened for me another approach to the Japanese culture and way of living. Additionally, the museum shop offers interesting items, like wonderfully printed cloths. And finally, the museum is surrounded by a village ambiance, with little shops offering local specialties, like ice cream made of chestnuts and unbelievably big apples. I would have liked to spend more time here, but our bus left too soon for the next destination, the black castle of Matsumoto.

This fortress was founded about 1500 AD and is made of stones and black painted wood. It was owned by various shoguns, due to fortunes of war and historical changes. Today it is a national treasure. Walking from the parking place leads to a beautiful view, especially in spring. It must be a sensational impression due to the flowering cherry trees around the water.

Of course, we had a quick look into the fortress – but be careful: As always, it is necessary to remove your shoes. The steep steps of the slippery wooden stairway up to the third floor are 30 cm (1 ft.) high and on the next 2 floors, about 40 cm (1.3 ft.)!

The presentation in the castle describes its history, showing especially the weapons and armor. For me, it was an open question of how the ancient soldiers in their heavy armor were able to climb these stairways as quickly as necessary, especially in defense.

But the castle also hosted other, more sensitive residents: A later built balcony with a red handrail has the poetic name: “Balcony for observation of the surrounding moon.” One can imagine a warm night, sitting on the balcony, sipping some tea or sake, listening to the nightly birds, and watching the moon’s journey over the dark sky.



### The famous pottery village of Tokoname

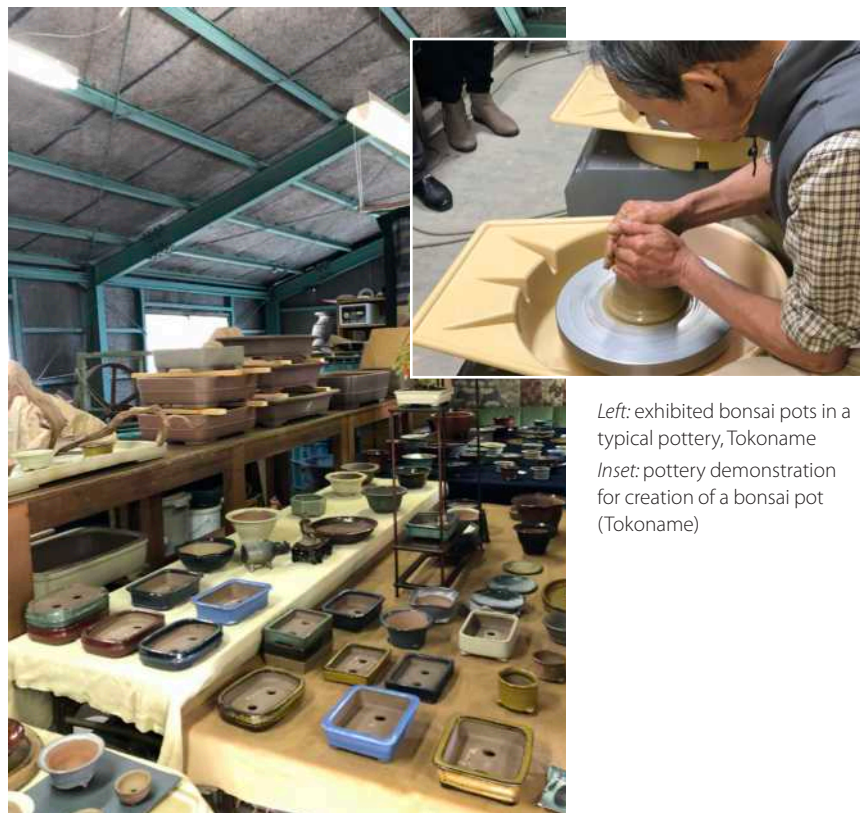
The next morning we had the opportunity to visit the famous pottery village of Tokoname. Due to local promotion activities, for a travel group like us, a little tour was organized and included an exhibition of bonsai pots made by several pottery artists, and a formidable lunch. Of course, it was highly appreciated to buy the exhibits or other souvenirs, and we did not pass up this chance.

Afterward, we visited two more impressive bonsai nurseries. The latter was Mr. Tanaka’s Aichi-en in Nagoya. In addition to the bonsai trees, a large variety of suiseki available in all sizes, also impressed us.

*Top left:* Katsushika Hokusai, c. 1829–1833. *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, 25.7 cm × 37.8 cm (10.1 in × 14.9 in) color woodblock print at the The Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum.

*Top right:* black castle of Matsumoto

*Bottom left:* entrance to Hokusai museum in Obuse



*Left:* exhibited bonsai pots in a typical pottery, Tokoname

*Inset:* pottery demonstration for creation of a bonsai pot (Tokoname)



All pictures: Golden Pavilion, Kyoto

Top: the Pavilion is surrounded by a beautiful lake and garden

Upper left: view from backside; the pines on all islands are carefully groomed

Bottom: maple trees at the entrance

## Kyoto

Now, arriving at Kyoto, the final stage of our journey was reached. This town holds dozens of classical heritage sites and is the cultural center of Japan. To realize the main historical treasures alone would need a visit of more than a densely packed week. During our stay in Kyoto, the weather was fine and sunny with fresh cool air, so again it can be recommended to choose November for such a journey. For a visit to the main touristic attractions, it's better to go on a workday since on the weekend, Japanese families also like to come and see their national sights. Regardless of the weekday, the Golden Pavilion or the Zen temple Ryoan-ji is crowded. At any time, you can meet big Chinese travel groups.

Visitors are first led through maple trees and moss-covered ground in front of the yellow-painted outer walls when arriving at the Golden Pavilion area. The unusual pale-yellow color of these walls, together with the reddish maple leaves, the green moss, and the blue sky, gave an unforgettable impression. After passing the main entrance gate, the walkers are directed counterclockwise around the lake and the golden pavilion at its northern side. The building is well-aligned with the terrain and therefore becomes only slowly visible.

The pavilion is located at the shore of a hill on the backside, sheltering the lake and the surrounding valley. The present Zen temple was founded at the end of the 14th century, and at that time was used as the summer residence of the Shogun Yoshimitsu. Built in a peaceful and creative period of history, the two top floors are covered with pure gold leaf. Surprisingly it was not damaged through the following martial times. Still, in 1950, it burned down completely, followed by an authentic reconstruction.

During our visit in November 2019, the pavilion was closed, so we could focus on the wonderful scenery around the marvelous park surrounding



the lake. Particularly imposing were the reflections of the golden building on the water surface, and the artificial islands with solitary trees or little pine groups. As often seen in Japanese cities and villages, the trees and shrubs are groomed carefully. We had the opportunity to watch one of the gardeners, sitting in the treetop and cutting the small branches. It is an enormous effort to care for all the trees of this park in such detail.

This also applies to the park of the Ryoan-ji temple, built in 1450. Even here it was good to take some more time to walk through the beautiful garden towards the temple, rather than hurry to the temple entrance. The beautifully landscaped ground with the central lake gave a very natural impression, and the walkway seemed to follow an old winding footpath. Again, the autumn colors of the Japanese maple trees contrasted wonderfully with the blue sky. On the footpath, the crowds are carried away, and it was possible to seize a quiet moment to appreciate some of the surrounding details, such as a hidden Buddha some steps away, a little source, dripping over old mossy stones, or a view over the lake to a distant bridge.

When reaching the main entrance, the quiet atmosphere was unfortunately over. After removing the shoes under the strict control of museum guards, the crowds were floating through the temple rooms and the well-known rock garden with its 15 stones. The rocks are arranged in a way that they can never be seen all together. There are so many theories about the meaning of the stone setting that a silent viewer is invited to create his own. Unfortunately, a silent consideration was a pious hope, because of the always crowded viewing terrace with continual whispering and laughing.

