

promoting
international friendship
through bonsai



bc i

Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

2016
Q3

Three Case Studies Showing the
Three Phases in Shaping Wild Olive Bonsai

Enhancing the Stone, Part One:
The Japanese Reality of Modifying
Suiseki

Exploring the African Bonsai Style

The Mysterious Forest; Creating
a High Mountain Style Group
Planting

Techniques in Creating
Tropical Bonsai:
Clerodendrum aculeatum

Creating Ficus Bonsai;
Trunk and Branch
Fusing Method

Stone Paradise;
Suiseki from Batang
Ombilin River

European Bonsai &
Suiseki
Convention
2016 in Hungary



Juniperus chinensis var. *Itoigawa*

H: 82 cm, Pot: Gyozan

Created by Jura Takashi, Japan

Collection of Fabio Mantovani, Italy

Exhibit history:

Japan, Kokufu 2016

Italy, BCI Excellence Award 2016

Italy, UBI Award 2016

www.joshuaroth.com

Bonsai Tools to Shape the Dream

As your experience with Bonsai grows, so does your need for higher quality tools. Joshua Roth offers a wide range of superior Japanese Bonsai Tools at competitive prices—for every level of interest—worldwide.

Our products are available through our extensive network of retail dealers—including several mail-order and Internet dealers.

We offer four grades of Joshua Roth brand of tools. Select the tools appropriate to your interest and needs:

- **Student/Novice:** Good Quality, basic tools for beginners at a fair price.
- **Intermediate:** A wider range of quality high carbon steel tools for the increased needs of more experienced enthusiasts.
- **Professional:** This very wide range presents superior quality and life for the serious Bonsaiist without an astronomical price.
- **Master:** Our Stainless Steel grade is of the very best quality available at any price. Easy clean-up, with the aesthetic feel of fine surgical instruments—the ultimate in lifetime Bonsai tools.

For those looking for tools at a lower price point than our Joshua Roth Japanese tools, we now also have the RYUGA brand of tools—offering a wide range of both stainless steel and carbon steel tools made in China.

Although we specialize in Bonsai Tools and supplies, we also offer quality tools for landscaping and nursery maintenance, as well as floral and gardening tasks. These product lines include our extremely popular GardenCut™ general purpose shears, and a selection of Japanese pull-technology saws.

For more information

visit www.joshuaroth.com or
e-mail bonsai@joshuaroth.com

Call 1-800-624-4635 today for a free catalog and the name of a dealer near you.
Outside the US, phone 1-541-791-5312.
Fax: 1-541-791-5337

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

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

Read more about
The Artisans Cup
movement at
theartisanscup.com

Joshua Roth,
proud sponsor of the 2015
Inaugural Artisans Cup,
founded by Ryan Neil
and Chelsea Neil of Bonsai
Mirai, near Portland OR,
to showcase American
Bonsai as a true
art form.

2015 Artisans Cup Trophy by Sculptor Rick Gregg, www.rickgreggstudio.com

JOSHUA ROTH
LIMITED

*Joshua Roth — where
artistic vision gains precision*
Providing Superior Service and Quality Tools
to the Bonsai Community Since 1980.

President's Message

I hope you are liking the educational articles. We have more in this issue. As I have been saying, education is the BCI Buzz word for 2016.

As President of BCI, I also take on the role of Chair of the Editorial Committee, as it is a bylaw requirement. Also on this committee are Gudrun Benz, Massimo Bandera and of course our Magazine Editor Joe Grande. BCI's membership is made up of Individual Members and Clubs. Trying to balance BCI Bonsai and Stone Magazine to include reports on club events and exhibitions around the world and at the same time include educational articles on both Bonsai and Stones is what makes BCI Bonsai and Stone Magazine unique. We have increased the number of pages in this issue to accommodate everyone.

One of the great things about being involved with BCI is, we are always learning. We have some very talented members who are willing to share their knowledge and we are always looking for more. We have some great articles in this issue. I offer a personal thank you to all of our contributors for without you we would not have a magazine. I hope you enjoy their articles and learn from their shared knowledge.

I feel that bonsai is having a great resurgence throughout the world and I feel we, at BCI are contributing in this.

It is sad to hear of the passing of Guillermo Castaño, a past board member and long time supporter of BCI. Guillermo was the creator of the BCI Excellence Awards that have been presented by BCI Directors at major bonsai events throughout the world for several years. I first met Guillermo and his son Enrique at the first BCI Convention held in China in Guangzhou, in 2006, followed by a BCI Post Convention Tour, travelling through China and Inner Mongolia with a small group, where we formed long-term bonds. Guillermo was a very talented bonsai artist, sculptor, a gentleman and friend. Guillermo will be sadly missed but never forgotten.

BCI will open three more cooperation Centres in China in September in Rugau, and Myyang, Jiangsu province and in Kunming, Yunnan province. Some of the BCI board members will travel to China to participate in these events and also the first BCI-China Exhibition to be held in conjunction with the 9th National Exhibition to be held in Guangzhou.

We now have a new BCI board member and Treasurer, Roger Snipes from Spokane, Washington, USA. Roger has been involved in the US bonsai world for the past 30 years. Roger is an accountant and we are fortunate to have someone with such experience. This is a voluntary position. BCI Board members are all volunteers they pay all of their own travel expenses to all BCI events.

Larry Stephan, BCI Business Manager's trial period is up and he is now a permanent BCI staff member. Larry is a great asset to the BCI team and is working well with the BCI Editor Joe Grande and with our web guru Bonnie Moore.

The next BCI event will be a Regional Convention in Mysore India from 19th–22nd December, 2016. They are also hosting a four day pre-convention tour for international guests from 15th -18th December. More information can be found on the BCI website convention page. 🌳

Cheers from Down Under,
Glenis Bebb



We have some great articles in this issue. I offer a personal thank you to all of our contributors for without you we would not have a magazine. I hope you enjoy their articles and learn from their shared knowledge.

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

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

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

For more information contact:

Glenis Bebb, president@bonsai-bci.com



MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

How will you improve your bonsai practice? A common belief is that it takes 10,000 hours to acquire a skill. Where are you on this continuum to virtuosity? Can you create a beautiful bonsai or carve a compelling suiseki? (No, it's not a typo, I said carve a suiseki—not just the base or *daiza* but the actual stone. Read on.)

At 8 hours per day, five days a week, 10,000 hours equals approximately 5 years. But if you are not under the watchful eye of a teacher or coach, without a program or resources, it may take much longer. Most of us will never get to this level with our bonsai. Many of us are satisfied with only 50 hours of training, allowing for a “good enough” performance level, enjoying other aspects of the hobby, such as socializing with other bonsai friends or dabbling in related pastimes such as carpentry, photography, or making pots. Although we can go through the motions easily, no matter how much we practice, improvement is negligible. Compare this to the length of time a bonsai apprentice serves during a six-year period where 12-hour days are the norm. Regardless of where we are on this scale, we must respect each other and rejoice in what is accomplished, both by pros and amateurs.

As individuals, we are motivated and shaped by many influences in our lives so why not heed the advice of those who have excelled?

José Rodriguez from Puerto Rico has made a big contribution to this issue by introducing, writing, and translating a series of articles. The feature article is by David Benavente, an acclaimed bonsai artist in Spain. The detailed case studies on three wild olives serve to teach many bonsai techniques for methodically developing wild material into a work of art. David's meticulous record and keen knowledge will help you with olives and many species with similar characteristics. In another case study, José shares his experience in developing a *Clerodendrum aculeatum* in the bonsai style. Ogi Uyehara, Philippines, shows us how he purposefully uses time and the unique growth habit of a Ficus to develop a Taiwanese-inspired bonsai. Min Hsuan Lo from Taiwan, takes a big leap and creates a distinctive innovation on the forest style with an alpine forest, inspired by Nature's Masters.

Tobie Kleynhans looks at the evolution of a national bonsai style that is true to geography, culture and climate by using the language of fine art to explore the African Bonsai Style.

Budi Sulisty, Indonesia, explores the Ombilin River in West Sumatra for stones and presents the bounty that can be found there.

If you can't search for stones in exotic places, perhaps you can manufacture one. Tom Elias and Hiromi Nakaoji have collected some startling information about the many suiseki that have been enhanced by skilled stone carvers in Japan to create works of art that are thought to be totally natural—even those stones shown in National exhibits.

There's lots to learn and explore in this issue, and to help you accumulate more hours on your way to perfect stones and trees. 🌲

—Joe Grande, Canada (editor@bonsai-bci.com)

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.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Glenis Bebb, President

Queensland, Australia

president@bonsai-bci.com

Helen Su, 1st Vice President

Taiwan, R.O.C.

bcivp@bonsai-bci.com

Nikunj Parekh, 2nd Vice President

Mumbai, India

nikunjyo@gmail.com

David DeGroot, Secretary

Washington, USA

degroot@comcast.net

Roger Snipes, Treasurer

Washington, USA

treasurer@bonsai-bci.com

Chen Chan, China

chairman@pck.com.cn

Les Dowdell, Canada

hokkoku@telusplanet.net

Min Hsuan Lo, Taiwan

bonsailo@mail2000.com.tw

Frank Mihalic, USA

mihalicf@yahoo.com

Carlos Morales, Puerto Rico

djcalinary@yahoo.com

Ing Suan Ng, Malaysia

isng1818@gmail.com

Budi Sulisty, Indonesia

budisulisty22@gmail.com

BCI BUSINESS OFFICE

Larry Stephan, Business Manager

PO Box 639, Prospect Heights,

IL 60070-0639, USA

office@bonsai-bci.com

WEB SITE MAINTENANCE

Bonnie Moore, Canada

neveryonas@shaw.ca

WEB SITE EDITOR

Joe Grande, Canada

editor@bonsai-bci.com

DIRECTORS

Massimo Bandera, Italy

mb@massimobandera.it

Sujata Bhat, India

sbhat@hotmail.com

Gudrun Benz, Germany

Benz-W@t-online.de

Vic Ceballos, Philippines

bonsairp@yahoo.com

TO JOIN BCI OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

New members, go to www.bonsai-bci.com and click on “Join BCI Today” button. Renewing members, log in to your account and go to **Manage My Profile/Renew My Membership**.



Join or Renew Online, by Phone, by E-mail or by Mail.

www.bonsai-bci.com,

office@bonsai-bci.com,

phone 847-612-5133,

PO Box 639,

Prospect Heights,

IL 60070-0639, USA.

EDITOR

Joe Grande: editor@bonsai-bci.com
Box 85, Group 20, RR2
Ste. Anne, MB Canada R5H 1R2

MAGAZINE ADVERTISING

Helen Su, Asia: bcivp@bonsai-bci.com
Dick Anderson, USA & Other:
mkarka1958@aol.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Massimo Bandera, Italy & Spain
Gudrun Benz, Germany
Michael Collins-McIntyre, Canada
Thomas S. Elias, USA
Min Hsuan Lo, Taiwan
Danilo Scursatone, Italy
Budi Sulisty, Indonesia

“BCI,” “Bonsai Clubs International” and *Bonsai & Stone Appreciation Magazine* are trademarks of Bonsai Clubs International, Inc., © 2016 BCI (All Rights Reserved). Editorial materials contained in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of *Bonsai & Stone Appreciation Magazine*, its publishers, editors or the Executive Board of Bonsai Clubs International. Neither BCI nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise—without permission in writing from the Editor.

Bonsai & Stone Appreciation Magazine (ISSN 1068-6193 USPS 901-680) is published quarterly by Bonsai Clubs International, Inc., at PO Box 639,

Prospect Heights, IL 60070-0639, USA, and is sent to its members. Annual membership dues include a 1-year subscription to the Magazine. Back issues are available from our business office. Periodical postage is paid at Prospect Heights, IL, the USA, and additional mailing offices. This issue is printed in U.S.A. Postmaster: send address changes to *Bonsai & Stone Appreciation Magazine*, PO Box 639, Prospect Heights, IL 60070-0639, USA.

Advertising, Editorial Policy and Deadlines:

For advertising space or rates, please e-mail advertising representatives listed above.

The Magazine reserves the right to edit all materials accepted for publication. Articles requiring extensive editing will be returned to the author with suggestions from the editorial staff. Manuscripts, drawings & photographs, with clear identification for captions, should be provided in digital format, on disk, or by e-mail or internet.

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.

PUBLISHING SCHEDULE

Issue	Month	Closing Date
Q1	J/F/M	November 1
Q2	A/M/J	February 1
Q3	J/A/S	May 1
Q4	O/N/D	August 1



Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

VOLUME 55 NUMBER 3

JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

inside Q3 2016

TOURS, EXHIBITS AND CONVENTIONS

- 56** Can You Say Székesfehérvár? European Bonsai & Suiseki Convention 2016 in Hungary
By Gudrun Benz, Germany

ARTICLES

- 4** Three Case Studies Showing the Three Phases in Shaping Wild Olive Bonsai
By David Benavente, Spain
- 26** Enhancing the Stone, Part One: The Japanese Reality of Modifying Suiseki
By Thomas Elias and Hiromi Nakaoji, USA
- 32** Exploring the African Bonsai Style
By Tobie Kleynhans, South Africa
- 42** Techniques in Creating Tropical Bonsai: *Clerodendrum aculeatum*
By José Luis Rodríguez Macias, Puerto Rico
- 52** Creating Ficus Bonsai; Trunk and Branch Fusing Method
By Angel “Ogi” Uyehara, Philippines, and José Luis Rodríguez Macias, Puerto Rico
- 60** The Mysterious Forest; Creating a High Mountain Style Group Planting
By Min Hsuan Lo, Taiwan, and José L. Rodríguez Macias, Puerto Rico

COLLECTIONS

- 46** Stone Paradise; Suiseki from Batang Ombilin River
By Budi Sulisty, Indonesia and José L. Rodríguez Macias, Puerto Rico

PEOPLE

- 69** Dreams of Perfect Trees; Jim Smith’s Bonsai Legacy
By Tom Kehoe and Belinda Kehoe, USA

NEWS

- 67** Bonsai and Stone News: Arcobonsai, Celebrating 31 years of conventions; In Memoriam; Guillermo Castaño Ramirez; Bonsai Intermediate Course launched on Bonsai Empire Website.

ON OUR COVER: *Juniperus chinensis* var. *Itoigawa*, 82 cm, Pot: Gyozan

Created by Jura Takashi, Japan; in the collection of Fabio Mantovani, Italy

This tree was exhibited in Japan, Kokufu 2016, received the BCI Excellence Award 2016 at Arcobonsai, Italy and also received the UBI Award 2016 (Unione Bonsaisti Italiani). This distinctive tree is the subject of an article by Massimo Bandera in an upcoming issue.



WILD OLIVES

Olea europaea var. "sylvestris"

3 Case Studies Showing the 3 Phases in Shaping Wild Olive Bonsai

About the Author: David Benavente is an award-winning bonsai artist who has studied bonsai in Europe and in Japan. In 2012, he was a resident artist for the honorable Kato family at Manseien nursery in Ōmiya. David has worked as a bonsai potter, curator of important bonsai collections in Spain, teacher at the Luis Vallejos Bonsai School, and author of many articles for bonsai magazines in USA, Europe and Japan. Since 2009, his trees have won many awards at major competitions. He owns David Benavente-Bonsai Studio, where everything for bonsai is available from his online store at www.davidbenavente.com. The website features finished collected trees from nature as well as many species of cultivated and imported bonsai. Tools, fertilizers, containers, exhibit items and books are available from the website too. If you can attend his school in Spain, founded in 2006, consider one of David's workshops or courses.

By David Benavente, Spain www.davidbenavente.com

Translation by José Luis Rodríguez Macías, Puerto Rico

SPECIAL AESTHETIC VALUE LIVING SCULPTURE

The shapes acquired by wild olives, with their sinuous trunks full of character, have nothing to do and take us away from the typical image of the old cultivated olive trees. We deal with a different spirit. Notwithstanding, the wild olive and the cultivated olives share common ground, in terms of plant genera and species. In many cases, the shapes of wild olive are an abstract interpretation of the natural forms, in which many specimens may be considered as a true sculpture in the modern art world, rather than a traditional representation of a tree in nature.

This special character deserves special treatment and a special point of view in order to be able to extract the maximum amount of potential from the material.



ESTABLISHING A PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BRANCHES AND FUTURE PROGRESS

Wild olives have a particular styling method, given the fact that they are shaped upon a trunk devoid of branches and that the entirety of the branch structure must be created from new buds that emerge from the trunk.

For this reason, establishing a plan is a must.

Wild olives develop numerous buds and branches at a fast, vigorous rate. As such, they require careful attention in order to redirect strength to those areas that conform to our design plan.

If you don't carefully trace a design plan and don't have a clear idea of the final shape you wish to achieve, all that energy will go to waste.

By following the preconceived image, we carefully shape those new tender branches and eliminate those that appear sporadically in different areas and that don't contribute to our overall design.

During the first years, pinching of branches is delayed and scarce, as branches are allowed to elongate and all energy will be concentrated on gaining girth on those branches that will compose the primary, secondary and tertiary branch structure of the tree.

In this initial phase and during those first years, the use of wire and tourniquets are our best allies in terms of reaching our objectives.



In the first phase and while giving shape to this branch, too many sub-branches were left untouched. Now, they do not have sufficient room to grow. Some of these need to be eliminated in order to improve the structure of the branch. The empty spaces that result after this operation will be covered by the fine ramification of each sub-branch.

FEAR OF EMPTY SPACES

In planning our design objectives, it is not only important to place emphasis solely on the trunk line and branch distribution. Foliar mass placement plays an important role, so the distribution of empty spaces is an important factor to take into consideration.

Aficionados frequently have an obsession with back branches. This need to garner back branches at all costs is, in many cases, the genesis of many problems.

In the first stages of shaping, when we are shaping secondary branches, it is fundamentally important to foresee beyond the present state of the tree and mentally visualize the

finished product in order to be able to leave sufficient space in between those branches and the green masses that will emerge from them. If we allow the development of too many branches, there will be no room for those branches to grow, all branches will be cluttered thus creating a clumping effect; there will be no room for air and empty spaces.

