

promoting  
international friendship  
through bonsai



# bcj

# Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

2016  
Q2

**From a Cutting to the Mountain;  
Techniques for Creating  
Yamadori-Like Juniper Bonsai**

**A Fascination with the Far West  
and a *Juniperus californica***

**Bonsai Beyond Borders:  
BCI 2016, Manila, Philippines**

**The Fine Ethics of  
Tree Collecting**

**The Wonder of  
Creating a Pemphis:  
A demonstration  
at BCI 2016 Convention**

**Azaleas, What Passion!**

**BCI Excellence Awards:**

**BCI 2016 Convention  
and Exhibition**

**Noelanders Trophy,  
2016, Belgium**

**2016 Japan Suiseki Exhibition**

**Education and Fresh Perspectives:  
Bonsai Symposium  
2015 in Puerto Rico**



*Juniperus chinensis var. sargentii* on  
exhibit at Kokufu-ten, Japan, 2016,  
photo courtesy  
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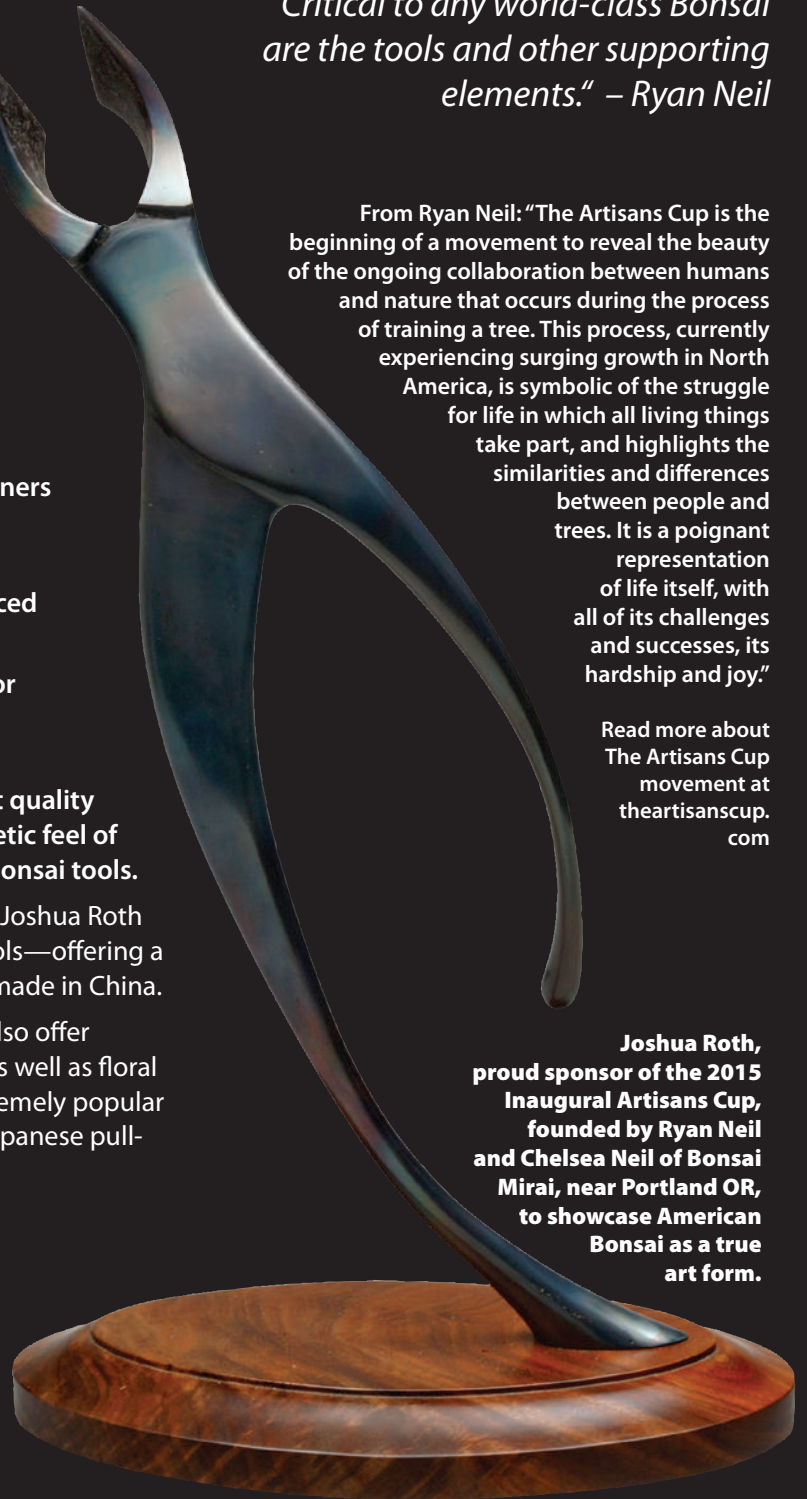
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*“Critical to any world-class Bonsai are the tools and other supporting elements.” – Ryan Neil*

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

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## President's Message

**M**y first task as BCI President was to open three BCI Cooperation Centers in Guangzhou, Guiyang and Liuzhou, in China, in January. These are the first of many planned for China and hopefully other countries in the future. The BCI China Cooperation Centers are being established throughout China, to promote BCI China, recruit members and promote bonsai and BCI to the Chinese public. I found it very humbling to be representing BCI in promoting bonsai to the Chinese people. Later this year we will open more Cooperation Centers in China. See page 61 for photos and more details on this wonderful program that will expand the BCI family.

I have just returned from the BCI Convention in Manila, Philippines and the BCI Annual General Meeting. The bonsai and stone display was held in Ayala Triangle Gardens, a private park in Makati City, Manila. Setting up had to be conducted after business hours so the Philippine group had to work between the hours of 10 pm and 6 am. Lindsay and I accompanied them on the first set up night. We arrived around 10 pm and shortly after, the lighting in the garden was turned off! The Philippine team of workers, laboured for three nights setting up the display in near darkness! The results were great as were the demonstrations, presentations and hospitality. You will see photos and reports in this edition.

The BCI board had a very productive meeting. We agreed to set up a fund specifically for payment of good quality techniques and how-to articles for the BCI Magazine. These articles will also be available in PDF format for members and clubs via the BCI website, member area. This will be implemented in the near future. BCI will fund the program initially but will rely on donations and fundraising.

BCI editor Joe Grande is exploring the concept of collaborating with a Guest Editor to create thematic issues of Bonsai & Stone Appreciation magazine. The Guest Editor will contribute the leading article and work with the BCI team to support and expand on the theme of the feature article with additional content. For example, in Australia, where yamadori, trees from the wild, are scarce to non-existent because of conservation laws, we are very keen on what the Japanese call the Tanuki bonsai style. BCI member Dan Robinson coined the phrase "Phoenix Graft" to describe the process of physically attaching a young, supple tree to ancient and gnarly deadwood. The combined effect can be quite striking and natural if done right. A magazine edition on the subject of the Tanuki style would allow us to learn more about this controversial style.

What subjects are you and your club interested in and do you have any recommendations for people to serve as Guest Editors?

Joe is also working on some Videos to help members and clubs navigate the website and instructions on how to use some of the website features such as the Events Calendar or the online BCI magazine. Watch for e-mail notices when these are available to members.

Bonnie Moore, our IT expert, is continuing the process of safeguarding our website with security improvements and better navigation. She has implemented new e-mail software that will improve our communications with our members. BCI mass e-mails to members are now certified, which means e-mail servers everywhere will trust e-mails from info@bonsai-bci.com and will not put them into your Spam or Junk folder. To receive updates and notices by e-mail, please be sure BCI has your e-mail address. You can log in and edit this on your profile page, or you can contact Larry Stephan at the BCI Office for assistance.



**We, at BCI, are striving to improve our members services. Education is the buzz word for 2016.**

Forty articles by Lew Buller have recently been added to the BCI resource area of the website. These come under the heading of Lew's Lessons. Lew is a long-time supporter of BCI and we appreciate his hard work and support. You will find lots of other valuable information in the resource area of the BCI Website including articles on Judging Bonsai by Kath and Malcolm Hughes. If you have not visited the website recently please check out the new content.

We have Conventions now planned for November 2017 in Taiwan, information is this issue. In September 2018, the Convention is in Mulhouse, France. Mulhouse is shaping up to be a unique event and one of the highlights will be a display of Gudrun and Willi Benz's Viewing Stone Collection. We are then back to China in September, 2019. The 2019 event will be a two-part convention starting in a mountainous area near Guiyang, Guizhou province, then flying to Alashan in Inner Mongolia for a stone exhibition. The local governments are sponsoring the events so we expect costs to be very reasonable.

BCI tours are very popular and we are looking at conducting more tours in conjunction with major bonsai events around the world. These will be customized especially for BCI members, visiting bonsai and stone exhibitions, collections and sightseeing.

Three new Board Members have joined the BCI team: Chen Chang, a BCI life member and Chair of the BCI China Group; Sujata Bhat, valued supporter and contributor from India; and Les Dowdell from Canada. Les is not actually new to the BCI Board, he served on the board for 2000-2014, took a two-year break and is now back.

We, at BCI, are striving to improve our member services. Education is the buzz word for 2016. If you have something to contribute to help with us with this objective, either for the website or magazine, please send to Joe Grande BCI Editor editor@bonsai-bci.com or contact me direct, president@bonsai-bci.com. 🌱

Cheers from Down Under,  
Glenis Bebb

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

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

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

For more information contact:

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## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

**T**hanks to the activities of recent and present BCI Directors, BCI is seen as an authoritative organization, respected all over the world for its ongoing promotion of bonsai, viewing stones and related arts.

With annual conventions planned well into the future, BCI will be there to participate, acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of bonsai and stones as these art forms evolve and become more popular.

A great example of this diversity, are the bonsai in the Philippines, notably the spectacular Bantigue, or *Pemphis acidula*, in the collections of Alfred Manarang, Bobby Gopiao and Susan Lee, just to name a few collectors and artists. BCI directors Budi Sulisty, Gudrun Benz and Carlos Morales report on the BCI Convention in Manila and together with Lindsay Bebb and José Rodriguez, they cover the convention, the exhibits, demonstrations and awards. Learn more about *Pemphis acidula* in Budi's and José's article. More photos from this convention are on [bonsai-bci.com/conventions](http://bonsai-bci.com/conventions).

For many of us, Japan is the gold standard when it comes to trees and stones. Proof of this can be seen in Gudrun Benz's report on the 2016 Suiseki Exhibition. Gudrun also awarded a BCI medal to Luis Vallejo at the Noelanders Trophy in Belgium. Luis, BCI member and well-known bonsai expert from Spain, sent us additional photos of his beautiful tree for us to enjoy.

Puerto Rico is an epicenter of bonsai activity where new knowledge is always welcomed. Carlos Morales and José Rodriguez report on BCI director Min Hsuan Lo's recent participation in their symposium that focused on education. Min Hsuan and José also share with us the results of innovative techniques developed by Min Hsuan Lo in Taiwan that transform juniper cuttings into specimens that look like they were collected from the wild. You won't believe your eyes when you see this work.

In North America, where wild areas are immense and numerous, collecting from the wild is an option that many bonsai collectors in other parts of the world do not have. This largely untapped resource, and the amazing specimens there, are a fascination for bonsai artist Mauro Stemberger from Italy. In a photo essay, he shares with us his know-how in styling a large California juniper. But before we all rush out and dig up all the trees, please read Andy Smith's article on ethical collecting. Andy brings experience and expertise to this topic that is sure to help us preserve the bonsai bounty in North America and other places where plants suitable for bonsai grow wild.

If you don't see yourself scrambling up mountains, trekking deserts and negotiating bogs and swamps, consider acquiring a perennial favorite, a bonsai Azalea. Danilo Scursatone muses on why this species engenders such passion and tells us how to care for Azaleas bonsai.