So for me, any contemplation of the stone setting was impossible. But for interested individuals, I recommend visiting the temple's web site, which brought me back into the temple and gives a little impression of the mysteries of Zen.

Walking further through the temple and back on the surrounding footpath around the lake, several beautiful impressions of the whole complex and individual garden aspects took our attention, like the west garden entrance and the water-stone basin... This left me a thoughtful emotion of a "mystery in the heart of a jewel, hidden in a treasure."



All pictures: Ryoan-ji temple, Kyoto

Upper left and right: moss gardens near the walkway to the temple

Upper middle: bordered well at the backside

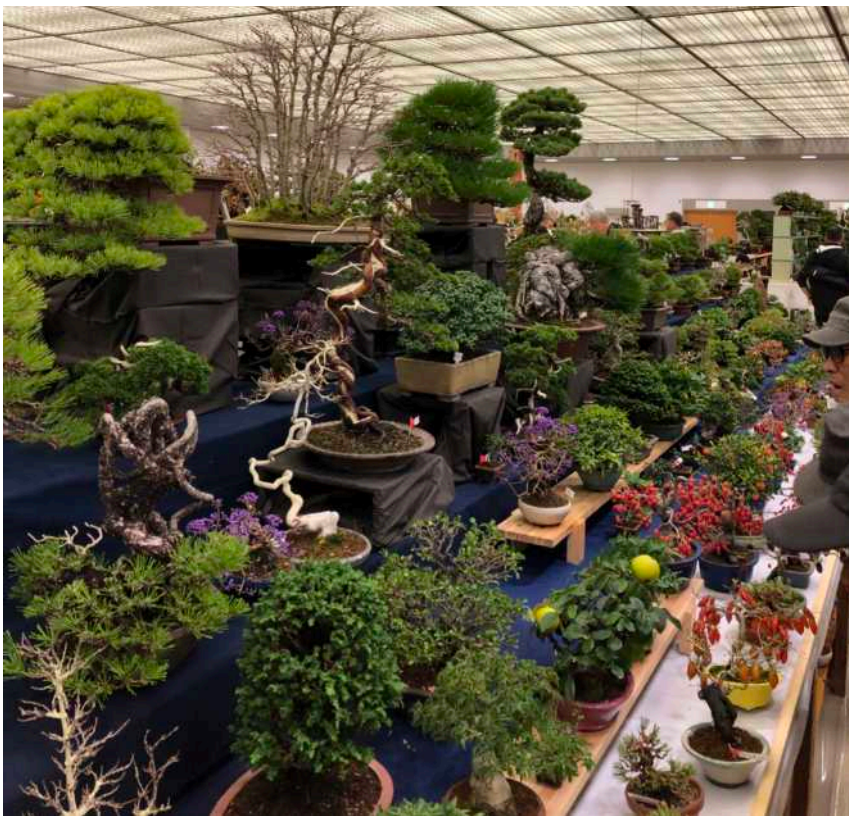
Middle: view into the well-known rock garden

Bottom: entrance to the west garden (closed for visitors)

But when stepping outside the garden, the present was a sharp contrast to the contemplative atmosphere of the temple. On the parking lots, a large number of self-service automats were found. They serve not only ice-cold beverages but also hot drinks and other foods. This sometimes was very helpful before climbing into the bus again.

### Taikan-ten

As the final highlight, we had the opportunity to attend the opening ceremony and the first day of the exhibition Taikan-ten (or Daikan-ten). This event is



held every November in Kyoto in a big exhibition hall (in 2019, it was the 39th edition).

We were astonished that at the official opening, the number of Japanese attendants and visitors of other countries seemed nearly equal. Besides our group traveling with Mr Harald Lehner (who was the juror invited for Europe), an American group of about the same size was present.

The opening ceremony started at 8:30 am and was well thought out: After the 14 jurors were seated according to their priority, the opening speech was held. To start the exhibition, a red ribbon with many loops was cut through simultaneously by all jurors.

Then all attendants hurried to the exhibition and to the area reserved for the dealers. Compared with the European exhibition “The Trophy,” held in Genk (formerly: Noelanders Trophy), the Taikan-ten is two- to three-fold in size.

The dealer booths exceeded my expectations many times over. For bonsai and suiseki enthusiasts, nearly





Facing page, all pictures:  
Taikan-ten, Kyoto  
Top, left and right: dealer's  
presentations  
Middle: some accent plants in  
the exhibition  
Bottom: presentation  
of Chinese quince  
(*Pseudocydonia sinensis*) and  
Japanese fern

This page: Prime Minister  
Award: black pine "Okuma",  
age is estimated to 300 years,  
height 110 cm (43"), presented  
at Taikan-ten 2019

**The exhibition  
itself was  
really  
overwhelming.  
It made  
sense to walk  
through it  
several times  
since it was  
impossible  
to perceive  
the most  
important  
pieces and  
presentations  
in a single run.**

everything thinkable was presented, not only in a new state but often also as antiquities. Hanging scrolls of all sizes and ages, stands, desks, wooden panels, ceramics of all sizes, colors, ages and shapes, suiseki from many countries (e.g., from China and the Gobi desert), figures and *tenpai*, and last but not least, bonsai, filled the shelves. The quality and extent of the presented bonsai trees, solitaires, forests, pre-bonsai, and seedlings were enormous. Since we had limited space in the suitcase and in the money purse, purchasing decisions were very difficult.

And it should be noted that with advancing time the most interesting pieces found their customers, so to have the best choice it would be good starting early on the first day.

The exhibition itself was really overwhelming. It made sense to walk through it several times since it was impossible to perceive the most important pieces and presentations in a single run.

Special parts were reserved for pottery, suiseki, and some very well-known bonsai masters (e.g., Kimura, Suzuki) and some of the sponsors (e.g., Bonsai-S-cube).

Exhibits at Taikan-ten 2019

Upper left: old maple tree (*Acer palmatum* "Shishigashira")

Upper right: *Juniperus chinensis* "Itoigawa," yamadori

Middle left: Flowering quince (*Chaenomeles japonicum*) in raft style

Middle right: Japanese crab apple

Bottom left: Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinensis*), the color of the antique bonsai pot is in perfect harmony with the *kakemono*



Additionally, for enthusiasts of fine hanging scrolls, the exhibition was also well worth seeing. In several presentations, mostly antique *kakemono* were used to complete the suggested stories of autumn and near winter.

The quality and the health of the presented trees were unique, especially, the Itoigawa Juniper, awarded with the prize of the Prime Minister, was bursting with strength. This was the same with the black pine "Okuma," the age of which is estimated to be about 300 years.

Presumably, it is impossible to truly honor all the efforts, thoughts, adoration, and empathy which were given to these trees and *suiseki* through the centuries



Exhibits at Taikan-ten 2019  
*Upper left:* Old Japanese white pine (*Pinus parviflora*) in rare double trunk-style  
*Upper right:* *Juniperus chinensis* 'Itoigawa,' yamadori with natural looking shari and perfect green foliage  
*Bottom left:* old rock planting with spruces, moss and sparingly applied deadwood  
*Bottom right:* old Japanese apricot (*Prunus mume*)



- Websites of places visited:**  
<http://www.kunio-kobayashi.com>  
<https://www.bonsai-art-museum.jp>  
<https://hokusai-kan.com/en/>  
<https://www.zenkoji.jp>  
<https://bonsaiaichien.com>  
<https://www.matsumoto-castle.jp/lang/>  
<https://www.japanvisitor.com/japan-city-guides/tokoname-guide>  
<http://www.ryoanji.jp>

and by the various generations. And from such outstanding specimens, a larger number was shown in this marvelous exhibition, leaving the sensitive visitor overwhelmed with impressions.