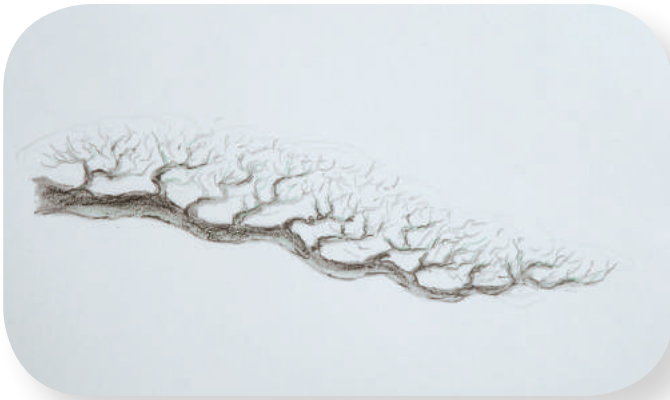
Branch structures must have order, flow and ample room in function to our design plan.

Allowing too many branches to develop will result in a thick mass; monotonous and heavy in appearance. Generally speaking,

RESULTS AFTER THE INITIAL SHAPING PHASE

- New buds emerge from the trunk.
- Thorough study of the tree and structural planning.
- Selection of those buds that will compose the primary branch structure of the tree.
- Suppression of those buds that do not contribute to the design.
- Wiring of those buds that will compile the tree's primary branch structure.
- The branches that are wired are left alone and, spontaneously, new secondary growth appears.
- Elimination of water shoots.
- As soon as the wire starts to bite in, a revision of the entire tree is performed and the wire is removed. If necessary, new branches are wired into position and those buds that are now secondary branches are rectified or left alone, according to plan.
- This process is repeated until the structure of the tree is established and all objectives are accomplished.

branches that subdivide into smaller/multiple masses with even distribution are more attractive; being these small/evenly distributed masses the components of each primary branch.



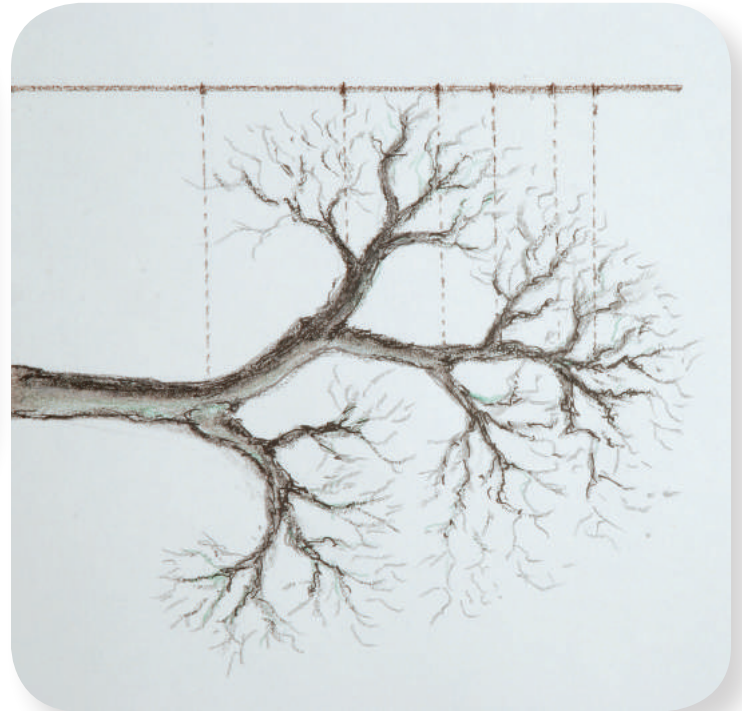
If we leave too many sub-branches a thick, monotonous and heavy mass will be the result.



Branches sub-divided into smaller masses are more interesting.



This other model of branch creation, consisting of minor foliar masses, is quite suitable for broadleaf species. This type of branch formation requires more spacing between each branch; hence the tree should have less primary branches.



The closer a secondary branch is to the main trunk, the longer the distance between this and another secondary branch should be.

CREATION OF FOLIAR MASSES, WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT

Another tendency, quite common in aficionados, is to begin pinching way too early, before the main branch structure is completed.

Creation of the main branch structure in a bonsai may take three (3) to five (5) years, depending on growing conditions, technique and climatological factors of the zone where our wild olives grown in.

We have to bear in mind that, before we create the foliar masses, we must have concluded an organized coherent branch structure which, in turn, is proportionate to the main trunk.

Remember, the longer we allow branches to get, the thicker they become.

If we begin pinching the tree too early, branch thickening is considerably hindered. As such and during the first years of cultivation, we allow the branches to grow freely; the longer the better!

As stated before, the creation process consists of wiring young shoots when they are still flexible and allowing them to grow freely. This way, we are able to fix their position quickly and allow them sufficient time to thicken up.

Even if you are tempted, refrain from pinching the branches in the early stages.

Branch creation is like building a roof. First you lay a solid structure, with a strong foundation that can withstand the weight of the roof. The shingles represent the leaves and the foliar masses. Before adding the shingles, we must first build the foundation structure in which they will rest on. On the other hand, if the foundation is not solid, the weight of the secondary elements will make it collapse. In the case of a bonsai tree, visual strength is achieved by means of a proportionate/thick primary and secondary branch structure..

CASE I

FIRST PHASE OF FORMATION

The trunk of this wild olive is quite sinuous and very elegant. The design objective must be in harmony with its inherent characteristics. As such, the canopy design will have ample spacing, allowing the viewer opportunity to appreciate its rugged bark and beautiful shari, which extends from top to bottom.



This example shows the tasks to be performed during the first phase of formation of branches. Let's see the developments during those three years.

The objectives are:

- Creation of a design that brings out the inherent potential of the tree.
- Determine the front and planting angle of the tree.
- Creation of the main branches, using the predetermined line.
- Creation of the secondary and tertiary branches.
- Allow maximum girth of the branch structure. The primary branches will need more time to thicken.

July, 2005. We only have a trunk and weak branches. At this moment, we allow the tree to gain strength. For that purpose, we placed the tree in a larger pot, thus allowing vigorous growth.



A year later, the tree has gained the necessary strength and vigor to withstand initial shaping. Growth is young and flexible.



Following our design plan, we wire the branches that will make up the branch structure. The unnecessary growth is quickly eliminated. Note that the terminal buds have not been removed. This allows the branches to elongate and gain girth.



May, 2008. The process has been repeated. Branches keep thickening and new spontaneous growth of secondary branching appears.



CASE II

SECOND PHASE OF FORMATION

Front, Right Side, Left Side and Back of tree is shown before and after work.

It has been quite a few years since I initially shaped this tree. The main branch structure was set, but for particular circumstances, no follow-up work in terms of shaping and maintenance were performed.

During the last couple of years, this specimen has occasionally been pinched and numerous erratic growth has appeared, thus ruining the original design plan.

Fortunately, with minor pruning, we are able to find solutions and rectify the order in the design.

To achieve harmony with the mighty trunk, styling work has to be diligent.

Once construction of the main branch structure is concluded, we will enter the third phase of style work; the creation of foliar masses and refinement work. In a couple of years, this tree will be show ready, displaying all its potential and splendor.

With this case, we wish to explain all details concerning the second phase of construction. We have the benefit of having concluded the foundation of the main branch work and must complete the consolidation of foliar masses and refinement work, all in accordance with our final design.

Our objectives are:

- Consolidation of the secondary and tertiary branches.
- Adjustment of volume and spacing.
- Definition of the design plan.





Vigorous water shoots have emerged throughout the trunk. We should never let them develop in this manner. They drain a lot of energy from the tree.



Water shoots should be completely eliminated, including the swelling at the base.



All cuts should be concave, making sure to seal the cuts with cut paste.

First branch, before work



First right branch, after work



First left branch, before work



First left branch, after work





Apex, before work



Apex, after work



First, remove all water shoots and excessively long growth



Eliminate old leaves

Below; After removing old leaves and redundant growth, branches should have this appearance.

HOW TO BEGIN

It's quite possible that when we face a tree that is so dense, we do not have a clear idea of where to begin. To make it easier, we start by eliminating the obvious, like long water shoots and excessively long growth.

After, we eliminate old leaves. Partial defoliation is a good tool for maintenance work, be it at the beginning of the growing season or during fall. In order to do it properly, we have to follow a method. We start at the first branch. After totally completing work of the first, we move to the second and so forth.





SHAPING OF BRANCHES

Not all branches will be at the same stages of formation. Let's see various examples:

First left branch

This branch is still in the initial phase of formation. The idea is for It to occupy a large amount of space. For It to be the branch that defines the overall design of the tree. For this reason, we will sub-divide it

into smaller branches, creating volumes at different heights. In reality, we will treat It as If It were an Individual tree; with Its first, second, back, front and apical branches.

Frontal View

Bird's eye view

First left branch, before work.



After removal of old leaves



After pruning



After wiring





Back Branch

This branch has developed better. Work will consist of light pruning to rectify its structure and minor wiring to arrange the profile of sub-branches

Left; We have eliminated all old leaves. With concave cutters, we have also eliminated unwanted growth. It is quite important not to leave stubs.



After pruning. Now the tree has an orderly appearance and each bud has its individual space.



After wiring. We have pointed all growth tips outwards. The contour of the branches is more sinuous and more elegant.



REDUCING WEIGHT BY MEANS OF PRUNING

Wild olives have a great ability to produce buds and growth along their branches. This particularity allows foliage and leaves to clump up in a disorganized manner, quite similar to a hedge. By removing some of the erratic growth, we enable a clear and organized structure.

Basic principles on deciding which growth to remove:

- Remove all downward growth
- Eliminate those that grow directly towards the trunk
- Leave only two branches/buds per branch, thus maintaining branch bifurcations to two buds or sub-branches.
- Do not allow opposing branches.
- All buds/branches must grow outwards.



Left; We eliminate all branches/buds that grow directly down or towards the trunk.

Right; All bifurcations must be clean, leaving only two sub-branches or buds growing from the same point.



When we have opposing growth in one sub-branch, we eliminate one. Remember, only two buds should emerge from the same point.



There is no need for sophisticated tools. A simple chisel will allow us to lift the dead bark. Other tools used for clean up are pressure water and brushes.

DEADWOOD

The inherent quality of dead wood in collected wild olives makes them one of the most desirable species in Europe. Because of the aforementioned, we have to place particular attention to properly maintaining the dead portions and cleaning them.

Cleaning dead wood is a task to be performed, even before we begin branch formation. In this case and given the circumstances, we delayed wood work until after completion of the branch structure. We will not delay it longer.

As can be appreciated in the images, the limits between the dead wood and live portions are not well defined.

Some parts of the dead wood remain underneath dead bark. It is here where we will begin, carefully delimiting each zone.

Careful observation reveals that there are some zones that are rotting and that, in general terms, the wood is covered by a great deal of dirt. This does not allow us to appreciate the dead wood in its entire splendor.

Before cleaning.



After cleaning.



After applying lime sulphur.



REPOTTING

Given the fact that this tree has not been repotted for quite some time and because we need a larger pot of better quality, I opted for transplanting. Styling arrangement was performed in the month of May, a good month to conduct root work on wild olives. In fact, the reduction in foliar mass makes it an ideal time for this operation.

With the aide of a root saw, I detach the root column from the sides of the pot.



A little force is needed to remove the tree.



After long year of cultivation, the pot is full of roots.



With the root hook, I loosen the entangled roots.



We prune all roots in this region, leaving a flat root system.



After and using a chop stick, we remove soil from the surface.



We take ample opportunity to arrange the nebari.



After, we disentangle the root perimeter.



A brush is essential to remove loosened soil.



Coarse grained Akadama enables us to cultivate vigorous growth.



We finish with a layer of standard grade soil.

Work is intense but gratifying. The tree has a great future and I hope to show it in two to three years time. From this moment on, this tree enters the third phase of creation and we are able to conduct pinching of foliar masses.



This part deals with the third phase in wild olive bonsai creation. With the benefit of a solid structure, all work is directed towards refining the foliar masses and sort out any minute details.

The objectives are:

- Refinement of foliar masses
- Placing the tree in its final container
- Refinement of dead wood

During seven years of cultivation, we have performed all the steps mentioned throughout this article; Foliage clean-up, elimination of water shoots, wiring and sacrificial branch growth to gain girth on branches and strengthen the vitality of the tree.

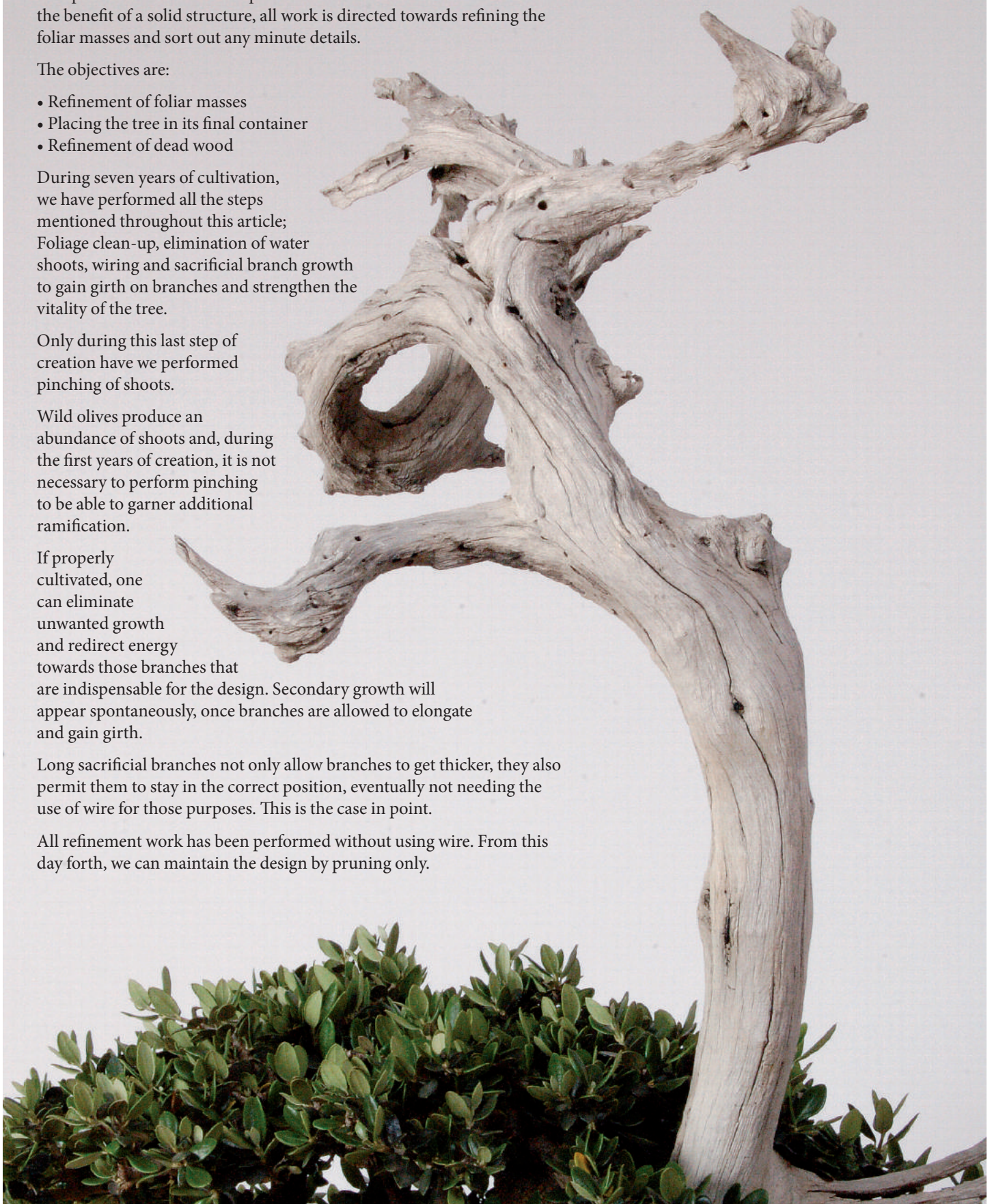
Only during this last step of creation have we performed pinching of shoots.

Wild olives produce an abundance of shoots and, during the first years of creation, it is not necessary to perform pinching to be able to garner additional ramification.

If properly cultivated, one can eliminate unwanted growth and redirect energy towards those branches that are indispensable for the design. Secondary growth will appear spontaneously, once branches are allowed to elongate and gain girth.

Long sacrificial branches not only allow branches to get thicker, they also permit them to stay in the correct position, eventually not needing the use of wire for those purposes. This is the case in point.

All refinement work has been performed without using wire. From this day forth, we can maintain the design by pruning only.



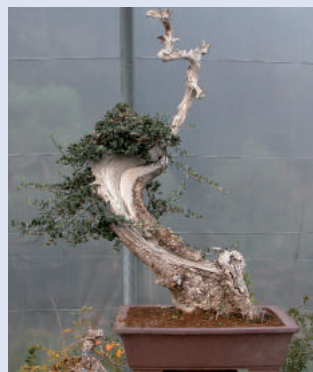
EVOLUTION

I acquired this wild olive in March 2002. As usual, all branch work had to be constructed. Every branch grew from the same location and no signs of new growth were visible along the trunk. Should that be the case, the foreseen design allowed the absence of lower branches, providing a dynamic image that gave emphasis to the dead portions of the tree. We decided to use what was in hand.

March
2002.



Proposed design sketch.



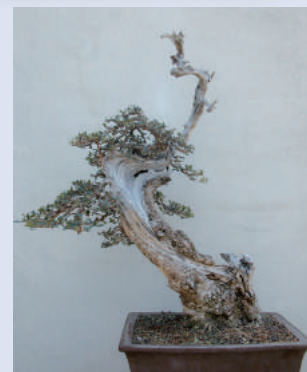
November 2003.