Two short articles on related arts round out our offering with this edition: Danilo's article on how Haiku poetry relates to bonsai; and on sculptor Rick Gregg, recruited by Ryan Neil to design and fabricate the trophies for the inaugural Artisans Cup in Portland, Oregon last September. 🌳

—Joe Grande, Canada ([bcieditor@grandesign.net](mailto:bcieditor@grandesign.net))

## MISSION STATEMENT

BONSAI CLUBS INTERNATIONAL

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

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Digital images must be provided at 300 dpi resolution for an 8 x 5 inch size minimum.

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

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ON OUR COVER: BCI member Tobie Kleynhans from South Africa attended the Kokufu-ten bonsai exhibition in Japan and submitted several photos from the exhibit as part on an article he wrote that discusses the African Bonsai Style. Watch for Tobie's article in a future edition of this magazine. In the meantime, we are featuring one of these photos on the cover of this edition, expertly photographed by Sandi Kleynhans, Tobie's wife.

# Bonsai Beyond Borders BCI 2016, MANILA, PHILIPPINES

By Budi Sulisty, Indonesia

Photos by Gudrun Benz, Germany; Sonny Armamento, Philippines; and Budi Sulisty, Indonesia.



From left to right and top to bottom; Cathedral of Intramuros Manila; Casa Manila museum; Horse and Carriage is a great way to see the sights; The main stage at the conference in Ayala Triangle Garden; Filipino dancers from the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group showcasing Asian dances; BCI Board meeting; Mrs. Felicidad S. Gupit, Chairperson of the convention, Glennis Bebb, Lindsay Bebb and Gudrun Benz at the official opening of the exhibit.

The BCI 2016 convention was held in Manila, Philippines and aptly named, Beyond Borders. It was a big event attended by 16 countries including India, Puerto Rico, France and USA. The opening was grand, starting with dancing boys and girls from several Asian countries welcoming all the guests entering Ayala Triangle Garden, a nice garden in the middle of Makati Central Business District. The garden was large and clean with many tall trees providing shade to the people attending the exhibition.

Around 300 bonsai and 60 stones exhibited in the garden. Granite-topped tables were used to present all the beautiful bonsai. There was enough distance between the tables to make each bonsai easily observed, although without a backdrop to provide contrast, photographs of the trees blended into the background.

There are two groups of exhibits. One is the Bantigue or *Pemphis acidula* that has become the pride of Philippine bonsai. In the tropics, pemphis mostly grow on islands with lime stone and sand beaches. This makes Philippine and Indonesian archipelagoes are the ideal habitat for this species. Pemphis has very hard wood so when trees are debarked in nature by wind, sand and waves the deadwood endures for a long time. This feature makes bonsai pemphis suitable for styles with *jin* and *shari*. They can be styled like Juniper in the sub-tropical countries. Most bonsai people in Philippines love the pemphis. That is why there are so many pemphis exhibited and many of them are exceptional. No wonder that pemphis comprises the majority of the trees on exhibit. If all trees were included into one category, most of the winners would be pemphis. Therefore to encourage other species to be used for bonsai, the judging is divided into pemphis and non pemphis.

The non pemphis category consists of many species like, *Juniperus chinensis*, *Ficus*, *Premna*, Blue bell or *Desmodium*, Tugas or *Vitex trifolia*, Lime berry or *Triphasia trifolia*, *Streblus asper*, *Murraya paniculata*, *Maba buxifolia*, *Tamarindus indica*, *Ixora coccinea*,



Left column; Shinichi Nakajima from Japan started the demonstration on a Podocarpus. He chose a tall tree for his demonstration. Some stout branch ends have been marked for carving.

Right column; Master Wen Jen Hsu, Taiwan studying a *Maba buxifolia* for his demonstration. He refined the composition by judicious pruning and changing the plant's angle in the pot.







Left column; Master Pang Yung Liu from Taiwan refined a *Murraya paniculata*.

Right column; William Valavanis, USA, started his demonstration with a detailed and excellent PowerPoint presentation on arranging group plantings and then went on to create a *Murraya paniculata* forest.



Bottom right; View of front and side. Photos courtesy Lindsay Bebb and William Valavanis.





*Casuarina equisetifolia*, *Malphigia glabra*, *Hibiscus tilliaceus* and many more. This policy encourages other species to be used as bonsai material. Looking at the trees exhibited, about 15% of them, especially the non Bantigue are trees imported from Taiwan. For the long term it is a good influence because people can learn how to make good bonsai. In general, Philippine bonsai are much affected by the Taiwan style.

The convention featured many experts that gave demonstrations and lectures. Shinichi Nakajima from Japan started the demonstration on a Podocarpus. He chose a tall tree for his demonstration. Later on Minhsuan Lo chose an informal upright *Pemphis acidula* and turned it into a cascading style. It was fun and educational to see the demo. Pang Yung Liu from Taiwan refined a *Murraya paniculata* and Wen Jen Hsu, also from Taiwan, did a nice *Maba buxifolia*. The demonstrations ended with William Valavanis from USA creating a forest style with *Murraya paniculata*.

Stones seminar were given by Tom Elias who talked about Japanese stones and Peter Huang from China, who spoke about wax stones.

Over all the convention was good and very successful. 🌲

Top left; Peter Huang presented a lecture about Chinese Wax stones

Top right; Dr. Tom Elias delivered a lecture on "Suiseki – Japanese Stone Appreciation"



## On Exhibit



Top left; Chrysanthemum stone, place of origin: Japan

Top right; Animal-shaped stone, place of origin, Philippines

Left; Object stone, bridge-shape stone, place of origin, Philippines



*Left column;*  
 Waterpool stone, place of origin: Philippines  
 Big stone with custom lid, place of origin: China  
 "Frog", animal-shaped stone plateau stone, place of origin: Japan  
*Right column;*  
 Grape agate, place of origin: Inner Mongolia, China  
 "Leopard", animal-shaped stone, place of origin, Philippines  
 A huge stone with a breakthrough, place of origin, Philippines



Top left; *Pemphis acidula*, 115 cm, gold award, collection of Samuel Ibuan

Top right; *Pemphis acidula*, 120 cm, Gold, Best in Show, collection of Alfred Manarang. This tree was featured on the cover of our Q1 issue.

Middle left; *Pemphis acidula*, 90 cm, silver award, collection of Bobby Gopiao

Bottom left; *Pemphis acidula*, 115 cm, cascade style, gold award, collection of Bobby Gopiao

Bottom right; This cascade *Pemphis acidula* is from the collection of Alfred Manarang



Top left; *Malphigia glabra*, 100 cm, Gold award, best in non-bantigue, best cascade, collection of Bobby Gopiao

Top right; *Pemphis acidula*, 75 cm, bronze award, collection of Susan Lee

Middle left; *Bougainvillea*, bronze award, 97 cm, collection of Jun Serapio

Middle right; *Vitex trifolia*, gold award, 66 cm, collection of Jun Serapio

Bottom left; *Ficus microcarpa*, silver award, 62 cm, collection of Susan Lee

Bottom right; *Ixora chinensis*, Clump, 51 cm, collection Elvis Magadia

# The Wonder of Creating a Pemphis

## A demonstration by Min Hsuan Lo at BCI 2016 Convention in Manila

By Budi Sulisty, Indonesia, and José Luis Rodríguez, Puerto Rico

Photography by Budi Sulisty



**D**uring the BCI Convention in Manila 2016, we had the opportunity to witness the expertise of Min Hsuan Lo, a prominent artist from Taiwan, who shared his artistry with those present. As the subject of his demonstration, he chose a *Pemphis acidula* material.

The tree was formerly an established bonsai, but the shape and style was not optimum and did not bring out its true potential. That was the reasoning of the master and why he selected that particular material for his demonstration.

On a botanical note, Pemphis is a tree native to the Philippines, Indonesia and other Southeast Asian tropical countries. It can reach up to 4 meters in height, mainly growing in coastal limestone and sandy areas within high proximity to the tidal zone. Its leaves are small, thick, shiny and quite suitable for bonsai. Having hard, strong wood, naturally some of them will get





deadwood elements due to the constant exposure to severe wind, sand blasts and waves. The natural dead wood is long-lived, reason why Pemphis is very suitable to be trained with *jin* and *shari*. Its beauty is comparable to Juniper but in the tropical zone.

As usual, Master Lo observed the tree from all sides and asked the opinion of the audience on choosing the best front. After deciding the front, Lo selected the best position for the tree. The crowd shouted when he turned the tree upside down. It was a really shocking experience for most people!

Once again, Lo asked the opinion from the audience, this time, on the choice of flow and what parts to be eliminated. He mentioned that the root structure was particularly strong on the left side, making it suitable of supporting a cascading style bonsai. Furthermore, the movement would be smooth, making it flow towards the middle trunk. After repositioning and explaining the reasons behind the angle change, he stated that the right trunk had to be converted into dead wood.





Afterwards, he started to cut off the branches on the right trunk. Immediately, it showed a clearer picture on the flow and made the tree look older. He then asked his assistants to debark the trunk, thus adding a dead feature to the design.

Meanwhile, Master Lo tried to take off the old wires that still remained on the branches and twigs of the tree. It was a bit late to take of the wires, as some of them had already cut into some branches. He suggested that, if later on people wanted to rewire those same branches and twigs, they would have to wind the wire in the opposite direction so that the cuts will not become deeper.

The spectators asked on how to properly take care of a Pemphis bonsai. To understand the knowhow of how to properly maintain Pemphis, we must first understand its habitat. Pemphis is a tropical tree that grows on sandy beaches and coastal rocky areas. Daily, they are showered by salt water and caressed by the sea breeze. Living in volcanic islands, Pemphis needs coarse, sand-based, soil-less and organic-less bonsai mix. Coarse stone and lava cinder are also an alternative. Salt water makes them strong, manifesting this by vigorous growth and thick leaves. From time to time,



salt water has to be provided to the growing medium, as well as showered on the leaves.

Lo reduced some unnecessary twigs and leaves to get the tree in better proportion.

On the right is the result of the demonstration. Anyhow, some more growth and minor arrangements will be necessary later on when the tree recovers and starts to grow.

A photomontage of the expected future profile is shown below. 🌲



Photomontage by Carlos A. Morales and José Luis Rodríguez Macías, Puerto Rico



# BCI Excellence Awards

## 2016 Philippines-BCI Convention and Exhibition

In an on-going effort to recognize excellence in bonsai and stone art around the world, BCI Directors can award a beautiful medal and certificate to deserving trees and stones at major exhibits. The medal, designed by ex-BCI Director, Guillermo Ramirez Castaño, of Mexico, is awarded at the discretion of the BCI Directors in attendance.

At the BCI Convention held in the Philippines, two BCI Medals of Excellence were awarded for both bonsai and stones.

The Exhibition was held in the Ayala Triangle Gardens a privately owned park in Makati, Manila. The standard of bonsai was excellent. Most were locally collected species. Their local viewing stones are mostly object type and of very good quality.



### Bonsai Awards

Top left; Ms. Marieta Querol, Bantigue Bonsai award for her Bantigue, *Pemphis acidula*, 83 cm.

Bottom left; Ms. Ludivina Loyola, Non-Bantigue award for her bluebell, *Desmodium acanthocladum*, 80 cm, a local species.

The bonsai were judged for BCI by Budi Sulisty and Min Hsuan Lo. Photos by Budi Sulisty.

### Stone Awards

The stone awards went to Ms. Susan Lee for her stone named "Circline" and Mr Roland "Dolphy" Soriaga's figure stone. Both stones are local Philippine stones.

Viewing Stone judges for BCI were Gudrun Benz and Lindsay Bebb. Photos by Gudrun Benz and Lindsay Bebb.





# The Fine Ethics of Tree Collecting

Text and photos by Andrew Smith, USA

Above; A panorama featuring a juniper overlooking a canyon in Wyoming.

**E**thics is where the individual collides with the world. So wear your helmet.

I like to think that I can live in such a way as to minimize the harm I do to other living things while still enjoying myself in a non-saintly manner. That would be an ethical life in my book. But it turns out this is easier to wish for than to do.

The truth is, there is no way to be in this world of ours without causing harm to other living things. Maybe the best we can do is to just try and make ourselves aware of the full consequences of our actions so we can decide if we are really acting as we wish.