We had many unforgettable memories when leaving the next day for Tokyo and our flight back to Germany. Indeed, on this last day, it was raining, so the skyline of Tokyo was hidden by gray veils, and the departure was not so very difficult.

But I will always remember the kindness, hospitality, and courtesy of all Japanese people we met, the perfect planning and performance of the tour (many thanks to Mr Lehner and Mrs Sato, the latter for her tireless

supportive translation), and the opportunity to gain a little glimpse into Japanese culture. It was an extraordinary experience. It is no wonder that several members of our tour will repeat the journey next year. 🌳

**About the Author:** Florentine Grunwald was born and raised in Hamburg, Northern Germany. She studied Pharmacy and has worked in the Pharmaceutical Industry for 30 years, focusing on Quality Assurance. Living between the Hanseatic cities Hamburg and Lübeck, her private interests are Bonsai and Suiseki. She is an advanced student of Bonsai design and currently nurtures about 80 trees. E-mail Florentine at <f-grunwald(at)t-online.de>

# Lo “stregone andaluso” [Andalusian Sorcerer] Styling a *Juniperus sabina* “rastrera”



By Mario Pavone and  
Marco Zocco Ramazzo,  
Italy

Photos: Mario Pavone



Above: This *Juniperus sabina* “rastrera,” before processing already showed its full potential.

**T**his Spanish Sabina juniper, *Juniperus sabina* “rastrera,” entered my garden in February 2017, and had been harvested a couple of years earlier, in 2015 in Spain.

The plant showed excellent characteristics, thanks to a very twisted movement of the trunk with prominent spiraling veins, small areas of deadwood, and the particular exfoliating red-brown bark.

A plant with several trunks is easily adapted to different styling possibilities: a semi-cascade with “two peaks” to an unusual *moyogi* or to an extreme cascade.

Since its collection, two years earlier, it had been placed in a round plastic tub with the original soil. The first step was only to clean the deadwood and the vein to better understand its movements, but above all, the micro-movements that the plant dictated, to choose the formal front. The first thought that came to my mind was to style it as a cascade considering the drama of the tree. Materially cutting the two parts of vegetation that started from each primary branch, keeping only the one furthest from the trunk. Once tilted, I could try to build a full cascade with deadwood that undoubtedly exceeded 50% of the design.

I did not worry much about future repotting and finding “uncomfortable” roots inside the tub, because the plastic container was not so big as to suggest a root mass to be reduced several times over time.

In the meantime, I have fertilized the plant a lot with organic fertilizer to maximize its vigor, and therefore help it withstand the operation of the first repotting after harvest, which is always the most critical operation after the rooting phase. So, in March 2018, thanks to the help of Flavio Ambrosioni and Marco Gadola, I made the first styling, with the design I had in mind from the beginning, to create a very dramatic cascading plant. The focus would be the deadwood that gave a sense of the tree hanging in the void on a rocky part in a high mountain, subjected to the most extreme elements of weather. So I started to cut off large sections of vegetation but leaving every single twig as *jin*, just to increase its drama.

Finally, I wired the remaining vegetation to give good triangularity to the design and, above all, the typical lines of the cascade style. After a year, in March 2019, I proceeded to repot the plant, finding with pleasure that there were absolutely no large roots that disturbed the repotting. Still, there was a large, dead part hidden under the ground that I simply cut with a saw. The root system showed numerous roots and capillaries rich in mycorrhiza, a sign of excellent general health.

The container chosen was not ideal, but it was large enough to easily contain all the root system and make it develop even better. The soil mix I opted for was akadama 80% and Kiryu 20%, which seems to be a balanced soil for this type of botanical species. After the repotting, I administered humic acid weekly for two months. Among other benefits, it helps generate roots. For another year, I left the plant free to grow,



Top: In this case, the choice was to use only the third vegetative mass, working in *jin* the first two.



Middle and bottom left: A meticulous cleaning of the veins has made it possible to highlight the very sinuous and twisted trend of the trunk. Already after the first cleaning operations it is possible to admire the color of the lymph-carrying veins.

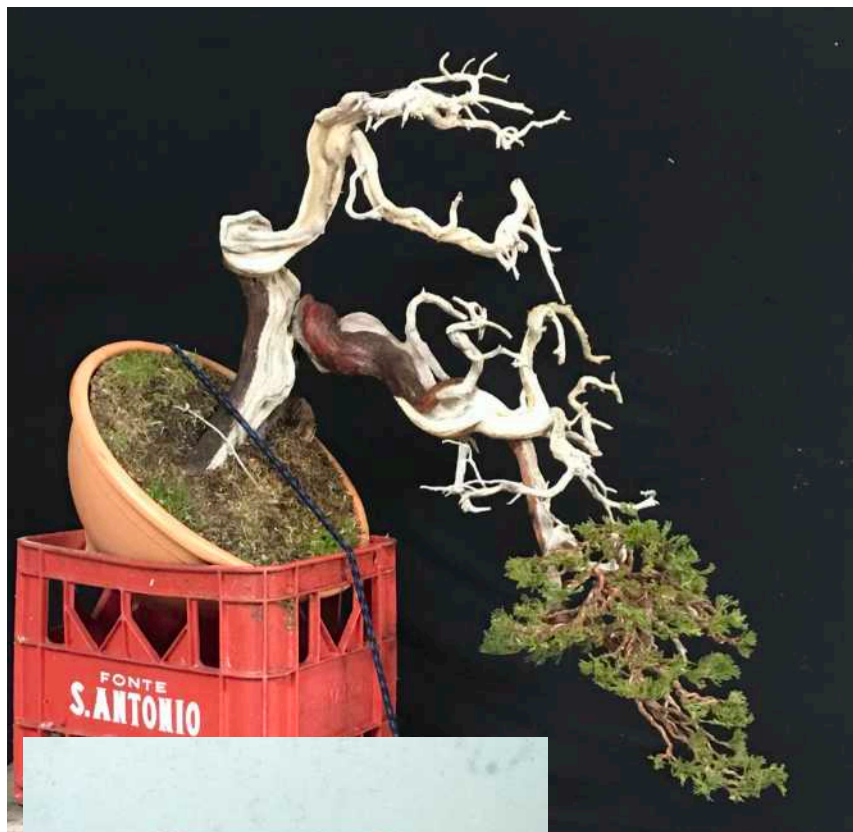
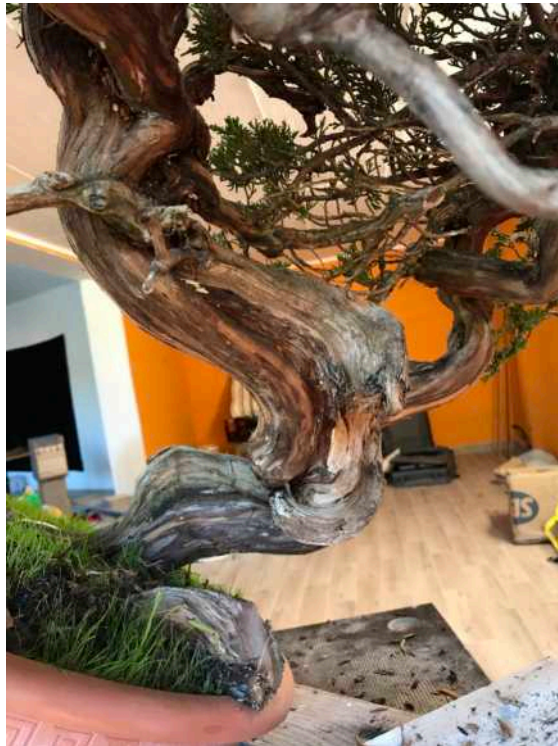


Bottom right: A simple pocket knife. Often in the choice of tools for making bonsai you fall into the error of following fashion, but a little money well-spent gets excellent results.