May 2004.



May 2005.



July 2006.

BEFORE WORK



Front.



Right Side.



Back



Left side



Detail of the first left branch



Detail of the apex



Details of the first right branch. This part is still in the process of formation.

LEAF SIZE

In all bonsai, leaf size is important. The idea isn't whether they are smaller or larger. This resides in the fact that they are homogeneous and have the same strength and vitality throughout the tree's canopy.

During the first years, when we allow unrestrained growth of sacrificial limbs, leaf size is irregular. Sacrificial branches tend to have large leaves. Bit by bit, selective pruning and pinching of leaves and branches allows leaves to gain equilibrium and eventually all leaves will be of the same size.



When we reach this phase, all leaves are of equal size.



Year 2002.

Year 2009.

REFINEMENT OF BRANCH PROFILE

Let's use the first left branch as an example.

The whole branch structure has been worked on in the same fashion.

Work consists of eliminating old leaves, cleaning the interior and superior profile of branches and eliminating erratic growth.

Each bud, no matter how small it may be, can develop into a new sub-branch. If these are not eliminated, the whole structure of the tree and fine ramification may be compromised.

Although these tasks might seem tedious, it is necessary to perform them, without fail.

Small concave cutters are a good tool, as they allow access to tight spots to eliminate branches on point and without leaving stubs.

We prune all unwanted growth and old leaves.



With concave cutters we prune all unwanted growth.



We use our fingers to eliminate old leaves.



First left branch, after work.



After performing the same task to the whole canopy.



Left; A view from the bottom shows that the branch remains in place without the aide of wire and that the ramification has adequate proportions in relationship to the trunk.

WOOD WORK

It was seven years ago when we last cleaned the dead wood on this tree. The wood seems to be in a good state and has the hardness particular to this species. Dirt and grit have managed to accumulate along the grain of the wood, thus clean up is in order.

We have also noted the presence of borer holes that were not there when we last worked on the tree. Of

equal diameter and alignment, these holes have probably been made by a xylophagous insect, which makes taking care of the problem a priority.

Generally speaking, wood borers (xylophagous) aren't a [problem as they only eat dead wood. Sometimes they even benefit the design, creating fissures and holes on the wood. The problem is taming them....



We begin at the base. In this part we have dead bark that covers the dead wood.



With a small chisel and a metal gouge, we rectify the live vein..



These holes pinpoint the presence of wood borers.....



We keep pinpointing the affected zone and discover that the borer galleries extend to the nebari.



Here's the first one, the rest, have tried to escape. We finally apprehend them. .



At last, we discover the new inhabitants.

After clean up and rectifying the live vein.





Clean up

We first spray the wood with water and let the layer of dirt become loose. After, we use a wire brush to gently remove the grit. We take precautions in not scraping the wood. Always clean the wood along the grain, never crosswise. We apply water to remove the dirt.

Once clean, we apply lime sulfur to the wood. We should always wet the wood for better absorption.

We use the wire brush gently in order not to scrape or damage the wood. The aim is too clean and bring out the wood's natural texture, not to create artificial traces.



Wood should be wet not damp. This enables better effectiveness.

NEW POT

Now that the canopy is complete, it's time to select the final pot.

The present pot is quite large, serving the purposes of development. From an aesthetic standpoint, the present pot does not allow the tree to shine. Its excessive visual weight competes with the canopy and its shape and straight lines do not harmonize with the design.

I found this Izumiya in the Tokoname region of Japan. I think it will bring out the best features of the tree. The base will now have a principal role in the design, formerly overshadowed by the old pot. The present shape of the container matches the tree perfectly and its height and feet give the tree better dynamism and rightward wind direction.



Wild olives do not develop copious root systems, but after a couple of years, this one has grown substantially.



After changing container.



May 2009. A couple of weeks later, this tree was displayed in Bonsai Paterna, where it received an award. 🌲

Enhancing the **STONE** PART ONE

The Japanese Reality of Modifying Suiseki

By Thomas Elias and Hiromi Nakaoji, USA

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THIS ARTICLE:

Biseki: Stones with beautiful color, often polished

Bonseki: Originally used for an interior viewing stones in Edo period; later used for tray landscapes using small stones and sand.

Diabase: a common dark-colored igneous rock of basaltic origin

Suiseki: A general term referring to a stone that captures the poetic beauty of natural landscape scenery according to Nippon Suiseki Association's Japan Suiseki Exhibition guide February 9-13, 2016.

Schalstein: a plate or sheet-like rock formed from the compression and metamorphosis of basaltic and an andesitic tuff (igneous rocks resulting from explosive volcanic eruptions).



Every Japanese *suiseki* dealer and most serious collectors are aware that *suiseki* have been, and continue to be, enhanced; yet it is a subject that is rarely discussed and seldom written about in contemporary stone reference books. Numerous Japanese *suiseki* have been enhanced by various degrees and methods, some of these are displayed at major exhibitions each year and included in publications on stones. Despite this, many

Western collectors continued to believe that Japanese *suiseki* are completely natural stones. Stone collectors and dealers in Japan were interviewed over a two-year period to better understand the extent to which *suiseki* are enhanced in Japan, and to better understand the dichotomy that developed between Western beliefs about Japanese *suiseki* and the realities in Japan. This article is based upon experiences in Japan and a review of the Japanese-language literature on this subject. In

Stone collectors and dealers in Japan were interviewed over a two-year period to better understand the extent to which *suishiki* are enhanced in Japan, and to better understand the dichotomy that developed between Western beliefs about Japanese *suishiki* and the realities in Japan.

our second article on this topic, we will present the results of in-depth interviews with one of Japan's leading stone carvers, confirming that the carving of Japanese stones was common in the 1960s and has continued to the present.

Stone collectors and connoisseurs have long admired the many beautifully shaped landscape stones of Japan and their refined elegance. Foreign visitors to Japan were often first introduced to Japanese *suishiki* at their national exhibitions in Tokyo—the Meihen-ten or the more recent Japan Suiseki Exhibition—or at the fine Taikan-ten each November in Kyoto. Many attractive small hut stones and Ibi River waterfall stones were purchased at these events. These stones were partially to totally manufactured. Slowly, and after repeat visits to Japan, some Western stone collectors learned that other Japanese stones were often worked to improve their appearance, many extensively so. Many of the Ibi River stones have been cut so the quartz vein is at the base of the stone. Sometimes they are further worked to make the cut bottom appear natural. A broader range of Japanese stones were being worked in one way or another to improve their appearance as a natural stone. Western stone enthusiasts



who are able to communicate with Japanese collectors and stone dealers, and who have access to the Japanese literature and practices, learn that many of the Japanese stones have been worked in some capacity. Some well-respected stone dealers have said that a vast majority of the landscape stones in Japan are enhanced while another dealer's estimate was 60% to 70%. This clearly conflicts with information published in English, French, Italian and German on Japanese *suishiki* and differs from what has been promoted in Western countries over the last thirty years.

The presentation of Japanese stones as natural is found in many influential books on the subject. For example, Vincent T. Covello and Yuji Yoshimura (1984) stated that Japanese "*suishiki* are small, naturally formed stones admired for their beauty and for their power to suggest a scene from nature or an object closely associated with nature" in their book, *The Japanese Art of Stone Appreciation*. This work was translated and published in Italian in 1994. The French language book, *La Collection de Suiseki de*

Facing page; This Ibi River hut stone was our first Japanese stone.

Top; An Ibi River waterfall stone with single basal cut.

Bottom; A small manufactured hut stone.



Top; This California Eel River stone was collected and cut from a larger rock by Ben Nanjo, a well-known stone enthusiast from the San Francisco Bay area. It is typical of the many fine viewing stones obtained from a single basal cut.

Bottom; This attractive Kamo River stone has a cut bottom. It was attributed to the Meiji Era by Arishige Matsuura, former chairman of the Nippon Suiseki Association, when it was acquired.

Pius Notter by Arishige Matsuura and Martin Pauli defined *suiseki* as small stones that were formed by nature. The concept that *suiseki* are completely natural was further promoted by Willi Benz in his book, *The Art of Suiseki* published in 1996. This was an English adaptation of his earlier book, *Suiseki: Kunstwerke der Natur Präsentiert von Menschen*. Thus, European stone collectors believed that Japanese *suiseki* were all natural stones formed by nature. This belief was supported by Felix Rivera when he wrote that “*Suiseki* is an art form that values the intrinsic qualities of hard minerals and stones shaped by natural forces into forms suggestive of mountains, islands, waterfalls, glaciers, plains, people, and animals” in his book, *Suiseki, The Japanese Art of Miniature Landscape Stones* (1997). Many newly formed stone clubs accepted this notion, first presented by Covello and Yoshimura, then reinforced by Benz and Rivera, as fact.

In California, stone collectors from California Suiseki Society in the San Francisco Bay Area were regularly cutting stones to make suitable landscape stones with stable bases. Felix Rivera, founder of this society and author of the book, *The Japanese Art of Miniature Landscape Stones*, described *suiseki* by size, color, and patina and by saying that they “may not be

altered other than to have their bottoms cut and leveled, if needed, to allow for easy placement within a wooden base.” Rivera pointed out that many Japanese collectors made single basal cuts to make *suiseki*. In southern California, the sentiments were against any altering of the stone, including a single bottom cut. This was promoted by the California Aiseki-kai Club, led by Larry and Nina Ragle. According to the current California Aiseki-kai web site, “*suiseki* are small stones shaped by nature, unaltered by man, which suggest familiar landscapes such as mountains, islands, waterfalls, shorelines or seascapes.”

Shaping, carving, polishing and inscribing stones is an ancient business in Japan necessary to meet the demand for various sizes and types of monuments, lanterns, pagodas, and Buddha figures. These skills were well developed and easily applied on a smaller scale to the art of stone appreciation. An examination of many older, important *suiseki* will show that the bottom was modified. Our Meiji era Kamo River stone, purchased from former Nippon Suiseki Association Chairman, Arishige Matsuura is a good example.

The Japanese stone appreciation community did not try to conceal the fact that many stones were partially or totally modified for use as *suiseki*. In fact, numerous articles were published beginning in the 1960s about the processes used to modify stones. Stones that have been worked and extensively polished, often to a mirror smooth finish, frequently colorful, usually quite beautiful, and placed in the category of *biseki* or beautiful stones, are not included in this article.

Two references were found to Sakai Teikyo, usually considered by the most well-informed Japanese stone professionals to be Japan’s finest stone carver. One reference is an article, *A Story of Sakai Teikyo* published in the book *How to Appreciate and Take Care of Suiseki*, edited by Inoue Yoshio in 1966. Teikyo was one of three sons of Sakai Sahichi, a stone carver in Gifu. Teikyo learned stone carving from his father and while he specialized in Ibi River stones, he also worked some Setagawa stones. He was known for his ability to make such natural looking *suiseki* that others could not see that they were enhanced. Sakai Teikyo studied different rivers, their rock formations and the way water flowed over and through them, to understand how they were formed. The way he worked on a rock depended upon the river in which it originated. He believed that movement in stones was important, and that working stones was unavoidable. This was due to the rapid increase in the number of collectors and the limited supply of stones. He also maintained that if working on a stone multiplies its value by many times, then a stone should be worked. The article included many photographs showing Sakai manufacturing *suiseki*.

Another important document was *Memories of Ibi River Stones* by Sakai Teikyo, third son, which was published in 1989 in a local publication, *Stone Friends* by the Ibi River Aiseki-kai association. It is an account

of his life and his family's lifelong work in acquiring and processing stones for the *bonseki* and *sui-seki* markets. His father, Sakai Sahichi, started collecting stones from the Nagara River and later, from the Ibi River to sell along with his bonsai in the late 1880s in Gifu. A small group of bonsai and stone enthusiasts were buying these stones except during a period after the 1891 earthquake struck Gifu.

Sometime between 1891 and 1907, Sakai Sahichi and Sakai Sasuke, his first son, began to work stones because they did not sit well. At first, they removed pieces from the bottom of the stones so they would be more stable. The Sakai family sold many stones at an exhibition held in Tsu City in Mie prefecture in 1907. According to Sakai Teikyo, this event made Ibi River stones famous throughout Japan. As a result, by the Taisho era (1912-1925), more stone dealers opened shops in Gifu and along the Ibi River.

In 1924, Sakai Kanhichi, second son of Sakai Sahichi opened Gaseki-en, a stone shop in Tokyo, to sell more of his Ibi River stones. Kanhichi and his younger brother Teikyo travelled to Kuze Village in Ibi County where they met Mr. Yojuro, a stone collector who had been collecting a two-tone type of stone from the Ibi River. This stone had a narrow light band—a nearly white layer of stone—near thicker layers of dark gray to black stone. The Sakai brothers started making wonderful and very realistic mountain *sui-seki* from this material. They called these stones Yojuro-ishi. There is no record that the stone collector Yojuro ever carved this type of stone to make his own mountain stones. The stones sold well and the Sakai brothers ordered larger quantities of the two-tone stone from Yojuro. This gave rise to the Yojuro stone type, one that is recognized in *sui-seki* manuals and displayed in major exhibitions today. Later stone carvers copied the Sakai's family's work, but few could ever match the fine craftsmanship of a Sakai mountain *sui-seki*.

Sakai's business continued to grow when he was asked to provide stones to other bonsai nurseries. In 1931, Teikyo purchased a large cutting machine to enable him to meet the demand for stones used as *bonseki* and *sui-seki*. *Bonseki* is an art form that used small stones up to 18 cm (7 inches) with white sand to make a temporary landscape scene on a black lacquer oval or rectangular tray. This was a popular art form with several schools that declined sharply after the major collapse of the Japanese economy in the late 1980s. This coincided with a steady decline in the number of Japanese collectors purchasing bonsai and *sui-seki*.

The 1960s was a period of rapid growth in the numbers of people collecting and displaying stones in Japan. Concurrent many new *sui-seki* clubs were established, as was the Nippon Sui-seki Association in 1961. Numerous books were published and periodicals started to help inform new stone enthusiasts about this fascinating hobby and art form. These were primarily books for stone hobbyists written by fellow hobbyists, while others were written or edited



by Murata Keiji, a leading professional bonsai and stone specialist.

Different steps in cleaning stones—making them shiny by using a cloth, polishing techniques, adjustment of the bottom of stones, and the removal of softer portions of stones—were all subjects presented in the 1966 book, *How to Cultivate and Polish Sui-seki*, edited by Murata Keiji. Inoue Toshihiko, who contributed a chapter in this book about modifying stones, wrote that he was providing assistance to collectors by presenting approaches to the modification of stones in order to reveal the interest and the beauty of stones. He was advocating expanding the horizon of viewing stones by adding abstract *sui-seki*.

Enhancing stones to make *sui-seki* was not limited to Ibi, Seta, Saji and Abe river stones, but a much wider range of stones were modified. A list of 29 different stone types from as many areas was listed in Appendix 2 in Inouye Yoshio's 1966 book *How to Appreciate and Take Care of Sui-seki*. The common name, geological

Top; The Ibi River in Shizuoka is a tributary of the larger Kiso River. Its broad channel with numerous extensive deposits of gravel, cobbles, small to large boulders, makes it an ideal place to search for *sui-seki*.

Bottom; This Ibi River stone was collected by Mr. Yojiro in the 1930s and was then made into a classical Japanese mountain range with a single tall peak. This stone carver was probably Sakai Teikyo. In Japan, this stone and other similar stones are given the name Yojiro-ishi rather than Ibigawa-ishi.

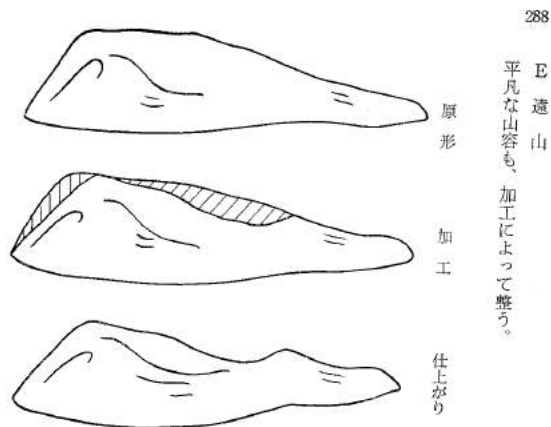
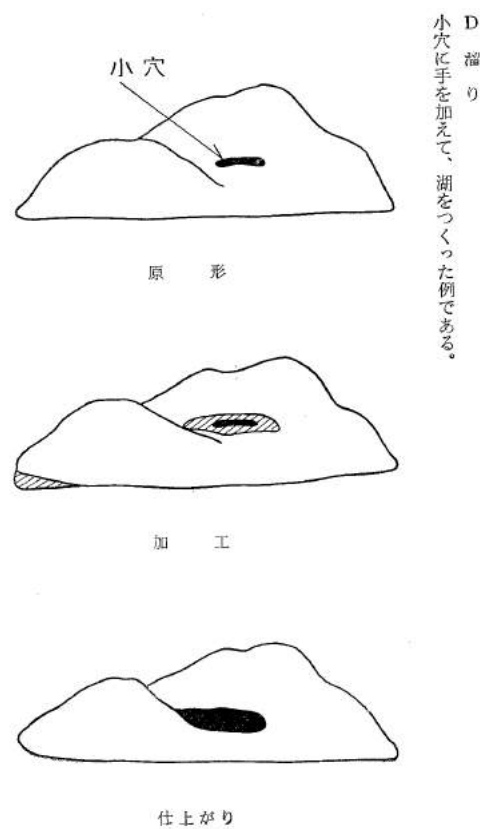


Top left; This small but beautiful mountain-shaped stone was first used in *bonseki*, later a wood base was carved for it so it can be used as a *suiseki*. It is 15.8 cm (6.2 inches) wide, 3.5 cm (1.4 inches) tall, and 4.5 cm (1.8 inches) deep.