I love being out in the cold, windy mountains and searching for ancient pines, dwarfed and contorted by decades of growing in some tiny rock crevice on a lonely crag. Such trees embody the feeling of a wild place, rude, but unspoiled with rules and expectations. If I can, I will collect this old pine and take it home to train as a bonsai. And if you can, I'd encourage you to do the same. I think it's a good thing.

Bonsai is an art that idealizes the beauty of nature. But you can't really know what you're trying to idealize unless you get out into it. Going out and collecting a tree is a perfect way to do that.

## Mindful, informed and aware

Collecting a tree from nature takes some effort. You'll have to get your hands dirty and your muscles tired. You'll have to become familiar with your local landscape and the tree species that grow there. You'll have to decide which ones have potential for bonsai and which ones don't. You'll have to become aware of the seasons and how they relate to tree growth and when is the proper time to dig. You'll have to learn about the different needs of each species, and just what is required to grow each one. And you'll have to find places where it's legal and proper to collect. And finally, after all that, if you're successful, you'll have to be there for your tree; day after day, year after year after year, to water, feed and care for it.

All of these things will increase your awareness of the natural world we are part of. And so, I think, they will make you a better citizen of the Earth. I think if everyone did bonsai, the world would be a better place. Really.

But, before you grab your shovel, consider the passenger pigeon, the American bison, the woolly mammoth and the shimpaku junipers in the mountains of Japan. The passenger pigeon went extinct from over-hunting by humans, the woolly mammoth probably



What I'm going to suggest is that you start taking your backyard with you everywhere you go. Just roll it up and stick it in your shirt pocket—it won't take up any room.

*Top; Junipers on a mountain in Wyoming.*

*Bottom; A pine with amazing deadwood in the Black Hills of South Dakota.*

*Facing page top and middle; Pines growing in rock crevices, Black Hills.*

*Facing page, bottom; Ancient juniper in Wyoming.*



did, and the American bison nearly did. And during the shimpaku juniper craze of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, nearly every wild juniper was removed from the mountains of Japan by bonsai collectors. That's right, by people like us. Today, collecting them is prohibited. But it's too late, since the trees are already gone. What a shame.

To avoid a similar legacy of disgrace here, we should develop a code of ethics for ourselves now, so that in the future tree collecting is still possible and legal. And so that in the future bonsai is seen as the true environmental art that it is, a mixing of humanity, nature and beauty; rather than as something more akin to poaching ivory.

### Take your backyard with you

Your own backyard is the best place to start. What I'm going to suggest is that you start taking your backyard with you everywhere you go. Just roll it up and stick it in your shirt pocket—it won't take up any room. But when you get to your collecting site, unroll it and spread it out. No matter what size yard you have behind your house you'll find that now it's limitless in size and depth.

If some strangers came to you and asked if they could dig some trees for bonsai from your backyard, what would your answer likely be? In most cases the answer would be "no." You'd say there are only a few trees there and you want all of them to stay where they are. They are more important to you in the ground than in a pot.

That answer applies everywhere. Collecting trees is not appropriate in most locations, even though there may be good trees there. A beautiful potential bonsai tree growing in a wilderness area should be left growing right where it is because wilderness values, and the law, dictate that the landscape be as untouched as possible by humans. But the very same tree growing in the middle of a timber sale area, or an area that was going to be prescribed burned or thinned, could be collected as long as the proper permit or permission was obtained first.

So the first thing to consider is not the tree, but where the tree is growing. Many areas will be off limits to collecting because the landowner or the land management agency does not want to allow collecting. This is their right and it should always be respected. Taking a tree without permission is theft. And that will eventually harm the whole bonsai community.

### Where can you collect in the USA?

There are many areas where collecting will never, or almost never, be allowed. These include national parks, national monuments, wilderness areas, wildlife preserves, most state parks and recreation areas, special natural, historic or archeological sites, areas near hiking trails, campgrounds, main roads, lakeshores, and, of course, most private lands. In other words, any area where the highest use of the land is something other than tree collecting is likely to ban it or severely restrict it.

But there are still many places where interesting trees can be found and collected. National and state forests (as opposed to national and state parks) will often allow collecting in areas where they also allow other commercial uses of the land, such as timber and firewood cutting, mining, oil production and livestock grazing. Since many normal forest management activities destroy the same trees we would like to use for bonsai, collecting them is not necessarily prohibited. The Bureau of Land Management (BML) also often allows trees to be transplanted from their lands.

Collecting from public lands always requires a permit of some type, which must usually be purchased. Since I live near a lot of public lands I regularly buy transplant permits from national and state forests as well as BLM lands. Permit prices range from \$2 to \$20 per tree, though between \$5 and \$10 is the norm.

Not every district will allow collecting, and you will probably have to do some research to find a place. When you do, the restrictions and number of trees allowed per collector will vary, depending on what the resource manager thinks is acceptable. Generally, the farther you are from a major population center the less restrictive the permits will be. It is sometimes helpful to talk with a forester or a resource person and explain exactly what you are looking for. The front desk personnel may not even be aware that transplant permits exist and may simply tell you “no,” because they think that’s the correct answer.

In any case, make sure you get the necessary permit before you start.



I love being out in the cold, windy mountains and searching for ancient trees, dwarfed and contorted by decades of growing in some tiny rock crevice on a lonely crag.





Top: A juniper from Wyoming. Middle and bottom: I have collected trees for over 10 years from this area, but now, after some recent logging/thinning operations were completed not a single contorted pine remains.

Although thinning is painful from a bonsai collector's perspective, it is necessary to protect the overall forest from insects and fire. The current beetle outbreak has killed millions of trees on several hundred thousand acres of forest in the last 15 years.



Surprisingly, private lands are also often a good source of bonsai material. Many times I have asked ranchers for permission to cross their place and get to my collecting location only to have them tell me I was welcome to collect on their land as well.

I once put an ad in the paper offering to pay \$2 each to dig sagebrush. I got a lot of phone calls from some very suspicious ranchers, most of whom assumed I was really selling insurance. After I assured them I really wanted sagebrush, most of them offered it to me for free. I later learned that a common punishment

for wayward ranch kids is to be sent out to dig up sagebrush until they come to their senses. Anyway, I actually did pay for my sagebrush, because the ranch I got it from was closer to home and this particular rancher wanted his two bucks. After all, he owned enough sagebrush that if I took them all he'd be a billionaire. But I only dug 40.

I always pay for the trees I collect from public lands, so it makes sense to me to pay for trees I'm getting from private land.

I have a friend who has great success finding houses and buildings that are going to be demolished and then getting permission to dig up the old foundation plants. He's gotten some awesome cotoneasters that way. He's never had to pay for anything, but he always asks first. His biggest problem is figuring out who to ask.

So, you found a great place to collect and you have the landowner's permission. You searched the area and you found a couple of spectacular trees to collect. What now?

### Respecting trees and Nature

Now is when you take your backyard out of your pocket and unroll it. The essence of ethics is the Golden Rule, which in this case means to treat the land like you lived there. If it really were your backyard, what would you consider acceptable?

Perhaps the first consideration is not to collect threatened or endangered plants, or plants that are locally rare. It's great to have a tree that's unusual as a bonsai, but that's very different from collecting a tree that's unusual in the wild, even locally. The trees we want for bonsai are rare because of their form, not because of their species. Most of the permits I get will specify what species are acceptable to collect. Where I live, ponderosa pine dominates the forest and so it is almost always acceptable to collect them. Other species are common too, like aspen and white spruce, but in some cases the land managers are trying to increase forest diversity by removing pine so other species can grow. So not every district will allow the collecting of aspen or spruce, especially if they are working to enhance that component of the forest.

Another consideration is tree survivability. Only experience can tell you what species will transplant well and what is required to make them survive. And this can vary considerably from species to species and season to season. And even if you do everything right you won't get 100% survival. But we should all avoid being wasteful with trees. If it looks like the tree won't survive transplanting it is far better to cover it back up and look for one that will.

I expect to get a 95%+ survival rate on ponderosa pine. One reason I get good survival is that I'm very selective of the trees I take. I try and remove only trees that have a great root system and therefore an excellent chance of survival. I'm not always successful at this, but I've gotten better over the years. With ponderosa pine I estimate only about 1 tree out of 100



I try to leave every collecting site so that no one can tell I was ever there... it takes only moments to fill in the depression left by a collected tree with dirt and gravel and then scatter pine needles and moss back across it so that it looks natural again.

will have both the character and root system to make a bonsai. With junipers I estimate 1 out of 1,000. It's better to spend your time looking for a tree that will survive transplanting than working hard and long on one that probably won't. In general, the easier a tree is to collect the better the chances it will survive.

The final consideration is appearance to the public, which includes both how the collecting site looks when you are finished and how you present yourself while collecting.

It's a no-brainer that if you let someone dig a few trees from your backyard and they left it full of holes, piles of dirt, trash and let their dog run loose you would not invite them, or anyone else, back to dig trees again. The same sensibility should apply to any collecting site you are lucky enough to visit.

I try to leave every collecting site so that no one can tell I was ever there. This is not very hard to do, but it's easy to forget to do. However it takes only moments to fill in the depression left by a collected tree with dirt and gravel and then scatter pine needles and moss back across it so that it looks natural again. I never leave garbage, not even a gum wrapper, in the woods.

Gates should always be left as they were found, either open or closed. Just because livestock are not in sight does not mean they are not there. Vehicles should stay on existing roads and trails and certainly avoid leaving ruts across wet meadows or pastures.

I also try and stay out of the public eye and park my truck away from heavily traveled roads. I have several reasons for this. First, I don't want to broadcast to just anyone where my favorite collecting site may be. Second, people driving by might misinterpret what I'm doing. They might assume that I'm doing something I shouldn't be and call the sheriff, or they might assume that since I'm doing it anyone can, and stop and start



digging up trees of their own. And this has happened. Neither of these things is desirable.

Really it all comes down to treating the trees, the land and the landowners with respect—the same respect you would want. It's not much to ask, but it will do a lot for the hobby we love. 🌲

Andrew Smith is a forester and bonsai collector/artist working in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Smith operates Golden Arrow Bonsai, now in its 21st year of business, specializing in collecting yamadori pre-bonsai specimens from the mountains of the American west. He attends several major bonsai gatherings every year and gives talks, demonstrations and workshops featuring collected conifers, all over the country.

*Top left, top right and bottom;* After digging up and bagging this interesting ponderosa pine, the hole is filled in and covered, leaving behind little evidence of human activity.



Top; Ueno Toshogu Shrine.

Bottom left; Metropolitan Art Museum.

Bottom right; Pagoda in Ueno Park.



# Cultural Elegance

## 2016 Japan Suiseiki Exhibition

By Gudrun Benz, Germany





The 3rd Japan Suiseki Exhibition of the Nippon Suiseki Association (NSA) was held on the second floor of Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum from February 9 to 13, 2016. This museum is located at Ueno park where other museums are located. The National Museum, a science museum, galleries, temples and shrines with a five-storey Pagoda, a peony garden and a zoo can be found within its area, including a lake where you can hire a pedal or row boat. The zoo is very popular for its pandas and other exotic animals.

The opening of the Suiseki exhibition with speeches in Japanese took place in the morning of February 9.

As in the previous years all exhibits were documented by a beautiful catalogue which was produced in advance. So it was possible to purchase a copy of it at the spot. The exhibits were divided into four sections: 5 special entries, 25 tokonoma displays, 102 general entries (with a subcategory of entries from abroad) and 10 Suiseki accessories (display stands/tables, suiban and tenpai). A flyer with the name of the exhibitors and the origin of the Suiseki was given to visitors at the entrance. The exhibits had to be subjected to a pre-selection and had to be sent in advance so it was possible to take photographs for the catalogue and to produce it. Instructions of the author and editor-in-chief Mr. Morimae inform the readers that “the tokonoma display and general entry sections are ordered according to Japanese syllabary, though this order has been altered slightly in places for the sake of improving the layout.” The catalogue was edited in only two months including the translation into English by Mr. Peter Warren and Mr. Wil Lautenschlager. The size of the Suiseki and some additional information/comments to each exhibit are given in English.