Top left and right: Subsequent interventions focused on jin and shari processing of the first two masses.

Middle right: The work team of the first styling has fun in the full bonsai spirit: together with me on the right, Marco Gadola left, in the center, Flavio Ambrosioni.

Middle left: Here is the plant after a first styling; playing with the inclination of the pot, the effect of a cascading plant stands out even more.



Bottom: For this plant you will need a pot similar to this one in stoneware, of a brown red color that recalls the bark, with scroll feet and a harmonious shape.

concentrating only on pruning for more back budding and thickening branches. Also, I took care to administer abundant organic fertilization, as has been done in Japan for hundreds of years, and something I personally experienced on my study trip to the Shunka-en of Kunio Kobayashi in Tokyo.

The abundant fertilization with organic fertilizers throughout the growing season is done precisely for the specific purpose of raising the vigor of the plants to the maximum, and then intervening when the plant is strong and robust, with the known techniques to reduce the size of the needles. Processing the juniper, this year in March, I removed the copper wire that began to cut into some branches, especially those with a larger diameter. In May, a second styling was made, with invaluable help from Marco Zocco Ramazzo, who highlighted how, with the right techniques, the plant will respond beyond expectations, thickening unexpectedly.

For the choice of the final container, I am opting for a pot like that of the final photomontage, in a brown-red stoneware with scrolled feet. It recalls the bark color with a shape that, in my opinion, fits well with the lines of the plant. Now, the main job will be to make the branch pads thicken even more, defining them better and creating more “voids” that will balance the “fullness” of the vegetation.

Making another small incision, as can be seen, in the construction of the pads, a “window” was deliberately left that frames a very beautiful part of the trunk that



*Top left:* At the time of repotting, as expected, the root system absolutely did not require an invasive decrease in several steps and the presence of mycorrhiza was truly surprising.

*Top right and middle right:* Gathering part of the vegetation with the help of a thin wire or ribbon helps even better when applying wire. This applies both to the denser masses and, as in this case, to the slightly less abundant ones: in this way you will always have optimal view and spaces.

*Middle left:* the plant in its first pot, obviously not definitive, but capacious enough to easily contain all the root system.



*Bottom left:* With the invaluable help of Marco Zocco Ramazzo, the plant was wired so as to adapt the silhouette of the vegetation to the peculiar and predominant waterfall pattern in this process. A good preliminary and preparatory cleaning of the axillary sprouts to the passage of the wire is a guarantee of correct, clean and precise work.

*Bottom right:* The arrangement of the vegetation, by means of accurate wiring, was carried out considering the strong descending flow of the cascade style, in particular for the stages most exposed to gravity.





*Top row:* To obtain the white color of deadwood distressed by bad weather on the live parts of the plants that are now jin, it was necessary to repeatedly apply liquid jin in different dilutions and in several rounds.

*Middle row:* Camellia oil, also applied to the most slender live parts, results in a very natural range of colors.

*Bottom:* How suggestive are some branches of our plants worked in jin or shari: speaking of sorcerers and spells, in particular this seems to evoke a classic dragon from the Far East, complete with a ridge and jaws wide open, in the act of spitting fire.



ends up in the vegetation, which shows a beautiful movement.

I named this plant “sorcerer” because the two groups of *jin* who precede the vegetation reminded me of a sorcerers’ old and wrinkled hands while casting a spell. The treatment and maintenance of the deadwood can be summarized with cleaning old bark stuck in the curves of the now dry branches and, subsequently,

with *jin* liquid treatment. In the finer and more fragile parts, a solvent-based furniture hardener was applied, preserving and hardening the material. A few drops of hydrogen peroxide have been added to the liquid jin, to make the deadwood a little whiter, which is a characteristic in the juniper. This makes the treated part a little whiter, but always with a color not excessively artificial. While the vein, once thoroughly cleaned with very fine sandpaper, was treated with camellia oil. Finally, I would like to say no one can know how many years it will take to bring this plant to show-quality, but one fact is certain: these Spanish Sabina junipers “rastrera” respond well to techniques and thicken quickly, perhaps not like the most prized Japanese itoigawa junipers, but always satisfactorily. The beauty of making bonsai, in my opinion, is precisely that of respecting each botanical species in its characteristics, but also respecting its limits, and not only preferring those that have effortless success in the future. 🌲







*Top left:* Leaving “windows” and arranging the vegetation to frame the sinuosities of the trunk allows the observer to wander and “enter” the bonsai itself.

*Top right and bottom:* Here I am at the end of the work, together with Marco Zocco Ramazzo (right) and together with a slightly inclined plant more in favor of the viewer: the satisfaction is clearly visible on our faces ... and on that of our bonsai!

**In the finer and more fragile parts, a solvent-based furniture hardener was applied, preserving and hardening the material.**

# What I See is the Courage



Jonathan Singer composing with Masahiko Kimura controlling the shutter during Jonathan's trip to Japan. Photo by William N. Valavanis.

## A Tribute to Dr. Jonathan Singer

By Michael Collins McIntyre, Canada

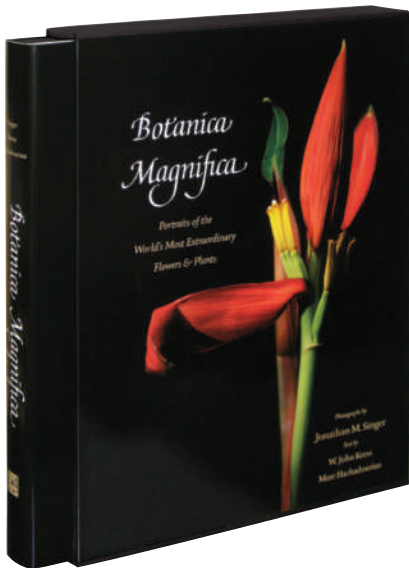
**O**n June 22, 2019, the world lost Jonathan Singer, a towering figure in photography and, fittingly standing over 6' 5" with a long white ponytail, was simply a towering figure. Jonathan was deeply appreciative of nature and other art. This appreciation was central to his deep and soulful appreciation of bonsai, viewing stones, and of orchids. The story of his discovery of the worlds of bonsai and of viewing stones is quite remarkable.