Middle left; A typical black, smooth and shiny Kamuikotan stone from the northern most main island of Hokkaido.

Bottom left; Sado island mountain stone that has been completely manufactured from a larger piece of Sado island akadama.

Right column; Tanaka illustrates how to form a mountain lake in the line drawing at the top; then below, he uses line drawings to show how to shape a stone to improve flow and to make it look more like a natural mountain shape. The upper drawing is the stone before any alterations, the middle drawing shows what stone to be removed, and the bottom illustration is the end product. From *Small Stones for Hobby* by Tanaka Kouki (1967)



description of the stone and the material used to modify the stones, was given for each type listed in this appendix. Examples of other types of stones listed here included Kamuikotan, Akadama, Kifune and Hakkaisan. Kamuikotan stones were described as Schalstein, diabase and that wet sand paper #250 to #600 can be used on these stones. Akadama stones were identified as iron quartz and that they should be worked with a grinder first followed by wet sand paper from #200 to #1200. Sandpaper with a grit size of #200 to #600 is considered fine to super fine.

Saruta Masami dealt with the subject of how much working was acceptable; points of modifying and working stones; and practical methods of working

stones in his 1967 book, *How to Collect and Enjoy Suiseki*. He was opposed to modifying stones just to add value and to deceive others. Instead, he advocated that enhancing the beauty of stones should be accepted to a certain degree. Saruta illustrated how to suspend a stone in an acid bath to modify the surface of the stone. This is another indication that some *suiseki* were being produced by working the stone to varying degrees.

Further evidence that stones were being worked extensively, and not just on the bottom, is obtained from Tanaka Kouki's book, *Small Stones for Hobby: from Searching to Appreciation*, published in 1967. Tanaka believed that polishing and processing stones enhances and deepens the beauty that *suiseki* holds. He included a chapter in his book to illustrate the tools and materials used in modifying stones, as well as a series of simple line drawings showing how to alter a stone by removing portions to make it look more like a natural mountain stone. Tanaka shows how to make a lake in a mountain stone. Other line drawings show how to make other types of *suiseki*.

The concept of removing parts of a stone to improve its appearance was not limited to Tanaka's largely obscure book, but it was discussed by *suiseki* leader Murata Keiji in his book, *Encyclopedia of Suiseki Hobby* (1969). Murata wrote about the limits of "worked out" stones by saying, "yes to removing stone, but no to adding to the stone." This was, in effect, setting the limits to the level of working stones. Further evidence to support this concept is found in an essay in Matsuura and Yoshimura's well known classic work, *An Overview of Japanese Suiseki Masterpieces* (1988). In describing *suiseki*, the authors wrote "As a principle, no works are allowed. However, it has been said that removing is acceptable, but no adding."

Articles describing the different methods used in stone enhancement were being replaced with photographic essays of attractive stones. Published works in the last two decades are largely silent on the matter of enhancements except to briefly state that it was acceptable to alter the bottom of a stone. Matsuura's 2010 English language book, *An Introduction to Suiseki*, supported limited basal alterations. Matsuura emphasized and promoted Japanese *suiseki* as natural stones in his lectures in North America and Europe. Kasahara Manabu, former chairman of the Nippon Suiseki Association, also stated in his book, *Notes on Suiseki*, published in 2013, that altering the bottom of stones was acceptable.

Even though the emphasis today in the West is on natural stones, some worked stones are regularly displayed in major exhibitions in Japan. A carefully examination of the stones in each of the major displays will reveal several stones with bottom cuts. One example is a large Kamo River Mountain shaped stone which was included in the 1987 Taikan-ten and a photograph of it published in their display catalog for that year. Another example is the nearly perfect *suiseki*, a two-peaked Saji River stone, exhibited in the 3rd Japan Suiseki Exhibition in Tokyo in 2016.



The evidence that Japanese *suiseki* were enhanced by altering stones, especially stones from the Ibi, Abe, Sajigawa and other rivers, is overwhelming. Despite the fact that some Japanese *suiseki* enthusiasts did not support the modification of stones, numerous articles were published in books and newsletters showing how stones can be modified to appear more natural. The demand for attractive landscape stones was great during the 1960s and 1970s, the peak of the boom among hobbyists in stone appreciation in Japan. Many of these pieces were so well-made that serious collectors and even dealers could not tell the altered from the unaltered. The fact that no records were kept of each of the worked stones as they passed from stone carver to dealer to collector helped to obscure the origin of each stone. Thus, it is time to dispense with the myth that Japanese *suiseki* are all natural and recognize that a significant number of stones held in collections and shown in exhibitions have been worked to some degree. Our findings blur the distinction between rocks displayed as found objects and a sculpted rock that is treated as an art object. The lines between the collector and the artist evaporate in regards to Japanese *suiseki*. 🌲

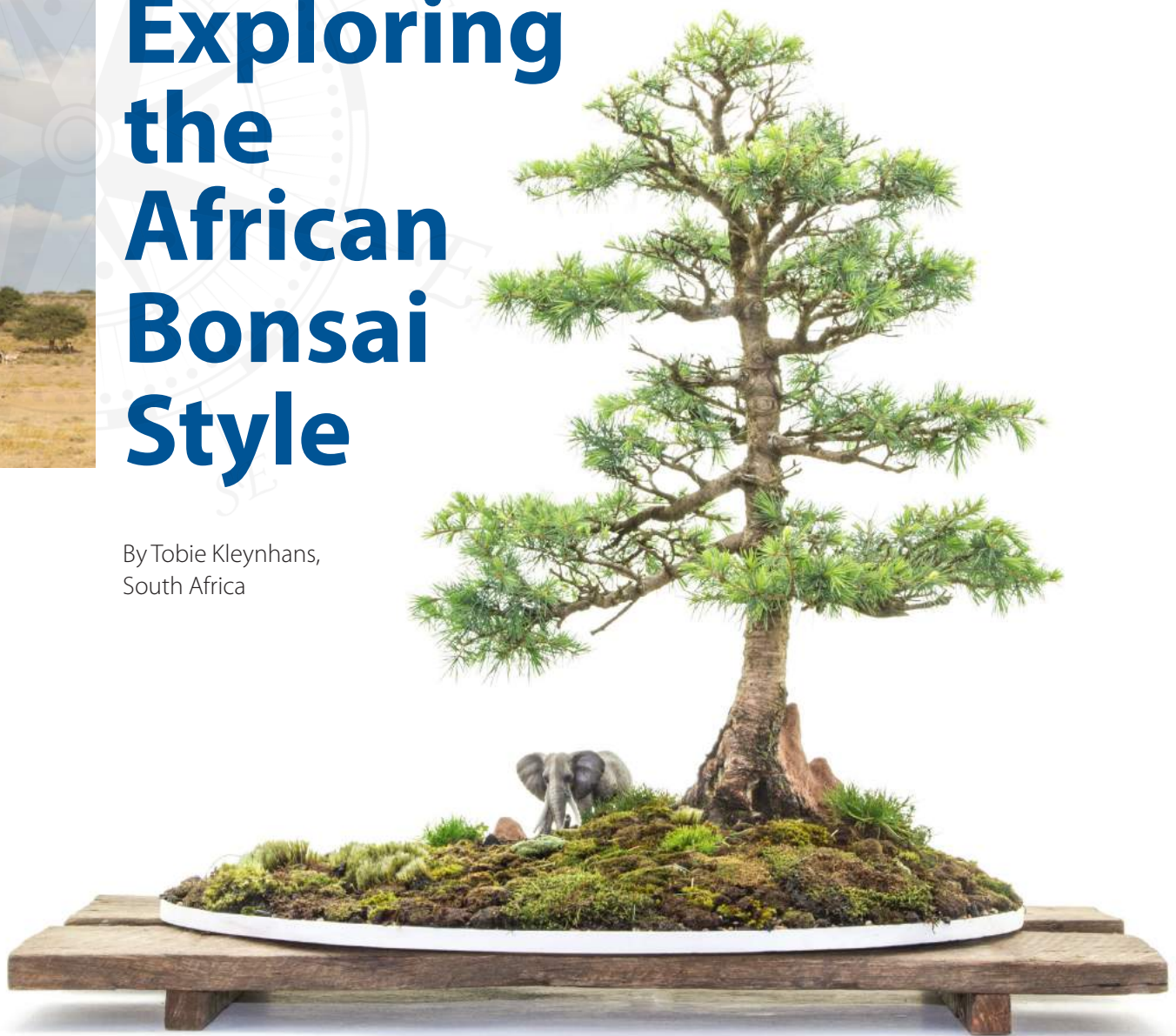
Top; The authenticity of this nearly perfect mountain shaped stone from the Kamo River was seriously questioned a year after it was purchased. It was sold as a natural stone with only slight work on the bottom; however, leading Japanese *suiseki* specialists said it was definitely "worked out." This is a very atypical shape for a natural stone from a fast flowing river.

Bottom; This Kamo River stone was displayed in the 1987 Taikan-ten in Kyoto and later published in the catalog for that exhibition. It is a beautiful island or mountain stone that was made by a single basal cut from a larger rock. This large stone was recognized as the best mountain *suiseki* in the World Bonsai Convention in Washington, D.C. in 2005.



Exploring the African Bonsai Style

By Tobie Kleynhans,
South Africa



The 90th Kokufu-ten bonsai exhibition was displayed in the Metropolitan Art museum from the 5th to the 8th and from the 10th to the 13th of February 2016 in Ueno Park, Tokyo.

The Kokufu-ten is the premier bonsai exhibition in Japan. The Nippon bonsai society celebrated their 90th exhibition by having a two part exhibition, replacing the trees after the first part with a new set of trees for the second part. More than 200 trees were on display during each part of the exhibition—and what a display it was!

It would take a lot more space to describe and analyze the Kokufu-ten exhibitions of 2016, but to summarize my first impressions:

The trees on display were of the highest quality. The immaculate refinement on each and every tree. The absence of any trace of human interference. The quality and suitability of the pots, display tables and accent plants.

The number of antique pots used.

Most trees conform to a unique classical Japanese Style.

Describing the classical Japanese bonsai style is difficult, but walking around the Kokufu-ten exhibitions, the inherent characteristics of this style became quite clear. In a recent article William N Valavanis, *International Bonsai*, 2015/No.1) reiterated the two bonsai styles described by the Japanese: classical and naturalistic.

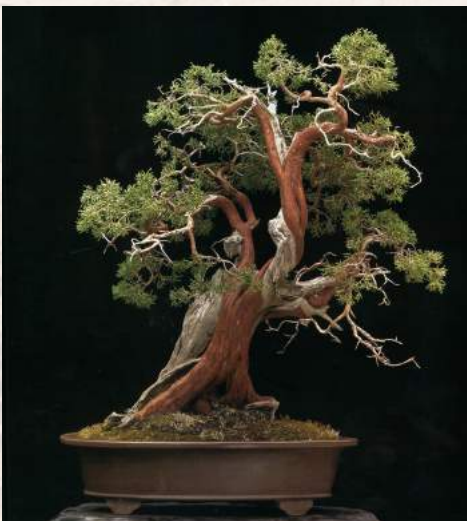
Classical bonsai is defined as idealized forms that have been highly refined and designed according to historical and well established styling norms.



Naturalistic bonsai depicts trees as miniatures of their larger counterparts that are trained to look exactly like trees in nature. It is also possible that a bonsai can have both classical and naturalistic features and still have outstanding qualities.

Above; Kokufu-ten Japan 2016

Below; Trees in the naturalistic style by Dan Robinson, from *Gnarly Branches, Ancient Trees*, by Will Hiltz.



An exciting development is the emerging of more and more regional styles as sub divisions of the naturalistic style. Indigenous plant material is shaped to represent the natural trees found in that particular region. The styling is also done according to their distinctive growth habits.

Is this the way forward? It certainly poses exciting new opportunities and challenges.

Art students hone their skills by studying the works of the great masters, i.e. Rembrandt, Picasso, Renoir, etc. It is also quite important that we understand, practice and apply the techniques used by bonsai masters to produce classical as well as naturalistic bonsai.

Should not bonsai artists from here on use these skills to develop their own regional style? Regional styles are becoming more and more recognizable, i.e. the styling of classical Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, Indonesian and African trees.

Some years ago, a friend asked me if we have a distinct bonsai style in Africa. A bonsai style that we can truly call "The African Style." A tree that is shaped in such a way that anybody that has been to Africa, or has seen photographs of typical African landscapes and trees, will immediately recognise the style as "African."

The answer to the above is both yes and no.



Typical tree forms found in Africa.



For the purpose of this discussion it is quite important to clearly distinguish between the concepts of form and style before we continue. Both the words *form* and *style* are used to describe the different shapes of bonsai and are mostly used as if they are synonyms. This can create some confusion and before one attempts to define an African style, the concepts of form and style must be defined.

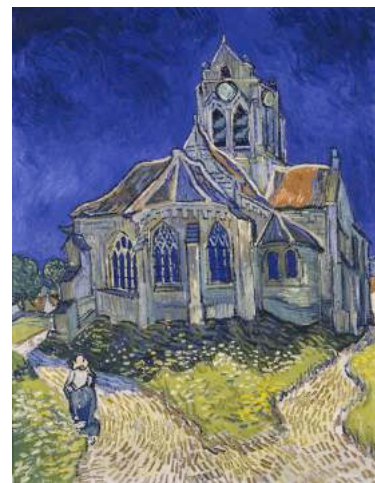
Form: (noun) can be defined as shape; a mould; a species or kind; a pattern or type; a way of being; a manner of arrangement; order; regularity; a prescribed set of rules, course of action; a schedule to be filled in with details; a specimen object for imitation; structural unity in music, literature, painting, art in general (including bonsai); the inherent nature of an object.

Style: (noun) refers to the distinctive manner or mode of expressing artistic concepts in writing, poetry, painting, sculpture, music, architecture and bonsai. The unique way or manner of expression peculiar to an artist, era, place or concept:

- era or timeframe (classic, neoclassic or modern)
- artistic interpretation (expressionistic or impressionistic)
- specific locality (Shanghai, Taiwan, Yangzhou, Indonesia, Africa)
- specific artists (Pierneef, Van Gogh, Salvador Dali, Kimura)
- futuristic interpretation (abstract)
- geographical interpretation (naturalistic or regional)



Above; The **form** is a house.



Right; The **form** is a church.

Both paintings clearly depict the **style** of the famous Vincent van Gogh.

SOME BONSAI STYLES

Abstract



Yangzhou



Impressionistic



Impressionistic



Expressionistic



Expressionistic



Naturalistic



Naturalistic



Classic



Modern



A painting of a landscape might include objects like the sky, mountains, water, trees, grasses and more. It will also contain the basics of foreground, mid-ground and background as well as artistic concepts like perspective, harmony, balance, etc. These elements make up the form of the landscape painting.

Landscape paintings by Van Gogh are completely different from the work of John Constable, Renoir or JH Pierneef. Each artist developed their own unique way of painting and although the medium (paint) and subject (landscape) are the same, the end results are very different.

Besides being different, their work has distinctive characteristics that make it recognizable. Their

manner of expression (style) is so unique that we can instantly distinguish between paintings by Van Gogh, Renoir, Constable or Pierneef.

A house, church or government building have distinctive and recognizable features because they are mostly built to fit a certain pattern, prescribed set of rules, structural unity or shape.

That is the form of the building and the form or shape of a building can clearly indicate the difference between a house, a church or cluster housing.

The style will be the distinctive mode of expression that can indicate an era or timeframe, locality or specific architect, i.e. Victorian, Tudor, or Baroque, etc.

Painting by Van Gogh,
Constable, Renoir and Pierneef.



Government building



Form: House

Style: Victorian



Form: Church

Style: Victorian



Cluster housing



Form: House

Style: Tudor



Form: Church

Style: Tudor

The form of the house on the left is a double storey in a very informal "do-it-yourself" style. It is clearly situated in a rural setting with wide open spaces around it. The area around the house seems very dry with sparse vegetation.

The house on the right is also a double storey form, but in a Victorian style. It is situated in an urban area with more temperate climatic conditions.

Both houses need some maintenance work!



Six shapes or forms have been described as African styles. They vary considerably as far as individual characteristics are concerned and actually only describe the typical growth habit of some African trees.

The Pierneef style is possibly the only exception as this bonsai style reflects the way the artist, JH Pierneef painted and sketched trees, especially the camel thorn, *Acacia erioloba*, in various locations in Africa.

Different tree species in other parts of the world naturally grow into similar shapes and forms as some African trees. These trees can certainly not be described as "African" just because they look similar.

A bonsai that is trained to represent a form or shape that commonly occurs in Africa can have enough distinctive characteristics to be classified into the African style, but a tree with a flat top does not necessarily represent the African style.

Characteristics of the African Style

With other art forms i.e. painting, architecture, etc. it is often difficult to describe a specific style. Most of the time we rely on instinctive pattern recognition to identify the specific style of the painting or building.

Salvador Dali, the surrealist painter, had a very specific style of painting that made his work unique and instantly recognizable, but still very difficult to describe. Words like funky, weird, way-out, dream like, fantastic, brilliant and more, will not bring a Dali image to mind. Once we have seen a couple of his paintings, we will be able to identify other paintings as his work by instinctive pattern recognition.

It is even easier to identify everyday objects by pattern recognition. Once we have seen an apple, you will just *know* that the object in front of you is an apple, not an orange, although it might be laborious to describe their characteristics in words.

A description of the African Style poses similar challenges, but there are a number of elements that collectively make this style recognizable.

Tree forms and other notable characteristics

The *Acacia*'s are probably the most representative tree shape in Africa. Their natural growth habit as well as Africa's inherent climatic conditions produced some typical forms. They often grow into a broom form with single or multiple trunks. The trunks are slender with slight movement.