Entries from abroad came mostly from the United States, six exhibitors were from Europe (Denmark, Germany, Italy and Switzerland) and the others from China, Malaysia and the Philippines.



Top; Main room: tokonoma displays along the walls and two rows in the middle

Middle; two elegant tokonoma displays with two most outstanding Suiseki, a Yase sudachi maguro ishi (49 cm w x 20.5 cm d x 23 cm h) at the right and a Matsumae kotan ishi (84cm w x 41 cm d x 19 cm h)

Bottom; The first room was dedicated to Suiseki accessories (display stands, suiban), special entries of Hosokawa School Bonseki (sand paintings) and small Suiseki displayed in wood framed glass boxes.

The exhibition was set up by Mr. Seiji Morimae, Vice president of NSA and his assistants in several rooms which were connected to each other by open passages (without doors) so it was possible to walk unimpeded from one into the other. The first room was dedicated to Suiseki accessories (display stands, suiban), special entries and small Suiseki displayed

Left column; Many traders had stands at the three storey building of the Ueno Green Club or outside in the courtyard. There was a wide selection of pre-Bonsai, small and big Bonsai and even masterpieces, accent plants, Suiseki, figurines and other display items—meaning everything a Bonsai or Suiseki enthusiast's heart could desire.

Top right; Red Chinese Quince Display Stand, by Hongo Juzan, exhibited at the Metropolitan Art Museum.



Bottom right; Neo kikka seki (39 cm w x 19 cm d x 42 cm h) with a single large flower

in wood framed glass boxes. The most impressive room was the tokonoma display. Each tokonoma was generously laid out. Triangular partitions divided the display area into sections of 2.20 m wide. Walls and the background of a middle row of general entries were pure white, the carpet covering the display floor was dark blue and the dark violet curtains and tassels were suspended from the ceiling. Scrolls were hung nearly in the middle of the display space whereas the display stands were placed to one side overlapping the scrolls to some extent. All in all a very elegant layout.



Another room was furnished with wood framed beige colored backgrounds.

Mr. Seiji Morimae invited all foreign guests to attend an informal, but excellent dinner at the Imperial Hotel on the evening of February 10. This was a great opportunity to chat with Suiseki friends from around the world.

My motivation to fly the long way to Japan for this prestigious exhibition was the possibility to exhibit a Suiseki, an antique Sajigawa ishi "Bridge to the Heavens," 29 x 9 x 7 cm, in memory of my late husband Willi Benz.



*Top left;* Sado akadama ishi, 28 cm w x 17 cm d x 24 cm h

*Top right;* Kern River stone (USA), 15.6 cm w x 7.9 cm d x 12.1 cm h, collection of James L. Greaves, USA)

*Middle;* Makko seki from Iyo area of Shikoku (53 cm w x 24 cm d x 20 cm h), tunnel stone with waterfalls

*Bottom;* Abegawa ishi, 29 cm w x 19 cm d x 17 cm h, mountain with deep ravines and waterfall

Top; Two tokonoma displays with a Seigaku ishi (64 cm w x 32 cm d x 19 cm h) with rugged peaks and a scroll with a “cloudy moon” at the right and a faint golden pear-skinned Setagawa ishi (64 cm w x 27.5 cm d x 22 cm h) at the left together with a Muromachi period painting of the deity Benzaiten at the left.

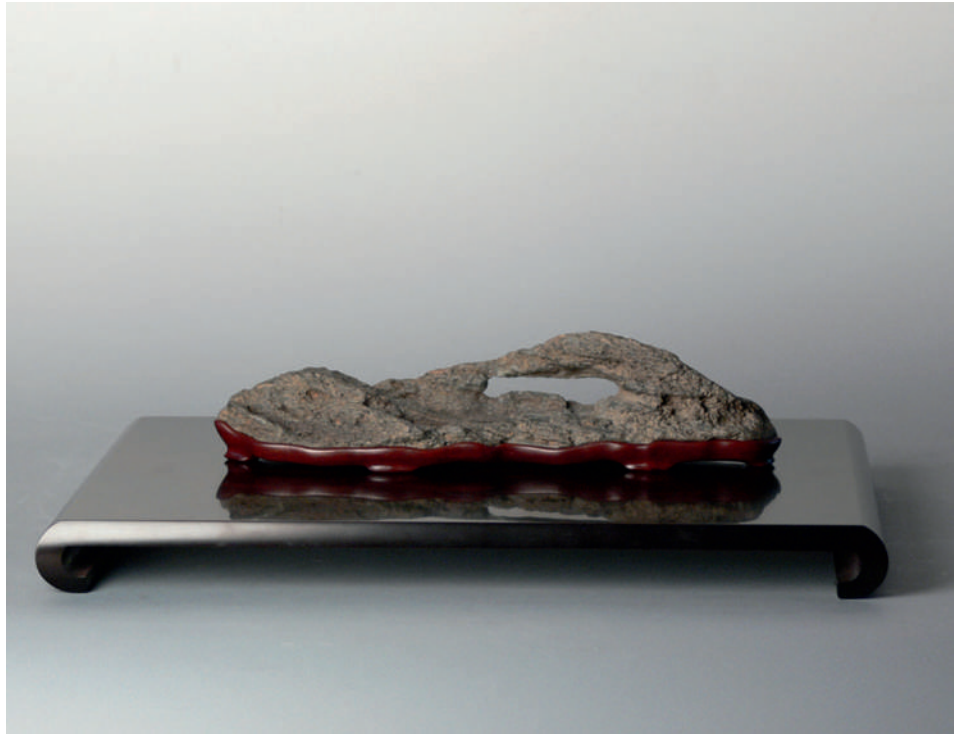
Middle left; Close up, Seigaku ishi (64 cm w x 32 cm d x 19 cm h)

Middle right; bonseki (22,5 cm w x 8.5 cm d x 12.5 cm h) elegant stone with aged patina



Bottom left; Mojave Desert stone (USA), 34 cm w x 15 cm d x 14 cm h, mountain stone, collection Ralph Johnson, USA

Bottom right; Kamogawa ishi, 28 cm w x 15 cm d x 9 cm h, distant mountain stone, collection Sean L. Smith, USA



*Top left;* Yoshimagawa ishi, 38.5 cm w x 23 cm d x 8.5 cm h, three-tiered stone from Yoshimagawa with nice patina

*Top right;* Sajigawa ishi of 29 x 9 x 7 cm with the title "Bridge to the Heavens" was exhibited in memory of Willi Benz

*Middle left;* Kiryugawa ishi, 25 cm w x 9 cm d x 23 cm h, A small bridge is visible among the cluster of soaring cliffs and sharp precipices.

*Lower middle left;* Abegawa ishi, 28 cm w x 14 cm d x 28 cm h, waterfall stone. The fact that the waterfall begins fast from the peak of the mountain is an excellent feature in an waterfall stone.

*Middle right;* Kifune ishi, 36 cm w x 19 cm d x 16 cm h, a rugged mountain with deep valleys and ravines filled with snow (quartz inclusions)

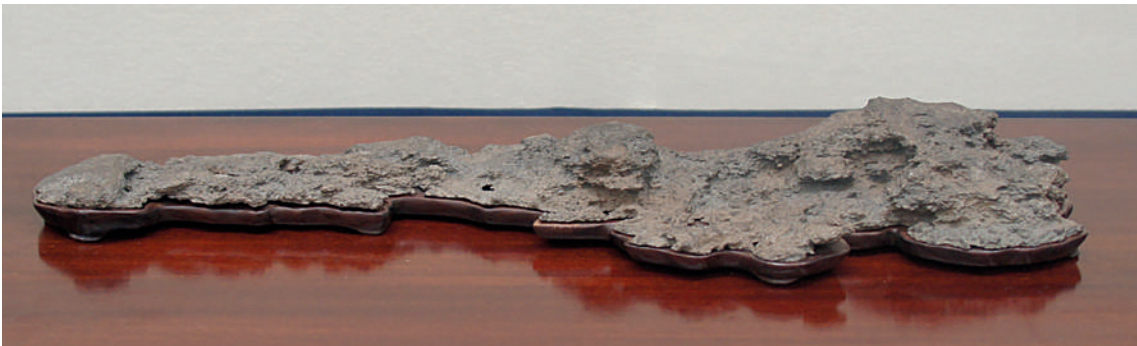
*Lower middle right;* Segen ishi, 23 cm w x 18 cm d x 10 cm h, collection Kee, Hee, Hup, Malaysia

*Bottom;* Sado akadama ishi, 30 cm w x 8 cm d x 8 cm h, mountain stone resembling in shape mount Fuji San



The 90th Kokufu-ten was held at the basement of the Metropolitan Art Museum from February 5th–8th, and 10th–13th, 2016. The second part of this world famous Bonsai exhibition took place at the same time as the Suiseki exhibition of NSA. Therefore it was possible to see apart from excellent Suiseki also most outstanding Bonsai. At this time, a Bonsai market was open at Ueno Green Club. A shuttle bus went regularly every half hour between the museum and this trader area for Bonsai and Bonsai related items. Many traders had stands at the three storey building of the Green Club or outside in the courtyard. There was a wide selection of pre-Bonsai, small and big Bonsai and even masterpieces, accent plants, Suiseki, figurines and other display items—meaning everything a Bonsai or Suiseki enthusiast’s heart could desire. 🌲

*Top left;* Setagawa ishi, 41 cm w x 31 cm d x 22 cm h, mountain stone with beautiful pear-skin texture  
*Top right;* Hakkaizan ishi, 34 cm w x 14 cm d x 12 cm h, tunnel stone  
*Middle left;* Neo kikka seki, 25 cm w x 13 cm d x 20 cm h  
*Middle right;* Tosa kikka seki, 44 cm w x 8.5 cm d x 26 cm h, rare type of chrysanthemum stone  
*Bottom;* Mabechigawa ishi, 41 cm w x 14 cm d x 13 cm h, distant mountain stone of deep black color



*Top left;* An elegant waterpool stone, Kamogawa ishi (27,5 cm w x 17,5 cm d x 8,5 cm h) in a white Cochin ware suiban

*Top right;* Kamogawa ishi, 53,5 cm w x 27 cm d x 21 cm h, a Yase sudachi stone of exceptional quality, shape, and patina

*Middle;* Elegant Setagawa ishi (38 cm w x 20 cm x 10 cm h), a so called "tiger stone" on a beautiful bamboo-table

*Lower middle;* Kamogawa ishi, 50 cm w x 12,5 cm d x 5 cm h, unusual long but narrow mountain range

*Bottom;* Sajigawa ishi, boat-shaped stone (39 cm w x 10,5 cm d x 8 cm h). The boat with its elegantly curved bow seems to cut through the waves.

# From a Cutting to the Mountain



## Techniques for Creating Yamadori-Like Juniper Bonsai

By Min Hsuan Lo, Taiwan, and José Luis Rodríguez Macías, Puerto Rico  
Photos by Min Hsuan Lo, Taiwan

Top; Snow Capped Jade Mountain, Hualien, Nantou County, Taiwan

Left inset; Wild *Juniperus squamata*, Taroko National Park (Yue San Buo/Jade Mountain Juniper)

Right inset; Mr. Min Hsuan Lo in Hehuan Mountain, learning from nature with his students.

For decades, Taiwanese bonsai artists have persisted in creating juniper bonsai presenting aged lifelines, natural twists and weathered dead wood features. Although Taiwan has natural occurring junipers with extensive *jin* and *shari*, their native habitat is protected and extraction is prohibited by law. Furthermore and due to the fact that their native grounds are located at high elevations, these specimens will not survive the hot-humid, tropical climate that is prevalent outside their natural range. This scarcity in the availability of suitable material, combined with a mandatory seven (7) year jail

sentence to those caught extracting native junipers, provided much needed incentive for devising ways of imparting aged character to cutting-grown nursery stock.