Despite his stature and spirited demeanor, Jonathan's life was riddled with illness. He overcame several different cancers, but it was Parkinson's disease that was most devastating. Parkinsonian tremors ended his career as a podiatrist and foot surgeon. Jonathan's response to this adversity was truly astonishing. He had always had an intense attraction to fine art. He once confided that in university, he took only enough science to pursue his career. The rest of his studies were devoted to art. In fact, he studied with two of the most famous abstract painters of the twentieth century, Ilya Bolotowsky and Willem de Kooning. He said that their influence persisted for his entire life. Jonathan's response to his illnesses was to pursue the art of photography with abandon and ferocity. Faced with potentially terminal illnesses, his response evokes the closing lines of the famous Dylan Thomas poem:

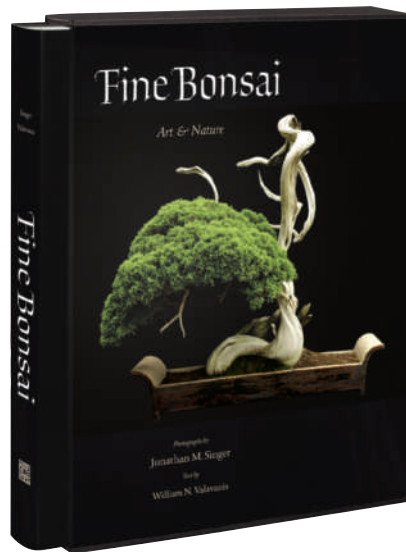
*Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

His foray into nature photography began with work on the microstructure of orchids and rare plants. He chose a Hasselblad camera as his instrument to "rage." This allowed incomparable detail and resolution. It also turned out that fortune smiled on him. One Saturday, he visited an orchid nursery near his home to acquire some new orchids to photograph. He also brought with him some of the work that he had done with an earlier set of plants. By chance, Marc Hachadourian, a curator at the New York Botanical garden, happened to be visiting the nursery at the same time. He was overwhelmed by the photographs and arranged to see more of Jonathan's work. In turn, he introduced Jonathan to Dr. John Kress of the Smithsonian. I have had opportunity to discuss Jonathan's work with both Marc and John Kress. They concur that these images are creatively revolutionary.

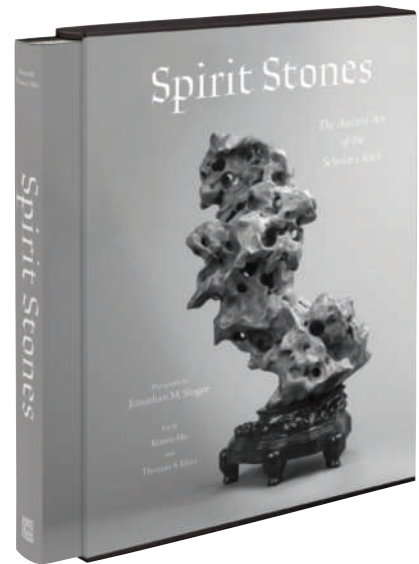
The images capture the eye in ways that allow each plant to reveal its essence. This revelation has been so profound that Marc and John, two extraordinary botanists, described how the images, printed on double-elephant folio paper, have allowed them to perceive the structure of the plants in ways that expanded their own knowledge. The full double-elephant folio-sized photographs are now housed in the rare book room



*Botanica Magnifica*, Portraits of the World's Most Extraordinary Flowers & Plants, Jonathan Singer, text by W. John Kress and Marc Hachadourian, Abbeville Press.



*Fine Bonsai: Art & Nature*, Jonathan Singer, William Valavanis, John Kress, Thomas Elias. Abbeville Press, 2012 Forward by Hideko Takeyama.



*Spirit Stones: The Ancient Art of the Scholar's Rocks*, Jonathan Singer, Kemin Hu, and Thomas Elias. Abbeville Press, 2014.

of the Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian. They also were collected in the first of Jonathan's three books published by Abbeville Press with the prepossessing quality characteristic of this firm. This book, of course, was *Botanica Magnifica*. While photographing some plants in the Smithsonian collection for *Botanica*, Jonathan was introduced to the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum, and Jonathan's introduction to bonsai and viewing stones began.

Jonathan was welcomed by the Museum staff and formed a working relationship with Tom Elias. This led to his photographing of some of the world's most esteemed bonsai and collaboration with preeminent figures in the bonsai community. Tom Elias, William Valavanis, Hiroshi Takeyama, along with the botanist John Kress, collaborated on the production of *Fine Bonsai, Art & Nature*. This book presents uniquely lit and composed photographs of breathtaking bonsai. The opening image depicts Jonathan composing a shot while Masahiko Kimura holds the shutter release. Page 51 illustrates the result. In *Fine Bonsai: Art & Nature*, I have been struck by the appropriateness of the subtitle.

Bonsai themselves express a harmonious interaction between the structure and growth habits of trees and artistic vision. The Japanese word "gei" describes the quality characteristic of the most artistically prepossessing of trees to have a soulfulness—art and nature

in harmony. Jonathan's photographs are different from any bonsai photographs that I had ever encountered. They themselves had *gei*. In these photographs, the images reveal the soul of the bonsai. Jonathan's lighting is exactly right. It reveals the soul of the tree. He has photographed many of the most-treasured bonsai in the world. The masters who created these trees have been astonished at how revealing and captivating his images are. They also described Jonathan at work. He would contemplate a tree, light it, capture the image, and move on. His eye is both extraordinary and baffling. How could someone who was not a bonsai artist immediately apprehend the soul of a tree and depict it in ways that spoke so profoundly to all viewers? My colleagues did not know the answer but were certain that the images succeeded in doing so.

Jonathan's meeting with Tom Elias introduced him to the world of viewing stones and led to the third volume in the Abbeville trilogy. *Spirit Stones: The Ancient Art of the Scholar's Rock* possesses a similar revelatory quality. The soul of the stones—revered objects of quiet contemplation in Asian culture—was revealed to be sure. Again the lighting and other artistic choices were uniquely appropriate. Jonathan also captured the relationship between the stones and the scholar—Kemin Hu—whose family had both collected the stones and written astutely about their place in Asian society in

**“There is a profound relationship between creativity, risk, and courage.”**

**—Rollo May**



Top: Calcified leaves:  
"Thousand-year-old leaves"  
from *Spirit Stones: The Ancient  
Art of the Scholar's Rock*,  
Jonathan Singer, Kemin Hu,  
and Thomas Elias, Abbeville  
Press, 2014

Facing page: 100 year-old  
Sargent Juniper designed  
by Masahiko Kimura  
photographed by Jonathan  
Singer, from *Fine Bonsai: Art  
& Nature*, Jonathan Singer,  
William Valavanis, John Kress,  
Thomas Elias. Abbeville Press,

general and in families in particular. One might think of stones being inert, but Jonathan's images are kinetic and emotionally moving. I asked him how he had done this. His answer was unforgettable. He replied: "Michael, I got to photograph a love story." His eye extends beyond the physical image. He captures, with deftness and sensitivity, the backstory.

Jonathan's preeminence is patent. Milton Estrow, Publisher of *ARTnews*, remarked that Jonathan was: "One of the world's most gifted photographers." While David Seideman, Editor-in-Chief, *Audubon* magazine, remarked that Jonathan was: "One of the most brilliant nature photographers of our generation." I have had the opportunity to read Jonathan's *Curriculum Vitae*. His many significant honors and the many museums and galleries that hold his work also speak to his stature. Our community, with the unique complementary love of both bonsai and viewing stones, has been blessed that his artistic light has shone on our trees and stones.

I would like to close with a personal observation or two. When I imagine Jonathan now, I imagine him in his chair with his beloved dog, Phoebe, in his lap. I know that he dearly loved his wife Marcia and daughter Marissa. I also know that he felt the inescapable progress of the Parkinson's Disease and fought fiercely to continue making art and bringing beauty to the world. His eyes reveal resolve rather than acquiescence. I am struck by the words of the noted psychoanalyst Rollo May: "there is a profound relationship between creativity, risk, and courage." It is difficult to know exactly what inspired Jonathan to take the risks that he took. He took them, though, and we are all the richer for his courage. In my mind's eye, what I see is the courage. 🌿

**Footnote:** This video link provides some insight into the absolutely extraordinary scope of the *Botanica Magnifica* project and its inclusion in the Smithsonian: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yc1o2xkCs0s>



# A Spectacular Bonsai Event in India

## The Lucknow Bonsai Summit 2020



By Dr. Sujata Bhat and Bhavna Shah, India  
Photographs courtesy Sujata Bhat and Shashwat Pathak.

*Top left inset:* Lighting of the lamp by the chief guest during the opening ceremony.