Primary, secondary and tertiary branches grow predominantly upwards and outwards. The canopies are very informal with a rounded, umbrella or even flat silhouette. It is not unusual for the canopy of a tree to be wider than the total height of the tree. This growth habit provides shade to keep the roots cool during the very hot summer months. The wider canopy will also maximize the tree's ability to collect dew during the night or early morning mist.

They lack the pyramidal or scalene triangle form seen in cold climate or high altitude trees. The canopies have an open, rather informal, loosely arranged structure. Branching and ramification only start at half the tree's height and not at the traditional one third or one quarter mark. The total foliage mass often comprises



Top row, left; Flat top form in Yangzhou style.

Top row, right; Umbrella form tree at an old temple in China.

Second row, left; Brazilian Rain Tree by Erik Wigert, USA - African style.

Second row, right; Tree with Umbrella shaped foliage pads at an exhibition in China.



no more than a third of the total height of the tree. Most trunks have a lack of taper with a width to height ratio greater than 12:1 or even as much as 20:1.

J H Pierneef (1886- 1957) was a well-known South African artist. He painted and sketched many typical African landscapes and trees and it is interesting to note how he depicted the slender trunks, branch height, canopy shape and canopy size in relation to tree height. These relationships and ratios appear consistently in his work. He also portrayed the trees with a typical open, well refined and clearly visible branch structure.

Third row; The surrealist style of Salvador Dali is so unique that we identify his work by "instinctive pattern recognition."

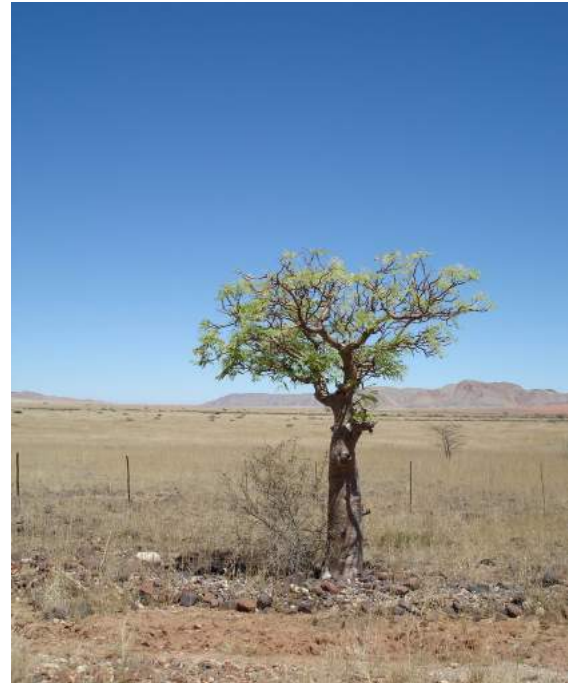
Bottom row; JH Pierneef also had such a unique style that we recognise his work by "instinctive pattern recognition."



Another iconic shape is that of the African baobab (*Adansonia digitata*). Extraordinary large trunks support a rather disorderly arrangement of primary and secondary branches. Primary and secondary branches mainly grow upwards, but will eventually be forced to curve gently downwards by their massive weight. Their size and shape is very dominant and dwarfs everything around them.

Open spaces: Trees in Africa grow in wide open areas. The landscapes portray these uninterrupted views of trees growing in vast open spaces. The trees and natural objects around them are simple and uncluttered.

Perspective: African trees are mostly seen from a distant perspective. Trees are portrayed with slender trunks, without severe taper. The canopies are open with clear areas of negative space. Deadwood detail is not very well defined and the nebari not prominent. The vastness of the plains, the lack of easy access and the possible presence of dangerous wild animals in and around the tree are responsible for this.



Top and Second row; African baobab

Middle left; Flat top form

Middle right and bottom row; Umbrella form





Deadwood: Deadwood is often present on African trees, but occurs mostly below the canopy. Damage by animals (usually elephant) or the lack of light, as well as droughts are the reason for this. Lightning strikes and uncontrolled veld fires leave characteristic markings or kill large sections on unfortunate trees. The color of the deadwood comes in different shades of grey and not the bleached white of high altitude conifers.

Top row; The wide open spaces of Namibia and Kgalagadi, where trees are mostly seen from a distant perspective.

Middle left; Close-up perspective

Middle right and bottom row; Typical deadwood features on African trees.





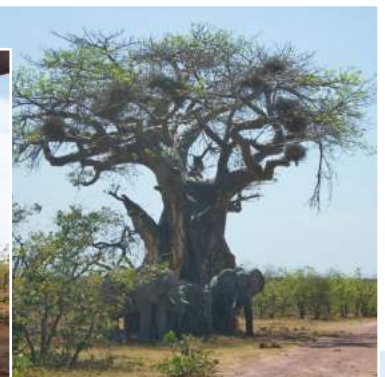
Top three photos; Typical African landscapes. Rocks play an important role in the composition of the African landscape and therefore also in depicting the African Style. Middle and bottom left; Bonsai with figurines.

Rocks: Rocks provide a micro climate and give the necessary protection at the early stages of a tree's development and therefore trees often grow over or in close proximity of them.

African rocks are eroded by extreme temperatures and wind, they mostly have a rough and rugged surface compared to rocks that are eroded by water or snow.

Figurines: African animals, miniature anthills, native huts, etc. can be used to emphasize the African theme, but make sure that the scale and proportions of the figurines fit perfectly with the scene. Stay minimalistic and if in doubt, choose to leave them out.

*Inset; Damage by elephants on a baobab.
Below; Caught in the act.*





Top left and right; Anthills often occur in association with African trees. Note the base of the bonsai on first page of this article.

A few examples of true African style trees exist, but we need many more to give true authenticity to the style.

The creation of a tree that shouts: "I am from Africa" needs a proper understanding of African tree forms, the different species, as well as the divergent landscapes and climatic conditions in Africa.

All this sounds like quite a difficult task, but what a privilege it is to accept such a challenge. 🌳

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Gnarly Branches, Ancient Trees by Will Hiltz.

International Bonsai Magazine, Bill Valavanis.

Internet, Wikipedia.

Die Rupert Kunststgting publication: Pierneef.

Robert Steven, Indonesia

Vietnamese Bonsai Society

Sandi Kleynhans, photographer

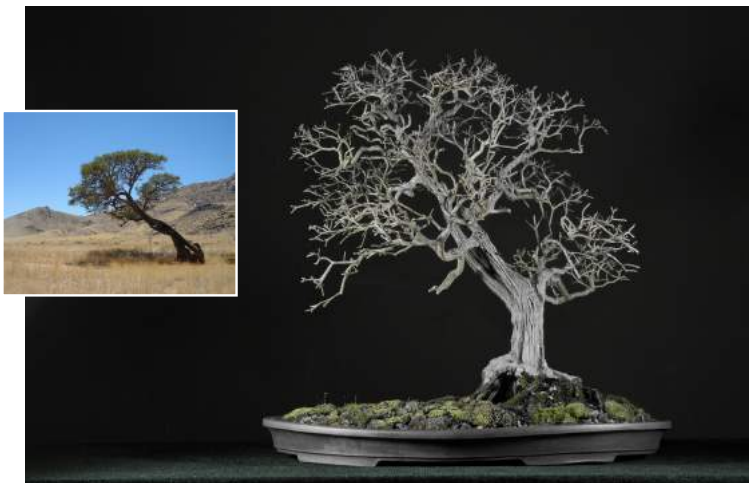


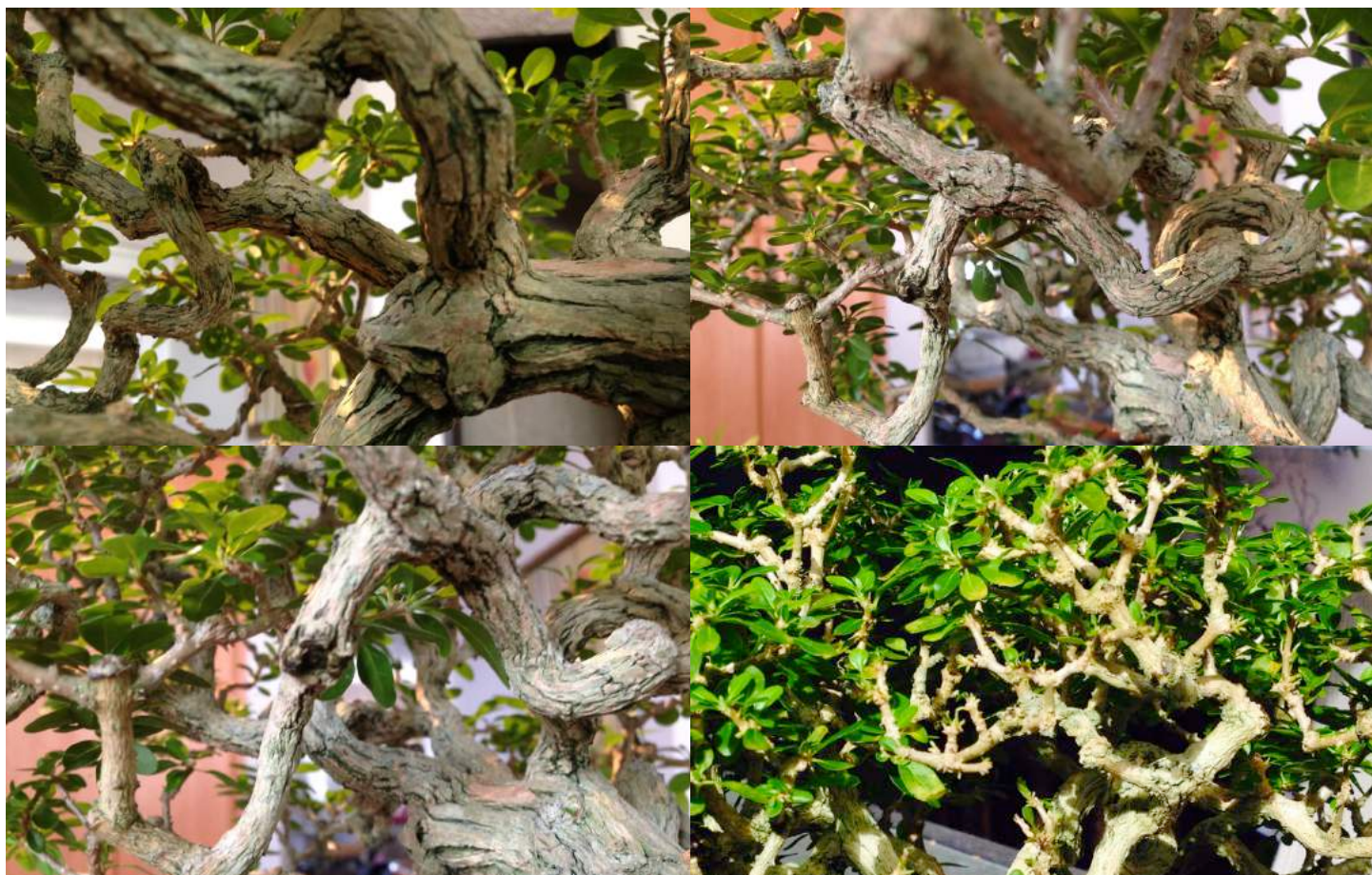
Above; Group planting by the late Theunis Roos has a distinctive African feel and can be classified as a Pierneef style.

Middle right; This bonsai by the late Louis Nel has the typical umbrella form, but has enough elements to qualify as a tree in the African style.



Middle left and bottom row; *Buddleja saligna* in the African style showing the inspiration from nature in the insets.





Techniques in Creating Tropical Bonsai: **Clerodendrum aculeatum**

By José Luis Rodríguez Macias, Puerto Rico

I recognized that the vast majority of technical knowledge used to train temperate trees in Japan was not suitable for our tropical species.

For those of us living in a tropical setting, we have often faced the misconception that tropical bonsai is only suitable as indoor bonsai. Also, many have marveled at the spectacular bonsai hailing from Asia and often wondered if such a level is possible or even plausible in our backyards. For a long time, the focus of attention and center of knowledge for an immense population of tropical bonsai enthusiasts was Japan and many of the techniques employed on temperate trees found their way to tropical material. Years ago and after first seeing the quality bonsai from Taiwan and Indonesia, I recognized that the vast majority of technical knowledge used to train temperate trees was not suitable for our local species. Furthermore, I was able to identify three pivotal characteristics, which I

consider to be the fundamentals on having world class material:

- Species selection
- Resistance to Pruning
- Leaf Character: Small, shiny, green, rounded and with a thick lamina

Immediately, I began to weed out certain plants that did not meet the aforementioned characteristics and kept those who met the criteria. Among the select individuals who made the cut was *Clerodendrum aculeatum* (Clerodendrum), a coastal species in the *Lamiaceae* family and a close relative to *Premna microphylla*. In Taiwan, there is also a species of *Clerodendrum* suitable for bonsai called Ku Lan Pan, *Clerodendrum inerme*, known as Pacar Laut in Indonesia and *Inerme* in the Philippines. The latter, is



more suitable for creating larger sized bonsai because of its larger leaves. As commonly manifested by its Asian Clerodendrum counterparts, specimens that come from coastal xerophytes and coral rock present thick-tiny leaves, rugged character and twisted shapes. On the contrary, underbrush Clerodendrum, who grow further inland as understory shrubby vines, display tuberous trunks, smoother bark and larger leaves with a thinner lamina.

For the purposes of this article, we'll focus on one specimen of coastal Clerodendrum which I collected from a rocky coastal outcrop in Puerto Rico a few years ago. A coastal dweller, Clerodendrum is characterized by twisting trunks and branches that sometimes trail along the rocks. This natural twisting character is to be considered when training this species, as training one with horizontal, pine-like branches will not be true to its nature. In order to clearly define the steps on how to develop a tree with proportional structures, techniques on cultivation, branch development and the use of different sizes of growing pots and sacrificial branches will be the main focus. As selection of display pots is the last step in bonsai creation and given the fact that it is highly subjective, for educational reasons, we will preclude this step in favor of describing structural techniques.

Development in Oversized Containers

Please take notice of the oversized container top left. On newly collected or young pre-bonsai material, the use of large pots offers the following benefits:

- Fast-speedy growth of trunks and branches
- Strong steady root development
- Overall-general health of the plant's vascular system
- Opportunity to develop sacrifice branches that will aid us in developing tapered structures and healing pruning scars, which detract value from the finished product.

Besides allowing the plant to grow freely, branches should be wired into place and the tree must be fed regularly to support its speedy growth. Once branches acquire the desired thickness, cut back and wire the new leaders into place as necessary. Please remember to watch out for wires and avoid wire scars.



Development in a Medium-Size Containers (part I)

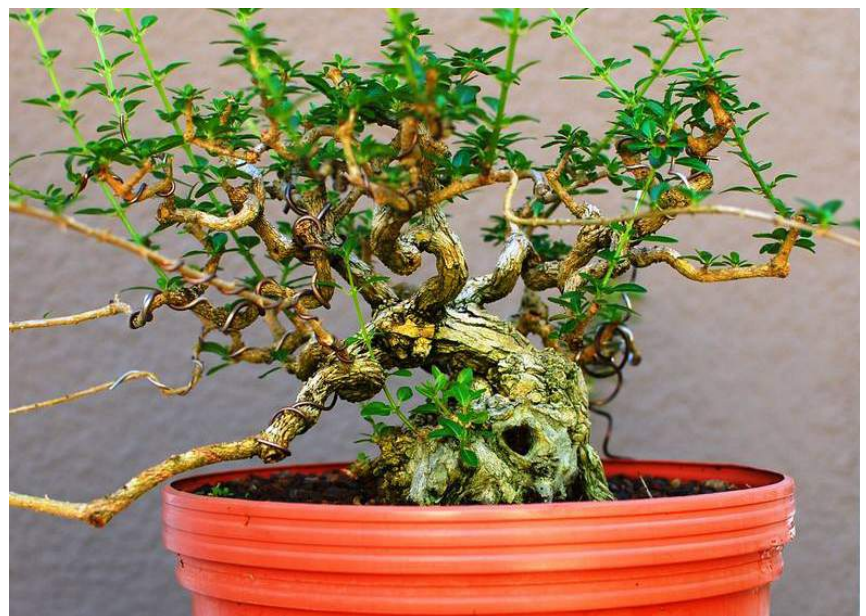
Before deciding to place trees in medium-size containers (top right), the overall projected profile and style of the tree must be at least 80% completed. Should some of the branches or roots need further thickness, it is advisable to continue its development in a larger container.

What advantages do medium size-containers offer?

- Because branch development and the overall growth of the tree reduces considerably, we have the opportunity to shape and develop secondary and tertiary branches.
- There is enough room to develop portions of the tree that require further girth.
- We begin to reduce the size of the root ball and take the gradual steps towards its placement in a final display pot.

Top left; On newly collected or young pre-bonsai material, the use of oversize pots offers many benefits, such as fast growth of trunks and branches.

Bottom right; Using a medium-size container is a two-part process that allows fine branch development, root reduction and natural taper.





Top left; The tree after several sacrificial limbs were removed. As you can see on top left, the tree has changed considerably and has acquired a branch structure that matches the aged character of the trunk.

Top right and middle right; Remove unsightly roots and promote a radially emerging root column, comprised of numerous fine roots.

Bottom left and inset; The tree was then defoliated in summer and rapeseed fertilizer was added once the tree started to bud.

Medium-Size Pot Development (part II)

As you can see on bottom right of previous page, the growth has reduced somewhat and the main branches have not grown out as they did before. Since the container is large enough, the lower left branch was allowed to lengthen, as it needs to achieve greater diameter. Some additional advantages of medium-size container cultivation are:

- Presents opportunity for a gradual branch structure development
- Allows a progressive growth cycle that will translate into accurate taper on trunks and branches.