Last year, I had the privilege of teaching several workshops at the First Bonsai Symposium, an educational event hosted by the Puerto Rico Shohin Bonsai Study Group. Among the seminars, the participants were eager to learn and requested a power point presentation on the techniques used for the development of high mountain style juniper from humble beginnings; cuttings.





In order to properly illustrate the steps on creating yamadori like junipers from cuttings, some principal steps must be followed:

- Selection of cutting stock**
- Growing medium**
- Correct insertion of cuttings into the soil**
- Aftercare**

### Cutting Selection

In Taiwan, winter months offer the best possible stock and climatic conditions for successful cuttings. Vigorous-pointed growth on junipers root the best and present the best option for our future bonsai. Weak dull-looking stock will not root as well and will manifest cultivation flaws that will hinder the development of our purpose in design.

### Cutting Insertion, Growing Medium and Aftercare

As stated before, vigorous-pointed growth offers the best possible stock for rooting cuttings. Once we select our stock, we need the following materials:

- Chop Stick**
- Coarse, sifted, river or mountain sand**
- Container**

Once we have all the materials on hand, we start to prep our cutting stock. In order to ensure proper root development, after lightly pruning the understock and preparing our container, we use the chop stick to create a hole in the soil medium. This is an indispensable step, as we want to prevent any damage to the cambium of the tree and preclude rot. After inserting our cuttings, we give them a thorough watering and place them in the shade. From time to time, the foliage should be misted to maintain humidity. In about two to three months, our material should show signs of new growth.



Top right; Close-up of strong-pointed growth on juniper  
Middle left and right; Cutting material, before and after prepping.



Using chopstick to create a hole in the soil medium for cutting insertion



Close-up of the hole



Carefully inserting cutting, making sure not to damage the cambium



Juniper cuttings, after planting



Cuttings, getting a thorough watering



Cuttings, placed in the shade for rooting



### Training Phase (two steps)

After 18 to 24 months of steady growth, our cuttings should be ready for the next step: training. As the stems of the young trees will be flexible enough, by means of wire, we start to shape our future bonsai. Depending on the size we want our tree to be, we can either opt to halt the development of the stock and use it for shohin bonsai or decide to prepare them for bigger size bonsai, which will require us to plant the trees on mounds or growing beds in the ground to speed up the process.

### Use of Bamboo Canes and Nylon Thread

Bamboo canes have been employed as training devices for landscape trees throughout Asia. A durable material that can withstand the elements of time, bamboo offers the best possible medium for ground training bonsai stock. Nylon thread, on the other hand, is also tough, flexible and will expand once our junipers begin to grow out. In sum, juniper stock is planted off center. Bamboo canes are installed in the ground in the shape of an isosceles triangle to ensure irregularity and naturalness. Once the tree and bamboo is secured, the tree is bent into shape, safeguarding each bend in the bamboo by means of nylon thread. During this process, imagination and creativity is everything, so we must plan ahead of time and visualize how our tree will look in the future. With proper fertilization and careful attention, the trees will grow quickly. Further steps in creating interesting trunk lines and character branches are also performed during this growing phase, using the training methods we explain later in this article.



Top left to bottom left; Andrew Lo, (Min Hsuan's son) thinning foliage, applying wire and creating dramatic bends on a young, 2 to 3 year old juniper cutting that will become a masterpiece bonsai.

Bottom right; Planting young juniper in the ground and shaping, using bamboo and nylon thread.



### Line Development and Deadwood Creation

In Taiwan, several techniques on developing high quality trunk lines, as well as *jin* and *shari* have been used for many years. However, the method that is subject of this article is intended to create durable wood that is not susceptible to rot. As time is a key element in developing quality bonsai, the stages we explain here make use of the tree's natural ability to heal wounds and create calluses. We also take advantage of the natural oils that are present in juniper wood, which will allow us to create durable-quality elements that withstand the test of time.

### Eliminate Bark, Not Wood!

Once we have programmed the size we want our future bonsai to be, the stock will be ready for line development and to start the deadwood development stage. Why do we say deadwood development stage? The answer is simple! We will remove the bark in stages and use the tree's natural ability to heal itself and create new wood. During the first year of dead wood and trunk line development, by means of a colored chalk, we trace the lines of bark we want to remove. Do remember, bark removal has to always follow sap flow in order to preserve health and the life of the tree. After we mark the trunk, using a sharp knife, we make precise incisions on the edge of the section we want to remove and eliminate the bark. During this process, we may also shape branches and secondary

*Top left;* Example of bark removal process and the use of nylon string.

*Top right and bottom;* Cutting-grown Juniper bonsai, over 30 years old. Before and after Mu Diaoke (carving method).



trunks using wire or nylon tread. Once we are done, the tree is allowed to rest. During the rest period, the tree will naturally try to heal itself, creating wound calluses and new wood. A year later or sometimes longer, depending on the physical health of the tree, the wounds will be ready to be worked on again and the process is repeated. This gradual development of trunk lines, as well as a *jin* and *shari* development, replicates the rugged and gradual weathering that occurs in nature. As the wood will have natural contours representing each stage of bark elimination, the resulting dead wood portions mimic the high mountain quality of natural junipers.

#### Contrast with Carving Wood (Mu Diaoke)

Wood carving consists of creating dead wood features by means of carving along the wood grain. Although it offers immediate results and is a valid method of creation, the resulting wood is often softer. Furthermore, the average bonsai enthusiast may not have the necessary technical skills to perform this process, thus resulting in the loss of the material. As the journey in bonsai creation is always the road to success, gradual development of deadwood features not only offers a safer approach to *jin*, *shari* and stock development, but also results in durable and natural looking elements. A combination of both methods is also possible.



Top right; Cutting-grown Taiwan Juniper bonsai

Top left; Marking the tree trunk with colored chalk for bark removal and line creation.

Middle left; After removing bark.

Bottom left; Another juniper undergoing the bark removal process.



Use of a concrete tube allows extra feeder roots to grow out from the original pot and speed up the process. These junipers are from cuttings and have been container grown for over fifty (50) years.



### Alternative to Ground Training

The scarcity of available land and space limitations make us look for alternatives that open new avenues in bonsai creation. If ground training is not possible, the use of oversized containers is a viable option. You might also place the oversized pots over concrete tubes filled with coarse sand. The roots of the junipers will send runners to the concrete tubes, which will translate in speedy growth. If you opt to use this method, you must feed the roots that remain in the original container well, as these will be the ones that remain when the material is ready to go into a bonsai pot. Whenever this alternate method is chosen, we can also use the same techniques we explained previously to shape the trunk, branches and dead wood features of our future bonsai.



Top left, middle left and bottom; Creation of root-exposed juniper follows the same erosion principles that happen in nature.

Top right; Group Effort: students and Andrew Lo ground training junipers.

Middle right; Juniper, after removal from training and being planted on the ground to train in the root-exposed style.



### Creation of Root-Exposed Juniper

The mountains of Taroko National Park Reserve, in Nantou County, are home to the natural *Juniperus squamata* that have served as inspiration to Taiwanese bonsai masters for decades. Displaying a rugged character and poetical twists, these magnificent specimens have an inherent natural beauty that has infinite shapes. Not only do they offer incredible bends and turns, but also their will to survive is accompanied by roots that, having been subject to snow, erosion, landslides and events of exposure, still manage to sustain these old trees firmly to the ground. As we believe that roots are an important element of age in bonsai creation, the creation of root exposed juniper material is a wonderful way to honor our mountain teachers.

Creation of root-exposed juniper follows the same erosion principles that happen in nature. By carefully removing the juniper material from its training pot, we raise the soil line to expose the root ball. To ensure survival, we can plant the tree in a larger training pot or in the ground. Once the roots touch new substrate, the tree will naturally issue roots into the soil bed. Regular watering and progressive exposure to the elements will gradually erode the soil and reveal the twisting roots, thus adding a new feature in our design.





### Flat Ribbon Style

Flat ribbon style trunk and *shari* are among the most sought after characteristics in weathered quality juniper bonsai. Because patience is a key ingredient in bonsai creation, time is of the essence. As stated before, the natural abilities, resilience and will of survival that junipers have are the main focus of attention when developing the material and employing these techniques. Taking advantage of the juniper's natural ability to heal itself and create new wood, the bark is gradually removed as explained previously in this article. Eventually, the live veins of the tree will swell and grow new wood. After some years of bark removal and *shari* extension, the live parts will grow outwards, thus creating a flat-ribbon style trunk that is prevalent in naturally weathered junipers.

### Concluding Thoughts

The diverse techniques that are explained in this article require patience, careful observation and a feel for identifying the right time to perform these tasks. Always remember! Consider the general climate of your area and the tree's physical health. One thing is certain; because these methods are gradual, the material is always allowed to recover before resuming the next steps. Why is this important? If we do not have healthy trees, we won't have quality bonsai! The sky is the limit. Encourage yourselves to explore the world of creating yamadori-like junipers and, at the same time, preserve nature, ecology and our wild natural heritage.

*When you believe, miracles will be!* 🌲



*Top left; Juniper Material, over 50 years old, from cutting.*

*Top right; Flat ribbon style. After some years of bark removal and shari extension, the live parts will grow outwards, thus creating a flat-ribbon style trunk that is prevalent in naturally weathered junipers*

*Bottom; The interplay between life and death, Cutting-grown juniper, over 50 years old, .*

# HAIKU POETRY

By Danilo Scursatone, Italy Translation by Danilo Scursatone and Joe Grande

In the poems of the great haiku master, Bashō, the whole of nature is called to express itself: the water, the rocks, the flowers, the sun, the clouds and the stars; the animals, the plants, the sea and the wind, and with all this, the pain and the joy of man. The poet, in contemplation of these divine elements, reveals to us their soul through a few verses. Its close relationship with nature offers us a vision free from the superfluous, capturing the deepest and truest aspects.

This particular vision of Nature joins the bonsai artist to the haiku poet. Often a masterpiece bonsai is like a haiku poem. All that is unnecessary has been removed and what we see is the essence, the soul of the tree, which takes us to a quiet and profound vision of nature and its continued evolution. Perhaps learning more about this haiku art form will help us clarify the concepts of *superfluous* and *essential* and apply them successfully in shaping our trees so that they will show us their intrinsic beauty, bringing us closer and closer to nature.

## What is haiku?

Haiku poetry holds an important space in the Japanese literature and is a pillar of Japanese culture. This type of poetry carries with it the idea that language is not always adequate to witness the truth. Zen culture is the basis of haiku poetry and through it, proposes a language free from the unnecessary and the unessential.

For the great haiku masters of the past, it is the vital energy to awaken the mind, if the mind is free from prejudices and limitations of the rational. The form expresses vital energy. Haiku in its simplicity, will allow the form to be articulated through the few syllables that make up and express the need of man to be one with nature. A haiku is never a simple realistic description but must be interpreted as evidence of a vision of the world free from constraints.

There are two main ways of writing haiku.

In the first mode, one of three lines that compose haiku introduces a topic; the other two lines expand and conclude it.

In the second way, a haiku is two different arguments made in harmony or in opposition: the first verse introduces the topic, the second expands it, the third is opposed to the subject of the first verse, always by relating with the first; or, the first verse introduces the topic and the other two verses relate to the subject matter, opposing or harmonizing with it.

The haiku form was born in Japan in the seventeenth century. It comes from Tanka (short poem of the fourth century), poem of thirty-one syllables. The Tanka consists of five lines with a precise amount of syllables per line: the first line contains five syllables, the second seven syllables, the third five syllables, the fourth seven syllables, the fifth seven syllables. Eliminating the last two lines formed the haiku.

After reading a composition of his disciple Takarai Kikaku, the great master Bashō said: “You have the weakness of wanting to surprise. Seeking beautiful verses for distant things; you should find them for things that are close to you.” In these few lines lay the essence and the thought process of Haiku poetry.

Currently in Japan there are many groups of poets called Haijin, who gather to talk about haiku poetry. Over ten million people love to write haiku in Japan alone, and all major Japanese newspapers and magazines publish a column dedicated to haiku. Despite being a form of poetry typically oriental, it is also reflected in Europe where poets are inspired by Oriental poetry, writing modern haiku that are very popular and interesting.