*Top right inset:* Exhibition of bonsai by members of the Awadh Bonsai Association, Lucknow.

*Above:* In a collaborative effort Nacho Marin and Manoj Kumar, along with their team, created a stunning composition with stones and Casuarina trees.

One of the major Bonsai events of 2020, just before the Covid-19 crisis gripped the world, was held in the city of Lucknow in North India. The Lucknow Bonsai Summit held between the 27th and 29th of February 2020 was the brainchild of a young and enterprising bonsai artist, Shashwat Pathak, under his institution 'The Bonsai Paradise.' The event received full support from his club 'Avadh Bonsai Association' and its president and founder, Mrs. Santosh Arora. Avadh Bonsai Association is also a chapter member of one of the oldest Bonsai clubs in India, the Bonsai Study Group of the Indo-Japanese Association, Mumbai. The aim of the Summit was to promote bonsai culture, global

friendship through Bonsai art and encourage people to adopt the art for a greener planet.

The Summit, which was attended by a large number of bonsai enthusiasts from all over India, began with the inaugural ceremony conducted in a very traditional Indian way with the lighting of a lamp by the chief guest Mr. Pankaj Singh. The demonstrators, guests, and other prominent dignitaries, including two BCI Directors from India, Sujata Bhat and Bhavna Shah, were honored with a commemorative medal for their dedication and contribution to the art of Bonsai in India. A spectacular dance program showcasing India's culture followed the inaugural function, which was enjoyed by all.



**Demonstrations:** The main highlight of the Summit was the demonstrations by international and Indian bonsai masters. From Latin-America were Pedro Morales, Nacho Marin, and Ricardo Marin and Noryadi Noruddin from Malaysia. India was represented by Anupama Vedachala from Bengaluru, Manoj Kumar from New Delhi, and Chand Kejriwal from Mumbai. The demonstrations were extremely educative with a lot of information being shared via interactive questions and answers exchanged between the audience and the demonstrators.

Since yamadori collection is banned in India, most of the material for the demonstrations were field-grown by Shashwat Pathak or procured from bonsai

nurseries all over India. The demonstrators had a choice of good quality material for selection.

The first demonstration, right after the inaugural ceremony, was by Nacho Marin from Venezuela. Nacho Marin is widely recognized in the field of visual arts through his paintings, sculptures, and photography. He brings an artist's perspective to Bonsai. In his words 'Bonsai is a virtual space where nature allows us to play at creating it'. He believes that to be a successful bonsai artist, one must shed any absolutist thoughts and open the floodgates of free-thinking and creativity, with nature being the main inspiration.

Nacho Marin gave valuable tips to the audience on how bonsai design should be approached. It should

*Top row:* Venezuelan artist Nacho Marin worked on a *Casuarina equisetifolia*, before and after styling pictures.

*Middle row:* Malaysian bonsai artist Noryadi Noruddin worked on a *Feronia lucida* creating a slender feminine look.



Top row: Master Pedro Morales worked on a *Premna microphylla* creating a good structure for future development.

Middle row: Pedro Morales made a shohin *Ficus microcarpa* (Tiger bark Ficus).

Bottom row: Indian bonsai artist Anupama Vedachala worked on a *Ulmus parviflora* (Chinese Elm) creating a beautiful informal upright tree.







be a three-step process of observation, analysis, and execution. He also explained the importance of taper and proportion in a tree. Nacho Marin worked on a *Casuarina equisetifolia*. His styling of the tree was unique in the sense that the longest branch was not the first branch but was higher up, at two-thirds of the trunk above the base, but stabilized by several short branches on the opposite side giving it a very natural look. This design created flow and dynamism in the composition, which was extremely pleasing to the eye.

The afternoon session saw demonstrations by Noryadi Noruddin, an artist from Malaysia who worked on a *Feronia lucida*, commonly called Wood apple. The



Top row: Noryadi Noruddin worked on a *Carmona microphylla* or Fukien tea creating a windswept style.

Middle row and bottom: Indian artist Chand Kejriwal created many artistic kusamonos and shitakusas. A book written by Chand Kejriwal called *Kusamonos and more* was released on the occasion.





Top left and right: Pedro Morales created deadwood and shari on a *Casuarina equisetifolia*. Middle and bottom: Ricardo Marin Villegas from Venezuela worked on a *Feronia lucida* and created a style with good movement.

material had a feminine quality being tall and slender. Noryadi wrapped rubber strips around the branches and, with some heavy wiring, lowered the branches on one side. In contrast, those on the opposite side were lifted up, creating a feminine dancing effect. He elucidated six strong principles in creating a good artistic bonsai stating that a bonsai should represent ideas, thoughts, and feelings of the creator.

Pedro Morales worked on a *Premna microphylla*. It was a powerful tree with a strong lower branch in a twin trunk style. The potting angle of the tree was changed which lowered the primary branch and brought the focus on to this branch. The tree was defoliated and cut back and then wired to get the final effect. Pedro next worked on a *Ficus microcarpa*. The material had a reverse taper in the upper part of the trunk. This part of the trunk was cut off, which resulted in a short but powerful shohin tree. The branches were wired, and the tree's basic skeleton was set to be developed into a nice future shohin bonsai.

The second day of the Summit featured a demonstration by a young and upcoming bonsai artist from India, Anupama Vedachala, who began her Bonsai education under her mentors Sula Jhaveri and Nikunj and Jyoti Parekh. She later trained under international masters like Pedro Morales, Nacho Marin, and Mauro Stemberger. Anupama worked on an *Ulmus parviflora* or Chinese Elm. The tree had a sinuously undulating trunk, very feminine in its movement. The tree was initially defoliated to expose its basic structure and then pruned and wired. Anupama meticulously placed the branches in position, putting a lot of movement in the branches and sub-branches mirroring the movement seen in the trunk. The final defoliated and wired elm tree was a study in movement and balance, showcasing Anupama's immense talent. She is sure to make her mark on the international stage in the near future.

Noryadi Noruddin, on the second day, worked on a *Carmona microphylla* or Fukien tea. The tree had many possibilities. After designating the front of the



tree, Noryadi decided to create a unique windswept style. He pruned back some branches and wired them and then applied movement to the branches. Noryadi explained his thought behind his unique styling, saying the force of the wind may not be constant all the time. Sometimes it is strong, but sometimes it may be weak or still. Hence branches may not all have a flow in the same direction as in a traditional windswept or Fukinagashi style.

This was followed by a demonstration from Chand Kejriwal on Kusamono or Accent planting. Chand stated that her Ikebana background has helped her understand the art of creating Kusamono. She created several beautiful kusamono, shitakusa, and kokedama plantings using a wonderful selection of grasses, foliage, and wildflowers. A book on Kusamono and Shitakusa, written by her titled *Discovering Nature, Kusamono and More* was released on this occasion.

In the afternoon session, Pedro Morales worked on another Casuarina, which was straight and upright. The apex of the tree was converted to deadwood, which was extended further down as a shari. The branches on the sides were wired and kept short, creating a visually powerful tree. The deadwood greatly enhanced the character of the tree impart age and maturity to the tree.