The Use of Sacrifice Branches

Sacrifice branches are the key to achieve taper in bonsai structures. Although the subject of this article is a Clerodendrum, the basics we present here are suitable to all deciduous, broadleaf evergreen and tropical species. On thing is certain, sacrifice branch removal, by itself, will not produce the desired results. A combination of Clip and Grow Techniques, combined with bud/leader selection and wiring will enable bonsai growers to guide our plants into the desired shape. Also, proper sealing of all open cuts with specialized orange cut paste is indispensable. Any open wounds might compromise the tree's vascular system. Natural



Because roots require equal attention as all other elements in bonsai cultivation, a well tapered and "ramified" root system is a desirable asset in the creation process.

shari in Clerodendrum is hard, but new wood is naturally soft and susceptible to rot. We want those cuts to heal as fast as possible.

Top left is an image of the tree after several sacrificial limbs were removed. The tree has changed considerably and has acquired a branch structure that matches the aged character of the trunk. However, I am still not satisfied with the appearance of the lower left branch, as it needs to be thicker. Furthermore, the number of twigs has to be increased, as this too is an important characteristic of bonsai quality and representation of age.

Root and Twig Development

Roots: As stated before, the transfer of the tree to different container sizes throughout its journey of creation is a pivotal step in preparing the tree for a future bonsai pot. Because roots require equal attention as all other elements in bonsai cultivation, a well tapered and "ramified" root system is a desirable asset in the creation process. Whenever we conduct repotting, it is advisable to remove unsightly roots and promote a radially emerging root column, comprised of numerous fine roots:

These multiple fibrous roots will transport tons of nutrients to our bonsai; a guarantee of health and sustainability. Whenever possible, remove any downward growing roots and promote those spreading outwards, in a radial fashion.





Top left, right and middle left; After cutback, the fertilizer cakes were removed and the tree was once again defoliated to promote a second flush of summer growth.

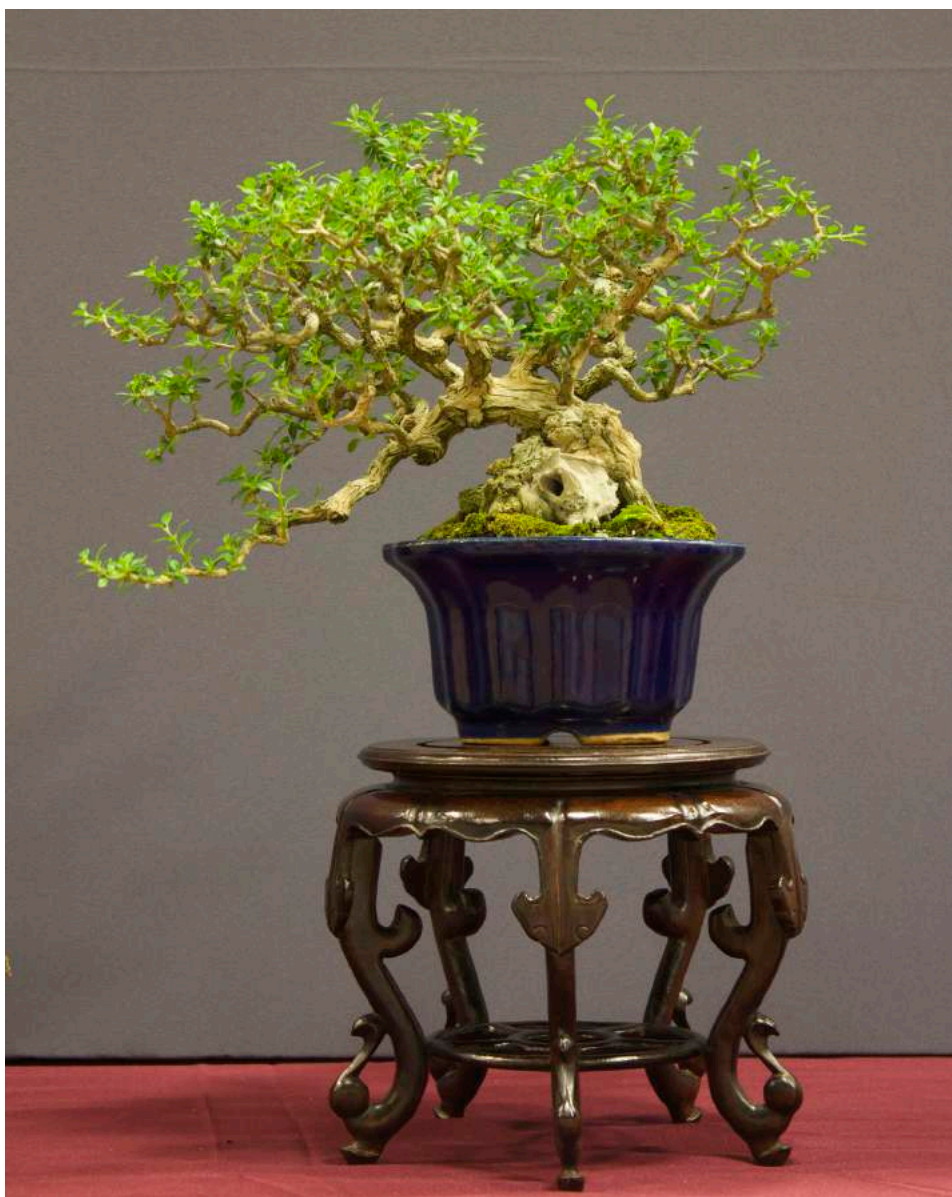


Twigs: Raising the number of twigs requires patience, timing, proper bud selection and attention to detail. Clerodendrums are vigorous growers, but branches are quite slow to thicken. Cultivation of the primary and secondary branch structures requires patience. Luckily and once the threshold of the main stems is completed, fine twig development is a bit easier. In sum, the tree is repeatedly pruned to promote bifurcation of the branch ends. In Clerodendrum, before the new leaves and stems harden, it is possible to pinch away the tender branch ends and force the tree to produce a second set of buds. By repeating the process over and over, we are able to progressively increase the number of twigs.

The tree was then defoliated in summer and rape-seed fertilizer was added once the tree started to bud. Before the twigs hardened off, the tree was pruned repeatedly to augment the number of twigs.

After cutback, the fertilizer cakes were removed and the tree was once again defoliated to promote a second flush of summer growth.

The bottom left branch of this Clerodendrum still requires attention. As the journey in bonsai creation comprises patience and hopes for the future, I am looking forward to the changes and challenges this tree will bring about. 🌳



In Clerodendrum, before the new leaves and stems harden, it is possible to pinch away the tender branch ends and force the tree to produce a second set of buds. By repeating the process over and over, we are able to progressively increase the number of twigs.

The tree is in an antique Chinese container and the stand is an antique Japanese stand, hand made out of Karin (quince) wood. I chose this pot because old trees should be in old pots that match their character.

Stone Paradise

Suiseki from Batang Ombilin River

By Budi Sulisty, Indonesia and Jose Luis Rodriguez, Puerto Rico

Photos by Budi Sulisty



Budi Sulisty at the Ombilin River's edge looking for stones.

Visually distinct from Javanese stones, Sumatra has a rich source of shapes and hard materials that lends itself as world class suiseki.

Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world, with over 17,000 islands spread along the equator between the Asian and Australian continents. Heavy rainfall, for up to four- to six-months-a-year, gives way to many lakes and rivers. There are countless areas for suiseki hunting, starting from the most populated island of Java, where the most famous sand stones presenting scenic shapes were collected by pioneer suiseki practitioners in the mid '80s, to the western provinces, where a rich biodiversity of ecological and geological factors gave way to an enormous source of quality stones. In 1991, with the celebration of the First Asia Pacific Bonsai and Suiseki Exhibition in Bali, which included a large suiseki exhibit with a great number of examples, people were encouraged to search for stones throughout the Indonesian Archipelago. The Bali ASPAC in 1991 was the driving force that provided the incentive needed to enrich the diversity of shapes, surface quality/patina and materials in Indonesian Suiseki Art.

Among the regions which provided a turning point in stone quality, were the stones from Sumatra, an island in the western part of Indonesia known for its gold, coal and tin deposits. Visually distinct from Javanese stones, Sumatra delivered a rich source of shapes and hard materials that lent itself as world class suiseki. In Batang Ombilin, a river fed by water from the Singkarak Lake located in West Sumatra, people

"Gateway to Heaven," a nice and dynamic stone with an opening. 33 x 23 x 31 cm



A classic shape of a mountain sloping down to a lake on the left. 34 x 21 x 14 cm



"Mt. Merapi" as the shape is similar to Mt. Merapi in West Sumatra. 47 x 26 x 13 cm

A long mountain range with fluid shape and smooth patina. 50 x 23 x 16 cm





An object stone resembling an elephant. 31 x 18 x 23 cm



Another stone resembling an elephant. 26 x 19 x 25 cm



A nice black stone gate stone with smooth surface and nice patina. 18 x 12 x 17 cm



A unique hut stone that has a door and a window. Something very interesting. 21 x 13 x 17 cm



A dry stream flows between two mounts. 22 x 16 x 24 cm



A pool with high mount on the left and some rivers on the right. 24 x 16 x 8 cm



A twin mountain with nicely proportioned big and small peaks. 35 x 22 x 15 cm



A tunnel stone with a very nice balance on the stand. 51 x 34 x 18 cm



The beautiful smooth shape of this stone resembles a perfect mountain shape. 54 x 40 x 17 cm



A boat stone with a sail creates a unique impression. 23 x 11 x 15 cm



found beautiful black stones which are very hard and have incredibly beautiful shapes. Right around the year 1992 was the time when these jet black stones started appearing in the collections of local suiseki lovers. Interestingly, Korean stone lovers became aware of their quality as well, manifesting this by saying that, in terms of color, hardness and shapes, they are similar to the first class stones from Korea, where such types of stones were no longer available. This prompted an intensive demand by Korean stone lovers which regularly looked for stones from Ombilin. Besides Koreans, some Malaysian stone lovers are also fond of Ombilin stones. Very hard, with dark color variations from dark brown to grey and totally black, Batang Ombilin stones are considered world class suiseki. As a welcome plus, most stones present wonderful, natural and smooth patina, representing the serene quality that is particular to classical stone art.

As stated before, the diverse shapes of these stones are infinite. We can find landscape stones in the shape of mountains, mountain ranges, lakes, hut stones, animals, and a combination of mountains and lakes which has become a signature representation of Indonesian Suiseki. Pool stones with some varieties, boats, tunnels, gates and waterfalls can be found. Object stones, human forms, turtles, elephants, Monks, religious motifs like Buddha and the Madonna are also prevalent. In fact, pattern stones are also available, so it is safe to say that Batang Ombilin stones are probably the best of Indonesian stones for suiseki. 🏞️

A unique shaped stone that has a high peak, a mountain and a lake. 40 x 27 x 19 cm

"Min Shan" (Min's Mountain), A distinctive stone showing a high land with two lakes. 43 x 25 x 13 cm





Top left; Another unique stone showing two pools on a high land. 42 x 23 x 13 cm

Top right; Twin mountain with very nice finish and patina. 32 x 17 x 12 cm

A boat stone, dark brown in color. 33 x 9 x 7 cm

An object stone showing two fighting figures. 25 x 20 x 29 cm



Creating Ficus Bonsai Trunk and Branch Fusing Method

By Angel "Ogi" Uyehara, Philippines, and
José Luis Rodríguez Macías, Puerto Rico

Ficus or *Balete*, as it is commonly referred to in the Philippines, has always been a favorite material to train as bonsai for its resilience, strength and willingness to grow. For years, Filipino bonsai artists have trained several varieties of ficus as bonsai and, at one point, it was one of the most common materials prevalent in collections. After years of growing ficus and other species as bonsai, in 2008, I was fortunate to attend the National Bonsai Association of Taiwan (NBAT) annual exhibition and competition; The Hwa Fong. marveling at the fabulous trees in the exhibit, I noticed the uncanny character, appearance of age and flawless training of their Ficus Microcarpa Bonsai. While in Taiwan, I managed to visit some nurseries where I witnessed ficus bonsai being worked on, at various stages of training. Some of them were available for purchase, but, restricted finances at that time did not allow me to take one of these marvelous materials home. Sad to admit, but my pocket was limited! After gathering my thoughts, I dedicated myself to carefully observe the trees, study them and, as my Chinese speaking ability in very limited, try to decipher how these trees were trained.

After returning to Manila, the image of these marvelous ficus bonsai stuck in my mind. As I always strive to better myself and push the limits of my technical capabilities, I saw this as an opportunity to learn and create my own trees. You might say, this was the beginning of my Ficus journey. Fortunately and at that time, I had the presence of mind to document the process of creation, for my own benefit and to assist future bonsaists in their own creation process; as an educational tool.

Facing page; The inspiration for this article and the way Taiwanese bonsai artist style Ficus bonsai is the famous tree on the National Cheng Kung University campus, the *Ficus microcarpa* that started it all.

Top left; The process started with a few stock *Ficus microcarpa*, var. 'kimen', binding them with wire and growing them as one unit. The group of trees on the right are added or fused to the group on the left to create a new fused group with stronger taper.



Top right; Time to remove some branches and plant another tree to the upper portion of the stock. This solves the tree's lack of taper and adds some character to the composition by fusing roots to the understock.



The Creation Process:

In the beginning, I had only my observations from my Taiwan trip, some internet pictures of magnificent Taiwanese ficus, and pictures of trees by Master Lo Min Hsuan to go by. In sum, the creation process was quite solitary, based on observation, combined with trial and error. As you know, ficus is a strong species, capable of fusing trunks and branches. I embarked on the task of gathering a few stock *Ficus microcarpa*, var. 'kimen', arrange them accordingly, binding them with wire and growing them out as one unit.

The first year of creation was slow and was mainly focused on observation. After the initial year, I noticed that the plants had indeed fused together. Unfortunately, the resulting lack of taper was ages away from my desired results. On a horticultural note, the unexpected outcome is a product of ficus' natural growing conditions, as lower branches are much stronger than upper limbs. This fact served as a constant reminder throughout the creation process, as my projected result was to achieve a strong looking tree with good taper. Not giving up, I decided it was time to remove some branches and plant another tree to the upper portion of the stock. By doing this, I could solve the tree's lack of taper and add some character to the composition with the aid of fusing roots to the understock. Remember, always fit the tree tightly and combine and arrange the roots to a skintight fit. To encourage growth, an extension to the original pot was added and additional coarse sand was placed to speed up the process.



Middle left; The fused trees to be added to the top of the larger group of fused trees.

Middle right; The two fused groups are now one group.

Bottom; Remember, always fit the tree tightly and combine and arrange the roots to a skintight fit. To encourage growth, an extension to the original pot was added and additional coarse sand was placed to speed up the process.

Top left; March 2011, the pot extension is removed to reveal a much better structure.

Top right; After wiring.

Middle, upper left; June 2013 after the tree has grown for 2 years in a larger pot with extension around the tree's base.

Middle, upper right; Two months later the tree has been pruned.

Bottom three photos; A year later the tree is pruned, wired and placed in a smaller container. The overall shape and taper is coming along nicely.



After a year, the pot extension was removed and a better proportioned structure was revealed. This was indeed a happy moment, as the initial lack of taper was on its way to being solved. Taking advantage of the opportunity, I arranged the general profile of the tree, placing branches into position and arranging roots closer to the body of the tree. Terminal buds of branches that needed to grow further were left intact. The tree was left to grow freely, carefully monitoring growth. After two seasons, the overall health of the tree was balanced, the combined trees grew perfectly as a unit and it was time to arrange the profile once again. To this point, because the roots had already merged into one, the pot extension was removed. After removing it, a strong-butressed trunk, reminiscent of life size



Top and middle row, left to right; January 2014 to February 2015. Roots are arranged and tightly wired, the tree is again grown in a large container but still within its smaller container, and the branches are pruned and wired to the profile typical to the Taiwanese Ficus that inspired this project.

Bottom right; January 2016. Work continues with additional small stock added to key locations to improve the structure and an extension added to thicken the base and the roots.

figus was revealed. As some branches needed further refinement and a few areas of the trunk required a bit of character, this was the time to arrange the profile once again and attach a few more small trees to the middle-left portion of the tree. The new trees aided in the perfection of the root structure and overall taper.

and mistakes; correct them from the beginning. Learn as you go and always remember, Patience and Effort are always rewarded. 🌱

Author's observations and Conclusion:

This tree, the object of this article, is a work in progress. One of the advantages of this fusing method is creating a good base, trunk and overall branch structure in a relatively short period of time. If you combine careful observation, attention to detail and optimal growing conditions, you can draw a detailed plan, with satisfying results. The key to success is studying the characteristics of a ficus, in this case Kimen, paying particular attention to the weaknesses and strong traits of the tree. My advice is to try to gather as much information from the masters, specifically from Taiwanese masters and observe good pictures of Taiwanese bonsai. Try to use observation as a means of deciphering the methods of the masters. Combining observation with time and the Lingnan Grow and Clip method, you are able to create natural structures that mimic our nature giants. During the process of creation, honestly, I was not fully convinced that I was employing the right technique. One thing is certain, I knew time was a key ingredient and I opted not to fast-track this method. Trunk and branch fusing is a long process; it takes time. Learn to recognize flaws



Can You Say Székesfehérvár?

European Bonsai & Suiseki Convention 2016 in Hungary



Photos and Text
by Gudrun Benz,
Germany

The name of the venue of this year's European convention is nearly inexpressible for non-native speakers and in addition is quasi unknown in western European countries. Nevertheless Székesfehérvár (see-kesh-fay-here-far), located in central Hungary and capital in the Middle Ages, is one of the largest cities of the country with a population of about 100 000 inhabitants. It has a great history as a royal seat, crown city and historical capital with the ruins of a coronation church where 36 kings were crowned. In medieval Hungary, only kings who had the crown of St. Stephan placed on his head by the archbishop of Székesfehérvár, were recognized as legitimate rulers.

The medieval, baroque, rococo architectural relics give evidence of the history. The renovated inner city with its main street—a pedestrian street—invite visitors to stroll along, to have a cup of coffee, beer or wine and to enjoy some sweets or a tasty dish of traditional Hungarian cuisine.