## Bonsai and haiku

The haiku poet addressed the presence of nature, free from constraints, giving us the message that nature itself evoked in that particular moment of deep contemplation. It is up to the reader to understand, interpret and expand the depth of the message. Take for example the famous haiku

The old pond,  
a frog jumps in,  
sound of water.

—Matsuo Bashō





# a metaphor for bonsai

of Matsuo Bashō: "The old pond / a frog jumps in, / sound of water." A few lines free of the superfluous have the strength to cross the centuries and immediately recall the whole environment and an atmosphere that is not explicitly described, but evoked. A old pond with its primeval mosses that cover ancient rocks, surrounded by trees bathed by a cool, sunny day, horsetails, grasses, duckweed and water lilies. Suddenly the silence of this intimate environment is broken with a splash in the water by a frog—a testament to the silent life of the pond. The scents of the ancient site that permeate the humid air... everything, even the smallest detail contributes to the vision evoked. But this is only one of the visions that each of us can have. Here is the inadequacy of language to describe reality, but instead, the haiku with its energy and vital form, devoid of the superfluous, takes us beyond the rational in a dimension more real, complete and universal.

When we intend to shape a tree, the first action is to study it, understand how to make it essential, or rather to eliminate all those plant parts that hide the soul of the tree, to reveal its natural living force, its formation in the passage of time, its history, everything that brings us back to the natural environment in which it lived. So here is the vision of the artist in the creative act of bonsai in communion with the plant, with few branches, a special twist of the trunk, and dead wood that create a "haiku"—a bonsai with evocative power (in the case of great bonsai masters) that does not want to express perfection, does not want to impress with technique, but wants to offer the observer the "truth," free of conditions. A bonsai, that over time, will have the strength to "evoke" and "transport" the careful observer—a connoisseur of nature—into the world in which the tree belongs, and bear witness to the ever-changing.

In my opinion, literati, or Bunjin, is the style that harmonizes the most with the essence expressed in haiku poetry and often recalls the artist's vision of the environment and nature of that particular species of bonsai, free from constraints.

The relation between haiku poetry to bonsai maybe now appears clearer, but it is essential for the bonsai artist, as well as the haiku poet, to be in nature where the trees live, fully unshackled from the routine of everyday, to be immersed in that reality, to fully understand the concepts of *superfluous* and *essential* that characterize life, and this time, the survival of these living beings. It is no coincidence that the great masters of haiku, homeless and often traveling alone, living and feeling the places in which they journeyed, found the inspiration to capture the essence of these places, and compose haiku that transcend time. 🌲



*Pinus mugo*, "Samurai," Danilo Scursatone collection.

# A Fascination with the Far West & a *Juniperus californica*



Text and photos: Mauro Stemberger, Italy

[ItalianBonsaiDream.com](http://ItalianBonsaiDream.com)

Translation by Joe Grande, Canada

The plant was collected in the winter of 2013 after a rainy period. After harvest the plant is potted in crushed granite and lava rock to retain moisture, and the plant is treated as a large cutting (frequent mists and under shade) until it shows signs of recovery. At that point it can be moved into the light and watered normally.



Ever since my first trip to the US I have been fascinated by the native pine and juniper species, similar in some ways to their European cousins, but also very different.

The subject of this article is a huge specimen, a Californian juniper that was given to me by a friend and client during one of my tours in Los Angeles.

The plant was collected two years prior to the styling session during a rainy period.... Yes, exactly! The California juniper, a renowned desert inhabitant, is

collected only following a long period of rains because it is precisely in this period that surface capillaries activate to absorb as much water as possible; capillaries that dry out during the rest of the season because of the extreme dryness typical to deserts.

We can treat these junipers almost like big cuttings. Often in nature they survive the dry seasons thanks to a few long taproots that prove irrecoverable during harvesting. So, you should rely only on the few surface capillaries resuscitated following a rain.



1



2



3

The tree was nurtured by Hank Fawcett prior to styling.

### 1-3

After harvest the plant is repotted in crushed granite and lava rock to retain moisture, and as mentioned, the plant is treated as a large cutting (frequent mists and under shade) until it shows signs of recovery. At that point it can be moved into the light and watered normally.

The foliage of the California juniper is very dense and coarse. This allows the plant to absorb the little moisture available during the morning dew point that results from the cycle of hot, dry days and cold nights.

I can say from experience, and the pictures that follow are proof, that if fertilized, these junipers grow like crazy considering the environment in which they are accustomed. Water and fertilizer for them is like a party at the Playboy mansion for me!

But back to our serious subject...

Just after just six months at my friend Hank's house, with constant watering and fertilizing, the juniper had rooted and grown abundantly. It was already time for the first styling, otherwise the new sprouts would become too thick to bend.

### 4

Everything is ready to start the day!

### 5-6

Obviously it is a thick trunk with plenty of dead-wood. A large living vein runs through the trunk, splitting into two parts in the apical area. Other stumps with veins cut at harvest should be cleaned and carved. The live vein should be cleaned to better reveal the motion of the trunk, and to choose the best angle for the front of the tree.

### 7-8

Equipped with chisels and knives, Hank Fawcett and Ben Griffin, my excellent assistants, begin to clean the live vein, removing the old bark, which on the California juniper is very thick to protect the vein in the event of a fire.

### 9-10

The dead and dry parts of the bark are scraped away to expose the wood grain in anticipation of carving the dead branches. Thus it begins, breaking the dead parts to create *jin* and *shari*, reducing them in size thanks to big branch splitters. I'm not a lover of drills if they are not absolutely necessary; for this work everything was done manually with a lot of elbow grease from Ben, Hank, and me.



4



5



6



7



8



9



10

Everything was done manually with a lot of elbow grease from Hank Fawcett (wearing a hat) and Ben Griffin, my excellent assistants, and me.



11



12



13



14



15

#### 11–15

After about two hours of work the outline of the deadwood is revealed, now the stumps are made into *jin* and after cleaning, the live vein becomes more noticeable (photo 15).

#### 16–18

Then begins the styling phase; the thick trunk is very static and after the first bend; the live vein continues in a straight line up to the foliage. It was decided

to separate it from the deadwood to make it flexible in order to lower it. This creates the first branch on the left side of our future bonsai to accompany the movement of the thick trunk, making the plant more dynamic. The live vein is separated using a splitter without protecting it, since the vein attached to the deadwood is very tubular, I perform what I call “an exposed bend.” Because it is bent without using raffia and black tape, I observe carefully how the fibers react as I lower the branch. I use this type of bend



16



17



18



19



20

only where a branch or a trunk will be bent in the same direction. Obviously for more complex bends or bends where it is necessary the use of grinders to remove internal fibers to make the branch more pliable, I always protect the branch as required.

**19-21**

At this point we proceed with wiring all the branches on this juniper. Thinking ahead to the strong lines of the lowered branches that create the primary structure

of the foliage, wind the wire in the direction of the bend (clockwise to bend to the left, or counterclockwise to bend to the right). Even the fine branches are wired. It is important that the juniper is strong and well hydrated before wiring, otherwise the Californian has a tendency to lose many fine branches that become weak at their junction when not properly watered. We wire and position the various levels of foliage working our way up to the apex.



21



22

## 22

The final details are arranged and now the juniper can enjoy a well deserved rest.

The most important part of this first styling has been to define the plant's strong lines. The primary branches have been positioned to create the structure

of our future bonsai. The subsequent growth of dense foliage will create more contrast between the solids and voids that form the crown, thus building a rhythm with the trunk line and the strong position of the first branch. 🌲

Michael Jonas helped Mauro by transporting the tree in his truck to Reseda and had the pleasure of posing with the remarkable result of Mauro's design.





# AZALEAS

## WHAT PASSION!

Text and Photos by Danilo Scursatone, Italy  
Translation by Danilo Scursatone and Joe Grande



Top: Azaleas in the gardens of Villa Taranto, Italy.  
Middle: white sand and azaleas, Shisen-dō Temple, Tokyo.  
Bottom: Villa Pallavicino in Lake Maggiore, Italy.  
Photos courtesy [www.creativecommons.org](http://www.creativecommons.org)

**A**zaleas, belonging to the genus *Rhododendron* and to the family Ericaceae, are widely used in the art bonsai although the species is not a tree but a shrub or a bush. The *Rhododendron indicum* or Satzuki Azalea originates from the mountains of Japan and encompasses the group of Azaleas most grown in Japan. This particular group of azaleas is of interest to the bonsai artist for two main reasons: the availability of many varieties of flowers and the availability of starter material specially grown to become a bonsai.

Satzuki Azaleas have many varieties in their cultivars, among them, those commonly used and most frequently found are:

**Satzuki Kaho** (white-magenta-pink flowers with possible streaks of various colors);  
**Satzuki Korin** (magenta flowers with small shape of the corolla of a lily and thick);  
**Satzuki Kobai** (magenta flower rounded with small flowers and stained);  
**Satzuki Gyoten** (light pink-white-magenta flowers);  
**Satzuki Kinsai** (orange-red flowers frayed and some without fraying).

The azalea, however is not only appreciated as bonsai, but in the East, this species is a symbol of femininity and temperance, and is the purest love that exists: that of mothers. In fact, here in the West, azalea are often gifted on Mother's Day.

Azalea as a symbol of pure love, azalea that fosters love, how many love stories are born in places where there are azaleas? In Italy, we think of the gardens of Villa Taranto created by the Scottish Captain Neil McEacham or the park of Villa Pallavicino in Lake Maggiore with their beautiful azaleas that bloom and inundate us with scents and colors like clouds on earth. Or the charming garden of Shisen-dō Temple in Kyoto, Japan, composed of white sand and azaleas.

Here is a new benefit of azalea bonsai: they foster love. When walking in a bonsai garden or in a simple nursery in the presence of a bonsai azalea, who knows when love will suddenly blossom...

Azalea are also gifted as a symbol of luck and strength before an important test.

### Tips for growing azaleas

Azalea require an acidic growing medium that is 5 on the pH scale. In our climate, good results are observed with the use of 40% Kanuma, 40% akadama, 20% peat. This composition aims to encourage the retention of water, never allow azalea to dry completely; aeration of the roots that are very fine, slow growing and therefore subject to rot; a good balance of acidity; intake of humic acids.

Repot more often than the 4-5 year period for other plants, and totally bare root every 7-8 years. The ideal period is immediately after flowering (usually in June), however, in our climate we have observed excellent results even in November, exploiting the dormant period of the tree.

For watering, rainwater is essential because they do not tolerate continuous watering with hardwater (water with dissolved minerals such as lime, calcium and iron), which causes a slow but steady and inexorable decline of the plant resulting in branches drying and dying; watering should be well balanced, with no stagnation but also without ever allowing the root ball to dry out completely.

NPK fertilization must be carried out according to the fertilizing curve, never exceeded; using balanced fertilizers, avoiding periods pre-flowering.

Exposure must be that of full sun to encourage flowering and then semi-shade during the flowering period.



**Satzuki Kaho;** white-magenta-pink flowers with possible streaks of various colors.



The formation of branching generally occurs after flowering (can also be done before but you lose the flowering period). In autumn/winter eliminate the weakest branches and the most vigorous, then, very gently, wire and position the branches to form foliage pads. Style azalea like the bushy plants they are in nature.

When pruning you should tend to favor the development the foliage in the apex. The terminal or apical buds are weaker than the lateral buds. To obtain a right balance and uniform foliage on the plant, prune the lower branches and their outer areas more aggressively.