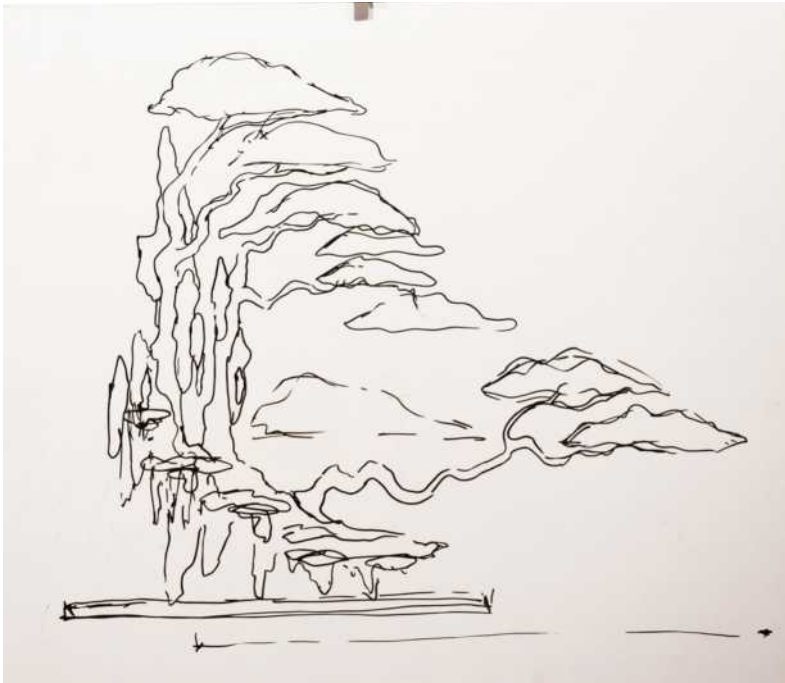
One of the most interesting demonstrations came towards the end of the day by the Indian artist Manoj Kumar. Manoj Kumar is a leading penjing and landscape artist who has traveled all over India and internationally, holding demonstrations and workshops. Many leading bonsai artists from around the world have recognized his talent as 'world class' and have appreciated his work. Manoj Kumar created a vertical penjing or rock landscape. The base was an oval granite slab mounted on an iron stand. His method of creating these exquisite pieces involved sorting the stones based on size and structure and then slowly assembling them piece by piece, creating crevices, shadows, pockets, extensions, etc., and ultimately creating a spectacular three-dimensional composition resembling a craggy mountain battling the forces of nature. He then strategically placed wired and shaped *Bucida spinosa* or black olive miniature trees on the mountain. The penjing turned out to be an exquisite piece of art.

The last day saw the creation of something totally novel and unusual. The demonstration was a collaborative effort between Nacho Marin, the artist, and Manoj Kumar, the 'Rock Magician'. Nacho Marin said that the idea for the composition came to him in the middle of the night. He first drew a sketch of the design he wanted to create. The structure had a stone mountain rising from the tray, representing the main trunk, and three separate Casuarina trees forming the branches and apex of the composition. A round tray was the starting point and Manoj Kumar slowly built up the stone structure, cementing each stone in place as per the sketch. This was a difficult task, as he also had to consider the stability of the structure. Three Casuarina trees were prepared by pruning and wiring the branches by Nacho Marin and his assistants. As the stone structure rose



Manoj Kumar from India created a spectacular vertical penjing with *Bucida spinosa* trees.





*Top left and right:* The last day saw the creation of something totally novel and unusual. The demonstration was a collaborative effort between Nacho Marin, the artist, and Manoj Kumar, the 'Rock Magician'. Nacho Marin said that the idea for the composition came to him in the middle of the night. The structure had a stone mountain rising from the tray, representing the main trunk, and three separate Casuarina trees forming the branches and apex of the composition.



*Above two photos:* BCI Directors Sujata Bhat (top) and Bhavna Shah were honored with commemorative medals for their contribution to the art of Bonsai.



Facing page, bottom right and this page, top left: Winner of BCI Excellence for Best Large Bonsai: Usha Singh (*Casuarina equisetifolia*).

Top right, middle and bottom: Winner of BCI Excellence for Best Medium Bonsai and Best penjing: Shashwat Pathak (*Ficus microcarpa* and *Premna microphylla*)

in height, the *Casuarina* trees were placed one by one, starting from the lowest branch and going up towards the apex. Simultaneously the stones were cemented in place around the trees. Nacho Marin explained why he chose a round tray for the composition. A round tray signifies stability and brings the focus back to the center of the tray. This allowed him to extend the first branch right out of the tray. Thus the first branch, with its length, movement and flow, became the focal point of the composition. It was indeed a fascinating experience to see a creative idea come to life right in front of us.

The concluding demonstration was by Ricardo Marin from Venezuela. He worked on a *Feronia lucida*. Rotating the tree by 90 degrees, he created a beautiful flowing cascade.

**Exhibition:** The exhibition area was set up in the open outside the main auditorium. Members of the Awadh Bonsai Association worked hard to arrange their Bonsai in a neat display. They were mainly tropical trees ranging from *Ficus*, *Casuarinas*, fruiting and flowering Bonsai, penjing, landscapes, forests, shohin, mame, etc. There were also many stalls selling not only stones and Bonsai but also some of their local products. Many of the delegates also participated in the workshops conducted by the headliners each day.



Top left and right: Winner of BCI Excellence for Best Shohin Bonsai: Alka Magon (Portulacaria afra).

Middle left and middle right: Winner of BCI Excellence for Best Mame display: Vikas Shrivastava.

Lower middle right and bottom left: Winner of BCI Excellence for Best Forest Bonsai: Renu Prakash (Divi divi forest).



**BCI Awards:** Bonsai Clubs International offered their Certificates of Excellence to the best Bonsai in 6 categories. Best large Bonsai, best medium bonsai, best shohin Bonsai, best mame display, best forest or group planting, and best penjing or landscape. Judging was done by the BCI directors. The winners were awarded the certificates during the closing ceremony. Awards were also offered by the organizers of Lucknow Bonsai Summit and the WBF.

The Lucknow Bonsai summit 2020 was a great success, a good learning experience for all those who attended. The organizers saw to it that the delegates also had a taste of the tradition and culture that Lucknow is famous for. The lunches and teas were a celebration of Awadhi culinary marvels. The welcome dinner was a grand affair held at the residence of Mrs. Renu Prakash and hosted by the Awadh Bonsai Association. This was a Summit that will be remembered for a long time. Many congratulations to Shashwat Pathak and his team at Bonsai Paradise, who worked really hard to organize this event successfully, and the members of the Awadh Bonsai Association for their efforts to promote the spread of Bonsai in India. 🌳



Kimura Masterclass

**Class curriculum**

Course introduction

1 02:37 Introduction

The Design Process of a Bonsai

2 18:12 Preparing the tree

3 24:12 Setting the structure 1

4 52:36 Setting the structure 2

5 16:18 Refinement

6 19:51 Apex and Aesthetics

Creating a Rock Bonsai

7 24:28 Preparations

8 14:49 The composition

9 30:19 Design and Moss application

10 10:14 Aesthetics and Conclusion

Bonus content

11 03:40 Private garden

12 04:51 Public garden

13 21:06 Interview with mr. Kimura

Conclusion

14 02:35 Conclusion

**I would like my fans to grow bonsai with love. — Masahiko Kimura**



By Joe Grande, Canada

**B**onsai Empire’s latest offering is the Kimura Master Class. Five videos cover The Design Process of a Bonsai, four videos show him Creating a Rock Bonsai. Bonus videos offer tours of his public and private gardens and an interview. As with all Bonsai Empire Online lessons, you can download a ceremonial Certificate of Completion.

The production values are superb. Video quality, the set, and editing are excellent. Bonsai Empire continues to improve the video format. The progress bar now has segment markers with a short description of the subject covered in that segment. I found it very easy to search for the portions I wanted to watch again.

Clearly, the cost is worth it if you want to observe and learn from one of today’s greatest bonsai masters on this planet.

Kimura is 80 years old but still thinks 20 to 30 years ahead for the bonsai compositions he creates today. He is a man of few words, speaks simply and clearly, with a Zen-like manner. He is obviously at peace with himself.