The convention took place from 20th to 22nd May. The opening ceremony on Friday evening began with taiko drummers and was followed by speeches of the city mayor and the presidents of the European Bonsai Association, the European Suiseki Association and the Hungarian Bonsai Association. On Saturday the European New Talent Contest (NTC), bonsai demonstrations and a Suiseki lecture were conducted. Thirteen candidates of the national winners participated in the European contest. The winner of the European contest was Dan Snipes from the Netherlands. The second place went to Rene Sukar from Austria, and the third to Andrea Junger from Germany.

In total there were shown 97 bonsai in the exhibition, from that 65 trees of EBA countries. Bonsai from Hungarian bonsai clubs were exhibited in a separate room.



Top; Main square with bishop's palace and orb (Reichsapfel) as well as St. Hans von Nepomuki church in the distance.

Inset; The vendor area offering bonsai-related items. Photo by Antli István.

Right inset and bottom; Views into the exhibition. The exhibition was well attended. Each exhibit was lit by two overhead lights.

Top right; The Award of Taiwan Bonsai Association was presented to a *Crataegus monogyna*, a yamadori in han-kengai style of Tirpak Balint. Pot: Japan. Photo by Antli István.

Top left; *Juniperus chinensis* in bunjin style

Middle right; EBA Merit Award: to a *Pyrus Communis* of Racz Gyorgy. The yamadori was shaped in Moyogi style. Pot: China

Bottom left; *Olea europea*, a yamadori from Mallorca island in bunjing style of Walter Schreiner from Austria

Bottom right; EBA Merit Award: to a *Acer buergerianum* over rock of Mario Pedrazetti.





Top left; An EBA Merit Award went to a *Pinus sylvestris*, Yamadori of Mr. Josef Valuch

Top right; *Sequoia sempervirens*

Middle left; A.I.A.S. President's Award Granted to the Most Deserving and Amazing Suiseki of the XXXII. EBA & ESA Annual Convention & Exhibition 2016" was presented to a Chinese waterpool stone of Mr. Michal Sebo, Slovakia by Vito Di Venere.

Middle right; *Pinus sylvestris*, a yamadori of Milan Karpisek.

Bottom left; EBA Merit Award: to a shohin display of René Lempel.

Bottom right; "Quasimodo," human-shaped stone from Thailand, collection Ella Gornerová, Slovakia .



Indigenous trees dominated, among them any broad-leaved trees.

The Suiseki were set-up at a room on the ground floor, bonsai in a hall on the first floor. Whereas bonsai came out very nicely on a blue table top cloth and before a light-colored backdrop, there wasn't a special background set up for Suiseki so the view on the stones in the middle rows of the room wasn't optimal. The walls were interrupted by niches, windows and doors so only a few scrolls could be added to the arrangements. 35 suiseki were exhibited in total, most came from Slovakia (18), 6 from Czech Republic and the others from Austria, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. As usually the bonsai show attracted more visitors than the Suiseki exhibition. Nevertheless both exhibitions were well attended.

Awards were presented before the gala diner on Saturday evening. EBA Merit Awards for outstanding bonsai in the exhibition were presented to a *Pinus sylvestris* of Josef Valuch, to a Trident Maple (*Acer buergerianum tridium*) in a root-over rock style of Marion Padrazetti, to a Shohin display of Rene Lempel, and to a bonsai of Racz Gyorgy in the Hungarian exhibition. The ESA Suiseki Award was presented to "Quasimodo," a human-shaped stone, of Mrs. Ella Gornerová from Slovakia, the ESA President Award to a mountain stone of Sarka Cermakova from Czech Republic.

The BCI Excellence Award went to an outstanding *Thymus vulgaris* of Barbara & Herbert Obermayer from Germany, the BCI Excellence Award for an outstanding Suiseki to three stones on a stand of Mrs. Martina Vylhidalová from Slovakia.

The European Bonsai & Suiseki Convention was a joint venture together with the Japanese-Hungarian festival. An Origami workshop, a Kimono show, tea ceremony and performances of Hungarian Kendo club were performed in Hiemer House, a historical building besides the Szent István Centre where bonsai and Suiseki activities were held. In addition, the Chocolate festival with lots of house-shaped market stalls was held at the main square (marketplace) of the city before the episcopate palace and the city hall at Saturday and Sunday.

In summary, the event was well organized and attractive for all participants. 🌳



Top left; Mountain stone of Igor Bárta, origin: Czech Republic.

Top right; *Juniperus chinensis*, a yamadori from Slovakia in Moyogi style of Milan Roskos (Slovakia), pot: Yixing

Middle; A BCI Award of Excellence for Suiseki was presented to Mrs. Martina Vylhidalová, Slovakia for her stand with a display of three beautiful Suiseki.

Bottom right; BCI Award of Excellence for an outstanding bonsai was presented to a *Thymus vulgaris* in bunjing style, a yamadori found in Italy of Barbara and Herbert Obermayer. The bonsai was shaped by Andrea Meloni. Pot: Andrea Meloni.



THE MYSTERIOUS FOREST

Creating a High Mountain Style Group Planting





By Min Hsuan Lo, Taiwan, and José L. Rodríguez Macias, Puerto Rico
Photos courtesy Min Hsuan Lo



Facing page, top; In 2004 Master Kuo Sze Ern (Ernie Kuo) took me to see the Great Basin Bristlecone Pine (*Pinus longaeva*) in California, an experience that influenced my understanding of the High Mountain Style.

Facing page, bottom insets and top of this page; Taroko National Park, Jade Mountain and Hehuan Mountain are fountains of inspiration to Taiwanese bonsai artists and the subject of this article.

Previous articles have addressed Taroko National Park, Jade Mountain and Hehuan Mountain as fountains of inspiration to Taiwanese bonsai artists. Originally established in December 12, 1937 and known as Tsugitaka-Taroko National Park, the park was reestablished as one of Formosa's nine national parks on November 28, 1986, along with Yushan National Park (1985) and as part of the National Park Law of the ROC.

Taiwanese high mountain junipers (*Juniperus squamata*) are the result of a permanent battle between life and death. Perhaps, judging by their crooked forms, they encompass the complementary and interdependent nature of opposites. As they struggle to grow, wind, snow, avalanches, rain, temperature and other natural phenomena exert force and shape them. One might say that without these elements, there would be no Taiwanese high mountain junipers and without the junipers, holding firmly onto the ground, there would be no Taiwanese alpine environment! Such is the essence that gives way to inspiration and the subject of this article.

Nature has always played an important role in my bonsai journey. For example, in the year 2004, I had the privilege of being a guest demonstrator at the California Golden State Bonsai Convention. As part of my leisure activities, Master Kuo Sze Ern (Ernie Kuo) took me to see the Great Basin Bristlecone Pine (*Pinus longaeva*). Although not entirely similar, the constant struggle and will of these pines to survive in subalpine forests present similar forms and environmental characteristics which remind me of my Taiwanese high mountain junipers. The colossal bristlecones, particularly those that thrive at high altitudes, have a magnificent, gnarly appearance. As they grow and play against the forces of nature, their vascular system suffers, exposing the relics of life and death, expressed in the dance of living tissue and shari. This essence of nature, these wild forms



and uncanny disposition to win the battle against the elements have always been the source of inspiration in my creation process. With this in mind, the puzzle of how to humbly recreate my version of the Mysterious Forest began.

The Material

Back in 2010, my good friend Mr. Ken Chen, brought me eight *Juniperus chinensis* trees, container-grown by his uncle for more than twenty five years, previously ground trained for an additional twenty years. At first glance, the material was a bit weak, as manifested by juvenile form foliage and uneven overall growth. Upon further inspection, I realized that the trees had not been transplanted in a long time and were unable to absorb nutrients properly. Visually, the material had sinuous trunks, pleasing interplay between live and dead portions and had a wild quality that lent itself to represent what I had in mind: the image of Taiwanese high mountain junipers. Furthermore, some of the trees had drooping branches that trailed close to the ground, a constant characteristic present in the high altitude alpine forest.

Top left and middle; The material for this forest was ground-trained for twenty years, then container-grown for more than twenty five years. The juvenile form foliage and uneven overall growth are a sign that the trees have not been transplanted in a long time.



Middle row; Some of the trees had drooping branches that trailed close to the ground, a constant characteristic present in the high altitude alpine forest.

Bottom; After improving their general health, five of the original eight trees brought to me by Mr. Chen were finally selected in 2011 as the material to be incorporated into the Mysterious Forest





The Container

The use of a traditional container, be it an oval or a rectangle, in my opinion, depreciates the image I wanted to portray. In my mind, the untamed natural appearance of a group of trees growing in high altitudes would be better manifested with the use of a stoneware slab. As such, and taking advantage of the recuperation period of the trees, I ordered an irregular shaped stoneware slab of Chinese origin as the foundation of the group planting.

Preparing the container is of outmost importance. First of all, drainage holes have to be set, cautiously, considering the final image, placement of the material and design. Drainage netting is also necessary, as we want to protect the soil from washing away, and prevent the ingress of insects to the root ball. Equally important, anchor wires have to be employed to fasten and secure the trees appropriately, using rubber or plastic material in the fastening points to avoid damage to the tree roots and cambium. On a side note and in order to properly identify the anchor wire ends, we recommend the use of different colored tape. This will save us time, assist us in identifying the correct wire and will clearly make the process easier. Remember, time is an essential ingredient in the creation process, but we should also have fun and enjoy the journey.



Top five photos; The untamed natural appearance of a group of trees growing in high altitudes would be better manifested with the use of a stoneware slab. Drainage screens and color-coded anchor wires complete the preparation of the slab.

Bottom; Setting the main tree commands the overall image and placement of the remaining elements.

The Initial Arrangement

Below; Because some of the planting angles were a bit extreme, as commonly seen in nature, the use of guy wires was crucial to keep the plants situated.

In the year 2011 and after improving their general health, five of the original eight trees brought to me by Mr. Chen were finally selected as the material to be incorporated within the group setting. As often is the case, the trees needed initial preparation to be able to enter the realm of the creation. In sum, unnecessary branches were eliminated, weak/immature growth was cut, bark and deadwood were carefully cleaned and the roots were trimmed accordingly.

Setting the main tree is often a challenge, as it regularly commands the overall image and placement of the remaining elements. Always having the natural images of high mountain junipers present, I chose an uneven, off-center location for the principal tree. As I set the tree into place, the wild character of my mountain travels came to mind, suddenly remembering that nature has no presets. Wild junipers come and go, twist and turn and have no regular rules. Like its natural counterparts, the main tree flows to the left, sometimes to the right, yielding a little, rising slowly to the sky. Other characteristics and particularities that came to mind were drooping branches and low trailing limbs. In my opinion these are essential traits of the wild alpine forests; elements that compulsorily had to be integrated within the creation. After two and a half hours of interplay between my mind, the material and the images of the wild trees, the final placement and the beginning of the trees as a group came to be. Because some of the chosen planting angles were a bit extreme, as commonly seen in nature, the use of guy wires was crucial to keep the plants situated. Once the location of the trees was concluded, the forest was allowed to rest, resuming fertilization once the trees anchored themselves and growth of the overall composition recommenced.





Growth and Refinement

By nature bonsai is comprised of living entities and is always changing. Unlike the traditional plastic arts, a bonsai is never actually completed. They always grow. Do remember, this is not necessarily a bad feature, as apparent growth and exuberant foliage are often synonymous of health, predominantly in works in progress that need additional development to reach adequate proportions. Such was the case of our forest.



As I always find an opportunity to teach my students about specific and general aspects of bonsai cultivation, I decided that it was the time to make the refinement process of our Mysterious Forest a group effort. Before my students came into play, minor adjustments were made to a few branches since the original setting was arranged, but, in general terms, the group was left to rest. This break period allowed the development of a unified root structure that permitted my pupils to remove anchor and guy wires. During the almost five and a half years that passed between the original arrangement and this refinement session, a substantial amount of old bark, lichen and dirt accumulated in every tree. Using the proper protective gloves and with the aid of a sharp knife given to me by my good friend Wu Hsiao Feng (Bonsai Wu) of Argentina, we carefully removed the plaques of old bark to reveal the reddish bronze hue that is so highly prized in juniper bonsai. Comparison between the dirty and clean bark versions of the pictorial images resonate in a fresh, lively and vigorous picture that should be a constant in all aspects of bonsai creation.

Top right; It was the time to make the refinement process of our Mysterious Forest a group effort and provide my students with some hands-on experience.

Top left; A substantial amount of old bark, lichen and dirt accumulated on every tree.

Middle and bottom: We carefully removed the plaques of old bark to reveal the reddish bronze hue that is so highly prized in juniper bonsai.

Following page; Three views of the Mysterious Forest.





Concluding Thoughts

Images of untamed, wild nature travel with us for the rest of our lives. Back when I was a university student, almost forty (40) years ago, I had such an opportunity. While visiting DaXue Shan (Great Snow Mountain) with a group of classmates, I had my first encounter with Taiwanese High Mountain Junipers. Humbled by their strong appearance, the feeling of *qi* (氣) and how that life force reminds us of how insignificant we are when compared to the natural environment overwhelmed my sense of self. My life as a bonsai artist would never be the same. To this day and after many years of study, that first meeting with the mountain, that fresh mountain air and that initial impression of the mighty junipers has constantly resonated within my thoughts and creative endeavors. The arrangement featured in this article is inspired by alpine forms and is an opportunity to create a new stage in juniper bonsai, honoring Nature's Masters, who are the true source of creativity and inspiration. Observation, meticulous study, patience and personal search for encouragement should be a goal and aspiration of all bonsai artists. Although failure sometimes is inevitable, the chance to overcome adversity should drive us to outshine every obstacle within our personal journey. I encourage all to be inspired, be observant and be creative, but, most of all, never give up! 🌲

Forty years ago, while visiting DaXue Shan (Great Snow Mountain) with a group of classmates, I had my first encounter with Taiwanese High Mountain Junipers.



Arcobonsai, Celebrating 31 years of conventions and hosting the national Congress of Union Bonsaisti Italiani (UBI) five times.

By Massimo Bandera, Italy

After three days of bright sunshine the XXXI edition of Arcobonsai that housed the XXth Congress of the Union Bonsaisti Italian (UBI) came to a close.

During the more than thirty years of activity, the Arcobonsai has hosted the national Congress five times, but this time, it was to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Association's activities and, therefore, the event had special significance.

In addition, through the Consulate General of Japan in Milan, the Local Coordination Committee for the 150th anniversary of relations between Italy and Japan participated in the event.

The Italian bonsai community responded enthusiastically to the invitation dell'UBI and Arcobonsai in large numbers and in some cases, there was the need to set some limits to requests for participation.

The numbers are always impressive; 120 plants on display, 20 suiseki, 240 participants at the welcome dinner and 400 at the awards dinner, more than 3000 visitors to the exhibitions, more than 460 guests attending the Conference, 57 bonsai vendors as well as 20 operators of horticulture and local products from agriculture.

The conference was opened by the Consul General of Japan in Milan, His Excellency Dr. Shinichi Nakatsugawa, expressing his pleasure and appreciation, both for the region and for the location. He was very interested by the exhibition displayed in the Municipal Casino, with particular attention to aspects of the bonsai that were expertly illustrated by Shozo Tanaka.

The Arcobonsai instructors trophy was awarded to John Mugnas, and between 21 Italian Bonsai Clubs, the club award went to Association Umbria Bonsai.

Considerable interest was aroused by the performances of the three foreign guests: David Benavente Lopez from Spain, Rock Junior, Brazil and the Seok Kim Ju, Korea.

The same applies to the demonstrations by the Bonsai Schools recognized by UBI and who have achieved high levels regarding teaching bonsai in Italy.



The plant designs proposed by Carlo Cipollini and Adriano Bonini and their valuable advice has now become a fixed and anticipated component at the Congress.

As always, the cultural program has been carefully prepared, and this year it was possible to enjoy Massimo Bandera's report on "exhibitions of Katayama," the must-see presentations of Luca Bragazzi and Augusto Marchesini, as well as the very interesting workshops of Silvia Orsi for kusamono and Sonia Stella for sumi-e.

The event was complemented by shiatsu massage offered to guests by Lucia Valais, the flag-wavers of Feltre, the Dro Band, and the food and beverage outlets managed by volunteer associations who offered dishes featuring the local cuisine.

In short, during the three days of celebration and friendship some problems of coexistence between National Associations were also set aside. 🌳



BCI Director Massimo Bandera awarded three BCI Excellence Awards: Paolo Dassetto for his viewing stone, (Marco Tarozzo shown top right accepting the award for Paolo Dassetto); Zino Rongo for his juniper bonsai (middle right and bottom right); and Fabio Mantovani for his *Juniperus chinensis*, (middle left) that also received the UBI Award 2016 and is featured on the cover of this issue. The tree is the subject of an article by Massimo Bandera in an upcoming issue.

Bonsai Intermediate Course launched on Bonsai Empire Website

The Bonsai Intermediate Course, an online tutorial featuring the best of contemporary Bonsai design and the techniques needed to create outstanding works of living art is now available. Bjorn Bjorholm, a Bonsai professional who studied this living art for over six years while living in Japan, apprenticing under the famous Bonsai master Keiichi Fujikawa is the course instructor.

This expansive online tutorial with over 3 hours of videos, builds upon the previous Bonsai Beginner's Course and features in-depth technical and practical content presented in an exciting, easy-to-use platform. The Bonsai Intermediate Course features focused, species specific lessons on some of the most popular plants used for Bonsai, including Junipers, Pines, Hornbeams, Apricots and Maples, as well as many obscure species, such as Stewartia, Cypress, Chojubai, Dwarf Kumquat, and Pyracantha along with its evolutionary background, necessary horticultural maintenance and developmental techniques, design and styling principles, and applied progressions. Learn about the mechanics of wiring and pruning, delve into the aesthetics of design, and horticultural maintenance per tree species.