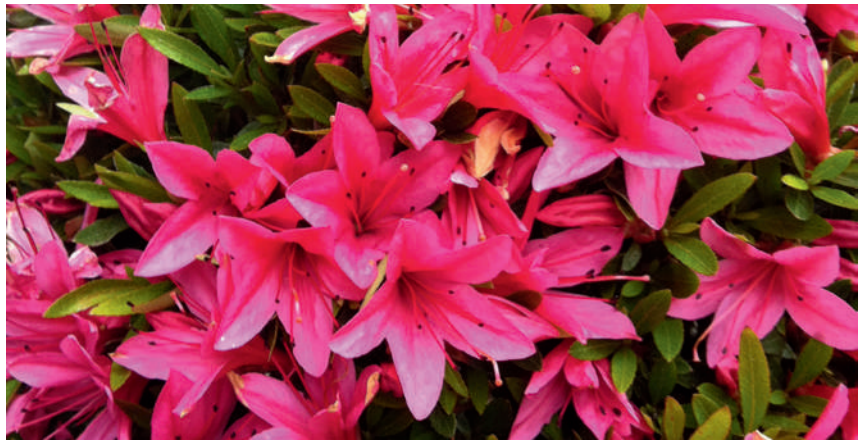
The pruning must be performed partially on young plants in order to promote flowering and more intensely on old plants, thinning the vegetation in the outer areas and on the apex to allow more light into the interior areas.

During spring, before flowering eliminate the various suckers, both basal and areal that are typically produced by azaleas.

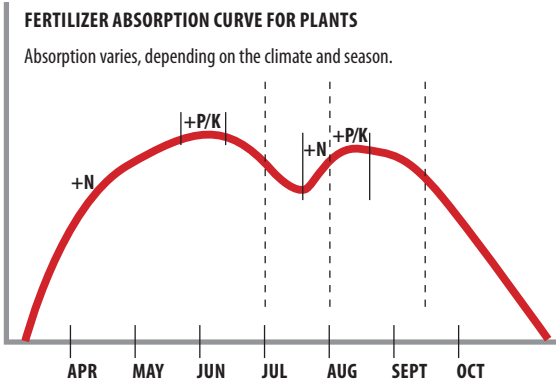
Regarding pruning for flowering, we tend to leave the larger, therefore more vigorous, buds; in the case of multi-colored azaleas we can also act on the color, removing those darker in color (they tend to magenta as in the native rhododendron species), favouring the lighter (pink-white). This selection is difficult to make as it is necessary to recognize a closed bud that is darker, one that tends to have darker reddish color.

After flowering is necessary to remove the fruit produced, by separating it from the mature flower stalk. This operation allows the plant increased vegetative growth and prevents unnecessary loss of nutrients because the fruit has no aesthetic function. It is also possible to perform a first pruning to the shoots that grow upwards vertically and the more vigorous lateral shoots (typical of the lower part of the azaleas).

As for diseases, the azaleas are subject to foliar fungi, such as the typical azalea gall, and pests, such as spider mites. In case of attacks of this type it is recommended to intervene with suitable fungicides and insecticides of professional type, so as to obtain the desired effect with one single treatment. 🌿



Top and Middle;  
**Satzuki Korin** (magenta flowers with small shape of the corolla of a lily and thick);  
Bottom;  
**Satzuki Kinsai** (orange-red flowers frayed and some without fraying).



Macro elements NPK (N = Nitrogen useful for leaf development; P = Phosphorus useful for development flowering / fruiting; K = Potassium useful for stem growth)  
+ Ca (useful to tissues) / Mg / S / Fe (useful for chlorophyll formation)  
Micro elements: Mn / B / Md / Cu / Zn / Co (catalysts of biological processes)

# Creating a Bonsai Icon

**Sculptor  
Rick Gregg and  
The Artisans Cup  
Trophy**

By Joe Grande,  
Canada

Photographs courtesy  
Rick Gregg Studio



*The Artisan Cup Trophy, 2015, by Rick Gregg. Forged, fabricated and welded steel, concrete with walnut base, 30" h*

Last autumn, bonsai artist Ryan Neil's dream of staging a national competition and exhibit of American bonsai became a reality with The Artisans Cup; expertly promoted, eagerly anticipated, and thoroughly enjoyed. For those who were there, it was a rich, sensory experience that elevated bonsai to fine art. No detail was overlooked as team of professional exhibit designers, graphic designers, copywriters, photographers, film makers and event planners collaborated to position The Artisans Cup as a movement to promote American bonsai as a true art form.

The crowning moment in any competition is when the awards are presented. It is at this moment that the entire undertaking is embodied by the trophy—an icon or symbol that will go on to represent the entire Artisans Cup experience; past, present and future. It is not surprising then, that Ryan Neil attended to this important detail by enlisting Rick Gregg, a sculptor living in Portland, to create a trophy that would be a work of art in itself.

Rick Gregg was introduced to metal working when he was 16 years old and by the time he turned 20, he had his own studio and regular clients for his work.

Working in metal, stone, glass and wood, this self-taught artist is inspired by the simplicity of form and expression found in primitive art such as the glyphs and cave paintings of America's southwest. His sculptures are a celebration of line and movement, simple, unadorned but dynamic, full of feeling and emotion.

BCI talked with Rick Gregg at his studio recently and asked him about his role in the creation of The Artisan Cup trophy.

**BCI: How did you become involved with The Artisans Cup?**

RG: Ryan Neil found me on the Internet and contacted me. We met and he described the project. He wanted two trophies, a permanent trophy for The Artisans Cup and take-home trophies for the winners. Ryan showed me a concave cutter and said, "Anyone who knows bonsai, knows this tool." After a quick sketch, the take-home trophy took shape and was approved.

**BCI: Apart from the wooden base, it looks like you made this sculpture by forging. How was the permanent trophy different?**

RG: Yes, the take home trophy was forged, which means mostly beating and shaping hot metal with a hammer and other tools or dies. Designing the permanent trophy was a longer process. After thinking about the landscape of the Northwest, the trees, the water, and the mountains, I made numerous sketches and presented six possibilities. After we discussed the options, one was chosen for further development.

**BCI: What did you know about bonsai before Ryan contacted you?**

RG: I saw bonsai for the first time at a county fair in San Diego when I was 15 years old. Although I never pursued bonsai, it was an experience that has stayed with me for over five decades. I love linear forms so I have always been interested in trees.

**BCI: Can you tell us a little about how you made The Artisan Cup trophy?**

RG: When I was drawing, I was looking for an expression of a sweeping tree, simple and stylized. It was when I added the second trunk that I got the feeling I was after. Creating a cloud-like canopy on the tree also proved difficult. By breaking the canopy into several shapes, the wind-swept tree came to life. Then came the fabrication. First, I made an exoskeleton of the trunks with light steel rod to which I carefully tack-welded forged panels of steel. Then with an oxy-acetylene welding process, I welded the panels together and smoothed out the surfaces to make them seamless.

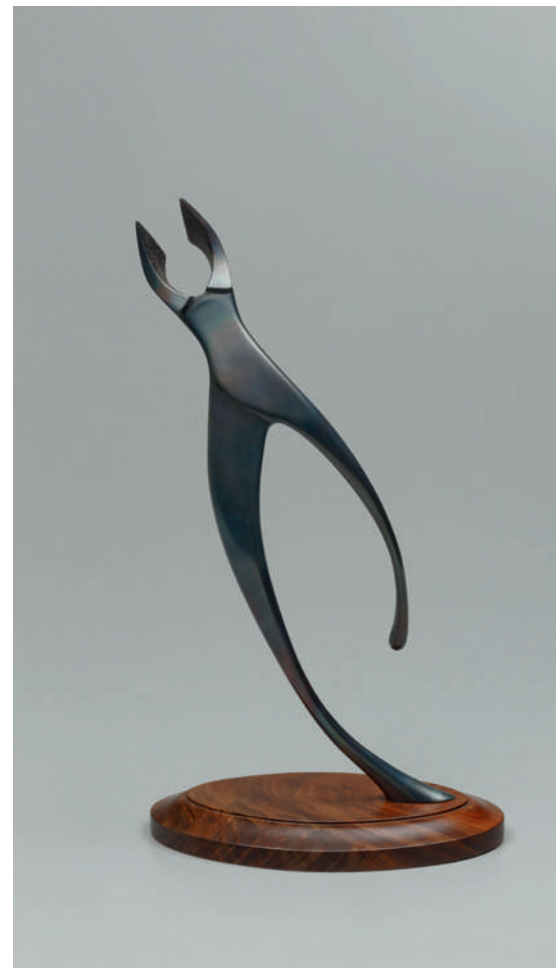
**BCI: How did you make the craggy cliff on which the tree is perched?**

RG: The base was tough. I made three bases before I got the look I wanted. I start with a wire mesh form to which I add my concrete mix that has a specific color and texture. I apply it with a painter's spatula and work it until I get right.

Rick did get it right. The Artisans Cup Trophy expresses what theartisanscup.com describes as the modern American bonsai aesthetic, "...the unbridled, natural form of the tree as it appears in the wild through asymmetry and dynamic movement."

The Artisans Cup has created a watershed moment in American bonsai, a moment that is sure to endure because The Artisans Cup website offers retrospective passes to the exhibit. Purchase a pass and experience the movement with photos and movies of the event, and audio commentary on every bonsai in the exhibit by the team of international judges. As the momentum builds for the next Artisans Cup, and the movement grows internationally with an exhibit planned for Sydney, Australia in 2020, so too will bonsai grow as a true art form. And The Artisans Cup Trophy will come to symbolize Ryan Neil's deep commitment to the art of bonsai and the global recognition it deserves. 🌲

Ryan Neil showed me a concave cutter and said, "Anyone who knows bonsai, knows this tool."



*The Artisan Cup Trophy [take home], 2015, by Rick Gregg. Forged steel, with walnut base. 18" h*

*Below; More Sculptures by Rick Gregg can be viewed at [www.rickgreggstudio.com](http://www.rickgreggstudio.com)*





# BCI Excellence Awards

Noelanders Trophy, 2016, Belgium

By Gudrun Benz, BCI Director, Germany

I attended this year's Noelanders Trophy and presented a BCI Award of Excellence to an outstanding bonsai, a *Celtis chinensis*, Moyogi style, double trunk of Luis Vallejo, Spain. Here is a short description:

*Celtis sinensis*,  
Double trunk style,  
Dimensions (H x W): 95 x 110 cm.

Luis purchased this tree from Danny Use at Ginkgo in 2006. To promote its natural movement, the first work on the tree was a structural pruning to select the main branches as a result of changing the planting angle to the left. In the ten years that it has been part of the collection, a great development of the ramification has been achieved.

The next aim is to realize a pot change, due to its dimensions and also in order to find a more adequate color throughout the seasons. 🌳





During the time the tree has been in the Luis Vallejo Bonsai Collection; it has been on display in:

- 2006, Luis Vallejo Bonsai Competition, Alcobendas, Madrid.
- 2013, Niemeyer, Avilés, Spain
- 2014, Euro top 30, Mulhouse, France.
- 2014, European Bonsai san show, Saulieu, France.
- Awarded by Esprit Magazine October 2014, Mulhouse, France.
- 2016, Noelanders Trophy XVII, Genk, Belgium.
- 2016 BCI Award of Excellence



Exhibit photo at top left by Gudrun Benz, Germany  
Formal photos by Miguel Krause, courtesy Luis Vallejo Bonsai Studio, Spain

# Education and Fresh Perspectives

## Bonsai Symposium 2015 in Puerto Rico

By Carlos Morales and José Luis Rodríguez, Puerto Rico

Photography by Hector Pacheco, Angel Serrano, Raymond Acevedo and Carlos Morales





“Quality bonsai is achieved by taking some initial risks early in the plant’s development, and conducting the necessary steps, the correct work, to set the best possible structure from the beginning. Only by doing so, can we get better quality bonsai.” – Min Hsuan Lo, Taiwan

**F**rom October 2nd through the 4th, The Bonsai Symposium 2015 was held at Jardín Selecto, a garden center located in greater San Juan. This elegant exhibit, which included all sizes of trees, was enjoyed by many local bonsai artists and plant lovers. The blue-green top and the white background part of the décor were a great contrast to the trees and made the experience much more visually appealing.

Throughout the opening night ceremony, the exhibit had special lighting to showcase the display in a different way. During the day, special illumination was incorporated on the trees. A touch of yellow light behind the white background enabled the guests to feel like they were witnessing the sunset. The exhibit was open to all bonsai artists, thus participation included beginners as well as more advanced artists.