An *Oyakata* is a Japanese term that means a boss, overseer, or father figure. He talks about his *Oyakata* and how he feels his presence, as if he is there by his side when he works on bonsai. He hopes his presence as an *Oyakata* is always with his apprentices, whom he says, have been trained very strictly. He muses that he can’t keep up with the speed with which they apply wire to branches. He praises two apprentices in particular, Taiga Urishibata and Masayuki Fujikawa, for their wiring skills.

I think Kimura is a traditional *Oyakata* that teaches a time-honored method. He does not provide long-winded explanations. Instead,

The first Kimura Masterclass is the styling of this white pine shown below, before and after Kimura’s excellent work.



Top: In the interview video, Kimura talks about his inspiration and refinement of this priceless and world-renowned *Ishitsuki*.

Below: Kimura and his apprentices work on a carved feather rock coated with pigmented cement to which he attached six junipers.



the model is, observe, imitate, and learn. He has no problem pointing out ways his apprentices can improve.

The student gradually performs as well as the master with what has been learned, starting to break the rules. Kimura's accomplished apprentices are now masters in their own right, the rules have disappeared. They are guided exclusively by sensitivity to their environment and the plant they are working on. Their inner growth instinctively transcends limitations and innovates new methods and techniques. He is clearly gratified by the success and popularity of his disciples in Japan, Europe, and America as they practice their own bonsai style.

Kimura works effortlessly, every move is calculated, no wasted energy. He is fearless, the branch cracks but he will show us how to fix it. His reverence for the health of the plant is paramount. He is very sensitive to the nuances of wiring. A number 8 wire is too thick for this branch, a number 10 is too weak. He chooses the number 8 wire in the end. As he shapes the pine branches wired by his current apprentices into pads, he admits that branches are more difficult to arrange when someone else has wired them.

As a senior bonsai master, he shows respect for tradition, even though he was an innovator of controversial techniques in his early days of bonsai design. Like the juniper, he calls *The Dragon*, published in *The Bonsai Art of Kimura* in the late '80s by Stone Lantern. He departed from the classic design principles of bonsai art, turned the plant upside down to create an abstract design that suggested the unseen elements of the landscape that shaped it.

Lately, he has been inspired by bonsai's penjing roots and the mountains of Huangshan. He has developed a technique for carving feather rock and coating it with pigmented cement to create realistic rockeries reminiscent of China's famous mountains. In this composition, the rock represents the trunk of a tree. The plants he carefully arranges on the rock represent the apex and main branches of a tree.

The two demonstrations are like a painting on a vast canvas. Whether you are new to bonsai, or a seasoned practitioner, you will notice both the broad strokes and the fine details of how Kimura creates a bonsai design. I believe each person will take away what is relevant to them. The knowledge can be presented in an obvious way, or you may have to "read between the lines." As a 30-year bonsai hobbyist, I am still learning new things about bonsai with every encounter with a master or any bonsai practitioner willing to share tips and techniques.

In this series, Kimura tells us how he grows moss on carpets. It is easy to grow and harvest in large sheets or small pieces, whatever suits the work.

He also discusses the use of dyed raffia. He does not like the intense contrasting color of natural raffia on a tree. His solution is to add ink to the water that soaks the raffia. Once the raffia's garish color is brought to our attention, you can appreciate his reasoning. I looked at one of my recently wired trees, and the natural color of the raffia-wrapped branches was distracting. In my next



session, I used raffia that was soaked in water treated with black aniline dye. Now I apply raffia like Kimura!

Watching a master at work can be like watching paint dry if you are insensitive to the art form. But if you aspire to refine your techniques and add to your knowledge, Kimura's work is thoroughly captivating. It is a study in time and thoughtful motion that yields masterpieces for the ages.

The interview with Kimura is absolutely charming. Kimura talks about some of his favorite compositions and shares their history, proud of his successes and candid about his failures. The first example is his world-famous *Ishitsuki*. It is an inspired and original composition that has been celebrated by all and has inspired works on this theme by other bonsai artists all over the world.

We learn that Kimura started bonsai at the Toju-en nursery in Omiya Bonsai Village at age 15. He experienced many good and bad times during his 11-year apprenticeship. His first impression of the wiring technique is a familiar one to most bonsai practitioners.

Even Kimura thought it was complicated, hard work that he would never learn to do correctly.

He is asked some interesting questions about his life's work and teaching methods. He answers with an openness that reveals his unique sensibilities and creative spirit. *"The idea comes to me in a flash,"* he says about the designs he creates. The interview is very inspirational.

He wants his bonsai fans to promise him this: *"To grow trees with love and affection, regardless of the tree's value."* He adds, *"I guess there are some trees that are not good at all. But they are alive. There are various kinds of love/affection, so it is difficult to explain in one word. I would like my fans to grow bonsai with love, like how a mother raises a mute child. Just like the moment you return home, you immediately check on your trees. To see if they are doing well or need to be watered."* This is what he teaches to all his disciples.

We are lucky for the opportunity to spend this short time with Kimura and his work. Oscar Jonker, Bonsai Empire founder, is to be congratulated on this contribution to the art of bonsai. 🌲

*Bottom:* In the finished composition, the rock evokes the trunk of a large tree and the six junipers comprise the main branches and apex.



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## bc*i* BCI Logo Tree Pins and Pendants

Each Pin and Pendant is Handcrafted by 2nd Generation Bonsai Master Frank Mihalic, using the Lost Wax and Cameo Carving process. The Pendant is cast in Sterling Silver and has a loop to which a chain or cord can be attached. The Pin, cast in Pewter, comes with a conventional clasp.



**Sterling Silver Pendant:**  
(postage included) \$95

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(postage included) \$15

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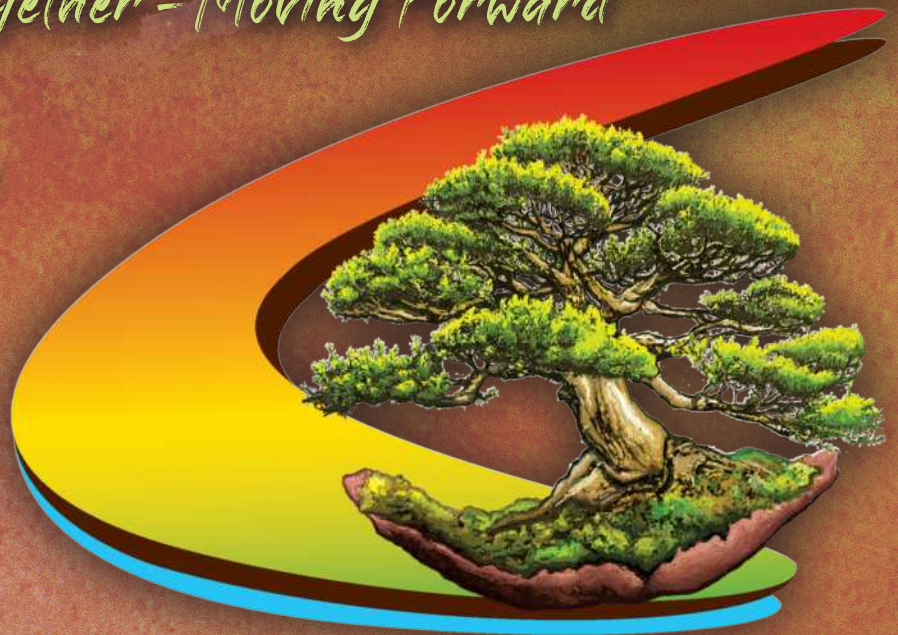
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