For a one-time fee of less than \$50US, you get unlimited access to the online course. There are two free lessons you can watch before buying. 🌳



In Memoriam: Guillermo Castaño Ramirez, a true friend of Bonsai and BCI.



Above: BCI Excellence Award Medal by Guillermo Castaño. The medallion is bronze with the BCI logo tree on one side and the inscription "BCI Excellence Award" on the other. It is now coveted around the world.

"Guillermo Castaño is a true friend to Bonsai! He has done so much to promote Bonsai around the world. He gives unselfishly to help promote the Art of Bonsai, and is a true Ambassador of Bonsai. When you need advice on Bonsai, Sculpture, or just life, Guillermo will always be there to help you, no questions asked. I am honored to call Guillermo a friend." —Frank Mihalic, BCI Director.

Guillermo's artistic abilities were first introduced to Bonsai Clubs International at the Louisville, Kentucky Convention when BCI President Robert Kempinski gave out the gold medallions that Guillermo had made for BCI. The BCI directors award the medallion to accomplished bonsai people. His generous contributions to BCI and bonsai will be missed. 🌳





Dreams of Perfect Trees; Jim Smith's Bonsai Legacy

By Tom Kehoe and Belinda Kehoe, USA

The beginning was sometime in the early 1950s. James J. Smith, a mason, was paging through the back of one of his wife's magazines, perhaps *Good Housekeeping*. He could never remember. A small ad struck his eye: *Learn the Secrets of the Ancient Art of Bonsai*. For reasons he could never explain, even to himself, he decided to send in his \$10—an exorbitant sum in those days. What he got was a packet of seeds and a little booklet. The seeds never became bonsai, but a life-long obsession had taken root—one that would grow and branch out like the vast banyan trees he loved.

James “Jim” Smith, who may have been America's greatest living bonsai master, died peacefully in his sleep at Consulate Health Care facility in Vero Beach on June 29, 2016.

He leaves behind a legacy of a life devoted to teaching the art of growing miniature trees in pots. Although he was hardly a household name in the United States, Smith's reputation extended around the world—to communities of artists in lands as far flung as India and Indonesia.

“Having traveled to all the continents judging, teaching or demonstrating at bonsai events, I've witnessed the global proportions of Jim Smith's influence,” said Rob Kempinski of Melbourne, Florida, a former president of Bonsai Clubs International, an international association with many bonsai artists. “Despite his international impact, he remained grounded in his humble approach, focusing on creating great bonsai art.”

Kempinski said that he has seen trees styled by Smith in Germany, Canada, South America, India, Japan, China and many more countries. “His passing leaves us sorry, but the sadness is tempered by the joy we had in knowing him, learning from him and

sharing his bonsai art. But in a way, his kind spirit lives on in the trees he shaped.”

When David DeGroot helped found the Pacific Rim Collection (now the Pacific Bonsai Museum) in Washington state, Jim Smith was one of the artists they sought out for a tree.

“Jim Smith was an outstanding bonsai artist who was creating international quality bonsai when most of the rest of us in the bonsai community were experimenting with gallon-size nursery plants,” said DeGroot, the curator emeritus of the Pacific Bonsai Museum. “His encyclopedic knowledge of tropical plants and his vast hands-on experience in growing and developing them were unequalled in the U.S. His artistry lives on at the Pacific Bonsai Museum, Heathcote Botanical Gardens, and many other public and private collections. His humanity lives on in our hearts.”

Today, there are bonsai societies in every state in the union, and virtually every country in the world, but when Smith began, few Americans had ever seen—or heard of—bonsai. Although he was largely self-taught, he studied with some of the greatest masters in America, including Yuji Yoshimura, John Naka and Tosh Saburamura.

Most of his personal collection—valued at upwards of \$500,000—is now on display as the James J. Smith Bonsai Gallery at Heathcote Botanical Garden in Ft. Pierce, Florida. It is the largest public collection of tropical bonsai in the United States.

His work has been featured in numerous books and collections around the world, including the Smithsonian's National Arboretum. He was a world-recognized expert on the use of ficus and other tropical species for bonsai, and a founder of both the Treasure Coast Bonsai Society and Bonsai Society of Brevard.

Top left; Smith's huge *F. salicifolia* banyan was the logo tree for the 2008 Florida state bonsai convention. The convention was dedicated to Smith's contributions to bonsai.

Top right; This enormous *Portulacaria afra* stand four feet tall. It's the logo tree for the James J. Smith Bonsai Gallery, and greet visitors as they enter.

Top left; For decades in Vero Beach, the fourth Sunday of each month was *Bonsai under the Oaks*, a free seminar that Smith gave for all interested.

Top right; Smith styled this enormous forest of dwarf F. Benjamina during one of his Bonsai Under the Oaks workshops in 2007.

Middle left; Smith trims one of the Portulacarias at Heathcote, circa 2014.

Bottom; Smith defoliated one of his Salicifolias for this photo, circa 1990.



Robert Kempinski has seen trees styled by Smith in Germany, Canada, South America, India, Japan, China and many more countries.

His contributions to bonsai art and cultivation are myriad. He was instrumental in creating the banyan style and pioneered the use of hardened clay particles. He traded clippings of exotic species from collectors around the world, and grew them in greenhouses under time-controlled misting systems.

He introduced numerous species to bonsai cultivation in the United States, including the small-leaf jade (*Portulacaria afra*). Several top examples of this species can be seen in the Heathcote collection, including the gallery's logo tree.

Smith was famous for his generosity to aspiring artists, both with material from his nursery, and more importantly, with endless hours of his time, teaching, coaching and trimming trees.

Born in Alton, Illinois on September 25, 1925 to William Arnett Smith and Elizabeth (Bettie Mary Reis) Smith, the family relocated with their infant son to Evansville Indiana where Smith was baptized at Sacred Heart Catholic Church and attended Reitz Memorial High School.

Smith enlisted in the U. S. Navy on the 6th of April 1943; thereafter, he attended Newbury Collage as a cadet before being attached to Admiral William Halsey's Pacific fleet aboard the USS Attu CVE 102. After the war, Jim and Wilma married at St Benedict's Church on the 6th of September 1947.

Smith began his plastering contractor's business under the name of Dura-Stone Co. while in Evansville before relocating family and business to Vero Beach Florida in 1956, where he began experimenting with the tropical plants found in Florida.

The fall of the housing market in the early 1970s forced Jim to turn at least one of his passions into a family-supporting income. Phasing out his plastering business he successfully ventured into an unexpected interest—numismatics. J & W (Jim and Wilma) Rare

Coins was born and a brief career dealing in rare coins occupied his time and provided an income. But increasingly his love of botany took hold.

In those early years he flirted with cactus and orchids, but dreams of perfect trees in miniature soon eclipsed all else. Durastone plastering became the strangely named Durastone Wholesale Bonsai Nursery and by the mid-1970s bonsai had become his hobby, his career and his refuge.

Smith admitted that the locale played a role in his success—you almost couldn't kill a plant in Florida, he said. The growing season was three to four times as long in Vero Beach as it is in most parts of the country, and his nursery was filled with potted trees with fat trunks and spreading crowns that looked ancient but were only a few years old.

Durastone became a bonsai Mecca for novice and master alike. Folks would arrive from half-way across the country and fill up a trailer with Banyan-shaped ficus, twisted-trunk Brazilian Raintree, and flowering trees like the Water Jasmine, *Wrightia religiosa*. Jim would stop work, grab a root beer, settle in a chair under the massive spreading banyan out front and talk trees, politics or the world situation. His personal experiences with war made him a passionate pacifist and ardent political progressive.

The big banyan, some variant of *F. Retusa*, was jokingly called "*The Tree of Knowledge*" by longtime students, because of all the talks that Smith gave under its boughs. He said it was never supposed to grow there—it started out in a plastic nursery pot, put its roots down, and burst through, growing into a massive tree with a six-foot trunk and a crown 80 feet across.

In the bonsai world, individual trees can be just as well known as the artist. Perhaps Smith's best-known tree was an immense banyan with a crown that spread five feet across. A portrait of it hangs in his Vero Beach home. A collector saw it and tried to buy it over and over again. Smith repeatedly demurred. One day, he said, he agreed and named a sum that he thought would silence the collector—\$25,000. To Smith's shock, the collector readily agreed. The amount is a pittance for a great tree in Japan, but may have been a record in the U.S.

It has been said that bonsai is the only art where the

canvas has as much to say about the composition as the artist. The essence of the *art* of bonsai lies in being able to see the tree that's waiting to be born from the raw material. Artists spend hours staring at a raw piece of material, formulating a plan for its future development—replant it at a different angle; remove a branch here; nurse a nascent bud into a branch there.

Smith could see things in an instant that took most artists months to find. They would come to him with a tree and describe their vision. "Well that's not bad," Smith would say, staring at the plant intently. "But did you ever think about doing this?" he would ask, rotating the tree around until a new front appeared with a more dramatic line.

For decades in Vero Beach, the fourth Sunday of each month was *Bonsai under the Oaks*, a free seminar that Smith gave for all interested. Jim gave the same care and attention to the novice who brought a bedraggled garden-center tree (derisively known as "mall-sai") as he did to well-known artists who traveled hours for some expert advice on making a single change to a tree they had worked on for decades.

Bonsai is an established art form with elaborate rules about composition, trunk angle and proportion. Smith conducted hundreds of demonstrations around the Southeast where he styled trees for bonsai aficionados. Smith's style was like the old joke about carving an elephant: He simply removed everything that didn't look like a bonsai. There was often little left.

Many canny professionals on the circuit would trim a tree and wire it into something that looked like a bonsai—knowing that it would please the audience, even if it prevented the tree from becoming a good

bonsai. Smith became famous for treating every tree as if it were going to be a masterpiece. When he styled a piece of raw material, there would often be only a bare trunk, three branches, and a shoot at the top, where the apex would grow. Truth be told, he secretly relished the shocked expressions. He was the ultimate sculptor, cutting and chiseling and bending to create living art.

In his last years his failing eyesight seemed destined to end his love affair with bonsai. But his knowledge of trunk, branch, and ramification was so finely tuned he could feel the line, the branch structure, and work his magic mostly by touch.

Smith checked himself into a nursing home in Vero Beach about 18 months ago, after health issues left him fragile. True to character he began teaching bonsai to some of the staff and residents.

Two sons, Gregory and David Smith survive him. Grandson Douglas Smith and granddaughter Cheryl Eakes and her son Tristan also survive him. His wife Wilma Elizabeth and three sons, Donald, Douglas, and Mark preceded Mr. Smith in death.

The family requests that donations be made to the Heathcote Botanical Gardens for the continuing support of the James J. Smith Bonsai Gallery, a testament of appreciation to a man and his life's work. Heathcote Botanical Gardens will be hosting a retrospective exhibit and memorial honoring Mr. Smith to coincide with his 91st birthday. The Gardens will be open free to the public, Saturday, September 24. The memorial service for Jim's many friends, students and family will be held at 2:30 Sunday afternoon. 🌳



Jim gave the same care and attention to the novice who brought a bedraggled garden-center tree (derisively known as "mall-sai") as he did to well-known artists who traveled hours for some expert advice on making a single change to a tree they had worked on for decades.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Miriam Charles, director,
Heathcote Botanical Gardens,
772-342-5506

Robert Kempinski, 3
21-259-0832;
817-300-3569 cell

Tom Kehoe, longtime student,
321-537-4784

Jack Sustic, curator of the
bonsai collection at the National
Arboretum, 240-602-5769

Johann Klodzen, president of
the National Bonsai Foundation,
202-396-3510



INTERNATIONAL BONSAI CONVENTION & EXHIBITION



19th DEC - 22nd DEC 2016

Organized by
Avadhoota Datta Peetham, Mysore, India

In Co-operation with
BONSAI STUDY GROUP OF THE INDO - JAPANESE ASSOCIATION, India.



DEMO, LECTURES, & WORK SHOP
BY WORLD RENOWNED MASTERS



ALL INDIA BONSAI EXHIBITION
& PHOTO COMPETITION
+ BAZAR & CULTURAL PROGRAMS



PRIZES FOR BOTH COMPETITIONS
JUDGED BY WORLD MASTERS

SUPPORTED BY - BCI & WBFF



Venue :

KISHKINDHA MOOLIKA BONSAI GARDEN

Sri Ganapathy Sachchidananda Ashrama | Datta Nagar | Mysore - 570 025 India.
Tel : 0821 2486486 | Email : bonsai@dattapeetham.com

Co - Ordinators : **Mr. Nikunj Parekh & Mrs. Jyoti Parekh**
e-mail : nikunjyo@gmail.com

See : Bonsai | Moolika | Nakshatra | Raashi | Saptarshi | Navagraha | Gardens | Shukavana Bird Refuge

URL: www.bonsai2016.com

NEW CONTACT INFORMATION FOR BCI BUSINESS OFFICE

BCI Business Manager, Larry can help members with renewals, back issues, changes to membership information and much more.

Remember, once you log in to the BCI website with your user name and password, you can access your profile page and self-manage much of your membership. However, to ensure BCI meets the needs of all members, the Business Office can be contacted by other methods:

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.

Larry Stephan
office@bonsai-bci.com
phone 847-612-5133
(Central Time Zone)
PO Box 639,
Prospect Heights,
IL 60070-0639, USA
www.bonsai-bci.com



Golden Arrow Bonsai

Andrew Smith, 22473 Alpine Acres Dr,
Deadwood, SD 57732

Specializing in
ancient collected
trees for bonsai.

Visit us online at:

goldenarrowbonsai.com

or contact

goldenarrow@exede.net

605-342-4467

盆 金
栽 矢

STREET ART AND BONSAI COLLIDE

Decked Out

ON VIEW

APRIL 30
- OCT 2

FEATURED ARTISTS

179

Baso

David Bultrago

Henry

Jean Nagai

Joe Vellan

Joey Nix

John Osgood

Maxwell Humphres

Merlot

Solace

Teyha Sullivan

They Drift

Wakuda



MORE INFO AT PACIFICBONSAIMUSEUM.ORG

Get outside
Be surprised
Connect with living art

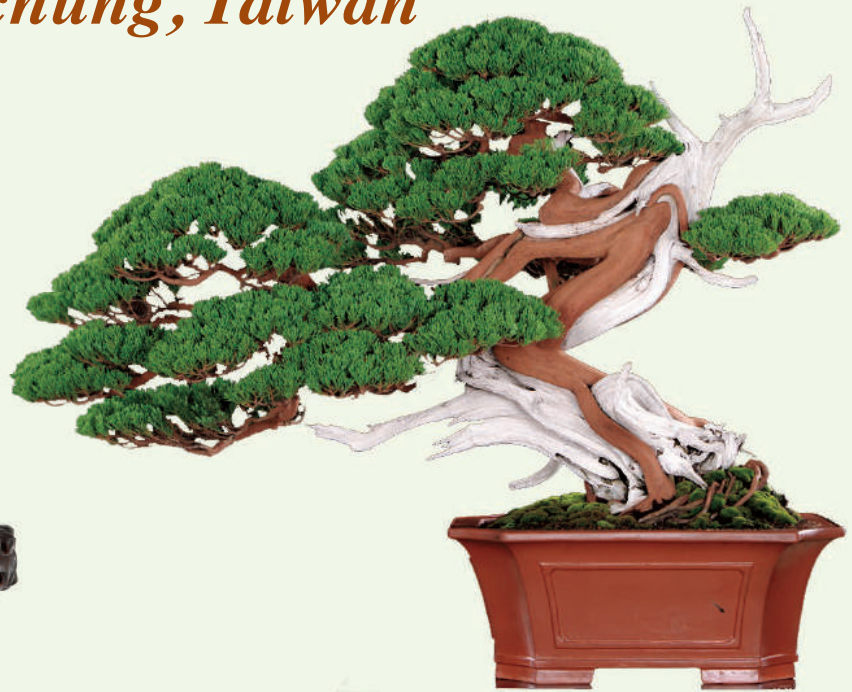
PACIFIC
bonsai
MUSEUM

Explore the Beauty & Culture of Taiwan



The Taiwan Bonsai Association invites you to the
Bonsai Clubs International Convention 2017
and the 14th Asia-Pacific Bonsai and
Viewing Stone Convention & Exhibition

4 – 7 November 2017
Changhua & Taichung, Taiwan



Contact us:

Address: No. 68, Sec. 4, Chungshan Rd., Xizhou, Changhua, Taiwan. 524

Information: Sean SC Huang

E-mail: bci2017aspac14@gmail.com or seanschuang@yahoo.com.tw

Registrations:

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

www.bcibonsai2017.com and register online.

(Online registration activated from January 2017)

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

+886-910382952 / or E-mail: bci2017aspac14@gmail.com

or Tel: +886-4-878-9797 Fax: +886-4-889-9799



BCI 2015 PHOTO ALBUM

**NOW
SHIPPING**

Order Online!

Bonsai Viewing Stones from BCI Members' Collections

Hard cover, 200
pages, full color, 250
x 247 mm/9.84 x 9.72
dust jacket and
limited edition.
\$59.00



BCI is honored to showcase our members' best trees and stones. The finalists from our biennial photographic contest, 120 trees and 60 stones, are presented in a keepsake photo album, representing trees and stones from nineteen countries. Spread the word in your local club, help us promote the treasures in the BCI world and promote international friendships.

- **Single copy: \$59.00**
 - **Participants in contest who order 2 or 3 copies:**
20% discount shipped to one address
 - **BCI Clubs who orders 6 or more copies at one time:**
20% discount shipped to one address
 - **Wholesale (for resale by legitimate businesses):**
50% discount on orders of 6 or more copies per order
- Shipping cost are additional and will vary depending on destination.

Order Online: See Home/pull down menu /SHOP
or <<http://www.bonsai-bci.com/home-main-menu-1/shop-bci>>

For personalized service and more information,
send an e-mail to
office@bonsai-bci.com, or phone (847) 612-5133.



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.