### The Dry Garden

Mr. Alexis Feliciano, a local landscape designer, was contracted to make a front garden for the event. In his design, Mr. Feliciano used an old pony tail palm, formally placed in a huge ornate pot, as the focal point. Taking into consideration the theme of the event, a variegated *Hibiscus tilliaceous* bonsai was incorporated into the display; artistically placed near a water basin with water lilies and colorful fish. Mr. Feliciano



constructed all the elements of the dry garden in unique harmony, resulting in an unparalleled visual experience. Blending different varieties of succulents, cacti and agave species with different kinds of stones and gravel, this beautiful dry garden was the perfect way to welcome and lead the guests to the main exhibit.

*Top; Ficus microcarpa “tigerbark” by David Soto displayed at the entrance to the event.*

*Bottom; A contemporary presentation of a Premna and a Ficus salicaria by Jorge Suria*





The learning experience provided by the symposium was the main reason behind it and we received more than expected.

### The Exhibit

Attended by many local bonsai artists, the exhibit was a complete success. The Puerto Rico Shohin Bonsai Study Group was in charge of the exhibit area and Jardín Selecto provided the venue for the exhibit and symposium. BCI sanctioned the event and Joshua Roth did not hesitate to be one of the premiere sponsors. Additional sponsors were Bonsai en El Trópico, a group led by local bonsai artist José O. Rivera; Suiseki in Puerto Rico of Mr. Omar Rojas; and Caribbean Shohin. Generously, all sponsors made special donations to contribute to the overall success of the activities.

On Friday October 2, the opening of the event took place. With the theme Bonsai at Dark, this was a great gathering of invited guests and bonsai friends. Besides recognizing the presence of the participating speakers and contributors to the event, the exhibit was formally opened. From the happy faces, people really appreciated all the hard work invested by the sponsor group. The night ended with a presentation of Bonsai in Taiwan by our main speaker Mr. Min Hsuan Lo which focused on the different styles, plant species and diversity of bonsai in his native Taiwan.

The exhibit had free admission and was open to the public.

### Learning

The idea of conducting the First Bonsai Symposium began with the prevalent hunger of a group of friends on learning more about world class tropical bonsai. In our minds we thought, “What a better way to do it than to have a visit of a great bonsai master from Taiwan, Mr. Min Hsuan Lo!” After that initial idea, arrangements were made and the rest of the pieces



*Top left;* The official opening ceremony, left to right; Carlos C Morales, Hector L Morales (Jardín Selecto owners), José Luis Rodríguez, Min Hsuan Lo (main Speakers), José O Rivera (Bonsai en el Trópico), Raymond Acevedo (Bonsai Shohin of Puerto Rico).

*Top right;* Our main speaker Mr. Min Hsuan Lo, focused on the different styles, plant species and diversity of bonsai in his native Taiwan.

*Middle;* Bonsai specialist Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Macías, esq., presented Malpighia species as bonsai.

*Bottom;* On Saturday October 3, 2015, on Lo's first master class, “From cuttings to the mountain” participants were treated to general cultivation techniques on creating yamadori-like junipers from cuttings/nursery-grown material.



Top; Temporana, *Suriana maritima*, by Hector Pacheco. With the theme Bonsai at Dark, this was a great gathering of invited guests and bonsai friends. Special lighting enabled the guests to feel like they were witnessing the sunset.

Bottom; Main exhibit area.



began to fall into place. In order to make it a complete learning experience, other professionals agreed to conduct lectures; Botanist, Mr. Rudy O'Reilly, District Conservationist for USDA, St. Croix, conducted a lecture on native Caribbean species suitable for bonsai; Mr. Joe Colon, on professional photography; Mr. Omar Rojas on Suiseki and Suiseki display; and bonsai specialist Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Macías, esq., on Malpighia species as bonsai.

*Bonsai Journey*, Mr. Min Hsuan Lo's publication, is one of the best books on bonsai, including specialized techniques on tropical and temperate trees. Although Mr. Lo is widely recognized for his knowledge in ficus bonsai, we decided that it was time for people to know and learn from his mastery and work in other species. On Saturday October 3, 2015, on his first master class, "From cuttings to the mountain" participants were treated to general cultivation techniques on creating yamadori-like junipers from cuttings/nursery-grown material. The following day, during the second master



class, *Eugenia uniflora* and *Myrciaria cauliflora* were the subject of a detailed presentation titled “Pitanga and Jaboticaba, The Two Diamonds of America”, in which advanced cultivation and design aspects of these species were explained, thus adding much needed interest, knowledge and variety to bonsai collections in the tropical setting.

The learning experience provided by the symposium was the main reason behind it and we received more than expected. Mr. Lo taught us so many new techniques, so much about junipers, jaboticabas and

*Facing page, top left; Ficus microcarpa “tiger bark” by Luis Carrasquillo*

*Facing page, top right; Neea buxifolia by Hector Pacheco*

*Facing page, middle left; Triphasia trifolia “Limoncillo” by Angel Serrano*

*Facing page, middle right; Buttonwood, Conocarpus erectus, by Mario Rios*

*Facing page, bottom; Casearia decandra “Palo Blanco” by José O Rivera*

*This page:*

*Top left; Gmelina philippensis, Wrightia religiosa and Ficus microcarpa “tiger bark” by Luis Carrasquillo. The Gmelina was selected best shohin by the people in the Caribbean Shohin facebook page.*

*Top right; Ficus salicaria (top) Neea buxifolia (bottom inside) Ixora (outside) by José E Rodriguez*

*Middle; Dwarf Ligustrum by Julian Medero*

*Bottom; dwarf dark clover accent plant*



Top left; *Neea buxifolia*, *Bucida spinosa* and *Ficus salicaria* by María Santiago

Top right; Mr. Omar Rojas lectured on *Suiseki* and *Suiseki* from his collection were on display.

Bottom; *Ficus microcarpa* "tiger bark" by Norberto Rodríguez.



pitangas that he expressed that he could really feel the interest, attention and receptivity of the participants. Every speaker had different themes and all presentations were diverse. As a result, the main educational goals of the event were satisfied and fresh perspectives for our bonsai environment were imparted.

One general conclusion of the event was conveyed by Mr. Lo: "Quality bonsai is achieved by taking some initial risks, early in the plant's development, and conducting the necessary steps, the correct work, to set the best possible structure from the beginning. Only by doing so, we can get better quality bonsai." 🌳





## BCI and BCI China forge new links

In January, BCI President Glen Bebb and BCI Vice President Helen Su met with BCI China Chairman Mr. Chen Chang and many leaders of Bonsai in China to sign a new Contract and to open three new BCI China Cooperation Centres.

The BCI China Cooperation Centres are being established throughout China, to promote BCI China, recruit members and promote bonsai and BCI to the Chinese public. More will be opened in September.



The new Contract was signed by Glen and Mr. Chen at a formal ceremony in Guangzhou attended by many dignitaries. After the signing ceremony the party headed off to formally open the new BCI China Cooperation Centre in Guangzhou and then some of the party flew immediately to Guiyang to formally open a new BCI China Cooperation Centre, then by train the following day to Liuzhou for the formal Opening of another BCI China Cooperation Centre and Exhibition.

The Liuzhou Exhibition was a grand affair and as part of the event, the host gave away, free of cost, 2,000



Top left; Mr. IC Su, BCI President Glenis Bebb, Mr. Chen Chang and Ms Chen XiaoLi, President, Chinese Society of Landscape Architecture.

Top right; Opening the center in Guangzhou.

Middle; Opening the center in Guiyang.

Middle, lower; Dignitaries at the opening in Liuzhou.

Bottom; Free bonsai!

Top right; Special BCI carry bags were printed for the 2,000 bonsai the host gave away, free of cost, to the general public attending the event as part of the promotion of the art and BCI China.

bonsai to the general public attending the event as part of the promotion of the art and BCI China. Special BCI carry bags had been printed as you can see in the photos.

The visit was also a great opportunity for the BCI President and Vice President to discuss common issues with the Bonsai leadership in China. It was an extremely productive visit. Subsequent to the visit, the BCI China people in Guiyang successfully bid in Manila for the BCI Convention in 2019, in cooperation with the Viewing Stone people in Alashan, Inner Mongolia. This will be a two-part convention—Bonsai in Guiyang and Viewing Stones in Inner Mongolia. Details will be released at the appropriate time. 🌳



## In Memoriam, Arthur Skolnik

By Joan Greenway, Canada

It is with great sadness that we record the passing of Arthur Skolnik: bonsai artist, suiseki authority and garden designer. Arthur was a two term director for BCI and the only Canadian instructor recorded in BCI's "International Bonsai Instructors" book.

Originally from Montreal, where he had a bonsai store, he moved to Toronto many years ago and began putting his artistic and creative talents to work designing unusual gardens.

He died of heart failure while scuba diving in Antigua, Wednesday, January 27, 2016, during a holiday with his wife Barbara.

Arthur had an infectious smile and always kept us laughing with his puns at bonsai events. He was an avid bonsai and suiseki collector and was a featured speaker at many bonsai events. He continued to maintain his bonsai and suiseki collection. Together with a few friends Arthur was one of the organizers for the International Viewing Stone Appreciation Conventions held in Pennsylvania.

Arthur had many connections to the bonsai world. Through his bonsai retail store, as guest demonstrator and workshop leader, and then his popular educational video, *The Growing Art of Bonsai*, Arthur has inspired many to start their own bonsai journey. He will be missed, but never forgotten. 🌳



Through his bonsai retail store, as guest demonstrator and workshop leader, and then his popular educational video, *The Growing Art of Bonsai*, Arthur Skolnik has inspired many to start their own bonsai journey.



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**15<sup>th</sup> DEC - 18<sup>th</sup> DEC 2016**

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Membership fees and other purchases can be paid by PayPal on the website. Checks can be mailed to BCI at the PO Box listed below. Credit card payments may be made by phone.

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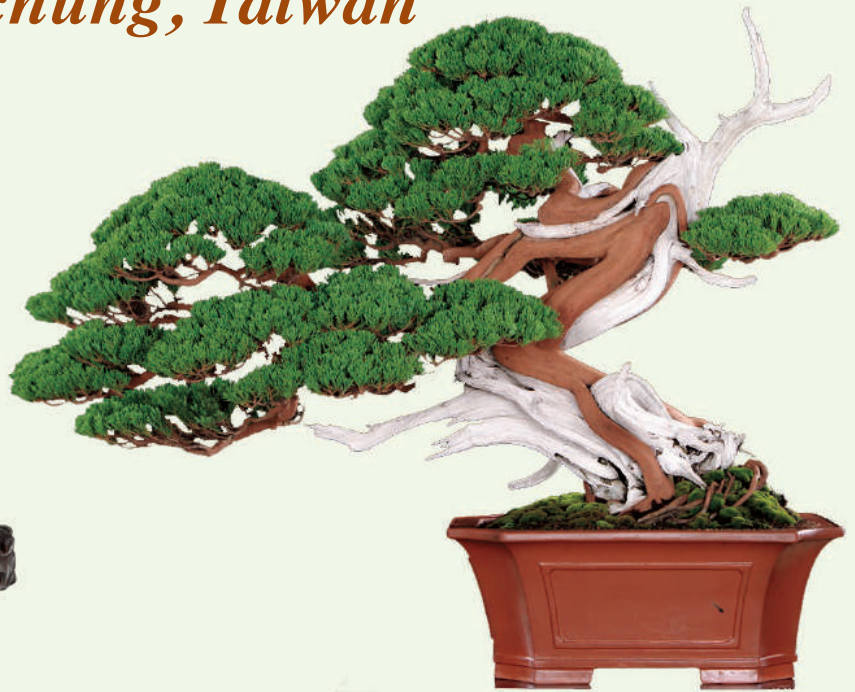
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## **Registrations:**

How to Register: The detail for all Bonsai Convention Information and Registration Forms, please visit this convention website:

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(Online registration activated from January 2017)

If you have questions please contact Mr. Sean SC Huang:

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*Below;* A limited number of prints selected from the finalists of viewing stones and bonsai trees from all over the world were debuted at the grand BCI Convention in Guangzhou, China in 2015.

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